

Committee, having had under consideration the bill (H.R. 5441) making appropriations for the Department of Homeland Security for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2007, and for other purposes, had come to no resolution thereon.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until approximately 5:15 p.m. today.

Accordingly (at 3 o'clock and 25 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess until approximately 5:15 p.m.

□ 1716

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. SCHWARZ of Michigan) at 5 o'clock and 16 minutes p.m.

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 5254, REFINERY PERMIT PROCESS SCHEDULE ACT

Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 842 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 842

Resolved, That upon the adoption of this resolution it shall be in order without intervention of any point of order to consider in the House the bill (H.R. 5254) to set schedules for the consideration of permits for refineries. The bill shall be considered as read. The previous question shall be considered as ordered on the bill to final passage without intervening motion except: (1) one hour of debate equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Energy and Commerce; and (2) one motion to recommit.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Florida (Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART) is recognized for 1 hour.

Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Mr. Speaker for the purpose of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to my good friend, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. MATSUI), pending which I yield myself such time as I may consume. During consideration of this resolution, all time yielded is for the purpose of debate only.

(Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida. The rule provides 1 hour of general debate, equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Energy and Commerce. The rule also provides one motion to recommit.

Mr. Speaker, over the last several years, we have seen gasoline prices increase steadily in the United States. The rising cost of gasoline can be attributed to several factors, including

increased demand in the United States and in other countries such as China and elsewhere, decreases in oil production in politically unstable countries, including Venezuela and Nigeria, and a lack of refinery capacity in the United States.

In the last 24 years, our refinery capacity has dropped from 18.62 million barrels a day to less than 17 million barrels a day. This at the same time that our gross domestic product has increased in current dollars from 3.1 trillion to 12.4 trillion. Because of the sustained growth of our economy and the fact that we have not built a new refinery in almost 30 years, we are now forced to import over 4 million barrels a day in refined products, and that is when our refineries are running at full capacity.

Any changes in our refinery capacity can cause supply constraints and price spikes, especially in the gulf coast, where we have approximately half of our refinery capacity. And that is exactly what happened when the Hurricanes Katrina and Rita hit the gulf coast, causing gasoline prices to rise almost 50 cent a gallon. 2 months after the storms hit we still had lost almost about 18 percent of our refining capacity, leading to sharp price increases.

In order to prevent the steep increases in gasoline prices that we saw after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, and to try to moderate the continuing price increase, we must make certain that we build new refineries to meet our current demand and to prevent a loss of capacity due to another hurricane, or a terrorist attack for that matter. Without an increase in our refinery capacity, we will be at the mercy of countries such as Venezuela for the importation of refined oil products. Now, these countries are not reliable sources of refined products due to their politically unstable and/or unfriendly governments.

One of the biggest challenges to the building of new refineries was pointed out by Daniel Yergin of the Cambridge Energy Research Associates during a hearing in the House Energy and Commerce Committee. Mr. Yergin stated that, and I quote, "the building of new refineries has been hampered by costs, citing and permitting."

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 5254 would help alleviate some of the problems associated with the building of new refineries. The legislation directs the President to appoint a Federal coordinator to manage the multi-agency refinery permitting process. Working with the governor of any State where a refinery is proposed, the coordinator will begin by identifying and then convening all relevant agencies to coordinate the schedules for action so that no process called for in statute or regulation is short-changed, and public input opportunities are preserved, but also to allow the project to proceed as fast as otherwise possible. The goal of this legislation is to eliminate needless delay from agencies that are either dragging

their feet or simply acting in sequence when parallel action would be more efficient.

Bringing new refineries online will ease our reliance on foreign sources of refined products and will also allow us to have enough refinery capacity to meet the needs of our growing economy while providing a back up if any of our refineries are shut down for an extended period of time.

Mr. Speaker, the House has already taken steps to help lower the cost of gasoline. Last month we passed legislation to combat price gouging as well as legislation to open up ANWR to environmentally friendly energy development. However, more must be done. The underlying legislation is just another step in our continued efforts to provide relief from the high cost of gasoline.

H.R. 5254 was introduced by Representative BASS. A majority of the House has already voted in favor of this legislation. However, the bill did not pass because it was brought up under suspension of the rules and it did not obtain a two-thirds majority. Now we have another chance to pass this bill which is important to our energy needs and our growing economy.

I would like to thank Chairman BARTON and Representative BASS for their leadership on this issue. I urge my colleagues to support both the rule and the underlying legislation.

And at this time, Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. MATSUI. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I thank my friend, the gentleman from Florida, for yielding me time.

(Ms. MATSUI asked and was given permission to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. MATSUI. Mr. Speaker, when I was home in Sacramento last week, one constant topic of conversation was gas prices and energy policy. I heard several different perspectives on the issues.

Many working families told me they are having to adjust their monthly budgets to offset the cost of \$3 a gallon gas. Other individuals expressed concern about global warming and how our dependence on fossil fuels is driving dangerous climate change.

Still others told me they are worried that our economy and our national security are frighteningly dependent on unstable oil producing countries like Iran, Venezuela and Nigeria.

From speaking with my colleagues, it is clear that Americans are echoing these concerns across the country. So I would hope that we could all agree that our constituents, from Sacramento to Miami, want Congress to do something substantive about gas prices and energy policy.

Unfortunately, today's debate represents another missed opportunity for strategic long-term national energy policy. Today we could be addressing the pressing issues raised by my constituents and yours. But we are not.