

never afford to squander our Nation's most precious resource—our children.

From 1994 to 2000 I served as the State of Florida's elected treasurer and insurance commissioner. During my tenure, I oversaw the implementation of the SCHIP program, or the Healthy Kids Program, as it is known in Florida. There is no doubt in my mind that this program works. Nationwide, in 1997 23.3 percent of low-income children were uninsured. By 2006, this number had dropped to 15.4 percent.

However, much remains to be done. The rate of uninsured children in Florida is nearly 19 percent—the second worst in the country. Around 8.6 million children in America are uninsured; nearly 900,000 of these children are in Florida. One of the reasons I support this bill so strongly is that it expands coverage and offers incentives for States like Florida to find and enroll uncovered children. During difficult economic times such as these, there are more children in need of the CHIP program, not fewer.

While I am very satisfied with the progress this legislation would make in covering children, I do have concerns about its financing. I want to emphasize that increasing the tobacco tax is an appropriate funding mechanism for this legislation. It will have significant positive impacts on health, save untold millions in health care costs, and reduce the prevalence of smoking among the children whom this bill is designed to protect. However, I am concerned that the tax is applied unequally across different tobacco products.

Under the current legislation, there is a much higher tax increase for large cigars than for other tobacco products. This is no small problem for Florida—90 percent of large cigars in the U.S. are either manufactured or imported through Florida, accounting for approximately 3,000 jobs. While I remain opposed to placing an unfair tax burden on any one product, I still feel we have a strong bill on the whole, one that will improve health care dramatically for America's children.

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:

You are asking Idahoans to write about gas prices? You mean you do not know? I think Washington D.C. may as well be registered as another planet because I think your colleagues are so far from reality of the rest of the people it is absolutely outrageous.

[Some of] your colleagues [suggest that] Americans use alternative [modes] of transportation and that it is a good thing that gas prices force people to take the bus, ride bikes, or walk to their destination because it helps reduce global warming.

I have something [for you to share with your colleagues]:

I am a driver for a living. I deliver products right here in Boise. I have to drive I have no choice. I am also a salesman, and a night supervisor. I live in Idaho. I do not have the option of riding the bus. I cannot walk my deliveries or ride my bike with my products.

I find it absolutely insulting [to think this suggestion can be taken seriously. Too many liberals] love these high gas prices because they want to use it as an excuse to make us live how they want us to live to fight so-called global warming, while [they make no sacrifices in their own personal travel behaviors.] That is eco-socialism in my opinion.

Senator Crapo, I have three jobs!! Three jobs, and I am still having problems fueling up. I have had to open credit card accounts for the first time in my life, and my debt is still going up!

You would think with three jobs and three paychecks for one person! I am not married, no kids. I would be starving with fuel prices if I had a family. I am just barely paying my bills on time as they are, to about \$1,500 a month, not including gas prices!

Starting in 2005 till 2007, I did very well financially. I was saving up and putting money away in my savings account. I loved myself for putting money away. This month [June 2008], I had to take one-quarter of my life savings out of my bank to pay for bills, including gas because the price skyrocketed from \$3 to \$4 a gallon in one month. This is outrageous!

I think it is 80 percent the government's fault for this and 20 percent the oil companies. The only thing the oil companies are doing wrong is speculating the price of oil for really dumb reasons.

Congress has done this because [legislation to drill for oil in ANWR has been blocked because of environmental concerns that do not exist.] Congress is more worried about a stupid deer than they are about [the lives of Americans]? More worried about the mating season of the caribou than they are about the economy? My jobs? My gas prices? My bills? My lifestyle?

You will not allow drilling off shore? Well, did you know that China is drilling for oil off the coast of Florida? But we cannot. Why? This is outrageous!

Do not listen to those radical environmentalists. They were wrong about the second Ice Age in the 70s. When I was kid in school in the 1980s, my teachers told me by the year 1999, New York would be underwater and Los Angeles would be a bunch of Islands. It has not happened. Of course, the earth's temperature changes and jumps over time. The earth's climate changes all the time, has been since the earth cooled and formed. The

earth's temperature does not stay the same all the time. There are so many scientists and people who disagree with Al Gore, but if we disagree, we are labeled "flat-earthers" and "Holocaust Deniers."

My question for [conservatives] is this. Why did you not approve drilling for oil when you [controlled Congress and the White House]?

You want to help me? A person with three jobs and struggling with gas prices? I have not had a vacation since March of 2007. I cannot even take a one-day vacation to Jackpot anymore. I work all seven days a week, get no weekends and I still struggle to pay gas prices of about \$15 a day, not a week, a day!

Drill here, drill in ANWR, drill in America!
AARON, Boise.

