

of infrastructure in our nation to dramatically increase our use of natural gas as a reliable, base-load source capable of replacing hydropower, nuclear, and coal-fired generation.

What continues to amaze me is how this administration sends its "yes men" in front of Congress to pledge support for each of these generation technologies. I do not hear the administration telling Congress they want to eliminate coal-fired generation. But the EPA is doing its best to regulate coal plants out of business. I have never heard the administration say they want to close down nuclear plants, but I have yet to see them lift a finger to keep them operating. When anyone in this body confronts the administration with the impending brown outs and energy price increases its policies are going to force, all its representatives can say is that they're working on it and they support renewable energy technologies.

Well, I too, am a strong supporter of renewable energy technologies. I've been a strong proponent of the development and promotion of ethanol and biodiesel as a means of reducing our reliance on foreign oil and improving the environment. I was a cosponsor of legislation signed into law last year extending the tax credit for electricity generated from wind and expanding that tax credit to electricity generated from poultry waste. I have written letters in each of the past two years to Senate appropriators supporting significant increases in renewable energy programs, and I was one of 39 Senators to vote in support of a \$75 million increase for renewable energy programs last year. I wrote to President Clinton this year asking him to include more money for renewable energy programs in his budget. However, I know that simply calling for increased funding for renewable energy can't even approach the loss of generation in hydropower, nuclear, coal, and other sources that this administration has pursued through its energy policies.

I'd like to believe that this administration has a grasp on the long-term energy needs of our nation and has plans for meeting those needs, but the actions of the administration and the DOE's failures on the spectrum of energy challenges prove otherwise.

That's why, in a letter to Secretary Richardson last week, I urged him to take immediate actions to allow for both on and offshore oil and gas exportation and production in states that want to do so. I urged him to take immediate steps to ensure that nuclear power plants such as Minnesota's Prairie Island Facility are not forced to shut down due to DOE inaction. I urged him to work with the Department of Interior to resist attempts to reduce the use of hydropower. And I urged him and the administration to undertake an immediate review of all regulations that impose undue burdens on the development of domestic energy sources that could reduce our reliance on foreign oil.

Long ago, the Congress charged the U.S. Department of Energy with the job of reducing our nation's reliance on foreign oil and establishing a long-term, stable energy policy to guide our economy for decades to come. It goes without saying that the Department has failed miserably in that, its most basic mission.

I look forward to working with my colleagues in the coming days, weeks and months in enacting a number of both short-term and long-term responses to the needs of farmers, truckers, the elderly, and all energy consumers. I've been a strong supporter of renewable energy technologies and increased funding for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program—or LIHEAP. I strongly support the efforts of my colleagues to increase domestic oil and gas exploration and production on public lands, including offshore reserves and the tremendous potential of ANWR. I remain committed to finding a resolution to our nation's nuclear waste storage crisis—as crisis that threatens to shut down nuclear plants and further weaken our nation's domestic energy security. And I'll continue to be one of the Senate's strongest critics of the Department of Energy's unbelievable neglect of the long-term energy needs of our nation.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. the Senator from Tennessee.

THE 17TH ANNIVERSARY OF PRESIDENT REAGAN'S STRATEGIC DEFENSE INITIATIVE

Mr. THOMPSON. Mr. President, seventeen years ago today President Reagan first committed his administration and the country to the concept of a National Missile Defense. He rightfully viewed the concept of Mutually Assured Destruction—the prevailing strategic concept of the day—as dangerous to this Nation. President Reagan understood that the only way to protect the American people and our homeland was through common sense, straight talk, and a strong, credible defense, not threats of mutual annihilation. While President Reagan and his Strategic Defense Initiative were mocked by critics, he remained steadfast in his vision and his belief that the American people could achieve anything they committed themselves to doing.

