authorities can truly and effectively and efficiently enforce the law.

The gun show loophole is just one example. When one-quarter or more of dealers at gun shows are unlicensed and therefore are not subject to the Brady background checks—they do not have to check the background of the purchaser—it does not take a genius to figure out, if a prohibited person seeks to purchase a weapon, where they will go. They will go right to those unlicensed dealers at the gun shows.

Under current law, someone who is a felon, someone who is prohibited from purchasing a firearm under the Brady law, and other laws, could go to an unlicensed dealer at a gun show and purchase as many weapons as he or she wanted without any type of background check, and they would not be effectively screened for the acquisition of a firearm.

Senator LAUTENBERG has many times on this floor pointed to Robyn Anderson—the woman who went to a Colorado gun show with Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris to help them buy 3 of the guns they used to kill 13 people at Columbine High School—who has said that the process was much too easy. In fact, it is reported that Harris and Klebold repeatedly asked dealers at the gun show if they were licensed or unlicensed, eventually finding a private seller, an unlicensed seller, in order to avoid paperwork and background checks.

What could be clearer? What could be more compelling for the need to close this loophole than the demonstration that these two young men were clever enough—and, frankly, the law is so wide open, you do not have to be that clever—to find a way to purchase weapons when they were supposed to be prevented from doing it? And they did.

Robyn Anderson later testified before the Colorado legislature, saying:

> It was too easy. I wish it had been more difficult. I wouldn't have helped them buy the guns if I had faced a background check.

We need to move promptly and swiftly to pass the Lautenberg amendment which was included in the juvenile justice bill to close this loophole and give our authorities the leverage they need to truly enforce the laws. The time has come for action. We have waited for an entire year. That wait is unforgivable. The memories of those students and what happened there linger. We should have done something much sooner than this. But we have a chance.

What is even worse is that Congress is about to go into a recess at the end of this week. So when all of those grieving families in Colorado and across the country come together on April 20 to ask, "What have we done," not only will we say "nothing," but we will be far from the center of Washington where we should have done something. We can pass this legislation.

What kind of message does that send, not only to the people of Columbine but the families of thousands and thousands of people who die each year? Over half of them are not killed in some type of confrontation; over half of them are killed by accidents and suicides.

We have to do something. We can do something. If we had safety locks on weapons, that could help, or we could think about, as some States do, having a waiting period. We used to have a waiting period with the Brady bill, but, again, to get that legislation through the Congress, we had to—as soon as the instant check system was put into place—abandon the waiting period.

There is more we can do.

Finally, I thank those Republican and Democratic Senators who joined last week to pass the Reed amendment, to send a strong signal to the leadership that we have to do something—words are insufficient—to express truly what we should express with respect to the tragedy at Columbine.

We need action. We need legislation. We need laws that will give our enforcement authorities the tools to do the job and do it well. Although the time is dwindling away, I hope we can move quickly so that on April 20 we will not only commemorate a tragedy but celebrate the passage of legislation that will help prevent, I hope, future tragedies.

I thank the Chair and yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska is recognized for up to 75 minutes.

Mr. MURKOWSKI. I thank the Chair and wish the occupant of the Chair a good day.

THE FEDERAL FUELS TAX HOLIDAY OF THE YEAR 2000

Mr. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, we have started our debate, and later this afternoon we will have a vote on the disposition of the waiver of the gas tax.

Upon arriving on the floor, I had the opportunity to hear the remarks of the Senator from California relative to an issue we have discussed on previous occasions; that is, the export of petroleum, energy products. I think the generalization was that she was concerned with the export from the State of Alaska of some 60,000 barrels a day of oil product.

As I have explained on this floor before, the export of our oil product, which is surplus to the west coast, has been carried on by one company that had that access, British Petroleum. British Petroleum has since acquired the non-Alaska segment of ARCO, which includes a number of refineries. BP did not have refineries on the west coast. I have introduced a letter in the RECORD from BP indicating they will curtail exports of Alaskan oil at the end of this month. I also have a letter from Phillips, which has acquired ARCO Alaska, and it is not their intent to export Alaskan oil.

I hope that addresses and resolves the issue and satisfies the concerns of those who continually bring this up in spite of my explanation.

But I will also submit for the RECORD the list of exports of petroleum products by States of exit for the current month. I note that Alaska is listed on this list at 3.9 million barrels a day; that California, the State of which my friend was speaking, shows exports of 6.2 million barrels a day of energy products; that Texas, for example, has 14 million barrels a day of petroleum, energy products; that Louisiana has 4.4 million.

We are currently exporting about 37 million barrels of energy products. This is a combination of jet fuel, motor gas, crude oil, and so forth. But it simply points out a reality that I think the RECORD should note.

Mr. President, this afternoon the Senate is going to have a chance to vote on whether we can quickly give the American motorists some relief from spiraling gasoline costs. I urge my colleagues to objectively evaluate the responsibility they have in representing the American people on this issue and whether the American people clearly want relief.

The 4.3-cent-per-gallon tax, that was adopted in 1993 after Vice President AL GORE cast the deciding tie-breaking vote, raised the gas tax by 30 percent. It is interesting to go back and look at the issue. I know some of my colleagues will come to the floor because they think it is a mistake to establish a precedent wherein general revenues are used to finance highway construction. Ordinarily I would agree with them, but not in this case.

