

Louis Cardinal fans. It is with a heavy heart that I tell the people of southern Illinois that the Cardinal fans have been “dissed” by my colleague from across the river.

I wouldn’t normally do that, but since he misquoted what I said, I thought I might as well take the same liberties and misquote what he had to say.

First, right there at the end I thought we were almost opening a new front in this debate. Wal-Mart bashing; oh, that is a great liberal sport these days, bashing Wal-Mart. I saw just the hint of Wal-Mart bashing. But I am sorry, I didn’t mean to attribute that to my colleague. He walked away from it. So we are not into Wal-Mart bashing. But he did say I wasn’t interested in conservation or energy efficiency. Perhaps the reason he didn’t vote for the Bond-Levin or Levin-Bond amendments to conserve energy and assure energy efficiency is he didn’t understand that we ordered the scientists at the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration to find the new technologies and require that fuel efficiency improvements be made as technological advances go forward.

That is the whole idea.

How about letting the scientists say what technology actually works? It is a lot more fun on the stump making a political speech saying we are going to double the mileage—and, by the way, forget about it if the lighter cars do kill more people. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has produced those figures: the lighter cars have been killing more people.

The third thing he said was we are going to waive all the environmental rules. We have had continually improving air quality in this country. We are making progress, and we are continuing to make progress. That is extremely important.

Are we going to get rid of the standards? No. How about getting the number of processes? One refinery had 800 different permitting processes to go through. How many different permitting processes do you have to go through? We need to hold these refineries or other new facilities to the standards we are setting to make air cleaner. When government bureaucracy and lawsuits tell them how to build and how to operate the facilities, we get tremendous waste. This is why I am talking about economics. Economics is bringing about conservation, as is the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, as are other conservation measures—new appliances with conservation standards.

Each one of us has the ability, in responding to the marketplace as to the price of energy, to make wise decisions about energy usage. The market does work.

If my colleague wants to have an allocation system to tell the American public what kind of cars and trucks they can buy and dictate what cars, trucks, and SUVs can be made by auto

manufacturers, let’s have that debate. In the meantime, let us all concede that the auto companies may have missed the mood. They may have made mistakes. They are paying for those mistakes in misjudging the market. But I would rather have the private sector taking the hit because they are in it for the profit motive, and they can afford it, rather than have the government make those decisions which cost jobs, which cost our economy.

I am hoping a Member will have an additional amendment. I will look for that.

I do not intend to answer my colleague from Illinois any further other than to say that if he cites my position, I will probably disagree with his characterization of my position. But we will have this debate perhaps again when we have an honest to goodness Energy bill, maybe one that fast-tracks refineries that would get us the oil, diesel, aviation fuel, and the coal gas we need.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois, from the southern part of Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. I am from all of Illinois.

The Presiding Officer must face the same thing in the State of Florida with your loyalties for sports teams. You cannot win in the State of Illinois. No matter where you go you will run into opposition—whether a Cardinals, Cubs, or White Sox fan.

I think we have made that issue. At least my position on that issue is clear as we can.

I say in closing, and I certainly invite the Senator from Missouri to respond, we ought to ask ourselves the basic question: If you have a business in America that is unsuccessful, and the business has a loss in one given year, we provide in our Tax Code that business can carry that loss forward from the year that it was experienced, so next year’s profits can be reduced accordingly. Your tax liability is reduced accordingly. It is a carry-forward provision for business losses.

It seems to me consistent to say that those corporations which have extraordinary profit taking—as we see with these major oil companies—would be subject to additional taxes.

I am sure the Senator from Missouri disagrees with me. But we have now seen virtually—I am trying to figure the calculation—roughly 30 percent increase in profits for the major oil companies in the United States of America, over the last 6 months, over last year. Last year was a big year for them. Last year, in the same 6-month period, they had about \$39 billion in profits. This was with \$40-a-barrel oil. This year it is up 30 percent over last year’s profits.

Why? We know why. When we go to the gas station, we know why. The price at the pump has gone up dramatically.

The Senator from Missouri thinks this is holy ground, that we should not

touch that money: My goodness, these people were brave enough and creative enough and entrepreneurial enough to raise gasoline prices, and we ought to accept that as the reality of capitalism.

