

I am hopeful that the outcome of what we have here with this current dilemma with respect to energy will result in a real, honest-to-goodness debate, discussion, and decision with respect to long-term energy policy and increased access to public lands for potential oil and gas in the Rocky Mountains, offshore, and in Alaska, and at the same time develop techniques where we can do it and also take care of the environment. It is not a choice between the two things.

We should develop tax incentives to try to encourage increases in oil and gas production, particularly in stripper wells. In old production wells, it really hasn't been economic to do that.

We can do some things with respect, of course, to research. We have been working now for a couple of years on a mineral management group to be able to clarify how those charges are made, and we have been unable to do that over a period of time.

There are a number of things: The Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act, we now have in my State a real activity going on with methane gas production—gas production that we need now under the Clean Water Act. Some Senators are pushing against insertions of fracture used to help with that production. These things are all, of course, inconsistent with some kind of policy which will, indeed, move us forward in terms of energy development.

Refineries are already up to 95 percent of capacity or more. So to actually take oil out of the reserve, if there isn't a refinery capacity, makes it very difficult. Everyone recognizes the difficulty in the Northeast, the major user of oil for heating in the wintertime. That has traditionally been important. We do need to do some things there. We need to provide more fuel. We need also, I am sure, to do something about low-income users.

There are a number of things we need to do. I hope we don't totally get involved in making this a political issue. Rather than trying now to point out what everyone has done or hasn't done, we ought to say, all right, here is where we are; now what do we do? How much can we do to develop domestic production? What are the best ways to do that? How can we move in that direction? How soon can we move forward with that?

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, what is the parliamentary situation?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate is in morning business and the Senator from Vermont has up to 15 minutes.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, is the Senator from Vermont correct in understanding that morning business will not start until he has completed his 15 minutes?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is correct.

Mr. LEAHY. I thank the Chair and my fellow New Englander.

LACK OF JUVENILE JUSTICE CONFERENCE

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, yesterday I was amazed when I checked my computer, as I do during the day, to see what the latest news items were in our country and around the world. I learned of another tragic incident of school violence in a middle school in New Orleans. Just before noon yesterday, two teenaged boys, age 13 and 15, shot each other with the same gun during a fight just outside the cafeteria at the Carter G. Woodson Middle School. Hundreds of students were inside eating lunch. Both boys are in critical condition.

The growing list of schoolyard violence by children in Arkansas, Washington, Oregon, Tennessee, California, Pennsylvania, Kentucky, Mississippi, Colorado, Georgia, Michigan, Florida, and now Louisiana is simply unacceptable and intolerable.

Over a year ago, May 20, 1999, this Senate passed the Hatch-Leahy juvenile crime bill by a vote of 73-25. It had a number of things that would address school violence, a number of things that would help with the problems of teenage violence, that would create everything from mentoring programs to the prosecution of juvenile delinquents, and it passed overwhelmingly, with Republicans and Democrats alike voting for it.

But we never had a real conference on it. It was stalled. Why? Because the gun lobbies told the Republican leadership that there was one minor problem, one minor bit of gun control—closing the gun show loophole, something that allows people to sell firearms to felons out of the back of a pickup truck at a flea market. One would think everyone would want to close that gun loophole and say everyone will abide by the same rules that the regular gun shops in Vermont or anywhere else have to follow; but, instead, because the gun lobby doesn't want that simple loophole closed, we haven't gone forward with a vote on this juvenile justice bill that goes into so many other areas—helping troubled teens, helping prosecutors, courts, and others with teenage violence.

