The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECESS

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate stand in recess until 2:15.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, at 12:26 p.m., the Senate recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. CARPER).

TOM LANTOS AND HENRY J. HYDE UNITED STATES GLOBAL LEADERSHIP AGAINST HIV/AIDS, TUBERCULOSIS, AND MALARIA REAUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2008—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senator from New Jersey, Mr. MENENDEZ, will be recognized for 15 minutes.

Following his remarks, Senator DOMENICI will be recognized for 15 minutes.

Following his remarks, Senator KYL will be recognized to offer an amendment.

The Senator from New Jersey is recognized.

OIL PRICE MYTHS

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, we are all aware of the seriousness of the oil crisis. Gas prices are more than three times what they were when President Bush took office. High prices are forcing some businesses to cut back or close and forcing some families to choose between putting a gallon of gas in the tank and putting a gallon of milk on their kitchen table.

People are demanding honest solutions to our oil crisis. But President Bush, JOHN MCCAIN, and their allies on the other side of the aisle have only decided to perpetuate myths, which is what brings me to the floor.

They have told us offshore drilling will lower gas prices tomorrow. They have told us oil companies could produce more if we hand over even more Federal land and water to them. When people spoke about the dangers of drilling, they claimed no oil was spilled after Hurricane Katrina and that drilling off the shore of one State would not affect all the other States around it.

I am here to clear up these myths before it is too late and they take a life of their own.

Myth No. 1: Drilling immediately brings down gas prices. The biggest myth, a myth that has been repeated over and over on the floor of this Chamber, is that opening our shores to drilling will somehow lower the price of gasoline. Let's get one thing straight; drilling in the Outer Continental Shelf will do nothing to bring down gas prices—not now, not ever.

While President Bush is suggesting that drilling will bring down prices at the pump, his own Energy Information Administration admits drilling will have no effect. The reason is the amount of oil involved is a drop in the bucket compared to what we use every day.

Let me put offshore production in perspective. Since April of this year, Americans have responded to extraordinarily high gas prices by using over 800,000 barrels of oil less than we did 1 year ago. That is the most significant and sudden drop in oil demand since the 1970s. Yet what have we seen since April? We have continued to see record gas prices.

In recent weeks, in response to record oil prices, Saudi Arabia has increased its production of oil by 500,000 barrels each and every day. What has been the effect on gas prices? They continue to go up.

So how does the Bush/McCain drilling plan compare to these recent events? If we open all our shores to oil production, the first drop of oil would not be seen for over a decade. Offshore oil production would peak in the year 2030 and only at 200,000 barrels a day. To put that number another way, the amount of gas we could get from offshore drilling is equivalent to a few tablespoons per car per day.

So let's look at the totality of this. If 800,000 barrels per day in reduced demand by Americans combined with an increase of 500,000 barrels per day of Saudi production—a total shift of 1.3 million barrels a day—doesn't lower gas prices, how does 200,000 in the year 2030 lower gas prices? If we have seen a shift of both a reduction in demand and an increase in that supply by 1.3 million barrels a day, and the price still goes up, how is it that 200,000 barrels in 2030 is going to do anything? It is a myth.

The second myth we hear is that if oil companies could only lease more Federal land and water, they would produce more oil. The fact of the matter is the oil industry has already leased 68 million acres of land, where they have not produced—for the most part—a single drop of oil. The oil companies clearly think there is oil there or else why would they be leasing the land? But they are not using it.

This chart is an example of where all that oil is located. I know our Republican colleagues have these little sayings, and they are going around with patches on their lapels saying ''find more, use less.'' This is what they should be telling the oil companies: Find more and use less. In fact, they are not even pursuing that which they already have access to.

To get an idea of the scale involved, here is a map showing how much territory the oil companies control in the Gulf of Mexico. The red part of the map represents unused acres. It is a huge portion of the gulf region, going completely undeveloped, which they already have leases and access to.

Here is an even more impressive map—a map of how much of the Western United States oil companies control. The black portion shows where companies are exploring and, again, the red is where they are. As you can see, the red far exceeds the black portion of the map. These oil companies control an enormous amount of land. When you add it all up, it is an area more than 12 times the size of my home State of New Jersey.

So why are oil companies asking us to hand over more land, when they have so much land that is already unused? It seems to me there is only one explanation: Oil companies aren't actually in a rush to drill in those areas, but they are in a rush to control as much Federal land as possible before their friends in the White House leave.

Let's talk about myth No. 3. In order to convince us to let this plan go through, big oil and their supporters want us to believe a third myth, which is that offshore drilling presents no threat to our environment and to the economies of States, such as New Jersey, where tourism is the second multibillion dollar part of our economy.

Many of my colleagues from the Republican side of the aisle, including Senator MCCONNELL and Senator MCCAIN, have repeatedly denied that oil spills could happen. They have denied repeatedly that Hurricanes Katrina and Rita caused any oil to spill.

The picture I have here was taken not by me but by the U.S. Coast Guard. It shows what happened after the hurricanes: a massive oil spill that was set on fire to assist in the cleanup effort, as indicated in this photo.

I don't know what my colleagues on the other side of the aisle would consider ''significant spillage,'' but I know if I saw this scene on the New Jersey shore, I would consider it a disaster.

In 2005, Hurricanes Katrina and Rita caused devastation on a massive scale. The EPA, the U.S. Minerals Management Service, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and the Coast Guard all agree that the storms caused 700,000 gallons of oil to spill into the Gulf of Mexico and over 7 million gallons of oil to leak onshore from the infrastructure that supports offshore drilling.

When oil spills in those quantities take place, it is not isolated to a small area. Some suggest certain States may want to drill and other States may not want to drill off their coast, but the devastation spreads far and wide. When the Exxon Valdez ran aground in Alaska, the spill was 600 miles wide. The IXTOC I spill in the Gulf of Mexico traveled 600 miles. That is why the decision to drill cannot be left to a single State, because the State's actions affect all the other States in proximity to it.

An oil spill off the coast of Virginia could wash up as far away as Maine. It could devastate the coastline from South Carolina to New York.