But the Tax Code says even if you are profitable you pay taxes. My position is that if you have these windfall profits at the expense of our economy and families and businesses you should face a windfall profits tax. The money should come back to consumers. The money should come back to fund the LIHEAP program. The money should come back to create an incentive for automobile manufacturers to make fuel-efficient cars. I don’t think that is an unreasonable position to take.

If the oil companies know that every dollar they make in profits by raising the price of gasoline at the pump is subject to a 50-percent tax, maybe they will slow down a little bit. Maybe they will not raise the prices as high next time. Wouldn’t that be nice if there was some disincentive for these prices being skyrocketed and kited on the average family and business? I don’t think it is unreasonable. When we consider the alternatives we are facing in this town right now, it makes a lot of sense.

We have arguments being made now that to pay for Hurricane Katrina we have to cut basic programs in this country for the most vulnerable Americans. The idea of cutting food stamps and health care for the poorest people in our country in order to pay for the victims of Hurricane Katrina strikes me as unfair to the nth degree. Why in the world would we help the poor people of Katrina by hurting other poor people in America and look the other way when it comes to the profits of oil companies?

For goodness’ sake, a windfall profit tax I have proposed could generate about \$40 billion. That is a big chunk of the \$60 billion we have heard appropriated for Hurricane Katrina.

Is it unreasonable that these oil companies would help to pay for the greatest natural disaster in modern memory? At least something good would come of it, and we would not be cutting the programs and the basic policies that help the most vulnerable people in America.

I didn’t mean to try to get the last word in. I wanted to give the Senator from Missouri that opportunity, but because he is chairman of the subcommittee it means he will ultimately have the last word on this bill and anything else that comes before the Senate.

AVIAN FLU

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, there is another issue which is timely, one that is growing in interest and intensity across America; that is, the challenge of avian flu. Public health officials have been worrying about this for the last several years. But an avian flu epidemic is not yesterday’s news. Sadly, it

may be tomorrow's news. It is our duty to prepare for it today.

Poultry have been susceptible to various strains of avian flu for a long time. Public health officials started to get worried when avian flu was noted in Indonesia, Romania, and other countries as well. This form of flu may be transferrable to humans. That is what is being monitored very carefully.

Unfortunately, humans do not have a natural resistance to this form of the flu. Remember that in previous flu epidemics they usually warned that the people who needed flu shots would be children, the elderly, and people in a compromised health situation. They are the most vulnerable for most ordinary flu strains.

In this particular case, everyone is vulnerable. None of us have a built-in resistance. It is unlike a typical flu that makes you feel bad for a few days and then you are back up and going strong. This, sadly, attacks fast and hard and kills. Over half of the people who have been diagnosed with avian flu around the world perished because of that exposure.

Last week we learned the virus is not just in Asia, but it has been found in Turkey and Romania. Romanian officials reacted quickly and believe they have done what needs to be done to eradicate the spread of flu in their area.

But Romania's Danube Delta is one of Europe's largest bird reserves. Hundreds of thousands of migratory birds are expected to arrive in the coming days. It is possible, maybe likely, that some of these birds will be carriers of avian flu.

If this H5N1 flu mutates into a form that transmits easily from person to person, we have been told to expect the worldwide pandemic that could kill tens of millions of people.

Dr. Andrew Pavia of the Infectious Disease Society of America said:

We may sound like we are hyperventilating, but in our heart of hearts we know this is a serious possibility.

That is why we added \$3.9 billion to the Defense appropriations bill. If we are going to prepare for a pandemic of avian flu, we cannot wait. We have to start now.

That is why I join my colleague from Illinois, Senator BARACK OBAMA, as well as Senator HARRY REID of Nevada, and many others in introducing the Pandemic Preparedness and Response Act, which lays out the necessary steps to prepare this country for the flu. It would take immediate steps to improve surveillance of this infectious disease so we can track it around the world and begin to contain it immediately.

Second, it expands current research and development at the National Institutes of Health to exhaust the possibilities for developing effective vaccines and antiviral drugs.

Third, it creates a Director of Pandemic Preparedness in the Executive Office of the President. The Director will oversee the response of States and

all involved Federal agencies so that we coordinate what we do, that we are organized, and we set out to save as many lives as possible. We do not want the response of Hurricane Katrina to be repeated if we face this avian influenza.

