

well. I extend my warmest congratulations to the State of Israel and the Israeli people for this important anniversary.

SENATE INACTION

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I want to turn to an important vote that we had yesterday in the Senate. Unfortunately, yesterday morning, we saw only 42 Senators voted to do anything significant about the high price of gasoline at the pump. This is just the latest example, I am afraid, of congressional intransigence and turning a deaf ear to the cries of the American people for Congress to do something to help bring relief at the gas pump. Unfortunately, it is just the latest example.

I know most of us came to Washington to serve in the Congress to try to solve problems. Unfortunately, the mentality inside the beltway seems to be that we ought to spend more time shooting at each other on a partisan political basis and not working together to solve problems. Unfortunately, there are more examples than just high gas prices to demonstrate this mentality.

I will just point to four areas where we have seen significant delays in congressional action that have had tremendous consequences on the American people. First and foremost is on our national security. It was 89 days ago that the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act basically expired. The most recent authorization would have allowed us to continue to listen in to foreign terrorists communicating with each other on the telephone in a way that would allow us to detect and deter terrorist activity and defeat terrorist activity.

Why the House of Representatives and Speaker PELOSI would refuse to allow this important piece of legislation to come to the floor after it passed the Senate on a strong bipartisan vote is, frankly, beyond me. But it has been 89 days now since we have had the ability to detect new terrorist threats, when the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act basically went dark and expired.

Secondly, it has been 540 days since we have failed to act on the Colombia Free Trade Agreement. Free-trade agreements should not be partisan affairs. It is good, in fact, for us to have free-trade agreements because it opens markets to American farmers and American manufacturers and producers for their goods in other countries. In fact, Colombia does about \$2.3 billion in trade with the State of Texas each year, which is very important to my State. Unfortunately, when Texas sells goods and produce to Colombia, they carry large tariffs, which disadvantages my manufacturers, my producers, and my farmers in Texas, while Colombian goods that are sold in the United States, because of other agreements, basically come in duty free.

Why Speaker PELOSI would fail to allow this important free-trade agree-

ment to be taken up and voted on in the House of Representatives, again, escapes me. This is in the best interest of the United States. It is in the best interest of my State and the people who work there. At a time when we are dealing with stimulus packages because we are concerned about the softening of our economy, what better stimulus could we enact than to pass this free-trade agreement, which would strengthen the robust markets in Colombia for American goods and produce? But here we are 540 days later, and it is bogged down in partisan disagreements.

The next number is another important number. I think one of the most important jobs the Senate has is to take up and consider the nominations of individuals who have been proposed for service on the Federal bench and to serve in that important branch of Government. But we have seen that because of inaction in the Judiciary Committee, on some nominees such as Peter Keisler—nominated more than 685 days ago—and we have seen nominees out of North Carolina pass the 300-day mark without even so much as a hearing in the Judiciary Committee.

This is another example of partisan delays that, frankly, I think frustrates the American people. It certainly frustrates me. It is an example of where we ought to act and find an opportunity to come together to solve a problem, and the problem is particularly in the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals, where many litigants simply cannot find access to the courts because there are not enough judges sitting on those benches to listen to cases. Whether you are a crime victim or a small business man or woman or whether you are just a regular citizen in that Fourth District, we have a judicial emergency with about one-third of the seats vacant. Frankly, that creates a lack of access to justice. So, again, it has been 685 days without a vote on some of the nominees in the Judiciary Committee. We need to do better.

Of course, it was 751 days ago when Speaker PELOSI, then running for election, and before the 2006 election, where Democrats were given the majority status in both the House and Senate, said: Elect us and we will produce a commonsense plan to help bring down the price of gasoline at the pump. Unfortunately, the price of gasoline at about the time that she took office as Speaker of the House was about \$2.33 a gallon, I believe. And now, of course, it is about \$3.75 a gallon.

Yesterday, as I mentioned, we had an opportunity to help provide relief for American families, to help them deal with their family budgets when it comes to the cost of gasoline. But I think we took a half step that did not do very much. What I mean by that is we did vote to quit filling the Strategic Petroleum Reserve, but if you look at how much oil that represents that would then be available in the open market, it is roughly 70,000 barrels of

oil a day. Now, 70,000 barrels of oil a day sounds like a lot of oil, unless you consider the amount of oil consumed globally by all the countries on the planet. That is 85 million barrels of oil a day. How much of an impact do you think it will have on gasoline at the pump to provide an additional 70,000 barrels of oil, when worldwide consumption is 85 million? You don't have to be a Ph.D. in mathematics to figure that out. It will not be big. As a matter of fact, it will be minuscule—not completely insignificant but not very much.

