

should not allow the relentless push of environmentalists' narrow agenda to make this crisis even worse. What will the average gallon of gas in America have to cost for the Democratic leadership in Congress to step to the plate with a comprehensive solution for our consumers?

We should seek to develop our renewable resources along with oil, gas, clean coal, nuclear, and hydroelectric energy in a manner that prevents foreign interests from taking over energy for their own purposes.

It is time for congressional leaders to be a part of the solution and not the problem. It is time to put every idea on the table. It is time for common sense.

In the State of Colorado, we have a plethora of energy sources. We obviously rely on renewable energy because we have lots of sun and wind, we have hydroelectric, we have uranium to produce nuclear power. None of these or our rich resources in petroleum and coal that exist throughout the country should be taken off the table.

For us to subject ourselves to a harsh extreme environmental agenda does not make sense. This country should continue to work to develop all of those resources. Obviously, the future of this country is on the renewable side, but we have to deal with today's problems, today's price at the gas pump, and therefore we need to produce domestic resources in addition to supporting the renewable technologies we are currently developing.

If we do that, we will most successfully address the high cost at the gas pump today. Congress should be working with industry to make sure we have more plentiful supplies of gas and petroleum products in addition to developing other sources of renewable energy.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Tennessee is recognized.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Would you please let me know when 5 minutes has expired?

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

TVA APPOINTMENTS

Mr. ALEXANDER. Madam President, Tennesseans like our sports teams, whether it is the Lady Vols, or the Memphis Tigers, or Bruce Pearl's team from Knoxville. But John Calipari or Pat Summitt or Bruce Pearl wouldn't think of sending any of our teams into a big game with two players locked up somewhere—two players missing.

That is exactly what my friend, the Democratic leader, has done for 8.7 million Americans who live in the seven-State region of the Tennessee Valley Authority. Our big game, like most Americans, is gas prices, electric prices, climate change, clean air, national security.

Every Senator is on the floor talking about that; some blaming, some with

solutions. I am going to Oak Ridge on May 9 to propose a new Manhattan Project to deal with clean energy independence.

But our secret weapon in the TVA region is the Tennessee Valley Authority. That is how we get our clean air so we're in compliance with clean air laws and new jobs can come in. It is how we deal with climate change. They have coal-fired powerplants. It is how we deal with large amounts of electricity at a low cost. That has to do with jobs and it has to do with gas prices as well.

Nissan, Toyota, and General Motors all are about to sell us plug-in hybrids that could, by some estimates, reduce the amount of gasoline we use by up to 40 percent. That would deal with gas prices. But who will supply electricity for the plug-in hybrids? The Tennessee Valley Authority. So what happens? The Democratic leader locks up two of our best players and won't let them play in the biggest game we've got. If he did that to two of our Memphis basketball players, or UT Lady Vols, or two of Bruce Pearl's players, there would be a revolt in Tennessee, and I hope there is a revolt about this.

Here is what has happened: In 2004, after several years of debate, we created a new board for the Nation's largest public utility—the Tennessee Valley Authority. The President appointed nine members. They were unanimously approved. Two had short terms; they served with distinction and the President nominated them for reappointment. The Environment and Public Works Committee unanimously, under Chairman BOXER, brought them to the floor. They are ready for approval, ready to go to work. But the Democratic Leader has sent me a letter that basically says he will not allow them to be confirmed because they are Republicans. That astounds me. I ask unanimous consent to put that letter in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

U.S. SENATE,

Washington, DC, April 14, 2008.

Hon. LAMAR ALEXANDER,
Dirksen Senate Office Building,
Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR ALEXANDER: I am writing to you to advise you of my concerns regarding appointments to the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA).

As you know, the TVA was reconfigured in P.L. 108-477, the Omnibus Appropriations bill enacted December 8, 2004. The inclusion of that substantive legislation in this appropriations vehicle expanded TVA membership to 9 members from 3 members. This omnibus legislative rider gave appointive authority entirely to the President with no bipartisan representation.

I expressed my concerns regarding this situation over a year ago when the first slate of 6 TVA nominees was sent to the Senate. I asked the President to consider using one of the remaining positions for a Democratic candidate. Despite that request, the President nominated 3 additional Republicans for the TVA. Before the Easter recess, we confirmed one of those remaining 3 TVA nominees.

