

In my view, our national and security interests have not yet been defined. Before I can even entertain the thought of sending American men and women into this situation, these interests must be real, and they must be defined.

Mr. STEVENS addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

SHOULD WE HAVE THE RIGHT TO BE INDIGNANT?

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, during an appearance on "Nightline" last week, I got quite disturbed with the Secretary of the Interior. He said that the Alaska delegation had been sneaky about, as he said, sticking in provisions to allow exploration and development of the Alaska oil reserve in the budget bills without honest debate. And he further said that we had done this in the dark of the night.

I came a little unglued at that, the idea that a Cabinet officer who is under oath—and I believe we are always under oath as Members of the Congress—will make statements that are just not true. I did not have time really to explain—in the context of that type of experience—the situation. So I have decided to come to the Senate and take 5 minutes to do it today.

This is a map of my State. It depicts what happened in 1980 at the time the Congress withdrew all of those areas that are outlined in blue and set them aside as preservation areas, national parks, national wildlife refuges, wild and scenic rivers, wilderness.

This area up here, the Arctic National Wildlife Range, was expanded into what is known now as Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. But one area, 1.5 million acres on the Arctic Slope, is the only area touched by that 1980 Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act that the 1980 act allowed for continued utilization for development. This is called the 1002 area, because that is the section, 1002 in the 1980 act. It abuts the Arctic Ocean of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. It is in the coastal plain. That area we have sought to proceed with leasing as was contemplated by the 1980 act now for 15 years.

What has happened this year that did not exist before this year was that the President requested and Congress has granted a change in the law with regard to scoring of Federal actions under the Budget Act. Prior to this year, the leasing of land, which brings about sizable bonus bids, would not score as a Federal revenue raiser even though it would bring money into the Federal Treasury. There was a bid for one area right offshore of the Arctic oil reserve, this part of ANWR, as we call it, \$2 billion just for the right to look to see if there was oil and gas in the area. It was dry. We expect bids in this area of over \$5 billion when the land is leased. More conservative estimates suggest that bids will be about \$2.6 bil-

lion, with \$1.3 billion coming to the Federal Treasury. That is what the Congressional Budget Office has said.

The President has asked for, and we granted, the right to score sales, and leasing is a sale of a right to use land for a period of time. Those are now scoreable so they can get in the Budget Act.

Going back to 1980, we have tried since then to get this leasing to proceed, but we have not been able to have it done.

This year in the budget reconciliation, what we're now calling the Balanced Budget Act of 1995, there was a vote in the Senate Energy Committee of 13 to 7 to include this area in the budget reconciliation. It came to the floor.

There have been three rollcall votes on the Senate floor this year dealing with the issue: May 24, to prohibit the asset sales in the budget resolution; again on May 24, to strike this amendment that had been inserted in the budget resolution by my colleague, Senator MURKOWSKI; and in October, during the budget reconciliation process, we voted on Senator BAUCUS' amendment dealing with the Arctic oil reserve. We tabled each of these motions. We were sustained in our position that this belongs in the budget bill.

In response to another of Secretary Babbitt's assertions, we have not done this in the dark of the night. There was not anything sneaky about it. As a matter of fact, we have had, since 1987, 26 days of hearings on this issue in the House of Representatives, 14 days of hearings in the Senate, and there is no question that this has all been done in the light of day.

We have not done anything sneaky in the dark of the night. To have a Cabinet officer accuse Members of the Congress of taking such action is really, I think, an extreme position. The interesting thing is the news media have picked this up and now they are bashing me over the head again, because I got disturbed at him for making such statements. It is appalling to me that we cannot require honesty and truthfulness out of people dealing with issues such as this.

We seek only to proceed with leasing, as was contemplated in 1980. As I said, this is the only area of Alaska in which that act allowed development. Look at the rest of it. Over 100 million acres of Alaska set aside. We cannot use them. This one area we can use, and we have been blocked by filibuster since 1980 to proceed as contemplated.

Now, the President asked for the change in the law, and asset sales can be included in the budget resolution. We can put this in the Budget Act, and we have put it in the Balanced Budget Act of 1995. It is a concept that we should, I think, consider.

Mr. President, it means over 735,000 jobs for Americans. It means we will be able to produce oil from that area as was contemplated. It is probably the

last greatest oil reserve on the North American Continent that has not been produced.