Seventeen years later the United States remains vulnerable to missile attack, but from newer and more likely threats, some of which we may not be able to deter: accidental launches, terrorist groups, and rogue states. The United States Intelligence Community and outside expert groups like the Rumsfeld Commission tell us that the threats are real and growing. Less than two years ago North Korea launched a three-stage missile over Japan, demonstrating a North Korean capability to send a missile with a nuclear, biological or chemical weapon to the United States. Meanwhile, other rogue

states like Iran, Iraq, and Libya are developing similar capabilities.

Despite these real dangers, the current administration has kept the American people vulnerable to attack by failing to vigorously pursue missile defense programs started by previous Republican administrations. It has put the fate of our country and our people in the hands of the 1972 ABM Treaty—a treaty signed with a country that no longer exists, which was written for a vastly different strategic environment, and which codified the concept of Mutual Assured Destruction.

It is imperative that the United States aggressively pursue Ronald Reagan's vision of an American homeland free and safe, protected from intimidation, blackmail, and attack by missile-armed adversaries. We can start by putting greater effort and resources into programs like the National Missile Defense program—which has already demonstrated through actual tests that missile defense is technologically feasible—a fact acknowledged privately by defense officials, and publicly by Secretary of Defense Bill Cohen following the most recent test when he stated that "the technology is certainly proving to be on the right track."

The United States should also continue to develop other initiatives which will complement our ground based system and provide for a multi-layered defense. I'm talking specifically about a sea-based system mounted on Navy Aegis cruisers that can be placed off an adversary's coast and destroy enemy missiles immediately after launch; or the Airborne Laser program that seeks to destroy missiles during their ascent; and a space-based system that can shoot down ballistic missiles in the outer atmosphere and vacuum of space.

I might also take this opportunity to compliment the Center for Security Policy and the Heritage Foundation that made valuable contributions in the discussion toward these alternatives.

The key to such a system is working with the Russians to allay their concerns, address their fears, and modify the ABM treaty to accommodate a robust, multi-layered national missile defense. We must try to convince the Russians that they share the threats we face—limited attacks or threats by rogue states—and that our missile defense plans in no way undercut their strategic deterrent. But ultimately, whether Russia is convinced or not, America must do what is necessary to protect itself.

I am concerned that the Clinton administration is currently negotiating changes to the ABM Treaty that will not allow us to fulfill these plans; that they are negotiating to make limited changes to the treaty that will sound good in an election year but will prevent us from building the robust, multi-tiered missile defense we need. This would be unsatisfactory and irresponsible. Marginal changes to the

ABM Treaty will only keep America vulnerable to missile attack, mislead the public about their safety, and tie the hands of the next Administration that may choose to do what is right, not politically or diplomatically expedient.

Finally, we must work with our Allies to address their concerns, interests, and our mutual defense obligations. We stood guard together during the dark days of the Cold War and eventually defeated communism. We must stand together again now and face the threats of the post-cold-war era.

Only through a sustained commitment to a national missile defense system—which can defend the American people from these horrible weapons of mass destruction—can the government fulfill its first responsibility of defending the United States. This is the right and sensible thing to do, and the American people are capable of achieving it. President Reagan understood that almost twenty years ago today.

Mr. COCHRAN. Mr. President, on several occasions I have discussed missile defense programs and the importance of moving as quickly as possible to develop and deploy missile defense systems—both theater and national—to protect forces that are deployed around the world and our citizens here at home. Of all the programs designated as “Major Defense Acquisition Programs” by the Office of the Secretary of Defense, only the Airborne Laser program has distinguished itself by being on schedule and on budget while meeting or exceeding all of its technical requirements. The spectacular performance of this program is the standard all defense programs should aspire to.

Our debates on defense programs usually focus on budgets, schedules, performance, requirements, and threats, but seldom do we pause to recognize success; more specifically, we hardly ever acknowledge the human component of success.

