

How Democrats Should Talk About the Oil and Gas Crisis



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Key Takeaway

In response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the Biden Administration is marshaling an unprecedented global action to punish Putin and squeeze Russia's economy. This includes ensuring America's energy independence so that Russia cannot use fossil fuels as an economic weapon to try to manipulate the West in the future.

Oil and gas prices are rising from what President Biden noted as “Putin’s price hike.”

As Americans watch Ukrainian families flee for their lives, they are beginning to understand these temporary spikes are necessary to protect democracy and stand up to an authoritarian bully. That’s why there is bipartisan support in Congress and the Administration to ban Russian oil and gas imports. Republicans and Democrats recognize that this will bring a short-term cost in the form of higher gas prices and know that in the long-term it will make America stronger.

Even though they support this measure that increases the price of oil, Republicans are peddling hollow solutions to voters and slinging hypocritical attacks at Democrats. We’ve put together some talking points on how Democrats should respond to these attacks and emphasize how our country is addressing this crisis now—and securing American energy security and independence in the future.

Topline Message

The President and Democrats want to help Americans who are anxious about high gas prices and are taking action now to lower gas prices and increase supply now, while also investing in the US clean energy economy to protect our future.

Three Supporting Messages

1. To keep prices low, the Biden Administration has increased domestic energy production.

- The US has been energy independent since 2017 despite Republican claims to the contrary. But because oil and gas are global commodities we will always rely on imports and exports, and consumers will be affected by shocks in the marketplace.
- President Biden approved more permits for oil and gas drilling on public lands in his first year in office than President Trump did during his.
- Monthly US oil production has grown roughly 20% since President Biden’s first full month in office.
- The number of oil rigs in operation in the US has grown 58% in the past year alone.

2. Republicans are getting basic economics wrong. I’m happy to explain how capitalism works. Oil production came to a screeching halt during COVID because most people stopped traveling and commuting. There was less demand, so there was less supply. The Biden Boom has arrived. Demand is up, and until supply catches up, prices will rise. Russia’s invasion has increased those supply challenges. Once enough supply is literally in the pipeline, prices will drop. This is econ 101, supply and demand.

3. **The Biden–Harris Administration and Democrats in Congress are fighting to cut household energy bills by an average of \$300 a month in the coming years and give Americans access to cleaner, reliable, and more affordable American-made power, fuels, and vehicles in the long-term.**

- Democrats are fighting for investments in an array of clean energy technologies that will provide affordable and reliable energy that isn't susceptible to volatile global shocks like we see in the oil and gas industry. That's where the global economy is headed, and it is a charge America should be leading.

Republican Claims and Fact-Checks

Republican Claim #1: America became energy independent under President Trump and Biden has squandered our resources and caused the US to backslide.

FACT: The United States began its path to energy independence in 2005 and remains so under President Biden. But oil and gas are global commodities, and we will always rely on imports and exports and be subjected to shocks in the marketplace. The Biden Administration is utilizing every tool in its arsenal to bolster oil supply and combat the oil price shock from Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Republican Claim #2: Over 4,000 oil and gas permits have not been approved for drilling by The Biden Administration.

FACT: This is misleading. The Biden Administration approved more leases in its first year than the Trump Administration did, and too many companies are sitting on too many of those leases. In addition, there are 4,621 *pending* oil and gas permits currently in review, but even if they were approved today, it would not have an impact on existing gas prices for months or even years.

Republican Claim #3: Biden is searching for oil anywhere on the planet except at home.

FACT: Once again, the GOP is working to mislead American voters. In its first year, the Biden Administration approved more than 9,000 oil and gas leases and released more than 120 million barrels of oil from the Strategic Petroleum Reserves to offset recent price hikes. They have made three things clear:

1. We will keep all options on the table to reduce costs hurting American families and businesses;
2. We will protect American energy independence and security; and
3. We will help our European allies weather this storm.

Republican Claim #4: The United States produced more oil in 2019 than we consumed, which should make America energy independent, but this Administration has bungled it all.

FACT: This is just a lie. In 2019 we produced 17.11 million barrels of oil per day, but we consumed 20.54 million barrels per day. And in 2020, both production and consumption fell because most people didn't travel or commute during the height of the COVID pandemic demand went down, and suppliers produced less oil and gas. The economy is booming, and demand is rising, which means prices will rise until supply catches up with demand. This is basic economics.

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