

we had a big banner and the speech was televised and it said: Health care for all. Health care for all. We gave a speech, and then a few days later someone who saw the speech said: Senator, I am really annoyed about your speech. You said health care for all. I already have my health care. I don't like your system. Leave me out of it.

And I responded in this way: I didn't mean anyone outside this room. I only meant the people I was speaking to in the room—even though I had a sign that said: Health Care For All.

So please, please, let's not make matters worse by distorting the truth any more than it has already been distorted from day one of this national nightmare.

What else did the President say on that aircraft carrier that day 5 years ago today? He said: Other nations in history have fought in foreign lands and remain to occupy and exploit. Americans following a battle—

Listen:

Americans following a battle want nothing more than to return home. Americans following a battle want nothing more than to return home.

He said:

That is your direction tonight.

Five years ago, the President said we won the battle; it is time to go home. Where are we 5 years later? I just heard 48 deaths last month, which is the highest in 6 months. Since that day 5 years ago, 3,922 troops have died in Iraq, including 796 either from or based in California, and almost 30,000 have been wounded. We have spent more than a half billion dollars, and there is no end in sight.

When the President made his declaration, the price of oil was \$26 per barrel. It now stands at \$113 per barrel. Remember, the oil was supposed to pay for the war. Remember. Don't forget, the oil was supposed to pay for the war. That is what the administration told us.

The words, "Mission Accomplished," no matter how somebody tries to torture it, have come to symbolize the dishonesty and the incompetence that took our Nation into an ill-advised war of choice—a war with a price in terms of lives and treasure and our Nation's standing in the world only grows higher and higher and higher with each passing day. We cannot afford it.

We recognize the words, "Mission Accomplished," as part of a sad and familiar pattern, another verse in the same song from the people who warned us the smoking gun could be a mushroom cloud. Remember when Secretary Rice said the smoking gun could be a mushroom cloud, even as they knew it wasn't true. They assured us we would be greeted as liberators. They swore we would be turning the corner and that the insurgency was in its last throes.

Then they said, when we asked why isn't this war over: Well, we need to train enough Iraqis, and when they stand up, we will stand down. We have spent so much training the Iraqis—I

want to make sure I am right on this—\$20 billion we have spent training over 400,000 Iraqis.

I asked General Petraeus: How many al-Qaida are there?

He said: Very few left, a few thousand maybe—not even.

I asked General Petraeus: How many insurgents are there?

He said: In the thousands.

We have trained over 400,000 Iraqi soldiers, but our troops are still dying instead of playing a support role as they should.

I wish to talk about the money that we, the taxpayers, are spending. We are spending \$10 billion a month in Iraq. That is \$2.5 billion a week. That is \$357 million a day. Now, remember, this is all borrowed money and the cost of this is going right to the debt that our grandchildren and their children will have on their backs. The President's policy is being paid for on a credit card, and we are sticking future generations with the bill. That is irresponsible and immoral.

We don't have a plan to get out of Iraq 5 years after "Mission Accomplished." Everybody says this war cannot be won through military means; it has to be won through political means. Yet we sit back, and the Government in Iraq makes very little progress, and they know, because of this President and this administration, they don't have a price to pay for not being effective. They don't pay a price for that, for not solving this politically. They don't pay any price because we are going to be there, and the blood and treasure of this country is on the line.

The President says: Iran and al-Qaida are our biggest enemies. The President of Iraq holds hands with Ahmadinejad of Iran. They kiss each other on the cheek. We spend this money, we lose these lives, our President says Iran is our biggest enemy alongside al-Qaida, and we just keep on sending the money to a government that embraces Iran.

Now, I don't care how you figure this out, it doesn't add up to me. For less than the cost of 3 months in Iraq, we could enroll every eligible child in the Nation in the Head Start Program for a year. For 3 months in Iraq, that is what we could do for our children, and we know the waiting list is long.

For 2 weeks in Iraq we could provide health insurance for 6 million uninsured children for a whole year. The list goes on.

For 7 days in Iraq we could enroll 2.5 million kids in afterschool programs. For 6 weeks in Iraq we could ensure full interoperability of all of our communications systems. We are not protected in America because we don't give our emergency workers the interoperability they need. For the cost of 6 weeks in Iraq we could do that. Oh, no.

For 3 weeks in Iraq we could extend the renewable energy production tax credit for 4 years and see jobs from solar and wind and geothermal energy. We could extend 13 additional weeks of unemployment insurance in this recess-

sion for 1 month in Iraq. The list goes on.

We have given so much on this 5-year anniversary. It is time for a change in this country. We need to tell the Iraqis we will stand behind them, but we are not going to stand in front of them, and we are not going to continue to pay these enormous costs. Our country cannot afford it.

I thank you, and I yield the floor.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

FAA REAUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2007

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 2881, which the clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 2881) to amend title 49, United States Code, to authorize appropriations for the Federal Aviation Administration for fiscal year 2008 through 2011, to improve aviation safety and capacity, to provide stable funding for the national aviation system, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Rockefeller amendment No. 4627, in the nature of a substitute.

Reid amendment No. 4628 (to amendment No. 4627), to change the enactment date.

Reid amendment No. 4629 (to amendment No. 4628), of a perfecting nature.

Reid amendment No. 4630 (to the language proposed to be stricken by amendment No. 4627), to change the enactment date.

Reid amendment No. 4631 (to amendment No. 4630), of a perfecting nature.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, the work done on this piece of legislation to bring it to the floor is a good piece of work. Democrats and Republicans worked together to move toward solving one of America's major problems, and that is dealing with our aviation system. Chairman ROCKEFELLER, Senator INOUE, Senator BAUCUS, Senator STEVENS, Senator GRASSLEY, Senator HUTCHISON, and their staffs understood that ensuring the safety and efficiency of America's air traffic is too important to fall victim to politics, slow walking, or obstruction. It even appeared for a while that this bill was on the path to a relatively smooth and easy final passage.

But now our Republican colleagues have signaled that they plan to let this bipartisan legislation fall victim to more obstruction. We could have moved to the bill yesterday, but the Republicans wouldn't let us do that. They forced us to spend more valuable legislative time not legislating, not trying to strengthen our country for the American people but simply overcoming procedural roadblocks that have been thrown at us time after time.

As we have said on a number of occasions, but certainly it is worth saying again, Republicans broke the 2-year filibuster record in the history of this Senate in just 10 months. We are now up to 68 filibusters. That is not normal filibustering, it is filibustering on steroids.

Democrats want to change our country for the better. We want to change the status quo. We have an economy spiraling into recession. Gas and oil prices are at a record high. We have the war in Iraq that 70 percent of the American people want to end. The problems we have faced and now face can't be solved easily.

But it would not be solved at all if Republicans refuse to let us legislate. The distinguished minority leader raised questions about offering amendments to the aviation modernization bill. As I said several times yesterday, we welcome their amendments. We want them to offer amendments. We understand there is a Bunning amendment dealing with turning coal into aviation fuel. I don't know much about that, but it is something that appears to be germane and relevant to the bill. We should start to debate that amendment. But it appears no matter what I suggest, it is obvious the Republicans don't like this bill and are not going to let us pass it.

It is my understanding that today they are concerned about at least two provisions in the bill. One deals with strengthening the passenger rail system we have in America and also doing something about the depleted highway trust fund, which is leaving States with no money to do road repairs, construction, and modernization. If that is the case, it seems to me the logical thing to do is to offer an amendment to take those provisions out of the bill.

Long ago, when I was an assemblyman in the Nevada State Legislature, it didn't take long to understand that if you don't like something, just move to take it out. If you can muster the votes, that works. If your amendment doesn't pass, at least everybody knows you have tried. Here the Republicans don't even try. They want to just kill things by doing nothing.

I told my Republican counterpart that Democrats are making every effort we can to allow amendments to be offered. We welcome relevant amendments on both sides of the aisle. That is how the legislative process is supposed to work. I even offered to the Republican leader that we can sit down and let him help me be the gatekeeper of what amendments should be offered. That is fair.

Do I want to avoid amendments that have nothing to do with aviation? I don't even care much about that. I want to move this bill forward. The Republicans' obstruction and claims of unfair dealings are not reflective of the facts or reality. I made it clear that the amendment process will be fair, open, and take place in the light of day. This legislation is far too impor-

tant to fall victim to the gamesmanship we are now seeing. Air travel is about getting from point A to point B, such as going from Las Vegas to San Francisco or from San Francisco to Chicago. That is what it is about—connecting to family and friends, getting goods to businesses, and connecting Americans to the global community.

The Federal Aviation Administration is facing challenges like they have never faced before. A record 770 million passengers flew on U.S. commercial airlines in 2007—nearly double the number who flew just 20 years ago.

If these trends continue, the FAA told us we will have 1 billion passengers in just 12 years.

Las Vegas-McCarran International Airport—the fifth busiest in America—now hosts 4 million passengers every month. At this rate, McCarran will reach maximum capacity in the next 3 to 5 years.

Every American who flies understands what this new congestion means: longer lines, more delays, and a more stressful, less efficient trip.

If growth in air travel in Nevada and throughout America is managed correctly, it represents a tremendous opportunity for airlines, tourism, and our economy. But the risks we face if we don't bring our aviation infrastructure up to speed are clear: Americans could be put at greater risk, our economy could suffer, and air travel could grind to a halt.

This Aviation Investment Modernization Act will help ensure that we manage this growing challenge. It will help passengers take off sooner, land safer, help commerce flow with fewer interruptions, and help carriers lower their fuel costs—which will save us all money.

The Aviation Investment Act will make air travel safer by upgrading aging airport infrastructure, enhancing oversight of airlines and the Federal Aviation Administration, and improving runway safety. There was an article within the past week that most airline accidents—the close calls—are on runways, not in the air.

Right now, the GPS in your car is more sophisticated than the system that guides your flight in an airplane. That is why this bill modernizes an obsolete air traffic control system with modern technology. That is why this bill requires airlines to give passengers better information about arrivals and delays. That is why the bill incorporates elements of the passenger bill of rights to protect consumers and deal with the most egregious flight delays and cancellations. That is why this bill does things that make air travel safer.

As Americans take to the skies in record numbers, they deserve to know the Government is doing everything possible to keep them safe. This legislation will give the American people that confidence. It will also make flying not only safer but less stressful, more efficient, and more enjoyable.

We must not let a crumbling infrastructure grind our economy to a halt. That is what it is doing.

I urge my colleagues, once again, to put politics aside, put obstruction aside, and work with us to pass the Aviation Investment Modernization Act.

Mr. President, if somebody wants to offer an amendment to this bill, they can come down and do that. They can play all the political games they want, saying: Senator REID filled the tree. This is something that is way inside the beltway, Mr. President. On this vehicle now before the Senate, people can offer amendments. All they have to do is come and give us an idea of what the amendment is. I have been in the Senate a long time, and it is no new theory that you would like to know what the amendment is. We always give our amendments to the minority and say here is what it is going to be. They should see it firsthand. This does not prohibit them from doing that.

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

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

MOTION TO COMMIT WITH AMENDMENT NO. 4636

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I move to commit the bill to the Finance Committee with the instruction to report back forthwith, with the following amendment, which I send to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Nevada (Mr. REID) moves to commit the bill to the Committee on Finance, with instructions, with the following amendment:

The provision of this act shall become effective 2 days after enactment.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask for the yeas and nays on the motion.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There is a sufficient second.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

AMENDMENT NO. 4637

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

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

The amendment is as follows:

In the amendment, strike "2" and insert "1"

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

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

SPENDING RECORD

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, I rise to respond to some attacks relative to my integrity which were run today in a New York newspaper—I think it was the Daily News—which I presume were energized and orchestrated by the staff of the leadership—the Senate office of the senior Senator from New York. The editorial could not have had the fact pattern that it had, had it not been fed that information from the senior Senator's staff. So I think it is appropriate to respond to it.

It implies, obviously, that I am inconsistent in my views on how I approach spending in this Congress. I think that will come as a surprise to most people in this Congress because I doubt anyone in this Congress—I am sure there are a few—does not think my record in trying to control spending and having some resistance to spending which I feel is inappropriate is fairly strong.

As chairman of the Budget Committee, I tried to discipline spending. I tried to make our Government more affordable for our children. I tried not to pass on to our children debts which they should not have to bear so our children can have the opportunity to live as fulfilling a life and have as high quality a life as we have had.

There is in this bill a proposal to spend \$1.6 billion on an air train to Kennedy Airport. That is not an aircraft issue. It is clearly an add-on. This proposal is, ironically, paid for using the Tax Code in a very ingenious way. It gives a credit to the State of New York, or the city, for taxes which they don't pay over a period of time, which is fairly extensive. I think it will run into the period 2020. That credit totals about \$1.6 billion, \$1.7 billion. It is, under any scenario—I did not use this term when I spoke about it first, but I will use it now—it is under any scenario an earmark, and not a very good earmark, to say the least.

The representation is that my opposition to this is an attack on the efforts of this country to address the very serious and legitimate and appropriate concerns of the city of New York that resulted from 9/11.

After 9/11, the people of New Hampshire and the people of this Nation were committed and remain committed to making sure the city of New York is made whole, to the extent it can be. Obviously, it could never be after such a horrific event. We in our State were happy to take our tax dollars and put them toward the city to try to address those problems, and I voted for that. And we in our State were happy to support efforts to rebuild and continue to be happy to support efforts to rebuild Ground Zero because that is a place which has taken on sacred meaning to our Nation. But we are not interested, in New Hampshire—and I suspect most American citizens are not interested—in using dollars which were supposed to be used for 9/11 to help out some other, maybe a legitimate need—but I don't

know whether it is—in the city of New York, and that is building a train. I call it the train to nowhere. It is a bit of an exaggeration, but since I was trying to put it in the context of an earmark that was of a questionable purpose, that seemed like a reasonable term to use. That has become sort of like the term “Xerox” when you talk about an earmark about which you have serious questions. But building this air train to Kennedy Airport—by the way, I understand there is some significant disagreement within the city about whether it should even be built, but certainly it should not be on this bill as an attempt to basically get around an authorizing process or a process which would air whether this earmark is appropriate.

It should also not use a brand new exercise in tax policy, which is totally inappropriate, of basically using the tax laws in a way that creates an earmark by saying that you get a credit for a tax you don't even have to pay. That is very bad precedent—horrific precedent, quite honestly.

This earmark should see the light of day, and I don't think it can be defended on the grounds of 9/11. In fact, I think that really does serious damage to the historic and very human perspective of 9/11. To try to defend building an air train to Kennedy Airport and stand behind 9/11 as your reasoning, and then claim, in a way that is most inappropriate, in my opinion, if somebody opposes that proposal, they are attacking the memory and the purpose and the sacredness of the 9/11 event and the Ground Zero reconstruction, is just, even by New York standards of exaggerated politics, carrying it a step too far—more than a step too far, in my opinion. But that is what was done here.

An earmark was created for something which has only marginal relationship to even downtown Manhattan—I guess you have to get there from Manhattan, so I guess it has a relationship—certainly no nexus with Ground Zero from the standpoint of an air tram construction to Kennedy Airport. Using the tax laws in an abusive way to generate this earmark and then claiming, when anybody raises the question of the legitimacy of it, that they are somehow acting in a way that is inconsistent with the commitment to the rebuilding of New York after 9/11 and they are degrading the name of the 9/11 event is beyond the pale.

But that seems to be the goal, the style, and the approach of at least the people who fed the information to the paper—which I presume was the staff of the senior Senator from New York. Maybe it was not his staff. I would like him to come down here and deny it if it wasn't. I would like him to come to the floor and deny it if he didn't basically give this information and set the tone of this position because, very clearly, in my opinion, he has.

Let's return to the fact pattern as it exists. I will stop using the term “train

to nowhere” because I can understand how that might irritate. I will accept that term was probably inappropriately applied. I will call it an earmark, a very questionable earmark for a lot of money which does not flow from the original commitment, in my opinion, to the rebuilding of New York—which the citizenry of America made and which we were happy to stand behind.

In fact, ironically, the plans for this train, this elevated train, were begun in 1998, and the actual commitments that this train would go forward, as I understand it, were discussed as early as 1988. The claim this is tied into Ground Zero is to extend credibility quite a bit, in my opinion. To hide behind that and use it in such a personal way which basically questions another Member's integrity is obviously inappropriate.

I think the Senator may have the votes to support his proposal to raid the Tax Code for \$1.6 billion. Maybe he has the votes to do that. But it should not be on this bill. It is not an airplane issue. I can tell you right now, if I have anything to say about it, this bill is not going to move forward as long as it is on this bill.

It had not been my intention to engage at this level, but, as, you know, people from New Hampshire know how to play politics. We know how to deal in this Chamber as well as people from New York. We may be from the country, but we know how to engage. It appears engagement has been called upon, so let us go forward and see who is right, see who has the equities on their side, and determine whether the American people believe building a train which was designed in 1988, was committed to, I believe, in 1998, about which there is considerable discussion whether it should even be going forward, which is an elevated train to an airport in, I believe, Queens, is an appropriate use of \$1.7 or \$1.6 billion of their hard-earned income. Let's see what happens on that issue.

I yield the floor.

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

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

Mr. ROCKEFELLER. Mr. President, I remember those days in West Virginia when all the major airlines operating large jet aircraft served all of West Virginia's airports—jets, actual jets coming into West Virginia. Airline deregulation was a terrible mistake. It changed the very nature of air travel in this country for all. For millions of Americans in large urban areas, it ushered in an era of affordable air traffic. A trip to New York and Los Angeles went down. In fact, at a number of points, it became much cheaper to go

to Los Angeles from New York than to go from West Virginia to Washington. But for West Virginia communities, it meant a loss of service and convenience and often higher prices. It seemed to me that the big jets disappeared from West Virginia within days of deregulation. I remember those nice American, United, and Eastern jets sitting out there on the tarmac, people piling on. Deregulation—boom, they were gone.

For 30 years, small and rural communities have had to cope with very limited and unreliable service. The Presiding Officer knows exactly what I am talking about. Over the last several years, these problems have been exacerbated by the weakened financial condition of the U.S. airlines, which is what this whole effort to get a bill going is about.

After September 11, dozens of communities saw a dramatic decrease in the level of air service. It was measurable, noticeable, and depressing. Many lost service altogether. As the industry recovered from the dramatic downturn in the air traffic that tragic day sparked, small communities did not see the benefits of that resurgence because once they dropped something, it was easier to keep it dropped rather than to help.

Small community air service is facing an unprecedented crisis. If we fail to act to address this problem, dozens of small communities across our Nation will face a future without air service. Consider that for a moment—small communities, viable industries, institutions, people who count. Americans are born equal, but then some don't have air service. That is what we have now. Without access to reliable air service, we throw into question their economic future.

I do not come to the Senate to represent the diminution of possibilities for West Virginia's economic future. I have spoken about the weakened financial condition of our major airlines. But we must also recognize that small regional carriers that provide the air service to rural States such as West Virginia and Montana and parts of Ohio, I am quite certain, also provide the vast majority of air service to midsize communities across the country, and they are teetering on the brink of collapse because of high fuel prices.

As Senator BAUCUS knows all too well, small airlines across the West have folded, leaving at least 17 communities with no air service at all. Seventeen communities would sort of make up the entire State of West Virginia. That is a terrible blow. So few regional airlines are willing to initiate service to small, isolated communities that, when one withdraws service, it is very hard to find replacement air service. In most cases, it is impossible. Hundreds of small and rural communities across our country are facing drastically reduced air service because of this financial turmoil in the industry. Even in

the best of times, these communities face a difficult time maintaining and developing new air service options. Today, their challenge is preventing the complete loss of air service. That is effort No. 1: Hold on to whatever you might have. No matter if it is one flight a day, hold on to it. Fight for it.

I strongly believe the Federal Government must continue to assist our most vulnerable communities stay connected to the Nation's aviation network, a network paid for by all Americans.

The reduction or elimination of air service has been devastating in terms of its effect on the economic well-being of many of our communities across the country. Having adequate air service is not only a matter of convenience, it is a matter of economic survival. Without access to reliable air service, businesses will not locate their operations in these areas of the country, no matter how attractive the quality of life or the quality of the workforce. We have, for example, extremely low housing prices, low property taxes, and an extraordinarily highly productive workforce, with an average in manufacturing of 1 percent annual turnover. That is almost unheard of. Airports are economic engines that attract critical new development opportunities and the people who can make those things happen or continue to grow.

West Virginia is a very good place to do business. Toyota and a number of other large industries, chemical and otherwise, have found that out. I can proudly state that countless large U.S. and international companies have facilities in my State. I can even point out that 20 Japanese companies have industries in the State of West Virginia, three in Wayne County, which the Presiding Officer is familiar with. From West Virginia, a business traveler can get to seven airline hubs and from these seven cities can get to any point on the globe. One-stop service to Tokyo, London, Dubai is critical if my State is going to compete in the global economy. West Virginia has been able to attract firms from around the world because corporate executives know they can visit their operations with ease. That is why we have air service. Rural and smalltown America must continue to be adequately linked to the Nation's air transportation network if its people and businesses are to compete with larger urban areas and around the world.

When Congress deregulated the airline industry, we promised small and rural communities we would make sure they would remain connected to the aviation system. We have failed in our commitment to those promises. The Essential Air Service Program, which Congress established when we deregulated the airline industry, is not a huge program, but it provides money to attract airlines into smaller communities and is incredibly valuable.

But, on the other hand, the essential air service has never met the true

needs and expectations of rural air service or the necessary requirements of rural air service.

In West Virginia, the essential air service has often been plagued by high fares and limited, sporadic service. For 10 years, I have worked to strengthen small community air service. I do that because I represent a rural State with hard-working people who have an enormous desire to succeed and to work and are deprived of what many other Americans take for granted. That is not fair in Internet connection; you cannot have a rural and urban divide. It is just as true in airline service; you cannot have urban doing well, rurals being left out because we are all Americans, all created by God to be equal.

So I have worked to strengthen small community air service. In the Aviation Investment and Reform Act for the 21st Century, which Congress enacted into law in the distant past of the year 2000, we began to address the need to improve air service in small and rural communities.

I, along with many of my colleagues, supported the creation of something called the Small Community Air Service Development Pilot Program, a competitive grant program to provide communities with the resources they needed to attract new air service to their town. We try everything we can. We try absolutely everything we can. Over 100 communities now have used these grants to secure and retain new air service options. That is good.

I wish to highlight two success stories which happened in my State. Charleston received money under the program I have described and has used it successfully—Charleston is our capital—they have used it very successfully to attract a new service connection for our chemical industry to Houston. Why is that important? Well, our chemical companies do a lot of the training of their people in Houston and then they come back and they work in our chemical companies. Air service to Houston gave West Virginians an important gateway, in addition, therefore, to the markets of Latin America.

Over the past 2 years, Tri-State Airport in Huntington has been reborn because of the money it received under this Small Community Air Service Development Grant Program. Prior to attracting a low-cost charter operator, the airport had seen a steep decline in the number of passengers using the airport. With fewer passengers, airlines cut back flights. Fewer flights meant fewer passengers. It was a death spiral.

Once the community was able to secure a grant, matched with almost as many local dollars, airport officials were able to attract a new carrier that served the critical markets local residents wanted. For the first time in 20 years, large jets roared off the runways in West Virginia, in Huntington. The airport will have 100,000 passengers pass through its gates for the first time in decades.

Now, that is not very impressive if you are from New York or Los Angeles,

but in West Virginia it shakes the world, and it gives people new hope. I was there when all this happened, and you could see a new sense of vigor and determination in the population. Air service attracts community ambition.

Improving air service must be a collective effort. Communities are most successful in creating new air service options when everyone—including the Federal and the State governments, airports, airlines, businesses, and citizens—works together to attract, promote, and use the service.

One of the things we learned the hard way in West Virginia was you cannot treat an airport similar to something which is out there which people will automatically go to. We used to have a lot of our people from Charleston driving all the way to Cincinnati and actually not understanding that the cost of traveling to Cincinnati and the fuel and the overnight and all the rest of it actually did not give them that much of a financial break, but they looked at the cost of the airline and off they went. So 16 percent of Charleston's traffic disappeared.

I am now proud to say West Virginia communities have been able to use this important program to rethink their air service needs, to think about marketing airports. You market airports like you market anything else. People have to be aware of it. You have to attract people to it. It is not something which is there. It is something which has to sell itself. LaGuardia does not have to do that. Newark does not have to do that. In West Virginia, we have to do that, and we are doing that.

The FAA bill that is before us extends the authorization for these important programs for 4 more years.

Four West Virginia commercial airports rely solely upon the Essential Air Service program for any service at all. We are extending that and enlarging the amount. No community wants to be dependent on essential air service. It is not a badge of honor. But it is a fact of survival. But for many, it is their only option to maintain air service.

But as I mentioned earlier, the program has not met the needs of many communities. In 2003, as part of the last FAA reauthorization bill, I created a number of new voluntary pilot programs for essential air service communities. I modeled these initiatives after the Small Community Air Service Pilot Program by focusing on incentives rather than punitive approaches.

Under this new plan, a community could receive funds to develop its own marketing plans rather than rely on the airline for one. It could use funds to increase service levels, opt to use different types of aircraft or investigate the use of alternative transportation service. In other words, it said: What is our problem? What are we going to do about it? We cannot wait on other people. We have to make these decisions ourselves. We are doing that in West Virginia.

This year, we have added a number of provisions to strengthen the Essential

Air Service program. We have increased the authorization level for the program by \$58 million to \$175 million a year. We have included provisions to help carriers that provide the essential air service so they can meet the cost of high fuel. It is essential. We have increased the flexibility of the program even further so communities can work with the Department of Transportation and air carriers to find air service that works for them.

Small and rural communities are the very first to bear the brunt of bad economic times. It has always been so. It shall always be so. The Presiding Officer knows exactly what I am talking about. We are always, in West Virginia, at the end of the food chain on everything. We understand that. We do not like it, but that is our current destiny, and so that is why we have to fight harder and try to be more imaginative.

The general economic downturn and the dire straits of the aviation industry have placed exceptional burdens on air service to our most isolated communities. The Federal Government must provide additional resources for small communities to help themselves attract air service. If you have to do the work yourself, you do it. You just do it. The Federal Government must make sure our most vulnerable towns and cities are linked to the rest of the Nation. It is an easy statement to make, but it is a huge statement. We have an obligation in this country to make sure all of our communities and our people are linked to the broad air service opportunities, hubs and spokes. It has to happen.

My legislation builds on existing programs and strengthens them. We must continue to provide our constituents the tools and resources necessary to attract air service, and we are doing that.

