

APRIL 5, 2004

SCHAKOWSKY & DURBIN CHALLENGE PRESIDENT BUSH TO BRING DRIVERS RELIEF AT THE GAS PUMP AFTER THREE YEARS OF CLIMBING PRICES UNDER HIS LEADERSHIP

CHICAGO, IL - U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) and U.S. Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL) today challenged President Bush to bring consumers in Chicago and across the country relief at the gas pump.

Standing across from a gas station in Schakowsky's Congressional District where prices have climbed to at least \$2.00 a gallon, the Congressional leaders expressed concern that President Bush's failed energy strategy is costing families in Illinois hundreds of dollars a year and challenged him to take immediate steps to help consumers, especially as the summer driving season approaches.

Schakowsky called on President Bush to deliver on his [2000 campaign promise](#) to convince the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) "to open up the spigot." OPEC announced last week that it plans to cut production by 4%. However, the White House announced that President Bush had not called OPEC leaders.

"America deserves better than what they have been offered by President Bush. President Bush must finally follow through on this campaign promise and immediately call on OPEC to increase supplies. For our long term energy strategy, we must invest in clean energy and technology and increase CAFÉ standards so that cars can use less gas and so that consumers can save more. That is the only way we will truly reduce our dependence on foreign oil," said Schakowsky said, who is a member of the Energy and Commerce Committee in the House.

Below is Schakowsky's written statement for today's news conference:

**WRITTEN STATEMENT OF U.S. REPRESENTATIVE JAN SCHAKOWSKY (D-IL)
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"I want to thank Senator Durbin for his leadership and unwavering commitment to bringing relief at the gas pump to my constituents and to families all across Illinois."

"High gas prices are not a new phenomenon for Chicagoans. We have seen them spike several times during the Bush Presidency. I joined Senator Durbin in requesting a Federal Trade Commission study a few years ago that found that distributors and refiners were cutting supplies to create artificial shortages and drive up prices. That was not illegal, but it was wrong. At that time, I asked President Bush to call on his industry friends to reduce prices and maintain adequate supplies because consumers were being gouged at the pump. Despite his close ties to key industry players, and despite years of increased gas prices in this country, he refused."

"Today, President Bush is refusing to follow through on a [promise he made to America while he was campaigning for President in 2000](#)."

"Candidate Bush criticized President Clinton for rising gas prices and declared: 'I think the president ought to get on the phone with the OPEC cartel and say: "We expect you to open your spigots' ...The president of the United States must jawbone OPEC members to lower the price.

**□ □ Then later, Candidate Bush promised the American people:
*'I would work with our friends in OPEC to convince them to open up the spigot, to increase the supply. ... Use the capital that my administration will earn, with the Kuwaitis or the Saudis, and convince them to open up the spigot.'***

"I agree with then candidate Bush's belief that the President should at least try to reason with OPEC nations. That is why I was surprised last week when the White House announced that President Bush has not called OPEC leaders after the oil cartel announced it is cutting production by 4%."

"Gas prices have risen over 11% since President Bush took office. This steady increase has cost Americans billions of dollars over the course of the Bush presidency. The winners of the price spikes at the pump are oil and gas companies who are filling up the Bush/Cheney campaign coffers while consumers are struggling just to fill their tanks.

"This is one of the most oil and gas friendly Administration's --Vice President Cheney, Karl Rove, Condoleezza Rice, Commerce Secretary Don Evans, Interior Secretary Gale Norton, and other key players who drafted the secretive Administration energy plan during secret meetings of the President's hand-picked Energy Task Force all have big oil roots and big oil fortunes."

"We challenge President Bush to take responsibility for the rising gas prices, to stop playing politics, and show some leadership. We know what many of the problems are: Producers and refiners are manipulating supplies, OPEC is reducing output, and CAFÉ standards are inadequate. But, because he refuses to tell us what was discussed behind closed doors, consumers can only assume that real energy problems that affect their pocketbooks and the environment were not addressed. But we do know they talked about big tax breaks for big oil because that is the only kind of energy policy we have seen from this Administration. And meanwhile, American consumers are forced to pay twice. Once at the pump and once through their taxes to subsidize big oil. Enough is enough."

"By blaming Democrats and Senator Kerry for standing up against his anti-consumer, anti-environment energy plan, President Bush is making it clear where he stands - with OPEC and with his contributors at the Exxons and Mobiles of the world, instead of with the hard working families, commuters and those whose livelihood depends on reasonable gas prices."

"Nothing that has been proposed by President Bush is guaranteed to lower gas prices. The Bush/Cheney energy plan delivers tax breaks to big oil without any guarantee that the industry will in fact charge consumers reasonable prices. And drilling in the Arctic will harm the environment while only making a negligible impact on the domestic supply of gasoline in this country."

"America deserves better than what they have been offered by President Bush. President Bush must finally follow through on this campaign promise and immediately call on OPEC to increase supplies. For our long term energy strategy, we must invest in clean energy and technology and increase CAFÉ standards so that cars can use less gas and so that consumers can save more. That is the only way we will truly reduce our dependence on foreign oil."

"President Bush should pick up the phone and jawbone OPEC leaders so they will open up the spigot, and, while he's at it, he should finally call on his big oil friends and contributors in the industry and tell them to give hard working American consumers a break at the pump."