

SUV; our other cars won't make it out of our steep driveway. Buying gasoline is not a choice, it is not a luxury—it is a necessity. We've already cut our consumption, we've limited our trips into Boise to the absolute minimum and we even try to consolidate our trips into town as much as possible.

Any further cuts will require some major changes—the biggest one would be my seriously considering quitting school. I'm currently pursuing my Master's degree in History at BSU, I hope to graduate in May—but if gas prices go up to the eight or ten dollars a gallon that I've heard many of the so-called environmentalists advocate, I won't be able to continue driving up to Boise three to four times a week. We also have to limit our driving to one trip to Mountain Home each day to my husband's office in our most gas-efficient vehicle, and none on the weekends. If that means that one of us has to sit around for hours waiting for the other one so be it. Our trips to the base to the Commissary and BX will have to be made in conjunction with a workday trip in to town, and we may stop making them altogether unless they were in conjunction with a trip to the hospital—the savings would probably be outweighed by the gas costs.

Moving is not an option—my husband and I are both Air Force retirees who invested our savings, an immense amount of sweat equity, and a lot of love in our ultimate dream house on a beautiful lot on forty acres. This is our home. We love living in the country the same way many people love living in the city. They have their rapid transit that is highly subsidized by the government; why are we paying for their lifestyle so that they can play holier than thou and harp about mine being evil?

My husband and I are actually quite lucky—we're retirees who can make choices about when and where we want to be places—they're hard choices, but at least they're our choices. Most people do not have that luxury. I keep thinking about the many people who were out here working on our house, most of whom drove from Boise. They didn't have a choice, they had to make the drive. They did, however, have an alternative funding source—they could pass their costs on to us, which is what is now happening with all businesses and commodities—and everything is just going to keep getting more and more expensive as this goes around in a lovely little circle. Remember the 70s and inflation? If we do not find a way to stop this pretty soon, we're going to see inflation like we've never seen it before. . .

I'm all for "alternative energy;" I'd be thrilled to use a vehicle that runs on "alternative energy"—if there was one available and I could afford it. Additionally, the government has been funding research into "alternative energy" for years now—do not make me raise even more funds for it every time I fill up my gas tank. On top of that—do not you think that whoever it is who finally makes a vehicle that does run on "alternative energy" will be able to make an awful lot of money on it? Why should I be paying for the R&D for their huge profits? Stop wasting your time and my money conducting show trial hearings of oil executives and do something useful like maybe suspending the stupid rules about mandatory floors on ethanol usage—with the floods in the midwest and the even higher corn prices that is going to raise gas prices even higher. Drill everywhere we can get oil. Use the shale oil. Build nuclear plants. Do it now so that ten years from now your successor won't be saying "oh, well, we would have had to do that ten years ago for it to have done any good so we might as well not do it now that gas prices have risen to fifteen dollars a gallon. . ."

Oh, and by the way—why haven't the Republicans been all over the Democrats about the fact that they were going to fix everything that was wrong in the world once they had control of Congress? Could you guys please make some noise about the fact that some things aren't George Bush's fault but should be laid at the feet of the Democratically-controlled Congress?

TAMARA, *Mountain Home.*

Honorable Senator, I am absolutely astonished and even sickened at the shameful interrogation of the oil company executives that was conducted by Senator Durbin, Maxine Waters and others. Also, Senator McCain for insinuating that the 'Speculators' are to blame for the high price of oil. Why is so much time being spent pointing the finger of blame at people who did not cause this problem in the first place?

These committees should be spending their time removing the restrictions that have minimized access to the resources of our own country as quickly as possible. I urge you to meet with the Senators who somehow do not understand that it is their own actions that have brought us to this place.

They have stifled production, placed their own taxes on our fuel supply and even threaten to penalize and take away profits from the very companies who can invest those profits back into increasing the available supplies, finding new resources in an environmentally friendly way and developing cleaner fuels. With sufficient resources, the private sector will be able to solve this problem.

You must convince other congressmen that the only solution is to get out of the way and remove the restrictions that prohibit qualified companies from increasing domestic production of energy.

Thank you for the work you do on our behalf.

RAMONA.

