

seek employment closer to home at a significantly lower wage just to continue to go into debt. Being unable to keep up with the higher energy costs not associated with travel such as for cooking, heating and cooling a house as well as the maintenance for the residence. I know I am speaking for many low to middle income families when I implore the political representatives of the citizens of this state to help find a solution. This is such a rural state that public transportation is not justifiable and impractical. Please help.

MYRNA.

SENATOR CRAPO: While I can fully appreciate your efforts in trying to keep energy prices down, it is a bit late as the damage has already been done. I have run a small business in Idaho for 25 years. Currently I have 8 employees and I live in constant fear that I will be put out of business. Why? Because EVERY YEAR, we have yet another out-of-control economic crisis in this country.

Now we have 4+ dollar per gallon gasoline. As you know, Idaho has one of the lowest per capita incomes in the U.S. (ranked 41st), yet the cost of living has skyrocketed in the metropolitan areas over the last 10 years. Because of this, and also from increased pressure from the Internet and chain stores, I have had to downsize my operation from a high of 35 employees to what I have now. With the additional increased pressures now in place due to gasoline prices, I expect our sales to decline even further. To be perfectly honest, I cannot survive yet another business downturn and will simply have to go under, putting myself and 7 other people out on the streets. I talk to many other small business owners who are feeling the pinch as well.

If you examine what has happened in this country, we keep talking about 3 major issues but no significant proactive steps have been taken:

First, reducing our dependence on foreign oil by increasing domestic production. This has been debated for 30 years but essentially nothing has been done about it. It would have been a relatively simple matter to open up domestic exploration but Congress will have nothing of it because of lobbyists and environmentalists.

Second, alternative energy. Again this has been talked about for 3 decades but relatively little has been done. The U.S., which should be at the forefront in this area, has lagged far behind much smaller countries such as Spain, France, and the Netherlands.

Third, more fuel efficient transportation. The technology exists TODAY to almost DOUBLE gas mileage in vehicles, but our government can't even get the car manufacturers to comply with federal fuel consumption guidelines which are a pittance. There has not been a significant breakthrough in vehicle gas mileage from the major U.S. carmakers for over 10 years. This is not only inexcusable, it is a major factor in the reason that GM and Ford have fallen on hard times the last several years.

In addition to all of this, we have been embroiled in overseas conflicts in both Iraq and Kuwait, two of the most oil-rich countries on earth, but we have not held them accountable in any way for our help. The costs of our aiding just those two countries, by the time we eventually get out of Iraq, will easily exceed one trillion U.S. taxpayer dollars, not to mention ongoing costs associated with taking care of returning veterans. For this obscene amount of money we will receive nothing in return because we have failed to negotiate oil treaties at the outset. We could have better spent this money on energy research and production here at home.

There is a time for talking and a time for action. We need action NOW to help solve these issues.

Regards,

BOB, Boise.

I am a single mother of three children. Two are disabled. I live in Wilder Idaho and commute to Nampa. The round trip is about 50 miles. I also have to take my children, especially the two disabled ones, to doctor's appointments quite often.

We are now nearly destitute due in part to the cost of commuting. I have been living on credit cards part of the time. I do not know what I'll do about the cost of gas except look into a hydrogen unit for my vehicle. That seems to be the only solution on the horizon as I cannot afford to get another vehicle. Any other ideas?

UNSIGNED.

MIKE: As American citizens we are sick and tired of Congress doing nothing to remove our dependency on foreign oil. We are no longer able to travel, except in emergencies to visit family. Almost everything we consume has gone up in price, from shipping goods and services to products made from oil. We either need to get current members of Congress out of office or demand you hold a special session to do the following:

1. Remove legislation that limits drilling offshore and in Alaska to help increase supply (Drill Now, Drill Everywhere, Save America).

