

akin to not including a major form of treatment such as a surgical procedure when Medicare was established in 1965. It is absolutely unthinkable. Too many seniors lack dependable drug coverage and their health is being compromised. I am committed to providing Medicare coverage for prescription drugs, and promise to continue fighting for America's seniors. The Congress must move forward expeditiously to adopt legislation to accomplish this important objective.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. FITZGERALD). The Senator from Delaware.

Mr. ROTH. I thank the Chair.

(The remarks of Mr. ROTH and Mr. MOYNIHAN pertaining to the introduction of S. 2277 are located in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

Mr. MOYNIHAN. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MOYNIHAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

MEASURE READ THE FIRST TIME—S. 2284

Mr. MOYNIHAN. Mr. President, I understand that S. 2284, introduced earlier today by Senator DASCHLE, and others, is at the desk, and I ask for its first reading.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will read the bill for the first time.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 2284) to amend the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 to provide for an increase in the Federal minimum wage.

Mr. MOYNIHAN. I thank the always generous clerk.

I now ask for its second reading and object to my own request on behalf of the other side.

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

Mr. MOYNIHAN. If the distinguished Chair understands that, he understands more than I do. But the matter is now concluded. Once again, I suggest the absence of a quorum. And thank Heaven for Mr. Dove.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. GORTON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. GORTON. Mr. President, what is the business before the Senate?

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate is in morning business.

Mr. GORTON. With any time limitations?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There are none.

PIPELINE SAFETY

Mr. GORTON. Mr. President, last week the city of Bellingham was the site of a Senate field hearing on pipeline safety. This hearing comes after the unspeakable tragedy that took place when three young boys were killed after a gasoline pipeline exploded in Bellingham on June 10.

I want to share with you my thoughts from the hearing and outline future congressional action as the Senate Commerce Committee prepares to reauthorize the Office of Pipeline Safety this year.

Unfortunately, my Senate Commerce Committee colleagues were unable to attend last Monday's hearing in Bellingham, but I believe the committee has no greater priority than to making sure the pipelines running underneath our schools, neighborhoods, churches, and senior centers are safe.

Pipeline safety concerns aren't unique to Washington. We're seeing States such as Texas, Wisconsin, Florida, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania respond to various local pipeline issues from oil spills and leaks to siting battles. In the last decade, there were 3,917 liquid fuel spills and natural gas leaks, averaging roughly one per day. These accidents resulted in 201 deaths, close to 3,000 injuries and \$778 million in property damage. And for the first time, a National Pipeline Safety Conference will be held in Washington, D.C. next month.

Though the sacrifice is one that no family and no community should have to make, the tragedy in Bellingham would be even worse if we did not learn from it and apply those lessons to try to prevent other accidents. To this end, last week's hearing was invaluable.

While the cause of the explosion remains under investigation, here's what we do know:

We know that many people in Bellingham were unaware that a pipeline was even running through their neighborhood.

We know that the Office of Pipeline Safety ignored enhanced safety requirements, including increased inspections inside pipes, in highly populated and environmentally sensitive areas as Congress required in 1992 and 1996.

We learned that cities through which the Olympic Pipelines Company line runs have tremendous concerns with the integrity of the pipelines, and have had problems getting information and cooperation from the company.

We know that the National Transportation Safety Board has criticized OPS for its poor record of responding to NTSB recommendations. NTSB Chairman Jim Hall has even said, "There's no indication that the Office of Pipeline Safety is in charge or that its regulations, its inspections, its assets, its staffing and its spirit are adequate to the task."

We know that right now, the power to oversee and regulate the safety of the millions of miles of pipelines running underneath our communities rests with the federal Office of Pipeline Safety under the supervision of the Department of Transportation. And in the case of implementing pipeline safety standards in Washington State they have failed miserably.

We learned that only a handful of States have the power to implement tougher safety standards, and when States are given this authority, their safety record is equal if not greater to that of OPS.

So, where does this leave us?

