

minutes as he gathered on the south lawn of the White House with a group of supporters of another very important bill—an issue we have actually debated for many hours and helped to usher through called the Conservation and Reinvestment Act.

The President, just this morning, called on us, in a bipartisan fashion, not to miss the opportunity to push forward on this very important piece of legislation—one which his administration has supported and helped to design. The Conservation and Reinvestment Act is really Congress's way of responding to a need that the American people have and have expressed themselves clearly on over and over, from the South to the North, from the East to the West, in meetings, through polling information that we have, through calls made to this Congress, through letters written, through e-mails sent—to say to us that now is the time to set aside a small but significant portion of the surplus that we have to invest—not for 1 year, or 6 months, not occasionally when we can, but to invest permanently a stream of revenue for conservation programs in our Nation.

I guess I can speak so passionately about this issue because the money we are speaking about investing is coming from offshore oil and gas revenues, 85 percent of which are produced off of the coast of Louisiana. We are proud of that production. We are doing it in a much more environmentally sensitive way and have been doing it for 50 years. But all of the revenue generated off of that oil and gas production has gone to the Federal Treasury. It is hard to account for how they have been spent, and they have not been spent for environmental investments for our Nation—a promise that was made 30 years ago but not kept.

So the Conservation and Reinvestment Act, which the President spoke about and continues to urge us to move forward on, is a way for us to redirect appropriately and in a very fiscally responsible way some of those revenues back to our States and local governments to help with the expansion of our parks and recreation areas in both rural and urban areas, for the preservation and restoration of our coastlines.

We in Louisiana feel strongly about getting some help from Washington to restore an eroding coastline, helping us to invest in wildlife conservation and preservation and, in many ways, including historic preservation. I will give to the staff a list of the 63 Senators, Republicans and Democrats, who are supporting this legislation, to acknowledge again in the RECORD the great work that the House leadership did—Congressman DON YOUNG, Congressman JOHN DINGELL, and Congressman GEORGE MILLER, leaders in the House.

It has truly been a bipartisan-bicameral effort.

I will submit for the RECORD the names of 63 Senators who the President

mentioned in his remarks this morning, thanking us for our support and joining with him in this effort, and finally shaping this bill in such a way that both parties can be proud, for which we in Louisiana can be grateful, and that Governors and mayors and elected officials and leaders all across our Nation can be happy to work on in partnership with the Federal Government to make a significant, meaningful, reliable investment now as we begin this century—something our children and our grandchildren can count on for a more beautiful nation in 2025 or 2050. We can't wait. This is the year to make it a reality.

I thank the Chair. Again, I thank Senator LOTT and Senator DASCHLE for their excellent leadership.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

Mr. WELLSTONE. I thank the Chair. I thank the Senator from Louisiana for her excellent work. I just had three members of the department of natural resources of Minnesota in my office today encouraging me to support this measure. It is very important legislation.

NATIONAL HISTORICAL BLACK COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY WEEK

Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, this week is a week that we take out to celebrate, to honor, and to acknowledge the great contributions that 105 Historically Black Colleges and Universities have made to our Nation.

In Louisiana, I am very proud to represent four of the greatest of these institutions—Grambling State University, Southern University System, Xavier University, and Dillard University—and to recognize their great contributions in making our Nation stronger, and as we enter the new century to reassert my commitment and to acknowledge their great and significant place in the educational framework of our Nation.

On September 14, 2000, President Clinton proclaimed this week as National Historical Black Colleges Week and asked the country to join him in honoring the tremendous contributions these institutions have made not only to the lives of the students they serve but also to the history of this country. As a Senator from Louisiana, I am proud to have four HBCUs in the State of Louisiana: Dillard University, Grambling State University, Southern University System, and Xavier University.

For too many years in our Nation's history—HBCUs were the sole source of higher education for African Americans. Today, HBCUs confer the majority of the bachelor's and advanced degrees awarded to African American students in physical science, mathematics, computer science, engineering, and education. There are now 105 HBCUs in existence, providing an array of disciplines at both public and private medical schools, four-year institutions, community and junior colleges.

