

The Vindication of 'Drill, Baby, Drill'



Back in 2008, Americans began hearing the phrase “Drill, baby, drill” thrown around in Republican circles. It was a simple message that proposed the simple solution of increased domestic drilling to deal with some of our nation’s energy problems, like high gas prices and our reliance on foreign oil.

Michael Steele, who was the RNC Chairman at the time, proudly spoke the motto to an exuberant crowd during his speech at the Republican National Convention. He also penned an op-ed for the *Washington Times*, expanding on his position.

“Most have come to understand that if we don’t act this energy crisis will profoundly alter our way of life, as the cost per barrel eats into our ability to save and invest,” Steele wrote. “America must prevent a short-term crisis from becoming a long-term tragedy. We’ve allowed 30 years of our shortsightedness on energy security to catch us once again. It’s time to take the initial steps to open new areas for development and to expand America’s domestic production. It’s time to drill, baby, drill. And drill now.”

Democrats largely mocked the idea, insisting that more drilling in America would have essentially no effect on the price of oil. Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi and her majority of House Democrats wouldn’t even allow a debate on the topic, and Joe Biden, in his vice presidential debate with Sarah Palin, said that “it will take ten years for one drop of

oil to come out of any of the wells that are going to be drilled.”

Palin defended her support for increased domestic drilling that night, and continued to promote the “Drill, baby, drill” mantra long after her presidential ticket lost the election. She took a lot of heat from the media for it.

In 2011, renewable energy expert Eric Wesoff, in a piece for Greentech Media ridiculed Palin’s stance, writing that “no amount of increase in U.S. production will influence oil prices given the relative size of our oil reserves.” It was the conventional wisdom held by the American Left, and more importantly President Obama.

During his re-election campaign in 2012, the president said in his weekly address to the nation that “we can’t just drill our way to lower gas prices.”

A couple of weeks before that, he outright mocked the notion of domestic drilling bringing down the price of gasoline: “Now, some politicians always see this as a political opportunity. And since it’s an election year, they’re already dusting off their three-point plans for \$2 gas. I’ll save you the suspense: Step one is drill, step two is drill, and step three is keep drilling.”

He made the same types of jokes in front of audiences, telling a group in Washington, “You remember that? Drill, baby, drill. We were going through all that. And none of it was really going to do anything to solve the problem.”

As we all know, \$2 gas is *exactly* what Americans are now enjoying. What a lot of people don’t know, however, is that we’re enjoying it thanks to precisely what the Democratic Party had been telling us for the past 6 years (and really long before that) wouldn’t make one bit of difference to the price of gasoline: Increased domestic drilling.

Increased domestic drilling has led to a record supply of domestic crude, and the United States is now the world's largest combined producer of oil and natural gas. The process of "fracking" (which has been thoroughly vilified by liberals including many Democratic politicians) has been driving the momentum, and the drop in the price of gas has put an estimated \$100 billion into the pockets of U.S. consumers.

Ironically, the person benefiting the most politically from \$2 gas is President Obama. His approval ratings are up, and to the surprise of few, he's been out on the trail actually taking credit for the country's new energy status. He recently told a crowd in Michigan, "America is the number one producer of oil, number one producer of gas. It's helping to save drivers \$1.10 a gallon at the pump over this time last year."

Yay, President Obama! The only problem is that the president has had little if nothing to do with it. You see, his anti-drilling comments and vocal vilification of the oil industry over the years haven't been just empty rhetoric. They've reflected his actual policies and priorities. Oil production on federal land – where the president actually has control – has *not* gone up. In fact, it's fallen 6 percent since 2009 when he took office. On the other hand, production on private land – where the president *doesn't* have control – has *increased* by a whopping 61 percent.

The dirty little secret is that where government has failed to help the middle class, the private sector has succeeded. The oil industry has played a huge role in slowly rebuilding our economy since the Great Recession, leading the way in growth, jobs, and now cheap gas – all while being cast as an enemy by the Obama administration and politicians from his side of the aisle. This country still has plenty of economic problems, but we'd have far more if it wasn't for domestic drilling.

Ironically, it's also the oil industry (and the solution the president mocked and adamantly opposed) that has revived the

president's approval ratings, because people tend to reward positive things for the country to whoever happens to be sitting in the Oval Office.

The truth is that "Drill, baby, drill" was *exactly* the prescription this country needed in 2008 to help repair our broken economy, and if our government had gotten on board instead of standing in the way, just imagine how much faster of a recovery we would have experienced.

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