December 13, 2007

CONGRESSIONAL RECORD — SENATE

S15385

we are working to achieve that goal. That being said, in a time of budgetary constraints, I find it unconscionable that a Member of Congress would not vote to restrict such egregious spending and vote to promote our rural communities. I urge my colleagues to support this amendment.

Mr. COCHRAN. Mr. President, first I want to thank the chairman of the committee, the distinguished Senator from Iowa, Mr. HARKIN and the distinguished ranking member, the Senator from Georgia, Mr. CHAMBLISS, for their leadership during the debate of this farm bill.

I commend them for their response to the needs and interests of our Nation’s farmers and ranchers. In my State, most of our farmers are deeply concerned about the amendment offered by Senator GRASSLEY and Senator DORGAN. If it is approved it will adversely affect family farms in many States by eliminating the ability to receive financial incentives and tax credit subsidies in the South, cotton and rice, are not seeing the record prices created by the ethanol boom. The most prevalent crops in my State of Mississippi to accept and will result in quite low.

Since the passage of the 2002 farm bill there has been a good bit of controversy surrounding the issue of payment limits. Much of this has been based on misinformation and is a result of misunderstanding of modern agricultural practices. While I am pleased that the legislation passed by the committee contains significant reforms to address the concerns raised over the past 6 years, these reforms are not easy for producers in my State of Mississippi to accept and will result in many farms having to significantly alter their farming operation.

I believe it is important for us to understand just how significant the reforms in the committee passed bill are. This legislation applies direct attribution to the individual farmer, thus making all farm payments transparent. The committee passed legislation would limit the direct payment a single producer can receive to $60,000. In legislation reduces the amount of a countercyclical payment to $60,000. In addition, the Senate language reduces the direct payment a single producer can receive to $40,000. The majority leader is correct.

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second? There appears to be. The yeas and nays are ordered. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant journal clerk called the roll.

Mr. LOTT. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Arizona (Mr. MCCAIN).

The majority leader is recognized.

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I move to reconsider the vote.

The question is on agreeing to the amendment No. 3695, the Dorgan-Grassley payment limit amendment.

The majority leader is recognized.

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The result was announced — yeas 56, nays 43, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 424 Leg.]

YEAS—56

Akin
Allard
Baucus
Bennett
Bond
Bunning
Burris
Chambliss
Coburn
Cochran
Conrad
Corker
Corsyn
Craig
Crapo

NOT VOTING—1

Mc Cain

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order requiring 60 votes for the adoption of this amendment, the amendment is withdrawn.

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I move to reconsider the vote.

Mr. REID. I move to lay that motion on the table.

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

RENEWABLE FUELS, CONSUMER PROTECTION, AND ENERGY EFFICIENCY ACT OF 2007

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, each leader is permitted to use leader time prior to a vote on the motion to invoke cloture with respect to H.R. 6.

NHTSA REGULATIONS ON FUEL ECONOMY

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I support this bill and, in particular, the provisions that require the Department of Transportation, through the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, NHTSA, to set new fuel economy standards for vehicles that will reach an industry fleet wide level of 35 miles per gallon by 2020 based on my understanding that these new federal standards will not be undercut in the future by regulations issued by the Environmental Protection Agency regulating greenhouse gas emissions from vehicles.

I believe that we have taken historic steps in this legislation by putting in place ambitious but achievable fuel economy standards that will reduce our Nation’s fuel consumption and greenhouse gas emissions. In this legislation, the Senate and House have come together and established the appropriate level of fuel economy standards and have directed NHTSA to implement that through new regulations. In this legislation, the Congress has agreed that the appropriate level of fuel economy to reach is 35 miles per gallon in 2020, or an increase of 10 miles per gallon in 10 years.

But it is essential to manufacturers that they are able to plan on the 35 miles per gallon standard in 2020. We must resolve now with the sponsors of this legislation in the Senate any ambiguity that could arise in the future when EPA issues new rules to regulate greenhouse gas emissions from vehicles pursuant to its authority under the Clean Air Act so that our manufacturers can have certainty. With that in mind, I want to clarify both Senator INOUYE’s and Senator FEINSTEIN’s understanding and interpretation of what the Congress is doing in this legislation and to clarify their agreement that we want all Federal regulations in this area to be consistent. We do not want to enact this legislation today only to find later that we have not been sufficiently diligent to avoid any conflicts in the future.

