

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:

Even before the almost (daily) increase in a gallon of gas, I tried to drive as little as possible and carpool when possible. And, when driving, to bunch errand together in the same area of the city, so as to use less gasoline.

It is summer, now, and I try to use my car just once a week, for church on Sunday (buses do not run on Sunday, bike helmet causes helmet hair-do, which is not cool for church).

When I do purchase gas, it shocks me how much I pay. I did not budget for \$4+/gallon gas. I worry that the effect of escalating petroleum prices on all sectors of our commerce and so, my life (along with the incredible rise in health care costs), may severely compromise my carefully-planned retirement budget. Some days I wonder what will become of me.

However, I keep on trying to live lightly, use Boise's bare-bones bus system, and ride my bike whenever and wherever I can. I know I do not look chic with my old-lady Schwinn with side baskets, but at my age, I try not to be too vain.

I have more time than employed people to use the bus and ride my bike to the grocery, appointments, and other places. Unfortunately, I also have osteoarthritis, so riding my bike or walking any distance from the bus stops has become more difficult.

Nonetheless, I try to do my part to stay green and influence others to do the same. I am a little old lady who conserves water in my landscape and in my house (e.g., bucket of water in the shower to catch the cold water while waiting for the shower to heat up, buying/installing water saving fixtures and appliances), recycles and pulls recyclables out of others' trash cans, has implemented several recycling programs, has a mostly xeric landscape, eschews plastic water bottles and paper cups, and is pure in heart.

I wish I had more answers on what will become of all of us. On dark days, I think our civilization is going to implode because we do not seem to be able to get smart enough fast enough to save ourselves. We knew—as individuals, as a government, as a society—that we would run out of fossil fuels and

would need alternative energy sources. They are at least 20 years out from being viable.

I pray that God will let me die before the last catastrophic days of all our lives. Thank you for a chance to tell my story and express my opinion.

FRANCES, Boise.

It saddens me greatly that we Idahoans, along with all Americans are suffering like we are at the hands of big government and environmentalists. It is clear and has been for years that we can and should be accessing our own resources in the United States. We should not be dependent on other countries for our oil. It is simple really. No matter how long it takes it needs to be done and we should not put it off another minute. I fear greatly that our next president (the one most likely to be elected) will overlook this issue and it will rapidly get worse.

The general public, average hard working Americans are struggling. If one does not make \$100,000 a year, it is getting impossible to live. I look at my own situation (which is not good) and then wonder how those less fortunate are even surviving?

My husband is a small partner on a dairy. I lost my job in November of last year due to an office closure and I am now working from home. Yet, there is hardly any work. As a travel agent, money only comes in when people travel. And that is not happening much anymore. We have never had much left over after bills were paid; however a year ago if my kids needed socks, I could at least buy a package. This year, I have to use one credit . . . card to pay another just to keep afloat. In fact, I have to put my groceries on credit which is pretty much run out. Do you not find that sad? I fear greatly what is ahead. Should not people who have good jobs like us be able to live without worrying about food or socks? We are \$500 away from bankruptcy.

And the stimulus package? Really, what kind of joke was that? First of all, we were lied to about when we would receive it direct deposited, so a good chunk of it went to NSF fees. Then the rest went to barely put a dent in catching up bills. Save it? Whose idea (dream) was that? I do not know a person who saved it.

I am behind in my car payments which I guess if I lose my car, I will not need to worry much about gas now, will I? I am sick, insecure, and sad about what I know is coming. We Americans cannot hold on much longer. Why is not someone doing anything about this? Maybe because most government officials make enough money to live comfortably right? I bet you can afford socks right? I bet you can buy food for your family without maxing a credit card to do so. Why cannot I?

Please . . . help us . . . and soon.

MICHELLE.

I want to thank you for taking the time to read this e-mail and for contacting us about how energy prices are having an impact on us.

My wife and I are both college graduates; she is a teacher and I am a chiropractor at Saint Alphonsus Hospital. We have sky-high student loans we pay on and as such watch our budget close. The rise in gas as well as the result in increased prices in food has caused us to ride our bikes to work; we live almost in Eagle and I ride the Greenbelt all the way into downtown Boise to try and save money. We have also planted a garden in hopes that it will save us some money at the store.

Our overall shopping is down, we do not buy clothing, or "extras" anymore and we just buy what we need and then save up for fun items once in a while. Our shopping has turned from new items to more and more

used or discount so I know that if others are feeling this way too the major retail stores will be suffering a major blow, no wonder why the economy is slow? We love to travel, but we do not as much now due to the cost of gas, food and airline tickets. In short, our way of life is being crippled and will continue to be so till we wake up and start using our own natural resources.

BRIAN and AMY, Boise.

