

harshest winds and seas in the world. They put their own lives on the line every day so that others may live.

The events that were depicted in "The Guardian" were fictional, but the events that transpired this past Easter morning in the Bering Sea were very real. I rise today to honor the men and women of the U.S. Coast Guard who participated in efforts to rescue the 47-member crew of the fishing vessel *Alaska Ranger*. As a direct result of these heroic efforts, 42 members of the *Ranger's* crew survived. There were no Coast Guard lives lost. In the words of RADM Arthur Brooks, commander of the Seventeenth Coast Guard District, it was "one of the greatest search and rescue efforts in modern history."

Let me kind of paint the scene for you. It was 2:52 a.m. local time on Easter Sunday, March 23, that the *Alaska Ranger*, a Seattle-based factory trawler, radioed the Coast Guard Communications Station Kodiak with a distress call. The vessel at that time was located 120 miles west of Dutch Harbor at the end of the Aleutian Chain. The vessel was taking on water. There were 25-knot winds and seas 6 to 8 feet high.

The Coast Guard immediately launched a rescue effort. There was a cutter, two helicopters, and a C-130. The crew of the *Ranger* had to abandon ship before the first Coast Guard asset arrived.

First to arrive on the scene is a Coast Guard Jayhawk Rescue Helicopter, deployed from St. Paul Island, located about 230 miles to the north of where the *Alaska Ranger* was at the time.

The Jayhawk carried a crew of four men. There was no backup. The Jayhawk arrives on the scene about 5:30 a.m. This is about 2½ hours after the first distress call. This helps put in perspective the distances with which we are dealing. By this point in time, the *Alaska Ranger* has already sunk in the water. The vessel is completely gone. It has already sunk in water that is more than 6,300 feet deep.

The air crew flies in and looks upon this sea of flashing strobe lights. Keep in mind, this is 5:30 in the morning. It is still dark. They have wind and sleet and waves coming up, and they see this sea of flashing strobe lights, probably a mile end to end. They are looking down at this scene through the helicopter thinking there is a light there: Is that a liferaft? Yet another light and another light. Each light is a member of the *Ranger's* crew wearing a survival suit. Some are in liferafts, but others were literally in this human chain stretching almost a mile in length. Others are floating alone. The water temperature in the sea is about 32 degrees.

Rescue swimmer O'Brien Hollow is lowered into the water to triage the survivors. One by one, he positions the survivors to be hoisted into the helicopter above. The helicopter is tossing above in these very heavy winds. Hollow is tethered to the helicopter from above.

We also have then the Coast Guard cutter *Munro*. It has been diverted from its position 130 nautical miles south of the incident. It is racing to the scene at the speed of about 30 knots.

The *Munro* carries a Dolphin rescue helicopter which lifts off the *Munro* some 80 miles before the cutter arrives at the scene.

Rescue swimmer Abram Heller is lowered into the water and begins to gather victims to be hoisted into the basket to be lifted up into the helicopter. Heller stays in the water to make room on the Dolphin for survivors.

One has to remember, they have some 47 men in the water. They are trying to lift them into the basket and then into the helicopter, but the helicopter can only accommodate so many people. The rescue swimmer is saying: I am going to stay down here; move this group to safety.

The Jayhawk then departs the scene for the *Munro*, but the Jayhawk cannot land on the cutter's deck because it is too big. So the Jayhawk crew hoists the survivors down to the *Munro's* deck one by one. Just as they have been lifting survivors out of the sea into this helicopter that is pitching around in the air, they now have to be dropped down to the deck one at a time in the basket.

In the meantime, a fuel line is sent up from the *Munro's* deck to refuel the Jayhawk, and it then departs to the scene.

The Jayhawk recovers Heller, the rescue swimmer who has been down there with the survivors, and rescues more survivors. In total, the Jayhawk is responsible for saving 15 lives. The Dolphin saves five lives.

The third player in this supremely heroic effort is a Coast Guard C-130, which circled over the scene serving as an airborne coordination and communications platform.

The Coast Guard also received substantial assistance from the *Ranger's* sister fishing vessel, the *Alaska Warrior*. The *Alaska Warrior* also had been out on the *Alaska* fishing grounds. They left their fishing grounds to pick up 22 survivors from the *Ranger* who were in liferafts and then returned them to Dutch Harbor.

Unfortunately, four of the *Ranger's* crew members could not be saved. One still remains unaccounted for. The Coast Guard sent the Jayhawk and a C-130 back to the scene with fresh crews to search for the missing mariner but without success. The search for the missing crew member was suspended on Tuesday, March 25.