Without their courage and commitment, this country would have been deprived of generations of African American educators, physicians, lawyers, scientists, and other professionals. In fact, a few of this country's cabinet members are alumni of HBCUs: Secretary of Labor, Alexis Herman—Xavier University; Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Togo West—Howard University; Former Secretary of Energy, Hazel O'Leary—Fisk University; and Former Secretary of Agriculture, Mike Espy—Howard University.

Like the President, I am proud to say that several members of my staff are graduates of historically black colleges and universities. Alicia Williams, Grambling State University; Tari Bradford, Southern University; Tony Eason, Grambling State University; Former Legislative Director, Ben Cannon, Xavier University and Southern University Law School; Kaira Stelly, Southern University at New Orleans; and Roderick Scott, Southern University.

In addition to educating many of our Nation's most distinguished African American professionals, HBCUs have remained steadfast to their commitment to improving the communities in which they reside and preserving America's history. Through countless forms of community service, including tutoring programs, head start, senior citizen programs, they teach their students to use their education to be men and women for others. Their libraries and colleges continue to serve as living repositories for the writings, artifacts, and photographs representing generations of African American history.

If one wants to estimate the effect that the Historically Black Colleges and Universities have had on the history of America, ask yourself what would the field of education be without the contributions of Booker T. Washington, or science without George Washington Carver, or Mathematics without Dr. Nan P. Manuel, or Engineering without Dr. Lonnie Sharp. This list is endless. Each year hundreds and thousands of students graduate from these vital institutions and are helping to shape the new century.

HBCUs have accomplished this enviable record of achievement despite numerous challenges. Even with limited financial resources and serving a relatively high number of disadvantaged students, they have kept their fees low so that no student is prohibited from accessing a quality education. For years, the faculty and staff have worked hard to provide a nurturing and accepting environment for their students, encouraging them to grow challenging them to meet the highest of academic standards.

Mr. President, I ask my colleagues to join me in taking this opportunity to salute the founders, faculty, staff, and students of America's Historically Black Colleges and Universities.

Former President Lyndon B. Johnson once said, "Until justice is blind to

color, until education is unaware of race, until opportunity is unconcerned with the color of men's skins . . . emancipation will be a proclamation but not a fact." For well over a century, Historically Black Colleges and Universities have led the way, opened the doors and provided the tools for a quality education for all.

I yield any time I might have remaining. Thank you, Mr. President.

LOW-INCOME HOME ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, I wish to announce on the floor of the Senate that 34 colleagues—Democrats and Republicans alike—join me in a letter to the White House today.

We are talking about what is going on with oil prices and what is going on with home heating costs. The projections are very frightening.

We see home heating oil costs up 30 percent and natural gas costs up 40 percent. For many of us in cold-weather States, this is a crisis issue. Specifically, we are talking about the Low-Income Energy Assistance Program.

My colleague, Senator HARKIN, has been a leader in this fight for a long, long time.

The point is that the President has about \$500 million right now in LIHEAP emergency funding that we could get back to the cold-weather States. LIHEAP is a terribly important addition to the negotiations on the appropriations bill this year. Also, for funding next year, we are saying add an additional \$500 million. Otherwise, I think probably maybe 15 percent of the people who are eligible for LIHEAP funding will not get any.

In the State of Minnesota, you are talking about, roughly speaking, 90,000 households. About a third of them are elderly. This is a lifeline program. It is not a lot—maybe \$350 a year. But it helps people with their heating costs.

What is going on now means that the heating costs are going to go way up. If we don't add some funding to this program, we are going to have people who are cold, or they will not buy prescription drugs, or they will not have food on the table. This is a huge issue.

I urge the President and the White House in negotiations to be strong on funding for LIHEAP. We need the additional \$500 million now and an additional \$500 million next year. We have to make sure this important lifeline program is funded.

I visited a lot of people in their homes. Many of them are elderly people. This makes a huge difference to them. I am really worried about what is going to happen.

By the way, for the information of colleagues, it is interesting to me that we have focused on OPEC countries. An interesting story came out in the past couple of days that the non-OPEC oil countries, that collectively produce more than half the world's crude oil, rather than producing more to meet

the additional demands, are producing less.