So, in closing, I should say a subsidy alone does not solve the problems of small community air service. If our constituents do not use that service, or the airlines take it away—airlines cannot operate unprofitable flights or flights that are marginally profitable, for which they could do better elsewhere. They make a little bit of money or they do not make a little bit of money, and they are gone because their situation is so dire.

I do not know what the future of the U.S. airline industry will look like in 6 months, but our Nation needs a strong airline industry. Our communities need to be connected to the aviation system.

That is why we are going through this most extraordinary exercise of no amendments to be voted on, a good deal of time to sit and talk, a great deal of frustration. But we are trying to pass something called the Federal aviation bill that will provide service to our people. If there is anything in the national interest, it is that. I will not go so far as to say it is more important than the interstate highway system, in terms of economic development and also reaching out to the world,

which all our States need now to do on a two-way basis.

So we fight. We continue to fight.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. McCASKILL). The Senator from Georgia.

Mr. ISAKSON. Madam President, while the distinguished Senator from West Virginia is on the floor, I wish to, first of all, commend him for his efforts on behalf of aviation in the United States. I associate myself with his remarks about rural and underserved areas. I associate myself with all the remarks he made in support of our aviation system.

I am one of those people who are frustrated with our inability to deal right now with amendments. I understand a substitute was offered last night and the tree was filled so there are no germane amendments that were—the amendments that were filed yesterday are no longer germane; am I correct?

Mr. ROCKEFELLER. Madam President, I say to my good friend, the Senator from Georgia, things have changed a bit this morning and decisions are being made on that side of the aisle that will determine whether we can move forward. I am hopeful about that process.

Mr. ISAKSON. Madam President, in the hopeful event we can move forward, I wish to, for a minute, with the distinguished Senator, make him aware of an amendment I submitted yesterday but is not pending. It cannot be pending right now. I agree with the Senator entirely on the importance to the American economy of U.S. aviation. In the bill they put out, there is one element that was not addressed that I think should be.

On December 31 of this year, the United States providing terrorism insurance to the airlines sunsets. If it is, there will be no access to terrorism insurance by U.S. domestic carriers because the only private insurers that will offer terrorism insurance offer it with an advanced cancellation provision, which basically means if we went to a code level orange or a code level red, the insurance company in advance of a terrorist attack could actually cancel the insurance. So the aviation industry would be without insurance.

Our competition in Europe does not have that problem. They still have private insurance available for coverage of aviation terrorism. I submitted an amendment yesterday that would extend the date of December 31 of this year—which is the expiration date—to make it December 31, 2011, so airlines can continue to pay the U.S. Government for insurance against terrorism.

If my understandings are correct, those premiums totaled \$160 million in the last year and are a revenue source to the United States of America, as it should be. We should not be providing it without cost.

So I would hope, when the meetings that are going on are concluded, and if

we can get back to the base bill and if amendments again become relevant, that the distinguished Senator from West Virginia, the Senator from Alaska, and the others who have worked so hard on this legislation will look favorably on an extension of terrorism insurance availability to domestic U.S. carriers.

With that, Madam President, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. ROCKEFELLER. Madam President, I say also to my very dear friend from Georgia with whom I have a long and wonderful background because of his strong reaction to our plight in West Virginia with the coal miners—he doesn't have coal in his State but he came into our State and adopted it as his own and we adopted him.

I also wish to tell him that what he is suggesting is something I very much support.

AMENDMENT NO. 4642 TO AMENDMENT NO. 4637

Madam President, I believe there is an amendment at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the amendment.

The bill clerk read as follows:

The Senator from West Virginia [Mr. ROCKEFELLER] proposes an amendment numbered 4642 to amendment No. 4637.

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

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

The amendment is as follows:

In the amendment, strike "1" and insert "3."

Mr. WYDEN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business for up to 15 minutes.

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

HEALTHY AMERICANS ACT

Mr. WYDEN. Madam President, there is now an historic coalition here in the Senate, a group of 14 Senators. Seven Democrats and 7 Republicans are sponsoring a health bill guaranteeing all Americans quality, affordable health care coverage. There has never been such a coalition in the history of the Senate.

Today our group got some historic news. The Government's go-to officials for budgeting and taxes have thrown decades of conventional wisdom into the trash can. They have informed our group that all Americans can have quality, affordable health care coverage without breaking the bank.

Briefly, here is what the Congressional Budget Office and the Joint Committee on Taxation have found.

They found that our legislation, the Healthy Americans Act, can be up and running in 2012. They found the legislation would become budget neutral in 2014. That means our legislation is self-financing in the first year that universal health care coverage would be fully implemented in our country. In the years after 2014, because the legislation holds down health cost increases, it starts to generate budget surpluses for the Federal Government.

This analysis is fresh, independent evidence that health care can be fixed without massive tax increases or boatloads of additional Government spending. It is a chance, in my view, for Congress and our country to look at the issue of health care reform with fresh eyes, because what the Congressional Budget Office and the Joint Committee on Taxation have analyzed doesn't involve a set of lofty principles or some of the oratory from the campaign trail, but it is actual legislation.

Because this report is a historic document, I ask unanimous consent that the letter dated today from the Congressional Budget Office and the Joint Committee on Taxation be printed in the RECORD. The report is available on the CBO Web site www.cbo.gov.

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

MAY 1, 2008.

Hon. RON WYDEN,
U.S. Senate,
Washington, DC.

Hon. ROBERT F. BENNETT,
U.S. Senate,
Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATORS: At your request, the staffs of our two organizations have collaborated on a preliminary analysis of a modified proposal for comprehensive health insurance based on S. 334, the "Healthy Americans Act," which you introduced last year. That modified proposal includes various clarifications and changes that you have indicated you would like to examine as part of the consideration of that bill. Attachment A summarizes our understanding of your modified proposal.

The staffs of the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) and the Joint Committee on Taxation (JCT) have worked closely together for the past several months to analyze your modified proposal; this collaboration reflects both the novelty of the undertaking and the intimate connection between the revenue and expenditure components of this proposal. We have summarized our conclusions in this joint letter; its purpose is to give you preliminary guidance regarding an approximate range of revenue and cost results that might be expected from your modified proposal. This joint letter does not constitute and should not be interpreted as a formal estimate of your proposal's budgetary impact, which—for the purposes of scoring under the Congressional Budget Act—would ultimately be provided by CBO and would incorporate revenue estimates prepared by the JCT staff.

The basic thrust of your modified proposal is to require individuals to purchase private health insurance and to establish state-run purchasing pools and a system of Federal premium collections and subsidies to facilitate those purchases. The system's premium collection and subsidy mechanisms would be based largely on income tax filings, and the required benefits would initially be based on

the Blue Cross/Blue Shield standard plan offered to Federal workers in 2011 and then allowed to grow at the rate of growth of the economy. Although employers would have the option of continuing to offer coverage to their workers, nearly all individuals who were not enrolled in Medicare would obtain their basic health insurance coverage through this new system. Most enrollees in Medicaid and all enrollees in the State Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) would have their primary insurance coverage shifted to the new system.

Your proposal also would replace the current tax exclusion for employer-based health insurance premiums with a fixed income tax deduction for health insurance. (In addition, employers that had provided health insurance would be expected to "cash out" their workers—that is, to increase workers' wages by the average contribution that the employers would have made for their health plan.) The proposal also would require new tax payments from employers to the Federal government and further would seek to recapture the savings to state governments from reduced expenditures on Medicaid and CHIP.

There are several important distinctions between the proposal we analyzed and S. 334 as it was introduced. For example, our analysis was limited to the operation of the new health insurance purchasing system and did not take into account most of S. 334's provisions regarding the Medicare program or other provisions that would not directly affect the new system. More fundamentally, the modified proposal would tie the premiums collected through the tax system—as well as the premium subsidies for lower-income households—to the cost of the least expensive health plan available in an area that provided required benefits, not to the average premium amount, as under S. 334. Furthermore, the value of the new tax deduction would not vary with the premium of the insurance policy that was actually purchased, and the schedule of employers' payment rates would range from 3 percent to 26 percent (rather than 2 percent to 25 percent) of the average premium. Attachment B describes in more detail the main differences between your modified proposal and S. 334.

The preliminary analysis reflected in this letter is subject to three important limitations. First, the staffs of both JCT and CBO are in the process of enhancing our capabilities to estimate the effects of comprehensive health care proposals. Improvements in our methodologies or more careful analysis of your modified proposal's provisions—particularly as you translate those concepts into formal legislative language—could change our assessment of its consequences.

Second, any formal budget estimate will reflect the macroeconomic assumptions and the baseline projections of current-law tax and spending policies in effect at the time it is issued. That baseline could differ materially from today's baseline.

Third, we focused our analysis on a single future year in which the proposed system would be fully implemented. For that purpose, we settled on 2014, the sixth year of the current 2009–2018 budget window. Under an assumption that the proposal is enacted in 2008, that timeline for full implementation seems to us to be achievable but could be optimistic, as we expect that it would probably take until 2012 for the new system to begin operation, and several years after that for various phase-ins and behavioral adjustments to take place. The new system would involve temporary net budgetary costs in its initial years; we have not analyzed the magnitude of those early-year transition costs.

Overall, our preliminary analysis indicates that the proposal would be roughly budget-

neutral in 2014. That is, our analysis suggests that your proposal would be essentially self-financing in the first year that it was fully implemented. That net result reflects large gross changes in Federal revenues and outlays that would roughly offset each other.

More specifically, under your proposal, most health insurance premiums that are now paid privately would flow through the Federal budget. As a result, total Federal outlays for health insurance premiums in 2014 would be on the order of \$1.3 trillion to \$1.4 trillion. Those costs would be approximately offset by revenues and savings from several sources: premium payments collected from individuals through their tax returns; revenue raised by replacing the current tax exclusion for health insurance with an income tax deduction; new tax payments by employers to the Federal government; Federal savings on Medicaid and SCHIP; and state maintenance-of-effort payments of their savings from Medicaid and SCHIP. Attachment C provides more information about the approximate magnitudes of those components.

For the years after 2014, we anticipate that the fiscal impact would improve gradually, so that the proposal would tend to become more than self-financing and thereby would reduce future budget deficits or increase future surpluses. That improvement would reflect two features of the proposal. First, the amount of the new health insurance deduction would grow at the rate of general price inflation and thus would increase more slowly than the value of the current tax exclusion.

Second, the minimum value of covered benefits that all participating health plans had to provide would initially be set at the level of the Blue Cross/Blue Shield standard option offered to Federal workers in 2011 (we assume that the system's inaugural year would be 2012); but under your proposal that average value would from that point forward be indexed to growth in gross domestic product per capita rather than growth in health care costs. Because Federal premium subsidies would be based on the cost of providing that level of coverage, the cost of those subsidies would grow more slowly over time.

We hope this analysis is useful to you. Not surprisingly, a number of uncertainties arise in attempting to predict the effects of such large-scale changes to the current health insurance system. Although we have provided a range of results that reflect our current expectations about likely outcomes, actual experience—and the results of a formal cost estimate—could differ substantially in either direction. If you have any questions about this analysis, please do not hesitate to contact us; the staff contacts are Pam Moomau and Nikole Flax for JCT and Philip Ellis for CBO.

Sincerely,

PETER R. ORSZAG,
Director, Congressional Budget Office.
EDWARD D. KLEINBARD,
Chief of Staff, Joint Committee on Taxation.

Mr. WYDEN. Madam President, I wish to touch on a few points with respect to this report. Obviously, the key to fixing health care is to contain costs. Our bipartisan legislation does that by making sure all Americans have more clout in the marketplace. We achieve that by making sure that everyone goes into a big pool, because if they are off by themselves, they don't have a lot of ability to get the

best deal for their health care dollar. But if they belong to a bigger group, they have a lot better chance of containing costs. We cut the administrative costs of health care. We use a State and regional pooling approach that has been found to cut administrative costs. We get patients out of unnecessary hospital emergency room visits because more would get seen on an outpatient basis. We make progressive changes in tax law and we empower consumers, because for the first time, if they have employer-based health coverage, they could actually find out what is being spent on their health care. Right now, basically all they know is they are not seeing their wages go up because health care costs are eating up all of the employers' resources. We think making sure that the worker knows what is being spent on health care provides them a new set of opportunities to get more for their health care dollar.

My view is that today's health care system is largely driven by employers and insurance companies. Clearly, there is a significant role to play for them. But what we do in our legislation is provide a bigger role for individuals and especially their health care providers—the thousands of doctors and nurses and physician assistants. We make sure that everybody under our legislation could have a health care home. So instead of being lost in an incredibly complicated health care system, there would be one person who would coordinate each individual's care.

A big part of what we are doing in this bill is to modernize the employer-employee relationship in the health care field. What we are doing in 2008 in health care as it relates to employers and employees isn't much different than what was done in 1948. The Chair can remember all of the efforts of President Truman to make changes in American health care. So we modernize that relationship. We continue to let employers who choose to offer coverage, but we give the workers more choices with respect to their health care and we give the employers much needed cost relief, which is especially essential at a time when they are competing in tough global markets.

I want to mention all of my colleagues who are sponsoring this legislation with me. Senator BENNETT of Utah, a member of the Republican leadership, is the principal cosponsor. Senator BENNETT's knowledge of economics, in my view, has few equals and I could not have a better partner for this whole effort. We have seven Democrats and seven Republicans who are on the effort. I am particularly pleased that so many from the Senate Finance Committee, where Senator BAUCUS and Senator GRASSLEY have worked in a bipartisan tradition for years, are part of our effort. From the Senate Finance Committee we have Senator GRASSLEY and Senator CRAPO and Senator STABENOW cosponsoring the legislation,

all of them making a great contribution in this area.

As we go forward in the days ahead, Senator STABENOW's expertise and interest, particularly in health information technology, is going to be instrumental. For example, Dr. Orszag, the director of the Congressional Budget Office, who brings great professionalism to this effort to look at health care, this morning when he briefed eight of us in the Senate on the legislation, mentioned the fact that the evidence suggests as much as 30 percent of the health care dollar is spent in a fashion that produces very little value. So what Senator STABENOW is trying to do with health information technology, electronic medical records, and other innovative approaches is to wring more value out of every health care dollar. Her contribution is so very important.

Senator GRASSLEY and I have worked together on many health care issues. Of course, the partnership we have on the Finance Committee between Chairman BAUCUS and Senator GRASSLEY is a very rare and a very beneficial alliance here in the Senate, and I so appreciate Senator GRASSLEY's involvement. Senator CRAPO is my partner in the West who has a great interest and longstanding involvement in rural health care, and we are very pleased that he is an additional voice on the Senate Finance Committee for the legislation.

I would also like to credit the other Senators who are involved. We are very pleased that Senator LANDRIEU, who is helping to reinvent health care in her State as a result of destruction caused by Hurricane Katrina and all of the challenges they face, has been particularly interested in and creative in thinking about opening up new opportunities for entrepreneurship in her State and elsewhere. Senator LANDRIEU correctly points out that if you modernize the employer-employee relationship in health care, that is going to mean we are going to have more entrepreneurs. It is going to be good for business. It is going to be good for our economy. We are going to be able to grow our economic base in the country. Senator LANDRIEU argues very eloquently, in my view, that if you provide some cost relief for the employers who got into the business of driving health care by accident in the 1940s, you are going to be able to create jobs and strengthen our economy.

Senator NELSON, a former insurance commissioner, is one of our cosponsors. He has great expertise in insurance regulation. In fact, he pointed out this morning some of the tools that are going to be necessary to prevent price gouging in health insurance and is making a great contribution there.

Senator LIEBERMAN has a long-standing interest in this and is a cosponsor. Of course, his involvement is particularly critical because his State is a center of health insurance and technology and there are a variety of major economic concerns involved.

We are very glad to have Senator GREGG, who is the ranking member on the Budget Committee and a driving force on keeping down health costs to make health care more affordable and available to all. We're also pleased to have the support of Senator INOUE, who as chairman of the Defense Appropriations Subcommittee, has shown his leadership in health care research for our soldiers and sailors with benefits for all Americans. We also appreciate the support of Senator CORKER, who has been a leading advocate for reforming the tax code to make health insurance more available and affordable. And we're grateful for support from Senator COLEMAN, who has the world renowned Mayo Clinic in his state and himself has been a leader in the area of health technology. And we are especially pleased to have the support of two former governors, Senator CARPER and Senator ALEXANDER. The Healthy Americans Act gives a major role to the states in reforming our health system and it's critical to have the support of Senators with the knowledge of state government and executive leadership experience they have supporting our legislation. It is a group unlike any other we have seen in the history of the Senate. Fourteen Senators—seven Democrats, seven Republicans—actually cosponsoring together a piece of legislation that will guarantee all Americans affordable, good quality coverage.

This legislation ensures that all of our people have choices such as we have here in the Congress. We have choices among a number of very good private sector packages. It ensures that coverage for the first time will be portable. You can take your coverage from job to job to job, which is something that millions of Americans desperately want.

It is our future. The fact is that today, by the time you are 35 years old, you are likely to change your job 7 times. Yet the system almost locks you into your present position. You cannot move. You cannot go to another opportunity. I think to have a portable health system where you can take your coverage from job to job to job and not worry about losing your coverage if you want to take a promotion or start your own business is particularly important.

The best part about it is that the Joint Committee on Taxation and the Congressional Budget Office have said this can be done in a revenue-neutral way.

We have had a number of Senators involved who have longstanding credentials in terms of being tougher on budgets and concerned about fiscal discipline. Now, the Joint Committee on Taxation and the Congressional Budget Office have said that, contrary to popular wisdom that universal coverage is going to break the bank and require tax hikes and new spending, it can be done in a budget-neutral kind of fashion.

Finally, I want to add since I think I really didn't do him justice earlier—Senator INOUE has been a wonderful addition to our group. He and his staff have had a great interest in looking at a number of health reform issues, particularly ones that make better use of our workforce, focused on prevention and quality. We are thrilled to have him as well.

Madam President, I note that one of our colleagues has come to the floor. I will wrap up simply by saying that I think the entire Senate should be very grateful for the outstanding work done by the Joint Committee on Taxation and the Congressional Budget Office, led by Peter Orszag and Edward Kleinbard. Those two organizations have never issued—in the history of their organizations—an analysis like the one they made available today. Never in the history of the organizations has there been such an analysis.

I submit that if there had been an analysis like this done the last time the Congress debated universal coverage back in 1993 and 1994, if there had been a report like this one from the Congressional Budget Office and the Joint Committee on Taxation, they could have moved forward on a bipartisan basis to actually pass legislation, see it signed into law, and end the disgrace that a country such as ours, which is good and strong and talented, hasn't been able to fix American health care.

This time, I think we are up to it. Senator BENNETT and I have kept apprised the leadership in the Senate on both sides of the aisle. It is our determination to work with colleagues of both political parties. We intend to work with the Presidential candidates. I have talked with Senators CLINTON and OBAMA many times about the Healthy Americans Act. I talked to Senator GRAHAM last night about the Congressional Budget Office briefing. We know of his involvement with Senator MCCAIN. If you are going to deal with a big, important issue, it has to be bipartisan.

Today, the Congressional Budget Office and the Joint Committee on Taxation have made a significant contribution to our effort to move forward and actually enact universal health coverage that works for all Americans. We are indebted to their organizations.

I am particularly grateful to colleagues who have joined as cosponsors in this effort. Senator BENNETT and I will continue to work with colleagues like Senator BAUCUS, Senator KENNEDY and others over the next 6 or 7 months so that this can be ready to go for the next President of the United States.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Idaho is recognized.

Mr. CRAIG. Madam President, what is the current state of the floor?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate is considering H.R. 2881.

Mr. CRAIG. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that I be allowed to speak as in morning business.

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

(The remarks of Mr. CRAIG pertaining to the introduction of S. 2953 are located in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Madam President, the statement by the Senator from Idaho with regard to the need for drilling has been articulated by a very respected columnist, Robert J. Samuelson, who recently wrote his column, published in the Washington Post, that in essence said we ought to put oil rigs off the protected shores of Florida and in the preserved wilds of Alaska.

Once again, we are going to hear statements such as that of the Senator from Idaho and read statements in the written press by Mr. Samuelson as gas prices are hitting record highs. We are going to see the renewed push by the Bush administration and by the oil industry to drill in areas that are protected, such as the Gulf of Mexico off Florida, as articulated by the Senator from Idaho, as well as the area known as ANWR, which is in the preserved wilderness of Alaska. Drilling right away in environmentally protected areas was the centerpiece of Mr. Samuelson's solution to the rising gas prices.

There is not one of us in this Chamber who does not want to do something about those gas prices. What Mr. Samuelson said in his column was that to oppose drilling in those protected areas—as indicated also by the Senator who has just spoken—to oppose drilling in those protected areas, he said, is sheer stupidity. And he said further it is a "prejudice against oil companies."

That is the same thing the oil companies say every time there is a spike in prices. They have their long-term remedy that would expose these wilderness areas, and Florida's beach and tourism-driven economy, our areas of an environmentally sensitive nature, as well as the military interests I asked the Senator from Idaho to acknowledge, and they would put all that at risk. It is these same oil companies that are now, because of the high price of gasoline, going to make another end run—very possibly next week—and try to bust the ban, the longstanding ban on coastal drilling. Of course, they are going to cite what they do every time the oil prices spike high. They are going to cite the high gasoline prices.

I am basing my predictions of what is going to happen in the next couple of weeks, I am basing this assertion on the oil industry's track record and on the comments made Tuesday by the President, renewing his call for drilling. I am basing it on the suggestions we see in this newspaper column.

In advance of this likely new assault, this Senator wants to make clear oil that is still deep in the ground has no direct link—none—to today's pump

prices. Any oil in the ground will not be in the marketplace for another 10 years. More important, no matter what anybody says or what anybody writes, the United States only has 3 percent of the world's oil reserves while the United States consumes 25 percent of the world's oil production. In other words, it is, to use Samuelson's term, "sheer stupidity" to think the United States can somehow drill its way out of the energy crisis.

We are a nation that is hooked on oil. Drilling along the Florida shore or in wildlife preserves will not break the habit. By the way, one of the main reasons oil prices have gone up so sharply in recent years is the volatility of major producer nations, such as Iraq and Iran—not even to mention Venezuela and Nigeria. History reflects similar spikes, circa 1973, when we had an OPEC oil embargo related to a war in the Middle East; then again in 1979 with the Iranian revolution; again in 1990 with Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and the first gulf war; and again, since 2003, with the war in Iraq, concomitant with increasing Asian demand.

The common denominator in all these spikes is they are fueled by the subsequent increase in oil speculation. The common denominator is trouble in the Middle East and especially in Iraq and Iran. More drilling along protected U.S. coasts, in bays and harbors and in the pristine wilderness of Alaska, will not stabilize Iraq and it will not guarantee Saudi Arabia's long-term friendship. Nor will it end the unregulated speculation that has driven the price of oil to more than \$118 a barrel when the price should have been no more than \$55 a barrel, based on present supply and demand, according to an industry leader's testimony before Congress. That means the law of supply and demand has been broken and we are paying at least \$63 per barrel over and above what supply and demand would produce—a price of \$55. We are paying that extra \$63 per barrel to enrich investment bankers, speculators, and oil companies.

As Mr. Samuelson says in his column: "What to do?"

The U.S. failed in the 1970s to enact a real energy program to get us off oil. The result is it is Brazil that runs on ethanol today—not the United States. Germany leads the world in solar power, not the United States. In the meantime, oil companies are awash in record profits, more than \$155 billion in profits alone last year, at the same time not spending enough on refineries or alternative energy, while guess who is getting it in the neck: the consumers at the pump.

Then, even worse, it took the United States more than 30 years to raise mileage standards on cars and trucks to a paltry 35 miles per gallon, something that will not even be in effect until the year 2020. And is it not interesting that most of Europe and the cars U.S.-based manufacturers sell there already average 43 miles per gal-

lon, and in Japan the cars are approaching 50-miles-a-gallon.

In other words, we are wasting, flat out wasting billions and billions of gallons of oil. So, again, what are we to do? Well, about half of the oil we consume goes into transportation, and it should not take a rocket scientist to realize that is where we ought to focus. So, first, if we start to enact serious conservation measures, and things such as a 40-miles-per-gallon mandate for the fleet average of our personal vehicles, and if we provided greater tax breaks for hybrid cars, and ultimately hydrogen-powered and electric-powered cars, then we are going to start making a difference.

Second, the Government, our Government, led by our next President, is going to have to enact and subsidize a national energy program to transform us from our energy dependence on oil, especially foreign oil, to alternative and synthetic fuels to power much of the transportation sector.

Members of the Senate, it has been done before. Remember in the 1960s, President Kennedy led us to conquer the bounds of Earth, to go to the Moon and return, and all of that occurred within a decade. So we have got to act with the same urgency. And while we are at it, we are going to have to make ethanol, ethanol that we will make from things we do not eat so we do not reduce our food supply.

While we are at that, we are also going to have to pay attention to how we power not only our cars and our trucks, but our homes and our industry. We are going to need to develop solar, wind, thermal energy, and hydroelectric. And who knows the advances of technology in harnessing renewable energy sources. We are going to have to look for electricity that is from safer nuclear power.

Now, this is what our Presidential candidates ought to be hearing and ultimately before this election they ought to be making a pledge to the American people that they are going to do this. In the 10 years going forward that it would take to bring in new oil rigs fully to market, in that 10 years, if we are good stewards of what we have, we will have conserved more oil than we ever get out of the ground, and we will be mostly free from foreign oil by enacting this energy plan.

Our future will not be realized by looking backward to the short-term polluting and dirty energy solutions of the last century, solutions they still offer for the future, solutions by people who do not want to change their ways, such as oil companies.

So should we start drilling right now in very environmentally sensitive areas? To use Mr. Samuelson's words in his column, "That is sheer stupidity." 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. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SALAZAR). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I rise to speak about the provision related to the New York liberty zone that appears in the FAA reauthorization bill. A few of my friends on the other side of the aisle have called this provision an earmark. They have called it a fund to create a train to Kennedy Airport, even though that is not even mentioned in the legislation.

I wish to fill in on the facts. First, after the devastating attacks of 9/11 which scarred my city and our country, Congress and the President generously agreed to provide \$20 billion in assistance toward the rebuilding of lower Manhattan. It was a promise the President made to me and Senator CLINTON the day after the attacks. It is a promise that, to his everlasting credit, the President has kept and has never wavered from. The President understood, I think all of my colleagues understand, what happened in New York. But we still live with the scars. That downtown has not recovered. There are fewer square feet of office space today than there were then in downtown. And the families who lost loved ones still grieve every day, as does just about every New Yorker.