State government, local government, and citizen groups in Washington State were quick to answer the wake-up call from Bellingham and examine what they could do to improve pipeline safety. What they found was that while there are significant actions Washington can take to prevent and respond to accidents, such as improving the State's call-before-you-dig requirements, increasing public awareness, and training emergency response personnel, there is a lot the state cannot do with respect to prescribing safety standards because Federal law preempts state regulations.

Today is already March 23. We know this is going to be a short legislative year. Many will say we won't have the time to address this issue this year. I disagree. Congress is due to reauthorize the Office of Pipelines Safety and we've been told the administration will submit its proposal to Congress any day now.

Senator MURRAY and I are supporting legislation to give states greater authority in adopting tougher pipeline safety standards. Given the Office of Pipelines Safety's failure to make pipeline safety a priority, its reluctance to cede any authority to states, I feel we must move forward.

When I asked both the Office of Pipeline Safety and the NTSB last week to take a position on our pipeline legislation, the answer was less than clear. After listening to the painful and damaging testimony that scoured OPS's safety record and failure to comply with congressionally-mandated safety requirements, I was speechless at their unwillingness to relinquish oversight authority to the states. The State of Washington, the people of Bellingham and communities along the pipeline route are ready and capable of implementing tougher safety standards. I demand OPS to take a firm position on this pipeline legislation.

I also request that my good friend and colleague, Senator JOHN MCCAIN, chairman of the Senate Commerce Committee, schedule a vote on the various pipeline safety proposals.

As I have said before, this pipeline legislation may not be perfect, and I believe we need to do some more listening before we arrive at the final pipeline safety proposal. NTSB officials highlighted the complexities of regulating pipelines that pass through a

number of States. They made their case as to why they should retain sole authority to regulate interstate pipelines. But it was an unpersuasive case. I encourage the Office of Pipeline Safety to consider my proposal to allow States which have at least 90 percent of a pipeline passing through their borders, to have greater authority in setting and implementing its own safety and inspection standards.

As Senator MURRAY and I await the administration's proposal, we agree that the following proposals must be included in the final legislation:

Allow States greater authority to adopt and enforce safety standards for interstate pipelines, particularly in light of the absence of meaningful federal standards.

This increase in authority should be accompanied by an increase in grants to States to carry out pipeline safety activities.

Improve the collection and dissemination of information about pipelines to the public and to local and State officials responsible for preventing and responding to pipeline accidents. This includes ensuring that operators are collecting the information necessary to accurately assess and respond to risks. The public should be informed about where pipelines are, what condition they are in, when they fail and why they fail.

Adopt more stringent national standards for pipeline testing, monitoring, and operation.

Ensure congressional mandates are followed, and make sure there are sufficient resources to enforce regulations.

Invest more in research and development to improve pipeline inspections.

Create a model oversight oil spill advisory panel in Washington State. This body would have the authority to not only respond, but to initiate the development of pipeline safety measures.

I have long believed that those closest to the problem are in a better position to help develop the solution. Families in Washington state, and across the country, have already paid to high a price for us to miss this opportunity to put higher federal safety standards into law.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

Mr. GRAMS. Mr. President, is the Senate currently in morning business with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Yes.

OIL PRICES AND ENERGY POLICY

Mr. GRAMS. Mr. President, I rise to talk this afternoon about this country's overall energy policy or, more truthfully, to talk about the lack of this country's overall energy policy.

With fuel prices continuing their rise to levels that threaten farmers, truckers, families, and, in fact, our entire economy, I felt I needed to come to the Senate floor for a few minutes to discuss this very important issue.

As my colleagues know, I come from a rural State that is heavily dependent on agriculture. When farmers in Minnesota are hurting, it has an impact on businesses, on families, and individuals far removed from the fields of our family farms. Because Minnesota is a large State and so heavily reliant upon agriculture, it is also reliant upon truckers to move products to market and to bring products to communities. It is also important to note that Minnesota is well known as one of our Nation's coldest States, a State where many residents rely on fuel oil to heat their homes. These realities are a few examples of why crude oil prices and supplies are so important to the people of my State. They are also examples of why, since coming to the Congress in 1993, I have been a strong critic of the Department of Energy's failure to strengthen our Nation's energy policies.