On the other hand, we had an opportunity to vote to reduce our dependence upon imported oil and gas from dangerous enemies of the United States, countries such as Iran and Venezuela, both of whom are members of OPEC, the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries.

Unfortunately, the Senate turned down that opportunity to produce as much as 3 million barrels of oil a day from the U.S. reserve because we would not allow or authorize Alaskans to produce oil in Alaska. We would not authorize the States along the Outer Continental Shelf to be able to develop their oil reserves in the Outer Continental Shelf, and we would not allow States in the West to develop the oil shale that could produce massive amounts of oil right here in America, reducing our dependency on imported oil from dangerous countries such as Iran and Venezuela.

What I don't understand is, if our friends across the Senate—and I believe there was only one vote against the decision to stop putting oil in the Strategic Petroleum Reserve. But if everybody in the Senate virtually agrees that adding 70,000 barrels of oil to the worldwide supply of oil would help bring down the price of gas at the pump—however minuscule that figure may be—how much more would it be likely to bring down the price of gas at the pump to add 3 million additional barrels to worldwide supply? Of course, this would not be from Saudi Arabia or Iran or Venezuela. It would be from the good old USA.

Again, how many new jobs would that create at home, when our economy has turned soft? It would create a lot of jobs in Texas. I know it would create jobs in Louisiana and, frankly, all over the country.

Instead of taking an opportunity to take a bold move on a bipartisan basis to increase the supply of American oil and gas, we find ourselves with half steps and relatively insignificant votes to increase production. I am glad that, finally, the Congress has recognized that the laws of supply and demand are not inapplicable in the District of Columbia. As a matter of fact, for a long time, it seemed that we outright refused to recognize the economic laws that apply across the planet right here in Washington, DC.

So I ask my friends and colleagues, if you are unwilling to allow us to open

American oil reserves when the price of gasoline is \$3.75 a gallon and the price of a barrel of oil is \$125, will you allow us to do it when gasoline hits \$4 a gallon? How about when it hits \$4.50 a gallon or \$5 a gallon or \$10 a gallon? How about when the price of oil hits \$150 a barrel or \$200 or \$250?

We know because of the geopolitical situation with countries such as Iran, which are no friend to the United States and are major oil producers and are part of OPEC, that causes speculation on the spot market to push the price of oil higher. I believe it would have a dramatic impact on those prices and, ultimately, because oil represents 70 percent of the price of a gallon of gasoline, I believe it would ultimately bring down the price of gasoline and provide some much needed relief to the average American family.

Congress's failure to act on a strong bipartisan basis to do it is, frankly, inexplicable to me, just as it is inexplicable to me why we would not allow our intelligence officials to listen to the conversations of new targets of foreign terror surveillance, and why we would continue to let American businesses and farmers be disadvantaged by tariffs on goods and produce sold to the nation of Colombia, and why we would wait more than 685 days to consider the nominations of judicial nominees and allow crime victims and small businesses and others to go without their day in court.

Just for the same reasons those delays are inexplicable, why are we still waiting 751 days after Speaker PELOSI made the statement that she would produce a commonsense plan to bring down the price at the pump?

It is inexplicable to me why we have to wait with no real solutions in sight.

I yield the floor.

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

Mr. VITTER. Mr. President, I ask that I be notified when I have consumed 6 minutes.

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

Mr. VITTER. Mr. President, I also rise on the Senate floor today to talk about the crisis we face in terms of gasoline and energy prices and the need for us to act in terms of this true crisis that affects every Louisiana family I represent and every American family this body represents.

When this new Congress, led by Democratic leadership, took office, energy prices, gasoline prices were supposed to be a top priority. At the time, the price at the pump was \$2.31. Yet today it has risen to \$3.76 a gallon. That is a 61-percent increase.

If this was such a priority at \$2.31, if we have had this dramatic increase, the fastest, the most dramatic, the most onerous on the consumer in history, why isn't this leading to action? The simple reality is that it is not.

This Congress has been tangled in inaction, unable to take significant ac-

tion on this issue, and that has to end for the good of the American people.

As my colleague from Texas reiterated, this is not overly complicated. Price is set by the equation of where supply meets demand. That is economics 101. That is the first lesson of economics. So we need to do everything we can to reduce demand, mitigate worldwide demand, which is clearly increasing, particularly from rapidly growing countries such as China and India, and we can do that through conservation, fuel efficiency, and new sources of energy. But we also need to increase supply. We need to do both at once because our energy picture is so challenging and so dire.

So I rise to join my colleagues who are saying we need to act, we need to break out of this gridlock, we need to act on energy prices which affect all American families.

Unfortunately, we had that opportunity in the last several weeks and, once again, the Senate passed on the opportunity, shut down the opportunity to take real action.

