

getting to know this stately and cordial artist, a man of great intelligence, modesty and warmth.

Leon Fleisher has been playing across the country with full use of his hands for several years now. We are fortunate to be able to hear again how he plumbs the depths of every musical score, revealing something about ourselves through his music making. I know the Senate joins me in congratulating and recognizing Leon Fleisher's incredible contributions to the vibrant cultural fabric of our country.

IDAHOANS SPEAK OUT ON HIGH ENERGY PRICES

Mr. CRAPO. Mr. President, in mid-June, I asked Idahoans to share with me how high energy prices are affecting their lives, and they responded by the hundreds. The stories, numbering well over 1,200, are heartbreaking and touching. While energy prices have dropped in recent weeks, the concerns expressed remain very relevant. To respect the efforts of those who took the opportunity to share their thoughts, I am submitting every e-mail sent to me through an address set up specifically for this purpose to the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD. This is not an issue that will be easily resolved, but it is one that deserves immediate and serious attention, and Idahoans deserve to be heard. Their stories not only detail their struggles to meet everyday expenses, but also have suggestions and recommendations as to what Congress can do now to tackle this problem and find solutions that last beyond today. I ask unanimous consent to have today's letters printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

My husband and I are semi retired but the figure of \$200 way off the mark even for us. We do work part of the year but are not doing so at this time. We live rural and have to travel for groceries, building supplies. When we work all of this involves a minimum of 40 miles each way, not including the around town mileage. We have 20 acres, with a small tractor to keep weeds under control which the county urges all of us to do. We also have a large lawn to mow. Our fuel bill for the month of May was \$400. The tractor has a tank of 10 gallons, and that alone costs \$40 per tank. We are trying to save a bit by purchasing dyed fuel but, by the time you travel to that, you have eaten up your savings. The point is we have very little choice on our fuel issues. We do not go to town on a whim and really never have as long as we have been here (since 1973). The price of food is skyrocketing also in the rural areas. We have a small grocery store in a small town by us, but they have fuel issues, too. We would like to see nuclear power sources and wind generators multiply. Our daughter does websites and she has a customer that has a wind power source for sale for each single home. However, at this point, it is somewhat expensive, approximately \$5,500. Although in the past, nuclear power has had a few hiccups so even we were not in favor of it. I subscribe to Popular Science Magazine and it is my understanding they are very close or have reached the ability to neutralize the

waste. However, I have not heard any news about it from the media or official science reports.

Fixed income as well as families and singles cannot get pay raises that equals the cost of living in reality. We dealt with this our last years at work. Companies have their stockholders that have to be kept and for the last eight years of our jobs we steadily lost money from cost of living that the government adjusted to be 3% or less when in the blue collar world did not equate to that. Fuel along doubled and what cost us \$30 per week for work fuel jumped within 3 months to \$60 per week and kept traveling upward since. Property taxes, auto and home insurance also have risen but employers went with the government figures. I would get 25 cent per hour raise. It brought home approximately \$4 and change per week. It did not cover any of our rising expenses. Anything under \$1.00 does not even show anything much on a take home check. So there needs to be some way for an employer with all their overheads to realize this and perhaps hire CEOs, CFOs and other company officials that make a decent wage without the super perks they have received for the last 25 years. Corporate waste is rampant and should be addressed somehow in the near future so the frontline employees can afford today's fuel prices and not be stressed daily by how to make ends meet. Sorry I got off the edge here but it is all one big picture which is why the energy costs are a frontline problem with this. We still have many elderly people who do not have enough to live as is. With this energy impact, I do not know how they can make it. So please keep up your vigil. We need to open up the fields in Alaska and not be selling it to other countries at this point. [When] my husband and I work, which involves truck driving, we see what is happening along the routes we travel. The distress in the citizens and the oil wells being developed and the ones that are not running.

