

of morning business until 10:30 a.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each, with the first half of the time under the control of the majority leader or his designee, and the second half of the time under the control of the minority leader or his designee.

The Senator from Illinois is recognized.

#### ENERGY

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, last night in the State of the Union Address, President Bush, for the seventh year running, raised the issue of energy. I am glad he did because I think everybody across America understands we are in a dangerous position. We are entirely dependent upon imports from foreign countries when it comes to our energy needs and our economy.

It is true that we produce our own oil and gas in this country, but we don't produce enough to fuel our economy. So we find ourselves buying oil from countries far and wide across the globe. We find ourselves in positions where we are compromised sometimes by that dependence. Many of us have felt that the President's first goal or task should be to establish the reduction of our dependence upon foreign oil. I think that is a worthy goal and one I wish the President had quantified last night a little more specifically than he did.

The reason, of course, is if we can find a way to reduce dependence upon foreign oil, for example, we might have several positive impacts: first, not entangling ourselves in the foreign policy goals of countries we don't share many values with; second, it is good for our security interests to have sources of fuel that are reliable closer to home; third, of course, we are dealing with an environmental issue here. The more gasoline we burn to move a mile or two miles down the road, the more emissions and the more global warming; the more global warming, the more climate change and a disastrous environmental impact.

So many of us believe that though the President continues to refer to the problem, he has never quite moved us as we would like in the direction of a solution.

Last night, he said two things that were more encouraging. As I said, this is the seventh year the President has brought up the issue. He made a famous statement last year about America's addiction to oil. In the ensuing 12 months, we did little or nothing in Washington to address that addiction.

Assuming the same addiction today, the President said we should move toward alternative fuels, which I heartily support, not just biofuels, such as ethanol and biodiesel, but other alternative fuels that could make a big difference in the way we drive our cars, heat our homes, and fuel our businesses.

The second issue the President talked about, which is long overdue, is

addressing the CAFE standards. These, of course, were standards created in 1975 by Congress. At the time, we knew we had a problem. The problem was obvious—that we had too much dependence on foreign oil and prices were going up. By today's standards, they were not going up that high, but by the standards of those days they were.

In addition, the cars and trucks we were driving were inefficient. In fact, the average miles per gallon in 1975 for cars and trucks was about 13, 14 miles per gallon. At that point, Congress worked up the courage, with the cooperation of the President, to set a new goal and said that in 10 years, we will virtually double the fuel efficiency of the cars and trucks in America.

The negotiations got underway, and they decided to exempt trucks—we will go after cars and we will go after the fleet average of cars.

It worked. In a span of 10 years, we went from 13 or 14 miles a gallon average mileage to 27, 28 miles a gallon. So we clearly showed that when given incentives and mandates, the automobile manufacturers could respond with a product that was more fuel efficient.

What happened after 1985, after we hit the 27, 28 miles a gallon average? We did nothing. For 21 straight years, we did nothing. What happened in addition, that little loophole we created for trucks, letting them off the hook, the SUVs drove right through it. They produced these big, heavy vehicles that became extremely popular with Americans. They classified them as trucks, and they had no requirements to be fuel efficient. So the overall use of gasoline continued to increase, and the overall efficiency of the cars and trucks we drive went down as more and more SUVs and trucks were built that were exempt from the CAFE standards. Twenty-one years passed and things got progressively worse as we imported more and more fuel—dramatically more and more fuel—to burn in cars and trucks that were significantly more inefficient than those we had in 1985.

I have tried, on the floor of this Senate, three different times to reimpose CAFE standards on cars and trucks, to close loopholes and to move us back in the direction of more efficient cars and trucks, and I failed every time. Maybe things have changed. I credit a lot of people for this new debate.

What troubled me last night was the President, I felt, acknowledged the energy issue but gave scant attention to the environmental aspect. It is true that most of us understand we are going through a climate change in America. If you have seen Al Gore's documentary "An Inconvenient Truth," he documents and brings the facts forward to make the argument that this climate change is changing the world we live in on a permanent basis.

I recently returned from an official trip with my colleagues to South America, where leaders in that region

of the world said, when asked, they saw ample evidence of climate change—glacier melt and changes in things they thought would never change. We have seen it in America. We have seen it in the weather we find in different regions of our country, the extremes which we have witnessed and experienced.

My point is I hope we can take the President's invitation in his speech last night to the next level. I hope we can start talking about an energy policy that does make sense. The starting point ought to be a realistic goal for reducing our dependence on foreign oil. We ought to understand, if we can move forward with more efficient cars and trucks, give consumers in America more choices, that they will, given those choices, make the right choice, time and again.

