

to chart the course of a democratic Nigeria.

I also visited Senegal, which is truly an inspirational place. In a neighborhood plagued by horrific violence, where even the most basic human security is in jeopardy, Senegal is moving in the opposite direction. Last year they experienced a historic and peaceful democratic transition. Senegal continues to be a global leader in AIDS prevention.

Both of these countries—one still consolidating its transition, another forging ahead in its quest for development and concern for the condition of its citizens—affected by the crisis in Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Guinea. The entire region is. Refugees flee from one country to the next, desperately seeking safety. States fear they will be the next target of the syndicate of thugs led by Charles Taylor and personified by the RUF, and for Guinea, this fear has become a reality. Many, most notably Nigeria but also including Senegal, are undertaking serious military initiatives to bolster the peacekeeping forces in Sierra Leone.

Some will ask, why does it matter? Why must we care about the difficult and messy situation of a far-away place. We must care because the destabilization of an entire region will make it all but impossible to pursue a number of U.S. interests, from trade and investment to fighting international crime and drug trade. We must care because, if we do not resist, the model presented by the likes of Charles Taylor will surely be emulated elsewhere in the world. We must care because atrocities like those committed in Sierra Leone are an affront to humanity as a whole. We are something less than what we aspire to be as Americans if we simply turn our heads away as children lose their limbs, families lose their homes, and so many West Africans lose their lives.

What is happening in West Africa is no less shocking and no less despicable than it would be if these atrocities were committed in Europe. The innocent men, women, and children who have borne the brunt of this crisis did nothing wrong, and we must avoid what might be called ignorant fatalism, wherein we throw up our hands and write off the people of Sierra Leone and Liberia and Guinea with some groundless assertion that this is just the way things are in Africa. Africa is not the problem. A series of deliberate acts carried out by forces with a plan that is, at its core, criminal—that is the problem. And these are forces that we can name, and we should. And Mr. President, the leadership of these forces should be held accountable for their actions.

That leads me to the next question—what can we do?

We can help the British, who are working to train the Sierra Leonean Army and whose very presence has done a great deal to stabilize Sierra Leone. Their commitment is admi-

nable; their costs are great. When they need assistance, we should make every effort to provide it.

We can reinforce the democracies in the region, like the countries of Senegal, Ghana, and Mali, to help them pursue their positive, alternative vision for West Africa's future.

We can continue our efforts to bolster the peacekeeping forces in Sierra Leone through Operation Focus Relief, the U.S. program to train and equip seven West African battalions for service in Sierra Leone. And we can urge the UN force in Sierra Leone to develop their capacity to move into the rebel controlled areas, and then to use that capacity assertively.

We can work to avoid the pitfalls of the past. We must not forget that the welfare of the people of Sierra Leone is the responsibility of that beleaguered government. I met with President Kabbah, and with the Attorney General and Foreign Minister. I know that they want to do the right thing. But the point is not about which individuals are holding office. The point is that we must work to enhance the capacity and the integrity of Sierra Leone's government, and it must work on that project feverishly as well. The people of Sierra Leone need basic services, they need to have their security assured, they need opportunities. Ending the war is not enough.

In the same vein, we must not tolerate human rights abuses no matter who is responsible. When militia forces that support the government of Sierra Leone abuse civilians, they should be held accountable for their actions. And we must work to ensure that our involvement in the region is responsible, and collaborate with regional actors to ensure that we monitor the human rights performance of the troops we train and equip. West Africa must break the cycle of violence and impunity, and all forces have a role to play in that effort.

And that leads me to a crucial point, one that is particularly important for this new Administration and for this Congress. We must support the accountability mechanisms being established in the region. There has been consistent, bipartisan support for accountability in the region. The Administration should find the money needed to support the Special Court for Sierra Leone, and it should find it now. And this Congress should commit to contributing to that court in this year and the next.