Avian influence is not a new thing, but it is not yesterday's news. An avian flu that develops into a pandemic flu is virtually certain to be tomorrow's news. Let's enact the pandemic preparedness legislation and move immediately, today, before this Senate goes home, to prepare for this possible.

I yield the floor and 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. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. KENNEDY. What is the pending business?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Kennedy amendment is the pending amendment.

AMENDMENT NO. 2063, AS MODIFIED

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I send to the desk a modification and ask for its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The amendment is so modified.

The amendment (No. 2063), as modified, is as follows:

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

SEC. ____ MINIMUM WAGE.

(a) INCREASE IN THE MINIMUM WAGE.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Section 6(a)(1) of the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 (29 U.S.C. 206(a)(1)) is amended to read as follows:

“(1) except as otherwise provided in this section, not less than—

“(A) \$5.70 an hour, beginning 6 months after the date of enactment of the Fair Minimum Wage Act of 2005;

“(B) \$6.25 an hour, beginning 12 months after that 60th day; and

(2) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendment made by paragraph (1) shall take effect 60 days after the date of enactment of this Act.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I thank the Chair.

This is a modification of our amendment which was to raise the minimum wage to \$7.25. It seemed to me that in an attempt to try to find some common ground with our friends on the other side, we would modify this amendment to reflect what had been the position of the Republican side the last time we had the debate on the increase in the minimum wage and that was \$1.10.

There were other provisions in the Santorum amendment, but the overall figure that was included in the alternative amendment to my last amendment was \$1.10. That is what this amendment effectively does. It says that in 6 months after enactment, we would have an increase in the minimum wage of 55 cents and then a year after another 55 cents. That would be

the way it would be phased in over this period of time.

I will not take a great deal of time again on the Senate floor to urge the consideration of the increase in the minimum wage. It has been 9 years. We have increased our own salaries some six times in that 9-year period. We have not increased the minimum wage. We know the total number of children who have fallen into poverty, the total number of families who have fallen into poverty, some 5 million Americans—5 million Americans have fallen into poverty during the Bush Administration. And we saw at the time of the Katrina tragedy the fact that so many of our fellow citizens have been left out and left behind, lost opportunity, and certainly lost income.

As I have mentioned many times, the minimum wage applies to men and women of dignity. These are men and women who work hard, who try to do a job, try to take care of their children. More often than not, the minimum wage worker has two or even three jobs, and rarely has a chance to spend much time with their family. They are men and women of dignity. They are the men and women who clean the great buildings of American commerce. They are helpers to schoolteachers in the school districts around the country. They work in our nursing homes to look after our senior citizens who have in so many instances sacrificed to permit their children to have a better and a happier future. Now minimum wage workers are looking after our seniors who have done so much to make this country the great Nation that it is. So this is about men and women of dignity. That is the most important point. They should not be held back and should not be held down.

We have seen that this has very substantial support, as it should. It has support in blue States and in red States. It is reflected in votes in Florida and also out West in Nevada in these last elections by a very substantial margin.

This is basically a women's issue because 60 percent of those who would benefit from a minimum wage increase are women. More than one-third of those women have children. So it is a children's issue. It is a family issue. An increase in the minimum wage is a family issue. It is a children's issue. It is a women's issue. It is a civil rights issue because so many of the men and women who receive the minimum wage are men and women of color.

Most of all, it is a fairness issue. If there is one thing the American people understand it is fairness. The American people believe that anyone who works 40 hours a week, 52 weeks of the year, should not have to live in poverty. This very small step is to try to address the needs and the well-being of these families. That is what this debate is really all about.

As I have pointed out at other times, this has been bipartisan. I was here when President Ford supported an increase in the minimum wage. I was

here when President Bush 1 supported an increase in the minimum wage. I have been here when we have had bipartisan support for this effort. This is an attempt now to basically move, as our amendment did, from \$5.15 to \$7.25, increase it 70 cents a year over a 3-year period to effectively cut that in half, to try to reach out to those on the other side. Hopefully we can accept this downpayment and let me give the assurance that it is just a downpayment and move forward.

At the appropriate time, we will have a chance to go through some of the reasons for the increase. I will mention just a few now. I know some of our colleagues desire to speak at 5:15, and when they arrive I will yield the floor.

I will just review what has happened since 2001: the increased cost of gasoline; health insurance; housing up 44 percent; increase in college tuition. Basically, the increases are making it prohibitive for families to be able to own cars or be able to afford health insurance. Housing has become prohibitive, and college tuition is out of sight.