The Environmental Protection Agency has authority under the Clean Air Act to regulate greenhouse gas emissions from vehicles and to delegate that authority, as the agency deems appropriate, to the State of California. The authority was recently recognized by the U.S. Supreme Court, and it is not our purpose today to attempt to change that authority or to undercut
the decision of the Supreme Court. We simply want to make clear that it is Congressional intent in this bill that, with respect to regulation of greenhouse gas emissions, any future regulations issued by the Environmental Protection Agency to regulate greenhouse gas emissions from vehicles be consistent with the Department of Transportation’s new fuel economy regulations that will reach an industry fleet wide level by 35 miles per gallon by 2020.

Does the Senator from California and the original sponsor of this legislation, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, agree with my view that the intent of this language is for EPA regulations on greenhouse gas emissions from vehicles to be consistent with the direction of Congress in this 35 miles per gallon in 2020 legislation and consistent with regulations issued by the Department of Transportation to implement this legislation?

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Yes, of course, we have always worked together on this legislation directing NHTSA to issue new fuel economy regulations to reach an industry fleet wide level of 35 miles per gallon by 2020, and it is our intent in the bill before us that all Federal regulations in this area be consistent with our 35 miles per gallon in 2020 language.

Mr. LEVIN. I thank the Senator for her clarification of her intent.

Do the chairmen of the Commerce, Transportation, and Environmental Protection Agencies work together on this legislation directing NHTSA to issue new fuel economy regulations to reach an industry fleet wide level of 35 miles per gallon by 2020, and it is our intent in the bill before us that all Federal regulations in this area be consistent with our 35 miles per gallon in 2020 language.

Mr. LEVIN. I thank the Senator for her clarification of her intent.

Does the chairmen of the Commerce Committee, the distinguished Senator from California, and the Environmental Protection Agency be consistent with the direction of Congress in this legislation and regulations issued by the Department of Transportation to implement this legislation?

Mr. INOUYE. Yes, I agree that it is very important that all Federal regulations in this area be consistent and that we provide clear direction to the agency that has responsibility for setting fuel economy standards, the Department of Transportation.

Mr. LEVIN. I thank my distinguished colleague from California, Mr. INOUYE, for his clarification.

AGENCY MANAGEMENT

Mr. INOUYE. Mr. President, I have worked for many months with the Senator from California and the original sponsor of this legislation, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, to draft a sound policy to increase fuel economy standards in our country. I stated earlier today that “all Federal regulations in this area be consistent.” I wholly agree with that notion, in that these agencies have two different missions. The Department of Transportation has the responsibility for regulating fuel economy, and should enforce the Ten-in Ten Fuel Economy Act fully and vigorously to save oil in the automobile. The Environmental Protection Agency has the responsibility to protect public health. These two missions can and should co-exist without one undermining the other. There are numerous examples in the executive branch where two or more agencies share responsibility over a particular issue. The Federal Trade Commission and the Federal Communications Commission both oversee telemarketing practices and they work together consistent with the Department of Transportation’s new fuel economy regulations that will reach an industry fleet wide level by 35 miles per gallon by 2020.

Does the Senator from California and original sponsor of this legislation, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, to draft a sound policy consistent with the Department of Transportation’s new fuel economy regulations that will reach an industry fleet wide level of 35 miles per gallon by 2020, and it is our intent in the bill before us that all Federal regulations in this area be consistent with the direction of Congress in this 35 miles per gallon in 2020 legislation and consistent with regulations issued by the Department of Transportation to implement this legislation?

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order to reduce fossil fuel consumption. Federal leadership in building performance and procurement standards in our Federal facilities and in commercial buildings generally is critically important in achieving our energy conservation goals. The energy savings requirements for Federal facilities incorporated in the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007 are intended to apply to all building systems and technologies.

Mr. KOHL. I would like to thank the chairman for all of his help on this issue. Chairman BINGMAN’s leadership on energy efficiency and this Energy bill has been invaluable.

Mr. BAUCUS. Mr. President, they say that ADM William ‘Bull’ Halsey, who commanded the Pacific Fleet in World War II, once said:

‘‘There aren’t any great men. There are just great challenges that ordinary men like you and me are forced by circumstances to meet. Today, the circumstances around energy is a great challenge for all of us and uses another set of skills. Today, we will see whether we can rise to meet them.