The Special Court will try only those most responsible for terrible abuses—the very worst actors. Others who have been swept up in the violence will be referred to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, another entity which deserves international support. The Court and the Commission are two elements of the same strategy to ensure accountability without leaving the rank-and-file no incentive to disarm and demobilize. They are vital to Sierra Leone's future, and they will

serve as a crucial signal of a changing tide, and an end to impunity, throughout the region.

Finally, we must join together to isolate Charles Taylor and his cronies and to tell it like it is. There was a time when some believed that he could be part of the solution in West Africa. At this point, we should all know better. And we must speak the truth about the role played by the government of Burkina Faso, the government of Gambia, and the others involved in the arms trade in the region.

Mr. President, these issues do matter. I have looked into the faces of amputees, refugees, widows and widowers and orphans. I have seen the tragic consequences of the near total disruption of a society—the malnourishment, the disillusionment, the desperation. Some people are getting rich as a result of this misery. I have heard the people of neighboring countries speak of their fears for the region's future. I implore this body and this Administration to take the steps I have described. It is in our interest and it is right. And if we fail to do so, I fear that the terrible crisis will only get worse.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Mexico is recognized.

(The remarks of Mr. DOMENICI pertaining to the introduction of S. 472 are located in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BUNNING). Under the previous order, the distinguished Senator from Kansas, Mr. ROBERTS, has the floor.

Mr. ROBERTS. I thank the distinguished Presiding Officer.

(The remarks of Mr. ROBERTS pertaining to the introduction of S. 478 are located in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

Mr. ROBERTS. 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. THOMAS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the order for the quorum call be dispensed with.

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

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#### ENERGY

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, I am going to be joined shortly by my friend from Texas. In the meantime, I want to comment for a moment on the statement of the Senator from New Mexico on energy. We need to take a long look at where we are with respect to energy. The Vice President with his working group is putting together a national policy on energy, as are many groups. We have an oil and gas forum, which I cochair. We will be taking a look at where we want to be on energy and energy production in this country over a period of time.

We have not had an energy policy in the United States, I am sorry to say, for the last 8 years. As a result, we did not look at what the demand was going to be, where the supply was going to be, and, indeed, have found ourselves depending almost 60 percent on imported oil, depending on foreign countries and OPEC to manage that. So we need to take a long look.

I was pleased with what the Senator from New Mexico had to say about diversity. We need not only to take a look at our need to increase domestic production in oil and gas, but we also need to look at diversity, to where we can continue to use coal. You may have noticed on his chart that coal now produces over 50 percent of our electric energy. We need to do some research with respect to air quality so coal becomes even more useful. We need also to look at coal and its enrichment, getting the Btu's out of low-sulfur coal so transportation costs will not be so high.

Nuclear, I am sure, has a role in our future as a very clean and very economical source of electric energy. However, before we do that, we are going to have to solve the question of the storage of nuclear waste, or begin to use it differently, as they do in some other countries, recycling the waste that is there.

We have great opportunities to do these things. We also need, along with this, of course, to take a look at conservation to make sure we are using all the conservation methods available to us. Certainly we are not now. We have to be careful about doing the kinds of things that were done in California, to seek to deregulate part of an industry—in this case electric energy—however keeping caps on the retail part. Obviously, you are going to have increased usage and reduced production, which is the case they have now.

It is really a test for us at this time. One of the issues is going to be the accessibility to public lands. Most of the States where gas and oil is produced in any volume are public land States, where 50 percent to 87 percent of the State belongs to the Federal Government. Much of those lands have been unavailable for exploration and production.

We need to get away from the idea that the multiple use of lands means you are going to ruin the environment or, on the other hand, that we need to do whatever we need to do and we do not care about the environment. Those are not the two choices. The choice we have is to have multiple use of our lands, to preserve the environment and to have access to those lands as well. We can do that, and we have proven that it can, indeed, be done.

That is one of the real challenges before us during this Congress, although, of course, Congress only has a portion of involvement—it is really the private sector that will do most of it.

