



Opinion: Congress plays the blame game on gas prices



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By Jamie Dupree, For The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

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Most of us don't like it much these days when we pull into the gas station to fill up and see gas prices of over \$4 per gallon.

In Congress, it's been the usual mad political scramble to assess blame, as the fate of the U.S. economy is often a powerful force on Election Day.

Feeling the heat, many Democrats have taken aim at Big Oil.

"It is clear to me that corporate greed is a large part of what is behind these prices at the pump," said U.S. Sen. Raphael Warnock, as he questioned at a Senate hearing why gas prices seem to stay high as oil prices have retreated.

"Why the gas price doesn't follow the oil price down in Georgia is something we really do need to get to the bottom of," energy research expert Robert McCullough testified, as he joined Warnock in urging the Federal

Trade Commission to investigate.

“Some of the increase is due obviously to Putin’s war,” McCullough added. “But other increases are inexplicable at the moment.”

Republicans fault President Biden for the sticker shock at the pump, and efforts by Warnock and other Democrats to blame Russia are like fingernails on a chalkboard.

“I’m tired of Biden using the war in Ukraine as an excuse for inflation in the U.S.,” said U.S. Rep. Austin Scott, R-Tifton.

GOP lawmakers again denounced a plan from Democrats to strip \$30 billion a year in tax breaks for the oil and gas industry, arguing that won’t help produce new domestic energy resources.

“Energy independence is a national security issue, and President Biden is calling for a tax increase on American energy producers,” said U.S. Rep. Rick Allen, R-Evans.

When you peel away the arguments, the fight over high gas prices is just one part of the larger political battle over the U.S. economy in this midterm election year.

Democrats have cards to play, as they can tout strong monthly job gains and economic growth, big increases in tax revenues, smaller deficits, and a very low jobless rate of 3.6 percent in March.

But polls consistently show Americans don’t feel like things are going in the right direction, worried by the highest inflation in 40 years .

“Biden is taking money out of Americans’ wallets,” said U.S. Rep. Drew Ferguson, R-West Point.

History shows voters often take out their economic frustrations on the party in power — which this year would be the Democrats.

That’s the blame game Democrats hope to avoid in November.

Jamie Dupree has covered national politics and Congress from Washington, D.C. since the Reagan administration. His column appears weekly in The Atlanta Journal-Constitution. For more, check out his Capitol Hill newsletter at <http://jamiedupree.substack.com>

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