DARLENE, *Spirit Lake.*

Thank you for the opportunity to communicate in this fashion my family's challenges with the high cost of energy and our thoughts. I travel a great deal all over America and, as part of my job, I work closely with many convenience store operators around our great country. We own a Dodge Durango 4-wheel drive SUV. It is great because it provides the safety my family needs during the winter and the space we need for all the stuff we need to transport when you have two young children. As you no doubt remember with your own family, a nine-month-old baby [needs] a lot of baggage when he travels—car seats, strollers, etc. The daughter wants her bike when visiting the grandparents, her books, and spare clothes, etc. The bad thing is it only gets 13 miles to the gallon on average and, like most families, we did not buy it with cash but financed it which means we owe more on it than we can sell it for. In fact, in this market, many car dealers will not even take an SUV in on trade. So we have no choice but to bear the burden of high gas prices for the foreseeable future. We cannot just throw the car away and run out and buy a new fuel-efficient SUV which is selling at a premium that, frankly, even in today's market, does not even pencil out as a good investment by my calculations. Of course, this is not the only part of the story of how high energy costs have impacted our family but the part those like Thomas Freidman never take into consideration when promoting even higher costs through taxation, cap and trade, and government manipulation of the market.

What should Congress do?

Do not do as Congresswoman Maxine Waters suggested in Committee and take over

the oil companies. The markets are working just fine, but what they reflect is all the inaction and obstacles that have burdened the supply and demand elasticity of the commodities markets be it oil or corn, etc.

Again, taxing is not a solution. We should be working to lower taxes for everyone. Not redistributing it. Not to manipulate markets. Fuel taxes should be what they need to be to maintain our infrastructure. We should be encouraging efficiencies in the market place with our tax code and policies.

The fact is we need to make it easier to drill now. We need to make it easier to refine more fuel now. We need to add capacity to distribute that fuel to the marketplace now. We need to expand our reserves so we have a cushion when natural disasters occur. We need to do something about all the boutique fuels that cause unnatural shortages every spring and fall (winter blend, summer blend, smog blend, this blend, that blend impact refinery efficiency). We need to do something about credit card interchange fees. We need to do everything we can to encourage efficiency.

And, of course, we need to encourage conservation, public transportation where possible, more not less airports and routes, and alternative even renewable sources of energy.

Well, that is my 415 cents. Thank you.

ROBERT, *Twin Falls.*

I find it odd as the greatest country in the world we are lagging in becoming energy self-sufficient. France, for instance, runs and has, for many years, ran its country off nuclear power. How is it that we cannot do this? If our country was powered off of nuclear power, consider the substantial reduction in oil consumption for the east coast. They are paying to heat their houses with heating oil, more expensive than our natural gas. Drilling for more oil will help but we need a bigger and better solution. Corn is not the answer, either. As the government pushes alternative fuels (ethanol), the price of food rises. Also we do not get the power out of ethanol that we get out of traditional fuel so MPG on our cars drop. So we need more ethanol. It is a very ridiculous cycle. Nuclear, wind, hydrogen, oil—all these options need to be brought to the table now. Waiting until after the election will not work. We all know as soon as that election is over the focus will be on mid-term elections and pandering to voters. Let us get it done now. Does our government really care about our future, our children? Let us act on this now before these same promises are being made to our children's children.

UNSIGNED.

It is time that we get off our cans and get aggressive in drilling for oil on our own soil. I am tired of our country being held hostage to foreign interests and values when it comes to our own energy needs. High fuel costs have had a significant negative effect on my business and my ability to grow my business. Please do all you can to get us out of this crisis.

CRAIG, *Eagle.*

It is time to reign in the market speculation in oil and it is products. There is no shortage of gasoline or oil. There are no lines at gas stations! It is gouging, plain and simple. Stop protecting the oil companies! Windfall profits tax on all oil-related products of at least 50%. Apply the windfall tax funds to alternative energy research that have no connection to the oil industry. Make it a modern day Apollo project. Repeal oil industry tax breaks. Apply a 100% tax rate on any salary over 10 million per year.