There has always been talk about wearing flags. I put this flag on my lapel on 9/12/2001. I have worn it every day since and, God willing, I will wear it every day for the remainder of my life in remembrance of what has happened.

Now, of the \$20 billion, the money was divided for various purposes. Some, of course, was to help the families who have lost loved ones. Some was for the cleaning up of the World Trade Center site. It was a massive undertaking—to visit the rubble a day later, to smell death and the burnt flesh in the air, and then to realize that people, not only from New York but from around the whole country came to help us help heal those wounds.

Some of the money was put aside specifically so that downtown would recover; incentives to bring business back and money for transportation, because the entire subway nexus had been destroyed. At that point in time, people worried that people would desert downtown and never come back.

New Yorkers, through efforts and valiance, have struggled, and so that is how the \$20 billion came about. Was any part of the \$20 billion an earmark? Is there any reason to equate it with a bridge to nowhere? Please. Please, my colleagues, I do appreciate that my friend from New Hampshire—I do consider him my friend—has retracted that specific statement. But to call the \$20 billion, or a significant part of it, an earmark is unfair labeling, to be kind. Or the tax preferences for the gulf opportunity zone after Katrina,

were they earmarks? They were a benefit, a large benefit, designated for a specific region. When we help a disaster area, is that an earmark? No. And all the hallmarks of earmarks done for only one member, slipped in in secrecy, none of that applies here.

In fact, this exact proposal is in the President's budget this year in the light of day for all to study because the President himself, as I said, has kept his word. Has it been done secretly? Obviously, no. This provision has been around for a while.

As I will show in a few minutes, many of my colleagues who oppose it now have voted for it in other legislation. Why has New York had to wait so long for this provision? It is because it has passed the House a couple of times, it has passed the Senate once, but the bills that passed never hooked up and never made it to the President's desk.

Are we going to tell those who argue that this is an earmark that any aid to any region, no matter how publicly talked about, no matter how desperate the need, is an earmark? With all due respect to my colleagues, it is not fair. It is not right. It is not up to the level of this body or this discourse. It is using a word that has a bad connotation and inappropriately labeling something that has been part of America's nobleness since 9/11.

Let me give you a little bit of history here. After the \$20 billion in aid was passed, some of the provisions were not fully realized, others were, and exceeded the amounts of money. So the New York delegation had talked with the President and with OMB leaders about how to make sure those dollars were most wisely spent, and in some places, the amounts of money changed.

A consensus emerged as we went through this that the best way to support private enterprise, or one of the best ways to support private enterprise and rebuild lower Manhattan, was to improve transportation in and around the liberty zone.

As a result, the city and State proposed supporting improvements in transportation infrastructure in or connected with the liberty zone. If you look at the Treasury blue book, my colleagues, it is on pages 47 to 49. This is not something that was slipped in by any Member of the Senate, not by me or anyone else. It was the President who proposed it in this budget, as he has proposed it in previous budgets.

It is not something that was slipped into the bill in the middle of the night. And to equate it with wasteful porkbarrel projects is an insult to the families of those who survive, to every New Yorker, and I believe to every American.

When New York was struck, we all rallied together. We have sort of kept that tone since, when it comes to helping areas that need help. So this is not about funding porkbarrel projects. This is about keeping our promises and our faith.

Second, my colleague insists that this is a train to Kennedy Airport. I

refer him to the language in the FAA bill. There is no reference to a train to Kennedy Airport. There is no reference to an air rail. As I said, it sounded good, but I appreciate the fact that the Senator from New Hampshire has pulled back from calling it a train to nowhere. I personally called him 2 days ago and read the language of the bill to him. It does not mention a rail project. There has been talk in Manhattan, among the mayor and Governor and the city leaders who would be in charge of spending this money, that that is a possibility. But there are many other possibilities as well.

The one thing the legislation states is about improving and rebuilding transportation in the liberty zone. That is all. There is no specific project mentioned in the language. There is no particular project or projects I am supporting. To say otherwise is untrue. It would be totally within the law to use this for some subway improvements or other types of spending. That will be what the city will decide, in consultation with the Governor and the appropriate legislative bodies.

As for the mechanism of funding which allows the city and State to keep part of the Federal income taxes withheld from city and State workers, we have tried various ways of designing this aid, and this is what the administration came up with, with our agreement and consent. If any of my colleagues would like to suggest another way for fulfilling the promise they would support, I am happy to listen. But I remind them that this is a solution supported by the administration. In fact, the Bush administration has supported the \$2 billion trade-in for the liberty zone in four consecutive budget proposals. The details of how to do it, again, of how to spend the money, will be left up to the city and State. This is not new money, I remind my colleagues. It is the last part of a solemn promise made by President Bush and supported by this Congress in 2001.

The current version of the language passed the full House in the most recent energy bill. It was part of a Senate energy bill that received 59 votes last year and 58 votes earlier this year. It was also part of the FAA reform package that passed out of committee by broad bipartisan vote. This is not something that was snuck into the bill as it reached the floor of the House. It was passed and debated in the Finance Committee. In fact, two of my colleagues who have raised questions about this—my friends from New Hampshire and South Carolina have both voted for legislation in favor of enacting the liberty zone provision, when it has been previously considered as part of other legislation.

So now to object to this, to the whole FAA bill because it has this provision in it, is a change of view. There was no objection to other legislation that had it on that basis.

The junior Senator from South Carolina voted yes on final passage of two

bills in the 109th Congress—S. 2020, and H.R. 4297—that both contained the liberty zone provision. Unfortunately, the provision was not in the final versions of these bills, and the remaining funds for Ground Zero were not allocated. By advocating against this current position, it is clearly a change. There was no specific vote on this rail link, but there were votes on larger packages that contained it, just as this FAA package is a larger package that contains it. The senior Senator from New Hampshire has voted in favor of the liberty zone tax provisions at least three times: First, in favor of the original bill, H.R. 3090; again, in favor of two separate bills—S. 2020 and H.R. 4297—to complete the funding in the 109th Congress.

So it is hard to understand, since this is not an earmark. This is not a specific project. This is supported by the President. It fulfills a promise that, frankly, this Nation made to New York, the last part of it. It is hard to understand why the views have changed. We have been working 4 years to finally complete this promise. Each time objections are raised. If someone doesn't like it on this bill, then make a commitment on what bill we can finally get it done because I am going to try to get this on any piece of legislation that moves in the Senate until the promise to the people of my city and, frankly, the people of America is finally fulfilled.

I say this to the 98 other Senators not from New York: If 9/11 had happened in your State, you would be down here on the floor of the Senate making the same fight we are making. You would not allow anything to get in the way of a promise that had been made to a city or State, particularly when the arguments made don't really apply—not an earmark, not a train to nowhere, and not something that was done in the dark of night.

I want to note again that the Bush administration has been supportive. I have many disagreements with the White House on a host of issues, but they have been helpful and true to their word on this issue. President Bush himself has. I have thanked him for it repeatedly. The President believes it is important to keep his promise. This body should feel the same way. That is why he put his proposal in four consecutive budgets. That is why when the administration issued its statement of administrative policy on this bill, they did not note any objection to this provision.

I know there can be objections. That is part of what we do around here. But I haven't seen a good argument against this other than you don't believe New York City should get the money that was promised to it. This is about keeping a promise. I am going to make sure, to the best of my ability in this body, that this promise is kept. My constituents demand it. Fairness demands it. If this were about your State, you would demand it too.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

Mrs. MCCASKILL. Mr. President, I rise to talk about an amendment that I hope to offer on the reauthorization of the Federal Aviation Administration. It is an important amendment, and I want to discuss it so that my colleagues understand what this amendment is about.

This is a picture of an airplane that was provided to my office by a U.S. safety inspector. A pilot for a Chinese carrier requested permission and landed in Frankfurt, Germany, for an unscheduled refueling stop. They were running low on fuel. This is what the U.S. safety inspector provided us. This is what German workers found—seatbelts wrapped around fan blades.

There is a seatbelt. There is a seatbelt, as you can see, and the structure behind. They did this to minimize turbulence because there had been an engine that had failed. The inspection found that a total of three engines had to be replaced before the plane was going to be allowed to take off again.

What does this have to do with the amendment? In the latest audit, the Department of Transportation inspector general found that 67 percent of the heavy maintenance—not talking about kicking the tires or changing the oil—of U.S. commercial aircraft is now being performed by foreign repair stations. In a series of reports, the inspector general has identified many gaps in FAA oversight for these foreign repair stations.

What this amendment does is seek to apply the same standards of safety and security to all of these foreign repair stations that U.S. carriers are using. That is a pretty reasonable proposition. If you have a commercial carrier that is serviced in the United States at an FAA certified facility, it is likely an FAA inspector is onsite, a constant presence. There are requirements of drug and alcohol checks. There is perimeter security. There are standards that must be met in terms of these repair stations. How does it make sense that we don't demand those same standards for American carriers that are using foreign repair stations? Most Americans would be surprised to find out that we don't. That is what this amendment is going to fix.

I thank Senator SPECTER for cosponsoring this amendment. I want to spend a little bit of time talking about what the amendment contains, but I want to make sure that not only is the problem just whether the work being done is not up to the standards we would expect in some of these foreign repair stations, I want to talk about security issues.

My mom is going to be 80 this summer. She has had two knee replacements. She can't go through an airport without being wanded, many times her suitcase being opened. We all know that we have to check our shampoo. We have to not carry water bottles

through security anymore. I think the American flying public understands and has accepted these incredibly intrusive measures because they want safety. They want security. They want to make sure that when they fly, they are safe. So they have said: OK, I am going to take a bunch of time at the airport. I will stand in lines. I will have a wand. I will have people patting my body. I am going to do all this because I want safety and security.

In 2003, an inspector general report found that there was an al-Qaida member working at a foreign repair station in Singapore. The report discovered easy access to facilities by outsiders and found the FAA was leaving employee background checks and drug and alcohol testing up to individual airlines.

We note that in December 2001 a senior aircraft technician at a foreign repair station was found to be a member of the terrorist organization Al Qaeda. . . . The aircraft technician photographed U.S. aircraft as potential targets for a terrorist attack.

Really, is it fair that we all are worrying about whether we have 1 ounce too much of shampoo when we have not taken the basic steps to make sure al-Qaida is not under the hood? I think most Americans would be shocked to see this inconsistency in our sense of urgency and caution when it comes to the safety of the flying public.

What does this amendment do? It is pretty simple. First, it requires identification and oversight of foreign repair facilities that are noncertified. The FAA must submit a plan to Congress within 6 months of enactment to identify and expand its oversight of all noncertified facilities used by U.S. air carriers. Keep in mind, these U.S. air carriers are not just outsourcing the labor to foreign repair stations that are FAA certified in foreign nations. They are also outsourcing the work to noncertified FAA facilities.

I keep asking the FAA in hearings: Why do we have certification? I will say: Do you think certification is important?

The FAA officials will say: Yes, we think it is important.

I say: Then why do we have it, if we don't require everybody to have it? What is the point? Why are we letting carriers use noncertified facilities if the certification is important to our safety and security? It doesn't make sense.

This amendment would, in fact, require that those carriers use certified facilities if they are, in fact, going to use foreign repair stations. It will require the FAA to do two inspections a year. I do not think that is a heavy lift: two inspections a year of their facilities, wherever they may be.

It will require drug and alcohol testing of employees performing maintenance at foreign repair stations. It has been interesting to me because we have had some push-backs from some places about this because of some countries that want us not to require this be-

cause they currently have work of U.S. carriers and they do not want America to require FAA oversight to this degree. One of the things they protest most—some of these nations—is the drug and alcohol testing. Well, with all due respect, I really do not think Americans are excited about the idea that we would waive drug and alcohol testing for people who are working on airplanes. I think that is a basic. It certainly would be a basic in this country. I think it is certainly something the American people would expect.

It will also enforce the TSA requirements that foreign repair stations comply with security standards issued by the Transportation Security Administration.

It will update foreign repair station fee schedules to ensure taxpayers are not subsidizing the outsourcing of this work.

Here is the part that gets me a little bit cranky about this whole situation. It is one thing for companies to want to outsource labor to other countries because it is cheaper. Now, other than the need to fix our Tax Code, we do not encourage the outsourcing of jobs. It is not as if we can require corporations in our country to keep all their jobs in the United States. That is a tough thing for us to do in an open democracy, in a free market economy. I will tell you what we can do, though. We can sure make absolutely certain these companies are not doing it with the help of taxpayer dollars.

Right now, as to the certified repair facilities that are in foreign countries, the U.S. taxpayers are underwriting the bill for those inspections and that certification. In other words, the companies can outsource the labor to a country where it is less expensive, and taxpayers are footing part of the bill for the safety and security of those facilities.

Now, if you are going to go for a less expensive labor cost, it seems to me that you, at a minimum, ought to add to that savings the cost of the inspections by the U.S. Government. Why should the taxpayers foot the bill for FAA inspectors to fly over to Singapore to inspect a facility? That does not seem fair. So this makes sure the people who are using the foreign repair stations are absorbing the costs of inspecting and keeping those foreign repair stations up to our standards. Obviously, it requires the regular inspector general oversight of the implementation of this provision.

This is very reasonable. The House has similar language in its bill. I think this makes sense. I think it is something, frankly, the American public would be surprised to understand, that we have this huge gap in our safety and security oversight for the flying public.

I look forward to an opportunity for the Members to have a vote on this amendment. I think we all want trade. We all want to make sure we can export American products. We do not want trade agreements that put us at a

disadvantage or, frankly, we want to make sure we still have access to other markets. But we cannot outsource safety. We just cannot. This administration is willing to do that. This administration is willing to say: We are going to let these other countries worry about whether their facilities are safe. I do not think this is one area where the American people want this function of our Government outsourced. I think they want us to be on top of it. I think they want to make sure it is being done right. I think they want to make sure it is being done fairly. I think they want to make sure they are not paying the bill to outsource this work.

At the end of the day, I think they have been cheerful, as Americans always are about what is asked of them, but I do not blame them for being a little worried that there has not been more sense of urgency about the safety and security of this situation in light of all of the money we have spent in the name of national security and, importantly, homeland security.

Mr. President, I yield the floor 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. ROCKEFELLER. 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. ROCKEFELLER. Mr. President, I would like to take a few moments today to discuss what is a catastrophe all across our Nation—and it certainly is in West Virginia—because of the price of gasoline and other transportation fuels.

My State is not wealthy. I think it is either the third or fourth poorest State in our country, and I do not say that with shame, I say that with pride because it was, in a sense, one of the reasons I was a VISTA volunteer. I went there as a VISTA volunteer because I saw a place where I could at least try to help. The people are the best ever. When people have to struggle to make it, day-in and day-out, they are pretty solid people.

As I am sure it is the case for all of my colleagues, for the past few weeks and months I have been hearing from my constituents constantly about rising gasoline prices and the resulting rise in the prices for goods and services throughout our economy.

West Virginians are hurting. West Virginians will always find a way to persevere—always—but right now many are struggling to juggle expenses, making enormous sacrifices to feed and clothe their families, while trying to pay the cost of going to work. We have plants in West Virginia which people drive hours and hours every day to get to. Work is not easily found, so where it is, people have to drive. We are 96 percent mountains, 4 percent flat. We have a lot of roads. People

pretty much have canceled the occasional splurge for a movie. We have a baseball team in West Virginia. That has pretty much been pushed off. In other words, if it is a nonemergency purchase, they bypass it. It takes away from their happiness, their stability as a family, but they have no choice. Belts have been tightened just about as far as belts can be tightened.

Yet, this week, we hear that oil company profits are again nearing or exceeding record highs and that these companies have no plan and these companies have no desire to increase domestic refining capacity—one of the very few things we know would actually help bring down prices.

The Energy Information Administration and private sector energy experts tell us to expect gasoline and diesel fuel prices to continue to rise for the foreseeable future. I do not know what that means. I do not think West Virginians care very much what that means. It just means a long time. And a week, a month, is a long time. This is well beyond the usual cyclical annual price fluctuation. And the so-called summer driving season is not even here yet. But other than a brief dip in January, the price West Virginians have been paying at the pump has been climbing steadily since before Christmas—not as noticeable at first, now catastrophic.

The average price for a gallon of regular gasoline in West Virginia has risen from just over \$2.70 a gallon in August 2007 to a price on the last day of April 2008 of \$3.71. I do not have new wage data for workers in my State. I wish I did. But I am willing to stand on the floor of the Senate and assert that nobody's salary has risen to match that 37-percent increase.

The idea of \$4-a-gallon gasoline—which 2, 3, 4, 5 years ago would have sounded crazy—really now is a matter not so much of “if,” but “when.” The timeframe I just mentioned is relevant, of course, because we are a country that has been at war in Iraq for more than 5 years—spending money, letting people do corruption at all levels. I am always suspicious of oil companies. When our brave American forces set out to impose regime change on that country based upon the false—or at least unforgivably imprecise; I prefer the word “false”—intelligence, West Virginians were paying, on average, \$1.63 for regular gasoline. That was not that long ago. It had been as low as \$1.26 in the months leading up to the invasion.

It should come as no surprise to anyone within the sound of my voice, but in that time oil industry profits have risen steadily: almost \$60 billion in profits in 2003, just over \$80 billion in profits in 2004, approximately \$110 billion in profits in 2005, just under \$120 billion in 2006, and just over \$120 billion so far in 2007. ExxonMobil, Shell, and ChevronTexaco have each had increasingly larger profits each of the last 5 years. BP and ConocoPhillips have

done nearly as well. In all, the five largest integrated multinational oil companies have reaped almost \$560 billion in profits since President Bush and Vice President CHENEY came into town. I don't particularly want to do it that way, because I blame the companies more than I blame them, but there is lots of blame to go around.

Anyone who looks at the numbers can make this about politics, of course. It is easy to do. But this is, in essence, for me, a former Vista volunteer in my 44th year in West Virginia, all about people. It is simply all about people and families who have been struggling anyway. The average salary for the average working family of four in West Virginia is \$31,000. That is not a lot of money, before you get to all of this, and then it is even less.

Today, if you are lucky enough to live or work near Sam's Club in Vienna, WV, which is on the Ohio River, and you can afford to become a member there, you can get a gallon of gasoline for \$3.49. It is hard for anyone I know in West Virginia to think of that as cheap, but it is the lowest price reported in the entire State. Frankly, based on the data I have seen, it is so much lower than the rest of the State that you almost have to consider it an anomaly.

If you are running low in Spencer, WV, a rural community, however, you need to be prepared to pay \$3.82 at the Exxon station on Main Street. It is \$3.79 in South Charleston. Residents of Huntington are paying \$3.75. In Berkeley Springs, not far from Washington, it is \$3.69. No West Virginia county—none—is reporting an average price per gallon of regular gasoline that is below \$3.61. Only three of my States' 55 counties are reporting average gasoline prices lower than \$3.67.

Individual price quotes at individual stations are ominous enough, but the real stark numbers, the real telling calculation, is how much more West Virginians are paying for gasoline than they were in years past, and that is not even getting into the meteoric rises in food prices and the other costs essential to daily living. Even those in West Virginia who travel by air, which is the subject of the bill we are meant to be on, those prices have gone up.

Since 2001, West Virginia households are paying almost \$2,500 per year more for gasoline. If it is a household with children, that makes it \$3,000. I take my colleagues back to the average salary for the average family of four, working family of four in West Virginia: \$31,000. When you add on health care, food, rent, and all the rest, everything else, it is an enormous matter. If it is a household with teenagers, it is just below \$3,600 more. Families, businesses, and farmers in West Virginia will spend \$153 million more on gasoline in April 2008 than they spent in January 2001.

If prices remain at current levels, \$1.83 billion more will be spent on gasoline in West Virginia this year than

was spent in 2001. West Virginia consumers, farmers, and businesses are on a track to pay \$2.96 billion for gasoline this year.

So West Virginians are asking two questions: How did we get here; but to them, much more importantly, what can be done to fix this.

Nobody in Government, academia, or the private industry can give us a single definitive equation for what makes the price of oil go up and down. We don't know why, but we can't. Generally, increased demand from China, India, and much of the developing world has set the stage obviously for prices that we have to take into consideration.

Much of our oil comes from an unregulated and unresponsive cartel called OPEC. We also know that since the tragic terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the world price for petroleum has been affected by a global struggle against stateless thugs.

The instability brought about by the invasion in Iraq has done nothing but raise the pump price. I don't know a single benefit to our Nation that has been accomplished there. But smaller factors have also had huge consequences. Instability in Nigeria and the outrageous behavior in Venezuela have contributed in similarly negative ways. The recent strike by refinery and pipeline workers in Scotland, unbeknownst to many of our citizens, will not help. Likewise for the very serious refinery explosion in Utah this week.

Economists cannot pinpoint how much speculation in the commodities market is adding to the price of oil, but a congressional study in 2005 suggested it was in the \$20 to \$25 per barrel range. A more recent study announced by Public Citizen said it is now closer to \$30 a barrel. It doesn't matter. Every cent of that is being seen at the gas pumps in West Virginia and around the country, and it hurts, and trying to give a worldwide economic explanation for it doesn't solve anybody's problems or anybody's pain.

We know, too, that the price is manipulated up and down the supply chain. Nobody will ever convince me that there is not a large amount of corruption and manipulation, deliberate, cozy and easy, that goes on around boardrooms in oil companies. From the huge oil companies that find the oil, through more markets and middlemen than we can keep up with, every player has the ability to force the price up for their own bottom line. There is manipulation beyond the reach of my people in West Virginia or the Presiding Officer's people in the State of Colorado. We are at their mercy. We pay the price, we are at the mercy—at the mercy of oil. Federal investigators cannot usually pinpoint collusion, but those acting independently to manipulate prices cost the people of West Virginia all the same. There are a lot of things Federal regulators never manage to find.

In the long term, the things we need to do sound basic—and this is the final

part of my remarks and the important part, other than the overriding theme of anger—such as increasing supply and reducing consumption, but achieving these goals has proved to be very difficult.

I have long supported efforts to improve automobile fuel efficiency, and so have most other people—not all. We made a small and long overdue change last year, and I believe we will do more. I think CAFE standards are going to go up and up, as they should; cars will get smaller and smaller, as they should. That will not be good for my legs, but it will be good for my people. But even when Detroit catches up with the rest of the world's automakers on fuel efficiency—I repeat, catches up—we do need to add to our supply now.

That is why in 2006, I supported Senator DOMENICI's legislation to increase oil and gas exploration in the eastern Gulf of Mexico. When these new fields are fully on line, they will add 1.26 billion barrels of oil to our domestic supply. Now, I say that, but I also have to say in all honesty that I voted against virtually every other attempt to do drilling offshore and in ANWR, for example. ANWR to me has always been a shibboleth. People say: Well, we can get lots of supply there, just as many people or more say it is technically feasible or maybe it is economically feasible, but it is not both. In the meantime, the tundra continues to melt.

That is why I have also consistently supported holding off on additional deposits in our Strategic Petroleum Reserve. It is more than 97 percent full as it is, and there is no economic rationale for filling it to the brim with \$120 per barrel of oil. That product should be making its way into the market some place.

I joined my colleagues earlier this year to ask the President to suspend deliveries into the petroleum reserve until the price of oil drops below \$75 a barrel. Since the President persists in refusing to stop taking oil off the market, I will support legislation to force him to do it.

I also support, as I have in the past on several occasions, the imposition of a windfall profits tax on integrated multinational oil companies. People say this won't have any effect. I would like to try that out to show that they are wrong and to send a message. The oil companies are making so much money maybe they won't even notice it. But I doubt that, because there are now 300 million Americans who are very angry about what very few of them are doing. As I have said, these companies are making huge, perhaps unconscionable—not perhaps—totally unconscionable profits off the hard-working people in my State and off the wages of struggling Americans everywhere. If they refuse to reinvest in additional refining capacity, which has been their habit, the least we can do is use some of those profits to shore up

the highway trust fund for the road infrastructure and transportation projects that we need for the 21st century, and perhaps even for something called aviation. Those projects would create jobs.

I will also reintroduce legislation this week that I first introduced in 2001. It is called the Low Income Gasoline Assistance Program, or LIGAP. This will provide some relief to Americans hardest hit by any rise in prices; to wit, the working poor, which describes a lot of my State. For many West Virginia seniors who have no means of getting to work, the grocery store, or to a doctor's appointment other than their cars or trucks, if they have them, LIGAP assistance for gasoline purchases will enable them to weather this crisis with a little more peace of mind. I say "if they have them" because many people in communities I have worked in throughout West Virginia don't have automobiles, so when they have to go somewhere, usually a pretty long distance, they have to hitch a ride. Even though our people are innately good and generous, because they depend on others as others depend on them, they will usually charge a fee for that ride. In any event, whether they can even take that ride will depend on whether they can afford the gasoline price to get there.

So LIGAP eligibility would be linked to and modeled after LIHEAP, the very successful and efficient home heating and cooling assistance program. Funds would be distributed to States as additions to allocations under the existing community development block grant program.

It makes sense. For everyone who qualifies, LIGAP would give stipends of between \$100 and \$165 a month. Hopefully, this may mean not having to scrimp on their children's food or cut back on prescription drugs and other family needs.

Families are the basis of our country. People are the basis of everything we do. It is just that there are some sectors of our economy that choose to avoid that because they don't have to depend upon those people because those people have no choice but to buy their products.

It is time for Congress and the administration to come together and stop bickering—it would be a majestic accomplishment—and stop fighting over turf, as we are doing on the aviation bill. While we engage in parliamentary tactics that most Americans don't give a hoot about—in fact, they hate us for doing it—West Virginians and citizens in every State are suffering, while oil companies are laughing all the way to their many banks. This must stop. I ask my colleagues to work with me to make this stop.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska is recognized.

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, we import more than 12.5 million barrels a day of petroleum—over 60 percent of

our petroleum energy needs. As a matter of fact, I think it is higher than that now, in the last 2 or 3 days. This is why our economy and the value of the dollar has weakened and our energy costs have skyrocketed. With oil at \$117 a barrel—and it is more than that today—the United States spends nearly \$1.5 billion each day on foreign oil. That is \$533 billion each year that was not invested in our own economy.

Instead, that money is being sent—along with jobs—to other countries, such as Saudi Arabia, Nigeria, and Venezuela. For every million barrels of oil we import, 20,000 American jobs are lost.

Our country needs a real economic stimulus now. That stimulus will come when we stop spending hundreds of billions of dollars each year to import oil and, instead, invest that money in our own economy by increasing domestic production of our energy resources.

