

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Oklahoma is recognized.

CHANGE OF VOTE

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from Colorado for yielding. On rollcall vote No. 307, I was recorded as voting yea. I voted no. Therefore, I ask unanimous consent that the official record be corrected to accurately reflect my vote. This will in no way change the outcome of the vote.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Colorado.

ENERGY INDEPENDENCE: A 21ST CENTURY IMPERATIVE

Mr. SALAZAR. Mr. President, I rise today to discuss an urgent problem that continues to confront this great Nation. The problem is simply stated. Today, America is held hostage to our overdependence on foreign oil. That dependency is continuing to grow at an ever-alarming rate. America deserves better.

The problem is a result of the malignant neglect of the United States of a meaningful national energy policy for the last three decades. From the formation of OPEC and President Carter's national statement that we must embrace energy independence with "the moral imperative of war," Washington has been stuck in the swamp of inaction. It is time to change this neglect and, for the sake of ourselves and for our children, find our way out of this swamp of inaction.

Ever since 1970, America's domestic production of oil has been dropping. And ever since, many speeches have been given in Washington about the importance of achieving energy independence. Many of us remember the speeches of Richard Nixon and President Carter in the 1970s and the 1980s.

In 1973, following the formation of OPEC, President Nixon gave a speech to the Nation where he said:

our overall objective . . . can be summed up in one word that best characterizes this Nation and its essential character. The word is "independence."

Then again in 1980, President Carter spoke to the Congress at his State of the Union address. In that speech, President Carter said:

Our excessive dependence on foreign oil is a clear and present danger to our Nation's security. The need has never been more urgent. At long last, we must have a clear, comprehensive energy policy for the United States.

That was President Jimmy Carter in 1980. Well, here we are in 2005 and the Nation has miserably failed to achieve any meaningful reform and any progress toward energy independence. Instead, we have retreated and gone backward. We have become more dependent on imports of foreign oil. The words of President Nixon and President

Carter today in 2005 sound hollow because there has not been action to follow the words that have come out of Washington. I am sure both President Nixon, if he were alive today, and President Carter today would be frustrated with the refusal by Washington, the refusal by the White House, to move this great Nation toward energy independence.

I, too, am tired of this talk, and I believe many of my colleagues in this Chamber are tired of this talk. I am tired of the maneuvering of Congress to protect the special interests, and it is time for us to take action.

The facts do not lie about the national energy crisis that we are in and how we are being held hostage to the whims of foreign governments. The conclusion is inescapable when one reviews the facts. Let me review just a few of those important facts. One, Americans today consume one-quarter of the world's oil, but we only stand on top of about 3 percent of the global reserves. So we consume one-quarter of the world's oil, but we only have 3 percent of the world's reserves.

Currently, the OPEC member countries produce about 40 percent of the world's oil, but they hold 80 percent of the proven world reserves. That is a second fact that should be alarming to us because 85 percent of those reserves are in the greater Middle East in countries such as Iraq, Iran, and Saudi Arabia.

Third, 22 percent of the world's oil is in the hands of state sponsors of terrorism under U.S. or U.N. sanction, and only 9 percent of the world's oil is in the hands of free countries.

Today, as we debate the Department of Defense authorization bill to make sure that we remain a strong America, this ought to be something in the back of our minds and in the front of our minds, that we cannot really have a strong America unless we address this most fundamental national security threat of our overdependence on foreign oil.

In the 1970s, this Nation imported about a third of our oil needs. Today, we import almost 60 percent, and the projections are that 20 to 25 years from now we will be importing 70 percent of our oil from foreign countries.

Fifth, we are importing more oil at a time when other growing nations such as China continue to grow in their importation of oil from other countries. China, today, has become the No. 2 petroleum user on the entire globe. Experts predict that China's 1.2 billion people and its large and rapidly growing demand for oil will have serious implications for the United States and for oil prices and supplies at home.

Fully one-quarter of the U.S. trade deficit today—those of us like my colleague from Oklahoma who is here today, who is concerned about the growing deficits that we have in America today, understand that one-quarter of the U.S. trade deficits are associated with oil imports. The problem that we

face for sure is due in part to dwindling resources in America. Domestic reserves of oil and natural gas are declining although our demand continues to grow. However, the reality is that there has been a deliberate unwillingness to address this problem in America.

As proof, the average American vehicle gets fewer miles per gallon today than it did in 1988. That is right. Even though transportation fuels represent about two-thirds of our demand for petroleum products, our current fuel economy is worse today than it was 17 years ago. According to EPA estimates, back in 1988 passenger vehicles in America had an average fuel economy of 26 miles per gallon. Today, in the midst of this national crisis, we have 50 million more passenger vehicles on the road and the average fuel economy has declined to less than 24 miles per gallon. That is going in the wrong direction. How is it possible that the world's biggest economy with the world's best scientists and engineers, we, the United States of America, are doing worse today on fuel economy than we were 17 years ago?

We find ourselves in this mess because we have not taken our energy consumption problem seriously. Since most of the known oil reserves lie in one specific region of the world, the Middle East, our addiction to foreign oil means that we will continue to be held hostage to the whims of despotic or increasingly unstable regimes. Ominously, the money we pay today for foreign oil helps pay for the activities of extremists and terrorists around the world who hate the United States and the West in general. We only need to recall the horrors of 9/11 to know how real that hatred is.

Even worse, the money pit grows deeper because we as a world consume more oil and that oil becomes more expensive and the money that keeps some of these regimes in place gets more concentrated in the hands of these few countries. So, yes, America is held hostage and in a tighter and tighter grip.

There is only one way for us to fix this. America must stop the rhetoric, and we must embrace a true imperative of energy independence.

I wish to say a word about the work of this body, this Congress, in the last year with the Energy Policy Act of 2005. I wish to say two things about that legislation. It was the first time in 13 years that any significant energy legislation came out of Washington, DC, again, demonstrating the malignant neglect. There are two important lessons we should take from the act. The first is it was a good template of bipartisan cooperation. In this body, with more than 80 votes, Republicans and Democrats coming together saying we need to embrace a new National Energy Policy Act, we are making a statement that this is an important issue for the American people. We ought to find more places where the American people can get that kind of