

**U.S. SENATOR BENJAMIN L. CARDIN (D-MD)**  
**“HIGH ENERGY PRICES ARE HURTING OUR MARYLAND AND OUR NATION”**  
**FLOOR STATEMENT**  
**APRIL 30, 2008**

First, I welcome the bipartisan support for programs that will move us toward energy independence. I agree with my colleagues that we need to do a Manhattan-type project, with the same type of commitment we made when putting a person on the Moon, to become energy independent. We have the technology. We know how to get it done. If we have the will, this Nation can do anything it wants to do.

I think there is a growing awareness among Members of this body, as well as on the other side of the Capitol, that we need to take immediate steps so this Nation can become energy independent. So I welcome the comments that have been made.

I come to the floor because the people of Maryland and throughout the Nation are hurting today. The most recent assault on their pocketbooks has been filling up their cars with gasoline. The cost of gasoline is prohibitive for families. Quite frankly, I think the Administration is doing virtually nothing to help those who are trying to afford energy costs today--whether it is their electricity bills in their homes, running the family automobile, or a business that requires them to use an automobile. This Administration has done very little to help deal with the escalating costs of energy. Instead, they look for additional tax breaks for oil companies, or they want to extend tax cuts for millionaires. They don't come forward with energy policies that would try to make energy much more affordable.

I believe we need to have strong energy legislation in this Congress. Let me give you some of the statistics that people in my State of Maryland are confronting on energy costs. Electricity rates went up 72 percent in 2007. Gasoline prices in Maryland are now \$3.49, on average, for regular gasoline, and \$3.80 for high test. That is a 150-percent increase since President Bush took office. Let me try to translate this as to how it affects the average family in my State. When you take a look at what household costs have gone up, just for gasoline for your automobile, since President Bush took office, for a typical household it has increased \$2,731 for the people of Maryland. If that household has children, it is an increase of \$3,414 a year. If they have a teenager also operating a car, it has gone up over \$4,000. To me, that is a shocking increase in just 7 years on the cost of gasoline that we put into our automobiles.

I recently had a conversation with small business owners in Maryland. Sixty-two percent of small business owners use a vehicle in their business. They need automobiles. They have to fill these tanks with gasoline. The majority drive over 50 miles a day in their automobiles to operate their businesses. So the statistics show that small businesses--and all of us talk about helping small businesses--spend more than their competitors that are large companies on energy costs. It can cost up to three times as much for a small business person for their energy cost to deliver a product to the market than for larger companies. I am sure you are aware that small businesses don't have the same availability of capital in order to buy equipment or the same availability of capital in order to keep their businesses afloat. Many small business owners are mortgaging their homes in order to keep their businesses going. Many are using credit cards with the highest

possible interest rates to keep afloat. Now they have additional energy costs. So, yes, we need to take action on the energy problem.

I must tell you that the first thing we need is a national energy policy. We have had bills that have been submitted on this floor. I appreciate my colleagues on both sides of the aisle coming forward in support of a national energy policy for energy independence. But if you remember when we voted on the renewable energy portfolio, we didn't seem to get enough of the votes we needed from the Republican side of the aisle. It is time to take action on a national energy policy--one that will truly make this Nation energy independent--whether you call it a Manhattan-type project or an Apollo-type project, we can do it. We can do it by using less energy and by developing alternative and renewable energy sources. We can do it in a way that will be good for America.

We should not be dependent for oil upon any country halfway around the world that disagrees with our policies. We have to eliminate our dependency on imported oil. We need to do that for the security of America. Our national security should come first. If for no other reason, we should do it for national security. Also, let's do it for the environment. I listened to my friend talk about green energy. We have a chance to do that. We have a bill in the Environment and Public Works Committee that Senator *Boxer* provided tremendous leadership on, along with Senators *Lieberman* and *Warner* that would cap our carbon emissions. That would energize our economy to produce green jobs and would help us to become energy independent. It would reduce greenhouse gases and would help our environment. We need to become energy independent because of our national security and because of our environment.

My friends who are talking about energy independence, we have a chance to move forward on that. Let's bring out the Lieberman-Warner legislation and move it on the floor. We are trying to do that, and if we had more help on the Republican side of the aisle, we could get that done this year and move toward energy independence.

There is a third reason we need an energy policy, and that is our economy. I don't need a clearer message about how important it is to be independent for our economy than to fill up my tank with gasoline. Go to any of your neighborhood gasoline stations and look at the price. We don't have control over our energy costs. If we were energy independent, we would. So we need an energy policy that is good for this Nation. We should not be financing other countries. That is what you do every time you fill up a tank with gas--financing other countries, and actually we are borrowing money to do that.

So we need a policy that is good for this Nation. What have the oil companies done to help us in this regard? They are doing quite well. We have businesses that are hurting. We are in a recession. We are not doing well in economic growth. But in the last year, the five major oil companies had profits of \$103 billion, and 2008 is going to be a better year than 2007 for the oil companies.

These are excessive profits. We need to do something about them. The administration says let's continue tax breaks for the oil companies; let's create some new ones. We should be using these tax breaks to develop alternative energy sources. That is what we should be doing to help the

people in our communities. We should be using these tax breaks to generate green jobs. We can do that if we energize the American economy to develop the alternative technologies that can solve our energy crisis as well as our environmental challenges.

We need to use these tax breaks so we have less reliance on foreign energy sources--alternative fuels. I wish to underscore that we need to get this administration, if they are really serious about trying to make this Nation energy independent, to refocus the tools we are using. Every time we try to do that--we try to take these tax credits and target it to the alternative energy sources rather than just giving them to the oil companies--we get a veto threat from the President.

I can tell you, Mr. President, people in Maryland desperately need leadership on energy. They need immediate help. One of the suggestions that has been made that I think we should move forward--again, the President said he is not going to do this--is the Strategic Petroleum Reserve. It is 95 percent filled. Let me explain to my constituents what this is about. Our Government is in the market every day buying 70,000 gallons of oil to put in the Strategic Petroleum Reserve. As a result, the cost to the consumers in filling up their automobiles' tanks is higher. It is supply and demand. The Government is there every day first at the gas pumps taking 70,000 gallons of fuel that otherwise could be available for consumers, and with supply and demand, the more fuel we have available, the lower the cost will be. This is something we can do immediately to try to reduce the cost of gasoline to the people of this Nation.

We need immediate action. We need immediate action to help the middle-income families in America and the small businesses that are literally being strangled by the high cost of gasoline and the high cost of energy. They need immediate relief. They need an administration that is going to take action to make more supply available. If the administration does not, the Congress should take action to do that. The American people need us to take action for immediate relief. But they also understand we cannot continue decade after decade to be dependent on foreign energy sources. It is way past time that this Nation becomes energy independent. We can get there.

As I hear my colleagues speak on both sides of the aisle, let's come together for the sake of our Nation, for the sake of our national security, for the sake of our environment, for the sake of our economy, and let's act together to pass laws so at last America can become energy independent and control its own destiny, be a good citizen of the world on the environment, and do much better for the growth of our economy. I am convinced we can do this if we act together in the best interest of our country.

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