

But we cannot stop there. We need a balanced, proactive national energy policy—one that serves as an energy plan for the future that not only increases energy production, but also decreases energy demand. We must work to decrease our dependence on foreign oil through conservation, renewable energy, and energy efficiency programs.

In the short term, we should look at ways to guard our consumers against potential price gouging by the big oil companies. For our home heating oil consumers, we should also look at incentives to encourage consumers to make energy efficient improvements to their homes, and we must make sure that we fully fund the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). The money we invest in this program will be put right back into the economy through lower heating and fuel bills.

In May, President Bush announced his Administration's plan to address our nation's current energy crisis, a plan for that calls for major increases in oil and gas production in the United States. I agree with the Administration that we need to increase production, but I believe their proposal is a plan for the past that seems to cater to the big oil companies.

I am disappointed that their plan does not do more to support programs to increase research and development in new energy technologies that increase conservation and alternative and renewable fuel sources to reduce our oil dependence. This may not be an immediate answer, but it is certainly important for the long-term as fossil fuel sources diminish. Surely, if we can create the technology to send a man to the moon, we can develop a crop that our farmers can grow that can provide an efficient and affordable alternative source for fuel.

Our current energy situation is a complicated problem with no easy answers, but it is of critical importance to the people of south Arkansas and across America. The sooner we take action, the sooner we can see results at the pump. I urge my colleagues to support a balanced, proactive, and bipartisan solution to this crisis so that we can bring relief to our hard working families.

A TRIBUTE TO FIREFIGHTER JOHN J. DOWNING

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York (Mr. GRUCCI) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. GRUCCI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today with a heavy heart to express my deepest sympathies and that of a grateful community to the Downing family and to pay honor and tribute to a true American hero, firefighter John J. Downing of Port Jefferson Station, New York.

On June 17, 2001, John Downing and 350 of his fellow firefighters and numerous police officers responded to a 2:19 p.m. call to a 911 that sent them to Long Island General Supply Company in Queens, New York. As is always the case, these brave men and women responded without reservation and with little or no regard for their personal safety. By 3 p.m., the blaze had gone to 5 alarms, and the fire and explosion had turned the 128-year-old Long Island

General Supply Company into a horrific scene.

□ 1915

By 8 p.m. the fire had been controlled, but at a tragic cost: three firefighters lost their lives. Additionally, two civilians and dozens of firefighters were injured.

The three brave men were firefighters John J. Downing of Port Jefferson Station, from Ladder Company 163; Harry Ford, of Long Beach; and Brian Fahey of East Rockaway, both of Rescue 4 unit.

My constituent, John Downing, leaves his wife of 11 years; a daughter, Joanne; and a son, Michael. John Downing was one of seven children from Woodside. He went to elementary school at St. Sebastian School in Woodside, and then to high school in St. Francis Preparatory School in Fresh Meadows. He later went on to work in the construction field before becoming a firefighter 11 years ago.

John Downing and all three of his brothers gave back to the community through public service. He and his brother Denis both became firefighters, Denis Downing now at Ladder Company 160 in Long Island City, and James and Joseph Downing are New York City police officers.

Everyone who knew John called him a hero in every sense of the word. Every day he was on the job for the past 11 years as a firefighter. John always gave his all and did his best. Whether it was in fighting fires or helping young firefighters to learn their job better, everyone in the firehouse knew they could count on John.

Knowing this, it was no surprise when firefighter Downing appeared on the front pages of the New York Daily News 3 years ago. He was pictured on the front page as a hero once again, rescuing passengers from a commercial jet that had gone off the runway at LaGuardia Airport and into the chilling waters of Flushing Bay.

Firefighting was not John's entire life, though. He was a family man, dotting over his two children and devoted to his wife. In recent weeks he had been working a second job to bring his family on their first real summer vacation to Ireland, to visit the relatives of his family and his wife's. Sadly, when the alarm for his last fire came, John was 2 hours away from ending his shift and beginning that vacation.

As the alarm went off, John put down the study book he had been reading, preparing to take the exam to become a lieutenant in the fire department. He grabbed his gear, and with the last full measure of devotion and commitment, John and his colleagues answered their last call.

Today John and his colleagues are in the loving embrace of God. I ask my colleagues to please join me in extending our deepest sympathies to the families of these three brave heroes and in recognizing the brave sacrifices of a true hero, John J. Downing.

CHANGE IN ENERGY REGULATION POLICY BY THE FEDERAL ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION COINCIDES WITH SWITCH IN CONTROL OF U.S. SENATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. JOHNSON of Illinois). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. DEFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, 6 months ago the staff of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission found that the prices being charged for power in the western United States were neither just nor reasonable. The law would require the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to then take action to both lower the prices and to order rebates for market manipulation, price-gouging, price-fixing that was going on.

But under the leadership of Mr. Hebert, chair of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, appointed by President Bush, FERC did nothing. They said there was not really a problem, this was just the market sending us a signal. What was the signal? Billions of dollars extracted from ratepayers, residential ratepayers, small business and big businesses alike; rolling blackouts and brownouts in California; incredibly high wholesale prices in the Pacific Northwest, with prices up to one hundred times, one hundred times what was charged just 2 years ago in the wholesale market.

But it also meant up to 1,000 percent, a 1,000 percent increase in profits for a handful of energy companies, most of whom happened to be based in Texas, and most of whom happened to be very generous contributors both to this administration and to the majority party in this House.

Mr. Hebert said no action was necessary, that he would do nothing. At one meeting, he opined that he would pray for us; faith-based regulation, I guess. But something changed all of a sudden; being stonewalled for months and months; his own staff saying the law was being violated; being sued; being petitioned by Members of Congress, by constituents, businesses desperate for relief.

On Monday they held an emergency meeting. What changed? What could have brought that about? Did they finally read their own staff reports, finally recognize the market manipulation? No, what changed is one vote in the United States Senate. Suddenly, there were committees in the Senate with the capability of investigating what was going on, and they scheduled hearings for tomorrow to bring in the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to have the chairman explain how it is his staff found things to be unjust and unreasonable, but he said that there was no problem.

Under that threat, they have adopted some half measures; better than nothing, but not much. They are going to peg prices to the least efficient, the most expensive unit, most obsolete