

Written by Grassley Press

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WASHINGTON --- Senator Chuck Grassley said today that defeat of an amendment 10 years ago to allow more domestic energy production in Alaska was “enormously shortsighted” because today that oil would be driving down prices at the pump for consumers.

“It’s past time to take action to ramp up domestic production of traditional energy,” he said. “In 2011, consumers spent a greater percentage of their household income on gasoline than any other year since 1981. Affordable energy is a major economic issue.”

Grassley made his remarks on the 10-year anniversary of a Senate vote against legislation to open a tiny portion of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge – ANWR – to oil and gas development. On April 18, 2002, the Democratic-controlled Senate defeated the domestic production initiative with many senators arguing that because it would take up to 10 years for the oil to reach the market ANWR was too far down the road to impact the energy supply or energy security.

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“This missed opportunity should be a lesson. We shouldn’t make the same mistakes again,” Grassley said. “Greater domestic energy production would increase supply and help to lower prices. It would create American jobs. And it needs to start today.”

Grassley said the Obama administration has made things worse by restricting access to domestic energy sources. “The President’s policies have prevented more oil production in the United States and resulted in higher prices, lost opportunities for job creation, and less energy security,” Grassley said. “The President’s record contradicts his recent remarks that he’s for an all-of-the-above energy strategy.”

Citing Obama administration policies that restrict access to federal lands and permitting delays, regulatory threats to refiners, and the decision to deny the Keystone XL decision, Grassley said that by limiting domestic energy production, we have less supply and higher prices.

The complete text of Grassley’s statement today is below and includes comments made during the 2002 Senate debate about ANWR being ineffective because production would have taken 10 years. [Click here](#) to watch the speech.

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## Floor Statement of U.S. Senator Chuck Grassley

Wednesday, April 18, 2012

Mr. President – Around the country, American consumers are paying near-record prices for gasoline at the pump. The current average price for a gallon of gas is near \$3.90 a gallon. Since January 2009, the average price of a gallon of regular gasoline has more than doubled. In 2011, consumers spent a greater percentage of their household income on gasoline than any other year since 1981.

Affordable energy is a major economic issue. Paying nearly \$4 for gas acts like a hidden tax and results in people having less money to spend on other things. Rising energy prices also increase the cost of doing business for job creators and take away dollars that otherwise could go to hiring workers.

We should be doing everything possible to prevent these high energy prices.

The Senate had an opportunity ten years ago today to take action to increase our domestic oil supply. Unfortunately, the Senate missed that opportunity. Ten years ago today, the Senate considered an amendment offered by Senator Frank Murkowski to open a tiny portion of the

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Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to oil and gas development. A vote on the cloture motion was rejected by the Democrat majority in the Senate on April 18, 2002.

During that debate, opponents argued that opening ANWR to development would never supply more than two percent of our nation's oil demands. They opposed it based on the belief that opening ANWR wouldn't address the real problem, namely, our dependence on fossil fuels. They said we needed to work toward a comprehensive approach. Opening ANWR was also portrayed as a distraction from real solutions like conservation, alternative and renewable energy, and less environmentally sensitive fossil energy development. Some even argued that fully-inflated or low-friction tires should be a larger part of our national energy policy.

I recognize the need for a comprehensive, balanced national energy policy. I truly believe in an all-of-the-above approach that includes conservation, alternative and renewable energy, nuclear power and oil and gas development. But the fact remains, we were talking about these policies as solutions to our energy problems in 2002, yet gas prices are still near \$4 a gallon.

I listened to dozens of speakers who argued against opening ANWR because it wouldn't address our near term energy needs. They said it would take nearly ten years to get that oil to consumers. Ten years ago we were told to forget about opening ANWR, because development was too far down the road to impact our energy supply or energy security. Here a few quotes from my Democratic colleagues during that debate in April 2002:

- “I oppose the proposal to drill in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Drilling in ANWR will not create energy independence, even if we started drilling tomorrow, the first barrel of crude oil would not make it to the market for at least ten years. So it would not affect our current energy needs.”
  
- “The oil exploration in ANWR will not actually start producing oil for as many as 10 years. Exploring and drilling for oil is not forward thinking.”
  
- “That oil would not be available for 10 years. This means drilling in ANWR would not provide any immediate energy relief for American families.”
  
- “Developing ANWR is simply not a necessary component of a progressive energy policy for this country. For a period starting at about 2012, we would see an increase in domestic production under ANWR, if ANWR was open to development. So, development would not address the near-term prices or shortages with which people are faced.”
  
- “When my colleagues come to the floor of the Senate and suggest to us that the crisis in the Middle East is a reason to drill in ANWR, that is a misleading argument because no oil will flow from ANWR until from seven to 10 years from now. That means if you open the refuge today, you are not going to see oil until about 2012, maybe a couple years earlier.”

- “Oil extracted from the wildlife refuge would not reach refineries for seven to 10 years.”

The defeat of the Murkowski amendment back in 2002 was enormously short-sighted. If we had voted to open ANWR ten years ago, that oil would be driving down prices at the pump for consumers today. Time after time opponents of domestic oil production have argued that because it won't lower prices at the pump today, it's not worth doing. Does anyone wonder if the American people today wish that the Senate had opened ANWR ten years ago?

It is past time to take action to ramp up domestic production of traditional energy. Greater domestic energy production would increase supply and help to lower prices, and it would create American jobs.

President Obama continues to push policies that contribute to higher gas prices, including restricting access to federal lands and permit delays, regulatory threats to refiners, and his decision to deny the Keystone XL decision. By limiting domestic energy production, we have less supply and higher prices. The Obama administration has made things worse by restricting access to domestic energy sources. The President's record contradicts his recent remarks that he's for an all-of-the-above strategy. His policies have prevented more oil production in the United States and resulted in higher prices, lost opportunities for job creation, and less energy security. President Obama's denial of the Keystone XL pipeline inhibits energy-related development that could create 20,000 jobs.

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Greater domestic energy production would increase supply and help to lower prices, and it would create American jobs. It's time to take action.

Denying ANWR development ten years ago was a mistake. The Senate missed an opportunity ten years ago that would have brought gas price relief to consumers now. We shouldn't make the same mistakes today.

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