Again, this is an enormous challenge, and we need to do everything we can, both on the demand side—and I support those measures: increased energy efficiency, increased levels of conservation, development of new technology and new energy sources. We have done a little bit of that, but we need to do more. But we also need to act on the supply side, increasing our supply of energy, particularly our domestic supply which increases our energy independence, lessens our dependence on unfriendly foreign nations.

Several weeks ago, we were on an FAA bill, and I had an amendment at the desk that would constitute real, meaningful action. It was very simple. It would have established a trigger at the price of \$126 per barrel of oil. When the price reached that mark—and we are, unfortunately, perilously close already—then the trigger would have been pulled, and we would have been able to explore and produce off America's Outer Continental Shelf, where we have vast resources of energy. But we would only do that with two significant caveats, with two significant demands.

The first is that the host State involved, wherever we were proposing drilling, would have to want that activity. The Governor and the State legislature would both have to affirm that they wanted to produce off their coast. It is very important, very fair, respecting State sovereignty and States rights.

Secondly, my amendment would have built on provisions we passed several years ago to give those host States significant royalty sharing so anything produced off their coast, 37.5 percent of that royalty would go to the State for the State to use on its top priorities, whether they be highways or higher education or, in the case of Louisiana, coastal restoration, hurricane protection, hurricane evacuation routes.

That was a very sound, sensible policy we set a couple years ago as we opened new areas of the gulf.

My amendment, which I had at the desk for the FAA reauthorization bill, would have expanded on that good policy initiative. Unfortunately, we couldn't have a full debate on that amendment. We couldn't have any vote on that amendment because the Democratic majority leader filled the amendment tree, took up all opportunity for amendment for himself and blocked all other amendments from coming to the floor.

That is unfortunate on any issue. It is particularly unfortunate, again, on the top concern of the American people, when prices at the pump are sky-high and continuing to rise, when they have risen from \$2.31 a gallon at the beginning of this Democratic Congress to \$3.76 a gallon today—a dramatic, onerous, 61-percent increase.

Yesterday, we had another opportunity to break through the gridlock and act, and it was by adopting the McConnell-Domenici amendment. That amendment proposed a number of measures, including something very similar to my Vitter amendment regarding the Outer Continental Shelf.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. NELSON of Nebraska). The Senator has used 6 minutes.

Mr. VITTER. I thank the Chair. That McConnell-Domenici amendment included a number of measures, something very similar to my proposal with regard to the Outer Continental Shelf. It would have dramatically expanded our domestic supply. It would have done something real, concrete and meaningful and have a significant impact over time on the price at the pump.

Yet again, the Senate refused to act, refused to move forward with that significant proposal that would do major things on the supply side and would couple it with other actions we are taking and further actions we need to take on the demand side.

Instead, we did something extremely modest. We said: For now, we are not going to continue to fill the Strategic Petroleum Reserve. I supported that move. It is true that will free up 70,000 barrels of oil to put into the open market versus pumping into the Strategic Petroleum Reserve, but that is very modest. That is hardly going to make a dent on the price at the pump.

In contrast, all the provisions of the McConnell-Domenici amendment, all that extra supply domestically would have meant 3 million barrels in contrast to 70,000. Yet again, the Democratic leadership and the Senate overall refused to act, refused to address this issue, the most serious that Americans are facing today, the one that hits their pocketbook over and over, causing them real concern about their family budget and how they are going to make it.

I urge the Senate to get out of this do-nothing attitude. I urge the Senate

to act on this crucial issue for all American families.

Again, this is not brain surgery. This is economics 101, supply and demand. It is not either/or. We need to do everything we can to lessen demand, and I support those measures to increase efficiency, to increase efforts at conservation, to increase new technology efforts that will lead us to new fuel sources. That is absolutely necessary. But it needs to be coupled with action to increase supply, particularly domestic supply, by tapping those vital reserves, particularly on our Outer Continental Shelf.

I join the Senator in Texas in asking, if we are not going to do it now at \$3.76 a gallon, when are we going to act? Are we going to wait for \$4? Are we going to wait for \$5? We need to act now. This is a serious issue for all Americans. This hits the pocketbook of every American family. We need to act now. We need to act not with political demagoguery, not with pure rhetoric. We need to act with measures that have an impact, both on the demand side and the supply side. I hope the Senate and the Congress move to do that.

ISRAEL'S 60TH ANNIVERSARY

Mr. VITTER. Mr. President, I wish to also speak on Israel's 60th anniversary. It is a very important date for a truly remarkable country and a remarkable people who, in a mere six decades of existence, have built a vibrant, successful, modern democracy out of almost nothing.

