It is a very real threat to our economy, a very real exposure to our consumers out there, and I don't think we realize what is ahead. Not too many people know that every time they get in the airplane now, they are paying a $20 surcharge on that airline ticket, whether they go from here to Seattle or from here to Baltimore. The Northeast corridor has felt the impact of $2 a gallon for heating oil.

The question is, Is it going to get worse? The answer is, probably. When can we get relief? The question is whether we want to just depend on the Mideast or whether we want to reduce our dependence on imported oil.

There are many areas of this country over the overthrust belt of the Rocky Mountains—Utah, Montana, North Dakota, New Mexico, Wyoming, and my State of Alaska—where we have a tremendous abundance of oil and gas if given the opportunity to initiate exploration. This is not supported by President Clinton. I am glad to say it is supported by some of the Republican candidates running for President.

The point is, what are we going to learn from history? Some say not much. If the Department of Energy predicts we will be 65-percent dependent in the years 2015 to 2020, should we not be doing something about it now? We should be committed to a policy of reducing our dependence on imported energy sources by developing sources in the United States. My State of Alaska, in the ANWR area, has an estimated 16 billion barrels. That would be an amount equal to what Saudi Arabia exports to America over an estimated 30-year timeframe.

We have areas in Louisiana, in Texas, and other coastal States that want to have OCS activity, yet we have an administration that does not support that activity. That is, indeed, unfortunate.

The bottom line is, when are we going to wake up? When will we relieve our dependency on imported oil? I might add, for those who think imported oil is the answer from an environmental point of view, it is estimated that from the year 2015 to 2020, it will take more than 30 tankers, 500,000 barrels each, docking every day in the United States, to supply that increase; that would be 10,000 ships per year. If that is not an environmental risk, I suggest anyone check the registration of the ships because they will be foreign ships.

Finally, in 1990 we had 657 rigs working in this country; today we have 153. In 1990, we had 405,000 jobs in the oil industry; today we have 293,000, a 28-percent decline.

If one considers the makeup of our trade deficit, a trade deficit of $300 billion, $100 billion is the cost of imported oil.

I encourage my colleagues to recognize that it is time to move. It is time to address opportunities to relieve our dependence on imported oil with meaningful proposals on the basic premise that charity begins at home.

I ask unanimous consent an article from the Wall Street Journal be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the article was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Wall Street Journal, Mar. 6, 2000]

OIL OUTPUT MAY BE HOSTAGE TO IRAN, IRAQ AGENDAS

(By Steve Liesman and Neil King, Jr.)

Iran and Iraq, the two major oil producers over which the U.S. has the least sway, are playing a crucial role in determining where oil prices are headed and are positioned to affect the world economy.

Together, the two countries account for 8% of the world's 75 million barrels of daily oil production. But tight world oil inventories, high prices and declining production capacity in the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries have given Baghdad and Tehran new power to push their separate agendas, analysts say.

OPEC members will gather in three weeks to decide whether to reverse the past year's production cutbacks, which reduced world output by about five million barrels a day. Leading producers support an increase as soon as April to cool prices that recently topped $31 a barrel for the benchmark West Texas Intermediate crude.

After initial reluctance, Kuwait during the weekend signaled its support for an agreement by Saudi Arabia, Venezuela and Mexico to boost production. Meanwhile, a strike by oil workers in Venezuela withered quickly.

Iran still leads the group of price hawks within OPEC and ''is one of the key stumbling blocks to coming out with a new decision,'' said Raad Alkadiri, an analyst with the Petroleum Finance Co., a Washington energy consultant.

Officially, Tehran says the second quarter is the wrong time to increase output because demand typically declines and higher production could lead to a quick collapse in prices. But domestic economics are at least as much of a factor. Unlike other major producers, which have extra capacity, Iran's 3.5 million barrels of daily production is about its maximum, analysts believe. Declining investments in its oil fields, as well as continued U.S. sanctions on spare parts, suggest production capacity may actually be declining. ''They don't have more capacity to make up for the price drop,'' Mr. Alkadiri said. Higher output world-wide—which could result in lower prices—would do little for the Iranian treasury at a time when payments on $11 billion of foreign debt begin to peak.

Iran, which has the backing of Algeria and Libya, also has little reason in the short term to care about the world economy. Its oil minister recently said that oil-consuming nations should lower energy taxes if they are concerned about inflation from higher oil prices.