The Coast Guard uses the maritime phrase "Bravo Zulu" to recognize a job well done, and this was truly a job well done. While the Coast Guard rigorously trains its people to perform this mission, it is very rare to undertake a mission of this intensity and this complexity.

Rescue swimmers Hollow and Heller had participated in rescues before but

nothing approaching this kind of a rescue. In fact, rescues of this nature are extremely rare. After very carefully examining the records dating back over 30 years, the Coast Guard could only find a couple mass rescue cases that were even remotely similar to what we experienced on Easter.

While dramatic search-and-rescue cases are no stranger to Alaska, most involve 10 victims or less. Others involve a much more orderly abandonment of a vessel. This was the case in 1980, when the cruise ship *Prinsendam* went down near Yakutat, AK. But large numbers of people abandoning ship directly into the water hardly ever happens. That is one more reason why this rescue effort was remarkable. But it is not the only reason.

The risks that were involved in this case were extreme. They had, again, darkness, extremely high winds, high seas, ice, freezing temperatures, extremely long distances from any supporting infrastructure, and all these conditions present unique hazards to the rescuers.

Success such as this could not occur without the commitment of a great many people. The crews of the Jayhawk, the Dolphin, and the *Munro* will long be remembered for their heroism.

Backing them were the watchstanders at Coast Guard Communications Station Kodiak. These were the folks who answered the *Alaska Ranger's* mayday call. The C-130 crews, the Kodiak Air Station duty officers, and the District 17 command center controllers in Juneau also contributed. In total, something on the order of 170 Alaska-based Coast Guard men and women were involved in this effort.

ADM Thad Allen has already expressed "Bravo Zulu" to all the men and women involved with this effort. I am honored to take a few minutes from the Senate's day to praise these men and women of the U.S. Coast Guard on a job well done. Our Nation is always well served by these highly trained individuals who stand "always ready."

AMERICAN ENERGY INDEPENDENCE AND SECURITY ACT OF 2008

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I wish to take a few minutes today to speak about legislation I introduced before we went on our 2-week recess. This is legislation that is cosponsored by my colleague, the senior Senator from Alaska, Mr. STEVENS.

It made great sense when the price of oil hit \$111.72 a barrel, which is an all-time record high, and it still makes sense today, even with the price of oil having declined to \$101, as it is today. It is a bill that will call for the United States to actually take steps to produce more oil, to actually help increase global supplies of petroleum to lower prices, and to use all the Federal revenues from the oil production to fund many forms of alternative energy and the programs that help Americans deal with high energy and food prices.

The legislation is entitled the "American Energy Independence and Security Act of 2008." This legislation would automatically open the Coastal Plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in northern Alaska if the world price of oil tops \$125 a barrel for 5 days. In return, it allocates all the Federal revenues that would come from that oil to both alternative energy development and to provide programs to help improve energy efficiencies to those in need.

The revenue includes the estimated \$3.5 billion of Federal lease, bonus, and royalty revenues within the first 5 years, plus all the oil production tax revenues over the life of the field.

This is an estimated \$191 billion to \$297 billion to fund wind, solar, biomass, geothermal, ocean, landfill gas—everything covered by the two Energy bills we passed in 2005 and 2007, plus programs such as LIHEAP, the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program, that provides aid to help low-income residents pay for home heating and cooling, the weatherization program that helps people improve their insulation to cut energy costs, and also to the Women, Infants, and Children's nutrition program that provides a safety net for nutrition costs, when energy prices rise so high women cannot afford to buy food for their babies and young infants. By the way, the estimates of those total revenues are not my estimates that I have worked up; they were developed by the Congressional Research Service.

We know there is a lot of hand-wringing in Washington about what to do about record-high oil prices that are strangling our economy from the east coast all the way west and certainly up to Alaska. Rather than begging Arab oil sheiks to produce more oil, America should produce our own oil to send a signal that we are willing to increase our own supplies and drive down prices.

Alaska's Arctic Coastal Plain is likely to hold the largest reserve of traditional oil left on land in Northern America. If the price rises any higher, we should explore the area and find out if there is oil there. And if there is, we ought to produce it and use the revenues to wean ourselves from the fossil fuels and to promote energy conservation.

We know so many Americans are hurting every time they fill up their cars at the pump. And while prices may moderate fractionally, the AAA early this month reported gasoline prices have risen 26.9 cents nationwide since February 10. In Alaska, my home State, the average price of gasoline is \$3.36 a gallon for regular. This is trailing California and Hawaii by a little bit.