As the record will show, in 1993, when this was passed, the revenue went to fund the general fund. That is the budget. That is the expenditures of the administration as they see fit. There was a substantial revenue stream that went into the general fund of about $21 billion. That is what was collected in that timeframe between 1993 and 1997, when the Republican majority changed the formula and directed that the 4.3 cent a gallon be put into the highway trust fund. That is a little background to keep in mind, as we address the appropriateness of supporting or rejecting the Federal Fuels Tax Holiday Act, which is before us.

The point I make again is that the administration had the benefit of $21 billion of expenditures from the revenue generated from 1993 until 1997, when the Republican majority changed the funding mechanism and put it in the highway trust fund. I also remind my colleagues that the Vice President broke the tie back in 1993 when the 4.3-cent-a-gallon tax was initiated. I think the Vice President has to bear the responsibility of defending his position on the Gore tax, as it has been fondly referred to by those of us on the Republican side of the aisle.

I find it curious to reflect that not a single penny of that tax was dedicated to highway or bridge construction. All the money was earmarked for the administration's spending.

I think we have an obligation to hear from the American public. What do they think? This is a Gallup poll, March 30 through April 2. It asked the question: Would you favor or oppose a temporary reduction in the Federal gas tax by 4.3 cents per gallon as a way of dealing with the increased price of oil? Notice, it does not ask about the highway trust fund. It does not ask whether we will reimburse the highway trust fund. It is quite specific: Would you favor or oppose a temporary reduction in the Federal gas tax of 4.3 cents per gallon as a way of dealing with the increased price of oil?

In response to this poll, 74 percent of the respondents favor a temporary reduction; those in opposition, 23 percent. I think this is a fair sample of the attitude of the American public with regard to this issue. Seventy-four percent favor the temporary reduction. I encourage my colleagues, as well as the staffs, observing the debate today, to recognize this. I remind all Members of the Gallup poll, March 30 to April 2, 74 percent of the respondents favor a temporary reduction. I think that is significant and represents, certainly, the attitude of a significant portion of the American public.

I think it is appropriate that we make it clear it is the intention, the commitment of those of us who happen to favor providing the American public with relief that we ensure there is no sacrifice made in the highway trust fund program. In addition, our legislative guarantees that if the failed Clinton-Gore energy policy results in the price of gasoline rising above $2 a gallon—that is for regular—all fuel taxes will be lifted until the end of the year.

Let me make sure everybody understands. We are proposing to waive the 4.3 immediately, suspending it for the balance of this year, with the proviso that the highway trust fund will be totally funded. I emphasize, there is no free lunch. It has to come from the budget surplus. I would like to see it come from savings on wasteful Government spending. But it will provide immediate relief, and it will not jeopardize the highway trust fund.

In addition, the legislation guarantees that if the failed Clinton-Gore energy policy results in the price of gasoline rising above $2 a gallon for the average price of fuel—that is regular self serve—all fuel taxes will be lifted until the end of the year.

Isn't this the kind of a safety net the American consumer needs, like the mom who goes down to fill up the Suburban at $1.80 a gallon? That shoots a pretty good hole in a $100 bill for that 40-gallon gas tank. What about the guy who gets up at 4 o'clock in the morning to drive into Washington, DC, to work as a carpenter. He drives 50 or 60 miles in the morning, the same in the evening. Is he looking for some relief? You bet he is.

This is real relief. It appropriately puts the responsibility back where it belongs—on the administration—to ensure us that their projections stand the test of time.

If you look at their projections, they are pretty weak. The statements by the Secretary of Energy were pretty weak as far as predicting the price. I note that on the CBS ''Early Show'' of March 29, the Secretary indicated, when asked by Jane Clayson about the price:

> . . . gasoline prices will gradually and steadily decline, possibly, according to the Energy Information Administration, my department, as much as 11 cents by the end of September. . . .

What are we going to do on Memorial Day? What are we going to do on the Fourth of July? They are hedging. This administration knows it is in trouble on this issue because it does not have an energy policy and is simply saying, ''Well, it is going to go down a little bit, maybe by the end of September.''

Further questioning by the interviewer Jane Clayson:

> So the bottom line, how much can we expect to see a drop at the pump?

Secretary Richardson replied:

> Well, bottom line—I'm just quoting our investigators and other official people—they are saying 11 cents by the end of the summer, possibly over 15, 16, 17 by the end of this year.

That is their answer, not very encouraging.

Let's get a little more current. If my colleagues have any doubt that prices are not going to come down very much, all they have to do is read today's New York Times. The headline story is: ''Oil Prices Fall Nearly Enough For OPEC''—to do what—''to cut production.''

Imagine that: We are seeing a decline, and they are talking about cutting production.

I quote:

> Less than two weeks after OPEC agreed to increase production to bring down the cost of oil, prices have fallen abruptly and are near the level at which the cartel had agreed it would then cut back its output. Ali Rodriguez, President of the Organization of Petroleum Export Countries, said today that it the price of the organization's benchmark basket of crude oil remained below $22 a barrel, the 1.5 million a day agreed to last month would be cut back by one third.