Given the inadequacy of bipartisan representation on the TVA and our recent approval of 7 Republican nominations to the TVA, I do not support proceeding with further TVA confirmations at this time.

Sincerely,

HARRY REID,
Majority Leader.

Mr. ALEXANDER. The Democratic leader's decision to block these nominees because of their party affiliation overturns 75 years of Federal law and custom. Since 1933, Federal law has never made politics one of the considerations for TVA appointments.

Most Presidents have appointed members of their own party, sometimes political independents—such as Bishop William Graves, one of the two nominees for reappointment who is being locked up.

Bishop Graves is not even a Republican. He is the most experienced member of the TVA board, coming from the largest customer, Memphis Light, Gas and Water, and he is the presiding bishop of one of the largest religious denominations in America.

I have sent a letter to the majority leader. I ask unanimous consent it be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

U.S. SENATE,

Washington, DC, April 30, 2008.

Hon. HARRY REID,
Majority Leader, U.S. Senate,
Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR REID: Your decision to block Senate confirmation of the President's renomination of Bishop William Graves of Memphis and Susan Williams of Knoxville to the Tennessee Valley Authority Board of Directors astounds me. If you succeed, you would overturn seventy-five years of federal law and custom.

Your actions insult the Mid-South's largest city, Memphis. Until Bishop Graves' appointment in 2006, a Memphian had never served on the TVA board.

Your actions are an affront to more than one and a half million African Americans in the seven-state TVA region. Until the appointment of Bishop Graves the presiding Bishop of the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church—an African American had never served on the TVA board.

Your actions are the kind of disheartening playpen partisan politics that disappoint the American people and are causing them to cry out for change in the way Washington does its business.

Since the founding of TVA in 1933, federal law has never required presidents to appoint TVA directors from one political party or another.

Almost always, presidents have appointed members of their own political party. As is the case with Bishop Graves, members have often been political independents.

TVA is the nation's largest public utility, with more than \$9.2 billion in annual revenues and 8.7 million customers. In 2004, after several years of debate, Congress created a new TVA board and a modern governance structure.

Bishop Graves and Susan Williams were original members of the new board, nominated by the President and confirmed by the Senate. They have served with distinction. The President has now renominated them. The Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works has again unanimously recommended them.

Tennessee Valley residents face no greater challenges today than dealing with energy costs, clean air and climate change. The Tennessee Valley Authority needs a full membership on its board to solve those problems.

I respectfully request that you lift your roadblock, stop trying to change seventy-five years of law and custom, and allow these two outstanding nominees to go back to work on the TVA board helping to provide the large amounts of clean, low cost, reliable electricity Tennessee Valley residents need to keep good jobs and clean air.

Sincerely,

LAMAR ALEXANDER,
United States Senator.

Mr. ALEXANDER. I have said to the majority leader: This is an insult to Memphis. Bishop Graves is the first Memphian ever to serve on the TVA board in its history. It is an affront to the more than 1.5 million African Americans in our region. Bishop Graves is the first African American ever to be on the TVA board.

At a time when there is a stream of Democratic Senators coming to the floor trying to find somebody to blame for high gas prices, why is the majority leader locking up two of the most valuable players on our team whose job it is to deal with high gas prices, high electric prices, climate change, clean air, and national security?

I respectfully suggest that the majority leader, for whom I have the greatest respect, lift this roadblock—stop trying to change 75 years of law and custom. Unlock our two players and let them out and let them into the game against high gas prices and let them go to work.

This is disheartening playpen partisan politics—it disappoints the American people and causes them to cry out for changing the way that we do business in Washington.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Tennessee is recognized.

Mr. CORKER. Madam President, it is always an honor to be in the presence of the senior Senator from Tennessee who does such an outstanding job in this body of promoting bipartisanship.

I know the Presiding Officer has played a big role in that. I thank you for that. I want to say I came here as did the Senator to solve big problems for our country in a bipartisan way.

I just left a meeting that I think exemplifies that to the highest level, where RON WYDEN and BOB BENNETT are cosponsoring a great piece of legislation in a bipartisan way, to solve the tremendous health care crisis our country is dealing with today.

