



Written by [Brian Koenig](#) on March 14, 2012

Steven Chu Retracts Previous Call for Higher Gas Prices

As gas prices loom near the \$4-a-gallon mark, the Obama administration has been hit with a public outburst that could prove politically lethal. And while the President is quick to emphasize that he does not favor high gas prices, his administration is toting heavy baggage in the area of energy policy.

At a news conference last Tuesday, Obama told Fox News it is deceptive to suggest that the White House harbors a secret agenda to increase gas prices with the intent to curb Americans' addiction to fossil fuels. "You think the president of the United States going into reelection wants gas prices to go up higher?" he [asked](#). "Is that — is there anybody here who thinks that makes a lot of sense?"



However, then-incoming-Energy Secretary Steven Chu's (above) [2008 remarks](#) to the *Wall Street Journal* seem to assert the affirmative. "Somehow we have to figure out how to boost the price of gasoline to the levels in Europe," Mr. Chu told the *Wall Street Journal* in a September 2008 interview.

In response Obama's sinking approval ratings, Chu backpedaled on his former assertion during a Senate hearing on Tuesday. "Are you saying that you no longer share the view that we need to figure out how to boost gasoline prices in America?" Sen. Mike Lee (R-Utah) asked the Energy Secretary.

"I no longer share that view," Chu conceded. "But you did then, but you don't now?" Sen. Lee quickly retorted.

Chu then explained that his purported remarks were made before he joined the administration. "When I became secretary of energy I represented the U.S. government and I think that right now in this economic — very slow return — that we need to have, these prices well could affect the comeback of our economy and we're very worried about that," said Chu. "And so, of course, we don't want the price of gasoline to go up. We want it to go down."

A [Washington Post/ABC News poll](#) released this week found that 46 percent of Americans approve of Obama's job performance, and 65 percent frown upon Obama's handling of gas prices. Another [poll](#), released by CBS News, showed that 54 percent of Americans deem gas prices as something the President has significant control over. A third poll, which *The New American* [reported](#) on earlier this week, illustrates what policies Americans believe the President should pursue to alleviate the rising pain at the pump:

[In a third poll](#) by the *Christian Science Monitor* two-thirds of those polled say that the government should allow increased production from offshore wells and from shale deposits on federal lands as a way to increase supply to bring down prices. 54 percent favor drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) in Alaska, while 47 percent favor rolling back some environmental



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restrictions to help increase energy production. That poll also reflected expectations that the price of gas will exceed \$4 a barrel nationally within the next three months and one-third of those polled are expecting \$5 a gallon gas by summer.

In response to such public discontent, the White House has been scrambling to reverse the perception of Obama's alleged anti-oil agenda. White House Press Secretary Jay Carney tried to mitigate concerns regarding the White House's ideological shift, while railing against Republican lawmakers for taking Chu's comments out of context. "There has been an attempt — a partisan, largely partisan attempt — to try to take comments like that and pretend those are policy when in fact the policy reflects the contrary," Carney averred.

Chu's backpedaling has prompted many Republicans to believe that Obama was behind the Energy Secretary's Tuesday remarks, particularly as Chu explicitly defined what high gas prices mean for the U.S. economy. "There is real hardship that Americans are suffering at the gasoline pump," Chu [said](#) following Tuesday's hearing. "We went through a terrible recession, a worldwide recession and we're recovering, but the recovery is fragile. And so as I've said, another spike in gasoline prices can put that recovery in jeopardy. So there are many, many reasons why we do not want the price of gasoline to go up, we want it to go down."

Whether Obama, or anyone in his administration, still harbors an agenda to inflate gas prices to European levels is sure to remain sealed, as the 2012 presidential election is only months away.



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