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**U.S. House of Representatives**  
**Committee on Natural Resources**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

**Opening Statement of**  
**Subcommittee Chairman Doug Lamborn**  
**Before the Full Natural Resources Committee**  
**Oversight Hearing on:**

***"Harnessing American Resources to Create Jobs and Address Rising Gasoline Prices:  
Impacts on Seniors, Working Families and Memorial Day Vacations."***  
**On Wednesday, May 25, 2011, at 10:00 a.m.**

*As Prepared for Delivery:*

The national average price of gasoline continues to hover near \$4 per gallon, causing even greater financial pain as the summer driving season begins. This weekend, families across the country will be celebrating Memorial Day – a holiday that's frequently marked by loading up the car and taking an extended weekend trip to the beach, a national park, or perhaps a trip to the grandparents' house for an outdoor barbeque. This year however, more Americans will be staying home due to escalating gasoline prices.

According to AAA, 40 percent of Americans said that high gasoline prices will impact their Memorial Day vacation plans. This decline in travel has ripple effects throughout the entire economy. Hotels, restaurants, recreational facilities, marinas, and other service industries will all feel the impact of fewer vacationers.

Unfortunately, annual family vacations are not the only trade-off having to be made due to rising gasoline prices. Seniors are often hit the hardest since even a slight increase in prices can seriously squeeze those living on an already tight, fixed income.

According to the Associated Press, over 76 percent of seniors are experiencing financial hardship over gasoline prices –up from 68 percent in March.

The AP also reported how some seniors are cutting back on medicine in order to fill up their cars. For example, Netti Cash from Georgia is forgoing her inhaler and ulcer medicine in order to pay for gasoline.

These are simply choices that Americans shouldn't have to make, not in a nation holding the most resources of any in the world.

This is the third hearing the Natural Resources Committee has held examining the impacts of high gasoline prices and how we can harness our own American energy resources to help ease the pain at the pump.

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We've heard from expert witnesses about America's vast energy supplies and it frankly makes no sense that there are policies in place, enforced by the Obama Administration, that keep them under lock-and-key.

The International Energy Agency last week called for increased oil production to prevent further economic damage to importing countries – which includes the United States. There's no reason why we shouldn't already be increasing production. We need a long-term plan to significantly increase our domestic oil and natural gas supplies.

I'm pleased that the House has already passed three bipartisan bills to do just that. It's time for the President and the Senate to step up to the plate and do likewise.

In a recent weekly address, President Obama appeared to be finally supporting the need for increased oil production as part of a solution to high gasoline prices. Indeed, his speech was a far cry from 2008 when then-candidate Obama said, "If it thought that by drilling offshore, we could solve our problem, I'd do it."

If President Obama has truly flipped positions, then I welcome his small steps in the right direction. However, I'm not convinced we've heard anything more from the President than just more rhetoric. It's one thing to say we need increased oil production and it's quite another to actually implement policies and issue the permits that allow for increased production.

It's my hope that both the Senate and the President will support our efforts in the House to allow for new drilling off the Atlantic and Pacific coasts where we have the most oil and natural gas resources. Doing so will dramatically increase U.S. production, reduce imports by one-third and create up to 1.2 million American jobs long-term.

Regardless of whether gasoline prices are up or down, it does not change the fundamental need to develop our own American energy resources. It's been put off for far too long - jeopardizing both our economic and national security.

I want to thank all the witnesses for being here today and look forward to hearing your testimony.