I have watched to rising cost of fuel affect everyone I know here in the Treasure Valley. My parents own a small trucking company in Emmett, and employed two other drivers. When the price of diesel fuel hit over \$3.50 a gallon, my stepfather had to lay off the other two drivers just to keep him in business. Now the price of diesel is over \$4.80 a gallon, and my stepfather is going to have to go out of business. My parents are too young to retire, but too old to get into any other line of work. What are they going to do to survive? Could you ask your other Senators that please? I have a friend who lives in Emmett, but works in Nampa at Buy MPC loyally for the past 12 years. He bought a house in Emmett at this time, and was living the American dream. Today he is starting to consider letting his home go into foreclosure. This is because he cannot afford the gasoline to drive his car to work and back, and he is thinking of renting an apartment in Nampa to be closer to work. He does not drive some gas-guzzling SUV, but a fuel-efficient compact, and his fuel expense is still more than he can afford. Many of my friends are in a very similar situation. Are the CEOs of the oil companies going to come in and fix things so my parents and friends get to keep their jobs and their homes? Could you ask them that for me? I wonder how many CEOs of oil companies, and the big city politicians, would be willing to come out here to Idaho and work for \$11.00 an hour and make the commute from Emmett to Boise five days a week? Maybe they should, so that way they know pain many hard working Idahoan's are going through right now.

I have some ideas for you and other Senators to think about. Do any of you watch the Discovery Channel? I have seen many solutions to our energy needs on this channel. In Europe they are testing a Hydrogen Fusion Reactor. This thing is environmentally safe, produces no waste, and cannot melt down. It also produces a lot more power than the old nuclear reactors that we have now. Why not look at doing this later on down the road, instead of going nuclear? During the last energy crisis of the latter 70s and early 80s, my grandfather showed me a solution. He ran his 1960s Farmal tractor on alcohol, and all he had to do was make a minor adjustment to the carburetor. He did the same thing with his 65 Ford pick-up. If this worked so well with 1960s technology, why would not it work with all the technology that has come after it? I turn on the news, and all I hear politicians and CEOs saying how we either cannot do these things, or it would be more expensive if we did these things. Yet, I know from personal knowledge, and from what I see and hear on the Discovery Channels, that this just is not the truth. Maybe the time has come for Idaho to stop waiting on the federal government to do something and take the bull by the horns. Why cannot Idaho fix Idaho's energy needs? Thank you for your time in reading this, and thank you for asking for these stories.

AARON.

My husband and three children live in Nampa. We both work in Boise. It is a 25-mile commute one way every day in the morning five days a week for my husband and three times a week for me. Going to the

gas pump so often does not make one happy. I cannot believe the lack of common sense our government officials have concerning most issues but right now but this is the issue affecting my family the most.

We try to live our lives in a way that is self-sufficient, trying to lower our debt, trying to not buy on credit, growing a big garden, canning food, storing water and a supply of food for the family and living within our means. We live in a 67-year-old farmhouse because that was all we could afford. It is beat up and needs to be torn down but this is our home so this is the way we live. My husband does not make a lot of money. I only can work in the evenings when he is home for the children because we do not want someone else raising our children who do not care for them in the least. I stopped working full-time five years ago to stay home full-time with the children. We lost our health benefits then and have been without since then. With a daughter who has pretty serious asthma and allergies with her medications every month costing about \$300 to me needing a \$40,000 surgery to reconstruct my knee so the intense pain I live with everyday recedes, any jump in our tight budget puts a strain on us.

Where do the extra fuel costs come from in my budget? It comes out of the money we buy food with. I cut down on fresh fruits and vegetables. I cut down on cuts of meat. I cut down on dairy products. We live very meagerly. Not in the world's standards mind you, I have lived in a third world country for about 14 months. I know what poor is. The standards we are talking about are our American society.

Our government does not live within its means; it spends to oblivion. They borrow money like it is monopoly money. They are in our lives too much and should not be. Then the answer they come up with for becoming self-reliant with our oil demands and our energy consumption is: "cut down on your driving, buy a more fuel efficient car. Do not build any more refineries, do not drill our own oil, do not build nuclear, do not convert coal to oil, do not convert shale to oil and for sure do not drill in ANWR or off our own coasts. Let us lease 100-year leases to China and India and let them take our oil. They will do it right for sure. They are so honest with us and keep us in their minds to try to help us for sure." What is wrong with all of our government officials?

My family lived in Anchorage, Alaska, for the previous eight years before moving to Nampa. We have been debating this ANWR thing since before I can remember. What will it take to knock some common sense into these elected officials? I am tired of them acting like they know what is best for us. I am tired of the environmentalists ruling the world. I am tired of these elected officials playing politics when I am suffering with my family in what I can buy for their dinner.

Do they worry about not having the right amount of vegetables and fruits for their children so they can grow and be well? No, they do not. I do. And then they vote on issues that like carbon taxes and credits. What the heck is that all about? I am so tired of this. If I could have them in a room for five minutes, I would let them know how I feel. Get your stinking head out of Washington, DC and listen to the people who elected you. Stop taking American's independence and trampling it under your feet. I am more angry than you know.

Build refineries, build coal plants, drill for oil wherever we can. Get the Chinese and India off our coasts and let us drill. Build nuclear power plants, get the coal and shale and convert it. Stop importing oil from terrorists that control our economy when they want to. Let the Americans be great again.