This is what has happened over the period of recent years, that more than 41 million Americans—that is 30 percent of our workforce—work more than 40 hours a week. Nearly 1 in 5 workers work more than 50 hours a week. Is that not extraordinary? When one looks at the fact of the work habits of the American workforce, 30 percent work more than 40 hours and 1 in 5 more than 50 hours. More than 7 million Americans are working 2 or more jobs, and 259,000 of them hold 2 full-time jobs. So Americans are working longer and they are working harder than any other industrial nation in the world.

Productivity has increased dramatically over the period of these last years—from 1965 up to the present time, a 115-percent increase in productivity. So we have workers working longer and harder. We have seen an explosion in productivity, but it is not reflected in any increase in the minimum wage. That is troublesome. It should be.

We have actually seen the purchasing power of the minimum wage decrease by some 31 percent. To give our colleagues some idea of what has happened to the minimum wage, we see the purchasing power of the minimum wage over the period of recent years. These are in real dollars, in 2004 dollars. It would have been close to \$9 in 1965. Look how this has gradually declined to \$5.15. We had proposed up to \$7.25. Now it will just increase \$1.10, so it will go to \$6.25. This is what the issue is about, and we will have an opportunity to address it.

We have been interested in getting a vote. We understand it is germane to the legislation. We only needed 50 votes to be able to pass this. We have had that in previous votes, but we have been unable to get the consideration for it. In an attempt to move this debate on the minimum wage forward, we

have made this very significant—and it is very significant—adjustment and change in this proposal. Hopefully this will result in the willingness to accept it and the beginning of the process to make sure many families will be treated more fairly and equitably in the future.

I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SALAZAR. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

(The remarks of Mr. SALAZAR and Mr. BURR are printed in today's RECORD under "Morning Business.")

Mr. SALAZAR. Mr. President, I yield the floor. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. DEMINT). The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, here it is quarter to 6 on the day after this bill has come to the floor. We have had two votes on technical amendments. We have another technical amendment we can offer. But my colleagues have filed about 40 amendments. While there are discussions going on over two different minimum wage amendments, we have set those aside in order for us to go back to work on other amendments relating to this bill. I ask on behalf of leadership on this side and my partner that Members who have amendments which they have filed to please come forward and offer those they wish to offer, or talk with us about ones that might be acceptable.

The leader said we are going to be here this week until we finish this bill. It is my hope, with the tremendous workload we have to accomplish, if we are to get out of here prior to Thanksgiving, that we move forward on this bill. We will be ready for business tomorrow morning. If Members do not come forward, my colleague and I will consider asking the bill go to third reading.

We still have time to deal with another amendment tonight if anyone wishes to come in and bring it before us. Otherwise, I would ask all our colleagues who want to pursue amendments which they have filed to come forward and do so tomorrow.

It is possible, if they will do so in an orderly manner and tell us which ones they do not wish to pursue, we could finish this tomorrow night and be ready to move on to the many other challenging pieces of legislation and appropriations measures we have to deal with.

This is an urgent request to Members on both sides who have amendments filed to come forward—staff met with us on those amendments—and let us know which ones they wish to pursue.

We are operating on a continuing resolution for all of the important agencies covered by this bill. Many of these agencies truly need the new appropriations for fiscal year 2006 in which we are operating. Some of the provisions we have in this bill will significantly improve the operation of the Federal Government.

It is going to be a very difficult bill to conference because of the different parts of it. It is going to take us several weeks to complete the conference on the bill. We cannot go to conference until this bill is passed. With any amendments that are agreed to after this, we still believe this is important for the functioning of the Federal Government and the service it provides.

There is much talk about Amtrak and what we need to do on Amtrak. Let us be clear: There are some Amtrak reforms in this bill. They do not go as far as we would hope to see in Amtrak legislation which is coming out of the Commerce Committee. It should be debated on this floor. But it will provide \$1.45 billion for the operation of Amtrak and begin to reform some of the significant problems we see in Amtrak. For those who are interested in improving the operation of the passenger rail service, I hope you will join with us in moving forward to completion of this bill so we can get the Amtrak funding done and those reforms which are included in this bill. The system will work better if this measure is passed.

