

I hope Condoleezza Rice fully testifies, testifies truthfully. The Commission's goal is not to point fingers or blame; the Commission's goal is to find out what went wrong so we don't do it again. No one feels that more keenly than the families in my State who have lost loved ones and who yearn for the truth; not so much because it will ever bring their loved ones back but because they, in a charitable, an eleemosynary gesture, want to prevent it from happening again.

This is a good step. We ought to trust this Commission. It is bipartisan. It has many people of integrity on it. Let it go forward without stonewalling. The truth, the truth will set us free.

OPEC

I would like to bring one other issue forward now that something has been announced, and that is the issue of OPEC. Tomorrow the OPEC nations meet. I have a letter that has been signed by 19 of my colleagues as well urging the President, today, to speak out strongly and publicly to get OPEC to back off their counterproductive policy to restrict the amount of oil that flows into the market and raise the prices. It is counterproductive because it is going to cause our economy to slow down and hurt everybody.

But where is the voice of our President? He went out of his way to create a \$400 tax cut, to put money into the hands of average families to stimulate the economy. I was all for that part of his tax proposal. But now that tax cut is going to OPEC. By the end of the summer, the average American family with 2 cars will pay \$400 more than they paid for gasoline because of this recent price rise in OPEC. It is taking the wind out of our economy.

OPEC is a monopoly—an oligopoly. It is killing America. We have a solution, which is the Strategic Petroleum Reserve which President Clinton did dip into after, frankly, I pressured him for 6 months. That brought oil prices down and they stayed down. Where is President Bush? What is his policy to deal with oil prices now?

He talks about the energy bill, he talks about ANWR. At best, whether you agree with it or not, that is not going to put more oil on the market for 5 years. What are we doing now, as OPEC drains dollars from the American family's pockets? There is no extra money to take the vacation, build the extra room on the house, or buy the new car. The President fiddles, frankly, while Rome burns, while oil prices go through the roof, not because of a free market but because there is a monopoly here that is manipulating price.

OPEC always said they would keep the price no greater than \$28 a barrel. It is now about \$10 more than that. Now, with the Saudi announcement this morning that they are going to constrict oil production further, it should go above \$40 a barrel. That is a very bad sign for this economy and for the American taxpayer, the American family.

The President is silent. He has to tell his Saudi friends they have to come clean. He has a weapon, an ace in the hole at his disposal, and that is the Strategic Petroleum Reserve. In this letter, 19 of us urge him to speak out today before the OPEC meeting tomorrow and shake up the Saudis and shake up OPEC and tell them that, if they don't start producing more oil, we will use our Strategic Petroleum Reserve.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator has used 7½ minutes.

Under the previous order, the Senator from Illinois is recognized for 7½ minutes.

A GREAT INJUSTICE

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I, too, commend those who were encouraging Condoleezza Rice to come before the 9/11 Commission publicly under oath to tell what she knows about the events leading up to 9/11 and those that followed. The fact she would argue it violated a precedent certainly didn't stand up once we looked at what happened in the past when we had others in her same position testifying before congressional committees.

Now that she has made this decision, along with the White House, to testify, I think it is a positive and good thing. This bipartisan Commission can now ask the hard questions that need to be asked.

I really come to the floor because, frankly, I think it is time for many of us who believe that a great injustice is being committed to speak out. The injustice I speak of is the reaction of this administration to the publication of the book "Against All Enemies: Inside America's War on Terror" by Richard Clarke.

To my knowledge, I have never met Mr. Clark nor worked with him. I know nothing about him personally. But I do know for 30 years Richard Clarke has been trusted by Presidents, Republican and Democrats alike, with some of the most important responsibilities in America.

If you read his book, and I have—at least the beginning of his book—you will find in the first chapter that Richard Clarke was the person America turned to on September 11 when we faced the greatest danger and chaos of modern time. He was the one at the controls in the White House, in the situation room, trying to bring some sense to the confusion that was hitting America. He was the one who was involved in working with the Secretary of Defense, the President, the Vice President, the Secretary of State, and all of the agencies of Government, to try to make sure America was safe at one of the most dangerous moments in our history. It is hard to believe this is the same man who has been so roundly discredited now by those in the White House. Those who trusted him on 9/11, who said to him, Use your judgment, your skill, and your experience to keep America safe at our most dangerous

moment, are now saying, Richard Clarke cannot be trusted when he speaks out from the heart, from his conscience, about the failures of this administration to prepare for the war on terrorism and to wage that war since 9/11.

