

Gas prices leave big holes in our wallets

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Sticker shock? You betcha!! If you haven't filled up your fuel tank in the past week, you're in for a surprise. Drivers in Lake and Geauga counties spotted gas prices well over \$3.40 on Tuesday.

Don't expect relief anytime soon.

A barrel of light, sweet crude topped \$109 in Tuesday trading, up \$5 over rates last week. That translates into higher prices at the pump. The American Automobile Association and Oil Price Information Service reported Tuesday the national average for gasoline at \$3.22 a gallon.

Yes, we're heading for trouble. Experts have predicted the national average likely will reach \$3.50 per gallon.

We could say we're lucky, because gas prices vaulted to \$4.35 a gallon on Monday in California.

President Bush did what any president would have done, calling on OPEC to boost output.

This action would lower prices at the pump.

But OPEC responded by accusing Americans of economic "mismanagement." With the dollar's value falling, OPEC nations must sell more to maintain earning levels. Thus, OPEC wants the U.S. government to prop up the dollar.

Bush has dispatched Vice President Dick Cheney to the Middle East this weekend to push for a rein on prices.

While it's a long shot, we must remain patient while we're stuck in the middle. Are we being gouged? Possibly.

What can we do about it? Not much.

In this election year, we can only hope one of the presidential candidates will emerge with a solution.

Part of the solution?

We're green. Go green. Seems everyone's talking about "green" these days. As more and more Americans adopt methods of energy savings, officials hope it will translate into a reduction of our dependence on foreign oil.

Yet we have a long way to go before we can brag about being self-reliant. That's why President Bush last week called on Americans to change their habits - combine errands into one driving trip around town and consider public transportation, as Laketran reports that so many of your neighbors have opted to do.

Now Ohio Gov. Ted Strickland wants to add Amtrak to the mix. He recently asked train line officials to resume lines from Cleveland, Columbus and Cincinnati. A study by Amtrak and the Ohio Rail Development Commission will be completed in 18 months.

Obviously, it's not an immediate solution to rising gas prices.

But it's clear someone's willing to think about ways to conserve energy.

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