How many shootings do we have to have before the leadership, the Republican leadership, says we will stand up to the gun lobby and actually have a vote? If this Senate wants to vote against it, let it vote against it. I don't know why the Republicans are so concerned. They have a majority. They can vote against this bill if they want. But vote. Vote "aye" or vote "nay." We are not paid to vote "maybe." We are paid to vote up or down. We should do it. It has been more than 15 months since the Senate acted. It has been more than a year since the only meeting of the House-Senate conference committee on the Hatch-Leahy juvenile crime bill. It was on August 5, 1999 that Chairman HATCH convened the conference for the limited purpose of opening statements. I am disappointed

that the Republican majority continues to refuse to reconvene the conference and that for a over a year this Congress has failed to respond to issues of youth violence, school violence and crime prevention.

It has been 17 months since the tragedy at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado, where 14 students and a teacher lost their lives. Senate and House Democrats have been ready for more than a year to reconvene the juvenile justice conference and work with Republicans to craft an effective juvenile justice conference report, but the Republican majority has adamantly refused to act.

On October 20, 1999, all the House and Senate Democratic conferees wrote to Senator HATCH who serves as the Chairman of the juvenile justice conference, and Congressman HYDE, the Chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, to reconvene the conference immediately.

In April of this year, Congressman HYDE joined our call for the juvenile justice conference to meet as soon as possible in a letter to Senator HATCH, which was also signed by Congressman CONYERS.

Last March, the President invited House and Senate leaders of the conference to the White House to implore us to proceed to the conference and to final enactment of legislation before the anniversary of the Columbine tragedy.

This effort to jump-start the stalled conference could not break through the majority's intransigent inaction. That anniversary, like so many others tragic anniversaries has come and gone. We have seen more incidents but no action by the Republican Congress.

The Republican majority has rejected the President's pleas for action as they have those of the American people. Every parent, teacher and student in this country is concerned about school violence over the last few years and worried about when the next shooting may occur. They only hope it does not happen at their school or involve their children.

We all recognize that there is no single cause and no single legislative solution that will cure the ill of youth violence in our schools or in our streets. But we have had an opportunity before us to do our part and the Republican majority has chosen to squander it. We should have seized this opportunity to act on balanced, effective juvenile justice legislation.

I regret that this Republican Congress has failed to do its work and provide the additional resources and reforms that would have been helpful and reassuring to our children, parents, grandparents, teachers and schools.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, my main reason for coming to the floor today is to introduce the Windfall Oil Profits for Heating Assistance Act of 2000.

(The remarks of Mr. LEAHY pertaining to the introduction of S. 3118 are located in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California.

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business for about 12 minutes.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, has the morning business hour closed?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. It has not been announced by the Chair. It is closed.

Mr. REID. It is closed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Time has expired.

Mr. REID. I am sorry?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair has not yet announced that morning business is closed, but the designated time has expired.

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I withdraw my unanimous consent request. Let us move on. Then I will take time under the cloture motion.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

AMERICAN COMPETITIVENESS IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY ACT OF 2000—RESUMED

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the pending business.

The senior assistant bill clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 2045) to amend the Immigration and Nationality Act with respect to H-1B nonimmigrant aliens.

Pending:

Lott (for Abraham) amendment No. 4177 (to the committee substitute), in the nature of a substitute.

Lott amendment No. 4178 (to amendment No. 4177), of a perfecting nature.

Lott (for Conrad) amendment No. 4183 (to the text of the bill proposed to be stricken), to exclude certain "J" non-immigrants from numerical limitations applicable to "H-1B" non-immigrants.

Lott amendment No. 4201 (to amendment No. 4183), in the nature of a substitute.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. HARKIN. Parliamentary inquiry. I understand we are now under cloture and each Senator is recognized for up to 1 hour to speak.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Each Senator has a maximum of 1 hour.

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader.

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, I appreciate very much the willingness on the part of the Senator from Iowa to give me an opportunity to make some remarks with regard to where we are on the legislation.

Yesterday's vote demonstrates clearly that there is strong bipartisan sup-

port in the Senate for increasing the number of visas for high-skilled workers. On that point, Democrats and Republicans agree, but there is a stark disagreement between our parties on the issue of fairness to immigrants.

