To paraphrase the accidental philosopher Yogi Berra, it’s déjà vu all over again in America: Another spring with gasoline prices high and rising, and everyone wondering if they can afford summer vacations. Our leaders’ response is also regrettably familiar — rather than remove self-imposed impediments to domestic energy development, government remains asleep in the control tower, resorting to unproductive demagoguery and half-measures.

World-wide demand for oil has long been on the rise; instability in the Middle East is constant; and our deadly dependence on foreign oil is a decades-old reality. So why is America still the only oil-producing nation in the world that limits access to its own abundant energy resources?

The maze of bureaucratic obstacles which domestic energy producers must navigate has grown unabated. Regulatory hostility has stalled efforts to recover an estimated 800 billion barrels of oil and oil shale from three western states. Decisions to lock up more territory have withheld billions more gallons of oil. The recent offshore drilling moratorium is reducing domestic oil production by 13%. Massive sections of oil-rich Alaska, including an area exceeding the size of California which wildlife regulators set aside for polar bears, remain off-limits.

When regulators do grant energy development permits, litigious activist groups often swoop in with disruptive lawsuits. In March, activists convinced an EPA appeals board to deny drilling in the Arctic Sea due to the allegedly excessive carbon emissions of Shell Oil’s ice-breaking vessels. After spending five years and $3.7 billion on exploration and leases, Shell has been unable to pursue the potentially 27 billion barrels of available oil.

Once oil is recovered, even more government regulations and mandates ensnare oil refining. It’s been 30 years since a new refinery was built in the U.S., and old refineries struggle to keep up with increased demand. Additionally, EPA forces refiners to develop 50 different blends of gas for certain states, none of which can be used to relieve gas shortages in other states.

High gas prices and reduced oil supply have stifling collateral effects. The increased price of basic staples like food, and the heightened cost of simply driving to the store, falls hardest on those Americans with the least. But government still seems to believe, as it did in previous years, that such blame-shifting initiatives as federal investigations for unlawful oil “speculation” and “price-gouging” will placate everyone until the oligarchs of OPEC rescue us.

Our policy makers cannot continue down this reckless path of domestic energy disregard. Government is tilting at windmills if it tries to pursue the laudable goal of alternative energy development while skyrocketing oil prices are dragging down the economy. Only by putting Americans back to work tapping into the natural resources available now can we build an economy for the future and ensure our energy security.