Exxon-Mobil—we have these mergers, acquisitions. We have monopolies and a cartel. I think they are in a position to fix prices. If there ever was a case to be made for antitrust action, this is a pretty decisive area in the economy where we ought to be looking at these conglomerates and holding them accountable for putting more competition into this industry.

APPROPRIATIONS AND HEALTH CARE

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, Senator MOYNIHAN, Senator DASCHLE, and others have introduced a bill of which I am a cosponsor. It is really important. I didn't support the Balanced Budget Act of 1997. I thought it was a mistake. I didn't understand how this projected \$116 billion in Medicare cuts was actually going to work on the ground with our hospitals, HMOs, and nursing homes—you name it. The projected cost is actually \$200 million less by way of funding.

Last year, we did a "fix." We restored approximately an additional \$16 billion or \$17 billion. It did not solve the problem. We now have a bill and a request of \$8 billion over the next 10 years. This is critically important. In Minnesota, in 1999, 54 of our 139 hospitals operated with less than a 2-percent margin, and 27 percent of them are in the red.

Whether it is an inner-city hospital, such as Hennepin County General, or rural hospitals, I tell Senators—Democrats and Republicans alike—that we made a huge mistake. We should have never voted for these draconian cuts in Medicare reimbursements. I don't know what is in the world we were thinking. I didn't vote for it. But I say "we" because I am a Member of the Senate, and proud to be a Member of the Senate.

But we have to restore a significant amount of this funding because both in the inner city and in the rural areas where there is a disproportionate number of elderly and low-income people, these providers are not making it. Rural hospitals will shut down. This is not just a crisis for rural communities. Employers lack health care for people. And Hennepin County General, which is, I think, a sacred place, is such an important hospital. They are struggling because of what we did in 1997.

This piece of legislation we have introduced will call for \$80 billion to be restored for this funding. It is critically important if we care about the care for the elderly, low-income, rural, and inner-city communities.

I hope Democrats and Republicans alike in this final week of negotiations will come together and support not only our providers but also support the people in our State who really count on this care.

As long as we are talking about the last couple of weeks, I want to ask Sen-

ator HARKIN to share with me his reaction.

We had a vote yesterday. We had two appropriations bills, Postal-Treasury and legislative branch appropriations, which were merged together. Legislative branch got through and Postal-Treasury never came to the floor of the Senate. It was put into the conference report. Part of the idea was that you could have a salary increase, which may be fine, but of course we don't raise the minimum wage for people. The idea would be then we would have an opportunity to have up-or-down amendments and a vote on the minimum wage. If we can raise the salaries above \$140,000, we ought to be able to vote for the minimum wage for the working poor people of the country. Senators voted against that bill.

Now I hear that the majority leader is talking about a lame duck session. Am I correct? I ask my colleague from Iowa. I would like to go back and forth in some discussion with my colleague from Iowa about this.

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, I thank my friend from Minnesota for bringing this up, and for his earlier statement on the plight of our small rural hospitals and relief for them. He was talking about the smaller hospitals, but it is really the people in our small towns and communities who need the relief. I thank him for bringing that up.

I serve on the Appropriations Committee. I have been on it now for 15 years. I am ranking member on the Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Subcommittee. I also serve on a number of others—Agriculture, Foreign Operations, and others.

I was disturbed, I say to my friend, to read in Congress Daily this morning that Senate Majority Leader LOTT said our failure to pass these two bills yesterday "increases the possibility of a lame duck session after the November elections." He told reporters: I always thought that was a possibility anyway. Senate Appropriations Committee Chairman STEVENS told reporters: In my opinion, now we are ready for a postelection session. We just don't have time to get 11 bills through in 9 days.

I say to my friend from Minnesota, we have been here for 9 months, haven't we? What have we been doing? What has happened to the 9 months? We've done nothing. Eleven out of thirteen appropriations bills have not been passed—11. Here is what's going on: The Republicans in charge don't want to vote on a Patients' Bill of Rights. They don't want to vote on it. They don't want to vote on prescription drugs for the elderly. They don't want to vote on increasing the minimum wage. What do they want to do? Put it off until after the election, have a lame duck session.

I don't understand how this complies with what our responsibilities are, what the people elected us for, what we get paid to do around here. That is, to