

Call Congress Back To Vote On Drilling

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Leadership: When it comes to giving relief at the pump by drilling for more oil, this is truly a "do-nothing" Democratic Congress. President Bush should give 'em hell like Harry Truman did.

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Article II, Section 3 of the Constitution states that the president "may, on extraordinary occasions, convene both houses" of Congress. On more than two dozen occasions in our history, presidents have done just that, forcing the Senate and House of Representatives to meet on extraordinary matters of defense or economic peril.

Sixty years ago this month, President Truman called such a special session to shame into action what he labeled a "do nothing" Republican Congress. He dubbed it the Turnip Day Session, because of the day on which it began. According to folklore in Truman's native Missouri, "On the 25th of July, sow your turnips, wet or dry."

Congress refused to do Truman's bidding in the session, but the bold move saved the president's political skin. He defied the odds that November and was re-elected — largely because the public came to view the 80th Congress as in the grip of a cowardly paralysis.

Today's Democratic-controlled 110th Congress is just as paralyzed, but the stakes are far higher. Our irrational dependence on oil from foreign nations is squeezing American consumers and businesses with sky-high fuel prices. And it makes us vulnerable to blackmail by hostile, oil-rich regimes.

Americans use nearly 21 million barrels of oil a day. The U.S. Geological Survey has just identified 90 billion barrels of recoverable oil in the Arctic — nearly 30 billion barrels of it in Alaska. Yet House Speaker Nancy Pelosi refuses to allow a floor vote on drilling because the idea it would make a difference is "frivolous," she said last week.

Suffering consumers disagree. This month, an IBD/TIPP Poll of 920 adults found that by more than 3-to-1 Americans believe gas prices to be a bigger problem than global warming. A broad-based 64% of respondents favor offshore drilling, and 65% want oil shale development in the Western states.

A Rasmussen survey in June found 67% of voters in favor of drilling off the coasts of California, Florida and other states, and 64% believing gas prices would drop as a result. A Zogby poll last month found that 74% want offshore drilling in U.S. waters.

This is a potential political gusher, if only Republicans would fully tap into it. Bush has the opportunity to do so before this hot, cash-guzzling summer ends. Like Truman, he can use his constitutional authority to call this negligent Congress back once it embarks on its long August recess to campaign for re-election.

In so doing, he can demand that instead of nonsolutions like its failed attempt to release more oil from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve [SPR], Congress carry out the will of the vast majority of Americans by passing laws that authorize drilling.

In one fell swoop, a presidential recall of Congress would strengthen national security, boost our economy and maybe even turn things around for Republicans and avoid the losses being predicted for them this election year.

If giving 'em hell worked for Harry, you bet it can work for Dubya.

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