

the Republican leader, they are being led off a cliff. Republicans wouldn't just be refusing to support the bill, they would be refusing to let us even move to debate it. They would be stopping this crucial legislation in its tracks and deny any possibility of progress or compromise in the near future.

I hope people on the other side will follow what I read to them from a Republican Senator downtown this morning: There is a lot of frustration within the Republican caucus on blocking motions to proceed.

And well there should be.

I will use leader time, Mr. President.

I can't imagine why all 100 Senators would not flock to quickly pass this legislation, much less why they would not all vote eagerly for the motion to proceed. Denying debate on the Medicare Improvements Act and denying its passage would be a grave disservice to tens of millions of Americans over age 65. It would be a slap in the face to all those who suffer silently through mental illness because they can't afford the treatment that would make them well. Opposing this legislation and clinging to the status quo, as I fear some Republicans may choose to do, would be an abandonment of our decades-old commitment to honoring and caring for senior citizens in the manner they deserve.

In Independence, MO, 43 years ago, President Johnson said this:

Many men can make many proposals. Many men can draft many laws. But few have the piercing and humane eye which can see beyond the words to the people they touch.

Few can see past the speeches and political battles to the doctor over there that is tending the infirmed, and to the hospital that is receiving those in anguish, or feel in their heart the painful wrath at the injustice which denies the miracle of healing to the old and to the poor.

And fewer still have the courage to stake reputation, and position, and the effort of a lifetime upon such a cause when there are so few that share it.

But it is just such men who illuminate the life and history of [this] nation.

Because times have changed in 43 years, I call upon the men and women of the Senate to do the right thing and let us move to this legislation. It is the right thing to do. President Johnson's words go to the heart of this country. People need to vote their conscience, not the status quo.

Mrs. BOXER. Will my friend yield for a brief question?

Mr. REID. I have time? OK.

Mrs. BOXER. In a minute or less, I am rather stunned to hear that the Republican leader is suggesting that Republican Senators vote no to move to a bill for the purpose of making improvements in Medicare. I ask my friend, because people sometimes lose track of what happens, would this not be the third straight bill in a row where the Republicans have been fierce defenders of the status quo—global warming, gas prices, and now fixing Medicare? Am I correct on that?

Mr. REID. I say to my distinguished friend from California, it has gotten so out of hand that we are having trouble keeping up. We now have on filibusters 75, but we have it on Velcro because we know they will add another one to it in the near future. We also have Velcro as to what they are blocking on a given day. We pull it off because yesterday they were blocking global warming. The day before they were blocking gas prices, today Medicare improvements. It has gotten so difficult around here that we have Velcro as to what they are stopping.

If there is no more time to be used on the Republican side, we could start the vote early. We are going to start the vote early. We were going to consider having it started at 3 o'clock. There are some people who want to leave and we have some coming back. Anyway, I have gotten a nod to yield back all time for both Democrats and Republicans, and I ask that the vote start.

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, pursuant to rule XXII, the clerk will report the motion to invoke cloture.

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 motion to proceed to Calendar No. 772, S. 3101, the Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act of 2008.

Harry Reid, Max Baucus, Jon Tester, Barbara Boxer, Benjamin L. Cardin, Bernard Sanders, John F. Kerry, Patty Murray, Maria Cantwell, Blanche L. Lincoln, Ken Salazar, Charles E. Schumer, Ron Wyden, Patrick J. Leahy, Jeff Bingaman, Debbie Stabenow, John D. Rockefeller, IV, Jack Reed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the motion to proceed to S. 3101, the Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act of 2008, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from New York (Mrs. CLINTON), the Senator from Hawaii (Mr. INOUE), the Senator from Massachusetts (Mr. KENNEDY), the Senator from Louisiana (Ms. LANDRIEU), and the Senator from Illinois (Mr. OBAMA) are necessarily absent.

I further announce that, if present and voting, the Senator from Louisiana (Ms. LANDRIEU) would vote "yea."

Mr. KYL. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Arizona (Mr. MCCAIN) and the Senator from New Hampshire (Mr. SUNUNU).

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. KLOBUCHAR). Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 54, nays 39, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 149 Leg.]

