

# *Who is Really Responsible for Rising Gas Prices?*

Gas prices are soaring with no end in sight. The national average recently passed \$4 a gallon and \$5 a gallon will soon become the norm. Congress spins with the blame game and looks for quick fixes. The Democrats blame the oil companies. They want to levy a 25% windfall profit tax on the oil industry, eliminate \$17 billion in tax breaks to the industry, have more regulations, and grant the U.S. government the authority to sue OPEC. The Republicans counter the solution is more oil exploration in the United States. They want to open up the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and the coastal areas of the continental United States for more oil drilling, and to give more tax breaks to the oil industry.

Both plans are flawed because they do not address the really fundamental issues of how we got ourselves into this predicament in the first place and how we are going to get out of it. We shouldn't be blaming India, China and the rest of the world for imitating our energy intensive life styles, thereby increasing the world demand for more oil and energy. Neither should we blame the oil companies and OPEC for being the beneficiaries of our insatiable thirst for oil.

Oil has always been a finite natural resource. Drilling for more oil will not change the fact that the supply of oil will keep going down, no matter how much drilling we do, while the demand for this black gold keeps going up. Drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and off our coastal waters may give us a little bit more oil in the short term, but at what cost to our environment and to our children's legacy? It has taken our planet hundreds of millions of years to create this oil and it has taken humankind less than 100 years to use it up.

We also shouldn't be blaming Congress for its failure to act in a sensible manner and to craft real long term solutions to this very serious problem.

The truth is that Congress is doing exactly what the American people want. As a collective, the American people are not ready for real change. The truth is that we don't want to change our energy and resource intensive lifestyles and our dependence on oil. Just like in the Alcoholics Anonymous program where the first step in the treatment is for the person to admit that he or she has an alcohol problem, we must collectively acknowledge that we have a problem and that we must change our lifestyles and habits to make a difference.

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