

The 60 Plus Association

515 King Street • Suite 315 • Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone 703.807.2070 • Fax 703.807.2073 • www.60Plus.org

Kill the Death Tax. Protect Social Security. Energy Security.

James L. Martin
Chairman

Amy N. Frederick
President

Rep. Roger Zion (R-IN, 1967-75)
Honorary Chairman

Pat Boone
National Spokesman

May 25, 2011

Re: Natural Resources Committee Full Committee Hearing on “Harnessing American Resources to Create Jobs and Address Rising Gasoline Prices - Part III: Impacts on Seniors, Working Families and Memorial Day Vacations”

Dear Chairman Hastings and Ranking Minority Leader Markey:

The 60 Plus Association, which represents over seven million senior activists, commends you for your commitment to America and her seniors, and for convening this important hearing focusing on the high prices of gas and its impact on seniors, minorities, and the tourism industry.

The 60 Plus Association stands for free enterprise, less government and fewer taxes for seniors, and neither takes nor seeks federal grant money. As senior activists, we at 60 Plus are pleased to weigh-in on whatever our supporters tell us is on their minds. They care deeply about Medicare and Social Security reform, repealing the death tax, out-of-control government spending, rising taxes, and jobs...but I must say that lately, I'm hearing more and more about their concerns over the adverse impact rising costs of energy has made on their lives. And so, 60 Plus is involved.

60 Plus is also, proudly, a Member of the Affordable Power Alliance, consisting of the Congress of Racial Equality (with National Spokesperson Niger Innis), the Black Chamber of Commerce (along with its President, Harry C. Alford), and two minority-run religious groups – the High Impact Leadership Coalition (led by Bishop Harry R. Jackson Jr.) and the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference (with its President, Reverend Samuel Rodriguez). This coalition works to ensure access to affordable energy for the working poor, minorities and the elderly; all of whom are hit especially hard by high gas prices.

60 Plus is equally proud to be a member of the Consumer Energy Alliance led by President David Holt, which was formed to help support the thoughtful utilization of all domestic energy resources to improve domestic energy security and reduce consumer prices. The also seek to improve consumer understanding of our nation's energy security, including the need to reduce reliance on imported oil and natural gas in order to maintain reasonable energy prices for consumers, and continue efforts to diversify our energy resources.

Groups like these are trying to make a difference because the country is in crisis.

My message is simple: seniors (and for that matter, every segment of American society) have for decades painfully witnessed first-hand the negligence, and quite frankly, the disregard over this nation's mandate for serious energy exploration. Now, our country is in an economic crisis and our national security is threatened due to this neglect. This nation has the wherewithal to fulfill energy supply domestically, but we seem only willing to remain dependent on other, unstable and often hostile nations to fulfill our energy needs.

Time and time again we have heard the rhetoric of Presidents and some in Congress regarding alternative energy, but until such options become a legitimately viable outlet, we need to focus on tapping America's vast natural resources, including drilling both onshore and offshore. When then-President Clinton vetoed ANWR in 1995, some environmental groups argued that opening ANWR wouldn't do anything to lower currently high gas prices (which were then high enough to be a drag on the economy and to cause significant public disgruntlement) because it would take (quote)10 years (unquote) for the oil to start flowing. If President Clinton hadn't vetoed the bill in 1995, there would almost certainly be at least an additional one million barrels a day starting to flow through the Trans-Alaska pipeline, right now, today, for over six years...for a total of over 2 BILLION 190 MILLION BARRELS of oil that could have gone towards easing our current energy crisis. If we want more domestic oil production in the future, we need to take action now and not keep falling for the (quote) 10 year (unquote) bogus arguments of the past.

I hope so. Seniors hope so. We need affordable oil production, and we need it now!

With gas prices being at an all-time high, it is hurting those who can least afford it. Seniors on fixed incomes are, in many cases, unable to keep up with the runaway cost increases that are making a devastating impact on their standard of living. According to a USA Today/Gallup Poll taken May 12-15, 2011, 7 in 10 Americans say the high cost of fuel is causing financial hardship for their families. Gasoline to drive our cars, heating oil to keep our homes warm, electricity to power the stores we shop in...everything is on the increase, cost-wise. Transportation costs have driven food prices through the roof.

I speak from experience, having testified before a 2007 hearing of the House Resources Committee chaired by Congressman Nick Rahall and before a similar House Energy and Commerce Committee's Sub-Committee on Energy and the Environment hearing chaired by Representative Eliot Engel. My testimonies then focused upon the lack of adequate energy exploration and the resulting high energy costs. 60 Plus has also testified at Department of Energy hearings in Atlantic City (twice), Virginia Beach, and Tallahassee, Florida.