Americans are having an equally hard time affording their winter heating bills and will have similar problems with their summer air-conditioning bills. So it only makes sense the revenues from finding and producing U.S. oil go to help the people who are hav-

ing trouble making ends meet, given the high fuel prices we are facing.

By this legislation, only 2,000 acres of the 1.5 million acres of the Arctic Coastal Plain can be physically disturbed. The bill includes a host of environmental protections. It requires directional drilling to be used to minimize disturbance to the wildlife. That means wells can be drilled from a single oil pad that can go underground up to 8 miles away to find the oil pockets. That means that there will be nearly 100 square miles of habitat for caribou and musk oxen and the birds between these well pads.

The bill mandates exploration only occurs in winter, when there are no animals on the Coastal Plain to be disturbed. It requires the use of ice roads that disappear in the summer to protect the wildlife. It allows special areas to be designated to protect key habitat to keep any activity out. It contains dozens of other stipulations to guard against noise, flight disturbances, spills or land-use problems.

The bill also sets up a special fund to help protect Alaska and Canadian Natives should they face any disruptions because of the limited development that would be allowed.

The bill earmarks not just the \$3.5 billion of expected initial Federal lease royalties and the potential \$192 billion to \$297 billion of total Federal income taxes from the first 30 years of energy production, to be split evenly, half would be going then to alternative energy projects contained in the Energy Policy Act of 2005 and the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007 that we approved in December. The other half would be allocated evenly to LIHEAP, weatherization, and to the WIC programs.

In a hearing we held earlier this month, there was a discussion about LIHEAP and LIHEAP funding. We recognized that LIHEAP needs \$2 billion a year in additional funding to be fully funded. This legislation could do this for 30 years if we were to pass it.

We need a balanced program to increase alternative energy development and improve energy efficiency, but we also need to fund these programs without increasing our Federal debt. Look at the fights we are having to find the offsets to pay for extending tax breaks to further alternative energy. The best way to fund alternatives is by raising new revenue. Look at the pain we are having in crafting and approving the ongoing budget resolution.

We know this pain is going to continue for years if we don't do something, and the best way is by using the funds from the fossil fuels to build alternatives. By doing that, we are using domestic oil as a bridge, as a bridge to pay for the alternative fuels that will allow us to reduce our use of fossil fuels and cut our carbon emissions.

Opening ANWR does so many things. It makes us less dependent on foreign oil, it cuts our balance of payments deficit, it improves our economy, it

keeps our jobs at home instead of exporting them to foreign oil producers such as Venezuela and the Middle East. More importantly, signaling we are finally serious about helping ourselves, that we will produce oil from ANWR, will help to drive down the psychology and the speculation that is currently acting to drive up world oil prices.

Admittedly, if we were to open ANWR tomorrow, it is not going to produce more oil tomorrow, but it will or it can dampen the speculation that is helping to fuel higher prices. It is absolutely the right thing to do today, and it is vital if prices rise higher, as we believe they will.

The U.S. economy is at risk if prices rise, not counting the health of our low- and middle-income residents. Folks are drowning under the high cost of gasoline and the high cost of heating oil. This bill helps to reduce that pain. If the prices get any higher, we have to produce more oil as a means of driving down market forces.

This bill contains all of the environmental safeguards that will allow us to open a tiny fraction of the 40 million acres of the Arctic Coastal Plain in Alaska without harming the wildlife or the environment. It won't hurt the polar bears. It won't hurt the yellow loon. And doing onshore development certainly protects the marine environment and the whale and the walrus and the polar bear that spends 90 percent of its life offshore on the Arctic ice pack.

This bill is cautious. It doesn't open the refuge tomorrow, but it simply says if oil prices rise much further we have to take action to show markets that we are serious about helping ourselves and producing more domestic supplies of oil and natural gas. It responsibly takes all the proceeds and puts them toward alternatives and safety net program for those who can't afford these prices. Using these monies for these existing programs will free up funds in the Federal budget to help reduce the debt or fund other vital services.

I am realistic about the fate of this legislation. I doubt that the leadership in this body will allow this bill to come up for a vote right now. But everyone here, from Senators who represent farmers who won't be able to afford to till their fields this spring during the planting season due to the high prices, to those who represent cold States, where home heating oil is a problem, to those Senators who represent warm States, where air-conditioning costs will be a concern, to those of us who represent fishermen who are worried about how they will afford the fuel to go out and earn their living, we should come together to support this common-sense way to help reduce prices and to actually help provide a real long-term solution to our supply problems.

We owe to it our constituents to do what is right, and I believe this is what is right for our Nation's future.