

the types of harmful employment regulations that will reduce or even eliminate middle class jobs in the United States.

“Europeanization” of U.S. labor and employment laws is not the type of change the middle class really needs.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

CHANGE IN IRAQ

Mr. BOND. Madam President, there is no doubt that right now American families are being squeezed on all sides. Gas prices are sky high and climbing. The cost of food is going up. So is the cost of college tuition and health care. So it is no surprise that “change” is the word everyone is talking about.

My colleagues on this side of the aisle and I want change, too, but we want commonsense solutions. We are the party of economic security. We think we should keep more of the money we earn. We favor more private sector solutions to health care. We want America’s energy future to be here in America, not the Middle East. We want to change the disastrous policy that has been implemented and kept by our fellow colleagues on the other side of the aisle for the last 30 years, a nonenergy policy, no production. As a Washington Post editorial pointed out today, Congress cannot repeal the laws of supply and demand. Demand worldwide has gone up but supply has not.

We have the answer to that problem right here in America. We want to change it and use the resources we have. We also want a strong commitment in the war on terror. Changing back to the policies of the 1990s is not the way to win the war on terror. Senator OBAMA has said we should go back to the 9/11 days, when terrorism was treated as just another law enforcement matter. He pointed to the prosecution of the World Trade Center bombers as the example to follow. That is precisely the type of policy that led to attacks on American embassies and the USS *Cole*. That is the kind of change that will make the Nation less safe again.

If the Democrats wish to talk about change, let’s talk about change, change that matters and change that they have been unwilling to acknowledge, a change when we started executing the war on terror by going after the terrorists in the safe havens. We have kept our country safe from attack since 9/11. Under the leadership of GEN David Petraeus, Iraq has changed and changed dramatically. So why can’t my colleagues on the other side of the aisle change with it. Why can’t they change their stance and get behind our service men and women who want to succeed and have had tremendous successes?

President Bush announced the surge and the new counterinsurgency in 2007. Iraq was a violent place at the time.

Al-Qaida in Iraq held large swaths of territory. Shiite death squads roamed much of Baghdad, and the Iraqi political leadership appeared helpless. So President Bush, understanding the consequences of failure and withdrawal, changed. He changed military leadership. General Petraeus changed to a new strategy, a strategy for victory, of counterinsurgency or COIN that involves getting out among the Iraqi people, working directly with Iraqis committed to a peaceful, stable Iraq. That is a change my son saw in Al Anbar, when his Marine scout sniper platoon helped clear Al Anbar and turn it over to Sunni citizens and police. We still face big challenges in Iraq but with a far more optimistic picture emerging. Al-Qaida has been almost, if not completely, routed in Al Anbar, once declared the center and base of operations for al-Qaida in Iraq.

On May 12 of this year, a prolific terrorist sympathizer by the name of Dir’a Limen Wehded posted a study on the Internet in which he laments “the dire situation that the mujaheddin find themselves in in Iraq.” He is talking about his guys, the bad guys. He cites the steep drop in the number of insurgent operations conducted by various terrorist groups, most notably al-Qaida’s 94 percent decline in operational ability over the last 12 months. In Sadr City, Iraqi forces, the forces of the Iraqi Shiite leader al-Maliki, have rolled through huge Shiite enclaves relatively unopposed. Iraqi forces did the same in April in the southern city of Basra, where the Iraqi Government advanced its goal of establishing sovereignty and curtail the powers of the militias.

When General Petraeus returned to Washington in September of last year, even at that time he reported that the number of violent incidents, civilian deaths, ethnosectarian killings and car and suicide bombings had declined dramatically from the previous December. But despite all this positive change, many on the other side of the aisle are too vested in political defeat to see it. In fact, most Democrats opposed the surge, claiming it is more of the same and would neither make a dent in the violence nor change the dynamics in Iraq. The Democratic leader proclaimed “This war is lost” and that U.S. troops should pack up and come home, a disastrous change that even many thoughtful scholars and commentators who opposed going into Iraq initially say now is not the way to go. It would be a disaster. General Petraeus returned again to Washington in April this year, and violence has been reduced further. American casualties have declined significantly. Al-Qaida was virtually eliminated in the northern city of Mosul, as verified by the terrorists themselves. There are more Iraqi security forces. The Iraqi Government has passed a variety of laws promoting reconciliation. Prime Minister al-Maliki continues to demonstrate he can stand up to fellow Shi-

ites supporting violence and Iranian-backed special groups. There is every reason to embrace the positive change we have seen and not abandon it and not force a withdrawal. For that is not change but, rather, a policy that would put Iraq back on the path toward violence, terrorism, and chaos.