The area known as ANWR is a million and a half acres that was reserved for oil and gas development on the Arctic slope in 1980; it is the largest untapped oilfield in North America. We believe that is the largest trap for oil in North America. Oil companies estimate they will spend between \$45 billion and \$60 billion to develop this area. Combined with the construction of the Alaska natural gas pipeline, which is expected to start soon, it will cost about \$40 billion. These resources would deliver a massive influx of jobs and capital investment in the United States. Our economy would be stabilized, and the dollar would be strengthened.

ANWR and the Alaska gas pipeline are only the beginning. This infrastructure would help lead to further development of Alaska's Outer Continental Shelf. We have more than two thirds of that Outer Continental Shelf. It has been expanded another 100 miles north of Alaska, as we discovered a further extension of the shelf. The Chukchi Sea holds an estimated 16 billion barrels of oil, and there is an estimated 7 billion barrels in the Beaufort Sea off our State. Bringing these resources on line would add even more jobs and capital to our economy.

Full development of ANWR would result in at least 60,000 jobs. Opening ANWR alone would require the construction of a fleet of 19 new tankers to transport the oil to the Lower 48. Those would be American-built tankers. Under the law, they must be—under the Jones Act. This alone would create at least 2,000 direct jobs in the U.S. shipbuilding industry and approximately 3,000 additional jobs in other sectors of our economy. The energy industry estimates the Alaska gas pipeline alone will create 400,000 new jobs nationwide.

Senator SCHUMER made an interesting statement the other day. He suggested that opening ANWR would reduce gas prices by only pennies. He took a shot at the President, saying he takes out the old saw of ANWR, that

ANWR would not produce a drop of oil in 10 years, and it is estimated that if we drilled in ANWR, in 20 years, it would reduce the price one penny.

I am afraid that shows how little the Senator from New York understands the oil industry. He ignores the long-term economic stimulus domestic production will bring through investment in our own country—raising household incomes and individual buying power, rather than sending money overseas. Senator SCHUMER would ask other nations, such as Saudi Arabia, to increase their production as a solution to our energy crisis.

I agree that increased production would help solve our problem but that production should occur in our own country. I think the Senator should realize what is happening in terms of the oil industry, and the key driver now to the cost of gasoline is not the supply and demand, it is the value of the dollar and the value of oil per se. The value of oil now is represented by paper on the New York Stock Exchange, which has replaced gold. People are speculating in oil. That is also what is causing the price of gasoline to go up at the pump. Senator SCHUMER should visit NYMEX and ask them to do something about that and stop the speculation in oil. I think it should be unlawful to speculate in anything related to energy in this country. I think soon we will do that.

This production has to come from our own country. The position of the Senator from New York would send more money in tax and royalty revenues outside our economy. I don't know how that will strengthen our dollar or lower prices at the pump at all. It is not a question of supply and demand, it is a question of a long-term commitment to restore our capability to produce oil and gas in this country.

Had President Clinton not vetoed the ANWR bill before, we would be producing at least 2 million barrels a day more out of Alaska right now. I don't like to be chided by the Senator from New York about why we don't have more production in this country. He is suggesting we ask the foreign producers to produce more oil and send it to us. That will send more money out of the country and take more of our jobs. I don't understand that.

In 1995, when we approved the amendment allowing development of the Arctic Plain, President Clinton vetoed that legislation, and we are paying for the consequences of that today. Had he not vetoed the legislation, the Trans Alaska Pipeline—which currently operates at less than 50 percent of capacity—as a matter of fact, it is even worse than that, about 38 percent of capacity. We are sending out about 700,000 barrels a day instead of 2.5 million barrels a day. We could easily have that pipeline—we call it a barrel—full and offset imports and keep our trade deficit down and keep jobs and money in our economy. In the long run—not short run—increased production does

affect the price at the pump. We would continue to increase domestic production of oil and that, in effect, would give us competition against the price set by foreign producers, and we would be able to reduce the price at the pump in the long run.

Between the Outer Continental Shelf, ANWR, the National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska—which is now ready to be leased—and the resources remaining in Prudhoe Bay, we believe we would have at least 45 billion barrels of oil left to produce. That is an estimate. When they estimated how much oil was in Prudhoe Bay, they estimated 1 billion barrels. We produced 18 billion. I remind the Senate of that. So we have produced more than that, and it is still producing. At full capacity, we ought to be able to deliver at least 2.5 million barrels to the daily market. We have oil from outside the Arctic, by the way. We can reduce the impact of sending more and more money out of the country and affect the American economy as we spend that money here at home. That money would generate tax and royalty revenues, fund research into alternative energy sources, create jobs, help strengthen the dollar, and lower our energy prices in the long run.

The weak dollar is what is causing speculation in oil futures and increasing the price of oil and gas at the pump. We need investment in our own country, which develops our own resources, instead of relying on those from other countries. By increasing domestic production, we would meet our own Nation's needs, strengthen the economy, and begin creating jobs and generating revenue, which would be re-invested back into our economy. That is the way to a strong economy, a stable dollar, lower energy prices, and to reduce the demand on foreign oil and the cost of gasoline at the pump. We have to stop sending our money abroad and sending jobs abroad to pay for energy resources, when we can use the money at home to develop the vast resources we have.

Alaska is the storehouse of energy for the future. It should not be cast aside as it has been. I hope we will find a way to vote on ANWR this year.

I yield the floor.

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, 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. DORGAN. 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. DORGAN. Mr. President, my understanding is the pending business is on the FAA reauthorization bill; is that correct?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is correct.

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I hope no one is out of breath this week as a result of working on this bill. We had

one vote on Monday at 5:30 p.m. and have not voted since. With legislation this important to this country, why are we not able to move ahead and cast votes and finish this legislation?

This is about FAA reauthorization which includes the issue of modernization of our air traffic control system, which is very important. We read in the newspapers these days about the additional inspections that are required of airlines. We read about airlines going bankrupt because of fuel costs. We read that the FAA system for air traffic control is archaic. We are told that the GPS system in your car is more sophisticated than the system by which we move airplanes around this country in the air traffic control system. We hear the problems with the air traffic controllers, the contract problems they have had with the FAA, the shortage of air traffic controllers, the number who will retire in the near future, and the need for training of additional controllers. We read about all these things in the news. We read about systems that still use vacuum tubes in the air traffic control system because it is that old.

The question for this Congress is, can we pass legislation that reauthorizes the FAA functions and then provides the funding to modernize this system of ours?

We have a lot of people who visit this Capital city, and most of them fly in by airplane. This country moves back and forth quickly from coast to coast using, in most cases, commercial air transportation. They don't think very much of it, frankly. You can fly from one coast to the other in 5 or 6 hours. It is not unusual to leave one part of this country and end up in another part before lunch. It is a wonderful thing to have this system of commercial air travel. The fact is, this system will not survive for a number of reasons under the current circumstances.

As I indicated the other day, I believe there are four airlines that have declared bankruptcy in recent weeks. We also understand, in addition, what high fuel costs are doing to the airlines, and we are talking now about the airlines in this legislation before us. But I could talk about the trucking industry, or I could talk about families and farmers. I can talk about what the high fuel prices are doing to all of this country. There is no heavier user of fuel than an airline.

What is happening is the fuel prices are undermining the opportunity for many of these airlines both to continue operating, in some cases, and, in other cases, to continue operating serving smaller areas or less populated areas of the country. So fuel prices are a serious problem.

The other issue is the modernization of the air traffic control system, the system by which we provide for the safety of the American people. There is going to be a catastrophe one of these days, and then everybody is going to stand around thumbing their sus-

penders, scratching their heads, and saying: Why didn't we do something about it?

We have a bill on the floor of the Senate right now to try to address this situation, to try to modernize this system, and we have been at parade rest since Monday because we are not allowed to move forward. Everything is blocked. Everything is plugged up. This is unbelievable.

This is important. Some people around here treat the serious things far too lightly and then treat the light things too seriously and never understand the difference. Why is it on a Thursday that legislation as important as this, that should have been passed in previous years, cannot even get amendments up and cannot get votes off because we have people who have decided they are just going to block everything?

I told a group in North Dakota a while back about Mark Twain. Mark Twain once was asked if he would engage in a debate. He said: Oh, sure, as long as I can take the negative side.

We haven't even told you the subject of the debate.

He said: It doesn't matter, the negative side is going to require no preparation.

The negative side never requires preparation. Those who are out here saying, no, you can't, they want to block it. That requires no preparation. What requires preparation is to advance public policy that is in the interest of this country. Does anybody really think modernizing our air traffic control system is somehow a backburner issue? We see what is happening in the skies in this country. They are absolutely clogged. In fact, because of fuel prices and other reasons, we have airlines now switching to smaller planes, these little regional jets skirting around the sky, hauling as many people but just takes more planes to do it. So that puts an unbelievable strain on the air traffic system.

The question is, Are we going to modernize it? Are we going to do what is necessary? Are we going to provide the funding? Are we going to finally get off this delaying nonsense that is going on and allow legislation to move forward that is essential for the safety of the air traveling public?

I hope the answer at some point soon is yes. This includes items such as the Airport Improvement Program, what is called the AIP, investing in infrastructure in this country. That is very important. Land at some of these airports and take a look at the infrastructure and ask yourself whether we need this investment.

It is interesting, if you travel around the world. If you go to Tegucigalpa, Honduras, and then get in a car and drive to Juticalpa. Take a look at the roads and ask yourself whether infrastructure matters. Land in some of the airports in some of these remote areas and take a look at what you are landing on and the infrastructure needs of

that airport. Then ask yourself whether infrastructure is important.

We have always prided ourselves in this country on the investment in infrastructure. When you come to America, you see infrastructure that is maintained. We have always prided ourselves on that until recently, and now somehow infrastructure doesn't matter. It takes a back seat.

In my little subcommittee on appropriations that I chair, the President says: Let's cut water funding by \$1 billion from last year's levels for the Corps of Engineers and the Bureau of Reclamation. These agencies fund much of the nation's water projects and were cut by \$1 billion, even as we have 950 water projects in this country which we are paying for in Iraq. Think of that. Let's cut water projects in this country and investment in the future of this country by \$1 billion, the President says. However, let's have 950 water projects that the American taxpayers will pay for in Iraq.

I think it is time to start taking care of a few things at home. One of them is the legislation on the floor of the Senate right now, and that is the FAA Reauthorization Act and the investment and the modernization of the air traffic control system. If we do not pay attention to that, we are going to run into very serious problems. I might also say, tragic problems because there is going to be some sort of spectacular tragedy, and then we are all going to sit around and say that somebody should have done something.

We are trying to do something. The fact is, we cannot even get a vote on an amendment on the floor of the Senate. It is unbelievable. As I said in the Mark Twain example, the easiest thing in the world is to oppose. It takes no talent, it takes no time to prepare, just oppose, oppose everything.

My hope is in the next couple of hours, perhaps there will be some here who wish to move ahead. I know Senator REID has been on the floor offering unanimous consent requests. He has talked with the minority to see if there are conditions under which we might be able to move forward and get something done on some legislation. I understand it takes a while to get things done. I understand we should be deliberative. I understand there should be enough research so we don't have unintended consequences to what we do. Nobody has ever accused this body of speeding, ever, But this is ridiculous. This makes a glacier look fast.

My hope is that those of us who are elected to come here, who try to make some improvements in this country, who do what is necessary for the health and safety of the people of this country will soon understand that the FAA reauthorization bill is not just some other piece of legislation, that it is an optional piece of legislation. The modernization of the air traffic control system is not some option that we ought to consider like any other bill. This is urgent and necessary and timely, and we ought to do it now.

ENERGY

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I wish to talk about energy. Several colleagues have spoken about energy prices, and I related energy prices to the airline industry a few moments ago. I mentioned several bankruptcies that have occurred recently, intensive heavy users of energy in the airline industry, and what it might mean. This country needs a commercial airline industry that works. Without it, there will be devastating consequences to our economy. The question is, What do we do here?

My colleague from Alaska made a point with which I agree. He talked about the speculation in these markets with respect to energy. I wish to talk about that issue. I have some charts.

This is a chart that shows the speculator activity in the oil futures market from January 1996 to April 2008. This is the activity by speculators in the futures markets. These are not people who want to buy oil or hold oil. They have no tanks in which to put oil. They are not interested in oil. They want to buy what they will never get from people who never had it. This is what speculating is about.

Here is the increase in speculation in the commodities market for oil. It is an unbelievable ramp-up, an orgy of speculation, having nothing to do with the fundamentals of oil supply and demand. There is no justification for the current price of oil if we simply look at supply and demand. Supply is up a bit; demand is down a bit. There is no justification with the current fundamentals of supply and demand that would seriously justify the current price of oil.

So then what has changed? What is different? Why is this price \$115 or \$120 a barrel for oil, acting like a yo-yo at the upper end? A couple issues have changed, especially this. We have hedge funds that are now neck deep in the commodities markets speculating on oil. We have investment banks that are speculating on oil. For the first time in history, I believe, investment banks are actually buying oil storage capacity to buy oil and take oil off the market to sell it later when it is more expensive. This is speculation, raw speculation. I suppose everybody is making money. The brokers are making money, the investment banks, the hedge funds—they are all wallowing to the bank full of cash, driving up the price of oil beyond what the fundamentals would suggest the price should be.

We know those people who are winning, but who are the losers? Well, our country. This is something that is providing great damage to our country's economy. Families drive up to the gas pumps, and it hurts to fill the tanks. Farmers, heavy users of energy and fertilizer that comes from energy, are losers. It is an unbelievable burden on family farmers. Airlines, they just cannot fly through this storm. They go belly up. The list goes on and on.

If this is what is happening with the ramp-up of speculation and it is caus-

ing an increase in prices, here is what has happened to oil prices. No one needs a chart to know this, but oil prices doubled in just over one year. Speculation goes up, up, way up, and oil prices have doubled in one year.

Let me cite some folks who have talked about this issue. Stephen Simon, senior vice president of ExxonMobil, April 1, a month ago:

“The price of oil should be about \$50-\$55 per barrel.” This from an executive in the oil company. I do not think his company is complaining about where the price is. He is just being candid. According to him, the price of oil ought to be about \$50 or \$55 per barrel, assuming current fundamentals.

Clarence Cazalot, CEO, Marathon Oil, October 30, 2007:

\$100 oil isn't justified by the physical demand in the market.

Experts, including the former head of ExxonMobil, say financial speculation in the energy market has grown so much over the last 30 years that it now adds 20 to 30 percent or more to the price of a barrel of oil.

Think of that.

Speculation in the energy markets has grown so much over the last 30 years that it now adds 20 to 30 percent or more to the price of a barrel of oil.

I understand the need for a marketplace futures market. It is required for hedging. It is required for liquidity. I understand it is necessary, and I understand we want one that works so there needs to be a futures market, but I also understand that when the futures market becomes something much more than just something that provides for hedging and liquidity. When it becomes an object of intense speculation, then there is a requirement for some intervention. No one quite knows what that intervention should be, but everyone ought to know that it is unhealthy when you have an unbelievable amount of speculation.

There are books written about bubbles in speculation. We have been through recent speculations. The tech bubble that occurred almost a decade ago. The bubble in housing prices is occurring. We have seen and understand about bubbles. This is a bubble of speculation.

Go back 500 years and read about tulip mania. If you have not read about it, I encourage you to do it. Yes, tulip mania. There was a time you could buy a tulip bulb for \$25,000. With the hindsight of 400 or 500 years, we can understand how unbelievably absurd it was, but it was a bubble, a financial speculative binge that was almost indescribable.

What is happening in this marketplace now—and most experts will agree—is we have this unbelievable amount of speculation in the futures market that does not justify the current price. The American people and American industry deserve to have a government, in those cases, that steps in and says: There is something wrong here, and we are going to find a way to set it right. This is one of the areas.

This man—in fact, I talked to this man last evening—Mr. Fadel Gheit, the top energy analyst for Oppenheimer Company. He has been there 30 years, he has testified before the Congress, and he is a very interesting fellow.

There is absolutely no shortage of oil . . . I'm absolutely convinced that oil prices should not be a dime above \$55 a barrel. . . . Oil speculators include the largest financial institutions in the world.

He said further:

I call it the world's largest gambling hall . . . it's open 24/7 . . . unfortunately it's totally unregulated . . . this is like a highway with no cops and no speed limit and everybody's going 120 miles an hour.

That is pretty well said, it seems to me. It describes this bubble of speculation that does damage to our economy and needs to be addressed by this Government. It is not the case that everybody hurts as a result of this.

This is a Wall Street Journal article of February 28, 2008. This is Andrew Hall. I wouldn't know Andrew Hall from a cord of wood. I just see his picture here. Over the past 5 years, Mr. Hall's compensation has totaled well over a quarter of a billion dollars.

What does Mr. Hall do? He makes money by speculating in the commodities market, according to this article. He is not alone. I pulled this because it is an article about him and he has made a lot of money. He has made a lot of money as someone who speculates in these commodity markets.

Is speculation something that is good for these markets? Absolutely not. When you have a speculative binge that drives these prices way out of sight, well above that which would be justified, it can be devastating to the country's economy.

That describes what is happening with respect to speculation. To address the issue of energy, it requires a lot of things. We must do this. If we do not address the issue of speculation, we are not going to solve the problem. We are just not.

But there are other things to do. For example, this administration is putting close to 70,000 barrels of oil a day, every single day, underground. It is being put in something called the Strategic Petroleum Reserve. The Strategic Petroleum Reserve is a pretty good idea because it saves some oil for a rainy day. But just not for any rainy day, for an emergency, strategic emergency, something unanticipated, so we developed it for this purpose. That makes sense to me. But should we take oil when it costs \$115 or \$120 a barrel and stick it underground, 70,000 barrels? Of course not. That is absolutely nuts. Why would you take the highest priced oil in history, take it out of the supply, stick it underground and by doing so increase the price of oil and increase the price of gasoline?

A man named Dr. Philip Verleger testified before the Congress. He is an economist and energy expert. He said that, by taking a disproportionate amount of oil, a subset of oil called

sweet light crude, out of the supply chain, it has increased the price of oil by 10 percent. You know, with more than \$100 a barrel oil, that is at least \$10 a barrel for light sweet crude. It is the most Byzantine thing one can imagine.

I have a piece of legislation to stop it. There are now 67 U.S. Senators who have declared themselves to be in support of my approach. There is also a very similar bill that was introduced just the other day by some in the minority, and JOHN MCCAIN running for President out in the country said he supports it. So I have 51 who have signed a letter saying they support suspending the SPR fill for 2008. On top of that, some Republican Senators numbering 15, led by Senator HUTCHISON, also sent a letter to the President. That takes it to 66. JOHN MCCAIN is out there saying he doesn't believe we should do it, so there are at least 67. That makes it a veto-proof margin. So I say let's do it. End the speculation, and there are ways to do that. Second, stop putting oil underground. That ought to be important.

In addition to all of that, let me just say the other menu of issues is not really very complicated either. Should we produce more? My colleague from Alaska says you have to produce more. I don't disagree with that. I was one of four Senators here in the Senate who introduced legislation, now law, that opens up Lease Sale 181 of the Gulf of Mexico. It opens up an opportunity to substantially increase our production of both oil and natural gas in a new region of the Gulf of Mexico. Frankly, if you look at the offshore capability of the Gulf of Mexico and compare it to the offshore options off the West Coast, East Coast or in Alaska, by far the most significant reserves that are achievable by us are in the Gulf of Mexico. We have not even tapped the potential of the Eastern Gulf either.

I and three others initiated the legislation that opened up a portion of the Gulf of Mexico, Lease Sale 181. But there is a lot more to do because it got too narrow. Ought we go back there and produce? You bet we should. There is more production to be had.

In addition to that, conservation is unbelievably important and so is efficiency. Production, conservation, efficiency, and then renewable energy.

Again, we have new technology that allows us to take energy from the wind. I come from a state that has the most wind potential in America. My state has a distinction of being No. 50 in trees, so we are last in America in trees, and we are first in wind. I am not sure where the merits are there, but all of us who live there lean to the northwest because it blows almost every day. We are the Saudi Arabia of wind, as the Department of Energy suggests, and with the new modern wind turbines, we will continue to take energy from the wind and produce electricity.

We have a great experiment going on in which we produce electricity from

wind energy and use that electricity in the process of electrolysis, separating hydrogen from water and storing hydrogen for vehicle fuel. It all makes a lot of sense and helps contribute to our energy future.

There are a lot of things we can and should do. This is not some mysterious illness for which we do not know the cure. This is not some strange disease for which we have no cure. We understand what is happening here, and with a little common sense, perhaps a deep reservoir of common sense, we could begin to fix it. At the very least, we ought to begin to take immediate action to stop putting oil underground, and stop it now. It is time to take some action to stop the unbelievable orgy of speculation in the futures market, and do that soon. Those are the first two steps, and they will reduce the price of gasoline. There is much more to do beyond that, but those are the first two sensible steps we ought to accomplish now.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. NELSON of Nebraska). The Senator from Minnesota.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I am here today to speak on climate change. Before I do that, I commend my colleague, Senator DORGAN, for all of his good work on this oil and gas issue. We have been working together on a number of things he talked about and I do believe that, while I will talk today about the long-term solutions to our energy crisis and the way this can work hand in hand with climate change if we show the kind of leadership we need to show, there are also short-term issues. That means, as he said, cutting down on the speculation, putting things in place, closing down the Enron loophole. In terms of enforcement, to have the Justice Department get some meat on the bone—as a former prosecutor, I know how important that is—and pushing those OPEC nations with which we have business dealings. If we are going to have business dealings with them, then they should not be cutting down or artificially keeping low the production of oil.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I think there are a number of things we can do in the short term, but I am here today to talk about the long-term energy future and climate future for this country.

In 1944, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt invited delegates from the Allied Powers to a remote New Hampshire resort called Bretton Woods to discuss the future of the global economy. Although the world was locked in a terrible war, these leaders had fresh memories of the Great Depression, a worldwide panic that had left the world's major economies in tatters. They wanted their countries to emerge from World War II on a more stable financial footing.

Over the course of 3 weeks, they created the World Bank and the Inter-

national Monetary Fund to battle world poverty and to avert currency crises of the sort that had led to the worldwide economic meltdown in the 1920s. It worked. Both the World Bank and the IMF have had their share of controversies in the last decade, but they succeeded in stabilizing the world's financial systems so that in the ensuing six decades there has never been a global financial disaster comparable to the Great Depression.

I draw on this chapter of history because today the world faces another grave international threat that demands imagination and leadership. This time, the threat is environmental. I am speaking, of course, of global climate change.

The heating of the Earth is a threat every bit as grave as the financial catastrophe that threw the developed world into chaos 80 years ago. The science is clear. Global temperatures are up 1 degree in the last century. That doesn't sound like much, 1 degree in the last century. To put it in perspective, they have risen only 5 degrees since the height of the ice age. The Environmental Protection Agency of this country predicts that temperatures could rise another 3 to 7 degrees in the next 100 years. The consequences are frightening: rising ocean levels, which we are already seeing, increased drought, wildfires, and destructive weather patterns.

The Presiding Officer knows from being in the Midwest that our constituents aren't as focused on rising ocean levels. But I can tell you, in Minnesota they are focused on the fact that last year Lake Superior was at the lowest level in 80 years. Why would the oceans be high and Lake Superior be low? That is because Lake Superior, as you know, is a lake, and when the ice that forms on that lake melts quicker, the water evaporates and the water level goes down. Why do we care about that? You think, are you going to swim in that cold lake? A lot of Minnesotans, probably not, but it matters because our barges cannot get through and it has had a severe economic impact for barge traffic and the economy in the Duluth area.

You can see the rising impacts of global warming and what we are seeing across the country: increasing wildfire risk—remember the fires we had this year in California? We had some in northern Minnesota as well—decreasing water availability. That is in 2007. You go up to the 2020s, increased mortality from heat waves, floods, and droughts; in the 2050s, millions more people face flooding. You go up, if we do not do anything, to some profound and very serious consequences.

Two weeks ago, President Bush gave a speech in the Rose Garden to announce a new initiative on global warming. To be perfectly blunt, I really didn't see anything new in the President's announcement and no initiative that had not been discussed before. The President has proposed that we wait

until the year 2025 before we even stop the increase in the emissions of greenhouse gases.

He did not call for a cut in emissions that was immediate. He did not call for concrete steps to meet the goals. He said it would be unwise to do it at this time.

I believe Americans are leaders not followers. When the world faces a crisis, they do not wait for someone else to go first. Our country has always stepped in and taken leadership. When we see a problem in our own backyard—and my people in Minnesota see shrinking wetlands and endangered wildlife, they have seen what has been going on with our ski resorts and ice fishing—they do something about it.

Our friends across the seas in Europe have recognized the challenge. They have introduced a plan to cut greenhouse gas emissions covering 27 countries. It is a plan covering more than 12,000 industrial sites in 27 countries. And they did it using a concept known as cap and trade.

This was actually started in our country. That is how we reduced acid rain. The European Union did not do everything right. They will be the first to admit that. Their emissions targets were too high. They issued too many carbon permits. But they are getting it back into equilibrium. I believe we are going to learn from what they did, and we will do better when we do it in this country. But the point is, many of these European countries rose to the challenge and took leadership.

Here at home, our country's private investors and business leaders already recognize this challenge. Nationally, venture capital investments in green and clean technologies have increased dramatically. In 2006, venture capital investment in green technologies in the United States reached \$2.9 billion, up 78 percent from a year earlier.

Not only is clean technology the fastest growing venture capital sector, it is now the third largest category of venture capital investment. So when we talk about some of the things Senator DORGAN and I have been talking about with energy, and we mentioned wind, we invented a lot of that wind technology in our country. But now we have fallen behind in wind production to other countries that have government policies in place that pushed that investment.

From what I can see, wind is going to bring jobs across our country. So is solar. So is biofuels. All of these things that cut our dependency on foreign oil and invest in the next generation of new technologies, that money is starting to filter into that area. But I think we can do better in our country.

CEOs from major corporations such as DuPont, Duke Energy, and General Electric see the opportunities, and they are making investments of their own. More than 200 major U.S. corporations such as American Electric Power and DuPont have started buying carbon offsets that are now traded on the

new Chicago Climate Exchange. You can see the global investments I talked about in renewable technologies that have been increased in wind, in solar, and other kinds of renewable technologies.

A company subsidizes a project that reduces greenhouse gas pollution, building a wind turbine, for example, then recoups its investments by selling that offset to another company on the Chicago Exchange. The Chicago Exchange is new, but it reports that it kept 10 million tons of carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere over the last 4 years.

Meanwhile our Nation's Governors and mayors have also stepped up to the challenge. Governors in five Western States, including California and Arizona, have announced they will work together to reduce greenhouse gasses by setting regional targets for lower emissions and establishing a regional cap-and-trade system for buying and selling greenhouse gas credits.