There is the leverage. They are calling the shots. We are not calling the shots.

I find it extraordinary that as this administration looks at the energy crisis, we would simply look to the Mideast for relief by increasing imports.

I ask unanimous consent that the article from the New York Times be printed in the RECORD.

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

[From the New York Times, Apr. 11, 2000]

OIL PRICE FALLS NEARLY ENOUGH FOR OPEC TO CUT PRODUCTION

CARACAS, Venezuela, April 10 (Bloomberg News)—Less than two weeks after OPEC agreed to increase production to bring down the cost of oil, prices have fallen abruptly and are near the level at which the cartel had agreed it would then cut back its output.

Ali Rodriguez, president of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, said today that if the price of the organization's benchmark basket of crude oil remained below $22 a barrel, the 1.5 million barrel-a-day increase that the organization agreed to last month would be cut back by one third. OPEC was expected to announce that the basket price dipped below $22 today, falling from a five-month low of $22.14 on Friday.

The price ''may fall a little further,'' Mr. Rodriguez said in a television interview. ''But OPEC has already established a corrective mechanism, and if prices fall below $22 a barrel for 20 consecutive days we'll immediately cut back production.''

Mr. Rodriguez, who is also the energy minister of Venezuela, said the traditional slump in demand for oil during the spring also could make the cutback likely. The German news agency Deutsche Presse-Agentur reported today that Saudi Arabia, OPEC's largest producer, would endorse the cuts if prices slipped further.

Oil prices have plunged about 30 percent since last month, when they reached nine-year highs. After a meeting March 29 in Vienna of the 11-member organization, 9 OPEC members agreed to raise oil output quotas by about 1.5 million barrels a day and keep prices within a range of $22 to $28.

Crude oil plunged 4.8 percent to a three-month low of $23.85 on the New York Mercantile Exchange today. OPEC's basket has been trading $2 to $3 cheaper than New York oil.

Mr. Rodriguez said he had the authority as OPEC president to order small adjustments before the group's next meeting in June.

''If the price falls I can communicate to each country how much it must cut back,'' he said.

Iran, OPEC's second-largest producer, refused to join the agreement to increase production, saying the move would lead to a price rout. Iraq, another member that does not participate in the cuts, also said new production would hurt prices.

Mr. Rodriguez said he still expected demand for oil to surge this year, perhaps prompting OPEC to approve further increases in output in June or later.

Mr. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, if OPEC decides to cut back its increased production by one-third, then where are we? We are right back where we were before OPEC made the decision to raise production.

Think about that—full circle.

I spoke before the ocean industries this morning and expressed my concern. The Secretary of Energy, the Honorable Bill Richardson, spoke before me. I don't think he was able to convey much of a feeling of assurance that, indeed, we had this issue of an energy crisis under control.

If OPEC makes the decision to raise production, I think we have to go back and examine the deal the Secretary made with OPEC. That is rather interesting. I think we need to because OPEC never really increased their production by 1.5 or 1.7 million barrels. If you factor in the reality that OPEC was cheating, what really happened on or before March 27 was OPEC's actual increase of production was a bare 500,000 barrels a day. That is what we really got.

The rationale for that is the recognition, if you read the agreement, that they acknowledge they were posting in the cartel a production of 23 million barrels a day. They were cheating and put out 24.2 million barrels a day. When the administration announced that it was going to get an additional 1.7 million barrels a day, they didn't take into account the reality that they were already cheating by 1.2 million barrels a day. If you subtract 1.2 from 1.7, you get 500,000 barrels a day. That is actually what we got.

In that case, we are right back where we started before OPEC met.

Do not be misled, my colleagues. All of that doesn't go to the United States. There are other customers of OPEC. We traditionally get 16 percent of our crude oil from OPEC. By the time you look at the allotments of the other countries, it is estimated that out of 500,000 barrels, the U.S. gets somewhere in the area of 75,000 to 88,000 barrels.

Furthermore, if you look at what we consume in the general metropolitan area of Washington, DC, and its extensions, it is about 121,000 barrels a day.

We haven't gotten anything. We are almost assured that we will see higher gasoline prices this summer.

For that reason alone, I believe we should give relief now to the American motorists by rolling back the Gore gas tax.

Yesterday, I indicated that 74 percent of the American people think that the 4.3 cents per gallon should be temporarily lifted.

I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD the Gallup Poll of March 30 to April 3 which indicated that 74 percent favor a temporary reduction of the Federal gas tax of 4.3 cents per gallon as a way of dealing with the increased price of oil, and 23 percent oppose that.

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

Would you favor or oppose a temporary reduction in the federal gas tax by 4.3 cents per gallon as a way of dealing with the increased price of oil?

	Percent
Favor	74
Oppose	23

Source: Gallup, Mar. 30–Apr. 2.

Mr. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, it is not just the American motorists who want to see gas taxes come down. There are business organizations, especially small businesses, that have been hit hard by the fuel price jump. Their businesses are being devastated.