For 19 years, 60 Plus has worked diligently for a self-sufficient energy policy as the best means for affordable energy supplies. Indeed, 60 Plus' Honorary Chairman Roger Zion (U.S. Congressman from Indiana, 1967-1975) who served on President George W. Bush's Task Force on Energy) authored an opinion piece that appeared in *The Washington Times* (November 9, 2001) urging development of the resources of ANWR and criticizing those in Congress blocking such exploration. Then as now, in today's terribly troubled world, Congressman Zion's warning that reliance for energy sources at such levels from outside our borders is not just irresponsible, it is dangerous.

We believed it was wrong then, and we believe it is still wrong, that while this nation has the wherewithal to fulfill energy supply needs right here where we live, we only seem willing to let foreign oil imports provide the bulk of America's energy, costing jobs and risking our nation's economic security.

Unfortunately, however, if the past is prologue, your hearing, which I strongly applaud, will for a short time put a spotlight on the legitimate concerns seniors and others have over the rising costs of energy and

the impact it has on every facet of their lives. Then, powerful Big-Green organizations will continue to strong-arm Congress to prevent domestic energy production. I believe the environmental movement, while important, simply cannot continue to block vital energy exploration and production. Domestic energy can be produced responsibly, and I believe it is imperative that we bridge this divide between those who claim the environmental mantle and those who are responsible for providing our energy needs.

We need more domestic energy, and we need it sooner, not later.

The crippling burden of these high prices can mean not being able to buy medications, get around, or stay warm in winter or cool in summer. For seniors this is about more than economic security, it's about survival.

Let me conclude with a few general remarks.

I believe we need all forms of domestic energy that we can produce and this includes oil, coal, natural gas, nuclear and renewables such as wind and solar. Speaking of coal, I, for one, am proud to be the son of a Kentucky coal miner and vividly recollect the sight and smell of my dad's carbide light many mornings as he left before dawn for the coal mine. As a little boy, I was fascinated by the black patch my father wore over his right eye. He was a dashing figure, and brought to my mind Terry and the Pirates comic strip—until I learned that he lost his eye in a dynamite blast deep in a mine shaft. My father's industry way back then is nearly unrecognizable today. Now we have sounder technologies that ensure energy exploration and production with diminished environmental risk. But, do we have the will to roll up our sleeves and do it?

Any limits to domestic exploration, whether offshore or drilling in the National Wildlife Refuge, etc., at a time when international supplies are so uncertain is not good for our nation. We must wean ourselves from our dangerous dependence on foreign oil supplies. In my previous Congressional testimony I stressed not only the economic impact on seniors, but that over-dependence on foreign sources is now a clear and present danger to national security. It is a travesty that, from the time President Carter said his goal was to see that foreign imports, then at about 37%, did not rise "another percentile". It is, sorry to say (that from the following 5 Presidents, Republicans and Democrats alike) that percentile is now in the neighborhood of 65%.

In re-assessing this country's energy policies, 60 Plus, with well over 80% of our supporters being veterans of military service, considers this a vital national security issue. In April of this year, Cuba announced that they are sinking 16 oil and gas wells just 50 miles off Key West, and estimate that 20 billion barrels of crude will be harvested. Additionally, 5 Cuban wells are being constructed in the Gulf of Mexico. How much of that will be syphoned off our oil deposits within American waters?

Seniors have long memories. We fondly recall cheap gas and boundless energy supplies. Many seniors are old enough to remember the gas-ration coupons of the World War II years. Seniors of the Boomer Generation remember the 1973 (Nixon Administration) Oil Embargo by the Arab Members of OPEC plus Egypt, Syria and Tunisia. They remember the Carter Administration's gas lines which occurred during the energy crisis of 1979, when oil imports were severely disrupted in the wake of the Iranian revolution. Today, the U.S. economy is even more vulnerable to hostile nation manipulation of oil imports.

In summary, we need more domestic energy, and more sources of domestic energy. Senior citizens...and all Americans...will benefit. On behalf of the 60 Plus Association, I strongly support efforts to ensure

reasonable energy prices through access to our nation's abundant offshore oil and natural gas resources in all areas of the U.S. Outer Continental Shelf, and the opening of ANWR to drilling. And we need these measures now.

Bottom line. Stop dreaming! Start drilling!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jim Martin". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

James L. Martin
Chairman
The 60 Plus Association
515 King Street Suite 315
Alexandria VA 22314
703.807.2070
jmartin@60plus.org

The 60 Plus Association is a 19-year-old nonpartisan organization working for death tax repeal, saving Social Security, affordable prescription drugs, lowering energy costs and other issues featuring a less government, less taxes approach as well as a strict adherence to the Constitution. 60 Plus calls on support from over 7 million activists. 60 Plus publishes a newsletter, SENIOR VOICE, and a Scorecard, bestowing awards on lawmakers of both parties who vote "pro-senior." 60 Plus has been called, "an increasingly influential senior citizen's group" and since 1992 "the conservative alternative to the AARP."

