

gallon if we were using our own resources, but again, Washington does not seem to care and it sickens me. It is clearly about greed and money and greed breeds greed—just look how well it is working for the greedy. It makes me wonder why I ever served in Vietnam and why I lost 60,000 of my comrades, but [I feel resigned to accept what is happening].

I have always been behind you and supported you and will continue to do so and only can hope that at least you will stay honest or at least believe that honesty is the best policy.

BOB, Boise.

I received an e-mail several days ago that has “shaken me up” and started my mind working. [We have enough gas] to keep all of America going for at least 150, and probably 200 years, even accounting for increased population growth and demand for energy. The reason—the “bottom line”—that keeps President Bush and Congress from allowing drilling oil within our borders is NOT environmental issues, but paying off the national debt. [Allow me to summarize:] In the early 1970’s then Secretary of State Henry Kissinger traveled to most of the oil producing countries in the world, agreeing to buy oil from them IF they would sign to use part of the money they made on the sale to buy off our national debt.

If we started producing our own oil reserves, the fear is that the U.S. economy would collapse because the oil-producing countries from which we buy oil would stop paying down our national debt when we stopped buying oil from them. Well, here is my solution:

Start using our own oil reserves which would reduce the cost of gasoline to about \$1.50/gallon. Charge us \$2.50/gallon, sending \$1.00 per gallon to pay off the national debt.

Who would not be delighted to pay just \$2.50/gallon again? Who would object to paying a “tax” of \$1.00/gallon to pay off the national debt when we would realize a savings over today’s oil prices?

Please do not just trash this. Please give it some careful attention, and share the concept with others. It is time for a change. It is time to start thinking about saving our country for our country, and stop being held hostage by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Thank you for “listening” and implementing some changes.

LOIS, Caldwell.

This is in response to your email asking for my story about the impact that high gas and energy prices are having on my life. You said I could write a paragraph or two about how I am affected by high energy prices, and that it would be worthwhile for me to share the priorities that I think Congress should set in resolving this crisis.

CRISIS

(1) I no longer go backpacking, hiking, camping, or canoeing. Instead, I float the Boise River on a tube, because it is close to home. I used to buy equipment and services that supported those hobbies, but now I do not. So, those businesses that I used to patronize are impacted negatively, because I stay in town. Who also suffers? The businesses near the towns where I traveled, and the businesses on the highway that lead to those areas.

If more people are doing this, what is the impact to our environment? More people will not recognize the beauty of God’s creation, which means they will be less likely to support bills that protect the environment.

(2) I no longer explore small Idaho towns and ghost towns. Who suffers? The business in those towns, and the businesses on the highways that lead to those towns.

(3) Long before the “energy crisis”, I had already switched to fluorescent light bulbs. Fortunately, I had my home built with 2 attic fans, so that I do not have to use the air conditioning during summer. Also, almost every room in my home has ceiling fans; so, I turn on the ceiling fan in the room I am occupying instead of turning on the air conditioning for my entire home.

During the cold months, I set my thermostat to 40 or 50 degrees, 40 during the day if the outside temperature is above 30, and 50 when I am at home or if the outside temperature is below 30. This keeps my pipes from freezing, and it keeps my bills low. I wear warm fleece underwear, and warm fleece outer garments to stay warm. In contrast, my neighbor pays 5 or 6 times as much as I do for their natural gas bills during the cold months (but they are wealthy).

I have drained my hot tub, and I no longer use it. Now I wish I had never bought one. This hurts the hot tub industry, and any businesses that support that industry.

I canceled my satellite TV; that saves me \$50 per month, and that is good for about two-thirds of a tank of gas.

I do not have a cell phone, and I do not plan on getting one, since it would cost \$50 or more a month (which I can apply toward higher food costs).

(4) I combine trips and do not drive unless I have to. No Sunday drives. No “unnecessary” trips to the grocery store. I used to travel about 10,000 miles per year; but for the last 2 years, I have limited my driving to about 6,000 miles per year.

(5) I exclusively shop at Wal-Mart. If Wal-Mart does not carry it, then I don’t buy it. Why would I drive around town to shop other stores when I can buy most everything at one place? That is great for Wal-Mart, but it hurts other businesses.

(6) I used to take one decent overseas vacation each year (or go to Hawaii or Florida). However, I stopped doing that after 2005. And since the cost of airline tickets are increasing, I won’t even consider traveling. I need to save my money to buy gas and food. And when I see the price of oil rise \$10 or more in one day, then I do not think about doing anything but save money for “the worst case scenario.”