I have a letter of support from the National Federation of Independent Businesses which represents more than 600,000 small businesses in America. In their letter, they cite the fuel price hike and what it has meant to an average small business.

I quote:

For a small company that consumes 50,000 gallons of diesel fuel in a month, the increase it prices in the past year will cost that company an additional $40,000 per month. If fuel prices remain high, these costs could eventually be passed on to consumers in the form of higher prices for many goods and services. A 4.3 cent reduction in the cost of fuel would save the company more than $2,000 per month.

The Independent Truckers Association also sent a letter of its support to our legislation.

I ask unanimous consent that be printed in the RECORD along with the letter from the National Federation of Independent Businesses.

There being no objection, the letters were ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

NFIB,
Washington, DC, March 29, 2000.

Hon. TRENT LOTT,
Majority Leader, U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.

DEAR LEADER: On behalf of the 600,000 members of the National Federation of Independent Business (NFIB), I want to express our support for Senate Bill 2285 which would temporarily repeal the 4.3 cent excise tax on fuel, provide additional tax relief should the cost of fuel continue to rise, and protect funding levels in the Highway Trust Fund. NFIB urges members to support its adoption.

Gas prices have been soaring. According to the U.S. Department of Energy, gas prices, which have increased by as much as 50 percent in the past year, are likely to continue to rise into the summer, if not beyond.

These high fuel prices are hitting many Americans, especially small businesses, extremely hard. For a small company that consumes 50,000 gallons of diesel fuel in a month, the increase in prices in the past year will cost that company an additional $40,000 per month. If fuel prices remain high these costs could eventually be passed on to consumers in the form of higher prices for many goods and services. A 4.3 cent reduction in the cost of fuel would save the company more than $2,000 per month.

Your bill goes along way towards providing America's small business owners valuable relief from rising fuel costs. We applaud your proactive efforts to reduce this tax burden on small business while at the same time providing a hold harmless provision for the Highway Trust Fund. This will guarantee that full funding will continue to flow to states and local communities for planned infrastructure projects.

Mr. Leader, thank you for your continued support of small businesses. We look forward to working with you to enact S. 2285 into law.

Sincerely,

DAN DANNER,
Sr. Vice President,
Federal Public Policy.

INDEPENDENT TRUCKERS ASSOCIATION,
Half Moon Bay, CA, April 4, 2000.

Hon. TRENT LOTT,
Majority Leader, U.S. Senate,
Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR LOTT: The Independent Truckers Association—the oldest association of the nation's long-haul independent truckers and small fleet owners—endorses wholeheartedly the swift passage of S. 2285, the Federal Fuels Tax Holiday Act of 2000.

This measure would temporarily repeal the 4.3 cents excise tax on fuels and protect funding levels in the highway Trust Fund. We see this as an important first step to help ensure that prices for consumer goods shipped to market will remain stable.

It's important to recognize that truckers—not just the independents and small fleets, but the whole industry—work on a very small profit margin. So, the recent increase of oil prices by OPEC, along with the failed energy policy of the Clinton-Gore Administration, strikes deep into the heart and wallet of America's truckers. Enacting S. 2285 today will help those injured by excessive oil and fuel prices, and help keep the economy rolling along.

Senator Lott, thank you for your support of America's independent truckers. We look forward to working with you to enact S. 2285 into law.

Very Sincerely,

MIKE PARKHURST,
National Chairman.

Mr. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I quote from this letter. It says:

It is important to recognize that truckers, not just the independents and small fleets, but the whole industry, work on a very small profit margin. So the recent increase in oil prices by OPEC, along with the failed energy policies of the Clinton/Gore administration, strikes deep in the heart and wallet of American truckers. Enacting Senate bill 2285, the Federal Fuels Tax Holiday Act, today will help those injured by excessive oil and fuel prices and will help keep the economy rolling along.

I also have a letter of support from the National Food Processors Association.

I ask unanimous consent that this letter also be printed in the RECORD.

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

NFPA,
Washington, DC, April 3, 2000.

Hon. TRENT LOTT,
Majority Leader, U.S. Senate, Russell Senate Office Building, Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR LOTT: On behalf of the National Food Processors Association (NFPA), the nation's largest food trade association, I am writing to urge that Congress take action to address rapidly rising fuel prices. From the food industry's perspective, the effects of higher energy prices are about to move from the gas pump to the grocery store, threatening to put a serious crimp in the incomes of America's working families.

You no doubt have heard from the transportation sector about the serious effect of the 50-plus percent fuel price increase since the first of the year. America's agribusiness industry relies heavily on trucks and the rails to transport food from the farm to processor and on to kitchen tables all across the United States. Additionally, the nation's food processors—an industry employing more than 1.5 million workers in some 20,000 facilities across the country—consume no small measure of energy to make available the tasty and nutritious foods that consumers enjoy. Given the intense competition and very small profit margins, under which most food manufacturers operate, they are in no position to absorb these dramatic increases in energy prices.

I believe the absence of an effective national energy policy is largely responsible for this budding crisis. However, there are tools available now to help address this problem, at least for the short term. First, portions of the Strategic Petroleum Reserve could be released, helping reduce prices by increasing, temporarily, the supply of fuel. Second, I encourage Congress to enact at least a temporary suspension of the most recent 4.3-cent gasoline tax increase, which was adopted in 1993 for the purpose of deficit reduction. NFPA also has urged President Clinton to support such actions.