California alone plans to cut its greenhouse gas emissions 25 percent by the year 2020. The Western Greenhouse Gas Initiative builds on other regional initiatives, especially the landmark New England Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, with seven Northeastern and Mid-Atlantic States that have also agreed to a regional cap-and-trade system set to take effect next year. You can see all of the States that have been involved.

In my home State of Minnesota, we have one of the most aggressive renewable electric portfolio standards in the country; a 25-percent reduction. We did this on a bipartisan basis. We did it with the support of ExelEnergy, our biggest electricity company. We did it the way we do things in Minnesota, with a focus on results and getting things done—Leadership.

There is also the U.S. Mayors' Climate Protection Agreement. More than 400 mayors representing over 59 million Americans have pledged to meet or beat the Kyoto Protocol greenhouse gas reduction goals in their own communities. Among the signatories to this agreement are cities in my home State of Minnesota: Minneapolis, St. Paul, Rochester, and Duluth.

I admire these States and communities that have signed onto this agreement for their initiatives and what they are doing. They should be an inspiration for this Congress for national action. There is a famous phrase, "the laboratories of democracy." That is what Justice Brandeis said in one of his most famous opinions when he described the special role of States in the Federal system.

He said:

It is one of the happy incidents of the Federal system that a single courageous State may, if its citizens choose, serve as a laboratory; and try novel social and economic experiments without risk to the rest of the country.

But Brandeis did not mean this would serve as an excuse for inaction

by the Federal Government. We have States all over this country, Governors, legislatures that have been brave, that have been courageous in taking action on climate change. But never, when Justice Brandeis talked about the one courageous State going above the norm, doing something different, did he mean there should be inaction by the Federal Government. Good ideas and successful innovations are supposed to emerge from the laboratory and serve as a model for national policy in action. That is now our responsibility in Congress.

In about 1 month we will have the chance to take up that responsibility. We will have the opportunity to vote in the Chamber on landmark climate change legislation, the Lieberman-Warner bill. I thank my colleagues, Senator WARNER and Senator LIEBERMAN, for their hard work on this bill. I thank our chairwoman, Senator BOXER for her leadership as it moves forward. At this very moment we are listening to Members make changes to the bill, doing everything we can to make the bill as strong as possible.

The truth is, we can no longer delay. I have been to Greenland and have seen those humongous icebergs melting in the ocean, and I have seen the effect of this in my own State.

The Union of Concerned Scientists estimates if we start today and cut emissions by just 4 percent a year, we could achieve an 80-percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. But if we wait just 10 years, we would have to double that annual rate of reduction.

This is forward-looking, bipartisan legislation. It is comprehensive, and it is carefully tailored. It is our opportunity to show the leadership for which Americans have always been known.

I pledged last week I was going come to the Senate floor and give a speech about this legislation on different aspects of why it is so important to move forward and to show leadership on climate change. Today, I think it is obvious that as we face these long-term consequences of doing nothing with our energy policy, when it comes to electricity or oil, this is our chance. This climate change legislation will play a major role in developing the new technologies we need.

Mr. DORGAN. Will the Senator yield for a question?

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. I will yield.

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, the Senator from Minnesota talked about the importance of renewable energy, which I certainly agree with her. Is it the case with renewable energy that we have done a pretty pathetic job as a country to incentivize renewable energy?

In 1916, we put in place tax incentives to produce oil and gas. They have been in place permanently for almost a century now, tax incentives to produce oil and gas. By contrast, with wind and solar and renewable energy, we put them in place in 1992 short term incentives. We have extended them short

term five times and have let them expire three times. It has been a pathetic response to renewables.

The current tax incentives expire at the end of this year, and I have introduced legislation to extend the production tax credit for 10 years. I believe our country ought to say to the world and to investors: Here is where America is headed for a decade. Count on it. Believe in it. Renewables, solar, wind, and so on need a clear signal for investment. You can count on these investments because this is where America is going.

Is it not the case, I would ask the Senator from Minnesota, that we have not nearly done the job in incentivizing renewables and establishing a national policy. Does she agree?

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Senator DORGAN, that is completely accurate. When you look at what we have done with oil companies, with the giveaways that we had for years and years and years, this Senate was one vote short of blocking a filibuster. We tried to change that, tried to take some of those oil giveaways and put them in the hands—we see record profits from the oil companies—put them in the hands of some of these renewables producers.

We were one vote short, but we have another opportunity. That is what the Senator from North Dakota is talking about, extending the tax credits for wind energy, solar, geothermal, and other kinds of renewables.

We did it in the last bill we passed through this Senate. We were able to, with some of the economic work we did with the mortgage crisis, extend that tax credit for 1 year. But we would like to do it for longer. Senator DORGAN has a bill for 10 years. I have a bipartisan bill with Senators SNOWE and CANTWELL expanding it for 5 years. The problem is, it has been a game of red light, green light. It goes on again, off again. It is hard to follow that investment, to follow in the way that we would like and the way that happens in other countries because they never know. You can show, 8 months before these tax credits go off, that the investment decreases.

This is no way to run a national energy policy. It is no way to run a national environmental policy. And that is why today I spoke about the leadership and the potential for leadership in this country.

We once put a man on the Moon. With that came not just winning the race against Russia, with it came all kinds of technology: the CAT scan, the space sticks that my family would take on camping trips in the 1970s. With that came technology. That is what we are trying to do with this bill.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Montana.

DRUGBUSTERS' SUMMIT

Mr. TESTER. Madam President, I would like to thank the Senator from Minnesota and the Senator from North Dakota for their comments on renew-

able energy and climate change. That is definitely an issue I hope we take up sooner rather than later, and hopefully we will have some commonsense solutions to the problem so we can move this country forward both in the area of reducing our effects on climate but also economically because it is a tremendous opportunity with the right piece of legislation.

I rise today to urge the inclusion of the JAG/Byrne grant funding in the emergency supplemental that we will consider in the coming weeks. A week ago, I organized a summit of drugbuster law enforcement in my home State of Montana. I asked all of the leaders of Montana's drug task forces to come together to talk about Federal funding. It is a critically important issue.

Many of them drove hundreds of miles across the State in a spring blizzard to take part in this summit. The drug task forces are made up of dedicated law enforcement officers from every part of Montana: sheriffs' deputies, narcotics officers, local and State police, and undercover agents. They work together across jurisdictions to bust drug smugglers, as well as those who grow or manufacture in-state.

Our State of Montana has 56 counties. There are, of course, a lot of different regions that deal with the task forces, that deal with catching the drug manufacturers and smugglers. It is critically important that these folks work together.

There is cause for concern because the President proposes slashing \$350 million from the drug task forces nationwide. If that happens, Montana will lose a staggering 70 percent of its national drug fighting money for the upcoming year, and the task forces would probably have to lay off 27 agents, leaving only 22 agents to battle drugs statewide. In a State the size of Montana that is impossible.

We should not let that happen. We should find a way to fund these drug task forces in this supplemental, this spending bill that we are going to be considering in a few weeks. If we do not, these cuts will cripple the progress that we have made up to now in the war on drugs in rural States such as the State of Montana.

These drug task forces are success stories. The officers who are on the front lines keep drugs, the drug smugglers, and the drug dealers off our streets. They make our communities safer; they reduce crime, and they make a place like Montana a whole lot safer to live and raise a family. These drug busters work together to get the job done.

Because drugs are not limited by borders, these task forces rely on Federal funding to facilitate the cooperation across the many jurisdictions of Montana, and it works.

Last weekend, folks picking up some trash in Havre, MT, stumbled across a dumped meth lab. They called the police, and within minutes the task force

agents were there on the scene to help clean it up and keep the community safe.

A week ago Monday I heard about a drug operation busted in a remote part of southeastern Montana; so remote, in fact, the task force needed the help of the National Guard helicopter to find it. Officers found 3 pounds of methamphetamine.

Last summer, the Northwest Montana Drug Task Force investigated a case that took them across State lines to Salt Lake City, UT. In the end, they seized 2 pounds of cocaine. They took 20 illegal weapons off the streets, and they say they couldn't have done it without their ability to work across jurisdictional lines and work together. For example, one task force busted a meth lab in a home. Through surveillance, they knew children were present. They took the precautions not to put the children in any more danger. When the bust was made, one child inside tested positive for meth because he was living in a house where they were cooking meth. Even his toys were covered with meth resin. This case set the standard for the way officers deal with and protect children in harm's way. In only 1 year, Montana's drug task forces rescued 84 children from homes where they were being exposed to drugs and drug dealers.

To me, restoring this funding is a no-brainer. As one of the officers put it: We will end up spending much more money in the future if we have to play catchup.

During the summit last week in Montana, officers told me again and again that without Federal funding our small communities will be devastated. Our children will be exposed to more drugs and, therefore, more crime, and families will be torn apart.

I hope we can all work together to restore this funding. Montana and the Nation cannot afford to do otherwise. Americans deserve better.

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

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

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. BINGAMAN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business for 15 minutes.

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

ENERGY PRICES

Mr. BINGAMAN. Madam President, I wish to take a few minutes to discuss what has become a very tortured topic for the entire country; that is, the prices for oil and gasoline and diesel.

I would like to respond, first, to the President's misstatements about Congress's role in this situation. These

are misstatements he made on Tuesday at his press conference. Then I would like to talk about what I believe are some of the real causes of the energy situation and what constructive steps we can take to address those causes.

First, with regard to the President's statements, on Tuesday he suggested the Congress is to blame for the current price situation Americans are seeing when they go to fill up at the gas pump. He cited three reasons to conclude that.

First of all, he was blaming Congress for preventing oil companies from exploring for oil and gas in the United States. Second, he was blaming Congress for blocking efforts to build more refineries in the United States. Third, he was blaming Congress for blocking increases in the U.S. nuclear electricity production capacity.

Frankly, I think the President's comments are disappointing in several regards. First, of course, they are very partisan. But second, the charges the President made are simply not borne out by the facts.

On exploration and production of natural gas in this country, Congress has taken significant steps on a bipartisan basis to enhance oil and gas production. Through enacting the Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act of 2006, Congress made available 4.74 trillion cubic feet of natural gas and 1.26 billion barrels of oil off the Florida Panhandle.

Ironically, Congress was required to pass that law because of steps that were taken early in the Bush administration. In her first year in office, in 2001, Secretary of the Interior Gale Norton cut the size of the scheduled Outer Continental Shelf lease sale in the area by 75 percent. So with the stroke of a pen, the Secretary of the Interior, in 2001, put off limits over 6 trillion cubic feet of natural gas and over 1 billion barrels of oil from an area that had been proposed for leasing by the Clinton administration, I would say, with the concurrence of our former colleague, Lawton Chiles, who was then the Governor of Florida.

So while, undoubtedly, a politically popular stance for the Bush administration in Florida when this action was taken by Secretary Norton, this was hardly an action that was intended to enhance oil and gas production in the country.

In fact, large areas of the Outer Continental Shelf are currently off limits to oil and gas development and production not just because of congressional moratoria but because of Presidential withdrawals that were first put in place, in 1990, by the first President Bush. This current President Bush could exercise real leadership in this area, if he wished to, by eliminating these Presidential withdrawals that were first put in place by his father.

We are talking about a significant area. There are some 574 million acres of the OCS, or Outer Continental Shelf, that are unavailable for leasing, and

virtually all that is covered by Presidential withdrawals, which could be eliminated by this President with the stroke of a pen.

The Arctic Refuge is another issue raised by the President. He failed to mention drilling in the Refuge will do nothing to address the high price of gas people are faced with today. I think everyone who has looked at the issue recognizes that not a single drop of oil would come to the lower continental United States from the Arctic Refuge for at least 10 years.

The Energy Information Administration has estimated that production from the Arctic Refuge would, at its peak, reduce our reliance on imports by about 4 percent, from 68 percent to 64 percent. That is the estimate the Energy Information Administration has given, which, of course, is part of our own Department of Energy.

Other areas of Federal lands that are much more appropriate for development can and should be drilled. In fact, of the 45.5 million acres of Federal onshore lands currently under lease by industry, there are over 31 million acres of those lands that are not currently being produced. Likewise, there are 33 million acres of Federal Outer Continental Shelf that are under lease; that is, the Government has done what it should do to make these areas available, but they are not being produced.

The processing of drilling permits on Federal lands has surged over the past several years. It has more than doubled between 2001 and 2006. At the same time, the administration reported that in five key basins in the Rocky Mountain States, 85 percent of oil resources and 88 percent of natural gas resources are currently available for leasing and for development.

Congress has also funded important research and development programs to enhance the best of production. It is simply inaccurate finger pointing to say that Congress is impeding oil and gas development in this country.

On refinery capacity, which is the second point the President made in his press conference, refining capacity has increased by about a million barrels per day during President Bush's tenure, from 16.6 million barrels per day in 2001 to 17.5 million barrels per day in 2007 through capacity expansion and existing refineries. There have been no efforts from Congress to try to slow down that expansion. Refiners have been asked whether they would like to build new refineries as opposed to expanding capacity at existing refineries, and those refiners have told us in hearings before our Energy Committee that they would rather expand capacity at existing refineries. We have never heard support from anyone inside the oil industry regarding the President's curious plan to build refineries on former U.S. military bases. As far as I know, no Member of Congress objects to that; it is just that the companies that are in the business of constructing refineries have not decided that it

makes good sense for them from an economic point of view.

The economics of refining are not very good at the moment, as gasoline prices are not yet fully reflecting the jump in crude oil prices. U.S. refining capacity is at about 85 percent utilization at the current time, as many refiners are losing money on every gallon of gasoline they produce. Clearly, constraining refinery capacity is not our current problem.

The third issue the President attacked the Congress about was nuclear energy production. Here again, Congress is not standing in the way of increasing nuclear production capacity. In fact, Congress over the past 3 years has put in place one of the most favorable sets of incentives for nuclear power development anywhere in the world.

For example, if a nuclear plant is proposed for licensing and is delayed because of a lack of action by Federal regulators, the proponents of the plant can get Federal payments to compensate for that delay. Now, that was part of the 2005 legislation we passed. No wind power developer can get that kind of a subsidy. No solar power developer can get that kind of a subsidy. We also provided tax incentives for the construction of new nuclear powerplants. So if the Congress passes global warming legislation—I know the administration and the President are opposed to that, but if we do, according to the Energy Information Administration, the most significant impact of that global warming legislation would be to provide a powerful new incentive to promote more nuclear power development in this country.

So let me move on from the discussion of the President's charges to a short discussion of what I consider the real causes of current oil prices. I think to understand what is going on here, it is critical to put these oil prices in the broader economic context. The current increase in oil prices is, to a large degree, a symptom of our ailing economy. Oil prices and the value of the U.S. dollar have been very strongly linked over the last year. As the value of the dollar declines, oil prices go up.

We have heard recent testimony before our Energy Committee that confirms that investors are seeking protection from inflationary risks associated with the weak dollar and from credit and wider financial markets in which they have lost confidence. As one witness put it, oil has become the new gold, and that is why speculators and others are investing in oil. Higher oil prices in turn weaken our economy, so we are caught in a downward spiral in which a weak economy is resulting in high oil prices, and high oil prices are, in turn, further weakening the economy.

So the question is how do we stop this downward spiral. This is a large task. It requires, first and foremost, a return to rational fiscal policy that will restore balance and investor confidence in our markets. That includes

an honest accounting of the costs of the war in Iraq, a figure that we now know is going to be in the trillions of dollars. Spending has also been accompanied by the administration's tax policies which have been extremely damaging to the country's long-term fiscal health. Every American family that sits around the kitchen table and tries to balance a budget recognizes the simple fact that spending more than you earn or more than the revenue you can bring in results in, after a period, your creditors eventually coming calling. That is what is happening to the dollar today. Apparently, the stewards of the U.S. economy and this administration have failed to absorb that simple reality.

Let me talk a little about policies to reduce oil prices in the short term. There are modest but important measures we can enact to increase our oil supply and reduce our demand. On the supply side, we need to immediately stop removing oil from the market to fill the Strategic Petroleum Reserve. It simply makes no sense to be putting \$120 per barrel oil underground. According to the most recent Energy Information Administration forecast, oil demand in the United States is expected to decline by 90,000 barrels per day in 2008. This is the kind of signal we need to send to the market in order to see some relief from current prices. However, we are taking 70,000 barrels per day off the market to add to the Strategic Petroleum Reserve which we all recognize is about 97 percent full right now. We are basically wiping out any positive effects from the decrease in demand. This is a policy completely wrongheaded and should be stopped immediately. I compliment all three of the candidates for President for embracing this recommendation that we eliminate the filling or we suspend the filling of the Strategic Petroleum Reserve. I wish the administration would support that simple measure.

On the demand side, we need to decide whether we are ready to get serious about educating consumers to take more responsibility to reduce consumption. We know that 5 miles per hour slower that a person drives will increase our fuel efficiency for that individual by about 7.5 percent. We also know that energy-efficient, properly inflated tires increase fuel efficiency by about 4 percent. Regular car maintenance can increase fuel efficiency by about 2 percent. So Americans individually could use about 10 to 15 percent less gasoline by adopting these commonsense measures. But to see we do that, we will need publicity out there to educate folks on the simple steps they can take to reduce consumption. In the medium term, we need to ensure there is a cop on the beat on the oil markets.

There are two key steps we should take to improve Government oversight of the oil markets. First, the Secretary of Energy needs to have a role in overseeing oil markets. It troubles me that

the people at the New York Mercantile Exchange on which oil is traded and the Commodity Futures Trading Commission which regulates that exchange seem to be the only people who think that speculators are not influencing oil prices.

Here is a quote from the Wall Street Journal on March 21 of 2006. It says:

Hedge funds are taking ever-larger bets in a futures market that is smaller than the stock or bond markets, and the funds are using borrowed money to maximize their bets, magnifying the impact on energy market prices.

So clearly, the Secretary of Energy and the 500-plus employees he has there in his Energy Information Administration who work every day to analyze energy data, forecast energy supply and demand, and prices should at a minimum provide insight and advice to market regulators at the Commodities Futures Trading Commission. Perhaps this could help the Commodities Futures Trading Commission come to understand the role of speculators in that market.

Second, we need to shed light on the so-called dark markets. Markets that trade U.S. oil or are located in the United States should be subject to U.S. regulation. It is unacceptable that an exchange that is based in Atlanta, GA and trades U.S. crude oil that is delivered in Oklahoma is regulated in the United Kingdom, not subject to the laws and regulations that we in Congress put in place to govern the U.S. futures market. It is also unacceptable that over-the-counter markets are regulated neither here in the United States nor in the United Kingdom. There is simply no regulatory body that can see these over-the-counter transactions.

Let me also say a few words about policies that will not reduce gasoline prices. First, there is a proposal to suspend the tax on gas and diesel. While I can appreciate the temporary public relations success that might accompany this tax suspension, it would come at the expense of fiscal common sense and sound energy policy. I agree that high gasoline and diesel prices are hurting consumers, but additional deficit spending will only help accelerate the downward trajectory of our economy as a whole. This is simply the latest in a long line of proposals that seek to score political points during an election year at the expense of good energy policy.

There are three main objections to the proposal. First, it would increase deficit spending by nearly \$10 billion while saving motorists about \$25 per person. If you do the math, you find that even if all of the savings are passed on to the consumer, which is a very unlikely outcome, the savings per person is negligible.

If you assume that the average motorist drives 12,000 miles per year and gets 22 miles per gallon, you can calculate that the amount the average person would save in a 3-month period

is \$25.50. So adopting the fuel efficiency measures I have discussed earlier, including shaving a few miles per hour off the top highway speed, would be much more effective in reducing the cost of gasoline to the average consumer.

Madam President, how much time remains?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. I believe the Senator has used his 15 minutes.

Mr. BINGAMAN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent for an additional 5 minutes.

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

Mr. BINGAMAN. Madam President, the second argument I wanted to raise related to this proposed suspension of the gas tax is the idea that it would be reinstated in September when prices might well be as high or higher than they are today would be very difficult and very unlikely to occur, frankly. We are talking about reinstating the gas tax in September. I think that is the proposal the Senator from Arizona has made: Let's suspend the gas tax now, or at Memorial Day, and let's reinstate it on Labor Day. Well, the problem with that is Labor Day is about 2 months before the election. It would not be politically feasible to have a single-day price increase on September 1st of 18.4 cents per gallon for gasoline and 24.4 cents for diesel. I don't think anybody—any politician in his or her right mind—would vote to impose that kind of a tax increase at that time. Prices could easily be as high or higher on September 1 as they are today. It is simply not possible to me that Congress will then choose to increase the price that consumers pay at the pump.

The third argument is that this tax suspension would stimulate demand for motor fuels without increasing supply. In fact, we would see something in the nature of a price increase. The best explanation of this was done by Paul Krugman, a respected economist who writes for the New York Times and teaches at Princeton, in an article he did on April 29. He said in that article, I think the conclusion was, the McCain gas tax plan is a giveaway to oil companies disguised as a gift to consumers.

The obvious point he was making is that under the basic rules of economics, the fact that Congress would suspend the gas tax would do nothing to ensure that consumers benefited from the suspension of the gas tax. The whole notion that you are going to see the price of gas at the pump drop 18 cents because Congress says the tax is all of a sudden suspended is not realistic.

In conclusion, we as a country and we as a Congress need to get serious about energy policy. It is an election year. While there is always a tendency to take rhetorical stands in the runup to an election, the American people understand that. I think they discount what they hear from Washington as the

election date begins to arrive. That is one reason they don't always hold Congress in the highest esteem. Proposals that are mostly feel-good propositions do not fool voters for long—if they fool them at all.

That said, there are a number of concrete steps we can take that will help. We should freeze the filling of the Strategic Petroleum Reserve—suspend that for the time being. We should take some effective actions to bring the oil markets under better control with U.S. laws and regulations. Let's be sure consumers know what they themselves can do to reduce their own demand. I hope that with oil at \$110 to \$120 per barrel, which it has been for several weeks and which it may well be for several more weeks or months ahead—or even a longer period—I hope we will give this topic the serious attention it deserves.

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

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

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, today, marks more than 2 years—by my count, 738 days—since Speaker PELOSI said:

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

That was on April 24, 2006—738 days ago. I think it is important to look at what has happened to the price of gas and to see whether her prediction was correct.

Lo and behold, we find the average price of a gallon of gasoline in America at \$3.62, up \$2.33 from the time when Speaker PELOSI became Speaker in January of 2007. Again, that is a rise from \$2.33 a gallon to \$3.62 a gallon.

I will tell you we have been asking and waiting, and the American people have been waiting and watching, to see what Congress is going to do to help relieve some of this pain at the pump. The American people want us to work together to try to find commonsense solutions to help them with this increasing pain they are feeling in the family budget.

Do you know that taking the difference between \$2.33 a gallon and \$3.62 a gallon represents roughly a \$1,400 increase in the cost for gasoline for the average American family? Of course, I don't have to tell anybody here, or anybody listening, that this is necessary for driving the kids to school, driving to work; it is necessary also to provide fuel for the airplanes Americans fly in. This is an American problem, and I suggest we need to come up with an American solution.

The problem has been that about 60 percent of our energy needs in this country are now satisfied by imported oil and gas from other parts of the

world. That is a national security challenge because, of course, to the extent which others supply our energy needs, it means they can turn off the spigot; or if hostilities were to occur that would, let's say, for example, block the Strait of Hormuz, there could be an economic body blow to the United States as a result of the restriction on our energy supply.

We need to recognize there are certain things that are irrefutable or, I should say, maybe unchangeable by Congress. We can pass a lot of laws and repeal laws, but we cannot change the law of supply and demand. Try as we might, Congress has neglected that for these many years. While we have done some good things on conservation, passing fuel efficiency standards recently, and we have also supported renewable fuels, which are an important part of the energy supply, you cannot put wind energy in your tank to drive your kids to school.

We need to recognize that with a fixed supply of oil, which is 70 percent of the price of gasoline, we are competing globally with countries such as China and India, rising economies where people want a better quality of life, and they realize one key to that is affordable energy. America has not had that exclusively, but we have had it pretty much to ourselves, and others want what we have, which is a good quality of life and standard of living. That comes with affordable energy.

So what are we going to do about satisfying the laws of supply and demand? Of course, we know Congress is the primary culprit when it comes to obstructing access to American natural resources. I remember that when I was growing up, we would talk about different countries in school and about how some were blessed with abundant natural resources and how that was a good thing because the citizens of that country could use those natural resources to enhance their quality of life—in this case, provide for affordable energy. But we have simply, by our inaction—and I would say to the extent it applies—actually acted affirmatively to place our natural resources out of bounds in a way that has exacerbated and not solved the problem.

I know how popular it is these days to say it is all big oil's fault. The blame game. Then we have people saying we need another investigation. Well, the blame game and investigations are important, and investigations and oversight is for Congress, but that is not producing a single drop of additional energy. We need to do that and we need to act today.

A moment ago, a group of Senators announced an omnibus energy bill that would satisfy America's need for more American solutions to our energy supply. My hope is that by taking advantage, for example, of the million-barrel-a-day capacity Alaska could supply, by taking advantage of the Outer Continental Shelf, such as we have in the Gulf of Mexico, with the vast oil depos-

its there, and by taking advantage of our abundant natural resources in the form of oil shale in the West, we could relieve our dependence upon imported oil in this country to the tune of some 3 million barrels a day.

I know there are environmental and safety concerns with developing our oil and gas resources right here at home. But I invite the people who are concerned about that and who do not believe we can do so to come to Fort Worth and see the Barnett shale, which is an abundant, plentiful source of natural gas being developed right in the city of Fort Worth. As a matter of fact, if you fly into DFW Airport, you will see drilling rigs on the airport property. The tract of land in Alaska that is going to be explored and used for producing this million-barrel-a-day-plus oil that is located in the Arctic is going to be on a postage stamp-size piece of property.

I see the distinguished ranking member of the Energy Committee. I was saying the city of Fort Worth is producing the Barnett shale and actually drilling gas at DFW Airport and that you can see the rigs there.

I suggest that if we can produce those natural resources in Texas and in Fort Worth on the DFW Airport property, American energy producers can do it in Alaska. People are concerned, as they should be—and I wish they would act on those concerns and not just complain about it—about \$120-a-barrel oil. It has been projected that if we were to take advantage of the natural resources God has blessed us with in the Arctic, we could produce oil there that costs roughly \$55 a barrel. So \$120 a barrel or \$55 a barrel? You pick.