Saudi Arabia, the world's largest exporter and OPEC's clear leader, has a special interest in keeping Iran happy. Relations between the two countries are at their best since the Iranian revolution of 1979. Their rapprochement last year was the linchpin of OPEC's ability to cut back production. ''The Saudis might have been more responsive more quickly [to world oil markets] had it not been for this relationship with Iran,'' said Amy Jaffe, senior energy analyst at the James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy in Houston.

OPEC producers want to continue the cartel's newfound unity, fear a production free-for-all if OPEC cooperation dissolves. Of course, oil-producing countries ultimately could go ahead without Iran, as they have in the past. Venezuela's oil minister is to visit Tehran in coming weeks to lobby the government to accept higher production levels.

But the one million to two million barrels that OPEC is considering putting back on the market could be quickly removed if Iraq withheld its two million barrels a day of exports. In November, Iraqi President Saddam Hussein pushed oil prices up almost $1 a barrel in a single day when he turned off his spigots to protest United Nations sanctions. This time, ''with oil inventories very low, any interruption in crude supply could cause prices to skyrocket,'' said Gary Ross, president of PIRA Energy Group, a New York energy-consulting company.

Whether Mr. Hussein would use the opportunity is a matter of debate, but few dispute he has ample reason. Baghdad is feuding with the U.S. about Iraq's need to import spare parts for its oil industry. It could decide to use the tight oil market, analysts say, to get Washington to ease up—or to undermine U.N. sanctions altogether. ''We have seen him do this before and we would not be surprised if he resorted to the same tactics again,'' one U.S. official said.

Other OPEC producers' ability to make up for any Iraqi cutbacks would be strained in the short term. Mr. Ross said OPEC production capacity has fallen by about 500,000 barrels a day during the past year. Venezuela in particular has let its capacity dwindle as it diverted oil revenue to pay for the extensive social agenda of President Hugo Chavez. In time, however, OPEC countries should be able to make up any shortfall with their four million to five million barrels a day of excess capacity.

Mr. MURKOWSKI. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. THOMAS). The Senator from Alabama.

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, I thank the distinguished chairman of our Energy Committee for the remarks. They are not new. He is not making a political statement. Chairman MURKOWSKI is here because he has spoken out for years, virtually since this administration has been in office, about discouraging—through so many rules, regulations, and taxes—the domestic production of oil and gas.

He has warned we would be at this point. Here we are. The best way by far to deal with this is to make sure we have more domestic production because it will help keep the prices down, and it will also help ease our balance of payments.

I thank the Senator for his leadership on this issue.

CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, Senators from the other side of the aisle made comments about the Republican Presidential primary, taking sides in those primaries. I think it is somewhat odd they would want to debate some of the issues here.

With regard to the concerns over contributions that are going to independent groups—I believe New York was complained of—to run TV ads, money was given by a small number of people who made large contributions to run those ads. It was said that this is a justification for passing the McCain-Feingold campaign finance reform legislation.

My best understanding of what that bill is all about is that this would not be covered. Fundamentally, the McCain-Feingold bill covered contributions of larger sums of money to political parties but it did not prevent people giving large contributions to an independent environmental group, an independent pro-choice group, or an independent pro-life group so they could run ads during a campaign season and say: Candidate JEFF SESSIONS doesn't agree with our views, vote against him.

The problem I have had with campaign finance reform is it was not in this McCain-Feingold bill. Why? Because this is America, these are political campaigns. Is the Senate going to pass a law that says individual American citizens can't raise money and run an ad and express their view as to how the American public should or should not vote on an issue?

It is frustrating to have the moneys come in. I certainly believe they ought to be disclosed. I was, I believe, a victim or target of one of these ads when I ran for the Senate 3 years ago. It came under the guise of an environmental group, but I know the money came mainly to beat up on me.

How can anyone say that is wrong? How can we say a group cannot raise money and run ads during an election campaign season about issues? I am troubled by that. I am frustrated not having a lot of money myself, facing two candidates in my primary, both of whom spent over $1 million of their own money, most of it beating up on me. I was struggling with $1,000 maximum contributions per person to try to fight back. I was able to do so. Fortunately, the American people don't vote on who has the most money. There are other issues. We have seen that time and time again. They are pretty sophisticated in how to evaluate this.

I am troubled by this idea that we can, out of some sort of vision of good government, blithely walk in and say candidates are not going to be able to raise money; they are not going to be able to spend money to express their ideas during an election campaign.

When do we want to do it? They say just accept certain guidelines for 6 months prior to the election. When do we want to speak out, if it isn't when people are getting ready to vote?