Similarly, for the Treasury Department, we are funding vitally needed resources to stop illicit financing of the terror trade. The Treasury has an important responsibility to do that. That is in our national interest.

We have additional funds available to make sure that the taxes already on the books and owed are collected.

Obviously, for housing, there are many important things for taking care of the needs of those who need assisted housing.

The Judiciary has important measures in it as do the other related agencies.

It is time we move forward on this bill. We reported it out of committee in July. It is now here on the floor and ready to go. We earnestly ask that our colleagues join us and offer amendments, debate them, if necessary, and we will vote on them so we can move this bill to conference and get on with the business of the Federal Government.

I thank the Chair and yield the floor. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

AMENDMENT NO. 2109

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I send an amendment to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Missouri [Mr. BOND] proposes an amendment numbered 2109.

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To provide the Judicial Branch with certain procurement authorities)

Insert the following on page 356, after line 4, and renumber accordingly:

“SEC. 408. (a) Section 604 of title 28, United States Code, is amended by adding section (4) at the end of section “(g)”:

“(4) The Director is hereby authorized:

(A) to enter into contracts for the acquisition of severable services for a period that begins in one fiscal year and ends in the next fiscal year to the same extent as the head of an executive agency under the authority of section 2531 of 41 U.S.C.; and

(B) to enter into contracts for multiple years for the acquisition of property and services to the same extent as executive agencies under the authority of section 254c of 41 U.S.C.; and

(C) to make advance, partial, progress or other payments under contracts for property or services to the same extent as executive agencies under the authority of section 255 of 41 U.S.C.”

(b) Section 612 of title 28, United States Code, is amended by striking the current language in section (e)(2)(B) and inserting “such contract is in accordance with the Director’s authority in section 604(g) of 28 U.S.C.; and.”

(c) The authorities granted in this Section shall expire on September 30, 2010.

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, this is an amendment to reform the judiciary’s ability to procure things. It is a procurement authority. The amendment actually establishes greater parity for the judicial branch by giving it the same procurement authorities that were given to the executive branch through acquisition reform legislation in the 1990s. We found this saved money. It gives the taxpayers a better bang for their buck. They can procure over several years.

Currently, the judiciary’s procurement authority is limited when compared to the executive branch. This limitation increases the cost of doing business. Specifically, these limitations are on multiyear contracting, severable services contracts, and the timing of contract payments and, thus, prevent the judicial branch from taking advantage of the best prices offered for some goods and services. As an example, a typical information technology contract will extend for several years. It is far more efficient for the executive branch and it is more efficient for the judicial branch to be able to make these contracts over several years.

Simply put, this amendment gives the judicial branch authority it should

already possess, and I believe makes good business sense for the American taxpayer.

I urge my colleagues to support this amendment.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, this amendment would extend to the judicial branch certain procurement authorities that are parallel with the authorities that have already been granted to the executive branch and would allow the judiciary to achieve certain cost efficiencies that I think we all want.

This amendment has been cleared by the Judiciary Committee with the sunset provision that limits the authority to 5 years.

I encourage an aye vote from all of our colleagues.

I thank the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there further debate? If not, the question is on agreeing to the amendment.

The amendment (No. 2109) was agreed to.

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I move to reconsider the vote.

Mrs. MURRAY. I move to lay that motion on the table.

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I thank the Chair and my colleague.

We are still open for business—maybe not for much longer—but I hope all Senators will take the fact that we intend to either vote on amendments tomorrow or have third reading. It doesn’t make any difference to us one way or the other. We want to finish this bill.

I thank the Chair and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, I appreciate the opportunity to say a few words while we are contemplating the Transportation appropriations bill. A special thanks to our ranking Democrat and chairman of the appropriations subcommittee for the work that their staff and others on the subcommittee have done.

One of my primary issues of interest is energy independence. This is an issue that, in this Nation today, we all have to be interested in. Today, roughly 60 percent of the oil we will use to drive our cars, trucks, and vans will be from foreign sources. A lot of the oil is controlled by people who, frankly, are not that friendly to us and some of whom, I am convinced, would do us ill if they had the opportunity.

Meanwhile, as we pump more and more money out of our economy into the hands of folks in other countries, who may or may not wish us well, we need to pause and reflect on the wisdom of that.