If we are talking about developing oil resources from the Outer Continental Shelf, even beyond the horizon, as we did in lease sale 181 in the Gulf of Mexico—it is 300 miles off the coast of Texas. You cannot even see it. Yet we have a way of producing those abundant resources. If Congress will simply quit the blame game, the finger-pointing and wake up to the fact that the American people are feeling pain not only at the pump but in their family budgets—they are looking for Congress to get out of the way and let the American people produce the natural resources we have been blessed with, in a way that will satisfy the laws of supply and demand, by producing as much as 3 million barrels of additional oil, which will then have a dramatic impact at the pump and help American families meet their energy needs at a reasonable price.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from New Mexico is recognized.

Mr. DOMENICI. I didn't hear the Senator from Texas say he was finished.

(The remarks of Mr. DOMENICI pertaining to the introduction of S. 2958 are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

Mr. CORNYN. Yes, I yield the floor.

Mr. DOMENICI. I thank the Senator.

Mr. DOMENICI. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the floor time now be given to Senator KENNEDY, who has been patiently waiting, for which I am grateful.

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

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

Mr. KENNEDY. Madam President, I thank my friend and colleague from New Mexico. We will not have a chance today to talk about mental health parity. But whenever I see him speak on the floor I am further inspired to make sure we are going to get that legislation passed in this Congress. I thank him for all of his good work in that undertaking. We are strongly committed to ensuring that this very important health policy issue is going to be addressed in the Congress.

I see my friend from Illinois. I know he was seeking the floor. I ask unanimous consent that he be recognized after I finish.

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

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE EXTENSION

Mr. KENNEDY. Madam President, tomorrow we are going to have the report by the Bureau of Labor Statistics about the unemployment figures in this country. Those unemployment figures may be statistics to some, but they are lost hopes and dreams to millions of our fellow citizens. They are a key indicator of the state of our economy. I think most of us who have had the opportunity to travel our States and listen to working families understand the extraordinary pressures these families are under, the incredible anxiety that goes to the heart and soul of these families. They really wonder if somehow they are guilty in some way for not being able to deal with the economic challenges they are facing, whether it is the increased cost of gas at the pump, or whether it is the increasing cost of tuition, the increasing cost of health care, or the challenges they are facing with their mortgages.

This afternoon I want to speak for a few minutes about the issue of unemployment and how that has impacted so many of our fellow citizens and what the implications are for so many of our fellow citizens. Even though we do not have the figures, I think we can reliably suggest there is going to be a further increase in the number of unemployed Americans when we get the figures tomorrow morning. These are the figures so far this year: we see 76,000 jobs lost in January; in February, 76,000; some 80,000 in March—232,000 jobs were lost over the period of these 3 months. There were 50,000 construction jobs lost. That sends a message in and of itself.

If we look at this chart, we see the total number of unemployed. These are

the Bureau of Labor Statistics figures. In March of 2008 we have 7.8 million unemployed and only 3.9 million jobs. That's two workers for every job. Here we have individuals, Americans, who have worked hard, played by the rules, and, through no fault of their own, because of the failure of fiscal and monetary policy, they have lost their jobs. Yet when we look back at the total number of job openings, they are limited. These Americans are getting squeezed. How are they going to be able to find jobs when the jobs are not available even if they have the skills? We are going to come back to that in just a moment.

These families are hurting. That is why it is so important that we have an increase in the unemployment compensation program that is now in surplus of about \$35 billion. That fund has actually been paid into by American workers. They have paid into the fund \$35 billion, and the reason they paid in was for circumstances such as this, a fiscal and monetary economic policy which has failed them. They are entitled to receive the unemployment compensation. Yet we have an administration which has consistently opposed extending unemployment benefits. I am going to come to that in just a moment too.

Here are recent veterans who having served, are having a hard time finding work. The total workforce, 5.1 percent unemployed; for these veterans serving after 2001, we can see their unemployment is 6.1 percent. And the young male veterans, serving after September 2001, are at 11.2 percent. These are all veterans, but this is young men—11.2 percent. These young Americans were the ones who had the burden of conflict and now they are facing the burden, at home, of an economy that will not serve them and serve their interests. Where is the burden falling? It is falling on our young veterans, and it is falling particularly hard.

This chart indicates where the burden of this economy is falling. We are finding out it is increasingly falling on adult women, who are seeing a sharper rise in unemployment rates than men. There is a 21-percent increase for women, and 15 percent for men, between March of 2007 and March of 2008. Do we understand how it is squeezing women? Women are more likely to have subprime mortgages than men, despite having slightly better credit scores. Women are having their homes foreclosed at a more rapid rate than men, their unemployment rates are going up, and their savings are lower. They are the ones who are taking the brunt of this recession along with young veterans.

Here we find women's earnings are falling faster than men's. Men's median income in 2007 fell one-half of 1 percent for men, women's fell 3 percent. We see increasing numbers of women are unemployed, and the wages of women who have jobs are being adversely impacted to a much higher and more significant degree.

We see what has happened generally with regard to the economy. The stock market lost \$2.7 trillion in value since May of 2007. This crisis has wiped out \$2.7 trillion in home values. The dollar has lost one-third of its value, and the Federal debt has nearly doubled since this President took office. Again, we are looking at home values, which is the wealth for so many middle-income and working families—\$2.7 trillion effectively has been wiped out during this last year.

All these figures show middle-income families, working families, are taking the heavy brunt of the recession we are facing. We should ask ourselves what are we doing about this. If we look at what we have done at other times, we have granted extended unemployment benefits. Look at the last recessions we have had, from January 1980 to July 1980, and then July 1981 to November 1982, the average number of weeks of unemployment was 16 weeks. And we extended unemployment compensation.

The next recession we had was July 1990 to March of 1991. The average weeks of unemployment was 13.9 weeks, but we had an extension of unemployment compensation.

In March 2001 to November 2001, 15 weeks was the average number of weeks of unemployment, and we had an extension of the unemployment compensation.

Here, look at this: 16.2 weeks is the average number of weeks workers are unemployed today—16.2 weeks—and this administration refuses to say the \$35 billion that is in the unemployment compensation fund that you have worked for and contributed into that fund, should be available to you when we have adverse economic conditions. These are just the kind of conditions that they are there for. This administration refuses to do anything about it. It is a striking difference for working families who are trying to make it and provide for their families.

Very briefly, this chart demonstrates that during a recession, among the limited economic stimulus measures, unemployment compensation is among the most promising investments—every dollar we invest in unemployment compensation has the effect of \$1.64; for infrastructure it is \$1.59 for every dollar invested; and it is \$1.73 in food stamps. This is from Moody's chief economist. There is much less impact, obviously, for the Bush extended tax cuts.

We should look at what is happening in food stamps—we do not frequently think about the numbers of our fellow American citizens who are dependent on food stamps, but we should pause now. We certainly should if we have been back home and listened to those who have been running the food banks in our States and we find out the condition of those food banks. 28 million Americans are projected to receive food stamps in fiscal year 2009—28 million Americans are going to be eligible for food stamps in 2009. Look at the indicators. This is another indicator

about what is happening in the economy, the kind of pressures that middle-income and working families have.

We could also ask, Why aren't we trying to provide training for these workers who are struggling to find a job? If we improve their skills, they will be able to find a job—is that right? No, it is wrong. What we are finding is Americans cannot access job training programs. This administration has been cutting back virtually every year on job training programs.

Look at this. In Massachusetts alone, for every available slot in a job training program there are 21 workers on a waiting list. Do we understand? There are 21 workers on a waiting list. These are American men and women who want to work, have worked, want to provide for their families, and they cannot even get the training in order to be able to fill the jobs. We have 83,000 jobs in my State that are not being filled today, but we have cut back. This administration has cut back on the training programs. This is the kind of misstep this administration has taken time in and time out.

I just remind the Senate about action that we took just yesterday with regard to students and the student loan program. One urgent step that we must take to ensure that the slumping economy does not prevent young people from going to college is to provide some help and assistance, and we did yesterday.

Right now, in May, students and their parents are applying for financial aid and the loans they need to attend college in the fall. This is happening just as some banks have said they are no longer offering student loans. We cannot allow the slumping economy to limit the horizons of a new generation of Americans. Students and parents need to know we will do everything we can to guarantee that every single student who needs a loan to go to college in the fall will get one, even in these troubled economic times. We will increase the amount of grant aid available to relieve the debt burden on needy students.

Yesterday the Senate passed legislation to do just that. The House of Representatives also passed the legislation just a few hours ago, and President Bush has indicated that he will sign it into law. This is what the emergency legislation does: For students, if private loans through the banks dry up, they can get lower cost government-guaranteed loans to take their place. So no matter what happens in the private loan market, the government loans will be there, and they will be there for them.

This guarantee comes in two ways. First, the bill expands the amount of Federal loans available for a student for 4 years of college from \$23,000 to \$31,000, an \$8,000 increase. Second, it ensures that students will have easy access to Federal loans.

If banks are not willing to make these loans to students, State-based,

nonprofit agencies, called the guaranty agencies, will take their place.

So for every student, there will always be someone to provide the loans, either through the private sector or through the Government.

Also, for thousands of low-income students, we increased the grant aid by up to \$1,300 a year for underclassmen and \$4,000 a year for upperclassmen. That is not a lot, but it is a part of an ongoing commitment to help low-income college students avoid the crushing burdens of debt that inevitably distort their choices for the future.

The bill also helps parents by providing them with better options and better access to the low-cost Federal PLUS loans alternative. This provides help to parents. It allows the parents to delay the repayment on the loans until their child has graduated from college. It makes it easier for parents who have been hit by the mortgage crisis to obtain these low-cost loans; help for the students, help as well for families.

Finally, the bill helps stabilize the overall student loan market by authorizing the Secretary of Education to purchase outstanding federal loans, allowing private lenders to replenish their capital so they can make new loans to students and parents.

For the 6 million students and over 700,000 parents currently relying on low cost federally subsidized loans, these steps mean they will continue to have ready access to these funds, even as the credit markets discourage lender participation in the Federal program. In other words, students and parents will now have multiple avenues to obtain low-cost Federal loans.

Fortunately, Congress has taken prompt action to prevent college students from becoming the next victims of our failing economy, and I commend President Bush for urging us to do so. I am grateful to Senator ENZI, Congressman MILLER, Congressman MCKEON for their partnership on this legislation, and for the support and assistance of the Secretary of Education.

I hope we can replicate this bipartisan effort in tackling other urgent economic issues. There is much work to be done to ensure that Main Street is insulated from the problems of Wall Street. It is clear that the Nation faces a serious ongoing economic challenge. We know what we have to do to put our economy and our country back on track. To do that we need to seize the moment and act immediately to help the millions of Americans who need our help the most.

I yield the floor.

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

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I see the Senator from Michigan on the floor. I know she is here to address the same topic as the Senator from Massachusetts, and she has a 5 o'clock conference committee on an important bill pending before the Senate. I ask unani-

mous consent that she be allowed to speak in my place and that I follow her.

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

The Senator from Michigan is recognized.

Ms. STABENOW. I thank our distinguished assistant majority leader for allowing me to do this. It is very important. I thank my colleague and friend, the champion from Massachusetts, for all of his efforts as they relate to the efforts to make sure college loans are available. Also I want to speak to the fact that we are working together to extend unemployment insurance benefits, and I greatly appreciate his leadership.

I want to specifically today speak to that piece of the effort we are working on together. Because since my colleagues across the aisle blocked extending critical unemployment benefits from the part of our first stimulus package, frankly, the situation has only gotten worse for families in Michigan and all across the country.

National unemployment is on the rise, with our Nation losing 80,000 jobs in March. It is stunning to me when we look at what is happening across the country. I have to say, these are not new kinds of numbers for us in Michigan. We have been seeing these kinds of numbers now for a number of years but we see nationally, in this last January, 76,000 jobs were lost; in February, 76,000 jobs were lost; in March, the highest number, 80,000 jobs were lost; 232,000 jobs cut in the past 3 months.

I remember coming to the floor and having colleagues say: Well, overall unemployment is not high. We do not have a problem. It is below 5 percent. Well, now it has crept up above 5 percent, and we are being told by Goldman Sachs and the Bureau of Labor Statistics that by January, this coming January, the national unemployment rate will be 6.5 percent.

We in Michigan would actually consider that a decrease, because ours is at 7.2 percent. But nationally when we look at that kind of steep increase in those people who are out of work, we need to be paying attention to this. Families, middle-class families, who have worked hard all their lives are finding themselves in a situation, due to no fault of their own, where they are looking for work, trying to keep their family together and, in fact, are looking for us to do what we have always done in times such as these, which is to extend unemployment benefits across the country for families, and particularly for those States that are hardest hit.

We have 10,000 people right now in Michigan every month who are losing unemployment benefits. That for us relates to the fact that we are one of the highest States in mortgage foreclosures, why people cannot afford to pay for their mortgage. So the ripple effect throughout the economy is staggering when we look at the fact that on

top of what is happening to people who are losing their jobs and cannot afford their mortgage, their gas, when we look at what is happening with gas prices.

We in the majority have been coming to this floor and have been doing everything we can in putting forward proposals to deal with the high gas prices. We have not been able to get support from colleagues to truly address this, what needs to be addressed, and even putting food on people's tables and health insurance.

Everything is going up in the wrong direction, including the fact that people are now losing their unemployment benefits. We have been suffering in Michigan through several years of high unemployment, as I mentioned. We have 7.2 percent unemployment right now. In the first half of this year, over 72,000 people exhausted their unemployment benefits. But we are not alone. This is not only a Michigan problem anymore. Alaska, California, Rhode Island, Mississippi, Nevada, Missouri, Oregon, South Carolina, Kentucky, Ohio, all have unemployment rates at or above 5.7 percent. Across the country, millions of Americans are losing what are insurance benefits. We are not talking about public assistance, we are talking about an insurance system that they paid into, that employees come into for these circumstances.

We have not seen the President's willingness, up to this point, to support extending unemployment benefits and, subsequently, my colleagues on the other side of the aisle. This makes absolutely no sense. Frankly, from an economic standpoint, it makes no sense.

Moody's economy.com chief economist Mark Zandi estimates for every \$1 spent on unemployment benefits, the economy is stimulated by \$1.4. We knew that when we passed the original stimulus package. Rather than a rebate, many of us were arguing that the best way, the fastest way to stimulate the economy was to give dollars directly to people out of work, struggling to make their payments, who on average make 40 percent of their wage from this unemployment insurance system. The people would have to turn right around and go to the grocery store, buy clothes for their children, spend the dollars they receive in unemployment benefits in order to be able to keep going. What we have heard over and over again from colleagues on the other side of the aisle is: We should wait; we should wait; it is not that bad; it is not bad enough. I do not know how many times we have heard the President say, up until recently, "Well, the underlying fundamentals of the economy are good" or "Things really are not as bad as people think."

Well, they are. They are. The American people know that when they are being hit on all sides with rising costs and lower wages. So I am here today to urge my colleagues to come together to

understand what American families are going through, and to support, strongly support, an extension of unemployment compensation.

Let me say in conclusion that this unfortunately is a pattern we have seen over and over again when it comes to blocking those programs that are critically important for American families. Over and over again we see colleagues filibustering issues, stopping us from moving forward on what makes a real difference in people's lives.

It is not only extending unemployment insurance for families and workers in Michigan and across the country, but it is part of a pattern of blocking and obstructing what is important to families in this very difficult economy. Last year my colleagues on the other side of the aisle blocked an energy tax bill that would have increased the production of renewable fuels and helped bring more advanced technology vehicles to the marketplace to reduce our dependence on foreign oil and begin to address what is happening on the gas price side of things.

But, unfortunately again, these efforts were blocked time and time again when we brought forward proposals that relate to energy and pricing and accountability for the industry. Moving tax breaks from oil companies to alternative fuels or to consumers, we have been blocked. I have to say also in conclusion today that once again, a critical issue to this safety of the American public has been blocked, and that is the question of whether we are going to modernize air service in this country; whether we are going to truly have a passenger's bill of rights; whether we are going to update a system that is clearly overloaded, clearly in crisis. We have been trying all week to bring to the floor critical changes to upgrade the American airline system, and once again these efforts have been blocked and blocked and blocked. We have a whole range of needs in this country that are urgent for the safety of those of us who are flying with our families and are counting on the fact that everything that is being done to make sure that system is the best in the country and it is safe.

We see that families are struggling with gas prices. We see in my home State again 10,000 people a month losing unemployment insurance who are trying to figure out how to make ends meet while we see blocking after blocking, filibuster after filibuster, here in the Senate stopping us from moving forward on important legislation.

I urge my colleagues to listen to the folks at home and what they are going through, and to join us to extend unemployment insurance, to address what are outrageous gas prices, and also make sure we are being serious and responsible about important issues such as airline safety.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. WHITEHOUSE). The Senator from Illinois is recognized.

Mr. DURBIN. My thanks to my colleagues from Massachusetts and Michigan for bringing to our attention the struggle this economy presents to many families across the United States.

You would almost find it hard to imagine that this Senate could meet with such regularity and not address these issues directly. But this administration and its economic policies have not focused on working families. They have focused on tax breaks for those in the highest income categories in America. That is something they do without embarrassment. They suggest that if the wealthy people in America have extra money to spend, it will be good for everyone else. That is a hard message to deliver and even harder to believe.

Elizabeth Warren is a professor of law at Harvard Law School in Cambridge, MA, and has become a good friend and adviser to many of us. She recently made a presentation to a number of Senators and showed an analysis which she had done relating to the middle of the middle class. Professor Warren took a look at real middle-income families and basically asked the question: What has happened to them during the last 7 years?

Her findings are troubling. From 2000 to 2007, she writes, the American family lost ground. Measured in real dollars, incomes declined while basic expenses skyrocketed. By the time today's family makes a few basic purchases—housing, health insurance, food, gasoline, and phone—it has about \$5,700 less than it had been in 2000.

Now, this is a family that is making in the range of \$40,000 to \$45,000. So a decline in buying power of \$5,700 over the last 7 years causes real hardship. By every measure, incomes are down for the same hypothetical family for this same period of time; down for fully employed males, fully employed females, down for households.

Adjusted for inflation, median household income has declined across America by \$1,175. Prosperity has not arrived to the working class, the working families of America. In fact, the opposite has been true.

Of course, the biggest thing we face going home is the increasing cost of gasoline. The increase in the cost of gasoline has more than doubled since President Bush became President. In that same period, the profits of the oil companies have more than quadrupled. It is no coincidence. They are making more money as families, rich and especially poor, reach deeper into their pockets to pay for gasoline. Families have reduced driving. They have to spend an average of \$2,000 more a year for gasoline than they did back in the year 2000, when President Bush was elected. Our friends on the Republican side of the aisle like to talk about cutting people's taxes, sending out rebate checks. Of course, those are all well and good. But it turns out the expense which has been passed along to working families for the cost of gasoline

since President Bush became President is more than \$2,000 a year. There is a tax. It is a tax families have to pay if they have to drive to work or if they want to take their family on vacation.

Increases in mortgage costs took another big bite out of middle-income families, almost \$1,700 each year. Health insurance, food, telephone, appliances, another \$750 a year knocked out of the family budget. The increases mean the average family is spending \$4,564 more for basic expenses now than they did in 2000. How about families with kids? Childcare costs under this President have gone up by \$1,321 a year, more than \$100 a month; afterschool care, \$511 a year. All parents, regardless of the age of children, see the rising cost of college. Under this Presidency, the net cost of college, including scholarships and grants, has increased by more than \$1,000. Is it any surprise, when Members of the Senate and the House go home over the weekends and run into these families, they want to talk about the latest outrage, which happens to be the price of gasoline?

My understanding is ExxonMobil made its report of quarterly earnings public today. It was a little bit off for them. Their earnings only increased 17 percent, hardly keeping pace with the recordbreaking percentage increases of the past. But trust me, there will be no tag days for those CEOs and members of the executive board and management of the biggest oil companies in America. They are doing quite well. The question is whether this Congress can do well by American families who pay the price for those profits. That is a challenge we will face.

President Bush is going to send us a supplemental appropriations bill. It is because of the emergency in Iraq. He is going to ask for \$108 billion for Iraq and Afghanistan. He is not going to ask for the emergency in America, and there is one. He will not be asking for increasing unemployment compensation for families out of work, watching unemployment rates rise by the day. He will not be asking for tax breaks for those struggling families I have described. He focuses on the Middle East.

I am from Illinois. I focus on the Middle West. I try to look at the whole Nation, but I start with my obligation at home. When I look out the window in the morning, I see America. When this administration looks out the window in the morning, it sees Iraq. So when it comes to emergency spending, drop everything, highest priorities, it is not about America. This administration focuses on the Middle East.

I think that is unfortunate. We need to understand a strong America begins at home. It begins with a strong economy, strong families, strong churches, strong temples, strong neighborhoods, strong cities, strong communities that build a great nation. They are suffering at this moment.

During the course of this week, there has been precious little done on the

floor of the Senate. Senator after Senator has come to talk about their concerns about energy costs. That is good. We should raise awareness of this particular issue. But we need to do more than give a speech, come up with a quick gimmick or a quick idea. We have to focus on changing some fundamentals, and it ought to start with the Tax Code and programs that help working families.

Mr. President, I have a friend in Illinois whose name is Harold Ramis. Harold Ramis and I share a birth date and a lot of friends. Harold Ramis has done quite well for himself. He is a writer, a producer of movies. Harold got started writing "Animal House," went on to write "Caddyshack" and a few others. But one of his most famous movies, which he released over 15 years ago, was a movie called "Groundhog Day." I bet every American has seen it. It is hard to believe it has been more than 15 years since it was released. In that movie another Chicagoan, Bill Murray, wakes up every morning in Punxsutawney, PA, and looks over at the clock radio as Sonny and Cher are singing "I Got You, Babe," and relives the same day over and over again, until finally it stops at the end. A fascinating movie, it has been analyzed by so many people. What is the message of the movie? I am not sure. I sure enjoy it and continue to watch it. I drive my wife crazy when she says: How many times have you seen that movie? But I like it a lot.

I am reminded of that movie when I think about what is going on in the Senate. It is almost like "Groundhog Day" around here because every day that you get up in the Senate and every week, it is the same music playing. It is the same script playing. The script that is playing is the strategy on the other side of the aisle, on the Republican side of the aisle. Their strategy is very simple. It involves the use of a filibuster.

A filibuster is a uniquely Senatorial institution that says, historically, any Senator can stand up at any time and stop anything—a nomination, a bill, anything. It gives us a lot of power. But unfortunately, that power can be misused. "Mr. Smith Goes to Washington," Jimmy Stewart on that famous set, the brandnew Senator who stood up and filibustered until he dropped right next to his desk, we all remember that image. It doesn't quite happen that way anymore. I have not seen anybody fall to the floor in the middle of a filibuster, but it does eat up a lot of time, and it slows things down.

In the history of the Senate, there is a record book. The record book says that in the history of this great body, in a 2-year period, the maximum number of filibusters is 57; 57 times in 2 years there was an effort to stop the debate, stop a nomination, and a filibuster was initiated.

For those who follow the history of the Senate, they are watching a his-

toric session. Because in the last year and 4 months, the Republicans in the Senate have broken the record. They have gone beyond 57 filibusters. At this point, they are now up to 68 Republican filibusters and still counting. On 68 different occasions, they have initiated a filibuster to stop us from taking up legislation.

You say to yourself: Maybe that had to be done. Not until you look at the legislation involved. Two weeks ago, we had something called a technical corrections bill. This is a bill that notices there were spelling errors and grammar errors in a highway bill that passed several years ago. They change it with technical corrections. It usually is a bill which passes with no debate, no comment, and not even a record vote. It just goes through when we have to clean up some problems we had in previous legislation.

In this new era of Republican filibusters, they decided to filibuster the technical corrections bill. If there was ever an embarrassing moment in the history of the Senate, it is the notion that we would filibuster a bill that corrects grammatical and spelling errors, but they did it. They held the Senate in session for a full week while we waited to complete the technical corrections bill. Then came the veterans' health benefits bill. Veterans' health benefits? Is this an issue anyone contests, that we would not provide all the benefits promised and all we can afford to the men and women who have served our country so valiantly and continue to? We brought this bill to the floor figuring this was an easy one, a bipartisan bill. It would pass. It was the subject of a Republican filibuster that held that bill on the floor for a full week.

Time and again, we came to the floor and said to the Republicans: Let us call up this bill. If you have an amendment, if there is something you want to change, then let's do it. No. Day after weary day this "Groundhog Day" script played out. We got up every morning. We didn't hear Sonny and Cher. We heard the Republican minority leader singing the same song every morning: We are going to try to get around to looking at this bill. Days passed.

If the Senate was paid for piecemeal as opposed to a general annual salary, we would be hurting at this point. We don't do much around here, and that is unfortunate. By the end of the week, after they had burned another week off the calendar, a week where we didn't consider the problems with our Nation's energy policy, where we didn't do a thing about gasoline prices but were stuck in a Republican filibuster, we had one vote on one amendment and passed the bill virtually unanimously when it was all over.

There was no controversy.

The object from the Republican side: Slow everything down. Stop it if you can.

So this week comes another bill. This bill is 288 pages. This is the reauthorization of the Federal Aviation Administration. Unfortunately, it is now subject to a Republican filibuster. A motion for cloture is about to be filed. This week in the Senate, for those who want to keep up with the ongoing and developing saga of our "Groundhog Day" script, Republicans are blocking safer, more efficient air travel. We have spent the entire week here and had one vote. I know it is not a secret. It is in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD. But it is embarrassing. We tried time and again to get Senate Republicans to give us an amendment, call it up for a vote. Let's get moving on this bill. No, let's wait until next week.

Is there anything else we could have been considering in the Senate this week? We should have passed this in a hurry. First, it is a bipartisan bill. Is it necessary or important? For those of us who live on airplanes, you bet it is. Twenty-five million more passengers flew on U.S. commercial air carriers last year than the previous year. Almost 800 million passengers flew on U.S. commercial carriers in 2007, double the number of 1985. The FAA predicts the aviation system will transport more than 1 billion airline passengers annually by 2020. There is a problem though. As modern as the airplanes may be, as new as some of the airports may be, we are running our air traffic system on radar that was established during World War II. This technology is not equipped to handle the volume increase in air travel we anticipate. We are already seeing it in airports across the country. Passengers are feeling it in my home State in the great airport at O'Hare, where I spend a large portion of my waking hours.

