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Real energy solutions needed

By U.S. Rep. Mary Fallin



The Democrat leadership in Congress has proposed a number of tragically misguided ways to address rising energy prices. To fully understand how flawed these proposals are, consider the parable of the town that ran out of bread.

Bread was in short supply and reached \$3 a loaf, so the angry town elders convened to find a scapegoat.

"It's the baker!" they cried. "He's making too much money. Let's tax him!" So they imposed a Windfall Bread Tax, and the baker had to cancel plans to hire an assistant who would have increased production.

Since taxing something yields less of that something, bread soon reached \$4 a loaf. There were lines at the bakery each morning and some customers went home hungry.

"Listen," the baker told the irate elders. "There are 900 acres of prime wheat in that field just east of town. I'll harvest it and make more bread."

"No way!" shouted the elders. "There's a groundhog that lives in that field. You might disturb it!"

So the wheat rotted in the field, the lines grew longer and bread reached \$5 a loaf.

"I'll invest my own money in a new, more efficient oven," the baker suggested. "It will bake more bread."

"Sorry," said the elders, "that would violate our zoning laws. Make do with your old oven."

The elders' bad policies prevented the baker from making more bread. As a result, the people continued to suffer under increasingly high bread prices and eventually they ran out of bread entirely.

America's energy problems are like those of the town with no bread.

Limited supply and an ever-increasing global demand are driving energy prices up. Rather than increase domestic supply of oil and natural gas by drilling on federal lands in Alaska, the Outer Continental Shelf and Western states with oil shale, we have declared that energy "off limits."

We haven't built a new oil refinery since 1976, partly because of the maze of environmental regulations and red tape erected by government.

Now liberal Democrats want a new windfall profits tax on oil. Remember the last time we tried that, in 1980? We got little tax revenue and increased our reliance on OPEC and foreign oil.

Liberals refuse to admit the basic laws of economics apply to bread — and to oil. Prices go up when supply is short and demand rises. More taxes mean fewer goods. Limiting access to raw materials and the means of production depresses supply and raises prices even higher. The result is catastrophe, with blame placed everywhere but where it belongs — on the architects of those flawed policies.

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The energy plans proposed by the Democrat leadership would transform the parable of the town with no bread into an all-too-real energy crisis of frightening proportions. We can avert this crisis by abandoning the failed policies of the past and embracing real energy solutions that produce real American energy.

Fallin, R-Oklahoma City, represents Oklahoma's 5th District.

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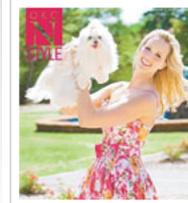
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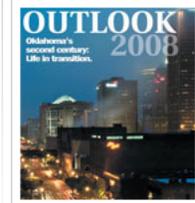
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