Political posturing does nothing but delay dealing with complex problems that only deteriorate with time.

Although Gingrich has a record of grandiose visions, he’s been a strong supporter of science. Unfortunately, his promise to quickly lower gas prices to $2.50 a gallon challenges his scientific credibility.

This is an important issue for those of us in the transportation industry, which consumes two-thirds of our country’s oil. Unfortunately, energy is part of a Gordian knot of partisan conflict spanning economic, transportation and environmental policy in Washington.

Though the Senate finally passed a surface freight transportation bill on March 14, it’s only a two-year extension. This represents a shorter period of time than has elapsed since the last legislation, SAFTEA-LU, was passed in 2009. Transportation funding has been living hand-to-mouth ever since with a series of eight extensions.

Our history is replete with examples of leaders from both political parties coming together to solve difficult challenges. The “race to the moon” was one such example. Traditionally, building and supporting our national infrastructure has been an area of common agreement.

Unfortunately, today, not only can neither side agree on a direction for policy, but they also can’t agree on the facts. Consider the following:

- Republicans believe “drill baby drill” will solve all problems, but overlook the fact that more drilling is taking place now than ever. Conversely, Democrats ignore the fact that many of these drilling initiatives predated this administration, and that more federal lands could be accessed.

- Many of the same politicians who decry Wall Street reforms established in the Dodd-Frank bill are calling for the government to rein in gasoline speculation, even if the extent of their influence is still under debate.

- Republicans, as well as allies ranging from the AFL-CIO to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, believe infrastructure spending represents a sound investment and a credible jobs creator. Republicans repudiate that argument by pointing to high unemployment hovering around or above 9 percent after the $700 billion stimulus. The GOP, however, also claims the Keystone XL pipeline construction would create jobs.

- Most Republicans believe climate change is a myth, although they’ve been unable to produce any research challenging its scientific basis that has not been funded by energy companies invested in the status quo. The GOP, which has criticized the Obama administration for not “listening to the generals,” has ignored Pentagon warnings that global climate change will likely require U.S. military intervention to respond to the effects of probable violent storms, drought, mass migration and pandemics.

- Republicans have called for free trade (except perhaps for China), yet they fail to realize oil is part of a global market that impacts the price of gasoline in the U.S.

- The Obama administration is proud of the greatly enhanced Corporate Average Fuel Economy standards it “negotiated” with manufacturers, but it fails to take note that more vehicles using less fuel — accompanied by its dogmatic refusal to raise the fuel tax — condemns the surface transportation trust funds to eventual bankruptcy.

According to the New York Times, the word “gridlock” was coined in New York City in the early 1970s by Sam Schwartz, chief traffic engineer for New York City. Its use quickly spread to other networks, and by the early 1980s, to the legislative process.

While it’s ironic the transportation and political definitions have aligned, the threats to our industry and our country are significant. Political posturing does nothing but delay dealing with complex problems that only deteriorate with time. Such an attitude would never have placed a man on the moon. The problems we face require a moonshot approach. Where will the leadership come from? JOC

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