

June 18, 2010 Partial Transcript The Rachel Maddow Show

Read the transcript to the Friday show

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Guests: Gerald Wojtala, Debbie Stabenow

RACHEL MADDOW, HOST (voice-over): You know that metaphor when people say something doesn't pass the smell test?

**Well, now, in the BP oil disaster era, it's no longer a metaphor. Smell tests for real—Trained smell testers monitoring America's seafood supply.**

As technology continues to appear to go backwards, but politics goes forward, at least it does for Democrats—as conservatives commit themselves to a disastrous, renewed embrace of the oil industry...

**“...Check out this report from “The Hill” newspaper today. “Senate liberals threaten rebellion on energy bill.” Yes, that means their own energy bill. Senate liberals threatening to vote against the energy bill if it gets watered down. If putting a price on carbon gets taken out of the legislation.**

They are drawing a line in the sand and saying, “If we're going to move on energy, we're going to do something important. No watering it down.”

Liberals, in other words, are saying that they have the political capital here on the issue of energy. Liberals have it. Conservatives have the opposite of political capital on this.

And so, progressives and Democrats should use it. Use it once. Use it for once. Use it to pass a no compromise bill. They're actually making that case right now. Pinch me.

Joining us now maybe to pinch me is Ezra Klein, staff writer for “The Washington Post” and an MSNBC contributor.

Hi, Ezra. Nice to see you.

EZRA KLEIN, MSNBC CONTRIBUTOR: Good evening.

MADDOW: Are you going to pinch me? Are you going to tell me I should wake up and realize this isn't really happening?

KLEIN: Well, I'm going to stay back here in D.C. on that. But it is happening. The question is how far it will go. It's a couple of liberals right now and it's important.

I mean, the big thing about energy, right, and the big thing about global warming policy, is that BP and the Gulf show that there are sort of different types of issues we need to solve in American life.

Health care reform, the deficit—if you don't do it right the first time, you can come back the next year, the year after that, 10 years after that, 20 years after that.

But then there are things like the Gulf oil spill, and if you get it wrong, you actually don't have the technical capacity to undo it—and climate change is one of those. If we let it happen, if the earth's temperature raises seven degrees centigrade, we don't know what to do. We don't even know what will happen. We've only got one of these planets.

And so, there is a real difference in this and I think the liberals aren't just seeing political opportunity but seeing policy reality. And the fact that something seems difficult in a big legislative lift in Congress, they don't feel that exempts them from trying.

MADDOW: Ezra, you posted a Tom Toles cartoon today on your blog at “The Washington Post.” It says, “Year 2060, the search for a breakthrough technology to solve climate change continues.” And then the scientist says, “It's a time machine we hope will take us back 50 years to 2010 when we should have put a price on carbon.” Obviously, Tom Toles is a genius.

But is a price on carbon really what it all boils down to? If we don't get that in an energy bill, is everything else in your view sort of just tinkering around on the margins?

**KLEIN: A price on carbon is the single most important thing we need to do. Not that everything else is tinkering around the margins. We want investment into clean energy such that we can hopefully get the sort of technological breakthroughs we're going to need to actually get through this problem and we're going to need to have regulations that deal with coal-fired power plants and other elements of it.**

**But at the end of the day, if we don't do the price on carbon, doing this any other way is going to be wasting an enormous amount of money. What a price on carbon does is it makes—when we go to the gas station or to buy electricity or use energy at all, it forces the energy to cost what it will really cost us in the long run, once these things like global warming are factored in.**

And when it does that other things like solar, wind—they become somewhat cheaper in comparison and we begin to use them and we begin to innovate around them and we begin to move towards them. We can do that just by funneling \$600 billion a year to renewable energies. We could pay every American 10,000 bucks to put a solar panel on their roof. But it's a dumb way to spend taxpayer money.

What we should do is use the market as conservatives frequently tell us and price things relative to their actual, not only value, but actual cost to us as a society. And that's what the carbon price will do. Sacrificing it is essentially wasting our money and for no good reason.

MADDOW: Ezra Klein, staff writer for “The Washington Post”—thank you for your time tonight, Ezra, and your clarity on an issue that is often really bamboozling. Thanks a lot.

KLEIN: Thank you...” **End of Segment – Question: Did they read and understand the bill?**