(7) I have changed my diet. I purchase less or no meats and more pasta and rice. I buy graham crackers instead of Oreos, or I make my own cookies. I buy less snack foods. The energy costs have driven up food costs. I have found ways to keep my food prices low by adjusting my diet, but this hurts other businesses. Oh, and I am not one of those obese Americans; I’m 5’9” and 160 pounds . . . right where I need to be. I do not understand how obese Americans and their children can afford to feed their addiction to foods.

(8) I had hoped to quit my full-time job and work part-time instead (in lieu of traditional “retirement”). However, because of the drastic increase in prices of energy and food, and because of the uncertainty and volatility in the global markets, I have postponed quitting my full-time job. That means that a college graduate cannot have my good paying full-time job. And it means that I can not enjoy the extra free time that a part-time job would give me.

(9) I drive a 1994 pick-up truck. I would like to buy a new vehicle, but I can not. Why? Because I need something that gets very good gas mileage and has a reasonable price tag, and there are no cars on the road that meet these criteria, even the so-called hybrids (which can not pay for themselves even at \$5 or \$6 a gallon because of the increased cost of hybrid technology). Back in 1994, it was a mistake to trade-in my 1987 Honda Civic that got 40 mpg in the city and 50 mpg on the highway (and it wasn’t even a hybrid . . .

and most hybrids can’t even come close to that kind of gas mileage these days . . . but they cost 3 or 4 times as much as my Honda did in 1987 . . . and the “technology” is so much greater today!!!). So, I will continue driving my 1994 truck that gets 19 mpg city, because it is way too expensive to buy a new vehicle (i.e., the cost to get a 30 mpg or 35 mpg vehicle will not pay for itself for 7 or 10 years). And you don’t need to know my truck’s mpg for highway driving, since I do not enjoy outdoor activities anymore, so it doesn’t matter.

(10) I have noticed more crime in Boise within the last year. Why do you think that is? Because energy costs (and food costs) have risen too quickly . . . people can’t cope with the sudden increases. However, we are not adding more police or more jails to support the increase in crime. I am glad that I do not live in a major metropolitan area, because I think that if energy costs continue to climb, the country is at risk of rioting in its metro areas.

CRISIS RESOLUTION

(1) Politicians need to stop pandering to oil companies and oil executives by developing very stringent fuel economy requirements. Politicians need to stop pandering to oil companies and oil executives by honestly and diligently pursuing alternative forms of energy. But can the politicians do this? After all, there is a lot of money involved with oil in so many places, industries, pocketbooks, and campaign contributions (legitimate and otherwise).

(2) Drill for oil on USA soil and in USA waters. Why? Because we can not wean ourselves from oil instantly; and there are no viable automotive solutions today that do not use oil. It is going to take several years to wean ourselves from oil. In the meantime, we need to rely on our own oil sources to balance our foreign oil dependency. This means drilling in “pristine” Alaska, along both of our coasts, and in other areas of our country where “environmentalists” say we should not drill.

(3) Pursue fuel cell technology for vehicles (Honda is doing it, finally). Forget ethanol. Forget hybrids. Fuel cell vehicles require hydrogen and oxygen and emit water! No gasoline involved at all. And no cash crops like corn are required, which should help ease the price of this and other commodities.

(4) Use more nuclear energy. This technology currently exists, and it is viable. We do not have to start from scratch.

(5) Take lessons from New Zealand with regards to hydro-electricity and other forms of energy. That country is extremely self-sufficient when it comes to energy.

(6) Use more wind power. This technology currently exists, and it is viable. Are some (rich) people worried about the view of the landscape changing? Then stop painting the wind turbines all white! Paint them to blend into the background, or camouflage style!

(7) Pursue solar power. It is amazing that this technology is so far behind. The sun is so powerful, and so available. Regular homeowners can not afford solar panels on their homes. Look at all the wasted roof space on buildings and homes!

(8) Give incentives for conservation. Why is this last on my list? Because I think most people do conserve energy already . . . except maybe the “celebrities” like Al Gore and many other rich folks who tout the environment and conservation, but live in the lap of luxury and waste.

KRISTIAN, Boise.

I really do not think the gasoline price is really a result of supply and demand. I am all for conservation and alternative energy