MARRIAGE TAX PENALTY

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, I believe all in government in Washington, DC, and in every State, need to ask ourselves: Do our legislative acts, the public policies that we create, enhance or nurture our better instincts as a people? Are we conducting activities and passing laws that further benefit the better instincts of our Nation as a people?

A payment to somebody or some institution is an incentive to them, for whatever reason, that incentivizes and encourages that activity that got them the payment.

A tax, likewise, is a penalty. It discourages, it penalizes, it hurts. It sanctions certain kinds of behavior. That is so basic as to be without dispute. Frankly, our Founding Fathers knew this.

Professor Sindell, at Harvard, has written a book. I have not read the book, but I read the article, I believe in the Atlantic Monthly, about how in the first 150 years of our Nation's history, if you look at the debate that occurred in Congress, the Senate and the House, they were constantly debating what to sign and what to veto and what bills to support; they were always debating this principle.

(Mr. KYL assumed the chair.)

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, is this going to make people better? Is it going to encourage their best instincts or will it encourage poor instincts? Will it encourage bad behavior? If they vote for or against bills on that basis, will it make us better people? That is an important issue. We ought to think about it.

We encourage a lot of activities in America through our tax policies. We encourage people to give to charitable institutions, churches, and schools by making those contributions tax deductible.

We help families raise their children by providing a deduction or a child tax credit, which we passed a few years ago.

We encourage savings by making the interest on individual retirement accounts tax free.

I have introduced a bill to make the interest that accrues on savings for prepaid college tuition plans tax free because we ought to encourage saving for education and have families and children invest in their education.

In many States—Kentucky, for example—the average contribution to those plans is $47 per month. They are middle-income people who care about their children's education. They are saving for their children's education, and we are taxing them on the interest that accrues on that savings for college education.

In my view, that is bad public policy. We discourage and penalize other activities we feel we can do without but we do not want to prohibit entirely. We tax cigarettes at a very high rate. We know that tobacco is bad for our health. It is not a good thing to do, and we have pretty high taxes, higher taxes every year it seems, and rightly so.

We tax gasoline. We can talk about the cost of gasoline. Last year in Alabama, gasoline was under $1 a gallon in a lot of places. Forty percent of the cost of that gallon of gasoline was State and Federal tax because we do not want people to use more than they need, we want to keep supplies strong. We do not want to import anymore than we have to, and we want to reduce pollution.

There are other taxes and penalties on people who pollute. That is one of the policies.

We have higher taxes on alcohol than we do a lot of other products.

We do not tax, for example, prescription drugs—most States do not. There is sales tax on all kinds of products that are sold in our grocery stores, but we do not tax prescription drugs because we know people need those drugs, and we do not want to penalize that.

Another thing we tax which I must add to that list is marriage. We are taxing and penalizing marriage to an extraordinary degree.

At church Sunday in Alabama—it was a pleasure to get back home—my minister told a story about an old man who had never been to town. His grandchildren said: Grandpa, you need to go to town. He finally agreed. He had never seen a zoo, so they wanted to take him to a zoo. They took him to a zoo, and he came upon a giraffe. He stood there and just looked at that giraffe. He walked around that giraffe, he studied that giraffe, and he spent 2 hours looking at that giraffe. He finally said: I still don't believe it.

We are at that point with the marriage penalty. Some people do not believe it is happening, that we are taxing marriage. It is very real. Talk to young people all over America today and ask them about what is going to happen to their taxes when two of them, particularly if both are working, are married. It costs them a lot of money.

We have to end this. We need to end this tax penalty. The President said he was for it. The proposal he made in his State of the Union Address and subsequently is insignificant in meeting that challenge, but it is an admission that he believes there is a problem.

Let's look at it. Soon we are going to be seeing legislation in this body to deal with it. I hope we will study it carefully and end this governmental policy of penalizing and discouraging marriage. That is wrong. We need to encourage marriage. We do not need to penalize singleness, but they ought not have a financial incentive to remain single. We should not have public policy that favors singleness over marriage. We should have a fair policy that does not favor one over the other.

I have a young staff member who married recently. He had been dating his fiancee for over four years and they finally married. He tells me they will pay over $1,000 a year more having married. They married in July of last year, and they have to pay the marriage tax for the whole year. It is $1,000. That is roughly $100 a month out of their budget simply because they quit being engaged and were married. That is not right. That is wrongheaded. We do not need to continue this.

A good friend of mine, a fine person, unfortunately went through a divorce. She divorced in January a year ago. She told me that had they divorced in December, it would have saved them $1,600 on their tax bill. That is approximately $130 a month. They gave up that much because they did not divorce