I am proud to be part of that and to join them in a bipartisan way to solve this major problem. I know many of us are doing the same thing to focus on the energy issues that are before us as a country. That is what I came here to the Senate to do. I know that is exactly the reason, Madam President, you came to the Senate.

That is why today I rise with tremendous frustration over the actions of our majority leader. I have enjoyed work-

ing with our majority leader, and he certainly has done a good job in many instances. But, today, strictly on a politically motivated basis, in a letter to the senior Senator he stated he is not going to confirm TVA appointees because they are not Democrats.

We went through a tremendous amount of effort, or this body did prior to me being here, to make sure the TVA board was a professional board, that people there were able to make decisions in the best interests of that body and all the many people who are served by the TVA facility.

These two nominees are outstanding human beings. They have served their State, their cities, and our country with great distinction. Bishop Graves is someone who recently was heralded here in Washington because of his tremendous leadership in making sure that the racial divides that have been a part of our country were swept away.

Susan Williams has done the same, has been a leader in many other ways, in business, and both of them have helped shepherd TVA through some of the finest years TVA has had.

Both of these are reappointments. In other words, they have already served as part of the TVA board, which recently has been expanded geographically to bring in other States, which is a very good thing from the standpoint of board representation.

Both of these members were approved unanimously by EPW, again a bipartisan effort, which I might say also is controlled by the Democratic Party. So I have to tell you while it is frustrating to me to see this body become a proxy in some cases for the Presidential races, I hate to see some of the things we deal with as a result, and that diminishes this body.

I will tell you that our leader taking this position is a tremendous disservice to this body; diminishes this body. I hope the leader will come to his senses, will realize that not only is he doing something that is of tremendous harm to TVA, it damages this body for the majority leader to act in such a politically motivated way.

I hope very soon these nominees will be reappointed. I hope TVA can get about its business in serving the people of Tennessee and other surrounding States in a proper way. I hope the majority leader again will do the right thing, will cause these nominees to come to the floor. I am sure they will be unanimously confirmed.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MARTINEZ. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

ENERGY POLICY

Mr. MARTINEZ. Madam President, we are facing a real problem as Ameri-

cans increasingly go to the gas pump to fill the need of energy for their vehicles and they find that the prices at the pump are ever higher, more onerous, and it makes the family budget more difficult to manage. This is a problem for working families, to the typical American family trying to drive children to school, participate in carpools and other activities. It hits everyone at a time when other economic problems are surrounding the American family. We have a problem, and we have to act. Failure to act is not an option. At this point in time, we cannot offer immediate solutions, but we have to recognize where we are. We have to recognize what has not happened.

I recall many days sitting where the Presiding Officer sits today, when our party was in the majority. Democrats would come to the floor and talk about how, if they were in power, because they were not in cahoots with the big oil companies, then things would be better, they would find a way to make things better. There was a bold announcement made by then-House minority leader NANCY PELOSI on April 24, 2006:

Democrats have a commonsense plan to help bring down skyrocketing gas prices.

That is when prices were tipping at \$3 a gallon. They were \$2-something a gallon. I wish today we were back to those moments in time.

A commonsense plan to help bring down skyrocketing gas prices? I ask, where is the plan? What happened to that plan? Democrats came into power to lead both Houses of Congress on January 4, 2007. The distinguished Senator from Minnesota proudly took her oath; many others came into office. At that point in time, the price of gas was \$2.33 a gallon. Today, it is \$3.62 a gallon. Is this what the commonsense plan to bring down prices was supposed to bring us? Is this why someone had a plan that was going to help America? Has it helped us? Have we gone up or down? The fact is, today prices are \$3.62.

What we should do is have some plain talk. The fact is, it didn't matter who was in control of Congress because the laws of economics go well above the laws of politics. This is about supply and demand. The fact is, there is not a commonsense plan. The fact is, there is no plan, that America's energy policy continues to flounder for several reasons. We have to act, and we have to act as responsible leaders.

One of the things that is inevitable is that as long as supply and demand stay where they are today, with demand ever increasing and supply topping out, we will continue to have increasing prices. I submit that part of what has to occur is increased production. We have to find ways that we can, within our own borders, produce more energy.

I have been supportive of drilling in 2000 acres of the vast wilderness of Alaska in a way that would be safe. If it had been done back when President