Leadership by Congress is needed to address this serious issue. I hope that the U.S. Senate will work with the President to take action promptly to ease the strain of rapidly increasing fuel costs.

Sincerely,

JOHN R. CADY.

Mr. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, many Americans accepted the gas tax increase because they believed that the money would go to rebuilding and expanding the Nation's highway infrastructure. Today, that is exactly how the money is used. But, again, since the 4.3-cent-per-gallon tax was adopted in 1993, not a single penny of that went into, as I said, building a highway or repairing a bridge. When the tax was adopted, it was not earmarked for the highway trust fund. It was instead collected from the motorists, transferred to the Treasury Department, and then spent for whatever programs the Clinton administration wanted. But those programs did not include added highway construction.

That changed when Republicans took control of Congress and enacted the 1997 highway bill. Only then did these fuel tax revenues become earmarked for highways, bridges, and mass transit.

I know some are concerned legitimately that if we spend these taxes for the remainder of this year, the highway trust fund, which finances roads, bridges, and mass transit, could be in danger. That is a legitimate concern. I am sure it is going to be a concern in the debate that is forthcoming. But I would like to try at least to put those fears to rest.

Our legislation is quite specific. If you do not believe that we can pass a bill that ensures something, then the argument is moot. But this legislation ensures that the highway trust fund will not lose a single penny during tax holiday. We require that all moneys that would have anything to do with the fund had the taxes not been suspended be replaced by other Federal revenues.

That isn't a free lunch. That is going to be difficult to do. But if this legislation passes, that is what is going to happen. We are going to have to find the money. I hope it will come from on-budget surplus. I would rather see it coming from reducing wasteful Federal programs.

Remember. The consumer can't pass it on. He or she can't pass on this increased price to anybody. They are stuck with it. The truckers that came to Washington can't pass it on. If you look at your airline ticket, it is passed on. Nobody can figure out the cost of an airline ticket. If you fly on a Monday or a Tuesday night, it is all different. The fishermen, the farmers—we don't really look at the impact on our economy. The farmer, for example, is dependent on fertilizer. Where does fertilizer come from? It comes from urea. Urea is made out of gas—all petroleum products. We have a multiplier here.

We have the difficulty of recognizing that we have become beholden to the Mideast for the sources.

I can assure the American motorists that highway construction projects this year and next year will be unaffected by the tax holiday that we are proposing in this legislation. When the trust fund is fully restored, all the projects scheduled for beyond 2002 will be completed. That is in the legislation.

The question before the Senate today is simple. Do Senators want to give the American motorists a break at the gas pump when gas prices are high?

Again, I refer to the Gallop Poll. Seventy-four percent of Americans say yes; 25 percent of Americans say no.

I think we should adopt this temporary tax holiday and invoke cloture on the bill.

The rationale is we are giving the American people a choice. We are the elected representatives. Aren't we? What is the priority? Is there a priority to have a choice and a reduction knowing that the highway trust fund is not going to be jeopardized because we are going to have to make it whole?

I would like to show you a couple more things before I conclude.

This is a picture of the hard, stark reality of where we are today and where we are going. Make no mistake about it. It is a very bleak picture. But it is very real because it shows the world oil balance for the year 2000. It shows where we are currently as we enter the second quarter of the year.

We have global demand at 76.8 million barrels a day and global supply at 74. We have the sources of our crude oil, where it comes from in the world, the non-OPEC, Iraqi production, OPEC 10 nations. The point is, in this country today, at the end of the first quarter, we are using reserves. The world is using up its reserves. In other words, the demand is greater than supply, so the world is drawing down about 2 million barrels of its reserve.

The projection in the second quarter is interesting. It shows a surplus of 200,000 barrels. The third quarter again draws down reserves of 1.3 million barrels a day. The fourth quarter is worse—2.7 million barrels a day.

That is the harsh reality. If things are going to get better, we will have to import more from OPEC or other nations such as Iraq.

I conclude with a reminder many people have forgotten relative to the administration's attitude of how we will get relief in this country as we look at various areas of domestic production. One of the most telling is to recognize that currently a significant portion of our activity is coming from the Gulf of Mexico. At the present time, OCS activity is primarily coming off Louisiana, Texas, Mississippi, and Alabama, producing 30 percent of our natural gas and 22 percent our crude oil. That is the OCS. That is in the Gulf of Mexico.

I cannot help but note an article on October 23, 1999, from the Metropolitan edition of the Capitol City Press State Times, Morning Advocate, Baton Rouge, LA. Vice President GORE says he will be more antidrilling than any other President. It is significant because it represents the attitude, I think, of this administration and certainly the Vice President as he seeks the Presidency.

> I will take the most sweeping steps in our history to protect our oceans and coastal waters from offshore oil drilling.
>
> I will make sure that there is no new oil leasing off the coast of California and Florida and then I will go much further, I will do everything in my power to make sure there is no new drilling off these sensitive areas even in areas already leased by previous administrations.

