

California is now faced with dry lightning strikes at a level that I cannot remember in my lifetime. And more are forecast this week.

The State is also facing extreme heat. Across the State, nearly in every county, there are excessive heat warnings.

And the State is in the midst of a serious drought—Governor Schwarzenegger has declared a drought emergency.

The State's reservoirs are below normal, and drought has produced record amounts of dry brush. In many areas, there is more dry brush than at any point in the 27-year recorded history of the data.

This dry brush is like an unexploded bomb.

Last month—the halfway point of the year—more than 272,969 acres in California had burned. That's up from 42,214 acres burned at the same point last year. And up from the 5-year average of 30,938 acres burned on State land at that time of year.

The facts are clear and cannot be ignored. California is in great peril. And California's peril is the Nation's peril, for the costs of fighting these fires is fast draining our Federal firefighting resources.

Bottom line: California and the Nation need help now. A potentially record-breaking fire season is upon us. We need to do more. We need to prepare. And we need to do it now.

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 over 1,000, are heartbreaking and touching. To respect their efforts, I am submitting every e-mail sent to me through energy_prices@crapo.senate.gov 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:

To whom it concerns:

Here's how rising gas and diesel prices are affecting this Idahoan and her family:

We are a one-income (plus overtime) middle-income family living in Boise. The huge increase in fuel prices has caused subsequent increases in the price of consumer goods (due to price increases for fuel to manufacture, transport, and deliver consumer goods). Thus, our entire cost of living has increased at a rate higher than that of my husband's annual raise. Our standard of living is dropping,

regardless of his continued raises, and we are having to cut corners from our budget, in every direction.

Due to our sons' disabilities, it has been imprudent for me to work full time. However, in light of the growing costs of living due to fuel costs skyrocketing, I will most likely need to return to work this year, NOT to purchase hobby equipment or upgrade our vehicle, but to continue to make our mortgage payment and to EAT PROPERLY.

To our Congress: PLEASE STOP OUR DEPENDENCE ON FOREIGN FUELS. We're lining the pockets of oil-rich nations while stealing the quality of life from our own citizens.

Nuclear energy is NOT the way to go, in my opinion. The dangerous waste by-products of nuclear-generated power are not worth the savings in costs of energy to our citizens. There are many other methods to generate energy for homes and businesses (and vehicles) that are cleaner, renewable, and completely non-polluting, such as solar energy; wind energy; hydro-electric energy (why not let all the dams in our state run at full capacity rather than leave one or two turbines unused most of the time, and STORE the excess energy we generate to keep our costs down, or sell it to profit our state's economy); and the transformation of our society's garbage into usable, non-polluting hydrogen fuel for vehicles that run on hydrogen.

There are always local (American) solutions to local (American) problems.

TERESA, Boise.

I should think it would be obvious to all sentient beings by now that we are on the wrong trajectory. The notion that we can consume more and more each year without some FUNDAMENTAL changes is wrong. I search your words in vain for ideas about something new. No luck. Same old mindset. What about conservation of finite resources? What about alternative energy resource development? The large and very profitable oil companies benefit enormously from tax breaks. Where is the policy incentive for non-polluting alternate forms of energy? Where are the incentives to promote more efficient use of the old sources? Pull your head from the sand. It is high time you realized a new era is upon us.

CRISTINA.

To Whom It May Concern,

Fuel costs are killing the average citizen in Idaho. It is bad enough that the price of getting to work is costing more than many can afford, but the prices in the grocery stores are also rising exponentially as the cost of shipping skyrockets and the cost of running farm equipment to produce the food skyrockets. To make things worse, Congress, once again with good intentions but not a clue of the damage they would do, are adding to the situation with the ridiculous bio-fuels subsidies. Bio-fuels are horribly inefficient, but the cost of corn to feed dairy cattle and fatten beef cattle is becoming unaffordable. To make things worse, these terrible incentives to plow up hay fields and raise corn is leaving livestock owners unable to buy hay. Horses are being turned loose or shot by owners who cannot get or afford hay to feed them. Once again the bloated farm bill is putting billions of dollars into the hands of a few farming corporations while small farmers and livestock owners are left to struggle against high fuel and feed costs created by Congress. PLEASE repeal these stupid restrictions on oil exploration and refining, as well as that awful subsidy on bio-fuels. They are counterproductive and just plain stupid.

PAT, Priest River.

Dear Senator Crapo,

High gas and energy prices are affecting everyone negatively but I would rather respond to the second part of your email.

Americans are not "too dependent on petroleum," as you said; we are just too dependent on *foreign* petroleum. We can thank Mr. Clinton and subsequent leaders and legislators for the predicament we find ourselves in today. They have caved in to the "environmentalists", a very small percentage of Americans, and not allowed us to provide for our own oil needs. These foolish politicians have put us and our economy in a very precarious position.

We need to pursue nuclear power and domestic drilling and refining of petroleum and take control of providing for our needs instead of relying on foreign volatile suppliers. If Congress would pass just one piece of legislation to allow us to drill and supply our own oil, our foreign suppliers would drop prices immediately in fear that we will completely cut them out of the loop someday. We do not need to continue any "food for fuel" programs as you can see what that has done to our economy and the food shortage in other parts of the world.

Finally, please inform others in Congress that our country is a capitalistic society and that oil companies deserve to profit for the risks they take and the product they supply to Americans. If anybody has received a "windfall" it is the federal, and to a lesser degree state, government which receives undeserved profits. They receive much more money from the sale of gas in our country than the oil companies and they have not done one thing for the money they get for each gallon sold. The latest figures I have read were that oil companies average 4 percent of profit from each gallon sold while taxes account for 16 percent of each gallon sold.

Please understand that I am angered by this situation but that anger is in no way directed at you. You have done a fine job representing the views of us conservative Republicans in Idaho. Keep up the good work.

Sincerely,

ROBYN.

Dear Senator,

I'm a fan of yours, as is my wife. We both have been registered Democrats all our lives, but in the mid-term election of 2006, we both re-registered as Independents so as to distance ourselves from our party, as they seem to have gone off the deep end. I remember when Democrats were proud Americans. And though there are a few of us left, most of the party of Rosie O'Donnell, Michael Moore, Al Franken, and certain Senators and Congressmen (and women) are little more than Socialists. And that is giving them the benefit of the doubt. My wife and I both voted for Reagan, by the way, and we will vote Republican till we see a difference in the far left that has taken over our party. Who knows? We may be registered Republicans before too long.

Enough about our distaste for the Democrat Party of today, except to say that it seems voting on issues such as this go down party lines, with even a few Republicans taking the wrong side on issues such as energy, illegal immigration, and homeland security which I consider to be one and the same.

We know there are many billions of barrels of crude off our shores, but the Democrats keep us from drilling. There is even more possibly in the Dakotas and Montana, not to mention the shale oil out here in the West and the coal-to-oil or coal-to-gas technology. All we have to do is start drilling and build more refineries and the price of oil from OPEC will drop drastically! I dropped out of college, but I know this, so Washington should too. I do not know what is up with