

ONE HUNDRED TWELFTH CONGRESS
Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
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Opening Statement of Rep. Henry A. Waxman
Ranking Member, Committee on Energy and Commerce
Markup of “H.R. ____, the Gasoline Regulations Act of 2012 and H.R. ____, the Strategic
Energy Production Act of 2012”
Subcommittee on Energy and Power
April 16, 2012

Today, we begin marking up two bills that contain the Republican response to gasoline prices. The new Republican energy policy is “Talk, Baby, Talk” and it isn’t going to lower prices at the pump by one penny.

The Republicans keep saying that President Obama’s policies are raising gasoline prices. Chairman Upton said it in the Republicans’ weekly radio address on Saturday. And they keep saying that these bills will lower gasoline prices. But as our mothers taught us long ago, saying something doesn’t make it true.

Every expert at our hearings on gas prices, including the Republicans’ own witnesses, says that gasoline prices are driven by world oil prices. World oil prices have spiked with rising global demand, tensions in the Middle East, and tight supplies. Nothing in these bills will affect world oil prices.

Republicans have two responses to gasoline prices at nearly \$4 per gallon. First, they propose drilling for more oil. Yet every economist and oil market expert tells us that this will have no meaningful impact on world oil prices.

Just look north to Canada. Canadians drill plenty of oil. They are energy independent and they export to us. But this doesn’t bring them lower prices. In fact, their gasoline prices go up and down in sync with ours – because both are driven by world oil prices. Republicans also say they can bring down gasoline prices by blocking environmental regulations that protect Americans from dangerous air pollution.

No one should be fooled by this argument. Under Republican leadership, this body has become the most anti-environment Congress in history. Since January 2011, the House Republicans have voted more than 200 times to undermine the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act, and other environmental laws. The premise of the legislation before us today is that high

gas prices are caused by EPA regulations that haven't even been proposed. That's a complete fantasy.

Americans want clean air. They don't want this Committee to use high gasoline prices as an excuse for blocking regulations to reduce toxic emissions from oil refineries. Americans want cars that can go further on a gallon of gasoline. This is especially important when fuel prices are high. They don't want us to use high gasoline prices as a pretext for blocking clean fuel regulations that the auto companies need to make cleaner, more efficient vehicles.

But that is exactly what this legislation does.

Even worse, one of the bills before us contains the Latta amendment – a proposal that will cut the heart out of the Clean Air Act. It would overturn a unanimous 2001 Supreme Court case and repeal a 40 year-old law that says the goal of the Clean Air Act is to achieve air quality that is safe for Americans to breathe.

While we can't control crude oil prices on the world market, we can act to insulate ourselves from crude oil price fluctuations. And that's exactly what the Obama Administration is doing. The best way to save money at the pump is to drive right by it, so the Obama Administration has issued strong new rules to make vehicles more efficient. Next year's vehicles will go even further between fill-ups, as will the vehicles every year after that.

The Energy Information Administration explains what this means for consumers. The costs per mile driven in 2012 were over 25% lower than the costs per mile in 1980, thanks to efficiency improvements.

While producing more oil here won't lower gasoline prices, oil production in the U.S. is the highest it's been in eight years. And the United States has been the world's largest producer of natural gas since 2009. This is undisputed fact. And it shows that the Obama Administration is not shutting down drilling.

Instead of supporting the President's responsible initiatives, the Republican-controlled House has done everything possible to frustrate them. The House has passed partisan legislation to prevent the Administration from cutting tailpipe emissions and making vehicles more efficient. The Republican budget would decimate the funding for clean energy. And House Republicans have even opposed efforts to end the billions of dollars of subsidies that the oil companies receive every year, which they don't need and the taxpayer cannot afford.

If we really cared about helping the country become more resilient to gasoline price volatility, we would be working with the Administration instead of trying to block President Obama's every initiative. But these bills aren't really about lowering gasoline prices. They are about using high gasoline prices as yet another rationale for advancing a profoundly anti-environment agenda.

Oil companies will surely benefit if these bills are enacted, and just as surely, American families will suffer.