Stop listening to the environmentalists and listen to us. My family suffers because you cannot do the right thing. Beware of continuing in your ways. Some of us have you in our sights and can vote differently. I cannot take this stupidity much longer. I wish you would all just stop fighting, go to your rooms on time out and then think about what you are doing wrong. That is the mother in me. Do the right thing. There, I think that is it for now.

JODI and AARON, *Nampa*.

We are writing in response to your letter asking for Idahoans to tell their story about how high fuel prices are affecting them. First I want to say that my family has been expecting this for some time now. We have known that cheap oil is a dream funded by government subsidies working with the big oil companies.

Oil is not an infinite resource. The U.S. peaked in oil production in the 70s and we believe that the world supply has peaked already and we are now facing the fact that supply cannot keep up with demand. We have actually four things which are coming to a head at this moment in time;

1. Peak Oil
2. Peak Food
3. Climate Change
4. Economic downturn/recession

Number 2 through 4 are all due to number 1—peak oil. The world is also experiencing a population problem which has come about from cheap oil resulting in cheap food. It seems like many are in denial about what is happening—and the longer we are in denial, the harder things are going to be.

We have bought a car which gets 45–50 mpg. We are conscious of when we drive, combining our errands etc. We are growing much of our own food and are sourcing and eating local food as much as possible. We are very involved with the "Local" movement as we believe that this is the one thing that is going to save us from a meltdown. We want small government as we do not believe that BIG government is in the people's best interest. The only thing that really seems to matter with BIG government is the bottom line of the corporations and the lobbyists.

People want change. They want better leadership and leaders with common sense. If we all have to forgo our SUV's and the "old American lifestyle" then so be it. We do not see much choice in the matter. We all need to conserve energy and create ways to have renewable energy. This planet cannot handle growth unchecked—which has been the premise up til now. It is going to be painful, but in the long run it is going to be better.

JAMES and LESLEE, *Buhl*.

We think we are lucky to be living in Idaho, as the people who live here are resourceful and strong.

JAMES.

The high gas prices are killing me when I buy gas. I own a rather old American car. It is a 1998 Pontiac Grand Am with a 3.1 liter V6. It is well cared for and gets pretty good gas mileage. 27 mpg around town and 30 mpg on the interstate. With 167,000 miles on the odometer I want to buy a new car but with gas prices around \$4 a gallon I hesitate. I want to buy an American car that can use ethanol. General Motors is in the news joining with the Ethanol maker from the 60 Minutes TV show to make Ethanol at \$1.00 a gallon from old tires, wood chips and garbage. I went to GM dealers and none make or sell flex fuel cars that can be bought in Brazil. My car runs good because I care for it so I guess I will need to wait a few more years to buy myself a new flex fuel car that can run on either gasoline or ethanol.

I try everything to save gas. My tires are well-inflated and the engine is tuned. I use a Chase Bank credit card that pays me 5% back on gasoline purchases. But the price of gas is still killing me.

In the short term, I believe that we in the U.S. need to pass laws to permit drilling for oil off the coast and also process oil shale into gasoline. We need to do something now or our country will come to a sudden stop.

DAN.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO DEBRA CLOW

• Mr. JOHNSON. Mr. President, I wish today to recognize the work and career of Debra K. Clow of Sioux Falls, SD. Later this month, Debra will be retiring after nearly 37 years of Federal service in the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Debra grew up in Yankton, SD. She attended the University of South Dakota at Springfield and started her career with the ROTC at USD in August 1972. She began her career with the VA as a fee base clerk in January 1974 and over the years worked impressively in various capacities, including development clerk, claims examiner, authorizer, training and quality coordinator, and coach. In recent years, she also advised and updated South Dakota congressional staffs with the detailed status of cases involving numerous veterans.

While working at the VA Regional Office in Sioux Falls, Debra served as the women's veterans coordinator. She served as coordinator from 1990 to 2008, witnessing the evolving scope of care and attention to the unique issues affecting women veterans. She has also attended numerous VA outreach events to explain VA benefits to veterans and their dependents.

I want to commend Debra for her many years of service to this Nation's veterans and their families. Her honorable service has been marked by a true sense of dedication and commitment to the men and women who have served our Nation in the Armed Forces. Countless veterans have benefitted from her dedicated work, much of which was done behind the scenes but always with the best interests of the veterans in mind. I applaud her great service, and I am sure that she is retiring from the Department of Veterans Affairs with many rewarding experiences and memories.

I wish Debra and her husband, Jeff, all the best in retirement. As a life member of the Izaak Walton League of America, a 25-year member of the American Business Women's Association, and an avid gardener and dog lover, I am sure there are many endeavors awaiting her attention and effort. Again, I wish to recognize and commend Debra for her great service to our Nation. •

TRIBUTE TO NOLAN B. GIERE

• Mr. TESTER. Mr. President, I know my colleagues and the American people