Some of the statements that have been made on the floor of the Senate, particularly by the majority leader last week, I couldn't believe as I read the transcript today. I will quote from those statements. In the statement the majority leader said that he is:

... equally troubled someone who would sell a book that trades on their former service as a Government insider with access to classified information, our Nation's most valuable intelligence, in order to profit from the suffering surrounding what this Nation endured on September 11, 2001.

What is missing from this statement and other references by the majority leader is the fact that before Mr. Clarke published this book, it was submitted to the White House. They saw it in advance. If there were any suspicion of the leak of classified information by any agency, there was ample opportunity for them to weigh in before the publication of the book, and they did not do it. It is a false issue to raise today, that Richard Clarke has somehow violated this Nation's trust and disclosed classified information. That is not a fact that can be proven based on the fact that the White House itself had the ability to review that book in advance and determine whether anything crossed the line. To suggest Mr. Clarke is just doing this for the money is, frankly, to discredit him and to discredit a 30-year career in service to this country.

If we look at what is happening to Richard Clarke by this attack machine out of the White House, we see it is nothing new. The same thing happened to Larry Lindsey, an economic adviser to the President who misspoke by saying the war in Iraq was going to cost far more than the Bush administration ever acknowledged. It turned out Larry Lindsey was right, but because he spoke the truth he is gone.

General Shinseki, who misspoke in the eyes of the administration by telling us about the necessary commitment in American troops in a war in Iraq, was roundly criticized. He was the target of their attack.

In addition, Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill stepped forward with his book, after serving in this administration, talking about some personal experiences he had with this administration and was immediately ridiculed by the people around the President.

Ambassador Joseph Wilson, who has served this country, who has contributed to both Democratic and Republican candidates, had the identity of his wife, who was working for the Central Intelligence Agency, disclosed by Robert Novak, columnist, on a tip from the White House in order to discredit Ambassador Joe Wilson.

In addition, Richard Foster, an actuary for the Department of Health and

Human Services who had the nerve to step forward and say the President's prescription drug program was being sold on false premises and in fact it would cost far more than what the administration was prepared to acknowledge, when he started making that public, they came back at him and said he could lose his job if he spoke the truth.

Then, of course, the Vice President. The Vice President, who wrote an energy bill—and submitted it to Congress—by meeting with special interest groups and basically kowtowing to their interests instead of the interests of America, when put on the spot and asked who were those special interest groups, refused to make that public.

We see not only this effort to attack all critics and debase them and question their motives and their patriotism, but we also find ourselves in a position where this administration has thrown a shroud of secrecy over the most important issues that face their Government. Thank goodness a corner of that shroud has been lifted this morning. Looking under that shroud, we will find Condoleezza Rice coming before this bipartisan commission answering questions, as she should.

What is at stake here is not the reputation of the White House or anyone in the White House. What is at stake here is the security and safety of the United States of America.

Richard Clarke, whether you agree with him or not, stepped forward on a critical issue and was prepared to accept his responsibility for not doing as much as possible. But those who should be joining him in accepting responsibility have instead turned on him and attacked him personally. That is not new in Washington, but it has reached a new depth in this particular instance.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan is recognized for 7½ minutes.

Ms. STABENOW. Thank you, Mr. President.

I first want to thank my friend from Illinois for his usual eloquence, and our leader and others who have spoken about what has been happening under an administration that chooses to fight those who state their opinions, face the facts, and give us information rather than working with us to make sure we have the best information; working with us to make sure the decisions we make are the right ones.

MEDICARE

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I want to speak about Medicare today, and the fact that one of those who stood up and was prepared to give us information is the Medicare actuary Richard Foster.

We now know he was told if he gave up information about the cost of the Medicare bill that passed last year before we voted on it, he would face being fired. We have heard this repeated over and over in different ways about people who had the courage to stand up and

disagree—or in this case a career public servant who was trying to do his job.

We find now on this Medicare bill that as we look more closely, over and over we are deeply disturbed by what has unfolded relating to the Medicare bill.

As I indicated over and over on the floor before we passed the final version, this is clearly about what is in the interest of the pharmaceutical industry and the insurance industry in this country—not in the best interests of seniors, not in the best interests of consumers or taxpayers. Piece by piece, we are seeing major flaws in this law; in fact, so much so that we are seeing comments from colleagues. Our colleague from Mississippi, Senator LOTT, has indicated now if it were to be done over he would in fact change his vote. I wonder how many others would be doing the same thing given what we have found.

This law does nothing to lower prices for Medicare recipients and families, which should be one of the primary goals. That should have been at the top of the list for us to do. Despite the passage, in fact, of something that would lower prices—what we call the reimportation of prescription drugs or the ability to allow the local pharmacist, say, in Michigan or across the country to do business with pharmacists in other countries such as Canada to bring back prescription drugs at half the price; most of them are made in the United States, and American taxpayers helped subsidize the research to make them. But instead of allowing that to happen—to lower prices, in fact, up to 70 percent in some cases—we saw nothing in the final bill.

