

Congressman Pence led House Republicans in giving special order speeches last night on the Democrats' energy bill.

The transcript of his remarks are pasted below:

Mr. Speaker, I will be joined this evening on the floor by a number of distinguished colleagues, and we're going to take the opportunity on what we believe, Mr. Speaker, is the eve of a historic debate on energy legislation in the House of Representatives, to talk about the issue that is most bearing upon the American family. It is most bearing upon American business. It is most bearing upon our schools and our seniors and our standard of living, and that is, the high cost of fuel and gasoline.

The American people are hurting, and Republicans here on the House floor are delighted that this Congress is back in session, that the lights are back on and the cameras are back on because, all through the month of August, while the House Democrats took a five-week paid vacation, Republicans stayed here because we simply believe that there's no issue of greater import to working Americans, small business owners or family farmers than the cost of gasoline and the high price of oil.

I will say to you that the disappointing economic news in August, Mr. Speaker, can be explained with one phrase: The high cost of energy is costing American jobs and the American people know this.

As I traveled the four corners of my eastern Indiana district this past weekend, I did not hear about the bowling scores of Presidential candidates. I didn't even hear about lipstick very much. But I heard one Hoosier after another saying to me, "Please, get Congress to do something real about lessening our dependence on foreign oil and lowering the price of gasoline at the pump." And that's why we're here tonight, to talk about this issue.

It's an issue on the front page of my hometown newspaper, the largest newspaper in my district, I should say, the Muncie Star Press. After Ike hit shore, gasoline prices went to \$4.29 a gallon. In parts of my district, they were reported to be well over \$5 a gallon in the Midwest.

The headline tells the tale: Hoosiers are helpless. Millions of American people are helpless, Mr.

Speaker, as they see a Congress that has over the last two years of this Democrat majority twiddled its thumbs while gasoline prices rose and rose and rose, and then they took their five-week paid vacation.

But as I said, Republicans never left. As newspapers reported and radio reported all throughout the course of this summer, we stayed on this floor even though the lights were dimmed and the microphones were off, and we kept demanding that Speaker Nancy Pelosi would bring this Congress back into session and would bring a bill to the floor of this House that would give the American people more access to our own domestic reserves through drilling and include all of the other strategies long-term energy independence, more conservation, more fuel efficiency, solar, wind, nuclear.

A lot of people are looking at Congress this week with the word that we're going to be debating an energy bill that newspapers are reporting includes drilling and they're saying, "Mike, what's your problem? It seems to me you were one of those people arguing in the dimmed lights of the House Chamber for the whole month of August, demanding that Congress come back. They came back. Demanding that they bring an energy bill to the floor with drilling. And it looks like they are."

Well, I want to say, Mr. Speaker, to you and anyone looking in, it only looks that way. The energy legislation that will be brought to this floor, according to the best information we have, will do virtually nothing to lessen our dependence on foreign oil. If they have their way and take them at their word, it will still leave more than 80 percent of our domestic reserves forever off limits.

Now, we are going to gather tonight with some of the most distinguished and eloquent voices in the House Republican caucus to talk about this bill, to talk about the Democrat energy bill.

But I want to frame this debate, because as near as we can tell, Mr. Speaker, the Democrat majority's going to file a bill tonight with this 21st century energy crisis underway that sounds like they're going to debate for a whole day, maybe a day and a half, and then we're being told we'll be voting by the middle of the week.

Now, I don't want to get lost in the weeds of boring the American people who are looking on

tonight with talking about subcommittees and committees and things we call markups. But the American people deserve to know that this bill, if it's filed tonight, we're being told the Democratic energy bill hasn't been written in any committee by people elected by the people of the United States of America. It hasn't been written in any normal process. It's been written in the back rooms of the Speaker's office.

Ironically, in the middle of August this year, as many of us were clamoring on this House floor with the lights dimmed, calling on the Democrat majority to come back and debate energy, we learned that an environmental group known as the Sierra Club had endorsed their bill. Well, we'd never seen the bill. In fact, we still haven't seen the bill. But it's coming.

