

Working to Wean U.S. Off of Foreign Oil

**By U.S. Reps, Jan Schakowsky, Dan Lipinski, Luis Gutierrez, Rahm Emanuel, and Jerry Costello**

**The Chicago Tribune**

**Letter to the Editor**

**May 4, 2006**

In your April 27 editorial "The ethanol factor," the Tribune accused a bipartisan group of Illinois representatives of voting to raise gas prices because they voted against a bill that provided billions of dollars in subsidies to the oil and gas industry.

We voted to stop giving away taxpayer dollars to corporations that are charging record prices in order to make record profits. Since Congress passed that legislation last October, Exxon Mobil reported the highest annual profits of any corporation in history and gas prices have been projected to rise 11 percent over last year's record level.

Our refinery capacity must be expanded to reduce prices at the production level.

It is the oil companies that have limited capacity in order to help their profits go up, closing 178 refineries since 1980.

In Senate testimony, the CEOs of Shell and ConocoPhillips said they were unaware of any federal or state regulations that had prevented them from opening new refineries.

The Tribune also blamed a switch from dangerous MTBE additives to low-cost and clean-burning ethanol for raising prices at the pump.

The use of ethanol expands our gasoline supply by increasing the volumes of finished product,

typically by about 10 percent.

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, ethanol also increases efficiency. For every unit of energy that goes into growing corn and turning it into ethanol, we get back about one-third more energy as automotive fuel.

We won't apologize for embracing the notion that ethanol provides the most promising means of weaning the U.S. off of foreign oil, and could ensure that the Illinois economy remains robust.

Next time the Tribune plays the blame game, it should look beyond the oil industry's talking points.