Thank you, Senator, for your sincere concern for Idaho residents. I am 58 next month and on disability from a very severe fire I was trapped in several years ago. Though I do get an income, this is where it goes:

1. I receive \$625 a month.
1. \$200 a month mobile home space rent.
2. \$156 a month mortgage payments for my mobile home . . . which without the owner of the mobile home, I would not be on my way to being a first time home owner!
3. \$48 a month mobile home insurance.
4. \$40 a month vehicle insurance . . . it is a 1988 Plymouth Voyager van that I have had since 1988.
5. \$39 phone bill, which was supposed to be reduced several months ago through my social worker, and still remains at the normal price and I do not have long distance.
6. \$30-40 electricity monthly; I do not have an air conditioner for summer but do open my windows and use my ceiling fans that helps.

7. \$125 and up in winter for gas to run my heater monthly. That is after I receive fuel assistance which for some reason only lasts 1-2 months and only use the heater to warm up the area so can start my wood stove which is usually one-half hour.

So, if I am lucky, all I can afford to do is put up to \$20 a month in gas, which gives me almost 1/4 tank and that has to last the month. I have medical problems that mean many trips to the doctor and pharmacy, and with such a low amount of gas I have to depend on others for rides when I run out of gas. Thank you for your sincere concern and we are all hoping and praying that gas will once again come down to where people like me can afford to purchase more.

LORETTA, Nampa.

From your letter on gas prices that you sent me, you are starting to understand that the Congress holds most of the blame for high oil (and thus gas) prices. Congress has failed to act in the thirty years since the last gas crisis, continually failing to take responsible action to make sure domestic supplies are developed and used to reduce dependence on foreign oil.

It should be clear that the single most deleterious action of Congress over the last forty years was the Environmental Protection Act. It has desperately needed revision since the early seventies and because it was not, the economic impact on America has been extreme. The inability to build domestic gas refineries, increase domestic oil production and take advantage of resources in ANWR are only a few of the unintended and disastrous impacts of that act. An environmentalist has only to write a single letter to cause the price of any such proposal to escalate exponentially. The latest case of the proposed nuclear reactor in Idaho is an example. One man writing one letter can cause the waste of hundreds of thousands of dollars to "prove" the lack of environmental

impacts of such a proposal. The price of a house in Idaho has risen by 10–15 percent, for instance, because of the ludicrous and technically flawed environmental studies and reactions on the spotted owl.

Still, no action in Congress to alleviate the situation. We simply need someone to stand up and take the actions necessary to replace political correctness with what used to be common sense.

So the bottom line, Senator, is that Congress bears the responsibility to stop passing stupid laws and start reigning in those that are hurting the nation's ability to do the right things rather than the politically correct things. Do you have the courage to start?

ROBERT, *Meridian*.

You asked what the high gas prices are doing to me. It has become very difficult to even do normal things. I cannot afford to go up town and buy necessary things. Since I am on Social Security Disability, my sister and I have been living off my money. Since my sister does not have a car and I cannot afford to buy one for her, nor could I afford the gas. She would love to go to work. How would she get there? Idaho, and particularly this area has a really horrible public transportation system. It truly is a disgrace to our state. My sister walks as much as possible. Our nation needs to stop depending on foreign oil. I love all the animals and have tried to protect them as much as possible, but we need to start taking care of our families first.

The oil companies are making over the profit margin; that is disgusting by itself. I do not trust one thing they say or do. Therefore, we need to have alternative fuel. The wind can run electricity. The air can fuel a car, water can do both, after seeing the pictures of a car that runs on air. America, the greatest country in the world needs to step up to the plate. Oil companies need to step up to the plate before they become the dinosaurs. Therefore, we need to drill. Do it. Many families like mine are being devastated by the high gasoline prices which makes high food prices we cannot afford. Thank you for your time

MARIAN, *Nampa*.

This is in response to a solicitation from Senator Crapo regarding personal stories on how high energy prices are affecting lives. Greed is the source of most of the world's evil. I know I sound like an ideologue, but please read on.

It is hard to disaggregate the effects of the high cost of energy from other economic hits our family is experiencing. When construction activity slowed in Valley and Adams County, wage earning families left our valleys looking for jobs elsewhere.

The resulting reduced school enrollment (now compounded by the end of Craig-Wyden) in our districts led me to being one of the teachers RIF'd from the Council School District. Fortunately, I found work part-time in the McCall School District. Unfortunately, this 70-mile, round-trip commute (in my 2000 140,000+ mile Dodge AWD Caravan—needed for unpredictable roads) costs me \$9.00–\$12.00 a trip! I would like to buy a more fuel efficient Subaru—but I cannot afford to.)

My school-age children suffer because programs are being severely reduced—shop and art are gone. Some high school courses will only be offered every other year. Summer school for poor learners is truncated. Field trips? Sports? Both are severely reduced. How can our small-town children go out and experience the world when there is not even money for gas?

As consumers, our family lives so far from "the source" that not only gas, but also milk

and other basic commodities seem to cost at least 25 percent more than they did a year ago. Last year I was able to find milk for \$2.29 gallon; now milk costs close to \$4.00/gallon. Healthy bread costs close to \$4.00/loaf. As a family, we certainly have not received a COLA to offset these price increases.