The change we have made has made our country safer, going after terrorists, helping Iraq stabilize their country, turning control over to them, and moving our forces back from the front lines of offense to a support role. That is the change we need to keep our country safe for the future from terrorist attacks.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

ENERGY

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Madam President, so much discussion has taken place of late about the high price of energy and what it is doing to family budgets. We don’t need to tell the American consumer what is going on with high prices. They are living it directly in each and every one of our States.

At today’s prices, Americans are paying \$1.6 billion daily to buy fuel. This is about twice what they paid 2 years ago. The national average price of gasoline passed the \$4.08-per-gallon mark, and fuel is consuming about 6 percent of the typical household budget. This eats up the money families need for food, clothing, medicine, education, 6 percent of the average U.S. household budget.

In my State of Alaska—you hear me say this all the time—our statistics are a little bit different. I need to let you know what kind of a hit Alaska’s families are taking when it comes to high energy prices.

Right now, in Anchorage, the State’s largest community, it is about 10 percent of the typical household budget that is directed toward energy costs. In the southeastern part of the State, where I was born and spent my early years, they are seeing about 14 percent of their family budget going toward energy costs. In the community of Fairbanks, up in the interior, where I spent my growing-up years in high school and years as a young adult, 22 percent of the household budget is going toward their energy costs. Nearly a quarter of the family budget is going into home heating fuel, into gas at the pump, into keeping their home warm during the long winter months—22 percent of the family budget.

As I have said before, people in Alaska are no longer angry about their energy prices. They are very afraid. You cannot continue on a trend such as this with this much of the family budget being dedicated to your energy prices and still survive.

There has been great debate on this floor about, How do we fix it? How do we reduce the price of energy for the American family? There are some who

imply the way to reduce energy prices is to perhaps punish the oil companies with tax hikes for the current high prices. The second option for some is to punish OPEC for their energy production levels by somehow dragging foreign nations into U.S. courts.

I would like to suggest that while maybe it might make some people feel good if they know we are imposing higher taxes on the energy industry, it is probably not a good idea for the 23 percent of individual Americans who own energy stocks or those who have pension funds, 27 percent of which are invested in energy stocks, or those who own mutual funds who have 29.5 percent of their funds invested in energy companies.

The problem we really have with additional taxation of the energy companies is, while it is going to funnel more revenue to the Federal Government—we have demonstrated this in the past—it is going to give us in Congress more money to spend on bureaucracy, but it is not necessarily going to do anything to increase our energy supplies, and it will not do anything to lower our energy prices. In fact, by taking money away from the energy companies, they are going to have less money to invest in searching for and producing more energy. Those are the things that will ultimately reduce energy prices into the future.

As far as this “NOPEC” concept of hauling OPEC nations into U.S. courts, no one has really explained just how this is all really going to work, how we would collect a judgment and still maintain access to world supplies of energy, and more importantly, how that would actually get money back into the pockets of American consumers or how that would keep American companies from being dragged constantly into foreign courts. Asking OPEC to produce more of their energy and then threatening to drag them into American courts if their production levels fall—which is what we have seen in this country—does not make sense to me. Instead, it seems to me the best way we can drive down fuel prices is for us to produce more in America, giving the jobs to Americans, and keep the royalties and tax revenues in U.S. hands.

I have said many times on this floor that it is not just all about increased production. We have to do more to encourage energy conservation, to encourage fuel efficiency. We have to do more to promote and develop the renewable energy technologies.

Just last week in the Energy Committee, we had a fascinating discussion about a process for using algae to produce hydrocarbons from which gasoline can then be made. It is a “green crude” type concept. It is wonderful to be exploring opportunities such as this. Hopefully, we are going to reach an agreement on a compromise to continue the tax aid to encourage wind, solar, biomass, geothermal, ocean energy, and nuclear development.