Prices for gasoline, heating oil, electricity, and natural gas have accelerated upward. Since the Senate last considered tax legislation in June, oil prices have soared by $30 a barrel. Energy costs make it hard for working families particularly hard.

Nearly every week, the news reminds us of the fragility of our energy supply, whether it is trouble in South America or Africa or in the Middle East.

As well, people have increasingly acknowledged the challenge presented by the link between energy use and global warming. To help address these challenges, I am pleased that the Senate will vote today on energy tax incentives designed to promote clean and sustainable energy.

Energy tax policy is not a new territory for the Finance Committee. In 2005, the committee designed tax incentives for that year’s major Energy bill. And last December, we enacted energy tax provisions as part of the end-of-the-year package.

We are building on that strong foundation today with additional tax incentives. Most of those incentives were approved by a 19 to 5 vote in the Finance Committee this past June.

We did not get 60 votes on the Senate floor for the energy crisis has not subsided. And so we are back here today with an even stronger package of energy tax incentives.

The energy tax proposal before us today continues our commitment to clean energy and renewable fuels. The amendment extends existing tax incentives for solar power, wind power, fuel cells, and energy-efficient homes and buildings. And we provide more than $2 billion for renewable energy bonds. But we need to go further. And we do in this proposal. We propose in three areas critical to our nation’s energy future: cellulosic ethanol, hybrid cars, and coal sequestration.

Ethanol made from corn has become familiar territory. Now, cellulosic ethanol is the new frontier to explore. This bill proposes a production tax credit of up to $1.00 a gallon for up to 60 million gallons of cellulosic fuel produced from grass or wheat straw, and from agricultural and forestry wastes.

Hybrid cars provide a tremendous opportunity to move our transportation sector cleaner. A high-mileage car with no emissions is territory well worth exploring. Our proposal calls for a new $3,500 credit for plug-in hybrid vehicles.

America has vast reserves of coal. But we have concerns about global warming. It is thus imperative that when we use our coal, we need to try to prevent carbon dioxide from escaping into the atmosphere.

Our proposal would provide tax credits for capturing carbon dioxide emit from industrial use of coal. The proposal also would provide accelerated depreciation for new dedicated coal plants that transport coal from an industrial source to a geologic formation for permanent disposal. A proposal to encourage the construction of additional reﬁnery capacity is also included.

We do our work in a ﬁscally responsible way. Lower budget deﬁcits help to keep interest rates low. That helps to make the economy more competitive. Paying as we go may be a tough task. But the proposal contains offsets that will be fairly sound.

We propose to simplify and improve the tax code by eliminating the distinction between “foreign oil and gas extraction income” and “foreign oil-related income.”

We propose to withdraw the tax breaks under section 199 from the large oil companies. There is strong evidence that the boost from section 199 that the Senate envisioned when we enacted the JOBS Act in 2004 has not been realized. We have heard from the major oil companies. But the majors collected over a half a trillion dollars in proﬁts since 2001, and they are on track to collect up to a trillion dollars in proﬁts over the next 10 years. The Joint Economic Committee has assured us that these provisions will have no affect on consumer prices for gasoline and natural gas in the immediate future.

The proposal before us today drops a severance tax on the production of oil, gas, and coal from the Outer Continental Shelf in the Gulf of Mexico. That severance tax was contained in the Senate Finance Committee-passed bill but is not in the proposal on which we will vote today.

Here is the territory that we are in: Gas prices are well over $3. The price of a barrel of oil is hovering around $90 a barrel. And concern about global warming is growing.

If we do not move forward today, Americans will look back and ask who was the leader. If we do not move forward, they will be astonished. They are not going to want to understand how good policy designed to address one of the greatest challenges facing our country—some call it a crisis—was blocked by good Senators in December of 2007.

The proposal before us today will address the challenge. It addresses today’s energy policy circumstances. So I urge my colleagues to meet the challenge and vote in favor of this sound energy package.

Mr. SPECTER. Mr. President, I seek recognition today to give my reasons for my vote against invoking cloture on H.R. 6, the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007 which was sent to the Senate from the House of Representatives on December 6, 2007. It is regrettable that certain tactics and maneuvers prevented a formal conference and there was no accommodation for removal of controversial tax provisions which further complicated the negotiations. I am voting against cloture on energy bill, although I support many of the bill’s provisions, because key commitments to at least one of my Republican colleagues were reportedly broken. Further, I understand that if its present form it would likely draw a veto from the President.