When I was still a student, I had the opportunity to visit Israel with my sister. She had a college friend who had moved to Israel after graduation. Even back then—I was very young—I couldn't help be impressed by the determination and perseverance of all the people I met and their effort to build a vibrant, democratic state, to create a safe, secure homeland for all Jews, no matter where they may have originally been from around the world.

I had a second opportunity to visit Israel as a Member of Congress many years later. It was a very different sort of trip, very different itinerary, a very different set of meetings than when I was a student. But I left with the same strong feelings of respect and admiration for all the people of Israel, the same recognition of their determination and unflagging faith in their nation and countrymen. Their belief in the importance of their mission had not faded at all in the years between my visits.

What makes today especially notable is it is the 60th anniversary of the founding of the State of Israel. There is wonderful hope in this celebration of the 60th anniversary, and there is also sober appreciation of the challenges that remain.

On the hopeful side, on the impressive side, is that in a mere 60 years, as I have said, Israel has created a nation characterized by strong democratic

principles, a compassionate and determined people, innovative industry, especially in technology, medicine, and science, a competitive global economy.

In a mere six decades, Israel has built all that tremendous innovation, tremendous economic prosperity and progress virtually out of nothing, virtually out of the sands of the desert. It has become a beacon of freedom and democracy in a region that has very few examples to speak to. Israel is the only fully developed democracy in that sense. It represents to all peoples what can be achieved when people come together in a common cause, set aside differences, work together in a very determined way to make life better for them and their children. I recognize this important anniversary.

I yield the floor.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is now closed.

PUBLIC SAFETY EMPLOYER-EMPLOYEE COOPERATION ACT OF 2007

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 980, which the clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 980) to provide collective bargaining rights for public safety officers employed by States or their political subdivisions.

Pending:

Reid (for Gregg-Kennedy) amendment No. 4751, in the nature of a substitute.

Hatch amendment No. 4755 (to amendment No. 4751), to provide for a public safety officer bill of rights.

Alexander amendment No. 4760 (to amendment No. 4751), to guarantee public safety and local control of taxes and spending.

Leahy amendment No. 4759 (to amendment No. 4751), to reauthorize the bulletproof vest partnership grant and provide a waiver for hardship for the matching grant program for law enforcement armor vests.

Corker amendment No. 4761 (to amendment No. 4751), to permit States to pass laws to exempt such States from the provisions of this act.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I see my friend and colleague, Senator ENZI. I will now make a comment about the pending legislation. I thought we did have some good discussion and debate on yesterday. A number of important issues were raised. I will try this morning at least to respond to some of those matters to clear up what I think are some questions we had. Obviously, we are interested in moving this process forward, considering amendments, and getting to the Senate's business.

Once again, I will mention two organizations that support our Public Safety Employee Cooperation Act: the International Association of Fire-

fighters and the Union of Police Associations. We pointed out this week is set aside in our Nation, and has been set aside since 1962, to give special honor to our men and women in the police organizations who have lost their lives in the line of duty. It is a very special, solemn ceremony in which they participate. We are mindful of their service every day but especially this week. We are grateful for their strong support for this legislation. They have studied it, analyzed it, looked into it, and support it.

The National Association of Police Organizations and a great many other organizations have supported this legislation—our first responders. These are the organizations that speak for firefighters, speak for police officers, speak for the first responders.

Yesterday we had a good debate about the bill. I think we are off to a good start. I would like to take some time today to set the record straight as to what the bill does do and what the bill does not do. Fundamentally, this bill is about choice, who should make the choice whether public safety workers get a union—the Federal Government, State government, or the workers themselves.

Right now we have a system where the Government makes the choice—26 States give workers the ability to form a union if they want one; 24 States deny workers that option. These 24 State governments think they know better than the workers themselves what is best.

I disagree. Our public safety officers are on the front lines every day fighting fires, stopping crimes, saving lives. They know best how to protect the public. They know best how to keep safe on the job. They know best whether they need a union to represent their interests.

The Cooperation Act gives this choice to the workers. It says the States have to provide a path that workers can use if they decide they want a union. If the workers do not want a union, fine, they do not have to walk down that path. But the State has to make it available and let the workers choose, just as it is with the right to vote. Individuals do not have to vote, but they have the right to vote. This is the State making that judgment. We recognize that as a fundamental right there and here.

Under current law, States make the judgment decision. With the Alexander amendment it will allow the States to make the judgment and decision. Under the Corker amendment, that is it. Under our Cooperation Act it is the workers themselves who make the judgment—do they want it, don't they want it—and we abide by the outcome. That is a basic, fundamental difference.

It is not going to be hard for the States to build this path. All they have to do is provide for four core rights: No. 1, the right to form and join a union; No. 2, the right to sit down and