One of the most encouraging things is Vice President CHENEY and his work-

ing group have brought in the other agencies. Too often we think about the Department of Energy being the sole source of involvement with respect to energy, and that is not the case. The Department of the Interior is certainly just as important, in many cases more important regarding where we go, as well as the EPA—all these are a real part of it.

One of the difficulties, of course, in addition to the supply, is the transportation. Whether we have an opportunity to have pipelines to move natural gas from Wyoming to California—a tough job, of course—whether we have a pipeline that economically can move gas from Alaska down to the continental United States, those are some of the things with which we are faced. In the case of California, people were not excited about having electric transmission lines and therefore it was very difficult and time consuming to get the rights-of-way to do these things.

We have to take a look at all of those issues to bring back domestic production and be able to support our economy with electric and other kinds of energy.

It is going to be one of the challenges. The Senator from Alaska, chairman of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee, has introduced a rather broad bill that deals with many parts of the energy problem. I am pleased to be a sponsor of that bill. Obviously, it will create a great deal of debate and discussion because it has all those items in it, but we need to move. We need to have a policy that will encourage production. But I say again, not only should we be looking at production but we should be looking at opportunities to, indeed, conserve and find efficient ways to use it.

#### THE BUDGET AND TAX RELIEF

Mr. THOMAS. We are going to debate lots of issues. We went on an issue yesterday which was passed. We are going to go to bankruptcy today. We will talk about a lot of issues. But the real issue we need to work towards and keep in mind, it seems to me, is the budget and the tax relief issue we have and that the President has promised and that we, I hope, will be able to support. We will be looking at spending, budgets, taxes, and the size of tax relief. It is going to be one of the most important things we do.

One important aspect of it is the American people are suffering under a record level of taxation, which is 20.6 percent of the gross national product. They deserve some relief. The individual tax burden has doubled from where it was. We really need to take a long look and encourage the private sector that has people who are paying excessive amounts of taxes to have those taxes returned and at the same time pay down the debt and be able to have a budget that pays for the increases we are looking for in education

and national security with the military, as well as have some reserves. The President's plan does all of those things. It puts a limit on spending, which we very badly need.

It takes care of paying down the debt. That can be paid down between now and 2011. It has a reserve for the kinds of things that come up unexpectedly and at the same time returns \$1.6 trillion in overpaid taxes to those people who in fact have paid the dollars.

We have a lot of important things to look forward to in this Congress. I am glad we are now beginning to get to where we are able to deal with these issues. I think yesterday was an example of that. I am certain we will move forward.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas is recognized.

#### TAX RELIEF

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, I thank my colleague from Wyoming for talking about taxes because I don't think we can talk about tax relief enough. There is no question but that we have the chance of a lifetime to bring tax relief to every working American and also give increased benefits to earned-income tax credit recipients. It is in everyone's best interest that we do this.

I thank my colleague from Wyoming for starting this debate and starting the process of educating everyone about the importance of this tax relief.

Let me say that when we talk about the tax relief package, we really are talking about good stewardship of our tax dollars. We have a projected \$5.6 trillion surplus. We have a bright red line between the Social Security surplus and income tax withholding surplus. We are taking half of the \$5.6 trillion—roughly \$3 trillion—that is in Social Security surplus, and we are going to leave it intact in a lockbox so that Social Security will be totally within itself, solid and firm.

The other half of the \$5.6 trillion—the \$2.6 trillion or so—is the income tax withholding surplus. That is very different from people who are paying into Social Security and expect that money to go to Social Security. But people who are sending \$2.6 trillion in income taxes above and beyond what government reasonably needs to operate should have some relief. That is money coming right out of the pocket of every American and going to Washington which we know it does not need for legitimate government expenditures.

It is our responsibility to be careful how we spend taxpayer dollars. With that \$2.6 trillion surplus in income tax withholding, we have a proposal that takes \$1.6 trillion and gives it back to the people so they don't even have to send it to Washington. We have \$1 trillion remaining. That \$1 trillion is going to be for the added expenditures that we know we need in priority areas to do the right thing.