The law prohibits the Medicare program from using its purchasing power to lower prices, which is stunning. What organization doesn't want to purchase in bulk in order to lower prices? Yet the Medicare legislation that passed specifically prohibits that from happening. There is only one group that benefits from that.

The law, as we know, would also lead to about one in four retirees losing their private coverage, if they have retiree coverage, given the way it is designed. My latest concern relates to what is happening with the discount cards in the legislation.

One thing we thought at least would be helpful—not as much as allowing us to bring back lower cost prescription drugs from Canada and from other countries, but something we had hoped would help a little bit—would be the discount card that was put in place which was supposed to provide from a 10 percent up to a 25-percent discount on prescription drugs.

But just as Health and Human Services announced which companies would be providing the discount cards, we also learned the meager savings these cards might offer is being eaten up by the continued explosion in prescription price increases.

As reported in the Wall Street Journal, the prescription drug provision for

our seniors and the disabled increased nearly 3½ times faster than the overall inflation rate in 2002. Because there are no checks or controls or accountability on these prices, the discount cards are very vulnerable to gaming by the pharmaceutical industry.

What do I mean by that? For example, the wholesale price for Lipitor or Zoloft went up 19 percent in the last 2 years. The pain reliever Celebrex went up 23 percent. Their producer has said these increases are among the most moderate pricing in the industry.

We are seeing great increases so that any kind of a discount now will be based on an inflated price, not providing relief for seniors.

I am very concerned. We are hearing from Families USA, which we know is a consumer health care advocacy group. They have now laid out four concerns they have which I will share regarding discount cards.

Their first concern is they say neither the new law nor the legislation specifies the base price on which the discounts will apply. Gains in the base price are going up dramatically, and we are going to give a 10 or 15-percent discount, or even a 30-percent discount. But the price has gone up 40 percent. You are not getting much of a deal.

Second, under the Discount Card Program, sponsors are required to pass on to cardholders only an undefined share of the rebates they get from drug manufacturers, and they can keep the remaining savings as profits. They are not required to pass on the entire amount of savings from the manufacturers to our seniors.

I know our leader Senator DASCHLE has a bill that would correct that, of which I am cosponsor, and I hope very strongly we will be able to pass it.

The regulations foster, in fact, also what is called bait-and-switch schemes so that people go into a particular card, and then things are switched. What is amazing is while the senior is locked into a specific card for 7 days, the size of a discount can change. Seniors are locked in but the provider is not.

Finally, there is a \$600 credit, which is positive for low-income seniors, that is applied to these cards. However, with the low-income asset tax and new, very cumbersome paperwork involved, we are not sure how many low-income seniors will actually receive the discount.

We can do better than that. If we were simply to do what the House of Representatives did in a strong bipartisan vote a number of months ago, we would be able to immediately drop prices at least in half with reimportation.

I urge my colleagues to get serious and pass that bill.

Thank you, Mr. President.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, have we used all of our time?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator has 1 minute 45 seconds.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I reserve that. But I note when we get to the bill

that a number of Members on this side indicate they would object to extending the vote past 12:45. Everyone should understand that. The managers of the bill—and I have spoken to our manager, Senator BAUCUS—understand that. If anyone tries to extend the time past 12:15, there will be an objection. We will vote at 12:15.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BENNETT). Is there any objection to reserving of the minority's time? Hearing none, the time is reserved.

The Senator from Wyoming.

WELFARE REFORM

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, I rise today to talk about the issue before the Senate. The previous comments this morning sounded like a political rally. We ought to talk about the issues before the Senate instead of spending all our time criticizing the President.

We have before the Senate welfare reform, to extend what we have done in the past. Welfare reform has been a remarkable success story for millions of people. Welfare reform is working because former recipients are working. Families once dependent on welfare checks are now looking forward to the independence of a paycheck. That, of course, has been the purpose of the program. Through the years it has been very successful.

This bill deals with the effort to provide meaningful work and more opportunity for welfare recipients to move off welfare, to promote healthy families, to provide opportunity for health and marriage programs, to give States the flexibility to continue to work on the programs they have had.

We are very pleased this is now before the Senate. As a Finance Committee member who has worked on this for a very long time, it is something that we need to pass and make available to people in this country.

The legislation before the Senate, H.R. 4, the Personal Responsibility and Individual Development for Everyone Act, makes the necessary changes in existing law to make it even more of a success. America began a war on poverty more than three decades ago. However, the good intentions of that policy produced conflicting results. Seniors were lifted out of poverty, poor families received basic health care, and disadvantaged children were given a head start in life.

