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## Opinion: Skyrocketing oil prices are a painful reminder of the need for energy diversification

*While we are reminded anew of our fragile energy security, meanwhile, the nation is finally clamoring for low-carbon fuels.*

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It's official: Gas prices are now the highest in U.S. history, breaking records set in 2008. We know that the war in Ukraine is a major factor behind the soaring oil prices, and we are just beginning to feel that pain at the pump. However, the underlying problem is an old one: dependence on foreign oil.

We Americans tend to have a short memory when it comes to the price we pay for oil — and the price we pay for our addiction is more than just financial. Nevertheless, when the actual cost comes down, we assume everything is OK again and fill up our SUVs without too much thought. Then something happens, like war, and we are reminded of how fragile our control of our energy destiny really is. We've done this to ourselves by accepting oil as the status quo.

To be sure, we have made some progress in diversifying where our energy supply comes from. Yet we still have a long way to go. Meanwhile one of our best, most immediate solutions to energy diversification grows right here on Iowa's fertile ground. No oil well required.

That's one reason I was proud to march recently at the State Capitol at a rally in support of biofuels legislation now before the state Senate. The proposed legislation is an incentive-based

approach to increase consumer access at the pump to higher blends of biofuels like E15 (15% ethanol) and B20 (20% biodiesel). It comes at an apropos moment.

Iowa has indeed reached a defining moment: Will we join the shift in energy priorities in this nation, and reap the economic reward? Or will we sit on the sidelines in our own commitment to using biofuels, despite our position as the leading biofuels-producing state?

The Iowa Biofuels Access Bill, proposed by Gov. Kim Reynolds and passed by a wide bipartisan majority out of the Iowa House of Representatives, is a common-sense choice for Iowa. Not only would it contribute to energy independence and carbon reduction, but increased availability to higher blends of biofuels can help grow Iowa's economy exponentially. It can help our state's 40,000 soybean farmers diversify their businesses while supporting 13% of the price per bushel of soybeans. That equaled \$1.78 per bushel in 2021 — no small change to a farming operation.

This bill will also help fuel retailers update and upgrade their equipment to handle higher blends through additional investments in the Renewable Fuels Infrastructure Fund. At the same time, it will protect smaller rural fuel retailers from costly rebuilds.

While we are reminded anew of our fragile energy security, meanwhile, the nation is finally clamoring for low-carbon fuels. This is mostly the result of state policy elsewhere in the nation, or even corporate policy. Iowa's answer to this call for low-carbon fuels is biodiesel, and the time to secure our seat at this table is now. That's why I urge Iowa to take control of our energy destiny by passing this legislation.

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