One of the elements in this Transportation appropriations bill is money to continue to fund passenger rail service in this country. I will talk for a moment about whether that is an energy-efficient approach to part of our transportation challenge.

We are gathered in Washington, DC. Believe it or not, we can move one ton of freight by rail from Washington, DC, where we are located, up to Boston, MA, using one gallon of diesel fuel by train. Think of that. We can move one ton of freight by rail from Washington, DC, to Boston, MA, by simply using one gallon of diesel fuel.

In a day and age when almost 60 percent of the oil we use is from foreign sources, to be able to have that efficiency using rail—whether for freight or, in many cases, by passenger—we are wise to more fully utilize that transportation mode.

Today we were having a hearing in the Environment and Public Works Committee, where I serve, as does Senator BOND. We were having a hearing on the question of whether or not we should make it easier for folks to locate a refinery, to build a refinery on military bases that have been made available through the BRAC process.

While we go forward and explore that option, I suggested to my colleagues and to those who were witnesses before the committee today that we might be wise, as we again try to reduce our reliance on foreign oil, to take a look to the south of our country, down to Brazil, to see what they are doing to reduce their reliance on foreign oil. In Brazil, they have learned how to meet, in an increasing way, their need to drive their cars, trucks, and vans not by importing oil, not by pumping oil but by growing sugarcane, soybeans, in some cases corn, grass, different kinds of grass, and being able to transform those crops into fuel for their cars, trucks, and vans. I understand now over a quarter of the fuel needs of Brazilians, as they are driving around their country today and tonight, are met by the crops they grow.

I am proud to say, in Delaware, during the time I was privileged to be their Governor, we decided to try an experiment with our DelDOT vehicles. The experiment was one where we said, Why don’t we use a combination of soybean oil—we raise a lot of soybeans in Delaware—use some of our soybean oil and mix it with diesel fuel and see if it works in powering our DelDOT vehicles. It worked fine and it ran well.

Actually, there were environmental consequences: The air pollution consequences were better with the mixture of soybean oil and diesel fuel, and we reduced our reliance on oil to some extent.

That experiment has given way to a broader experiment in our State, where we use a combination of soybean oil and diesel fuel to power an ever broader number of vehicles that are diesel powered, including farm equipment and I believe now some schoolbuses and other larger trucks.

We are building a refinery in Delaware today. It is not a traditional kind of refinery. We have a big oil refinery along the Delaware River in a town called Delaware City. This is a refinery where we are going to bring soybeans to the refinery and create, again, a blend of soybean oil and diesel fuel to help power those DelDOT vehicles and other vehicles normally diesel powered.

In the next year or so, new EPA requirements for cleaner, leaner, low-burning emission diesel engines will be phased in, Tier II requirements. As we face those requirements, we will find that diesel-powered vehicles, which used to belch black smoke pulling away from intersections and traffic lights, leaving a huge black plume of particulate and pollutants—those days are, at least with respect to new vehicles on the road, those days will be gone for the most part next year. We will see more diesel-powered vehicles which, in many cases in the future, will be clean burning, as lean burning, as low emission as our internal gas-powered engines that can take advantage of the refinery we are building north of Dover, DE, and other folks that are building similar biodiesel refineries in their own States.

We did a couple smart things in the Energy bill that we enacted early this year. They also relate to enhancing our ability to reduce our reliance on foreign oil. We have expanded the tax credit for people who buy hybrid-powered vehicles, a combination of internal combustion engine with the electric motor.

Under current law, the tax credit for people buying hybrids is about \$1,000, a flat \$1,000. I don't believe it is bigger if you have a vehicle that gets 60 miles per gallon as opposed to one that gets 30. The tax credit for hybrid-powered vehicles will change on January 1. Beginning that day, people who buy a hybrid-powered vehicle, ones that are highly energy efficient, get a tax credit worth up to as much as \$3,400. For hybrid engine vehicles that are less energy efficient, the tax credit goes down.

Similarly, we are going to begin to offer, on January 1 of next year, a tax credit—again, a variable tax credit—for folks who buy lean-burning, clean-burn, low-emission, highly fuel-efficient diesel-fueled vehicles.