The many accomplishments of the Airborne Laser program did not just happen by accident. Rather, the program has succeeded because of the human element; because of the many people who, over the course of the last three decades, have advanced our science and engineering to the point where the United States will be able to put chemical lasers on 747 aircraft and use them to defend America, its interests, and its deployed forces.

Most recently, the Airborne Laser program has succeeded because of the leadership of Col. Mike Booen and Dr. Paul Shennum, both of whom will be leaving the program in April after having driven the Airborne Laser program forward for the last four years. They deserve special recognition for their efforts.

Colonel Booen was named Deputy Airborne Laser Program Director in the summer of 1996 and promoted to Director in November of that year. While

Colonel Booen has been an energetic and tireless advocate for the Airborne Laser program and its people, his latest achievements are just the most recent in a notable career that includes early promotions, academic recognition as a distinguished graduate of the Air Force Academy, and assignments as a Defense Department Manned Space Flight Engineer and Deputy Chief of the Secretary of the Air Force's Staff Group. In recognition of his success Colonel Booen has been selected to become the next Director of the Air Force's System Program Office for the Space-Based Infrared System. It is an assignment of critical importance to our nation's security, and I look forward to continuing to work with Colonel Booen as he resuscitates that program.

Over a distinguished career of 40 years with Boeing, Dr. Paul Shennum has developed a reputation as a leader who leads with energy and integrity, embraces change, encourages innovation, and challenges people to contribute more than they thought they could. Dr. Shennum is one of the rare program managers who can be counted on to provide factual answers when asked a question. He does not give evasive responses, however convenient they may sometimes be for his company or the Pentagon. His straightforward approach with the Pentagon, Congress, and within his industry team has been instrumental in the Airborne Laser's outstanding program performance. I wish him the best in his well-deserved retirement.

The Booen-Shennum team has succeeded because both of these men understand what the word “leadership” means. They know it involves fixing on an objective, setting high, but realistic, standards, and leading the government and industry components of the Airborne Laser team effectively to that objective. They have refused to accept excuses for work that hasn't met their standards. They have inspired their colleagues to accomplish more than many thought possible. They appreciate effort, but expect results.

And it is results, unparalleled in any other defense program, that Mike Booen and Paul Shennum have given us.

Colonel Booen and Dr. Shennum have demonstrated how a government-industry team should act. This program is not a team in name only, thanks to the constant efforts of Colonel Booen and Dr. Shennum. They have caused the team members, including the various defense contractors, industry and government employees to really work together to achieve a common goal.

In their relentless pursuit of excellence, Col. Mike Booen and Dr. Paul Shennum have reminded us that America's defense programs will ultimately succeed or fail because of the people involved. I congratulate them and thank them for doing such a great job.

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

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

MILLENNIUM DIGITAL COMMERCE ACT

Mr. THOMPSON. I ask that the Chair lay before the Senate a message from the House to accompany S. 761.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

Mr. THOMPSON. I ask unanimous consent that the Senate disagree to the amendments of the House, agree to the request for a conference with the House, and the Chair be authorized to appoint conferees on the part of the Senate.

Mr. REID. I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

MEASURE READ THE FIRST TIME—S. 2285

Mr. THOMPSON. Mr. President, I understand that S. 2285 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 bill clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 2285) instituting a Federal fuels tax holiday.

Mr. THOMPSON. Mr. President, I now ask for its second reading, and I object to my own request.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

The bill will be read the second time on the next legislative day.

ORDERS FOR MONDAY, MARCH 27, 2000

Mr. THOMPSON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today it adjourn until the hour of 12 noon on Monday, March 27, 2000. I further ask consent that on Monday, immediately following the prayer, the Journal of proceedings be approved to date, the morning hour be deemed expired, the time for the two leaders be reserved for their use later in the day, and the Senate begin a period of morning business until 1:30 p.m. with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each, with the exception for the following: the first 45 minutes under the control of Senator DURBIN, or his designee; the second 45 minutes under the control of Senator THOMAS, or his designee.

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