We have had provisions to allow the leasing of the coastal plain in a whole series of bills. At one time, we had a six-vote margin on a filibuster vote to break the filibuster. We did not have 60 votes, and we were not able to bring this up in past Congresses. President Bush's 1993 budget proposed this area be leased. Leasing of the coastal plain was part of his proposal to balance the budget by leasing land such as this and getting the bonus bids and getting the royalties that would come to the United States if leasing and development came about. He specifically provided, as a matter of fact, that the revenues would be shared equally between the Federal Government and the State of Alaska, which would mean a change in the law to accomplish that.

I come to the floor and I am going to come back again and again. I am going to ask the Senate to analyze the statements made by this Cabinet officer and let the public decide: Should we have the right to be indignant when a Cabinet officer makes statements on national television that are not true, that we try to mislead the public in terms of what is going on here in Congress? Is it sneaky to put a provision in the Balanced Budget Act of 1995 that does the same thing the President of the United States wants to do with the helium reserve, with the Teapot Dome area, and with the naval petroleum reserves? He wants to sell them. If they are sold, they are scored. We put it in the Balanced Budget Act. These actions have never been able to proceed passed because they were not in those bills either. They did not have the capability of getting a vote to avoid a filibuster in the Senate.

Now, Mr. President, it is very difficult to represent a State that is offshore, that is one-fifth the size of the United States, and that has so many varied issues that involve Federal lands and Federal actions, and to deal with the person who is Secretary of the Interior, who is unwilling to properly present the issue to the American public. I believe—and there has been a recent poll that will be announced today—the American public, when fully informed about this issue, will agree with us, that leasing should go ahead, as contemplated in 1980, and the revenues that will come from that area should come to the Federal Treasury, and some to the State. But the jobs that would come from developing our oil reserve should be available to Americans. We should stop importing so much foreign oil.

There are a great many more things that were said by the Secretary of the Interior in that statement when we appeared together on "Nightline." I will come back again and again, because all I am asking for, Mr. President, is an honest debate, to tell the truth and give the facts and let the judgment be made. But when people are trying to

twist the information so that it casts us in a light of being people that sneak around in the night—can you imagine that, saying we did this in the “dark of the night,” that we were sneaky, when we have had so many days of hearings, so many public statements on the floor, so many votes both here and in the House?

I think there is just no question that a Cabinet officer who does that should be called to attention, and we should ask: Is this the conduct that this administration believes should be the conduct of a Cabinet officer? When he raised his hand and said he would support the Constitution, as you and I did, Mr. President, does that not mean we will be truthful in the conduct of our business, the public business?

We do it out in front of everybody, right here on the floor. We did our action of putting this amendment in the bill, by a vote of the committee. We have had three votes on the floor this year. We have been here for 15 years now trying to get this Congress to proceed as was contemplated in 1980. I do not think it is proper to call us “sneaky,” or to say we are doing it in the dark of the night.

I hope more and more people in America understand that those who make allegations like that have something to hide themselves. I am going to find some way to bring to the American public the truth in these statements that are being made by the Cabinet members of this administration.

Mr. LAUTENBERG addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. ASHCROFT). The Senator from New Jersey is recognized.

Mr. LAUTENBERG. Mr. President, I want to talk just a few minutes now. I understand that the unanimous-consent agreement that has been propounded and accepted limits Senators to 5 minutes. I ask unanimous consent to extend that to 10 minutes.

Mr. STEVENS. I would have to object, Mr. President. We, of course, have no objection if the Senator wishes to be recognized for the second time. But in the interest of fairness, we have set 5 minutes per Senator. If there is another Senator to speak at the end of that 5 minutes, he should be recognized.

Mr. LAUTENBERG. That is not an unfair response. Perhaps at the end of that time, I will call on using leader time, which I understand has been made available to me.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey is recognized for 5 minutes.

THE BUDGET

Mr. LAUTENBERG. Mr. President, as the Democrat and Republican negotiators sit down and try to work out a final budget, I want to urge the negotiators to begin their discussions by agreeing on a fundamental principle. The principle is critical to Democrats like me and to the overwhelming majority of Americans. The principle is

this: Congress should not cut Medicare to pay for tax breaks for the wealthy.