The head of Daimler Chrysler in North America, Juergen Schrempp, will head up Daimler Chrysler around the world and was here hosting a reception off of Capitol Hill and brought with him folks from Daimler Chrysler. Vehicles were, in some cases, internal combustion engines and other cases diesel powered. He brought with him a concept passenger car. They have not built it yet but they are hoping. My hope is that they will. The vehicle gets 60 miles per gallon in the city and 80 miles per gallon on the highway. The combination overall is about 70 miles per gallon. The vehicle will meet Tier II diesel requirements for lower emissions, as well.

We have seen our friends from GM and Daimler Chrysler create a partnership early this year for developing the next generation of hybrid-powered vehicles.

My hope is that one of the concepts they will come up with, one of the engines and power systems they will come up with, is something that marries together this notion of a low-emissions, highly energy efficient diesel-powered engine with an electric engine. It will be a diesel hybrid. GM has already introduced that kind of technology quite successfully with respect to buses. We have thousands of buses that are now roaming the streets of America that are diesel powered but also have a hybrid counterpart, too, to provide better efficiency and lower emissions.

I think it would be terrific for consumers and those of us who are interested in cleaner air and for those of us who are interested in reducing our reliance on foreign oil to take that same concept of a diesel engine with an electric hybrid motor—putting them together—and being able to introduce that kind of propulsion system in our cars, trucks, and vans, as we have—at least by GM—in larger vehicles.

Nobody in this country should be comfortable with the state we find ourselves in today, with this huge and growing reliance on foreign oil. We can do better. On behalf of all of us in this country, and especially our kids, the folks to whom we are leaving our trade deficit and our budget deficit, we have to do better than this.

About a quarter of our trade deficit is attributable to the cost of oil, the importation of oil. We cannot continue on a course, in my view, that has \$300 billion or \$400 billion budget deficits and \$600 billion or \$700 billion trade deficits. That is not sustainable. One of the ways we can at least take a big bite out of that trade deficit is to move toward energy independence, maybe by the year 2020—it would be great if we could do it sooner; that may not be realistic—but at least by 2020.

With that, Mr. President, I yield back my time and thank the Chair.

NOTICE OF INTENT

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I submit the following notice in writing: In accordance with rule V of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby give notice in writing that it is my intention to move to suspend paragraph 4 of rule XVI for the purpose of proposing to the bill H.R. 3058 amendment No. 2078.

(The amendment is printed in today's RECORD under "Text of Amendments.")

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, it appears that action for the day on the Treasury, Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, the Judiciary, and Related Agencies appropriations bill has come to a close. I ask once again that our colleagues be prepared to offer amendments tomorrow or we will ask to go to third reading.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that we now proceed to a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes.

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

REPEAL OF MICROPURCHASE AUTHORITY

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I rise today to speak regarding the repeal of expanded Federal Government micropurchase limits, as well as to speak regarding recent regulatory action taken by the Office of Management and Budget on this matter.

We are all deeply concerned with the recent events surrounding Hurricane Katrina and the massive rebuilding and reconstruction efforts ongoing in the gulf coast.

While we all agree that help is needed, many have argued how best to provide this help. The second supplemental emergency appropriation for Hurricane Katrina included a number of provisions to help provide for rebuilding and reconstruction—including nearly \$61 billion.

This money will help rebuild the gulf coast, yet there were some provisions in that second supplemental that leave the rebuilding effort vulnerable to fraud, waste, and abuse of taxpayer dollars.

One such provision was the repeal of the limitations on micropurchase spending authority. Micropurchases represent delegated buying authority for Federal agencies and were designed to save money by providing flexible spending. Micropurchases are usually small—averaging \$600—and are most often made through Government credit cards.

By law these Government credit card micropurchases were originally capped at \$2,500 per purchase. This limit was raised following 9/11 for emergency purposes only, to \$15,000 domestically and \$25,000 abroad.

The second Hurricane Katrina supplemental raised this emergency rate from \$15,000 to \$250,000, per purchase. This change represents a nearly 1600 percent increase. Imagine a Government bureaucrat being able to walk into a store, purchase an item for \$250,000 without prior approval, and say, "Put it on the taxpayer's tab."

History has proven that these Government credit cards are prone to fraud, waste and abuse of taxpayer funds. I began looking into this issue several years ago. Working with the Government Accountability Office, GAO, and the various inspectors general over the years, I have uncovered hundreds of millions of dollars lost to fraud, waste, and abuse due to inadequate controls on Government credit cards.

This history of abuse prompted my immediate attention and intervention