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## ENERGY

# Chu Backtracks on High Gas Prices

By Amy Harder  
 Updated: March 13, 2012 | 12:36 p.m.  
 March 13, 2012 | 12:07 p.m.

Energy Secretary Steven Chu on Tuesday retracted his now-infamous quote from 2008: "Somehow we have to figure out how to boost the price of gasoline to the levels in Europe."

"I no longer share that view," Chu said in response to questioning from Sen. **Mike Lee**, R-Utah, at a [Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee](#) hearing on another topic related to DOE's loan-guarantee program.

Chu's 2008 quote, initially included in a [Wall Street Journal](#) article, has formed the foundation for daily Republican attacks on President Obama over high gas prices.

Chu seemed to equivocate, pause, and stumble over his words when responding to Lee's question about high gas prices. Other comments Chu made at another hearing late last month put him in hot water on gas prices. [Politico](#) reported on Feb. 28 that Chu told a House committee that he was not working to lower gasoline prices but to wean the United States off oil. That story has since been corrected to clarify that DOE is working to *both* lower gas prices and wean the country off oil. But that was only after the story was picked up by Republicans and used against the administration.

During his testimony before the Senate panel on Tuesday, after stopping and starting with a few thoughts on the economy and the department's commitment to alternatively fueled vehicles, Chu told Lee: "Of course we don't want the price of gasoline to go up. We want it to go down."

New polling out this week found that the president's disapproval rating is going up alongside high gasoline prices, which averaged \$3.80 per gallon nationwide on Tuesday.

After the hearing, Chu told reporters that he changed his view from 2008 because of the fragile economy.

"There is a real hardship that Americans are suffering at the gasoline pump," Chu said. "The recovery is fragile. Another spike in gasoline prices could put that recovery at jeopardy. So there are many, many reasons why we do not want the price of gasoline to go up."

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10
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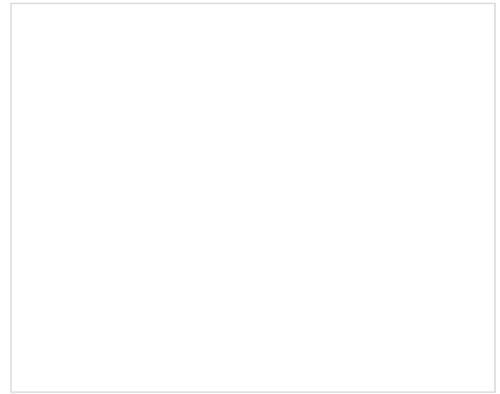
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