**Senate Rejects Attempt to End Oil Subsidies** [Meckler, Laura](http://search.proquest.com/docview.lateralsearchlink:lateralsearch/sng/author/Meckler,+Laura/$N?t:ac=955996603/fulltext/13603C7C0057F629E4F/35&t:cp=maintain/resultcitationblocks); [Boles, Corey](http://search.proquest.com/docview.lateralsearchlink:lateralsearch/sng/author/Boles,+Corey/$N?t:ac=955996603/fulltext/13603C7C0057F629E4F/35&t:cp=maintain/resultcitationblocks). [*Wall Street Journal (Online)*](http://search.proquest.com/docview.lateralsearchlinkbypubid:lateralsearch/sng/pubtitle/Wall+Street+Journal+$28Online$29/$N/105983?t:ac=955996603/fulltext/13603C7C0057F629E4F/35&t:cp=maintain/resultcitationblocks) [New York, N.Y] 30 Mar 2012:

WASHINGTON--The White House and its Democratic allies are doing what they can to shift Americans' frustration with high gasoline prices from President Barack Obama to another group: oil and gasoline companies.

Senate Democrats pressed for a vote Thursday to end some $20 billion in federal subsidies to the largest oil and gas companies. The vote failed, as Democrats knew it would. The effort was a political gesture aimed at highlighting Republican support for the biggest oil companies at a time when some people are struggling to afford filling their gas tanks.

The bill gave Mr. Obama an opportunity to champion the measure from the White House Rose Garden earlier Thursday.

"Today, members of Congress have a simple choice to make: They can stand with the big oil companies, or they can stand with the American people," he said. The industry, he said, doesn't need taxpayer subsidies. "American oil is booming. The oil industry is doing just fine. With record profits and rising production, I'm not worried about the big oil companies," he said.

Republicans criticized Democrats for trying to impose what they called a tax increase on oil companies at a time when pump prices are rapidly escalating. According to the auto club AAA, the average price of gasoline stood at $3.92 a gallon Thursday and many experts have predicted it could hit $5 by the summer driving months.

"Is this really the best we have to offer folks who are staring at $4 a gallon of gas," Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R., Ky.) said. "A bill that even Democrats admit won't have anything to do with the price of gasoline?"

The five largest oil companies reported a combined $140 billion in profit in 2011. Democrats argue that ending the taxpayer subsidies would have no effect on the price of gasoline, while Republicans say it would drive the price up.

Separately Thursday, an industry-backed group, the American Energy Alliance, said it would begin airing $3.6 million in TV ads blaming Mr. Obama's policies for high gasoline prices. The ads will run in eight states that are expected to be competitive in the presidential election.

President Obama and congressional Democrats have sought to end the payments since he took office, but they have been blocked by Republicans.

The bill would have affected subsidies paid to BP PLC, Exxon Mobil Corp., Royal Dutch Shell PLC, Chevron Corp. and ConocoPhillips.

Rising oil prices are a major concern for Mr. Obama's re-election campaign, where officials fear that optimism about the overall improving economy could be squelched by concerns over the price of gasoline. Working to show his concern on the issue, Mr. Obama has made a series of speeches on energy in recent weeks. Last week, he made a two-day trip focused solely on energy.

Obama pollster Joel Benenson, speaking to reporters at Third Way, a Democratic think tank, said Thursday that voters are feeling the pain of gasoline prices but also want a real solution, not something gimmicky.

"This [issue] isn't going to go away if they're paying four bucks [per gallon], or four bucks, 20 cents, at the pump," he said. "But they're going to want a real answer... They're very aware that we can't keep going down the path we're on."

A March Wall Street Journal/NBC News poll found that half of Americans believe gasoline prices have had a great deal or quite a bit of impact on their lives.

In the Senate on Thursday, the Democratic effort to end oil and gasoline subsidies was killed on a nearly party-line vote. The 51-47 vote fell short of the 60 votes needed to overcome a filibuster and pass it.

Four Democrats--Sens. Mark Begich of Alaska, Mary Landrieu of Louisiana, Ben Nelson of Nebraska and Jim Webb of Virginia--joined with most Republicans in opposing ending the subsidies. Maine Republican Sens. Susan Collins and Olympia Snowe voted with Democrats in supporting ending them.

Democrats had proposed redirecting some of the $20 billion from the subsidies to renew a series of tax credits aimed at manufacturers of solar panels, wind turbines and electric cars. Those credits ran out at the end of last year, and the renewable-energy industry has been clamoring for Congress to restore them. The remaining $9 billion would have gone toward the budget deficit.