

Senate Democratic Policy Committee Hearing
**“An Oversight Hearing on Record High Gasoline Prices
and Windfall Oil Company Profits”**

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My name is Mary McCaffrey. My husband Billy and I live with our two teenage children, William and Sarah, on a 200 acre mixed use farm an hour south of Boston. This acreage is eighty acres in woodlot, 30 acres hayfield, 11 acres cranberry bog, 1/2 acre pick your own strawberries. The balance is new growth woods, wetlands, and ponds. Our farm was once a dairy operation and my husband grew up working on his grandfather's farm. But milking cows is no longer viable on a farm of this size so we planted our first cranberry bog twenty-one years ago. We learned from scratch and adapted to changing conditions of production and marketing.

In the tradition of small family farms we all pitch in as much as possible, as well as having a part time employee. We need another income source, which is carpentry. We feel committed and connected to our land because not only do we work here, we live here. We plan and hope to be able to hand our farm to the next generation.

On August 28, I filled my car in Maine for the trip home after a family vacation. I looked at the \$2.65 per gallon mid-grade price and thought, “Well soon I'll be home in Massachusetts and be paying far less than that.” Little did I know that 96 hours later I would wait in line to pay \$3.25 per gallon and actually see some gas stations with no gas at all. All of a sudden, we started to question every mile we drove and a tinge of panic was in the air.

What did I do to respond to this sudden change? For our business, I consolidate my trips to the lumber yard, bank, or agricultural supply house. On a personal level, I no longer make two trips to pick up our kids at separate schools for clubs and sports practices. They must wait for a significant amount of time, doing homework in the meantime, and wait for my one daily trip to town.

How can we reduce the fuel we use for our hay equipment, tractors, trucks and chainsaws? This fall we are considering not cutting our third crop of hay. Fuel costs are up twenty three percent. The bone dry summer has reduced yield to the point that it might not be sensible to even cut the crop. Raising cranberries, however, allows almost no choices. We cannot let the bogs lie fallow or rotate crops. The bogs must be flooded for fall harvest and reflooded to be protected from winter's freezing weeks. If there is not sufficient rainfall the pump supplies water through the irrigation system. This summer's

heat and drought forced us to irrigate almost every day instead of every fourth or fifth day.

The other crucial use of the irrigation system is to protect spring flowers and fall fruit from freezing. The protection occurs when irrigation sprays water and there is enough warmth generated by the heat of fusion at 32 degrees to protect the berries from frost injury. During an average fall we will be running the pump for frost protection about 15 nights until picking ends in November. Mother Nature is the one who decides how much fuel we use.

Another aspect of the cranberry business is that we are not paid upon delivery. We pay for fuel today but we won't receive any money for at least a month and final payment is many months after that. The price itself is dictated by the handlers. We do no direct marketing of fruit because the vast majority of berries are processed and frozen for future use in muffins, juice or sauce. Thus, there is no way to pass on any cost increases to anyone but ourselves.

I hope we learn some lessons from this sudden crisis. We shouldn't need any more reminders about how fragile our fuel system and economy really are. We must research alternative fuels and learn to conserve and efficiently use the energy we have.

Thank You.