That is the Vice President saying, if elected President, he in effect would cancel leases leased by previous administrations.

It is ironic our Secretary of Energy takes credit for deep-water royalty relief. I worked with Senator Bennett Johnston on that legislation. We got it passed. He takes some credit for it although it didn't pass on his watch. Now the Vice President of the United States wants to undo it. I find that ironic.

The last point of irony is we are looking to receive our oil from Iraq. I have a chart showing our increased dependence and what the oil fields look like. It is germane to this debate. Our fastest growing source of imports is Iraq. Many people forget we had a war over there in 1991. We lost 147 American lives in that conflict. We had over 500,000 troops over there. We were over there to make sure Saddam Hussein did not take over the oil fields of Kuwait. That is the harsh fact. Iraq and Saddam Hussein had visions of going into Kuwait, taking over the oil fields, and moving on to Saudi Arabia. That was a war over oil. We fought that battle.

This chart demonstrates where we are today. I am outraged. Last year, we imported 300,000 barrels a day from Iraq; we are currently importing 700,000 barrels a day. That is where we are.

In addition to the loss of lives and the fact we had nearly 400 wounded and 23 taken prisoner, what has it cost the American taxpayer? The American taxpayer has been hit for over $10 billion in costs in keeping Saddam Hussein fenced in. Imagine that, $10 billion.

How many remember what happened when Saddam Hussein was defeated? That is what happened. Take a good look. It shows the burning oil fields of Kuwait he left behind. The fires are raging, and there are Americans trying to cap the wells and get this environmental disaster under control. That is the kind of person we are dealing with. We are looking to them to bail this country out from the standpoint of increasing our imports? This is the policy of this administration?

One other thing on which I cannot help but comment. I think it is so ironic, this war is still going on. It is not reported in the Washington press. I don't know if the folks back home know it. An article from March 29, Wednesday, the International News Service, says:

> U.S. Jets Bomb Iraqi Defense System.
>
> U.S. warplanes bombed Iraq air-defense system Wednesday in response to Iraqi artillery fired during their patrol.

There is a little more detail in the French newspaper, Agence France Presse, press reports from April 9:

U.S. war planes bombed northern Iraq Sunday after coming under Iraqi fire during routine patrols over the northern no-fly zone, the U.S. military said. The aircraft dropped "ordnance on elements of the Iraqi integrated air defense system" after Iraqi air forces fired anti-artillery northwest of Musul and west of Bashiqah, the U.S. European command base in Stuttgart, Germany, said.

Baghdad said on Thursday that 14 Iraqis were killed and 19 wounded when U.S. and British planes bombed the south of the country, in what was described as the deadliest raid since the beginning of the year.

A total of 176 people have been killed in Iraq in US-British bombings since December 1998.

Still not much notice. That is a French translation.

Here is a Russian translation on the Interfax Russian News, April 10:

Moscow Worried Over U.S., Britain Bombing Southern Iraq.

The foreign ministry has voiced concern over U.S. bombings of southern Iraq.

Baghdad made public its data about the victims of the latest raid, 14 people killed and 19 wounded.

How in the world can we justify being at war with Saddam Hussein, increasing our dependence to 700,000 barrels a day, lifting our export ban to give him the technology, which we did 2 weeks ago, to increase his production for his refining capacity even more, and be at war with him?

I don't understand this. I think it is outrageous. We have lost 147 lives in the Persian Gulf war. We are really taking his oil, putting it into our airplanes, and going over and bombing. Think about that.

Is that the kind of policy we have on energy? Do the American people know what has happened? Do they care? It is unbelievable to me, as we address this issue before us. You might say it is a gas tax. It is the whole issue of lack of an energy policy. We do not have an energy policy for coal. The same clean coal technology supported by this administration—we have seen that. We do not have a nuclear policy. The administration will not address the contractual commitment it made in 1998 to take nuclear waste, although the ratepayers paid the administration $15 billion. That is going to be a legal case of $40 billion to $50 billion when the lawyers are through suing each other. They want to take down the hydrodams. The replacement for that, obviously, is going to put more trucks on the highway in Oregon and Washington if they remove the dams, because so much of the traffic in grains and other produce are moved by barge.

Some say gas is the answer, just plug it in. The National Petroleum Council says we are using 21 trillion cubic feet of gas now, and in next 10 years we will be up to 31 trillion. The infrastructure is not there. It is going to take $1.5 trillion to put in that infrastructure. So don't think gas is going to be cheap. And this administration removed 65 percent of the public lands in the overthrust belt, which obviously means there is less area for exploration.

So the crunch is coming. I think this administration hopes they will get out of town before this becomes a big political issue in the campaign. But I think it is going to be a big political issue in the campaign.

I see many of my colleagues wishing to speak. I again encourage everybody to recognize the attitude of the American people as expressed by this Gallup Poll, which says 74 percent favor elimination of the tax—opposed 23. I had printed the letters of the Independent Truckers Association supporting this, and the NFPA as well, the National Food Processors Association, and the National Federation of Independent Business. We are not talking about jeopardizing the highway trust fund; we are talking about making it whole. We are talking about giving the American people a choice, whether this is a priority for them as represented through their elected representatives—which we are—whether they want relief. It gives us a safety net for the public out there; most of all, a safety net to keep this administration's feet to the fire to ensure that gasoline prices for regular do not go over $2 a gallon, because if they do, then the entire 18.4 cents federal gas tax goes off, it is suspended for the remainder of this year.

