

I said: I hope you are.

But the bottom line is, this industry now has been challenged. If the bill we passed last night is passed in the House of Representatives and becomes law, they will face a challenge. I, for one, believe they can rise to this challenge. I honestly do. It is going to call for a different mindset among the management at the highest levels in our automobile companies. It is going to call for the same spirit of can-do approach we have seen on the assembly lines from the workers. I think they can rise to this challenge.

I think America wants them to. I want to buy a car made in this country by American workers that is of the highest quality, that I can take pride in driving, knowing it is not only a good bargain for my family, but also a good deal for the environment.

That, I think, is what most Americans want to do. Now, that means there is going to have to be some new thinking. It means a lot of people in the boardrooms of those major companies are going to have to sit down and rethink their game plan.

I met with the man who is about to become the leader of Chrysler Corporation. He was talking about the fact that his private equity bought Chrysler because of their patriotic feelings. They do not want this great American car manufacturer to go away.

Well, I know if you are in business, sentimentality takes you so far. At some point you have to produce a profitable product. I think there is a profitability product built into the Energy bill we talked about last night. I believe if there is a conscious effort by our automobile manufacturers, they can meet these fuel efficiency standards we have included in our bill.

They can convince a lot of skeptical Americans it is time to come back home, to start buying these American cars. Now, it will be a painful process. There will be winners and losers. But, ultimately, I have confidence in this country, in the companies that work in this country, and in the workers of this country. When they come together, they can achieve great things.

Last night we set down a challenge to them: Change what you are selling in America. Make it a better product. Make it a more efficient product. Make it a product that is going to help us deal with global warming and climate change.

I think most American families are on board for that agenda. That is why I think the passage of this was so important. We never would have passed this energy bill late last night were it not for a bipartisan effort. We had many Republicans who crossed the aisle to join us. I think ultimately 17 or 18 came over to join the Democrats in the key procedural vote that moved this forward. Then the final vote was 65 to 27; there were even more.

We could have never achieved this goal of a new energy bill were it not for bipartisan cooperation, if Republicans had not come forward.

For some, it wasn't easy. When the Republican Senate leader, Mr. MCCONNELL of Kentucky, stood up last night late in the debate and said: I want this debate to end, I want this bill to be defeated, I am going to vote no on the cloture motion—I heard him make that announcement—I was stunned. This is a bill which the administration believes has good elements relative to fuel economy. Yet the Republican leader stood on the floor and said: I am going to try to stop this bill. He did not prevail because 17 or 18 of his colleagues thought it was more important that the bill move forward. I salute them. It took extraordinary courage for them to do what they did.

There was another element in the Energy bill which is important to me because of my midwestern roots and because of my determination to see America shake its dependence on foreign oil. I am sick and tired of the United States hat in hand begging for oil from countries overseas. Many of these nations we turn to for oil don't share our values. In fact, some of them are on the wrong side in the war on terrorism. To think that every time you swipe that credit card through the gasoline pump or put the money on the counter, a portion of that is going to a nation which is funding terrorism is an outrage. It has to end. To think that time and again our brave soldiers, men and women in uniform, are drawn into conflicts in the Middle East because of oil is unacceptable. I don't want my grandchildren to face that. I want America to be as close to energy independent as possible. How do we reach that goal? Homegrown fuel, homegrown energy. We grow it in my State every year, a new crop of corn. With that new crop of corn, more ethanol, more alcohol fuels, and more biodiesel come from the soybean fields. That means we have less of a need to import oil.

Last night, in this bill, we raised to a much higher level our national goals when it comes to alcohol fuels, renewable fuels. It means a growing industry in my part of the world, in the Midwest, in Iowa, Illinois, Ohio, where ethanol plants are being built. These plants use local production of agriculture, corn by and large, and turn it into alcohol. The construction workers are building the plants, good-paying jobs. There are people at the plants making sure they are producing ethanol. They are shipping products in trucks driven by Americans to put in the cars driven by Americans. I feel good about this. We are moving in the right direction.