YEAS—54

Akaka	Durbin	Nelson (FL)
Baucus	Feingold	Nelson (NE)
Bayh	Feinstein	Pryor
Biden	Harkin	Reed
Bingaman	Johnson	Roberts
Boxer	Kerry	Rockefeller
Brown	Klobuchar	Salazar
Byrd	Kohl	Sanders
Cantwell	Lautenberg	Schumer
Cardin	Leahy	Smith
Carper	Levin	Snowe
Casey	Lieberman	Specter
Coleman	Lincoln	Stabenow
Collins	McCaskill	Stevens
Conrad	Menendez	Tester
Dodd	Mikulski	Webb
Dole	Murkowski	Whitehouse
Dorgan	Murray	Wyden

NAYS—39

Alexander	Craig	Isakson
Allard	Crapo	Kyl
Barrasso	DeMint	Lugar
Bennett	Domenici	Martinez
Bond	Ensign	McConnell
Brownback	Enzi	Reid
Bunning	Graham	Sessions
Burr	Grassley	Shelby
Chambliss	Gregg	Thune
Coburn	Hagel	Vitter
Cochran	Hatch	Voinovich
Corker	Hutchison	Warner
Cornyn	Inhofe	Wicker

NOT VOTING—7

Clinton	Landrieu	Sununu
Inouye	McCain	
Kennedy	Obama	

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 54, the nays are 39. Three-fifths of the Senators duly chosen and sworn not having voted in the affirmative, the motion is rejected.

Mr. REID. Madam President, I enter a motion to reconsider the vote by which cloture was not invoked on the motion to proceed to S. 3101.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The motion is entered.

Mr. REID. Madam President, I now withdraw the motion to proceed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The motion is withdrawn.

The majority leader is recognized.

Mr. REID. Madam President, first of all, let me say I really appreciate the nine Republicans who voted to proceed. I appreciate that. We want to legislate. I think there is an indication that maybe things are getting to a point where we are going to be able to do that. I hope that, in fact, is the case.

RENEWABLE ENERGY AND JOB CREATION ACT OF 2008—MOTION TO PROCEED

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. REID. Madam President, I move to proceed to Calendar No. 767, H.R. 6049, and I send a cloture motion to the desk.

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 motion to proceed to Calendar No. 767, H.R. 6049, the Renewable Energy and Job Creation Act of 2008.

Harry Reid, Max Baucus, Barbara Boxer, Amy Klobuchar, Benjamin L. Cardin, E. Benjamin Nelson, Maria Cantwell, Patty Murray, Bernard Sanders, Daniel K. Akaka, Robert Menendez, Ron Wyden, Debbie Stabenow, Blanche L. Lincoln, Patrick J. Leahy, Richard Durbin, Sheldon Whitehouse.

Mr. REID. Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DOMENICI. 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. DOMENICI. Madam President, parliamentary inquiry: Is it appropriate to speak now as in morning business?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Yes, by unanimous consent.

Mr. DOMENICI. I ask unanimous consent to speak for 15 minutes, and I ask the Chair to advise me when I have 2 minutes remaining. I also ask unanimous consent that Senator DODD be recognized following my remarks.

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

ADDRESSING HIGH GAS PRICES

Mr. DOMENICI. Madam President, over the last several weeks, I have come to the Senate floor to discuss my ideas on how to address the high price of gasoline in this country. I understand the toll these high prices are taking on the American people, and I understand the grave consequences of continuing our cycle of dependence upon foreign oil.

Americans are looking to us for some solutions and leadership. But, so far, all they are getting is gridlock and fighting. However, I think there are some things that we ought to be able to come together on that would truly address the fundamental global supply and demand imbalance. Today, I would like to talk about them with the Senate and anybody who is interested out in the hinterland of America.

This morning, my friend, the senior Senator from New York, said the Republican leader was incorrect in his assertion that the Democrats do not want to increase American oil and gas production. I was glad to hear him say that because given the votes that the other side has taken, I had my doubts. Just in the last month alone, they have opposed exploring in Alaska, opposed deep sea exploration, opposed lifting the moratorium on final regulations for commercial leasing of oil shale, and they have opposed converting coal to liquid fuel. That liquid fuel could be used by the U.S. military, as an example. They will be using it in one way or another. They could use the liquid that comes from conversion from coal.