The economy is collapsing while [the Administration does nothing]. We own a small

business; we want support for the middle class. The rich need no help; let them earn a living for a change.

MIKE, *Moscow.*

I am glad to see someone taking a stand that actually has a chance to be heard. I am glad that we are going to try and get some relief to the gas prices, but I think we should also be looking into the contributing factors that are causing such a demand for fuel.

I live in Meridian and must commute to Boise every day for my job. I confronted my employer (a local utility company) regarding other options to having to commute to Boise every day when the air quality was getting so bad like 4-day work week, telecommuting, etc. and was told it was not an option. My son is 5 years old and has asthma. Every time the air quality gets bad, so does his health. Recently, with the gigantic increase in fuel prices and the demand of fuel, I confronted my employer again about other options that could not only help with the air quality, but help contribute to decreasing the demand of fuel; again, I was again turned down. To me it seems that not only should we be going after congress to help relieve the outrageous cost of fuel, but we also need someone to tell employers to do what they can to start helping with the problem instead of contributing to it. Thank you for what you are doing and I hope a resolution is on the horizon.

NICHOLE, *Meridian.*

I received your email asking us to share our stories about high energy costs so here goes. We live 5 miles from the nearest grocery store and town. This means that every time we get in the car, the round trip is a minimum of 10 miles. If my husband and I both go into town a couple of times a day, and only go to the nearest town, we drive a minimum of 40 miles a day and that is without running errands, going to another town or anything like that. When all is said and done, it is much more like 60 miles a day. We also live in snow country and must have 4-wheel drives so get about 15 mpg which means at \$4 per gallon, we spend about \$16 just to get to town and back which is almost \$500 per month. It is insane.

What is more insane is the idea that we can explore and produce our way out of this mess. The US consumes about 26% of the world's oil but only has about 2% of the world's oil reserves. We would have to increase our reserves and production 12 fold to cover today's demand and that is never going to happen. The price of oil shot up when it became clear we were going to invade Iraq—financial markets hate uncertainty and invading another country is a big uncertainty. As the war has dragged on and as our President has talked about taking action against Iran, oil prices have soared higher. The best thing our nation could do to lower the price of oil would be to get out of a country we had no business invading in the first place and start spending more, much much more, on the plentiful wind, solar and geothermal we have been blessed with.

Americans want this, the people of Idaho want this, I only hope Senator Crapo is listening. I ask him to do the only sane thing and think outside the oil box.

LESLIE.

I live with a husband who makes his money his. When I had a job, I had an income and contributed to the groceries. It has already been hard for me because I had been on medical leave for over a year from a job I had for over six years that paid a little over \$11 an hour. During this time on medical leave, I could not draw any income because of some "catch 22" about if my doctor re-

leased me to go back to work with limitations, and my job did not allow me to come back to work, I did not apply for short-term disability or assistance is what I was told. After my leave was exhausted and my employer said they did not have a job for my physical limitations, I was let go, and had to pay more money for COBRA. Last fall I had enrolled in BSU with student loans that barely cover school fees, books, and travel expenses as it is, from Mountain Home to Boise and the Air Base. I was doing very well for the first semester, but money was very tight then. I ended up using my savings, my tax refund, and my retirement from the company that let me go, just to pay the bills. I found out that I have a rheumatoid arthritis, osteo arthritis, spondylitis, depression, I take lots of medications and I have had back surgery, neck surgery and I am in pain most of the time. I am still waiting for my disability hearing because it takes so long to get it scheduled and I am down to maxed out credit cards and \$150 dollars in the bank. My husband wants me to leave him because my medical bills are too expensive. I have two classes this second twelve weeks at the Air Base in Mountain Home that will end on June 30th. I do not know if I will continue with my BSU degree because I cannot afford to drive to Boise anymore. And if I do not get an income I may end up on the street. I cannot pay back my credit cards that I used to pay for living expenses and medical bills and prescriptions. They are maxed out. I am going to have to sell my things to get by.