I would have preferred a conference report which did not include taxes on the oil and gas industries. Had there been a formal conference, those taxes might well have been left out of the conference report. It has been reported that the oil and gas industries took steps to oppose convening a conference. If so, they bear some responsibility for the inclusion of the taxes which might have been eliminated had there been a conference.

This past summer, I supported the Senate-passed Energy bill, H.R. 6, which would have promoted oil savings by increasing our national average vehicle fuel economy; alleviated dependence on imported oil by increasing requirements for the use of and advanced biofuels; advanced the prospects for cleanly utilizing our Nation’s abundant coal reserves by furthering research, development and demonstration of carbon capture and sequestration technology; and supported a reduction in our demand for energy by creating new efficiency benchmarks for appliances and authorizing research and development grants for more efficient building materials, processes and vehicle technology.

Furthermore, though the Senate did not include a minimum requirement for the amount of electricity generated by renewable sources, I support such a measure as I have done in the past. On June 14, 2007, the Senate voted 56-39 to table an amendment that would have replaced a 15 percent by 2020 renewable energy standard with 20 percent by 2020 using alternative sources including coal and nuclear energy. This amendment was viewed as undermining a “renewable” standard, therefore I opposed that amendment. I believe Pennsylvania is leading the way in renewable energy use and development through its Advanced Energy Portfolio.
Standard which requires that 18 percent of electricity in the Commonwealth be generated from clean and renewable sources by 2020.

While it would have been preferable for the House and Senate to have been able to strike a reasonable, bipartisan, and effective manner to produce legislation that includes both stronger automobile efficiency and a renewable portfolio standard, that clearly did not happen in this instance. Therefore, I face a choice between measures I dislike and policies I support. Many of my colleagues and I will oppose this bill based on the process used by the majority and the inclusion of controversial tax offset provisions. Had there been an opportunity for the two Houses and the two parties to come together, as is the common practice in Congress, to craft this important legislation governing our Nation’s energy production and use, I am confident we could have come to consensus on these issues and I still believe we could have done so.

This Nation has many challenges meeting today’s energy needs, with the price of oil at $100 per barrel, OPEC manipulating the oil markets, and concerns related to the environment including climate change, all of which will be directly addressed by this bill’s provisions. Too often in this Congress, we are faced with questionable procedures which have led to this situation of rancor and breakdown of the bicameral leadership of both parties and chambers to work together to improve this regrettable legislative environment and produce a bipartisan Energy bill.

Considering the current veto threat over the bill, it is my hope that after this difficult vote we can amicably move forward to work with our colleagues in the House of Representatives and the President to enact these policy measures which are important for the energy future of the United States.

As I stated in my introduction, I am troubled by reports from a Republican colleague that the legislation sent over by the House breached key commitments. It is difficult to know exactly what commitments were made, which were kept, and which may have been broken in multiple conversations with many parties. Therefore, in the interest of comity and improving the legislative process, I feel constrained to cast my vote against moving to this Energy bill, despite provisions I support.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, the clock is about to run on the 2007 congressional calendar. Our Democratic colleagues are about to show us once again how we can snatch defeat from the jaws of victory, all because they insist on raising taxes.

This time, the majority was on the verge of a real accomplishment, a bill that would increase the fuel efficiency standard for the first time in years, increase our use of clean, renewable fuels. They had a major accomplishment in their grasp, so why not take “yes” for an answer? Unfortunately, as on so many bills, they simply could not bring themselves to take the accomplishment without inserting an enormous tax hike—a tax hike that they knew would doom this legislation, that they knew would never be signed into law.

There should be absolutely no question about who or what is responsible for the failure of this bill. We have been very clear that the twin milestones of the utility rate increases—the RPS provision and the massive tax hikes—would sink the bill. There was no ambiguity about it whatsoever. The majority had a week to remove them, and they took a good step this week when they agreed to remove one of the milestones but, inexplicably, they made the other milestone—the tax hike—even bigger. If the twin milestones were removed, this important bill would pass Congress this week—and would pass the Senate in 2 days—and be signed into law.

By voting for this bill as written, it is a vote for a bill that will not become law. Voting for this bill is a vote for a bill that will not become law. Worse than that, it is a vote to block the rest of the Energy bill. It is a vote to block historic increases in fuel economy and an increase in renewable fuels.

The majority seems determined to accomplish little this year, and they have helped ensure that with this bill. I believe it is time to quit playing games, get serious, and get rid of the veto bait so this legislation can become law.

