

By Congressman Mike Pence

Hoosiers are hurting. They're struggling under the weight of record gasoline prices and in that cause, my Republican colleagues and I have been fighting for a comprehensive energy bill that includes more drilling in America and less dependence on foreign oil.

It's been a rough road. While Republicans stayed in Washington asking for a vote during August, Democrats took a five-week paid vacation, furthering the pain Hoosiers are feeling at the pump.

That is why at the beginning of last week I was hopeful that Congress would take up a bipartisan, comprehensive energy bill that would provide for more drilling in America and off of our shores, allow development of our vast oil shale resources, promote the use of clean coal technology, spur the production of renewable energy sources such as wind and solar power, encourage the use of nuclear power, and provide incentives for greater energy conservation.

Unfortunately, when the Democrat majority finally brought their bill up for a vote, they put politics in front of American energy independence and the needs of the American people and kept more than 80 percent of America's oil off limits.

Their bill purported to allow more drilling in America and lessen our dependence on foreign oil, but after reading the fine print, their bill was exposed as little more than a political charade that would do nothing to bring Americans closer to energy independence. A better title for Speaker Pelosi's bill would have been the "drill almost nothing" bill. Hoosiers should not stand for it.

Chief among the gimmicks in the Democrat bill is a provision that only appears to allow more drilling in the Outer Continental Shelf off of America's coast. Specifically, the bill prevents coastal states from sharing any of the oil and gas revenues generated by offshore drilling. For example, in Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana and Texas, where off-shore drilling is permitted, the states share revenues with the federal government in order to provide them with an incentive to allow drilling. With no incentive to drill offshore, there will be no drilling. As a result, an estimated 20 billion barrels of oil and 97 trillion cubic feet of natural gas off America's coasts alone will continue to be off limits.

Furthermore, the bill doesn't allow drilling in the Eastern Gulf of Mexico, effectively shutting off an additional four billion barrels of oil. It doesn't allow drilling within 50 miles of the coast (estimates show that only one-eighth of offshore oil is outside the 50-mile line), even if states decide they want to drill there, and it doesn't change litigation rules to prevent environmental lawyers from tying up any future off-shore drilling leases for years in court.

In addition, the Democrat bill doesn't allow drilling in Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, which holds an estimated 10 billion barrels of oil and already has the infrastructure to transport the oil once we tap into the vast reserves.

Finally, the same story holds true for states in the Rocky Mountain West, which contain oil shale reserves equivalent to more than 800 billion barrels of oil. Again, the Democrat bill puts these

resources off-limits, unless states agree to allow their development. However, states are not provided with any incentive, so there will be no development of our nation's oil shale resources.

And so it goes with the rest of the bill.

To put these vast resources in perspective, the United States currently consumes approximately 20 million barrels of oil per day, or 7.3 billion barrels of oil per year, approximately half of which is imported from foreign countries. Using these resources would allow us to continue to consume the same amount of oil solely from U.S. reserves for more than 100 years, and this number only increases as we bring more and more technology online to allow us to harness the power of wind, solar, and other renewable energy sources.

As House Democrats pat themselves on the back and explain to you that they solved your problems at the pump by passing a bill that allows drilling, it's important that Hoosiers realize there will be almost no drilling as a result of this bill. Democrats are taking Americans for a ride using nothing but hot air for power.

Even members of their own party recognize this. Democrat Senator Mary Landrieu, who represents Louisiana, a state that is dependent on drilling and energy production and benefits from shared revenues, said last Monday that Speaker Pelosi's bill is "dead on arrival" in the Senate because it includes zero incentive for states to drill.

Just when we thought we were making headway, Speaker Pelosi forced a vote on a charade of an energy bill that does almost nothing to increase the supply of domestic energy. It is time for House Democrats to get serious about addressing America's energy needs. It is time they end the charade, stop playing politics and bring a bipartisan, comprehensive energy bill up for a vote that actually allows drilling as part of an overall plan to use more of America's vast energy resources and stop sending billions of American dollars overseas for foreign sources of energy. Hoosiers should demand nothing less, and I will continue to advocate on the floor of the House for real, comprehensive energy reform.