To the Congressmen and Senators of this great country: Why are we so hesitant to get on the ball and do something about this crisis that filters down to more than gas? We cannot afford to live on what we have got and now we have to pay more?

While I am frustrated with my present circumstances, I know God will take care of me. What I am really worried about is this country and our leaders taking us down the path of destruction. Our country needs leaders who will demonstrate true authority, not bickering about what party did what or who is better for our country. We need to put parties aside, put aside differences, fall on our knees and ask God Almighty to forgive this country its many sins and his forgiveness and guidance.

[Please do your best to] to solve this crisis. I think we should drill for oil, build refineries, make alternatives available to the poor working public, use cooking oil instead of gasoline, use sugar cane like they do in South America, use wind power in windy places like Mountain Home, use geothermal resources, solar power, anything that is greener and healthier. [But please do it now and do not leave the rest of us for fend for ourselves in this terrible economy!] We are tired of the blame game. Someone do something and stop filibustering and stalling progress. [Such efforts stop our country from solving the problems we face.]

I know I went off on this a little long, but again, I am totally frustrated with inactivity and red tape. Thank you for all you do, but please remember the people who you work for whether they voted you in or not.

CRYSTAL, *Mountain Home.*

Something needs to be done. Prices keep going up everywhere. Not only is it affecting how much I spend in gas, but my grocery bill is outrageous now; Also, Idaho Power has just raised their rates. I have three children, which includes a baby in diapers. It is getting to the point where we can barely afford anything. It is really scary for us. We never have had much money, and one of the things I use to do with the kids was to go on "drives" just to get out of the house. We would go to Chevron and get drinks, then

drive to different areas in Boise that we had not seen before and listen to music. Now, we cannot even do that. Prices will keep going up because they can, and people like us are going to really "pay" for it in the long run. It makes me sick. It is not like we are not trying to make it in life. I am a student at Boise State and I will be a Respiratory Therapist. We are not people looking for hand-outs. We are a family not only trying to get by, but we want to live, too. We want to enjoy life also. It upsets me when even the little things that we were able to do are now a luxury. Something has got to be done. The reality is that there is really people who cannot afford the rise in prices (for gas and everything else). There has got to be some sort of stopping point. The saying, "The rich will get richer and the poor will get poorer" sounds more like the truth to me every day. Hopefully, you can represent the families and the people who are being affected by this.

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ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

CENTRAL MISSOURI EAGLES YOUTH HOCKEY ASSOCIATION

● Mr. BOND. Mr. President, today I recognize the Central Missouri Eagles Youth Hockey Association for their outstanding public service to the community. Also, the Eagles have been presented with the "Honoring the Game Award," presented annually by the Positive Coaching Alliance at Stanford University in 2006.

The "Honoring the Game Award" recognizes three youth sports programs that "strive to win, but also strive to help their players develop skills that will serve them throughout their lifetimes." The Eagles were the only Midwestern sports program and the only youth hockey program in the Nation to be honored.

The Eagles received the "Honoring the Game Award" in recognition for their service to the community. Each year Eagles teams commit to a local service project. These projects make a meaningful difference in mid-Missouri, and they teach the Eagles players valuable citizenship lessons about volunteering.

The Hockey's program's credo "Building Good Athletes and Great Citizens" rings true and is the foundation for this program's athletes who not only show good sportsmanship but are active every year in community service. The best way for our young people to ensure a stronger America is to be active in their communities.

The Central Missouri Eagles Youth Hockey Associations' achievements represent a great deal of dedication. I trust that they will continue the high standards of principle and perseverance that brought them this honor. I hope the Eagles continue to comprise success both on and off the rink. Again, I extend my congratulations to this exceptional association and the young people within it.●