I think it is a fair trade. I think it is a reasonable compromise. I encourage my colleagues to support the effort and not be misled by the argument that this is going to jeopardize the highway trust fund. It cannot. We have to live by the commitment, if we pass this legislation, to find the money someplace else—out of the surplus, out of reducing wasteful spending, or whatever. That is actually in the legislation.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. ENZI). The Senator from Florida.

Mr. GRAHAM. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that after my colleague, the Senator from Texas, completes her remarks, if I can have 10 minutes for purposes of introduction of legislation?

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, reserving the right to object—I shall not object—our distinguished colleague from West Virginia is controlling the time on the gas tax. I would like to have 8 minutes in opposition to the gas tax. I know our distinguished colleague from Ohio has been here for some time. He should be accorded precedence over this Senator at least.

I wonder if we could have some order so Senators can be convenienced. Then certainly we can put in this matter. I seek, from our distinguished colleague, how would he suggest we go about this?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there is reserved time. Senator MURKOWSKI has approximately 37 minutes remaining and the Democratic side has approximately 35 minutes remaining. To utilize the time under the previously existing unanimous consent agreement, we would——

Mr. WARNER. If I may interject, it is not necessarily the Democratic side because there is strong bipartisan support, am I not correct, I ask Senator BYRD?

Mr. BYRD. The Senator is correct.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The time under the control of the Democratic side——

Mr. WARNER. It is under the control of Senator BYRD.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator can yield to anyone he so chooses. Is there objection to the unanimous consent request?

Mr. BYRD. Reserving the right to object to that consent for a moment, Mr. VOINOVICH has been waiting here for quite some time. I believe he should be recognized next. Then, ordinarily, when we have controlled time like this, we might go to this side. If that is the case, I will yield for 8 minutes to the Senator from Virginia.

Mr. WARNER. I thank the Senator.

Mr. MURKOWSKI. I concur with the suggestion by my good friend from West Virginia. I am conducting a hearing on electric deregulation. I am going to turn the remaining time on this side over to my good friend from Texas to yield to those in support of the gas tax holiday.

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, could we have the Senator from Maine, who has been waiting, and the Senator from Texas, enter the colloquy on timing? Again, they have been here for some time.

Mr. MURKOWSKI. If I may, I assume the proponents and opponents control the time. We have other speakers who are coming to speak in support of the holiday. The Senator from Texas supports the holiday. I do not know the disposition of the other Republican Members.

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, I had requested time to introduce a bill. I do not, however, want to interrupt the debate on the gas tax. I suggest I go after the Senator from Florida, who I understand is also going to be introducing a bill, so as not to interrupt the debate on the gas tax issue.

Mr. MURKOWSKI. I assume that will mean the 37 minutes, approximately, for each side, would be used. Then the other morning business would come up. Is that the wish of the other side?

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, why don't we go in accordance with the times the Senators came to the floor and sat down and expected to be recognized? When I first came, Mr. VOINOVICH had been waiting and the Senator from Alaska was speaking. I was the next on the floor. I will be happy to yield 8 minutes to the Senator from Virginia.

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, I will be happy if the Senator wishes to proceed and I can follow. Whatever the Senator from West Virginia wishes.

Mr. BYRD. What does the Senator from Texas have to say?

Mrs. HUTCHISON. I ask the Senator from West Virginia, what he is proposing now is for Senator VOINOVICH to go next, and that is under the Senator's time; is that correct?

Mr. BYRD. That is correct.

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Following that, I would be recognized on Senator MURKOWSKI's time. Following that, then the Senator would have the ability to yield to the Senator from West Virginia, on your time again. And following that, then——

Mr. WARNER. I would like to speak on the gas issue in sequence after the Senator from West Virginia, if I may. We want to stay on the issue, I suggest, because we have a vote. Then we wish to accommodate other Senators.

Mr. MURKOWSKI. If I may, we have other speakers who want to speak on our side on the gas tax issue, so we can follow back and forth.

Mrs. HUTCHISON. If I can get an understanding, then it will be Senator VOINOVICH under Senator BYRD's time, then myself under Senator MURKOWSKI's time, then back to Senator BYRD—and Senator WARNER for however they are going to allocate their time under Senator BYRD's time allotment?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. That is my understanding.

Mr. BYRD. I always like to yield to the ladies. I was brought up the old-fashioned way. But the lady's proposal is going to automatically say she is going to be next after Mr. VOINOVICH. Is that the way she wants it done?

Mrs. HUTCHISON. It was my understanding we would go back and forth, according to the time allotments. Senator VOINOVICH is on the time of the Senator from West Virginia. I thought the sequence would be back to Senator MURKOWSKI's side after that.

If that is not correct, I will be happy to yield whatever time Senator BYRD wants on his side, and then I will control Senator MURKOWSKI's time after Senator VOINOVICH, Senator BYRD, and Senator WARNER. Is that what the Senator from West Virginia is suggesting? It is fine, as long as I know at what point our side will be able to reclaim our time.