Many Americans were injured by that helping hand. The welfare system actually became an enemy of individual efforts and responsibility. As dependence passed from one generation to the next, the vicious welfare cycle began for some families.

Between 1965 and 1995, Federal and State welfare spending increased from \$40 billion to more than \$350 billion per year. However, all this money produced virtually no progress in reducing child poverty.

In August 1996, Congress passed a progressive welfare reform law that

transferred welfare benefits into temporary help, not into a permanent way of life. The new system honors work by requiring all able-bodied recipients to work or go back to school to further their education.

The goal of the 1996 welfare reform law was to give participants a strong, time-limited support system as they developed long-life skills that encourage independence.

That is the purpose of this entire program. It has been successful. It provides childcare funding to help families meet the work requirements while limiting the benefits to 5 years. States must promote self-sufficiency. They are given the flexibility to reach that goal.

The following results of the 1996 landmark welfare reform bill speak for themselves. From August 1996 to June 2003, the number of families on welfare fell from 4.4 million to 2 million, a 54-percent decline. In the same time period, the number of individuals fell from 12.2 million to less than 5 million, a decline of 60 percent. From 1996 to 2002, child poverty went from 20.5 percent to 16.7 percent. This represents a reduction of over 2.3 million poor children.

Child poverty rates among African Americans and Hispanics were at or near record low levels. The percentage of never married working mothers increased from 49.3 in 1996 to 65 percent in 2002. Childcare funding has continued at record levels. Let me say that again: Childcare funding has continued at record levels. We are going to be faced with a resolution shortly to increase that. The fact is, we have had ample dollars in the past. We have fewer people now and all different kinds of programs going into that. I hope we do not add \$6 billion to the cost of the program.

State and Federal funding for childcare from the childcare development block grant, TANF, and social services block grant increased from \$3.2 billion in 1996 to \$11.8 billion in 2003. In 2003, an estimated 2.5 million children will receive subsidized childcare from these funding sources. From 1996 to 2003, child support collections increased from \$12 billion to \$21 billion. This demonstrates a pattern of success, moving people in the direction this was designed to move them.

Wyoming, my home State, has had particularly good luck. In the wake of these changes, welfare reform has been phenomenal. In fact, the number of individuals receiving assistance has dropped approximately 90 percent since 1994. This was accomplished with total weekly hour requirements of work of 40 hours, which is above and beyond the current law. That is what is in the reauthorization bill before the Senate.

Last year, Wyoming received a \$19.9 million bonus for reducing the out-of-wedlock birth rate.

Wyoming also has over \$30 million in reserve funds they are able to use when this bill is passed. This increased flexi-

bility will not only help my State keep folks off the welfare rolls, but provide assistance to childcare and other expenses while continuing on their path of self-sufficiency.

I am very proud of my State's success. Our experience proves welfare reform is a strong and comprehensive policy to uplift and empower people to be able to earn for themselves. I am encouraged by the initial results of welfare reform, but there is still a lot of work to do.

I support the chairman's bill because it does the following: It increases work hours to 34. This is better to prepare recipients for full-time employment. I would like to see that number of work hours be increased to 40. Wyoming has made that work well.

This creates a partial credit system for States doing everything they can to make this even better. We have increased childcare spending by \$1 billion over 5 years. It allows the States to use Federal money no longer used on cash assistance. Increased flexibility allows for more activities.

I hope we move this out of committee. We have been deferring it by extending the old bill. We need to put the new bill into place. We need to stop the uncertainty for the States as to what we are doing.

I thank Chairman GRASSLEY for his leadership. I hope we can move this week to conference and keep our commitments to equip TANF recipients with the skills they need to take care of themselves and their families.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nevada.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. ENSIGN. Mr. President, I will talk a little about jobs this morning.

How much time remains on the Republican side?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority has 21 minutes 40 seconds.

Mr. ENSIGN. Mr. President, is there a unanimous consent on how the time is divided on our side?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There is not.

Mr. ENSIGN. I ask unanimous consent I have 10 minutes of the remaining 21 minutes.

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

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, might I ask for 10 minutes after the Senator completes his remarks?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Does the Senator propound a unanimous consent?

Mr. BOND. I propound a unanimous consent request I be recognized for 10 minutes following Senator ENSIGN.

Mr. BAUCUS. Reserving the right to object, might I ask the Chair when we are scheduled to go back on the bill?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority has 21 minutes remaining, and the minority has reserved 1 minute 10 seconds. When that time has expired, we will return to the bill.