In the late 1970s, our Nation responded to the energy crisis by creating the Department of Energy and charging it with developing a stable energy policy that would decrease our reliance on foreign sources of energy. At the time, our Nation was reliant on foreign oil for about 35 percent of our needs. When DOE was created, with its charge to create an energy policy to make us more energy independent, our reliance on foreign fuels was 35 percent. Despite the countless billions of dollars taxpayers have invested in the Department of Energy over the past two decades, our Nation is now roughly 60 percent reliant on foreign energy sources, and that reliance is growing and growing rapidly.

That's one of the reasons why I'm an original cosponsor of S. Res. 263, which calls on both the administration and Congress to undertake steps which will lead to a long-term reduction of our reliance on foreign sources of energy. Among those steps, the resolution calls on the administration to review all programs, policies, and regulations that place an undue burden on domestic oil and gas producers. I believe this is an important aspect of the DOE's failure to reduce reliance on foreign energy sources. Sadly, this administration's opposition to virtually all exploration and production activities on public lands has rendered our nation's domestic producers incapable of responding to supply shortages. That is why we are in the position we are in today. In fact, since 1992, U.S. oil production has been reduced by 17% while our consumption of oil has increased by 14%. In 1990, U.S. jobs in oil and gas exploration and production were roughly 405,000—today those jobs have been reduced to roughly 290,000 a 27% decline in jobs in energy-related fields. In 1990, the United States was home to 657 working oil rigs. Today, there are only 153 working oil rigs scattered across the Nation—a decline of 77 percent; again, a reason the United States did not respond to shortages in supply. During a recent hearing before the Sen-

ate Budget Committee, I asked Energy Secretary Bill Richardson if he would consider supporting the exploration of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR), which is estimated to hold enough oil to offset 30 years of imports from Saudi Arabia. In his response, he indicated that he believes we have sufficient areas for exploration on federal lands without developing ANWR. We have opportunities, he says, to go onto other Federal lands and do the exploration. If we do, the question is, Why haven't we? If that is the case, then why has the Clinton administration failed to move forward in allowing expanded exploration and production activity on those Federal lands instead of leaving us vulnerable to the OPEC nations?

Why has this administration waited until an oil price crisis has gripped our nation before suggesting increased development of domestic oil and gas reserves on public lands? Why does this administration still maintain its opposition to exploring our nation's most promising oil reserves like ANWR? And why does this administration maintain opposition to exploration in the United States based on environmental considerations but has no reservations about calling on other nations to do so?

For some reason, this administration seems to believe that it is an environmentally friendly proposition to expect other nations to produce our oil for us. The United States has some of the most stringent environmental standards for oil exploration and production—standards that aren't embraced by many of the oil producing nations of the world. I simply cannot see how sending our nation's energy secretary across the world to beg for increased oil production every time we have a supply problem is sound energy, economic, or environmental policy. I do not connect the two.

I believe it's also important to note that this administration is currently engaged in a number of other activities that severely limit our nation's ability to increase our energy independence. First, this administration's failure to remove nuclear waste from civilian nuclear reactors threatens to shut down nuclear power plants across the country. In Minnesota, the DOE's inaction may force the premature closure of the Prairie Island Nuclear Generating Facility. If it should close, Minnesota will lose 20% of its generation capacity. At the same time, this administration is attempting to breach hydropower dams in the Pacific Northwest—dams that are crucial to the energy needs of that region. In each of these situations, consumers will be forced to rely more heavily upon fossil fuels to replace the loss of clean energy technologies. As if that weren't enough abuse of America's energy consumers, the Clinton administration has undertaken a number of activities that have severely impacted the ability of utilities to turn to coal-fired plants to meet the energy demands of consumers. And I need not remind any of my colleagues of the lack