

Kaptur speaks out for energy investment Ohio positioned to be leader, she says

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U.S. Rep. Marcy Kaptur (D., Toledo) continued to beat the drum yesterday for alternative energy sources at the Toledo Rotary Club luncheon at the Zenobia Shrine Hall.

In front of various community and business leaders, Miss Kaptur said that the country's foreign trade deficit in energy production was a "hemorrhage" and the country has received large transfusions from foreign loans.

She said the result has been the United States purchasing oil from countries that "don't really like us," and paying for it with borrowed money from countries like Japan and China.

"Two-thirds of [the oil] we use in this country comes from someplace else," Miss Kaptur said. "Going back to the 1970s, we as a country created a Department of Energy and said we were going to become energy independent. In truth, we have not.

"As time has gone on, the hole has gotten deeper," she said. "Can we invest in ourselves and create that kind of wealth in our country again?"

Miss Kaptur said that new investment should come from the development of alternative energy sources, such as ethanol and other biofuels. She said northwest Ohio is in perfect position to be a leader in new and already developed technology that could be used to create new energy sources.

"I'm sick and tired of being held hostage by these huge companies that will not democratize at the pump," Miss Kaptur said. "I think this area of new fuel production makes sense for the country, and it surely makes sense for our region. We have a history of refining. We have a history of delivering. We have all these major automotive firms. The only question is: How can we be creative?"

Dick Anderson, chairman of The Andersons Inc., of Maumee, who attended the speech, said the high price of gasoline is driving the interest in ethanol, and there is a great imbalance between supply and demand.

Mr. Anderson's agribusiness had a huge jump in share price in the last six months because of its investment in plants to produce ethanol.

"She's recognizing the imbalance," said Mr. Anderson, a member of the Toledo Rotary. "The government isn't the one that's making [the interest in ethanol] happen. The high price of gasoline [is what's] making it happen.

Asked about drilling for more oil off the Gulf Coast or in Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, Miss Kaptur responded that those reserves should be kept for a true national emergency.

The effort to drill in those areas, she said, would take away from developing alternative energy sources, which should be seen as the future of the country's energy supply. Miss Kaptur challenged business leaders to help her in a goal of bringing together top mechanics and economic leaders to build a demonstration vehicle that would run on alternative fuel.

Miss Kaptur didn't pass up the opportunity to once again speak out against the North American Free Trade Agreement.

An outspoken critic of the measure, which went into effect in 1994, she said it continues to create an uneven playing field for American companies and workers.

She said free trade should be made among "free people."

"If people are not free, don't ask me to be for free trade because what happens [is that] it's a rigged system and we have trade deficits with every single one of those countries," Miss Kaptur said.

"They are not legally transparent, their financial systems are not to be trusted, and we ask our businesses to compete in that kind of environment. No, thank you. That's not the kind of world that I want."

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