Republicans do not want to acknowledge this; they do not want to admit that they oppose the Latino and Immigrant Fairness Act. That is why they have gone to such extraordinary lengths to try to avoid having to take a public position on it. There is an election coming up, and they do not want to have to explain to Latino and immigrant groups why they told thousands of hard-working immigrants who are in this country doing essential jobs: Go home. Republicans would rather risk not delaying the passage of the H-1B visa bill than vote for the Latino and Immigrant Fairness Act or risk the political consequences of voting against it.

There is really no reason we cannot pass both a strong H-1B bill and the Latino and Immigrant Fairness Act.

We are in the longest period of economic expansion in our Nation's history. We all know that now. The census numbers which were released yesterday confirm once again the remarkable progress we have made in recent years.

In the last 7 years, we have seen 20 million new jobs. Unemployment is lower now than it has been in 30 years. In my State of South Dakota, the jobless rate is between 2 and 3 percent.

Ten years ago, many companies could not expand because they could not get the capital. Today they can get the capital, but they cannot get the workers.

Clearly, one of the industries hardest hit by today's skilled-worker shortage is the information technology industry. According to a recent survey of almost 900 IT executives, nearly 10 percent of IT service and support positions in this country—268,740 jobs—are unfilled today because there are not enough skilled workers in this country to fill them.

The H-1B visa program was supposed to prevent such shortages, but it cannot because it has not kept pace with the growth in our economy. This year, in fact, the H-1B program reached its ceiling of 115,000 visas in less than 6 months. That is why my colleagues and I support substantially increasing the number of visas available under the H-1B program.

The high-tech industry, however, is not the only industry struggling with worker shortages. The Federal Reserve Board has said repeatedly that there are widespread shortages of essential workers all through the United States. All across America, restaurants, hotels, and nursing homes are in desperate need of help. Widespread labor shortages in these industries also pose a very significant threat to our economy. That is one reason my colleagues and I introduced the Latino and Immigrant Fairness Act earlier this year and why we wanted to offer that legis-

lation as an amendment to this measure.

The changes in our proposal are pro-business and certainly pro-family. They are modest, and they are long overdue. We have talked about them before, but let me just, again for the RECORD, make sure people are clear as to what it is we want to do.

First, we want to establish legal parity for all Central American and Caribbean refugees. That is not too much to ask. Why is it we treat refugees from some countries differently from refugees from other countries? All we are asking for is parity.

Second, we want to update the registry so that immigrants who have been in this country since before 1986, who have worked hard and played by the rules, will remain here permanently and will have the ability to remain here legally.

We want to restore section 245(i) of the Immigration Act so that a person who is in this country and on the verge of becoming a legal resident can remain here while he or she completes the process. Why would we want to send somebody back to the country they fled—someone who is eligible to be a legal resident—just so they can come back here again? If we do not change the law, that is exactly what will happen, forcing these immigrants to pay thousands of dollars, disrupt their lives, and maybe imperil their opportunity to come back at all.

Finally, we want to adjust the status of the Liberians who fled to America when Liberia was plunged into a horrific civil war. Thousands of them live in the State of the current Presiding Officer. Our Nation gave these families protected immigrant status which allowed them to stay in the United States but preempted their asylum claims. Instead of forcing them to return to Liberia, a nation our Government warns Americans to avoid because it is so dangerous even today, our bill will give them the opportunity to become legal residents. That is all it would do.

Earlier this month, a coalition of 31 associations—the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the American Health Care Association, the National Restaurant Association, the National Retail Federation, and about 28 more—all came together and said: If there is something you do before the end of this year, now that we have PNTR finished, we hope you can pass the restoration of Section 245(i) and these other reasonable immigration provisions.

It is the only fair thing to do, and it is good business. We need this done. That is the message from the Chamber of Commerce and the American Retail Federation sent. The American economy is growing not in spite of immigrant workers, but with their help. That is one reason we should pass the Latino and Immigrant Fairness Act now.