Mr. BYRD. Any way is fine. The Senator from Alaska had a lot of time. He spoke a long time. I sat here a long time. I was glad to listen to it. Mr. VOINOVICH was here before I came. He should have his time.

Mrs. HUTCHISON. If the Senator from West Virginia wants to take all three from his side in answer to Senator MURKOWSKI, I will be happy to do that. Then I will take my time after Senator VOINOVICH, Senator BYRD, and Senator WARNER. Is that to what the Senator from West Virginia was referring?

Mr. BYRD. Very well. I thank the Senator.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The unanimous consent request we have before us came from the Senator from Florida, and he was not mentioned in any of this.

Mr. GRAHAM. If I may modify the request, I am in the category with the Senator from Maine. We have topics we wish to discuss other than the gasoline tax. We appreciate that debate should be completed. We just want to have an order that, after the gasoline tax debate, we may introduce our legislation. We want to be included in the unanimous consent request.

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

Will somebody restate the unanimous consent request, please, so we have an understanding by everybody? Will the Senator from Texas restate the unanimous consent request?

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, I will make an attempt. I ask unanimous consent that Senator BYRD be recognized on his time to allocate, as he sees fit, time to Senator VOINOVICH, himself, and Senator WARNER, after which I will be recognized to take control of Senator MURKOWSKI's 37 minutes, after which the Senator from Florida will be recognized for his introduction of legislation.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, I apologize. I did not know the Senator from Maine—I made a huge mistake. I amend my unanimous consent request to suggest that Senator COLLINS follow the Senator from Florida.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection to the request?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Chair recognizes the Senator from Ohio.

GAS TAX

Mr. VOINOVICH. I thank the Chair. Mr. President, I thank Senator BYRD for yielding time.

I speak against the repeal of the 4.3-cent-a-gallon gas tax for the third time on the floor of the Senate. Although I disagree with my colleague from Alaska in regard to this matter, I do agree this debate has given us an opportunity to identify the real problem of why we have high gas prices in this country, and that is, we lack an energy policy. Our reliance on foreign oil could increase to 65 percent or more by the year 2020.

As a matter of fact, a couple of weeks ago in the Committee on Governmental Affairs, we had a representative from the Energy Department appear before the committee and I asked him: Just how reliant should we be on foreign oil? What is the number? He was unable to give a number.

I mentioned that, as a former Governor, if I had a problem, I would identify what the goal was to solve that problem and put in place strategies to achieve that goal. The fact is, we are here today because we have no energy policy in this country. That is the main issue.

The other issue is whether or not reducing the gas tax by 4.3 cents a gallon is going to make any real difference. I argue it may not bring down the price of gas at the pump. In some States, if the gas tax is reduced, their State laws provide that the state gas tax is increased to make up for the loss of the Federal gas tax. I point out that in terms of the traveling public, the motoring public, getting rid of the 4.3 cent gas tax is only going to save about $43 a year.

This is one of the factors which I think adds to the cynicism of the American public in regard to some of the things we do in the Senate. We argue this is going to make a difference, and then the people realize all we are talking about over a year's period, if they drive 15,000 miles a year, at 15 miles-per-gallon is about $43.

I have been involved in this matter as a Governor and as the former chairman of the National Governors' Association. The Governors were opposed to the 4.3-cent-a-gallon gas tax in 1993 because it was used for deficit reduction and we thought it should be used for building highways.

In 1998, when TEA–21 was negotiated, everyone agreed to put that 4.3 cents a gallon into the highway trust fund so we can use it for new construction of highways and to maintain and repair highways. It also guaranteed to many of the donor States—that is, a State that sends more money to Washington than they get back, like Ohio—that they will get at least 90.5 cents per dollar back every year. It gave us a predictable, reliable source of revenue to get the job done. We thought we had resolved this issue once and for all.

Today we have the issue before us of reducing the gas tax by 4.3 cents a gallon. Someone said: Do not worry about it because we will make up the lost funding from the surplus. I argue, if I have listened carefully to my colleagues on the floor, there are lots of other good things that they want to do with our surplus. If one looks at it from an equity point of view, the tradition in this country is, the people who use the highways pay for them. We are saying reduce their tax and make it up by hitting everybody else in the country and taking it out of the general fund, which can be used for other things that would benefit the rest of America.

I cannot buy the argument: Do not worry about it, we will make it up from the surplus.

I also point out the National Governors' Association, the National League of Cities, the U.S. Conference of Mayors, the National Association of Counties, all the major State and local organizations are opposed to repealing the 4.3-cent-a-gallon gas tax.

I do not care what the polls say, the one organization I listen to in Ohio which represents the motoring public is the American Automobile Association. This is the premier organization representing the people who drive in this country.

One would think they would be for reducing the gas tax, wouldn't they? The fact is, they are opposed to it because they know that repair and maintenance of our highways and new construction are important to the motoring public, particularly to their safety. They also realize that this country, in so many areas, has turned into a gigantic parking lot, with gridlock, bottlenecks, and hours wasted in America on