And so what we are going to do tonight is we're going to do our level best to use the franchises that we have on this floor to inform the American people about what's going on here, and I'm going to use, Mr. Speaker, the Whip Pack that's put out by the office of the distinguished majority whip, the Honorable James E. Clyburn, and it's about five or six pages of, you know, what people in the political business call talking points about the Democrat legislation.

And let me be clear: I know I and the distinguished legislators on the floor tonight, we would love to be debating the bill but we don't have it. The Democrat majority is about to bring an energy bill that they're calling the Comprehensive American Energy Security and Consumer Protection Act, and the title of the bill is all I really know at this point. It will likely be hundreds, if not thousands, of pages long, but we'll talk about the talking points tonight.

But I want to make two points before I yield to my colleagues.

Number one, the American people deserve to know that the Democrats have made rhetorical progress in this battle. The truth is that Speaker Nancy Pelosi, a San Francisco liberal Democrat and a distinguished member of this body, who I respect as a person, has been accurately described in the media as a zealous opponent of offshore drilling since the 1980s.

Speaker Nancy Pelosi of San Francisco has, like many liberals in California, been an ardent opponent of offshore drilling throughout her public career and was an ardent opponent of even taking a vote on offshore drilling until I think last week.

Let me give you the tale of the tape here. As recently as July 11, Speaker Nancy Pelosi told the New York Times, "This call for drilling in areas that are protected is a hoax." She said, "It's an absolute hoax." This is this last July. The Speaker of the House said, and I quote her with respect, "It's an absolute hoax on the part of the Republicans and this Bush administration."

In an interview on July 17 on CNN, an interview with Wolf Blitzer, he said, "So let me get--will you allow the issue, offshore oil drilling, to come up for a vote on the floor of the House?"

Speaker Pelosi, "We're going to exhaust other remedies in terms of increasing supply in America..."

Wolf Blitzer, "So the answer is no?"

Speaker Nancy Pelosi, "I have no plans to do so."

In fact, many of us remember on August 3, a couple of days after that Congress adjourned for a five-week paid vacation, a memorable and, in my opinion, a workmanlike journalistic job by George Stephanopoulos on ABC's "This Week" Sunday morning program where he must have asked Speaker Pelosi five different times whether she would ever allow a vote on drilling. And she said no about as we say south of Highway 46, different ways from Sunday, no, no, no, no.

In other settings, Speaker Pelosi, has said, and I quote that she's, quote, "trying to save the planet," presuming that allowing the American people to environmentally, responsibly take advantage of our own natural resources on the Outer Continental Shelf in the gulf or in Alaska would endanger the earth.

And let me say, that's entirely her right to hold that view. It's just not the view of the overwhelming majority of the American people, and it is certainly not the view of the majority of the Members elected to Congress. All the Republicans and many Democrats are prepared today to vote to lift the moratorium on offshore drilling that's been in place for decades.

So I guess that my first point to make today, Mr. Speaker, to you and those looking on is, is first and foremost, let's understand our context here, that throughout the course of this newly minted Democrat majority, Speaker Nancy Pelosi has made it crystal clear until very recently that she was categorically opposed to this Congress ever voting on drilling. I think we ought to evaluate the Democratic proposal in the context of her sincerely held views up to a week ago.

And I would say with that, allowing for a belief in the sincerity of all of my colleagues, I think we ought to trust, but verify. I think we ought to look at the detail. Someone who has been, throughout her public career, a vociferous opponent of offshore drilling now allowing what we're being told is a bill that would allow offshore drilling, you know, we probably ought to read the fine print. And that's what we're going to try to do tonight. I can assure my countrymen who may be looking on, we will be trying to do that in the whole day we will be debating this energy proposal. A day.

You know, I worked on legislation that passed the House this year by 398 votes, a bipartisan measure; I have currently been working on it for four years. It has been debated through committees, it has been debated through the House, it has been considered in the Senate. And that's pretty typical in legislation. But this bill is going to be introduced tonight, and we may debate it for a day.