

AN OPEN LETTER TO SPEAKER PELOSI

On Friday August 1, 2008, at 11:23 a.m., your Democrat majority in the House of Representatives adjourned the House for five full weeks.

House Republicans believe that Congress should not go on vacation until we take action to lower gas and energy prices for struggling American families.

For the last two months we and our House Republican colleagues have used every tool at our disposal to try and get you and your Democrat majority to vote on legislation to lower gas and energy prices by expanding environmentally sound domestic production of oil and natural gas, improving energy efficiency, and encouraging the development of alternative energy technologies.

Many of the proposals we have asked you and your Democrat majority to allow us to vote on are bipartisan proposals that we believe would enjoy the support of a majority of the Members of the Congress. Yet because you and your Democrat Leadership personally oppose these proposals, you are not allowing them to come up for a vote. This past Sunday, you even told George Stephanopoulos that you will never allow this vote to occur (see transcript on the reverse).

In protest of you and your Democrat majority not allowing an up or down vote on producing more American energy, we and our House Republican colleagues were prepared to take to the floor on Friday, August 1, 2008, and speak to the nation. Rather than allowing that to happen you and your Democrat majority adjourned the House, turned off the television cameras, shut off the microphones and turned out the lights. Nearly 50 House Republicans remained on the floor of the House in defiance speaking to those citizens gathered in the galleries and to the media.

Today we have again returned to the Capitol to continue speaking to the thousands of Americans from all across our country who are visiting the Capitol. We would have preferred if instead we were joined by our colleagues to have a true debate on this issue that ended in an up or down vote.

We think it is unconscionable that Congress has gone on vacation before we have addressed the high gas prices that are crippling our economy and hurting millions of families. We are asking that you reconvene the House from your five-week vacation and schedule a vote on legislation to increase American energy production. Let us be clear, we are not asking for a guaranteed outcome, just the chance to vote.

Signed by: John Boehner, Republican Leader; Roy Blunt, Republican Whip; Adam Putnam, Republican Conference Chairman; Eric Cantor, Chief Deputy Whip; and Members of the House Republican Conference

STEPHANOPOULOS: ... You've been getting a lot of heat on -- for not allowing a vote, a straight up-or-down vote on expanding drilling off the coasts of the United States. Why won't you permit a straight up- or-down vote?

PELOSI: ... What these -- what our colleagues are talking about is something that won't have an effect for 10 years and it will be 2 cents at the time. If they want to present something as part of an energy package, we're talking about something. But to single shoot on something that won't work and mislead the American people as to thinking it's going to reduce the price at the pump, I'm just not going to be a party of it.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Except that it's not just Republicans calling for this. Members of your own caucus say we must have a vote. Congressman Jason Altmire, let me show our viewers right now, is saying there's going to be a vote. Here he says exactly, there's going to be a vote. September 30th will not come and go without a vote on opening the outer continental shelf. The message has been delivered. The issue can't be ignored any longer. He says he speaks for a lot of Democrats. He's talked to the leadership, and a vote must happen.

PELOSI: Well, maybe it will, as it's part of a larger energy package.

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Instead we're saying, free the oil. Use it, don't lose it. There's 68 million acres in lower 48 and 10 or 20 million more acres in Alaska, where they're permitted, where they could drill anytime. This is a diversionary tactic from a failed energy policy.

STEPHANOPOULOS: But if you feel you have the better arguments, why not give a straight up-or-down vote for drilling?

PELOSI: Because the misrepresentation has been made that this is going to reduce the price at the pump. This is, again, a decoy, it's not a solution.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Well, if you're right, why not let it be debated out and have the vote?

PELOSI: We have a debate every single day on this subject. What you saw in the Congress this week was the war dance of the hand maidens of the oil companies. That's what you saw on the Republican side of the aisle.

Democrats and Republicans are not right down party lines on this issue. There are regional concerns, as well as some people concerned about what this means back home for them.

But we have a planet to save. We have an economy to grow. And we can do that if we keep our balance in all of this and not just say but for drilling in unprotected and these protected areas offshore, we would have lower gas prices. ...

STEPHANOPOULOS: But why not allow votes on all that? When you came in as speaker, you promised in your commitment book, A New Direction for America, let me show our viewers, you said that bills should generally come to the floor under a procedure that allows open, full, fair debate, consisting of a full amendment process that grants the minority the right to offer its alternatives.

If they want to offer a drilling proposal, why can't they have a vote?

PELOSI: They'll have to use their imagination as to how they can get a vote, and they may get a vote. But I have tried, you know, we have serious policy issues in our country. The president of the United States has presented this but for this, our economy would be booming. But for this, gas would be cheaper at the pump.

It's simply not true. And even the president himself in his statement yesterday and before then has said there is no quick fix for this by drilling.

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STEPHANOPOULOS: So you will not permit a vote. You may get beat, but you're not going to permit a vote on your own?

PELOSI: Well, again, we take this one step at a time. But why we're spending all this time on a parliamentary tactic when nothing less is at stake than the planet, the air we breathe, our children breathe? We have...