This bill made a significant commitment to strengthen the market for alcohol fuels. I was disappointed that my biodiesel program was not included. I wish it had been. I am not giving up. We have a farm bill coming up. We will have several other opportunities. I think biodiesel is great. It uses soybeans and other oilseeds to produce a vegetable oil added to diesel fuel so

that we don't see that huge plume of black smoke coming out of the tailpipes of diesel trucks and cars, so there is less pollution. More homegrown energy is a good thing for the country. I want to include it as part of the energy picture.

This was a hard debate over the last 2 weeks. I am sorry it took 2 weeks. We wasted more time on the floor. I am sure the people who have C-SPAN on their cable often turn to it and say: What in the world is going on in the Senate? It doesn't look like there is any movement. Is anybody alive down there? The floor looks empty except for the handsome and beautiful staff we have here who are on television during the day. Many times there are periods when there is no activity. Time is wasted. There was time wasted on this bill. Time and again, the Republican minority forced us to wait 30 hours, file a motion, wait another 30 hours.

We have a lot to do. I think we owe it to the American people to roll up our sleeves and get it done. We need more bipartisan cooperation. We need to put an end to these endless motions and procedural delays. Let's get down to business. Wouldn't the American people cheer us if we said: Let's pass the 9/11 recommendations and turn them into law to make America safer; let's do something immediately about No Child Left Behind to send money to the schools so they can hire the very best teachers and produce students who are ready to compete in the 21st century. Wouldn't the American people cheer us if, instead of being lost in some procedural morass day after weary day, we came up with a way to help working families pay for college education expenses for their children so they don't end up graduating deep in debt and unable to take the jobs they had their hearts set on?

There are so many things we need to do. With a little cooperation from the other side of the aisle and a better approach, we can say to our Republican friends: You are entitled under the rules of the Senate to produce amendments, to ask for a vote, to ask for debate. But at some point, it has to come to an end. At some point, we have to move forward.

EMPLOYEE FREE CHOICE ACT

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, we are going to have a bill come up next week, a critically important bill known as the Employee Free Choice Act. I confess I come into this debate with strong feelings. I am a product of a family where my mother and father, my two brothers, and I were all members of labor unions. This was during a period where the labor movement created the middle class in America. It was World War II's aftermath. All of the returning veterans had an appetite to build homes, start families, open schools, and create the kind of middle-income working families who are the bedrock of America's democracy. The organization that helped these Americans move

forward was the labor movement. Organized labor went into plants and factories and offices across America and said: Workers, if you stand together, if you bargain together, great things can happen.

They did. We created health insurance as we know it today, pension plans that have provided the kind of security people dream of in retirement, good-paying jobs in safe workplaces. The American dream was realized. People bought the second car, put the kids through college, had enough time for a vacation, and enjoyed the good life in America.

It is no coincidence that as the strength of America's labor movement has declined. So, too, have the wages of working families. Not that those working families aren't doing a good job; they are. They are producing more goods and services than ever. They are more productive than ever, but they are not being paid for their hard work. They are not receiving a decent, livable wage so they can work one job and still have time with their family. They are not receiving the kind of health insurance protection they once received and fewer and fewer are receiving.

Taking a look at the numbers, in Illinois the median hourly wage fell in 2003, 2004, 2005, and 2006 by 4.4 percent. Think about that. The median wage of people getting up and going to work every day is not keeping up with inflation; it is falling behind. Health care benefits in Illinois, the share of the population under the age of 65 with employer-provided health insurance fell from 71.9 percent in 1999 to 68.2 percent in 2004. Fewer people had health insurance through their employers over a 5-year period. That is the wrong direction. Pensions are the same. In my State, 52.6 percent of the people had employer-provided pensions in the years 1998 to 2000. By 2003 to 2005, the share had dropped to under 50 percent.

I honestly believe if workers can organize, if they can bargain, we could have profitable corporations with quality goods and services, good employee morale, and employees treated decently. That can happen.