Sadly, the production of these fuel-efficient cars has been led by foreign manufacturers and not by the United States. That has to come to an end.

I might say, although I support biofuels, ethanol, and biodiesel, although I believe flexible fuel vehicles are sensible for people to own and drive, it is not enough, and we shouldn't delude ourselves into believing it is enough. We need to move toward those hybrid vehicles that truly burn less fuel and move people in America to the places they need to go. We can do that, but we need to move in a sensible way.

Let me give two examples. There are two companies in my State of Illinois. One is Firefly. Firefly is a spinoff of Caterpillar Tractor company. It is an independent company that is trying to design a new battery for cars and trucks. The lead-acid battery, which most use today, is ancient and heavy and inefficient and in extreme temperatures doesn't work well. They are investing in research to find a new battery that is lighter and has a longer life. I don't know if theirs will be the breakthrough technology, but we need to encourage companies such as Firefly to develop the new batteries that can lead to better hybrid cars and more fuel efficiency.

Secondly, one of the biggest problems we have with fuel efficiency is the weight of the vehicle. If we can reduce the weight of the vehicle without compromising safety, we can get more fuel efficiency. I happen to have another company in Illinois—I am certainly proud of my State and what we do; these happen to be two companies relevant to the discussion—this company in Illinois has now a new titanium alloy that can be derived at a much lower cost.

Titanium holds the promise of being stronger than steel and lighter than aluminum. So this could be the answer to a car chassis that is safe and lighter. Combining those two items might offer a prospect for a vehicle in the future which would be much more fuel efficient.

Why aren't we promoting companies such as those companies? If we truly

want to reach energy independence and energy inefficiency, we need to move beyond where we are today. We need to move the discussion. We need to say to automobile manufacturers that it isn't good enough to keep producing those SUVs and trucks, fuel-inefficient vehicles, and giving consumers fewer choices. It isn't enough to always come in second to the Japanese, when it comes to production of newer and forward looking technology. It isn't enough to let the airline and airplane industry look for these new alloys and new batteries and ignore their need for our automobile industry as well.

The President has pointed us in the right direction. I hope that now he will join us. We need to cooperate. We need to work together, Republicans and Democrats—give some ground, if necessary, but keep our eye on that goal to clean up this environment for our kids, reduce our dependence on foreign oil, push the kind of technology and innovation that will create great new American companies with great new American jobs that pay a decent income to those who work there.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Colorado.

Mr. SALAZAR. Mr. President, in each State of the Union Address that President Bush has given to our country over the last 6 years, he has talked about the importance of energy independence for our Nation.

In 2001, he said loudly and clearly that we as America "must become more energy independent."

In 2002, he said:

We need to encourage conservation, promote technology, and build infrastructure.

And again last year, most of us remember the President loudly and clearly telling the people of America, the people of this world, that America is addicted to oil and we need to do something about it.

I was pleased last night that the President revisited an issue he had talked about before—our energy independence. In my view, this is a signature issue for all of us in the 21st century. Encompassed in this issue of energy security for our Nation, we see the national security of America because today the way we approach the energy issue, where we now import 70 percent of our oil from foreign countries, we end up funding both ends of the war on terror. We do it when we put gasoline in our tanks in America and it ends up funding Iran and Iran ends up buying the rockets for Hezbollah that rain over Israel and funds the 10,000 members of the Hezbollah militia. That is crazy. So our national security requires us to move forward with energy independence.

As far as our economic independence at home, we saw what happened when gasoline went up over \$3 a gallon, when farmers and ranchers were suffering, having to pay \$3.50 a gallon for diesel to fill up their tractors, their combines, and their trucks. We know the

economic security of our country depends on having a steady supply of energy.

Finally, the environmental security of our country, knowing what global warming is doing to the North Pole and to the climate changes all around the world, is something we need to get our hands around. We need to deal with the energy issue in an effective way.

So I was pleased that the President of the United States last night came before the Congress and the Nation and said we needed to do some more work on energy. He said we needed to more than double, we need to quintuple the renewable fuel standard, which hopefully will get us to the 35 million gallons per day in 10 years. And he said we need to reduce the gasoline we are currently using in this country in 10 years by 20 percent.

At the end of the day, what we do on energy will depend on how we take those concepts and how we, with the President, walk the talk toward getting us to energy independence.

When we look back on what has happened in the last 6 years in the United States, the opposite has happened. Instead of becoming less dependent on foreign sources of oil, we have become more dependent on foreign sources of oil. So the rhetoric simply has not matched the deeds. We need to make sure the words that were spoken last night are matched by the deeds of the administration in terms of the budget, the leadership of the Department of Energy in investing in technology, in the National Renewable Energy Lab, and moving forward with an aggressive agenda on renewable energy and new technologies.