U.S. News and World Report placed O'Hare recently at the top of the airport misery index. In defense of that great airport, we are in the process of modernizing it and things will get better. But it is fat. The magazine cited that almost 30 percent of flights in and out of O'Hare are delayed. One of the main reasons is the incapacity of our air traffic control system to deal with this increase in volume. We need to move to a more modern, satellite-based air traffic control system. This technology, known as NextGen, will give pilots and air traffic controllers the ability to accurately pinpoint aircraft in the sky to avoid any problems, to monitor traffic, to move things more smoothly and efficiently.

The second reason for the increase in delays comes from the lack of capacity in our airports. O'Hare Airport was designed in the 1950s and built in that era. It doesn't handle, as it should most efficiently, the aircraft of today. We have a big expansion under way. But the bill that has been held up all week in the Senate, a bill that was brought to us on a bipartisan basis by Senator JAY ROCKEFELLER of West Virginia, who has worked his heart out to pass this bill, and Senator KAY BAILEY

HUTCHISON of Texas, who helped in crafting this bill, will provide funding for programs to give airports the money they need to expand and handle the growth in air traffic.

Lastly, the FAA bill also provides important provisions giving passengers rights when they are stuck in airplanes on the tarmac. Has it ever happened to you—stuck out there for an hour, if you are lucky? It used to be a lot longer. There are some horror stories that have come out of this. I will not go into the details other than to tell you we try to provide in this bill basic protections for airline passengers. We never want an airline to hurry into a circumstance that might compromise safety, but we do believe they should inform their passengers about what is going on and be mindful of the need for basic human comforts that passengers need when they are stuck on the runway for hour after weary hour. That is in this bill. You will not get a chance, if you look at the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD of this week, to hear any debate about it. We did not get to it. We were stuck in a filibuster—stuck for I think it will be the 69th filibuster of this senatorial session.

I believed when I came here that this was the world's greatest deliberative body. Maybe it is self-promotion for us to continue to say that because we have precious few amendments, very little debate, and we really lack the kind of legislative activity that has, I guess, been the hallmark of the Senate for as long as it has existed. We have ground to a halt because we are facing the slowdown strategy from the other side of the aisle.

When you think about how many important issues we need to work on for this country, for the families of this country, important decisions we need to make, it is sad that the Senate rules allow this to continue.

Well, we will return next Tuesday, after a long weekend. After having one vote this week, we need a rest. I hope you understand. We will come back Tuesday in the hopes we can start up this bill again. Maybe in the second week this bipartisan bill just might draw an amendment from the other side of the aisle, just might draw some debate on the floor, and just might get passed, so we can move on to the next issue, which I believe will be energy policy. And I can just guarantee you, it is likely to face another filibuster from the Republican side of the aisle.

The GOP is the, I guess, nickname for the Republican Party. It stands for the "Grand Old Party." When you watch the progress, or at least the strategy of the Republicans in the Senate, you come to believe that GOP stands for "Graveyard Of Progress." That is what they see the Senate. That is unfortunate.

There is a lot of work we need to do. The American people sent us here to do it on a bipartisan basis. I hope we can get it done.

I yield the floor.

Several Senators addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. REED. Mr. President, the custom is to alternate to each side. Senator DEMINT is here. After he has concluded his remarks, I ask unanimous consent to be recognized.

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

Mr. DEMINT. Mr. President, I thank the Senator.

Mr. President, I need to start by expressing my disappointment at the misleading and distorted information that was just presented on the floor. Actually, I was amazed at what was just said.

The Commerce Committee had come up with an aviation modernization bill with strong bipartisan support. But, like many other bills we have faced with our Democratic colleagues in the majority, some of my Democratic colleagues chose to add special provisions for some interest groups and very wasteful and questionable earmarks, tax earmarks, using unprecedented methods to fund things through changing our Tax Code, things that there is a lot of consternation about: changing a pension plan.

The reason this bill has been held up is the majority decided to add things to it that had nothing to do with aviation. We want this bill to come through, and it has strong support.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, will the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. DEMINT. Mr. President, no, I will not. I have been down here several times today, and I will continue my remarks. But I will be glad to have the Senator say anything after I complete my remarks.

The Senator mentioned the technical corrections bill for transportation. He said this was just typos. This bill added hundreds of millions of dollars of new earmarks to our transportation budget. It was not a technical correction bill. It was an opportunity for the majority and some others to add things that did not need to be a part of this bill. The Senator even knows, on bills such as consumer product safety where special provisions were added for manufacturers in that bill, we had to slow the bill down in order to get those things taken out.

So there is a reason the majority has not been able to move any significant legislation. It is because they tend to clutter it up with wasteful special interest earmarks that need to be taken out. Hopefully, we can come to an agreement to take out these unnecessary and unprecedented tax provisions in our aviation modernization bill so we can get this thing done.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. President, I did not come down to talk about aviation modernization, as I hope the majority will clean this bill up so we can get it through. But I want to talk a little bit about health care.

Health care is a priority for the Nation. Americans deserve access to affordable health insurance. Yet we are wasting time here and not doing anything to help with the health care crisis in this country today.

Fortunately, one of our colleagues, JOHN MCCAIN, has come out this week strongly for a health care plan that would help every American to be insured. He talks about guaranteed access to health insurance—plans people can own and can afford and keep, plans they choose for themselves and that are not chosen by the Government. This is the direction we need to move.

Unfortunately, my Democratic colleagues—at least many of them—do not want everyone to be insured with personal health insurance policies. They would much rather the Government take over the whole health insurance industry and decide for us what type of health plans we are going to have. The evidence of this is abundant.

There are a number of efforts Republicans have made to try to improve access to private health insurance. One is to allow people in this country to buy health insurance from anywhere in the country. Right now, they are restricted to buying it in the State where they live. So a few insurance companies have a monopoly on the business. We have had a Health Care Choice Act that would give Americans a chance to shop anywhere in the country. Yet the Democrats have blocked this bill.

Only a couple weeks ago, we had an amendment to the budget bill that would allow individuals to deduct the cost of health insurance, just as businesses do. But I believe every Democrat in the Senate voted against that, to give some kind of fair tax treatment to individuals who are buying health care. They blocked it. Yet they complain about individuals being uninsured. They do everything they can to keep individuals from owning health insurance.

Now the Democrats are trying to destroy health savings accounts. It started in the House with a bill that will change the way health savings accounts are set up. The fastest growing way for the uninsured to get insurance is new types of health plans that have health savings accounts and insurance, where people can buy most of their health care with their own dollars or in dollars their employers put in this health savings account that is tax free. It gives them a lot more choices and flexibility, and it takes out, importantly, the cost of third-party administration.

Health savings accounts are a way to restructure health insurance plans so that every time you go to the doctor or the hospital, there is not a third-party insurance company filing claims or dealing with billing and running up the cost of administration. We know today there are more administrative people in a doctor's office or a hospital than there are health care providers. The reason for that is, every time we use

the health care system, there is a third party involved, whether it is private health insurance or Medicaid or Medicare, and there are a lot of administrative costs.

Health savings accounts not only give people more flexibility, but they begin to take the cost of administration out of health care. It allows an individual to make their own decisions with their doctors or with their pharmacists as to their health care, and they do not need approval from some health insurance company or from some Government bureaucrat whether they are going to spend this money. Certainly, the way health savings account dollars are spent is restricted to real health care, and that is the way it is working.

But, unfortunately, a company that provides this service of substantiating the way health care dollars are spent has come to Washington and convinced Democrats that we need a third party to determine whether a health savings account spending event can be substantiated. This is definitely a special interest provision that the Democrats have bought into. But what it does is it adds the administrative costs back to health savings accounts and takes away the flexibility we are giving to individuals.

Keep in mind, people who are uninsured and people who did not have insurance before and a number of people who are switching from traditional plans—and we have gone from 1 million people covered by health savings account-type plans to over 6 million in the last few years. It is the fastest growing type of health care plan because that is the kind of plan people want.

Let me just read some statistics. The reason for all this is the Democrats have inserted, on the House side, in the bill they call the Taxpayer Assistance and Simplification Act, provisions that would put an administrative burden on health savings accounts. They are trying to kill health savings accounts so we will all end up with Government health care.

I already mentioned that we have gone from 1 million people covered by health savings account plans in 2005 to over 6 million today. Thirty-one percent of the people who have these health savings account plans plus insurance were previously uninsured. Eighty-four percent of health savings account policies in the group and individual market provide first-dollar coverage for preventative care. So this claim that health savings accounts keep people from seeking preventative care is totally bogus because the plans are designed that when someone seeks preventative care, diagnostic care, the insurance pays for it and it does not come out of the health savings account.

Health savings accounts give people better access to the type of health care they want. We found that it even helps with chronic-disease management. If

people have access to \$1,000 or \$2,000 more per year to use the way they need to for their own health, then they can manage their diabetes or congestive heart failure or other types of illnesses that are often restricted by traditional health insurance.

I want to encourage my colleagues—my colleagues who really believe Americans should have the freedom to own their own health insurance and not have to go to the Government for their health care—to help us preserve and promote and expand health savings accounts for those who want them.

I want to make it clear, health savings accounts are health insurance. They are just health insurance plans that have savings and insurance with them, so that most of health care can be accessed with dollars of patients doing direct business with their physician, with their pharmacist, with the hospital. It will save millions—even billions—as a nation in administrative costs. Already, Americans have well over \$3 billion saved in health savings accounts for future health care needs.

This is an idea we need to expand across the country, not to destroy. I would ask particularly my Democratic colleagues on the Senate side not to take up this provision that the House included that will hurt and probably destroy the whole idea of health savings accounts.

Mr. President, I thank the Senator for allowing me to speak, and I yield back the time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. REED. Mr. President, we are here today in the midst of another filibuster in which the FAA reauthorization bill is before us, but we have to wait for a cloture vote and we have to wait many, many days past, I think, what was appropriate. But it does give us an opportunity to talk about the issue that is of most concern to Americans at this moment; that is, the economy.

We have an economy that is heading, unfortunately, toward recession. Some economists have already declared it here. Over the last few months, I have spoken about the situation and particularly, I say to the Presiding Officer, in our home State of Rhode Island where, as we go about, we are stopped constantly by our constituents, our neighbors, our friends who, quite rightly, complain about the current economic situation.

The Senator from Illinois was very accurate and very insightful when he noted that the incomes of most Americans have not risen over the last decade or more and that these individuals—and we are not talking about low-income Americans, entry-level workers; we are talking about going way up close to \$100,000 or more—they have seen no real income growth. But what they have seen is accelerating prices.

Now, for several years, they thought they would be buttressed against these

accelerating prices and slow income growth by the value of their homes. But, as we know now, we are seeing a huge recession in the real estate market. The values of homes are beginning to fall. They certainly are not rising as they were. The foreclosure situation is deepening everywhere. Again, in Rhode Island, there were traditionally a few notices each week in the paper. Now it seems there is a whole section devoted to foreclosures in the Providence Journal. It is evidence of the worsening of the economic situation.

Now, the pressure of flat wages, flat incomes, housing values falling—these accelerating prices are becoming very difficult to endure by Americans everywhere.

According to a review, a recent survey by the Pew Research Center, fewer Americans now than at any time in the past half century believe they are moving forward in life.

One of the great aspects of my youth in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s is not only did families deal with moving forward, they also were of an unshakeable belief that their children would have a much better life than they enjoyed. That belief is being shaken today, seriously. Many parents—again, we are not talking about low-income workers; we are talking about a range of Americans—believe that unless we take positive and effective action, we are going to be in a situation where the next generation of Americans will have it even more difficult than we do today. That is why it is very difficult to bear these filibusters because ultimately, this is not about parliamentary maneuvering. It is about whether we can provide the leadership and the policies to reverse course in America today and provide for that better future for our sons and daughters tomorrow.

Seventy-nine percent of Americans today believe it is more difficult to maintain their middle-class standard of living. In fact, one of the great hallmarks of this country in the last century was the creation and the expansion of the middle class. Again, there are many people who are sensing that the middle class is not expanding any longer, but that it is shrinking. It is shrinking on the load of increasing prices, flat incomes, and decelerating housing values. That is not just the sum of statistics and analysis and reports; that is what people are talking about everywhere in this country.

In Rhode Island, for example, with respect to prices, the average price of gasoline is soaring to record levels. Regular unleaded is currently at more than \$3.60 per gallon. Diesel is getting close to \$4.50 per gallon. For our trucking industry, for all of the businesses that depend on moving their goods around, for the service people who have to get to their service calls, when prices go up—gasoline and diesel—that is an additional business cost. It is an additional tax on them because of, I think, the failed policies of this administration, and it is a tax that is taking

a big bite out of their well-being and the welfare of their families.

One thing we can do, and I think we should do—we could do it immediately—is we can refrain, at least temporarily, from filling the Strategic Petroleum Reserve. That seems to be a very simpleminded approach to lessening, at least in a small way, demand for oil at a time that oil is surging to around \$119 per barrel. I think it also will send a signal that we are at least doing something to relieve the pressure on working families, and that can be done with the signature by the President and ordered by the President, and it should be.

At the same time families across this country and businesses across this country are seeing extraordinary price increases, oil companies are seeing extraordinary profits. I think we have to take action, and that action, once again, stalled on the Senate floor several months ago to eliminate some of the tax breaks that oil companies are receiving. I thought that at \$119 a barrel, there would be sufficient incentives to go drill, but apparently the oil companies need tax incentives as well. I thought the market would be working in this case, but apparently it works in strange ways for these oil companies.

I think we also have to think about a windfall profits tax. We have huge expenditures. The President, as the Senator from Illinois pointed out, is sending up a supplemental appropriations bill for Iraq for billions of dollars. All of that is expended, and yet we can't tax some of the extraordinary profits of companies that are doing very well and don't seem to be reinvesting it robustly in drilling or searching for alternative sources.

I think we also have to protect consumers from price gouging at the pump, and something else—and that is speculation in the world oil markets. There are experts who suggest that more than 25 percent of the cost of crude oil may be the result not of supply and demand but of market speculation. We need to give the principal regulator for the energy-commodities markets, the Commodities Futures Trading Commission, the tools they need to review these transactions and to ferret out unscrupulous conduct in speculation.

That is why I support the Close the Enron Loophole Act that has been introduced by Senator LEVIN. It has been included in the Senate-passed farm bill, and I continue to advocate that provision should be adopted very quickly because without it, I don't think we can effectively provide regulation to a market that is exacting, in some estimates, a 25-percent premium, not because of supply and demand but because there are financial forces at work speculating in these commodities, and that speculation will go on until we authorize the appropriate regulatory authority to begin to supervise, regulate, and review those transactions.

The price of food is also, in many cases, spinning out of control for so many working Americans. Since March 2007, the price of eggs has jumped 35 percent, a gallon of milk is up 23 percent, a loaf of white bread has gone up 16 percent, and a pound of ground chuck is up 8 percent. Overall, food prices in 2008 are expected to rise 4 to 5 percent, about double the increase of recent years.

Again, this is not just an economic statistic. Talk to the bakers—and the Presiding Officer knows these families, such as the Calise family and other families in Rhode Island who have been baking Italian bread for 70 or 100 years—they have never seen the increase in wheat prices they have seen over the last several months. It is affecting their ability to make ends meet for their businesses. When you have accelerating energy prices, oil prices, gasoline prices, accelerating commodity prices such as wheat, a business such as that, a family-owned bakery, it is very difficult. It is extremely difficult for those families who are struggling to get by to get, frankly, to the supermarket, fill up their basket, and not walk out very much impoverished by the experience.

That is why I have requested the Senate Agriculture Committee to hold a hearing on the food versus fuel balance in U.S. agriculture policy. We have been encouraging ethanol production. That would bar us using some of our commodities, our agricultural commodities, but I believe we have to begin to focus on the tradeoff between energy production and food production.

I have also sent a letter to the Agriculture Secretary expressing concern with the cost of wheat, as I indicated, based upon comments I received from our bakers in Rhode Island, and requested that the Secretary work with the Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Energy to look at the need to develop a mechanism to balance this tradeoff between food production and fuel production, and requesting information about how the Department of Agriculture is managing the wheat stockpile—which is something that will influence the price of wheat—as well as requesting information on how it is monitoring new speculative investment in commodities and its impact on prices. All of this has to be done.

What is becoming also more difficult to bear on top of everything we have talked about—flat income, rising prices, declining home values—is the fact that now we are seeing unemployment begin to accelerate. In Rhode Island, we are unfortunately experiencing a 6.1-percent unemployment rate—higher than the rest of New England. It is causing real problems, and it is something we have to address. I think we have to begin to recognize that as we lose jobs, we have to think seriously about employing people again.

As I mentioned, Rhode Island has a 6.1 percent unemployment rate right

now. It is close to the highest unemployment rate in the United States, only behind Michigan, Alaska, and California. It is the highest unemployment rate in Rhode Island since August of 1995, more than 12 years ago. There are 35,100 people in Rhode Island who are unemployed, and this is a trend that has been going up, unfortunately, not down.

We have also seen a shift in employment recently from February to March of 2008. In just a single month, 3,100 less people were without jobs in Rhode Island, a decrease in 3,100 jobs. For a State with a population of just 1 million, that is a significant factor. It adds not only to the decline in the unemployment, but the velocity of that decline. Things seem to be trending much quicker downward than rebounding.

Now, it is no wonder that the Labor Department announced today that the number of first-time claims for unemployment benefits rose to 380,000 nationwide. That is the highest level in 4 years. Today's announcement concluded that Rhode Island had one of the largest increases in initial claims numbering 1,779. The direction is unfortunate, and it is the wrong direction. Approximately half of those unemployed workers were eligible to collect unemployment insurance benefits, and of this number, nearly 19 percent face long-term unemployment.

The number of Rhode Islanders in 2008 who continue to collect unemployment benefits has also increased—14.1 percent above the number of the same period last year. As a result of this situation of deteriorating employment and longer term unemployment, a significant number of Rhode Islanders are exhausting their benefits. They are receiving their final payment. That has occurred for more than 1,900 people, and that percentage is increasing also.

All of these numbers suggest something very obvious: more and more people need unemployment insurance. More and more people are on unemployment longer. The economy is not responding to their needs. This economy is not generating jobs, it is shredding jobs. That ultimately leads to the fact that the benefits run out if we do not extend unemployment insurance benefits.

Now, I think that is something we have to do. I think we have an obligation in this economy—which is getting worse, not better—to go ahead and provide extended unemployment benefits. By the way, these benefits are one of the best stimulus programs we have because the proportion of the money that is expended that gets reinvested quickly—respent in the economy—is significantly higher than other programs.

I was pleased the Senate passed and the President signed into law the Economic Stimulus Act in February. I voted for this package. It will provide tax rebate checks. They are on their way out to many families across the country. But given the historically

high unemployment in Rhode Island and in other parts of the country, I believe we need to do much more. This is a national problem. It needs attention. That is why I believe we have to extend unemployment benefits. In those States that are hit hard by this economic crisis, individuals should be eligible for benefits for an additional 13 weeks and another 13 weeks of emergency benefits in States where the unemployment rate is exceptionally high.

I pressed, as so many did, for inclusion of these extended unemployment insurance benefits last February, and I commend my colleagues who have fought also for this benefit, including Senators KENNEDY and DURBIN and STABENOW.

As I indicated, many economists have also pointed to the extent of unemployment benefits as not only something that helps the individual, but it provides further stimulus for our economy. An extension of these benefits provides a very high rate of return on the money expended, generating approximately \$1.64 in gross domestic product per dollar invested in this program. This is especially helpful when we are looking for ways to get the economy moving again.

We get news each day of declining economic statistics. The last notice of our gross domestic product for the last quarter was a very unimpressive .6 percent. We need urgent action to move the economy. We need urgent action to help families who are struggling. They have worked. They have worked hard, and they are running out of their benefits. We can't run out on them.

That is why we need an economic stimulus package that will not only recognize obligations overseas, but we will recognize obligations at home. I hope we will enact a very robust extension of unemployment benefits for all Americans.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kansas is recognized.

ETHANOL

Mr. BROWNBACK. Mr. President, I appreciate hearing my colleague from Rhode Island. I am standing here thinking: Thank goodness we have ethanol. Without ethanol—we are supplying 8 percent of our fuel needs—it would drive up gasoline prices another 15 percent. I am certainly pleased we have that.

We had a hearing in the Joint Economic Committee today on the price of corn and its impact on food prices. It is interesting from the standpoint that economists are putting it in front of us that a 40-percent increase in corn prices would only lead to a 1.3-percent increase in the price of food, and that is because corn goes into a whole bunch of different substances. Thankfully, with the corn-based ethanol we have, we are holding gasoline prices down approximately 15 percent.

A Merrill Lynch analyst estimated oil and gasoline prices would be 15 percent higher, or \$4.14 a gallon at today's

prices, if biofuel producers weren't increasing their output. That is significant in this marketplace. Thankfully, we have that.

I also note that on wheat prices something is significant in Kansas. We have had a fall of \$4 a bushel in the price of wheat since January, from \$12 a bushel to \$8 a bushel. Plus, in a loaf of bread, you probably have 10 cents' worth of wheat. I hope they would say the farm is not the problem in the system.

Our oil prices are high and we need to hold them down. Part of the answer to that is domestic production—more oil and gas production in the United States but also biofuels. That is not the reason I came to the floor to speak. It was a good use of time to be able to put that in the RECORD, though, because we are going to debate, apparently, the role of biofuels in the economy and around the world. I wanted to note it has a positive impact.

Mr. President, I will speak on the FAA reauthorization bill. I thank the chairman and ranking member of the relevant committees for bringing to the floor a balanced FAA reauthorization bill. It takes into account the needs of the air traffic control system and pays for them and distributes that in a fair manner.

I am not pleased we are not able to move the bill forward. I wish it wasn't loaded up with extraneous provisions but, rather, that it would stay with the FAA.

I am particularly happy to see the bill contains no user fees for the general aviation industry. It would have placed an inordinate burden on what has been and continues to be a thriving American industry, a true domestic manufacturing success story. I might note to people here and those watching, we are recruiting for jobs. We need people in this industry. We have a number of manufacturing jobs in my State. I have traveled around and they are saying we need more people coming in to work. Some in Hays, KS, were telling me they need a thousand people for jobs they have.

The aircraft industry is recruiting individuals and, hopefully, we can keep that moving forward with a good FAA reauthorization bill. I think it helps the industry further if you don't put a tax on the industry; it will hurt it. This is a domestic industry, and we need to take care of it.

Importantly, however, this bill provides for the needed upgrade of our Nation's air traffic control system, which has been outdated for many years and the technology is outpaced by many countries around the world. That should not be the case.

Aviation and manufacturing are very important to my State. We have five major aviation companies located there, including Cessna, Hawker Beechcraft, Bombardier Learjet, Spirit AeroSystems, and Boeing Integrated Defense Systems.

The aviation industry has a huge ripple effect. Every manufacturing job

created adds 2.9 other jobs. It is a vibrant industry that, for the first time this past year, exported more of its product than it sold domestically. This is the first time we have been able to do that.

However, I wish to note some disturbing trends on things I think we need to attack so we don't lose this domestic industry. This is one that a lot of people in the world are trying to get a big piece of. Honda is coming into the aviation manufacturing sector, and others are coming into it. It has high-paying manufacturing jobs of a key product used around the world.

In 1985, the United States produced 80 percent of the world's new aircraft. This past year, that number was down to 60 percent—from 80 to 60 percent. There is increasing competition, and I hope we can address this trend as we move forward. To that end, I intend to offer an amendment to the bill that would create a blue-ribbon commission of experts in aviation manufacturing to study the current trends in the industry and recommend ways in which we, as a Government, can respond to those trends and ensure the vibrancy of this important commercial sector.

Parenthetically, one of the things we should not be doing is exporting our aviation defense jobs—such as sending the major tanker contract to Europe and to Airbus, rather than having it done in the United States. This is a major battle that will engulf this Congress—whether that \$40 billion contract, that the base plane should be an Airbus plane, made primarily in Europe, or if the base plane should be a plane primarily made in the United States. It is a key part of the long-term trends of this industry, and we are already losing a lot of that, even as the industry continues to do well and is exporting well. We are not maintaining the market share we have had internationally because the Europeans, through government subsidies, are buying into this, and other countries are following as well.

I think as we look for what can help support our overall exports in our economy, aircraft sales can continue to be that. Presently, they provide a \$56 billion trade surplus for our country. We sold \$76 billion in airplanes and parts to foreign buyers. I think we need to watch and I think we need to be very aggressive to protect and see that this industry grows. One of the needed things is the FAA reauthorization program. We need a modern air traffic control system, and we need to have a fee structure that doesn't penalize general aviation.

There is one final note. One of my colleagues from Missouri is talking about bringing up an amendment that I think would have some positive impact on a repair and maintenance program but would have in it some features—if it continues in the way I have seen it—that could harm our aviation industry domestically. If that amendment comes up, we are going to look

very critically at it, with the possibility of putting forward second-degree amendments to make sure we don't unintentionally harm the domestic U.S. aviation industry.

I yield the floor 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. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

MILITARY HOUSING

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, there is a colossal waste of taxpayers' money that is occurring at Patrick Air Force Base in the State of Florida near my home of Melbourne, FL. Happily, the Senate Armed Services Committee has addressed the issue to try to expose the spotlight on the problem to get the U.S. Air Force to come clean as to what has happened in this huge fiasco of waste of taxpayers' money.

It is born out of the privatization of housing for military families. Throughout the country, there has been some success at other military bases, but on a particular contractor, a contractor who got the contract to build housing for the Air Force on four Air Force bases, including Patrick Air Force Base and three others in other places such as Georgia and Arkansas, the contractor went belly up and now, in order to try to keep some semblance of housing being built, what is happening is the Air Force now wants to use all of the land that is supposed to be for housing at Patrick Air Force Base as the equity to build the houses on the other bases in three other States.

You will be surprised when I tell you how bad this is. There were 300 acres on the barrier island south of Patrick Air Force Base. This is in the town of Satellite Beach in Florida. It is near Cape Canaveral and the Cape Canaveral Air Force station. The 300 acres were basically given by the Air Force to a joint venture, a corporation, that included this developer that ultimately went bust. The deal was so bad that the Air Force agrees, of the 300 acres, they are going to outright give 100 acres to the developer. The developer goes off and sells it for something like \$13 million or \$15 million and pockets the cash. On the remaining 200 acres the developer is supposed to build 550 new homes for airmen and their families and commensurately tear down the old dilapidated housing that had been there for several decades.

The developer only builds 163 houses and then stops, and all these other old dwellings are there, of which the developer has the authority to rent on the market, and since they are run down, almost slum-like conditions, you can imagine the kind of tenants you are now getting living next to Air Force families.

The Air Force's idea of rescuing this is to say we are going to take that remaining 200 acres, we are going to give it to a new developer, and that equity is going to help that developer build additional houses, but not at Patrick, no, in these three other States.

