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House of Representatives

The House met at 10:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. PASTOR).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
May 6, 2008.

I hereby appoint the Honorable ED PASTOR to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

NANCY PELOSI,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 4, 2007, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

FEDERAL GAS TAX HOLIDAY A BAD IDEA

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

One of the most disappointing turns in the current campaign has been the proposal of Senator CLINTON and Senator MCCAIN for the "gas tax holiday."

One doesn't want to be cynical, but thinking back to Senator MCCAIN's Straight Talk Express in the year 2000, it would be hard to imagine that he thought it was a good idea back then, that he wouldn't have stooped to this political trick. It wouldn't have been consistent with what he was saying and how he represented himself.

As far as Senator CLINTON is concerned, we don't have to guess about her position in 2000. We know because her opponent in 2000 when she was first

running for the Senate, our former colleague, Rick Lazio, called for suspending the 18.3 cent Federal gas tax and actually repealing the 4.3 cent per gallon surcharge that had been enacted. "What Mrs. CLINTON needs to do," he said, "is get out of the motorcade, get out of fantasyland and get in contact with the issues that are affecting real New Yorkers, the prices at the pump."

It's instructive what then candidate CLINTON had to say. She and her aides fired back immediately at Mr. Lazio for offering what they said was a shortsighted solution that could jeopardize money to fix highways. In fact, they handed out fliers that used quotes from Republican leaders to bolster her point that repealing the gas tax surcharge could be harmful. The Republicans discouraged such measures, the flier said, because they could diminish highway construction money.

Senator CLINTON said, in debating Mr. Lazio:

"We're totally reliant on the gas tax to do things like finishing I-86 in the Southern Tier, or the fast-ferry harbor works up in Rochester, as well as work we need to do here in the city. So you can count on me to support infrastructure," as she explained her opposition. And indeed she lashed out at the plan for the outright repeal of the 4.3 cent gas tax, calling it "a bad deal for New York and a potential bonanza for the oil companies."

Well, the facts that Senator CLINTON argued in 2000 are still true today. The timing, if anything, is worse, because for the first time in history, the Federal highway trust fund is going into deficit, and this would call for an additional reduction of \$9 billion to \$10 billion and 300,000 highway construction jobs. It actually is coming at a time when we should as a country be finding ways to invest more in infrastructure, not less. Virtually every independent expert acknowledges that as well as

most people in the House and the Senate.

And, of course, the irony as Senator CLINTON herself intimated is that this gas tax holiday is actually a holiday for the big producers, refiners and importers. They're the ones who pay the tax. The tax is charged to them. In order for any of the savings to trickle down to the pockets of motorists, the oil and gas interests would have to decide that they're going to pass their savings on to the rest of us. As Senator CLINTON pointed out in 2000, it's a potential bonanza for them. There's no indication that they're looking to share. Look at what they did with record profits of \$10.6 billion for ExxonMobil. Did they use that extra money to reduce prices at the pump?

The good news is that the American public is not buying this political trick. Even though they are aggravated at spiraling high gas prices and somebody is offering them, in a sense, free money, the American public sees through that. Fifty-one percent agree that it is a bad idea, even in the face of high gas prices. Even more tellingly, in the New York Times survey published yesterday, when the public was asked are politicians proposing this tax holiday because it's good for America or because it's good, they think, for the politicians, 70 percent said CLINTON and MCCAIN are doing this because it's good for the politicians, not for America.

Mr. Speaker, I hope that we can get past the campaign silly season, that people explain to Senator MCCAIN and Senator CLINTON that their earlier opposition is more important today. This is one area ought to be beyond sort of the partisan political warfare: It is time for us to rebuild and renew America, to deal with the first deficit in the trust fund, and not play political games.

This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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