The Employer Free Choice Act says that we want to give employees who want to organize a fighting chance. Some will say during the debate: If a majority of the workers in the workplace sign a card and say, I want to be part of a union, the process moves forward. Currently, if 30 percent of the workers sign a card, they move toward an election. Do you know how long it takes to have this election? Do you know how long it takes for the employees to finally get their chance to vote today as to whether they want a union? The Chicago Tribune pointed out in March of this year that the average National Labor Relations Board disputed election—and so many of them are disputed—takes 802 days to resolve, more than 2 years. Just think for a moment: if we said that the interminable campaigns we now have for public of-

fice would double in length—instead of a year from announcing your candidacy to a vote, we will make it over 2 years—is it possible voters would lose interest in that period of time? Is it possible people could work on their minds about prejudices against a candidate or for a candidate during that time? Of course it is. We need to make this a reasonable period and a reasonable process that comes to the ultimate question: Do a majority of the workers at this location want to organize collectively to try to represent their best interests and the interests of their family? I believe that is only fair.

Tuesday morning, we will have a vote. I hope my colleagues on both sides will take a close look at the legislation. If we give more opportunities for workers to express their heartfelt intentions about creating a union and they do, what is going to happen in America is as positive as what happened after World War II. We are going to see more workers in safer workplaces with decent living wages, good health insurance, and good pension benefits, and the corporations will still make a profit. Instead of giving some CEO \$600 million for very little performance, they may have to make do with \$300 million. I know it is going to be tough, but I think they can get by and then take that \$300 million and give it to the workers so they have a chance to enjoy a good life without indebtedness and without the worries that come with the current situation.

I hope my colleagues will join me on Tuesday in supporting this effort. I hope in joining me, we will see a change in the law and, with this change, we will see a dramatic improvement in the economic fate of American families.

PROTECTION OF CLASSIFIED INFORMATION

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, this morning's Washington Post had a front-page story that troubles me. It is about Vice President CHENEY and his attempts to exempt the Office of the Vice President of the United States of America from the Presidential Executive order that establishes a uniform, government-wide system for safeguarding classified national security information. The decision by Vice President CHENEY to exempt his office from this system for protecting classified information troubles me. It could place national security secrets at risk.

It is hard to believe the Vice President is taking this action given the history of security breaches involving high-ranking officials in his office. Scooter Libby, the Vice President's former Chief of Staff, has been convicted of several felonies: perjury, obstruction of justice, and false statements. He has been sentenced to prison in part for his role in disclosing the identity of a covert CIA agent and then misrepresenting that fact to a grand jury. Worse, it appears, at least accord-

ing to these press reports, Vice President CHENEY has attempted to block inspection of Federal agencies and White House offices to ensure compliance with the security procedures required by the President.

According to the National Archives, the agency responsible for conducting the oversight, Vice President CHENEY asserted that his office is not "an entity within the executive branch" and, therefore, not subject to Presidential Executive orders. The Vice President is arguing that his office is not in the executive branch of Government? It is hard to imagine the tortured logic Vice President CHENEY is using to avoid the requirements of the law and Executive orders.

Then he recommended that the Executive order be amended to abolish the Information Security Oversight Office. Here is a Vice President who has already been challenged as to the groups he meets with and the people he consults with in making some of the most important decisions for the country's policy. Here is a Vice President who has sadly misrepresented this war in Iraq over and over again, from the initiation of the war, the existence of weapons of mass destruction, and now is saying that he is not covered by the law when it comes to the disclosure of classified information within his own office. This is evidence of arrogance of power, and it is unacceptable.

The Vice President of the United States and his former Chief of Staff are not above the law. They have to be held to the same high standard of performance as Members of Congress and every member of our Government. For the Vice President to believe he has no responsibility to meet this requirement of the law is, in my mind, a dereliction of duty and responsibility to the people of the United States. And then for him to attempt to abolish the agency that was putting pressure on him to follow the law shows he has gone entirely too far.

Vice President CHENEY is not above the law. He is required to follow the law, as every American citizen should. This situation and the prosecution of his former Chief of Staff are evidence of an attitude toward governmental responsibility which has to change. I sincerely hope the Vice President will make it clear in the week ahead that he is finally going to comply with these Executive orders, that he is going to make sure we protect classified information moving through his office so we do not compromise this important intelligence data that keeps America safe.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.