In fact, in the past, a large majority of the other side of the aisle has op-

posed taking inventories on our U.S. lands to simply find out how much oil and gas we actually have. Why would that proposition be objectionable? Wouldn't it seem appropriate, with such large resources offshore, that we would inventory them, even if it costs some money? The amount we could find out there may be terrific and tremendous in size. Yet we have had objection to even doing that.

If the United States were to explore in our deep sea and move to develop our vast quantities of oil shale—just those two things—we could completely shift our dependence upon foreign oil in ways I suspect my friends on the other side of the aisle don't even realize. The amount of oil shale potential alone in our Nation is massive. This morning, I met with officials from the Department of the Interior who told me that in the coming decades, American companies are predicting production of up to 3 million barrels per day from our American oil shale. That gives us a good idea of just how much our Nation has at its disposal that we are not taking advantage of.

Nevertheless, my friend from New York pointed out that he supported my effort in 2006 to open a portion of the Gulf of Mexico to exploration. In fact, he even said he "helped lead the charge." Well, if that was the case, then I invite him to help me once again lead the charge to increase domestic production. Everything I have tried so far, his side has said no to. Tell me, what proposal will get them to say "yes"? The Senator knows that I have been here a long time, and I have had a hand in passing many pieces of legislation. I understand it usually takes some bipartisan compromise to get something done. So I say to my friend, on the production side, how can we compromise?

One reason I have been so discouraged about our ability to get something done is because even a limited, reasonable proposal to allow one single State to explore natural gas was rejected by the other side last year. My good friend from Virginia, Senator WARNER—who you all know is respected for his bipartisanship—introduced an amendment a year ago this week, with Senator WEBB's support, that would have allowed his home State to conduct natural gas exploration in the deep sea over 50 miles off the coast. He did this because the Democratic Governor of Virginia, and Republicans in the legislature expressed interest in possibly developing Virginia's coastal resources.

It all sounds pretty reasonable, doesn't it? What is the harm in letting Virginia explore for natural gas if Virginia is interested in it? And yet Senator WARNER's amendment was defeated by the Senate. Six Members from the other side of the aisle voted for it, and 39 voted against it—including my friend from New York.

America has enormous oil and gas resources. Total offshore oil reserves are

around 85.9 billion barrels of oil. Over 19 billion of that is completely off-limits for exploration. On shore, we have 30.5 billion barrels of oil, and over 60 percent of it is considered off-limits. We have over 1.6 trillion barrels of oil equivalent in oil shale, which is the equivalent of more than three times the oil reserves of Saudi Arabia.

This policy of taking our own resources off the table simply makes no sense, especially when we face a price of \$135 per barrel of oil and \$4 per gallon of gasoline. No other nation in the world deliberately prevents itself from using its own resources. Look around the world—Brazil, Norway, Mexico, the United Kingdom, Russia and many others. They are producing their own oil and gas off of their own shorelines. So I sincerely hope that my friends on the other side of the aisle will join with me to try to find a way to allow States that wish to explore 50 miles off their coasts to be able to do so.

The other side of the aisle frequently tells us that we can't drill our way out of this problem. This morning, the majority leader said that the "answer to this is not drill, drill, drill." I agree with him. He is right. The answer to this problem is not just "drill, drill, drill." There is no question that our long term future requires us to find solutions other than drilling. We need to reduce our dependence on oil from all sources. But we need to build a bridge to help get us there. On the far side of the bridge is a world in which cellulosic ethanol and plug-in hybrid vehicles are available and deployed on a wide scale basis. But in the near term our experts tell us we need oil to fuel our economy and our lives. So the question remains: is Congress going to choose to create jobs and revenues in America by exploring for our own oil and gas, or are we going to continue to increase our deficit by purchasing foreign oil in greater quantities?

In order to get across this bridge I just described to secure an energy future, we need to develop our own natural resources. So let's build this bridge to a cleaner, more independent energy future by increasing domestic production here at home. It will take time and investments. Congress has already made great progress developing these resources for the long term and for the future of this country, but we are falling short in the near term. So let's come together in a bipartisan fashion to build a bridge to the future and begin to reduce our reliance on foreign oil.

I truly believe that if we decided we could do this, the independence that would be shown to the world because of the great quantities we could say we would produce for ourselves, for the world inventory, would have an immediate impact on those who are speculating and those who are counting on a future of shortage. When they see the United States is going to do something about it, it can do something rather significant, I am convinced.