

selling so fast they cannot produce enough to have any in storage. It will hit the fan on that issue in January and February. When cold weather is here and has a grip on us and there is a short supply, we will see prices for home heating oil that will make natural gas look like a bargain, if you can even buy it.

Mr. Speaker, this country is facing, I believe, the greatest pressure on our economy because of the price of energy and specifically natural gas. It is one we do not have to have. This has been by choice, and then by willingness of no one to face up to where we are at today and change it.

I propose to this Congress, and I have been promised we will have a discussion, I have a proposal that would open up the outer continental shelf all of the way around this country. We would open it up for natural gas. We would give the 20-mile cushion so it is out of sight, and we would allow the States the rights, and we would reward the States for those who produce and provide the energy this country needs.

I have asked our leadership, and I have been told it will happen, that we will have a debate in the Committee on Resources. And if I can get my bill out of there, and I am hopeful because we passed an amendment similar to that a few weeks ago, and that bill got stalled because of great opposition from the Florida State government and the Florida delegation. So we did not deal with the issue on the floor. But I have asked that we have a clean up or down vote, that we have lengthy debate, that we tell the American people about how natural gas, and I believe natural gas, if we had ample supply, the use of it could be expanded.

We passed a bill last week to incentivize the expansion of refineries. Natural gas could be utilized in all of our school buses because a gasoline engine with a slight adjustment can burn natural gas. Our construction vehicles, city transit vehicles, we could have a large number of vehicles in this country that do not have to travel long distances and can be refueled every night use natural gas. Swan Delivery Company that sells ice cream and frozen products, they have advertised for years that they are the company that is green, they burn natural gas and not gasoline. Now they are paying a huge premium for that. That shows us it can be done.

I have a bus system at State College in my district, they are all natural gas. Today they are paying a premium for being good stewards of the environment burning the clean fuel.

And the West is full of natural gas, but that is not as obtainable because we have inadequate pipeline systems to get it out to the States. The outer continental where we have, I am told, over 400 trillion cubic feet, and many think it may be double that, that is a 50- to 70-year supply. We would not need to import any from Canada. We could use it for transportation. The first hydro-

gen cars would really be run on natural gas because that is how we can make hydrogen today most efficiently. So it can be the bridge to the future as we bring on renewables.

Mr. Speaker, \$60 oil is going to make a lot of things work. We are working now on making fuels out of coal. We are making fuels out of grain. I have a company in my district that just bought a landfill, and they are going to make ethanol out of garbage. All kinds of things are going to work, but it is not quick. It is going to take time.

So an ample supply of the clean fuel that has no contaminants, that we can use in so many ways and is so much a part of our economy already, natural gas can be our bridge, but \$14 natural gas has been the wall that this country is going to hit at a high rate of speed.

I was a retailer for 26 years. I vividly remember the late 1970s and early 1980s when we had very high natural gas prices, and we had extremely cold winters. I remember as a retailer it was always difficult to make a profit in January and February. You were lucky if you did not lose money, and then you started making profit in the spring and summer. But during those years, people were so far behind in their spending because they had spent so much money to heat their homes, and petroleum prices were up, too. Sometimes it was clear into May before business became normal again because people were spending so much.

This winter people are going to spend twice as much to drive their car, and almost twice as much to heat their homes. They are going to have a whole lot less money for spending, and 70 percent of Americans spend all of the money they earn every paycheck, so the marketplace is going to be very soft for retail business and commerce, in my view. It is all going to be caused because this country has been unwilling to realize that energy prices are a direct correlation of supply. And we are much more dependent on foreign oil. ANWR could be helpful, and other drilling would be helpful, but on natural gas, there is no valid reason that we have the highest natural gas prices in the world that makes our petrochemical companies uncompetitive, that makes our plastic companies and polymer companies uncompetitive.

Several weeks ago Alcoa Aluminum Company in Pittsburgh ran a release, and the headline did not say this, I had to read the whole article to pick it up, and I read it twice to make sure I was correct. It said in the article if energy prices persist to be consistently high as they are today in America, Alcoa Aluminum will have to, and it said especially natural gas, we will have to reconsider whether we can produce here.

Now, I thought that was a message that should have been the headline. I thought it should have read, "Alcoa said current natural gas prices may prevent us from doing business here." That was not the headline. I forgot what the headline was, but it was sort

of an innocuous headline. Nobody read that and seemed to understand what it said. It said we have to reconsider whether we can produce here.

Mr. Speaker, I have had chemical companies and fertilizer companies tell me how it is almost impossible for them to continue being here, and they have told that to the leaders of Congress and I am sure they have told it to the administration. But for some reason we are here tonight and today and yesterday, and we have no real plan of action to bring on natural gas supplies that can allow Americans to heat their homes cost effectively or small businesses to operate efficiently. Or for the major companies, which are the best blue collar jobs that we have left in this country, to stay here and prosper here and be competitive in a global marketplace.

This is an issue that I do not think is complicated. I think it is quite simple. I have been concerned about it for 5 years. Unfortunately, all of my predictions have come true, and it is even worse than I expected. Tonight I urge my colleagues, I urge the people in this country, we have to open up the supply of energy in general but natural gas in particular. It is the fuel that can give us a strong economy, that can help us affordably live in our homes, small businesses stay profitable, and allow the large production companies that make all of the products that I have mentioned, whether it is bending, melting, smelting, cooking, you name it, if it uses natural gas, today they cannot do it competitively.

If we do what we should do and open up supply, America will continue to be the land of opportunity and we can compete with anybody because we have the best workforce.

#### LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mr. OBEY (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today on account of an important matter in the district.

Mr. REYES (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today on account of official business.

Mr. MACK (at the request of Mr. BLUNT) for today on account of traveling with the President of the United States to survey damage caused by Hurricane Wilma.

Mr. SENSENBRENNER (at the request of Mr. BLUNT) for today and October 28 on account of family business.

#### SPECIAL ORDERS GRANTED

By unanimous consent, permission to address the House, following the legislative program and any special orders heretofore entered, was granted to:

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. DEFAZIO) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. DEFAZIO, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. SCHIFF, for 5 minutes, today.