2. Remove all the red tape with opening and producing more nuclear energy power plants.

3. Continue research on alternative fuels that do not deplete our food supply.

4. Take advantage of wind, solar, and hydro power and provide reasonable tax incentives for use of these energy sources.

Please pass this on to all our elected representatives and continue to push Congress to do what we elected them for, putting in place sound legislation that will move this country forward, not backward. We have waited too long, now we must react rather than act. I am counting on you Mike to make this happen, leave a legacy Idaho can be proud of.

M., Rexburg.

DEAR SENATOR CRAPO: This is not what you asked for, but I felt obliged to note that the energy price problem will solve itself through economics. As oil gets more expensive, alternative energies become relatively cheap. Thus, economics will drive up the development of those energies. Unfortunately, one of those alternate energies is food. What this means is that as oil gets more expensive, food will get more expensive, because more food will go toward powering cars (e.g. ethanol). To prevent this from happening, I believe that the federal government must assist in the development of nuclear power.

There is only one source of energy in the universe, and that is nuclear power. All other forms of energy derive from nuclear power. Wind, solar, biomass, oil all of these previously came or are now coming from a very large nuclear power plant in the sky called the sun. Fortunately, most of the detrimental radiation we receive from that nuclear power plant can be safely avoided with sunscreen. Jokes aside, this is an important fact to publicly recognize. Nuclear power is, in fact, our only source of power. We can either try to capture the nuclear power coming from the sun, or we can make it ourselves here on earth. While both are viable avenues, the former will lead to higher food prices because fields of wheat and corn are essentially huge solar power panels that can be used to propel rich people's jets instead of

feeding poor people, and economics will make that happen. I've been told that it takes enough corn to feed a person for a year to fill an SUV gas tank once. Think carefully about what that means. To be feasible and safe, nuclear power will require federal government intervention, but it can be done and will result in a cheap, very long term source of power for the United States.

Nuclear power is the cleanest, cheapest long term solution answer to America's power problems.

MIKE: As financially devastating as gas prices have been to our family budget over the past several years, I can not understand how anyone can determine it is a problem that stands by itself. There are several devastating intimately related issues that if our elected officials insist on continuing their tunnel vision over them, we will never have a meaningful solution. When will it be recognized that burning fossil fuels no matter what their source is or how much it costs to get them to the pump, the Earth is also degrading from their use every day with every gallon we consume. So the real question is, why are we still subsidizing oil production when we need to be gearing up our industrial infrastructure and workers to expand our fuel resources to solar, wind, industrial hemp oil and all the related necessities which would be so constructive, effective and economically advantageous, not to mention how remedial to our environment these most rational efforts would be.

What the hell are you waiting for? Why are you so focused on what gas costs? Do you have any idea what it is going to cost to live anything like a human being after all the oil in the world is burned and we need to live in biospheres in order to breathe—and if we go at this your way, we will still need to develop alternative resources when all the oil is gone—if we can still live on the Earth. Wake up! These problems are not just your problem to solve; this problem belongs to us all and would not be too big for all of us to solve collectively—stop trying to commandeer the solutions—start helping us to solve them meaningfully, constructively and effectively. All you have to do is facilitate the people getting together to organize their solutions into rational plans. Selling your power to solve these problems to the highest bidding lobbyist is NOT the right thing for you to do. There is help available when you come around to doing the right thing. I will be able to help a lot.

Sincerely,

DM.

Thanks for a chance to respond. We do not go to the gym every day because it is across town. Our air conditioner is set at 78 degrees, and even though we're hot and uncomfortable, we do not want the bill that turning it down will bring. We have doubled up our reunion with vacation, so we only have to "head out" as a family once this summer.

F.

DEAR SENATOR CRAPO: I am a retired USDA Forest Service employee, my career covered 40 years with assignments in Idaho, Oregon, Wyoming, California, New Mexico, and Nevada. I read your newsletter and request for comments regarding the serious effects of run-away energy prices. I do not want to focus on the effects, but would rather emphasize my support for using energy supplies and other natural resources within our own national borders to help reduce the cost and our dependency on Arab oil and other foreign natural resources.

My career with the Forest Service included the Arab Embargo on petroleum products in