

forcing extreme hardships on American families, especially on low wage earners. These high gas prices are single handedly impoverishing many, many Americans and many in congress have vowed to do nothing about it.

If you agree with me and you are tired of congress acting totally inept in this matter, and in letting us down "big-time" by not taking the bold decisive steps needed to get us out of this "out of control" gas crisis—please sign this petition "Drill Here, Drill Now, Pay Less."

Our message to Congress—Its time to stop talking and start acting.

TONY.

Two years ago, my family and I moved from Sugar City where I grew up, four miles north to a home site where my wife was raised. It is a wonderful location, and we love living there. However, the cost of energy has dramatically affected our lifestyle. Our vehicle fuel consumption has tripled, and our propane expense has more than doubled. Some of the price fluctuation used to be seasonal, but I do not believe the seasonal supplies and demands have much to do with it anymore. As a 43-year-old American living in rural Idaho, I have come to realize how dependent we have become on foreign energy sources, and on personal vehicles for transportation. We can plan better and drive less. We can resolve to drive more fuel-efficient vehicles. We can determine to reduce our food consumption and live more frugally. All of these things we have done, but when it comes right down to it, these changes have not made a drop in the bucket difference. There is no way the average middle-class American can keep up with this over the long run. Rising energy prices will prove to be the single most troublesome factor in our economy. New energy technologies are so bogged down and tied up in committees and environmental quagmires that no action seems to ever take place. In the meantime, the Chinese and other foreign countries are teaching us how to drill for oil right off our own shores in the Gulf of Mexico. Alaska seems to be off limits, which is a joke. Coal-to-oil technologies have not been taken seriously. We have made some progress with wind turbine development, but again, wind energy can help certain regions of our country, but is still a drop in the bucket in relation to our energy consumption. I am disgusted that we did not seriously pursue nuclear energy as a legitimate alternative to fossil fuel 40 years ago. Technology is not the problem; we have that. The problem is it takes so long to tool up for nuclear energy that we will be lucky if our grandchildren can benefit from this tremendously efficient and clean alternative, even if it gains traction over the next couple of years. That is one thing the French have definitely showed us up on. To me, nuclear power is the long term answer to our energy problem—please support it any way you can.

One last comment on nuclear power—I was talking to a friend just the other day whose father worked for many years at the INEL. His father told him that we really blew it when we started developing nuclear power by keeping the process such a secret. Start with secrecy, add a few mishaps like Three Mile Island, stir it all together and you have a recipe for paranoia and public distrust. What a shame! We have to get over our fear of nuclear power.

I love this country. I have increased my earning potential tremendously and have so many freedoms that I am truly grateful for. But I am very concerned that if we do get very serious about this energy problem right now, my real standard of living, even in the greatest county in the world, will decline. I am not anti-environment; I believe that we

can protect the environment in a reasonable manner without shutting off access to our God-given natural resources. We are the stewards of our planet, but I believe it was made for our use, not for us to be subject to it. I have a real problem with the extremely radical vocal minority shutting down all of our options. We have got to get smart and inject a large dose of common sense into this energy equation.

Thank You

TIM, *St. Anthony.*

Hi, I agree with some of what you are proposing but let us stop making futile arguments here! The only way that I will support more domestic production is if you come up with a plan for more efficiency and conservation along with higher building standards. Our state is hooked on cheap fuels, and it only leads to waste, so I am fine with high energy costs because it will lessen our carbon impact on the earth and we will get more creative. Cheap fuel is a thing of the past, and if we do not use the energy that we do have to prepare for the future, I will never support you and will resent your ignorance. Let us see a solid plan backed up with solid implementation!

JIM, *McCall.*

Dear Senator Crapo, [I would like to know if the] question of oil speculators [is being addressed]. Speculators are the ones primarily driving up the prices and not so much the oil companies or the oil producing nations. We did address refineries, and exploration and drilling. Clearly the American people and, indeed, citizens of other nations are suffering because of these speculators. It is rather like my grandparents told me about the stock market crash of 1929 when margin buying endangered the entire financial structure of the world. Can Congress force the commodities speculators to put down more than the 5% they now use for their speculations? It would seem that if they had to put up 50% or better, they would be a little more cautious in their "gambling".

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

ROCHELLE.

Both my wife and I are retired government employees on fixed incomes so we watch our P's and Q's very closely. In spite of our cautious spending practices we have found ourselves unwilling victims of the gas crunch.

Here is how we got caught. Our son graduated from college, owing substantially for money loaned to get through four years of very expensive educational expenses. He has sought out and found employment but not enough to pay back his accumulated debt. His monthly income is not at all what he had expected he might be able to get as a college graduate. Currently my son continues to work and at the same time looks for a better paying position . . . Here is where the gas prices come into play: He is living/working in Eugene, Oregon, and attempting to move into a higher-paying position in Portland, Oregon. He has been traveling back and forth to interview for jobs. One trip up and back in his older model vehicle costs him about \$60 in gas. On his salary, he cannot afford to make the trip in search of better employment. He is in fact a prisoner of the gas prices unable to travel to further himself financially.

As a consequence, he has had to get extensions on his federal educational loan (not a good thing for the government), which continues to charge him interest for the unpaid balance. He is really stuck.

We are also stuck because there was an additional \$8,000 loan obtained that was not through the federal government, which can-

not be put on hold and must be paid now. So, here we are putting out about \$200 per month to cover his debt, money we could really use as retired persons.

The short of it is he is in a bind and we are in a bind. Gas prices have handicapped him and imposed unnecessary expenses on us. I think everybody is coming up short here including the federal government.

JIM and LOLA.

Dear Sen. Crapo, From \$20 to \$48 to fill up my car tank. I think that says it all.

Polling data indicates that the majority of people want us to drill for our own oil. I want us to drill for our own oil.

I believe that the only reason the Arabs said they would increase the amount of oil that they produce is because they became concerned that we might actually begin drilling our own, and they wouldn't want that.

Please, Senator Crapo, we are so tired of living under the EPA's thumb. I urge you and Senator Craig to do whatever it takes so that our oil companies can start producing again.

Sincerely,

JUDY, *Burley.*

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

HONORING R.C. NORTH PLUMBING & HEATING INC.

● Ms. SNOWE. Madam President, at a time when people from my home State of Maine and throughout the Nation are struggling to cope with an unrelenting climb in energy prices, I rise today to recognize a small business that sells innovative, technological solutions to families and enterprises in Southern and Central Maine. R.C. North Plumbing & Heating Inc. of Naples provides energy-efficient heating and cooling equipment and expertise, which, in turn, enables Mainers to save money and decrease their energy consumption.

R.C. North Plumbing & Heating Inc., though less than 5 years old, offers years of technical experience in residential heating, cooling, and plumbing, which helps its customers remain confident that their heating and cooling systems are operating at maximum efficiency, thereby saving water, energy, and ultimately money. Furthermore, many of the products that R.C. North sells and installs are designated ENERGY STAR products by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Department of Energy because of their energy efficiency.

In addition to providing traditional heating and plumbing services, R.C. North has a burgeoning solar division that offers customers technologies to convert the Sun's power into a safe and reliable energy source for heating water. Additionally, R.C. North participates in the Maine Solar Energy Rebate Program, founded in 2005, to encourage the growth of solar energy in Maine by providing rebates to individuals who purchase solar energy systems. The firm is also certified by the Maine Public Utilities Commission as an installer of solar thermal heating systems.