I wish to illustrate two points that tell the history of what has happened over the last 6 years in Washington. First, with respect to renewable energy investments, if one takes a look at this chart, 2001 to 2006, one would think, as we were on this trajectory of getting ourselves energy independent, that this red line would show us increasing investments in renewable energy in America. And yet the exact opposite has happened.

We started in 2001 investing about \$350 million a year into renewable energy. By the time we got to 2006, we were at about \$375 million. So we actually dropped about \$25 million in what we were investing in renewable energies. This is not walking the talk as we embrace the future of renewable energy.

I would like to illustrate what we have done with efficiency. We talk about energy independence. We know it is a complex issue, but frankly, as my good friend from Tennessee and others know, it is not as complex as some of the other issues we face in America today. It certainly is not as complex, in my mind, as the health care issue which dogs the businesses and families of America every day because we know how we can get to energy independence.

If the country of Brazil, a Third World country, could declare itself to be energy independent, why not the most powerful Nation on Earth, the Nation with the greatest technology? Why couldn't we have done the same thing? The answer to that is that we have not had a sustained commitment to get us to energy independence.

If we look at the low-hanging fruit with respect to energy efficiency, we again see the story of our walking away from embracing a true ethic of energy independence. If we look at the investments that have been made from 2001 to 2006, we see a dramatic decline, again, in terms of what we are doing with energy efficiency. That is not the way to go. It is the wrong way to go because the experts and scientists at the Department of Energy, the National Renewable Energy Lab tell us that we waste about 62 percent of the energy we consume. We waste 62 percent of the energy that we consume. So if we can become much more efficient with respect to how we use energy, we can help deal with this issue of energy dependence, which is essentially strangling our economy and strangling our national security.

As I react to the President's State of the Union Address, I am delighted with the fact that he has given us this challenge. Now we need to work as a Congress and have the administration work with us so we are able to put the resources and the ideas on the table to come up with what is truly a bipartisan package that will help us move forward with the kind of energy independence that is achievable.

In my view, we can be even bolder and go beyond what the President has said. There is a group of Senators in this Chamber—some 25 of us, half Republicans, half Democrats—that last year sponsored legislation called 2025. This year it has another number. We talk about alternative fuels and how we incentivize moving forward with alternative fuels. We have in the Senate as well incentives for higher efficiencies and how we use oil. Our goal in that legislation is to reduce the consumption in the imports of oil in a very dramatic fashion by the year 2016 and then beyond, by the year 2026. It is a bipartisan agenda.

At the end of the day, and in conclusion, we have an opportunity to work together as a Senate, as a Congress, by bringing Republicans and Democrats together to achieve true energy independence and surpass even the President's vision of what we can do. When you think about Senators such as SESSIONS and BROWNBACK and then on the Democratic side BAYH and LIEBERMAN, a whole host of us who are involved in the set America free agenda, it is an important opportunity we have to move forward. But, at the end of the day, the way we will achieve this milestone of energy independence for our country, which is so essential, is by making sure the administration itself, the President of the United States,

walks the talk in terms of what we can do to achieve this goal of energy independence.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to be allowed to speak for 10 minutes in morning business.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Will the Chair please let me know when I have a minute remaining?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Chair will do so.

#### STATE OF THE UNION AND WASTEFUL SPENDING

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I wish to talk about two things this morning: No. 1, the President's State of the Union Address last night, and No. 2, Senator GREGG's proposal to reduce wasteful spending.

I appreciate the comments of the Senator from Colorado, who has been a leader on renewable energy and energy independence. I want to point this out. The President last night did his job. It was a truly Presidential speech, in my opinion. I used to work in the White House, and a wise man there told me: Lamar, our job here on the White House staff is to consider everything that comes to the White House as important. We need to push those things out and reserve for the President those things which are truly Presidential.

The President talked about truly Presidential issues last night, and he did what Presidents are supposed to do. He did not give us a laundry list. He talked about Iraq, terrorism, energy independence, and health care costs. He said: Pick up immigration and deal with it. He said reduce the budget in 5 years. He gave us a strategy in each case, he tried to persuade us that he is right, and then he handed the ball to us.

We are independent of the President. We have a Democratic Congress, closely divided, and a Republican President, so I don't think we can criticize the President. I think we should applaud the President and say: Mr. President, you did your job. You identified the issues, you gave us a strategy, and you handed the ball to us.

