

Alexander: Open drilling where prohibited to ease gas prices

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Fifth District U.S. Rep. Rodney Alexander said the best thing Congress could do to help ease gas prices is open up domestic drilling where it's now prohibited.

"I'm as aggravated as anyone else about putting \$4 gas in my vehicle," he said. "So what can we do? We need to begin allowing drilling in places like the Florida coast, Alaska and the eastern seaboard."

Alexander, who spoke Monday during a West Monroe-West Ouachita Chamber of Commerce luncheon at the West Monroe Convention Center, said increasing America's own supply of oil is the best way to battle price

spikes.

"Why should we expect Saudi Arabia or Venezuela to give us a good deal on oil when we're not using all of our own?" asked Alexander, who was presented with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Spirit of Enterprise Award during the luncheon.

The Spirit of Enterprise Award is given to members of Congress who support the chamber's key votes at least 70 percent of the time.

"Some of my colleagues continue to block opening drilling in places where we know there's oil, but I think there will continue to be public pressure toward using more of our own natural resources," he said. "We know we can drill effectively in a way that is safe for the environment. We've

proven that in Louisiana."

Ouachita Parish motorists have seen no relief at the pump, where the average price of gas hit another record high on Monday of \$3.839 per gallon.

One of the first questions Alexander was asked on Monday was about the price of gas.

"This is something that touches everybody every day," he said. "People are struggling to pay for \$4 gas and still take their 4-year-old to the doctor and buy groceries.

"It's natural that they're more worried about the things that impact them like gas prices than they are about some of the other things Congress seems to be worried about."