Make no mistake, if cloture is invoked with this massive tax hike still attached, it will have killed this bill. The majority will have traded an accomplishment for a tax hike and a veto.

I strongly urge a vote against this $22 billion tax hike by opposing cloture, and I urge my colleagues to do the same.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, my dear friend, the senior Senator from New California, I saw one of the marquees, $4 a gallon. In Nevada, everywhere is more than $3 a gallon.

Mr. BYRD. Shame.

Mr. REID. It is time to stop talking and putting America on a path to a cleaner, safer, and more affordable energy future. The Energy bill originally passed both the House and Senate with strong bipartisan majorities. Democrats and some Republicans agree we must pass this Energy bill for four major reasons. No. 1, if we do not act, I believe that is a constitutional insurrection to 10 million children instead of the 4.5 million children, if we are fortunate enough to extend the bill, it doesn’t make it good because the President doesn’t like it.

Global warming, the President doesn’t believe it exists and refused to even acknowledge the words until a few days ago. Does that make it right? No, it doesn’t.

The President believes in certain interrogation techniques involving torture. Does that make them right? No. We, as a Congress, have to stand up and do what we think is right.

Mr. BYRD. Right.

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Senate has passed a similar bill before, and we will do it again. But in the spirit of compromise and in a genuine pursuit of progress, Democrats have reluctantly agreed to remove that important provision from the Energy bill. But that is not all.

We also compromised by making changes to the energy tax title to accommodate the Republican minority. I would have preferred to make these tax credits permanent, certainly longer than 2 years.

Unless my colleagues vote for this bill, they are not doing anything to help the production of electricity in our country by alternative means. They are doing nothing. The great entrepreneurial minds of our country need these tax credits. They need incentives to invest billions of dollars into renewable energy. They cannot do it without these tax credits. If they do not vote for this tax provision of this bill, they are doing nothing to change our addiction to oil. But this compromise will ensure that critical investments in clean and sustainable sources of energy will continue.

We have business people looking at new solar, wind, and geothermal projects, and they will be spurred to action if we help them make their investment worthwhile.

I hope we reach the 60-vote threshold and send this bill to the House and on to the President today. I hope many Republicans will recognize the importance of this bill for their states and their country.

The White House is objecting to our provision requiring major oil and gas companies to part with a few dollars—a few dollars—of their billions of dollars of tax breaks they are scheduled to receive over the next 10 years.

Let’s be very clear. Our bill eliminates those tax breaks for those huge oil companies, international oil companies, an industry raking in record profits of half a trillion dollars in the last 6 years. Those are profits. We want to do our tax program so we can invest in clean energy.

Democrats and Republicans alike should agree that even without the renewable electricity standard, we have an energy bill that reduces energy costs, begin to break our addiction to oil, and reverse the threat of global warming. This is still an important, historic bill. I am very happy to support it and ask my colleagues from both sides of the aisle to hear the call of the American people for lower energy costs, less oil consumption and a cleaner environment and send this historic bill to the President.

I have been told there are Senators who have voted for our version of the bill—that is, CAFE and renewable fuels standard—who are considering voting against this bill because the President says he is going to veto this bill. That is not good enough. We have to flex our legislative muscles and do the right thing and not be stampeded because of 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. Democrats and Republicans have to heed that call. This could be the first step toward an energy revolution that starts in America and ripples throughout the world, but it can only start in the Senate today.

CLOUeT MOOTION
The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, Mr. President, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will report.

The assistant journal clerk read as follows:

CLOUeT MOOTION
We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, hereby move to bring to a close debate on the Reid motion to concur in the House amendment to the Senate amendment to the text of an amendment, with reference to H.R. 6, Energy.


The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call is waived.

The question is: Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the motion to concur in an amendment with the House amendment to the Senate amendment to the text of H.R. 6, the Renewable Fuels, Consumer Protection, and Energy Security Act of 2007, shall be brought to a close? The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. LOTT. The following Senator is not voting—

Mr. REID. Mr. President, this was a good, hard-fought battle. I am disappointed we did not pick up one more vote, but I know how difficult it was for some of my Republican colleagues to vote the way they did, and I admire and appreciate that very much.

We are going to finish this bill today, if at all possible. What we would like to do is go back to the farm bill for a while, and as soon as we get the path forward on that, we will go back to the bill.

