

Gas prices well over \$3 per gallon have highlighted a serious problem this country faces. Our excessive dependence on fossil fuel energy leaves us dependent on an uncertain global market and is a pressing matter of national security. We must develop an innovative energy security strategy that will give future generations of Americans an economy less dependent on oil and gas.

A number of factors are contributing to record gas prices according to the Department of Energy (DOE). Supply reduction due to hurricane damage, a steady rate of U.S. and global consumption, disruptions in oil production in such major exporters as Venezuela, Iraq, and Nigeria all top the list.

These are factors that unfortunately will not change in the short term, and coupled with the Administration's energy policy that fails to adequately invest in alternative fuel development, we are destined to continue seeing high energy prices well into the long term.

Misguided attempts to further subsidize the oil and gas industry and roll back environmental regulations only lead us further away from making real progress because even in an emergency, our energy policy must strike a balance by pursuing improvements in fuel technology and energy efficiency; maintaining a clean environment; and preserving our wilderness areas and public lands.

Congress needs to open up debate on this issue and craft legislation that will demand greater fuel efficiency and conservation, promote the development of alternative and renewable energy sources and increase oil and gas production domestically in areas that are not ecologically sensitive in an environmentally friendly manner. I feel these are positive steps that will help moderate the price of fuel.

In the meantime, I have joined my colleagues in sending a letter to the Speaker requesting oversight hearings on possible market manipulation in the oil and gas industries and to involve the Justice Department in possible anti-trust reviews to any proposals to further consolidate energy companies.

These positive steps will set a course towards energy independence.