Mr. President, the current Republican budget, which has yet to be sent to President Clinton, violates this basic principle because the heart of the Republican plan cuts Medicare by \$270 billion, and it is going to be used to pay for \$245 billion in tax breaks. The President has made it quite clear that these Medicare cuts for tax breaks are a quid pro quo and totally unacceptable. It is a basic matter of principle.

I also want to remind my colleagues about some of the other objectionable provisions in the Republican reconciliation bill. The budget proposed by the Republicans also cuts Medicaid by \$163 billion. This will mean huge cuts in nursing home care for seniors and care for the disabled.

The bill includes a \$23 billion cut in the earned income tax credit, and this means that 17 million working families, who make less than \$30,000 a year, will have to pay more in taxes. They will get a tax increase because the earned income tax credit, which helped them sustain themselves, will no longer be available. At the same time, the top 1 percent, who make over \$350,000 a year, will get an \$8,400 tax break. It is unnecessary and, frankly, it is unconscionable.

The bill also tears apart the safety net for poor children. Under the Republican so-called welfare reform provisions, between 1.2 and 2.1 million children will be thrust into poverty, potentially going hungry.

Mr. President, the basic thrust of this legislation is to balance the budget on the backs of working families and senior citizens, while handing out billions in tax breaks for the rich and powerful. It is an extreme approach. I know that Speaker GINGRICH and his followers believe in it strongly, but, in my view, it is fundamentally wrong.

Mr. President, when you get right down to it, the Republican budget forces all of us to answer a simple question, one that I have discussed many times here. It is very directly saying: “Whose side are you on?” That is the question being asked. Are you on the side of the rich and the powerful and the special interests? Or are you on the side of those who go to work every day worrying about how they will pay their bills, get their kids to college, sustain a lifestyle they have worked so hard to get, and worry about what happens in their later years? Or are you on the side of those who do not need help, but who have influence down here, who get to talk to a lot of people in Government, those who make the decisions?

That is the fundamental question that we are discussing as we consider the budget. The Republican reconciliation bill is pay dirt for the rich and the special interests, while senior citizens and working class families get stuck footing higher bills. This is an outrage.

We Democrats are going to continue to resist it as a basic matter of principle. We saw what happened with the

continuing resolution when the public caught on to this scheme.

Under the spotlight, our friends on the Republican side blinked. They retreated. They ran away. They wanted to escape the public wrath and quickly abandoned their deep principles for political cover. They quickly backed off their large increases in Medicare part B premiums.

Mr. President, the Republican budget makes the biggest cuts in the history of Medicare. I have heard the case made, “No, we are not making cuts. What we are doing is increasing the pot.” Yes, but there are a lot more people who are aging and who will be part of the Medicare population, and on a per capita basis they get hit very, very hard.

Republicans build their case around a false premise. They argue that in order to save Medicare they want to destroy its fundamental mission. That is not true. They ought to be frank with the American people about two major Republican misstatements.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Does the Senator from New Jersey wish to request additional time?

Mr. LAUTENBERG. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be permitted to speak for an additional 5 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. LAUTENBERG. The first misstatement that our Republican friends make is we need \$270 billion to save Medicare. That is simply untrue.

The Republicans are using this \$270 billion, as I said before, to finance their \$245 billion in tax breaks for the rich folk. It is no coincidence that Medicare cuts are \$270 billion and the tax breaks for the wealthy total \$245 billion.

These figures are remarkably similar because one is being used to finance the other. They are taking from our senior citizens who paid the bills, signed the contract, worked hard and weathered the storm, and they are giving it back to the wealthy and the special interests.

The second Republican falsehood is that we need to cut \$270 billion to make Medicare solvent. Not true. The chief Health and Human Services Medicare actuary has said that we only need \$89 billion in savings to make Medicare solvent until the end of the year 2006.

Let me give some examples of what kind of tax breaks these Medicare cuts are paying for: Under this bill, approximately 2,000 large corporations will get a tax break of \$2 million apiece because of changes in the alternative minimum tax calculations; the bill also gives an \$800,000 tax break to people with estates over \$2.5 million to be able to pass on to their heirs an additional \$800,000 tax break. It is not fair. It is not right.

Additionally, this bill contains hundreds of millions of dollars in giveaways to the oil companies.