

Residents pinched in the

Congressman: Keystone Pipeline would lower retail gasoline prices

wallet by 'pain at the pump'

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VERNON RECORD

Local residents are feeling the effects of "pain at the pump" as gasoline prices continue skyrocketing as has been the case since the start of the year, and are expected to meet or even exceed the previous record price of over \$4 per gallon reached in 2008.

Gasoline prices at most Vernon stations as of Thursday morning were set at \$3.69 per gallon for regular fuel, with most stations selling premium gasoline and diesel fuel for around \$4 per gallon and up.

"It hurts the pocketbook. I'm a retired teacher on a fixed income," said Donna Querner. "I can't go on as many trips as I would like to."

A former Vernon resident visiting the family in the city stated that gasoline prices in Vernon were much higher than in the city where she resides, Clovis, N.M., when she left

there a few days ago.

"Gasoline was \$3.44 a gallon when I left home," said Donna Miller. "But when I got to Vernon it was \$3.69 per gallon. I think this is the reason our economy is in such bad shape."

Chris Morton, who often travels to Oklahoma as part of his occupation, stated that he was definitely feeling the "pain at the pump" in his wallet.

"It's tough on everybody," he said. "I have to travel 1,000 miles a week."

Another resident reported he has to "grim and bear it" as far as the high fuel prices are concerned.

"Nothing I can do about it, but just by the gas (at the higher prices)," said F.A. Newman.

A local station owner, Wes Dudley of All Star Fuel at Expressway 287 and Main, stated that he is also feeling the effects of high gasoline prices.

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Gas

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He said that regular gasoline sold at his station for \$3 per gallon Jan. 1 and has increased some 66 cents per gallon since that time.

"And it went up another two cents in just one day," he said. "And I don't know what gasoline prices will be tomorrow."

Dudley stated that despite the higher prices for gasoline, he only makes a profit of 11 cents per gallon sold with 2.6 cents of each gallon sold going toward payment of credit card fees. He stated that higher prices have also adversely affected his gasoline sales, which are down 15 to 20 percent per month.

"I'm not making much of a profit," he said.

Dudley said gasoline prices locally will hit the \$4 per gallon mark for regular in the near future. He stated that during the big price spike of 2008 when gas prices surpassed that mark nationally, his highest price for regular gas fell just below that mark at \$3.99 per gallon.

U.S. Rep. Mac Thornberry, R-Clarendon was in Vernon Tuesday to speak to the Rotary Club during a noon meeting. He stated in an interview that followed the meeting that approval of the controversial Keystone Pipeline from Canada is one of many solutions to help bring down gasoline prices and reduce U.S. dependence on foreign oil, to bring relief to Americans feeling "pain at the pump" as recent gasoline price spikes has spiraled the price of fuel closer and closer to the \$4 per gallon mark last reached in 2008.

Thornberry stated that the Republican-controlled House of Representatives is looking for ways to get construction of the pipeline from Canada to Texas approved against the objections of the Obama Administration and the Democratic-controlled Senate.

recent claims by President Obama that domestic oil production has actually increased even as crude oil has surpassed the \$100 per barrel mark and national gasoline prices have dramatically increased since the first of the year from around \$3 per gallon to the current national average of \$3.80 per gallon.

"Oil production from federal lands has gone down, because Obama has put more of those lands off limits," he said. "The increase is production from private lands."

Thornberry confirmed that gasoline prices in the Washington, D.C. area have already surpassed the \$4 per gallon mark and some areas of the nation could see \$5 per gallon by summer.

"Gas prices will be a bigger and bigger issue as the year goes on," he said. "Depending on the situation in Iran, gas and oil prices could go up a lot."

Factors currently driving triple-digit crude oil and \$3.80 per-gallon gasoline prices include Iran using oil as a weapon against certain European nations in retaliation for sanctions against Iran over development of nuclear weapons, and further threat by Iran to block traffic through the Strait of Hormuz, which transports a significant amount of crude oil produced in the Middle East. Also driving up prices are increased demand for gasoline in developing nations including China and India, in spite of decreased demand in the United States.

"We've got to have more energy from North America so we can have less volatility of foreign oil and more price stability. "If we don't get it approved, Canada could sell the oil to China."

Thornberry countered

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Thornberry also cited other government regulations that prevent more drilling of oil as a major factor in high gasoline and oil prices. He also stated that increases in production of current energy sources such as oil and natural gas would go a long way toward reducing foreign oil dependence and price stability, in addition to the current administration's emphasis on alternative energy sources such as wind power.

"I'm for taking the shackles off so we can produce more of our own energy including wind and other alternatives," he said. "But more of all types of energy sources are needed."

Thornberry said that if Obama were to change his mind about his opposition to the Keystone Pipeline and open up more federal lands to oil drilling, oil prices would go down.

"If you take action to build Keystone and open up those lands, gasoline and oil prices would go down through market reaction," he said. "If nothing is done, gasoline could cost as much in the United States as it does in Europe and we could have some energy shortages."