My intention is to eliminate the tax title, and we would vote, then, on a piece of legislation that deals with CAFE and deals with renewable fuel.

Now, we, of course, really believe in the tax title, as I indicated in my speech before the vote, and hopefully we can work together to get that done. We all know we need to do renewable fuel, and really in a big way. I hope my friends on both sides of the aisle will work with us very early next year to get this done. It is extremely important.

But everyone should understand, as disappointed as I am and as disappointed as people throughout the country are, what we are going to wind up with is still historic—the first increase in fuel efficiency standards in 32 years. And we have increased them significantly. There has been a push from everybody to change various portions of what we have left, and there may be a little bit of tinkering with some of it but very little of it.

We are going to move forward as quickly as we can to today to complete this legislation. If we have to file cloture on the rest of it, we will do that. If we do that, that will mean there will be a cloture vote on Saturday, just so everyone understands. Hopefully, this is the last weekend before we adjourn for the year, so I hope we don’t have to do that. I hope we can have people working here together to maybe overcome some of the procedural hurdles we normally have to go through to move this legislation.

Also, we are going to finish the farm bill this week. Today is Thursday, tomorrow is Friday, and the next day is Saturday. We are going to finish the farm bill. I had a conversation earlier this morning with the Democratic
manager of the bill. I didn’t have a chance to speak to the Republican manager, but we would like to have all voting completed tonight or early—sometime before noon—tomorrow. If that is the case, we have a number of other issues that are extremely important to us and we would like to try to work through them before we leave. We need to take a look at the intelligence authorization bill. That is a conference report which has been completed. We also have to do the Defense authorization conference report. We need to complete that.

We have to take a hard look at FISA. It would be in the best interests of the Senate and this country if we could determine what the will of the Senate is on the domestic surveillance program. It expires on February 5. I hope prior to our coming back here in January that we have the Senate’s position on that and we send it to the House before we leave here.

The final one, it is kind of a moving target, but the spending bill we are going to get from the House—I have spoken to the Republican leader today. We are going to figure a way to go forward on that when we get it from the House. It appears at this time we will get it sometime Tuesday—maybe Monday but probably Tuesday.

Then—there are no secrets here; I wish we could have a few more—we have to do the domestic spending, get that done. Also, as much as it pains me to say this, we have to do something about the supplemental appropriation for the President for the war in Iraq.

Those are the main issues we have. With the little bit of time we have, there are a number of holds we are trying to work our way through. I had a good conversation with Senator Coburn yesterday and he has indicated a willingness to let us move some of those. I hope that in fact is the case. As much as I disagree with Senator Coburn on many things, I have found him to be an absolute gentleman and someone who is a man of his word. He has different beliefs than I do. He is entitled to those. He does it because it is a matter of principle. That is obvious. From all I know about him, it is not because of political purposes but because it is something he believes in.

I came to learn a long time ago that some of us think they are important. I think he does it because he believes in it. It is his cause, and someone who is a man of his word.

COBURN on so many things, I have a willingness to let us move some of those. He does it because it is something he believes in. From all I know about him, it is a matter of principle. That is obvious. From all I know about him, it is not exactly what you want, but it is something he believes in. I think he does it because he believes in it. It is his cause, and someone who is a man of his word.

We just don’t have the time to do that. We have to do some of those. We need to take a look at the intelligence authorization bill. That is a conference report which has been completed. We also have to do the Defense authorization conference report. We need to complete that.

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The irony is that the Republicans, Senator McConnell and others, have stood steadfast in protecting the subsidies for the oil companies of America. That is a time-honored tradition in the Senate. Whether you agree with it or not, the Senate, by and large, has been very kind to the oil companies and the oil industry throughout our history. We couldn’t have seen a vote they would have been happier with than the last one, because in the last one, the last vote, we suggested that subsidies for oil companies should give way to tax incentives for new sources of energy, sources of energy that are clean, renewable, sustainable, and that vote failed by one vote.

Isn’t it ironic, at a time when oil companies in America have enjoyed the highest profit margins in history, that the Republican argument is we must continue the tax subsidies for those oil companies? Isn’t it ironic, at a time when Americans are paying higher and higher prices at the pump for gasoline, while oil companies have the highest profits years in history, the Republicans argue we should not penalize these oil companies in any way or they will take it out on the consumers? It is a craven political position. It is a position which is devoid of leadership. It is a position which looks to the past instead of to the future. The future suggests these oil companies should be held accountable like