The biggest news last night, it seemed to me, was on energy independence and health care costs. Starting with energy independence, the President said let's set a goal to reduce our use of gasoline 20 percent in 10 years. That is a big, serious proposal. This country uses 25 percent of all the energy in the world. If we reduce our use of gasoline by 20 percent in 10 years, it will help clean the air, it will help reduce dependence on foreign oil, it will create a big market for agricultural products in this country to help create biodiesel alternative fuels, and it will

force innovation in such things as electric batteries.

The President's proposals will require a change in the so-called fuel efficiency CAFE standards. It will require these new technologies. It is a big step, and it is the kind of thing that Democrats as well as Republicans can take, improve, and pass. We don't need to be saying to the President: Mr. President, you walk the talk. He talked. Now it is up to us to act.

The same with health care. His proposal on health care is a big, serious proposal. There is probably no subject Tennesseans talk to me about more in their daily lives than: How do I pay for my health care costs? The President had an answer last night. He said: For 80 percent of working Americans, I will give you an average of \$3,600 in savings from your taxes which you can spend to buy yourself health care insurance. That means if you are a family of four, making \$60,000 a year, you might have \$4,000 or \$5,000 in tax savings to use to pay for health care costs.

Now, 20 percent of us would pay a little more for health care. Mine would go up. But 80 percent of all of us who work would get significant savings to pay for health care insurance. This would help us afford it. This would help more people who do not have it pay for it. This would help hospitals whose emergency rooms fill up with people who cannot pay for health care. It is a big, serious proposal.

The President has done his job. It is up to us now to have a hearing, improve it, and enact it.

I salute the President for doing his job last night with what I felt was a truly Presidential speech. Much of it was about Iraq. Iraq is being talked about today in many different bodies, but much of it is about what is happening at home. If we take up immigration and don't stop until we are finished, if we balance the budget in 5 years, if we reduce the amount of oil we are using by 20 percent in 10 years, if we give 80 percent of working Americans several thousand dollars to help pay for health care insurance, that will be a great big step forward. So it is up to us, now, to pick up the ball and run with it. He has handed it to us. Let's go. Let's talk about it. Let's do it. If we have a better idea, fine; if not, let's just pass his proposal.

Second, I wish to speak for just a moment about the proposal of Senator GREGG that would give the President a new tool for cutting wasteful spending. I believe it should have been enacted with our reforms last week on lobby reform because it would help rein in wasteful spending and earmark abuse. But I commend Senator MCCONNELL and Senator GREGG, and I thank Senator REID for working it out so we can have a vote on this important amendment.

We need to get our fiscal house in order. Yesterday, 25 of us attended a breakfast. The Chair and I were there. It wasn't a breakfast where we talked

about how Democrats could beat Republicans and vice versa; we talked about how we can put our fiscal house in order. The Presiding Officer had some very good ideas to express, but the whole 40 minutes was about the unsustainable growth of Federal spending here, especially in the entitlement area. There are several things we need to do about it, but this amendment by Senator GREGG is one. It is not the same thing as a line-item veto, but it goes in that direction.

I would support amending the Constitution to give the President a line-item veto. I don't think that is in derogation of our authority to appropriate. The Supreme Court thinks it does that, so we have to respect that. But this is a little different way to let the President have a way of letting us take a second look at appropriations we passed which may not have been wise.

Under current law, the President has the power, for example, to propose cuts in spending after appropriations bills have been passed by Congress. Then we can pass those cuts in the same form and send them back or we can ignore them. So the idea would be, under the Gregg amendment, that the President could submit four packages of rescission proposals each year. We couldn't ignore the proposals. We would have to vote on them in a short period of time, if any Member wanted us to. If the majority of the Senate and the House agreed with the President's recommendations for cutting spending, then the spending or targeted tax breaks would get cut and the money would be used to reduce the deficit. But if a simple majority of either House disagreed, then the cuts would not go into effect.

It is pretty much the same amendment Senator Daschle and Senator BYRD offered in 1995, which was supported by 21 of my Democratic colleagues who are still serving in the Senate. It is not the same thing as the traditional line-item veto, but it is an opportunity to put the spotlight on wasteful spending.

Senator GREGG went one step further to make his amendment more closely reflect the Daschle-Byrd proposal. Senator GREGG's amendment allows us in the Congress, if the President makes a rescission proposal, to strike out an individual part of his proposal. There are plenty of forces here in this city for increasing spending. There are not enough forces that push to reduce spending. The Gregg proposal would be one tool the President and the Congress can use to reduce spending.

I know when I was Governor I had this authority and 43 Governors currently have the line-item veto. In Tennessee, it is not much of a line-item veto because the Governor's veto can be overridden by a majority of the legislature. But just because I had the veto and the fact that I might have used it, and occasionally did use it, helped me put the spotlight on wasteful spending and gave the legislature a