The fact is, we need to do more of everything to promote lower energy prices. We have to do more to promote efficiency, more to promote alternatives, and more to produce traditional fuels in America.

One of my colleagues, the fine Senator from Tennessee, has summed it up in four simple words: We have to find more, use less—pretty simple. What a philosophy. What an energy policy. But on the “finding more” aspect, we need to produce more from the Outer Continental Shelf. We need to produce more onshore from the Arctic Coastal Plain up in Alaska. We need to do more in the oil shales in the West. We need to produce more natural gas from the OCS but also from the formations in Texas and the Appalachians. We have to protect, but streamline permitting rules so new refineries can be built. We need to be working harder so we can tap America’s energy—really our ace in the hole—which is our vast coal reserves and our vast hydrate resources, and do this in a way that can be done without increasing carbon emissions into the atmosphere. We also need to make sure there is sufficient transmission capacity to move the power to where we need it once it has been produced.

Some act as if we in this country cannot produce more energy. They imply that either we do not have anything left to produce or we cannot do it without harming the environment. I think both of those views are just plain wrong.

Look at the mean estimates of the undiscovered resources. This is what the USGS and the MMS have on line. We have an even chance of being able to produce 85.8 billion barrels of oil and 419.8 trillion cubic feet of natural gas. That is 10 times our remaining proven reserves of oil and nearly 15 times our proven reserves of gas. This is a decade’s supply of oil for this Nation.

America still has a third of all the oil Saudi Arabia has, and it is just waiting to be discovered. That does not include the 1.8 trillion barrels of oil shale or the 1,000-year supply of methane hydrates we possess in this country. In Alaska alone, when we are talking about coal reserves—we say we are the Saudi Arabia of coal—we need to recognize the resource is there.

On the floor earlier, there have been claims that I would like to respond to that we do not need to lease more acreage onshore or offshore because oil companies have millions of acres under lease from which they are not producing energy. That claim in part is true, but the part that is left out is exactly why we need to make better lands available for oil development in the country.

Clearly, oil companies are not going to spend billions of dollars a year up front to lease lands, for the opportunity to explore and pay yearly fees to keep the leases in place, just to let them sit idle. In most cases, companies are not producing because they are still evaluating the potential of the

leases. In other cases, you have oil finds that are so small that they are just not yet commercial to develop without additional oil being found nearby.

Up in Alaska, in the National Petroleum Reserve, it may take as many as 14 years for the leases to be developed, while dealing with the environmental permitting and logistics issues you face in an area that is as geographically remote as NPRA is, in order to bring these leases into production. In addition, we have extremely short windows in terms of the exploration and construction season, which we have in place to avoid the impacts on wildlife.

But the primary reason is that the companies spend millions of dollars on seismic and exploratory wells but still find very little. Even with the technology, with the 3-D seismic, companies gamble when they bid for leases, and they oftentimes find nothing.

So if we made more prospective areas open to exploration, then more oil would likely be found. So this is not necessarily the result of some conspiracy, but the fact is that oil is hard to find.

To wrap up, can we be energy independent immediately? No, we cannot. But can we help ourselves produce enough oil to help meet global demand, lowering prices, and keep our families from going broke? Yes, I believe we can. We know how to protect the environment in the process of development. We can protect wilderness. We already have in the State of Alaska. We have set aside an area that is nearly as large as all of Oregon, and this is in wilderness forever, never to be touched. But let’s allow some of the land that is likely to contain oil and gas—not just places that don’t—let’s allow them to be open for exploration and production.

So let’s put aside some of these preconceived biases that I think both parties and both of our constituencies hold. Let’s shelve the campaign rhetoric and actually do something that is good for the short-term and long-term good of the Nation. I believe we can do it. I believe this is change in which we all can believe.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

ENERGY PRODUCTION

Mr. DORGAN. Madam President, I wish to talk some about energy. I know the President, this morning, my colleague, Senator MCCAIN, and others have talked a lot today about additional production.

I am one of the four Senators who initiated in this body several years ago, along with Senator BINGAMAN, Senator DOMENICI, and Senator Talent, the legislation that is now law that opened lease 181 in the Gulf of Mexico, where there are substantial oil and gas reserves. We opened that up on a bipartisan basis. In addition to cosponsoring that legislation, I have also introduced