Dear Senator Crapo, I would first like to thank you for the way you voted in the recent issues. I would also like to have my voice heard on the energy crisis. I feel that you should take the restrictions off the oil company and allow them to drill for oil. I feel that the U.S. is getting into a situation such as Germany and Japan during World War II. They did not have the resources so that they were in a position of weakness. I feel that the energy crisis is brought about because of special interest at the expense of our national security. I also feel that they should allow nuclear energy. It would certainly solve many problems and other countries have been using it.

Sincerely,

JACKIE, *Pocatello.*

Senator Mike: I am not severely damaged by the gas prices because I can still afford to drive. But I am more cautious, and am much more conservative in my driving. The cost between \$2 gas and \$4 gas is about what many families pay for the cell phone service per month. Most people haven't put things into perspective properly.

There are lots of explanations of the reason for the high prices and they seem to point at two reasons: foreign demand (China and India) and the commodity speculators. Neither of these can be fixed. However, the exchange value of the dollar can be fixed, and we can announce that we are going to start new oil exploration and drilling in the Gulf of Mexico (Not ANWR).

Those two solutions sound reasonable and obtainable. Thanks for listening.

BOB, *Gooding.*

Fuel prices are seriously affecting my family's income. My wife and I are new parents,

and my wife is staying at home with the baby most of the time. I am a struggling mortgage loan originator, fighting to try and keep my family afloat in a suffering housing market. I live in Emmett, and my office is in Boise, so like many, many other folks from Emmett, I commute to work. The increase in fuel prices has caused me to cut down the amount of time I spend at the office. What used to cost about \$27 to get back and forth to work 4 times now costs over \$50. And that is with driving my 32 mpg Hyundai.

Gas prices didn't used to be a deciding factor in the work and recreational activities that we did. But, at \$4 a gallon for fuel, we cannot afford to get out as much as we used to, which limits the amount of money we spend on other activities. I'm sure I'm not alone and, with hundreds of thousands of Idahoans not spending as much money on recreational activities, it is further hurting our local and national economies.

I firmly believe that we as a nation are able to and need to develop alternative fuels AND drill for fossil fuels in an environmentally-responsible way. With advances in technology, I am sure that it is possible. No one needs to drill through the head of a caribou in order to get oil. With the oil available in ANWR and the newly-discovered North Dakota oil reserves, we have the potential for enough fuel to sustain our nation and stimulate the economy until further advances in alternative energy sources can be achieved.

Please do everything you can to minimize the hurt we Idahoans are feeling due to the sky-high energy costs. Struggling young families like mine are fighting just to keep our heads above water and gas prices are threatening to push us under.

Sincerely,

HOUSTON, *Emmett.*

My wife and I live in a small rural community in Idaho. We try to make one big trip each summer, and we visit my wife's family in Utah once a month. We both drive mid-sized American-made cars that are fairly economical, but [the cost] to fill our gas tank has gone from \$30 to \$60.

This is \$30 less that we can spend on groceries. Our grocery bill has also increased by \$20-\$40 a month. We have one small child and hope to have another next year, and I know my salary is not going to keep up with 7% inflation. It is not just fuel we are worried about. Our house is entirely electric because natural gas is not available in our neighborhood and, before we switched our utility bill to level pay, we were paying outrageous charges to heat and cool our house. Idaho has some of the cheapest electric power in the nation, and our electric bill in January was nearly \$400.00. Idaho seems to be anti-coal fired plants, but I am not. I lived next to a coal-fired plant in West Virginia and didn't notice any ill effects. However, I would rather see increased hydro, nuclear, and geothermal energy production. Nuclear is clean, and I think it is the way to go.

Geothermal and hydro are both regular and efficient methods of producing power. I am not in favor of wind farms; their source of energy is inconsistent at best, and I do not think the technology is quite good enough to place solar power above nuclear or coal. I support drilling in ANWR and other offshore sites in the U.S. ANWR is some of the most desolate and unattractive tundra wasteland you will ever see. Drilling could be accomplished there with virtually no ill effects to humans and very minimal effects to the few species who can survive the harsh tundra climate. Anything we can do to research and drill for that shale-oil found throughout the mountainous West would be beneficial. I would hope that American auto makers can