As middle-class professionals (my husband is a forester) and as parents, the drain on our budget means belt-tightening for any of "fun things" like vacation trips. Additionally, we have experienced a health crisis (and have met our catastrophic limits). I now must commute to Fruitland (140 miles round trip) every 2 weeks for chemo; in the fall I will need to commute 5 days a week for radiation for 6 weeks! (My doctor cavalierly denied me two prescriptions for drugs since they are also available OTC. "They only cost a few dollars." He casually shrugged off my request for RXs. Well, the two drugs cost more than \$30 altogether. I do not think that the upper-middle-class and upper-class have a clue that there is an exponential difference between a few bucks (a latte) and \$30 (a chance to visit a museum or movie, or half-way fill up a gas tank to make it to a chemo session!)

I believe that our tax system rewards the rich on the backs of the poor and middle class. I believe that oil companies and owners of stocks are making fortunes as the little guy suffers.

I believe we should take global warning seriously and allow tax credits for the development of alternative energy. We need to take recycling very seriously. We also need to be a world economic partner on a fair playing field (Kyoto convention), quit out-sourcing to countries that do not provide the labor protections we do to our workers, and build respectful relationships among all peoples and all cultures—as a first step to world peace and understanding and a step away from the ugliness of war.

I also believe that limiting population growth and sharing the world's resource's equably is the only way we will ever establish peace on earth.

Locally, for our family, what have been the effects of high energy costs? Higher food and medical costs, loss of job, reduced school programs for my children, dwindled savings, "making do" with older cars and housing needs, fewer amenities, no vacation.

Glad you asked.

LYNN, *Fruitvale*.

I read your letter sent out today. Glad to hear that at least one of our Senators in Washington gets it. I hope there are more of you in DC that can support the policies you want to support in your letter.

We do need to start drilling again in the US and offshore. We need to make sure that we take precautions to avoid damage to the environment. We cannot sacrifice one for the other. But we must start drilling again, and do so in a respective manner of Mother Nature.

And we are going to need some new refining capability. Again, do it new technology and with respect to our environment. Build it in Eastern Idaho—we have the space and we could use the jobs and economic boost. Tough to get oil here, but if they need a place for it, bring it here.

We must start the nuclear programs again. We need to build some new reactors soon. I do not know for sure, but I am betting some of our older reactors are getting long in the tooth, and if they go off the grid, then what happens? Besides we need more power and money spent to renew our grid system.

We need to take a serious look at Ethanol. I am not sure it is all it is being promoted to be. I am not sure the benefits outweigh all of the costs. With the flooding in the Midwest,

I wonder what the cost of corn will be now? But it is not just food issues, but the processing issues as well.

Wind Power should be promoted as well. But a Nuclear Power Plant is much easier on the eyes than 1000 wind towers, and not as susceptible to the changes in the wind.

Coal alternatives should be looked at as well. We need to check if the benefits we can gain from technology like coal gasification are valid and have low impact. Some of the claims you hear and read about look promising. But as I am learning with Ethanol, there may be some significant costs to chase this type of technology.

But the short of it—we need to develop our energy and become more independent. The amount of jobs created would be incredible in the process. You want a better health care system and less unemployment and less government care programs—just set the energy companies loose and see this economy rebound in a heartbeat. These energy companies can afford health care plans and benefits for their workers. Our current policies are killing us—and I really hope there are enough in Congress to turn this around. We have been shooting ourselves in the foot for more than 20 years.

Good Luck.

STEPHEN, *Rigby*.

Thank you for inviting me to share how the increased gas prices has affected my daily life. I have begun carpooling and eliminating unnecessary trips, and have really saved a lot of money, not to mention reducing the pollution my daily commute had been producing. Though it has not always been convenient, I look at it as one small step that I can do to help our world for future generations. You opposed the proposed climate change legislation that would further hike gas prices up, though I called and wrote your office to ask you to support it. I feel that the higher the gas prices are, the more people will look to limit extraneous trips which will help reduce emissions (greenhouse gases). I also think that the more you reduce the prices on gas, people will use more gas and will choose not to conserve.

Measures I want you to support would be to develop a larger, stronger infrastructure of public transportation so that people do not have to worry about getting to work the traditional way of driving singly in their own vehicle. We should encourage production and development of non-fossil fuels, such as cellulosic ethanol, which does not take from the food supply, but does give work to both the scientific developers as well as the laborers necessary to move this idea to fruition. Also, you should support solar, geothermal, and wind production. If measures could be discovered that would allow for the long-term safe storage of nuclear waste, as well as safe practices of running plants on a daily basis, no matter the weather conditions (i.e., drought), keeping in mind the larger picture of our environment, including fish and other natural resources, I would be supportive of that method as well. I know these newer methods are not as easy or convenient as just simply reducing gas prices, but your legacy for truly caring about the environment would be something that would be worth the extra work.

Thank you for reading this, even though it probably goes against what you are looking for.

SUSAN, *Boise*.