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BACHMANN: For shale now

End dependence on OPEC

Michele Bachmann
Friday, June 27, 2008

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Op-Ed:

In just one year, Americans have seen gas prices double. With food costs also soaring - in part due to rising gas prices - it has been difficult for many families to make ends meet. Combine that with estimates of \$5 dollar-a-gallon gas this summer and it seems like times will get worse before they get better.

This does not have to be the case. Congress has the ability to reduce these outrageous prices and help our nation's struggling families get back on their feet.

It has been estimated that in the [United States](#), about 1.8 trillion barrels of oil are available from oil shale. A fine-grained rock which contains hydrocarbons that yield petroleum, oil shale is abundant in the U.S. There is more recoverable oil shale in the states of Colorado, Utah and Wyoming than in the entire country of Saudi Arabia - enough to meet our supply needs for over two centuries.

A Heritage Foundation study found that if full-scale production of oil shale began within five years, the United States could end its dependence on OPEC (Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries) by 2020. But we have yet to utilize this resource. Instead, Congress has decided to force our nation's hardworking families to endure monstrous gas prices, while at the same time digging our country further into dependence on foreign oil.

Currently, Brazil, China and Estonia use shale for oil production. It is also used for power generation in Estonia, China, Israel and Germany. Additionally, other countries such as Canada, Egypt, Jordan and Turkey are all moving toward shale power in the near future. So why hasn't the United States used our plentiful shale reserves to reduce our quickly rising gas costs? Federal law prohibits the exploration of oil shale. In December 2007, Congress passed legislation that denied funding for oil shale commercial regulations, which subsequently prevented its production. Current Democratic congressional leadership has no one else to blame but themselves for our nation's record high gas costs.

Today, Congress has the ability to open the shale reserves and even look to other energy resources like nuclear and wind power to solve our energy dilemma. On several occasions, Democrats promised to meet our nation's current energy demands, but have failed to do so. They have continually blocked efforts on the House floor to expand the development of our petroleum resources. And most recently, they had the opportunity to support the No More Excuses Energy Act, a bill which would reduce the price of gasoline by opening new American oil refineries and invest in energy alternatives such as wind, nuclear, and clean coal-to-liquid technology. Signing onto this legislation - or at least allowing debate on it - would be an important step in the right direction.

In addition, I am also introducing another much-needed piece of legislation. This bill requires the Interior Department to open ANWR, oil shale reserves, and the Outer Continental Shelf, to exploration if the price of oil gets above \$100 a barrel. The Interior Department has noted that there are an estimated 88.85 billion barrels of oil available on the Outer Continental Shelf. The United States holds the world's largest known unconventional source of oil shale with an estimated 1.23 trillion barrels of oil on federal lands in Colorado, Utah, and Wyoming alone. The legislation also mandates the Interior Department to cut current red tape on drilling permits to help get oil and gas to the pipeline quicker.

The bill would encourage Congress to open federal lands that have been prohibited for drilling. Once these lands are available, we would immediately begin to tap into our own resources and refineries. That would help to decrease the current out-of-control gas prices for consumers and create more jobs at the same time.



A Shell gas station shows prices at more than \$4 a gallon on May 23, 2008, in Annapolis. An effort ...

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These resources belong to U.S. citizens and could be used to help our nation be energy independent once and for all. Congress should act to support the immediate opening of these lands and allow American companies to explore, produce, and put these sources of energy into production. No more time can be wasted: Congress must act now. Paying even higher gas prices is not an option for many American families; their pocket books are already stretched too thin. It's up to Washington to make lowering oil prices a priority. Opening U.S. shale oil reserves now will provide immediate relief today, tomorrow and for many years to come.

Rep. Michele Bachmann is a Minnesota Republican.

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