So Patrick Air Force Base and our Air Force families who thought they were going to get 550 new homes now only have 163 homes sitting next to slum dwellings, and the Air Force is going to give away the rest of this 200 acres?

Well, something smells awfully fishy. Fortunately, this has come to this Senator's attention. I am happy to say I had to strain and grunt a little bit to get my point of view across to the Senate Armed Services Committee yesterday in a markup, but when the test came on a recorded vote, it was 22 to 0 in favor of the amendment that would require the Air Force to do a cost-benefit study before they can transfer the property. That is the policy set forth in the Defense authorization bill.

I want to say a word to the U.S. Air Force: No, technically, you don't have to pay attention because legally you can go on and transfer that property now because our Defense authorization bill is not law. It has only been passed out of the Senate Armed Services Committee. But it is going to be law once it gets through the House and the Senate and goes to the President for signature.

I strongly suggest to the U.S. Air Force, and I am memorializing these comments in a letter to the Secretary of the Air Force, Secretary Wynne: Withhold, forbear on any transfer of the title to a new developer utilizing that very valuable asset of barrier island, oceanfront land until you do the cost-benefit analysis so we can bring this out into the full light of day and we will know how we can best protect the taxpayers' investment.

We want to serve the U.S. airmen and their families, we want to serve the U.S. taxpayers and their families, and the best way to do that is get this story out in the open with this cost-benefit analysis.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. NELSON of Florida). The distinguished Senator from Vermont is recognized.

ENERGY

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, in the last several weeks in a number of venues, I have met with hundreds, in fact thousands, of Vermonters, and to nobody's great surprise, the issue that is uppermost on their minds is the very high price of gas and the price of oil. I know that is true in all 50 States in this country and in thousands of communities. It is especially true in rural States because in rural States, especially cold-weather States, it is not uncommon for people to travel 50 miles to their jobs and then 50 miles back. If you drive 100 miles to work, the mileage runs up.

I should mention, I know it probably didn't snow in Florida, but it did snow

in Vermont. We had a small amount of snow. That simply indicates that people know when it gets cold in Vermont it gets very cold. We have a lot of elderly people right now wondering how they are going to heat their homes next winter. We have a combination of working people in a rural State—this is true all over rural America—paying outrageously high prices in order to get to work and, in colder weather States, people very worried about whether they can stay warm next winter.

The arithmetic is not really hard to figure out. If you put 25,000 miles on your car going to work every year and you are paying a buck more than you used to and you get 25 miles per gallon on your car, that is a thousand dollars. If you make \$30,000 a year and you get a 3-percent raise, that is 900 bucks. So all of your raise, all of your cost-of-living increase on your job is now in your gas tank. That is happening to millions of American workers. Then these same workers are paying more for health care, are paying more for food, more for education, which, added together, is why the middle class in America is collapsing.

For many years, as good-paying jobs have gone to China, as our people are struggling to make ends meet, people have been worried about how they are going to survive economically. On top of that, we now have the foreclosure crisis and we have the escalating cost of gas and oil in this country, which then leads some 80 percent of the people in this country to believe this country is going in the wrong direction, and one wonders, really, what the other 20 percent are thinking. Clearly, for the middle class in this country, we are facing a very serious problem.

I did an interesting thing a few weeks ago in Vermont. We were having some town meetings on the economy. We brought a professor from Harvard Law School, one of the best writers in America on the economy. Her name is Elizabeth Warren.

In preparation for that meeting, we sent out an e-mail to people in my State and said: Tell me what is going on in terms of the collapse of the middle class and how that impacts your life. Frankly, we expected a few dozen people to reply. As of today, we have received over 700 responses. This is doubly surprising because in Vermont people are quite reticent, not wanting to talk about personal aspects of their lives—700 people. I recommend you and Members of the Senate read some of these responses. They are up on our Web site. The tales people are telling are heartbreaking, they are poignant, they come from the heart, and there are hundreds of them.

Let me just read a few segments of some of the letters we have received and how they touch on gas prices and the general collapse of the middle class in our country.

We are hard-working people. We want to pay our bills. We want to keep what we

worked so hard for. The constantly increasing cost of gas, oil, groceries are drowning us. I hear the same thing from most of our friends on a daily basis—hanging on by a thread, robbing Peter to pay Paul. It is such a stressful way to live. There are days when I get so discouraged I just want to call the banks and say just take it all. I don't have it in me to fight for it anymore.

This is a family in the State of Vermont.

Here is another one. This comes from an elderly couple in Vermont:

My wife and I are both 77, retired and living on a very limited income. We live in the country, and driving the 60-plus miles round trip for shopping and health care has become a financial hardship.

Traveling 60 miles for shopping and health care has become a financial hardship.

Even though we drive a car that gets 35 miles to the gallon, a tankful of gas eats up an awfully large amount of our disposable income.

That is true all over America. You have older people who get in their car, they go out to buy groceries, they go to the doctor, and suddenly they are finding that just getting into their car and going where they have gone their whole lives is now a very expensive proposition, in this case eating up a large part of their disposable income.

Another family writes:

I live in the Northeast Kingdom, which is a very rural area in the northern part of Vermont near the Canadian border, and I have to drive a 30-mile round trip to work in Morrisville and even farther to Stowe, where most of the jobs are now. With the gas prices high and most employers paying \$8.50 to maybe \$10 per hour, you spend much of your paycheck traveling to and from work.

In other words, in the real world, there are millions of people in rural Vermont and all over this country and in Florida who are making \$8.50, \$9, \$10 an hour, and if you are paying \$3.50 a gallon to get to work and you have to travel any kind of distance, what do you have left? Not a lot.

The average price for a gallon of gas recently hit a recordbreaking \$3.62 a gallon, which is more than double what it was when President Bush first took office. The price of diesel fuel is now averaging over \$4.17 a gallon, which is more than \$1.36 higher than it was just a year ago. The price of oil is now \$110 a barrel. I think these prices say it all. They tell every Member or should tell every Member of Congress what the American people understand, which is that we have a national emergency on our hands. If we do not act boldly and rapidly to lower gas and oil prices, the economic situation for millions of working families will only deteriorate even further.

What we are talking about is not just the worker who can't afford to fill up his gas tank, it is the entire economy. It is small businesses, it is farmers, it is truckers. The trucking industry is convoluting right now with these high prices. It is the increased cost of groceries, it is tourism. People come to Vermont and people go to Florida to enjoy vacations. They are not going to be able to drive there with these prices.

In fact, what we are looking at is a major economic crisis impacting every segment of our economy.

Sadly, as in so many other areas regarding the needs of ordinary Americans, when it comes to gas prices the Bush-Cheney administration is just not there. This is an administration where, in area after area, you can count on them to stand up with the large multinational corporations. You can count on them protecting the wealthiest people in the country. Now, when the middle class is in crisis, when people cannot afford the rapidly rising costs of gas and oil, they are nowhere to be found.

What is particularly interesting, of course, as most people know, is both President Bush and Vice President CHENEY have backgrounds in the oil industry. That is what they did before they assumed the Presidency and Vice Presidency.

Ironically—and this would really be almost funny if it weren't so sad—when President Bush ran for office in the year 2000, he touted his experience in oil as one of the reasons he should be elected President. He knew the oil industry. He would make the energy situation better based on his experience.

Here is a direct quote from what candidate Bush said in the year 2000, in his first campaign, regarding how he would improve our relations with some of the OPEC countries. This is what he said:

I will use the capital that my administration will earn with the Kuwaitis or the Saudis and convince them to open the spigot.

That is what candidate George Bush said in the year 2000.

Then he said, also in that campaign:

The President of the United States must jawbone OPEC Members to lower the price.

End of quote from candidate George Bush in the year 2000. That was 8 years ago. When then-candidate Bush made those comments, the price of oil was \$30 a barrel. Today, after 7½ years of the Bush-Cheney administration, the price of oil is now \$110 a barrel.

It seems to me that it is imperative that among many other things, many other actions Congress must take, one of them is to do what President Bush talked about in 2000 but never did, and that is we must demand that Saudi Arabia and Kuwait produce the kind of oil they can. We must also move forward as a Congress to address the reality that OPEC is a cartel. That is their reason for existence. A cartel is formed in collusion in order, in this case, to prevent production of oil, control the production of oil in order to artificially keep prices high.

This Congress must demand two things: that Saudi Arabia and Kuwait and other OPEC members increase their production so we can lower prices, and second, we must be aggressive in telling the World Trade Organization that OPEC is a cartel; it must be disbanded.

Back to President Bush.

In 2004, when Saudi Arabia led the fight within OPEC to cut production

and raise prices, the Miami Herald reported that President Bush “refused to lean on the oil cartel” and “refused to even personally lobby OPEC leaders to change their minds.”

It is true that last January President Bush did visit Saudi Arabia to ask OPEC nations to increase production, but guess what. The Associated Press reported that President Bush’s request was “ignored.”

In 2000, as a candidate, he told us he was going to open the spigot, he was going to get them to produce more oil, but that, of course, has not happened.

Last March, after meeting with Saudi Arabia’s oil minister, the Wall Street Journal reported that “Vice President DICK CHENEY suggested there is little more Saudi Arabia can do to increase oil production and relieve price pressures in global markets.” But Stephen Brown, the energy economist at the Federal Reserve, has disputed this. He has said that “Saudi Arabia is restraining its production, probably by about 1.8 million barrels a day. And OPEC is probably holding back 2.3 million barrels a day altogether.” In other words, despite all of the rhetoric from President Bush, all of his experience in the oil industry, the reality is that Saudi Arabia is not producing the kind of oil it should be producing and we are hurting as a result of that.

Many of us are tired of waiting for the Bush administration to act. Congress must act. There are a number of things we must do in order to lower the price of gas and oil in this country. One of them is to demand that Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and the other OPEC countries start producing the quantity of oil we know they can produce.

That is one thing we can do, but it is certainly not enough. The national oil emergency we currently face in our country and in many other countries demands both short-term and long-term solutions.

Long term, I think many people in the Senate and the vast majority of the American people understand that we must break our dependency on fossil fuel. We must move to energy efficiency. We must move to such sustainable energies as wind, solar, geothermal, biomass, and others. In my view, the potential is absolutely staggering in terms of the amount of energy we can produce through sustainable energy and the amount of energy we can save through energy efficiency.

Not only that, obviously we need to significantly improve public transportation. Our railroads today lag far behind Europe and Japan. In doing that, building a broad mass-transportation system, we can break our dependency on the automobile.

In terms of automobiles, people are just now beginning—and we must help them—to move to electric cars, move to hybrid plug-in cars. There is just enormous potential out there. Clearly, that is the long-term solution of where we have to go.

But I sometimes hear my friends coming here and they talk about a

long-term solution and yet they forget about what is going on in America today for a family making \$30,000 or \$40,000 a year, and maybe they have two cars because they have two workers, and those people are going broke today.

So I do not think it is an either/or. I think we have got to be aggressive right now in moving toward energy efficiency and sustainable energy, but we have also got to be aggressive today in lowering the price of gas and oil. It is not an either/or. We move forward in parallel tracks.

One of the steps we have to take is to put pressure on OPEC nations to increase the production of oil. I think also we have got to break up OPEC, and let the free market work in that area. But that is only one of the things we have got to do.

Second, I believe it is absolutely imperative that we impose a windfall profits tax on the oil and gas industry. The American people do not understand, nor do I understand, why they are paying record-breaking prices at the gas pump, while ExxonMobil has made more in profits than any corporation in the history of the world for the past 2 consecutive years.

I know ExxonMobil and their propaganda machine will no doubt explain it. But the average person does not believe it and the average person should not believe it. ExxonMobil and the other major oil companies are ripping off the American people. That is clear. We need a windfall profits tax to address that.

Last year alone, ExxonMobil made \$40 billion in profits, and rewarded its CEO Rex Tillerson with a \$21 million compensation package. That is nothing. He is getting shortchanged, because the guy who went before him, when he retired—his name was Lee Raymond—got a \$400 million retirement package. So my suggestion to Mr. Tillerson is: Go back to your board. You are getting ripped off 21 million bucks. How are you going to make it on that?

Here you have a company charging record-breaking prices, having given its former CEO a few years ago \$400 million in a retirement package. But ExxonMobil is not alone. Chevron, ConocoPhillips, Shell, and BP have also been making out like bandits. In fact, the five largest oil companies in this country have made over \$600 billion in profits since George W. Bush has been President. Not bad, \$600 billion in profits in 7.5 years. And people in Vermont and Florida cannot afford to fill their gas tanks.

Last year alone, the major oil companies in the United States made over \$155 billion in profits and, not surprisingly, those profits continue to soar. Today, ExxonMobil reported a 17-percent increase in profits, totaling \$10.9 billion, \$10.9 billion for one quarter.

Earlier this week, however, BP, British Petroleum, announced a 63-percent increase in their profits. Shell’s first

quarter profits jumped by 25 percent to over \$9 billion; one quarter, 3 months. ConocoPhillips’ profits increased by over 16 percent in the first quarter to over \$4 billion.

It is hard to come up with the words to describe it, because I know, and I am sure you know, Mr. President, the problems middle-class people are facing today and what these high oil and gas prices are meaning to families, and at the same time this is going on, these major oil companies are enjoying obscene levels of profit. With their profits, among many other things, they are very lavish in the kind of benefits and salaries they provide their CEOs. Last year, Occidental Petroleum, one of the “smaller” companies, gave its CEO \$34.2 million in total compensation. The CEO of Anadarko Petroleum received \$26 million. Chevron’s CEO made \$15 million, as did ConocoPhillips’ CEO. He made \$15.1 million in compensation.

Let me be clear. I believe oil companies should be allowed to make a reasonable profit and CEOs of big oil companies should enjoy decent compensation. That is a tough job and they should earn a good salary. But they should not be allowed to rip off the American people at the gas pump, especially at this moment in our history when the middle class is stressed out and in many ways collapsing.

The time has come to impose a windfall oil tax on those companies so they cannot continue to gouge the ordinary people of our country. Unfortunately, however, imposing a windfall profits tax on big oil will not be easy. I think we all know the reason, and that is, since 1998 the oil and gas industry has spent over \$616 million on lobbyists.

And dare I say that right now on the floors of the Senate, and on the floors of the House, you have very well paid lobbyists, former congressional leaders, big-time law firms, floating all over this place right now trying to convince Members of the House and the Senate to leave big oil alone. Not only have they spent, since 1998, \$616 million on lobbying; since 1990 they have spent over \$213 million in campaign contributions. That is the way the world goes—lobby, campaign contributions from powerful multinational corporations.

What is the end result? Their profits are soaring and ordinary Americans are hurting. The time has come, it seems to me, for the Senate to stand with working families all over this country, to have the courage to stand up to this very powerful industry and say “yes” to a windfall profits tax and “no” to the continued urges of the oil and gas industry to pat them on the back and do nothing.

While it is true that oil companies and their executives are making money hand over fist, it is also true they are not the only culprits in this situation. We must begin focusing on the very powerful speculators and hedge fund managers who have also been making obscene sums of money by speculating

on futures and driving an unregulated market up and up and up.

There are some people who estimate, in fact, that half of the increase in oil costs is attributable to the cost of production but to the speculation that takes place.

In my view, Congress must act to rein in greedy speculators by closing what has been referred to as the Enron loophole and increasing oversight over the energy futures industry.

The Enron loophole was created in 2000 as part of the Commodity Futures Modernization Act. At the behest of Enron lobbyists, a provision in this bill was inserted in the dark of night and with no congressional hearings. Specifically, the Enron loophole exempts electronic energy trading from Federal commodities laws. Virtually overnight, the loophole freed over-the-counter energy trading from Federal oversight requirements, opening the door to excessive speculation and energy price manipulation. Since the Enron loophole has been in effect, crude oil prices jumped from \$33 a barrel in 2000, after adjusting for inflation, to over \$110 a barrel today.

Last January, a veteran oil analyst at Oppenheimer estimated there is as much as a \$57 a barrel "speculative premium" on the price of oil. In other words, he estimates that about half of the price of a barrel of oil is due not to the production and distribution of that product but simply to speculation.

The CEO of Marathon Oil said late last year that \$100 oil is not justified by the physical demand in the market. In other words, those guys see that the price of oil is being driven up by speculation.

Closing the Enron loophole would subject electronic energy markets to proper regulatory oversight by the Commodity Futures Trading Commission to prevent price manipulation and excessive speculation.

I thank Senators LEVIN and FEINSTEIN. I know Senator DORGAN and others have been involved in producing legislation and ideas to close this loophole. We must move forward and pass that type of legislation as soon as possible.

In addition—and this is an issue where there appears to be a degree of bipartisan support—some of our Republican friends also agree the Bush administration must stop the flow of oil into the Strategic Petroleum Reserve, and in my view, my view, immediately release oil from this Federal stockpile to reduce gas prices.

This action has been taken in the past. It is not a new idea. Goldman Sachs has estimated that continuing to fill the Strategic Petroleum Reserve has increased gas prices at the pump by as much as 25 cents a gallon, and that clearly is unacceptable.

Releasing oil from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve in the past, under both Democratic and Republican administrations has, in fact, lowered the price of gas and crude oil. For example,

when President Clinton ordered the release of 30 million barrels from the SPR in 2000, the price of gas fell by 14 cents a gallon in 2 weeks.

When President George H.W. Bush, the first President Bush, released 13 million barrels of crude oil from the SPR in 1991, crude oil prices dropped by over \$10 per barrel.

Let me conclude by saying that the issue we are dealing with today, in my view, is not only the high price of gas and oil. As serious as that is, and as much impact as that is having on our economy, the deeper issue here is the degree to which people in our country, the hard-working citizens of our country, will or will not continue to have faith that their Government represents them.

It is no secret that President Bush will likely go down in history as perhaps the least popular President and, in my view, one of the worst Presidents we have ever had. But it is also true that the ratings of this Congress are extraordinarily low; they are even lower than where President Bush is.

I think the reason for that is people are suffering terrible problems right now. In almost every area you can think of, this country is going in the wrong direction. The middle class is hurting. We talked about oil prices, food prices, the loss of good-paying jobs, the health care system, Social Security falling apart, people are paying 25, 30 percent interest rates on credit cards. People are in trouble. In a Democratic society, when people are in trouble, they look to the people whom they elected, to their Government, to protect their interests. They are looking to Washington right now. They are looking here. They are hurting, and they are asking whether the Congress of the United States has the courage to stand up to the very powerful financial interests which have so much influence over what goes on here.

So I hope very much we have the courage to once again earn the confidence of the American people, that we understand the pain they are feeling, and that we act properly, that we lower gas prices, that we lower oil prices.

We can do this with bold action, and we can move this country to a new energy policy dealing with energy efficiency and sustainable energy. I think the American people want us to do that. I think that is, in fact, what we should do.

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

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

Mr. REID. Mr. President, it is really difficult for me to comprehend the reasoning of my friends on the other side

of the aisle. All week we have done nothing. One of the most important bills that has been brought before this body this year, the Federal Aviation Administration reauthorization, as we speak there are thousands of airplanes going all across the United States. The equipment that allows those airplanes to take off and land is antiquated and way out of line for making air travel in America as safe as it should be. This legislation is very important and would be good for America, good for passengers.

We have in this legislation the passengers bill of rights, money to replace antiquated equipment. But the Republicans have stopped us from legislating. We have tried virtually everything.

I wanted to have an orderly process, which I think is not unreasonable. So last night I said: We have filled the different trees to allow amendments, but if you want to offer one, come on. No.

I said: Well, give us a list of the amendments you want to offer. No. They said: Bunning has an amendment. Let us see it. That went on all day yesterday. Finally, they told us today the subject matter of that particular amendment. When I learned about the subject matter, I said fine. It is something about coal being changed so they can use the fuel for flying airplanes. No.

I said: I will tell you what we will do. We will take down the tree. You can offer anything you want. No.

We heard what they didn't like were provisions that would allow rail service in this country to be updated and modernized. They didn't want that. There was some language in the bill that would do something to help make highway safety paramount. Don't want that. Offer an amendment to take it out. No.

Finally, I came to the conclusion that their objection was to a provision contained in the President's budget. I couldn't make up a story that is more ridiculous than the one I am relating, which is the truth. There is a provision in this bill that gives the State of New York the final amount of \$20 billion that was promised them after 9/11 by President Bush. That amount of money is in his budget for this year, which he gave us. I talked to the distinguished Republican leader and said: Offer an amendment to take it out. This is in the President's budget. We still oppose it, is what I was told.

So it is obvious. The Republicans don't want to do anything to improve, to modernize the Federal Aviation Administration. I hope people who are within the sound of my voice think about that when they are flying across the country.

We are not going to be able to do it this year, more than likely. There will be room made in the schedule by the Republicans to take up \$170-odd billion for funding the war in Iraq from now until a year from this June. With glad hands, they will all come to the Senate floor and spend more money in Iraq. I

guess they don't want to pull the plug on spending \$5,000 every second. Maybe they are trying to up the ante. I will have more to say about this tomorrow, but it is really a disappointment.

This is not a victory for the Republicans to maintain the status quo, is it? Of course not. Would it be a big victory for the Democrats to pass the Federal aviation reauthorization? No. It would be something good for the American people. I hope the American public sees this for what it is. We Democrats are in the majority. It is a slim majority. It is 51 to 49. The Republicans obviously are upset over the fact that we are in the majority. They want the record to show that this Congress accomplished nothing.

In spite of the obstacles and their obstruction, we have still accomplished quite a few things. We are proud of what we have accomplished, considering all the hoops we had to go through to get where we did.

I never give up hope. I hope there will be a new day in Washington starting next week. One way we can have a new day: We give all the blame to the Republicans in the Senate. They certainly are the ones who are on the firing lines. But do you know how much it would mean if the man down at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue would call the Republican leader and say our country needs this FAA reauthorization? We need it. The President could call down here and break this logjam, as he could have done on all the other legislation they have stopped. How in the world do these people go to bed at night not worrying about the air traffic system falling apart, because it is going to. It is in desperate shape.

Out in this parking lot there are new automobiles that have GPS systems in them. That is better equipment than the FAA has moving all the airplanes around the country.

CLOTURE MOTIONS

I send a cloture motion to the desk to the substitute amendment No. 4627. The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, hereby move to bring to a close debate on the substitute amendment No. 4627 to H.R. 2881, the FAA reauthorization.

Harry Reid, John D. Rockefeller IV, Barbara Boxer, Kent Conrad, Patrick J. Leahy, Robert P. Casey, Jr., Mark L. Pryor, Sherrod Brown, Patty Murray, Ken Salazar, Max Baucus, Thomas R. Carper, Amy Klobuchar, Sheldon Whitehouse, E. Benjamin Nelson, Richard Durbin, Blanche L. Lincoln, Daniel K. Inouye.

Mr. REID. I now send to the desk a cloture motion on the bill.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, hereby move to bring to a close debate on H.R. 2881, the FAA reauthorization.

Harry Reid, John D. Rockefeller IV, Barbara Boxer, Kent Conrad, Patrick J. Leahy, Robert P. Casey, Jr., Mark L. Pryor, Sherrod Brown, Patty Murray, Ken Salazar, Max Baucus, Thomas R. Carper, Amy Klobuchar, Sheldon Whitehouse, Blanche L. Lincoln, E. Benjamin Nelson, Richard Durbin, Daniel K. Inouye.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the cloture vote on the substitute amendment No. 4627 occur at 2:30 p.m., Tuesday, May 6; further, that the mandatory quorums for both motions be waived.

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

Mr. REID. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SANDERS). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, are we in morning business?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. We are not.

MORNING BUSINESS

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

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

REMEMBERING JOHNNY H. KILLIAN

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, I am saddened to learn that Mr. Johnny H. Killian has passed away. Mr. Killian was a highly regarded, highly admired, and highly utilized specialist in American public law at the Congressional Research Service. For more than four decades, he advised Members of Congress and our staffs on constitutional issues.

He had an encyclopedic knowledge of constitutional principles that was based on his astute mind, his many years of unbiased research, and his keen analytical skills. With his prodigious memory, he could provide guidance and cite, in detail, case law pertaining to nearly all of the key constitutional issues that came before the Senate. My staff and I depended on him for assistance and advice on a number of issues, including the line-item veto, the War Powers Act, eminent domain, prayer in schools, federal funding for education, and privacy protections under the fourth amendment.

I always appreciated the level of dedication and pride Mr. Killian took in his work. He was never too busy to answer the phone or return a call. He worked tirelessly to make certain that lawmakers and their staffs stayed always attuned to the original intent of the Framers. When presented with a question or a request, he responded quickly and with an amazing grasp of specifics, and with thorough information, even when presented with an unusual inquiry late in the evening, on a weekend, or even during a holiday or when he was ill at home.

All of this professionalism was enhanced by the fact that Mr. Killian was such a pleasant person with whom to work. He was soft-spoken, courteous, and a dedicated public servant. He was a man of incredible patience and kindness, with a warm sense of humor.

Mr. Killian will be truly missed by his Senate family, but his legacy as an academic, and a researcher, blessed with an extraordinary legal mind will be with us for a long time. Senators will remember him for a lifelong, commitment to the Constitution.

Mr. President, I extend my most heartfelt condolences to his family and many friends.

ROTUNDA COMMEMORATION

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, today as this Congress commemorated our National Commemoration of the Days of Remembrance for 2008 in the Rotunda of the Capitol of our Nation, Joshua B. Bolten, the Chief of Staff of President Bush, delivered the keynote address.

I note that Josh Bolten noted he will travel with President Bush later this month to Israel to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the founding of Israel, which he pointed out occurred just 3 years after the Holocaust.

I ask unanimous consent that Mr. Bolten's remarks be printed in the RECORD.

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

[Remarks by Joshua B. Bolten, May 1, 2008]

DAYS OF REMEMBRANCE

(United States Capitol Rotunda)

I am deeply honored to be at this podium today, to speak about anniversaries and the moral obligation of memory.

Many who have stood here before me have spoken from their own memory, telling their most personal of stories—the years of suffering, the loss of loved ones, survival and the anguish of haunting memories. I have no such stories to tell. My Jewish grandparents left Europe before the Holocaust, bestowing on my parents the gift of being born in this land of freedom.

But I do stand here as the proud son of a brave young American soldier, decorated for the valor that led to his capture by Nazi forces. Imprisoned in a German POW camp for two years, he refused to hide the dog tag that bore the letter H (for Hebrew). Twenty-five years later, working at the White House near the end of a distinguished career of national service, my father shepherded the work of the President's Commission on the Holocaust and helped bring to fruition the