

gotten us to the point today where we are so overdependent on foreign oil that not only our national policy but our economic reality is being driven by that massive overdependence. So embracing the new world of energy, where we are looking at greater efficiencies, where we are looking at alternative fuels, where we are looking at advanced technologies such as those of the hybrid plug-in vehicle, and where we are looking at the development of our conventional resources in a thoughtful, honest, and balanced way is a way forward. It has to be the kind of energy policy we can sustain, not over a week or a political season or even the term of one President, but over a longer period of time. It is the kind of challenge for America that should summon the kind of political courage among all those who are involved in this debate, in the same way we were able to take on the Manhattan Project and build the atomic bomb in less than 4 years, where we were able to move forward and put a man on the Moon in less than 10 years from the time President Kennedy announced that vision and that goal for America. That is important, and that is long term.

It is also important that we do what we can in the short term to address this issue. We have had conversations about speculation of the markets and how speculation might be accounting for somewhere between 25 and 40 percent of the high price of oil we see today. We need to look into that question and see whether we can bring the rapid speculation under control. Those are undertakings we can take on and take on in the very near term.

In addition, I have heard my colleagues on the other side of the aisle say what we need to do is to open up all the lands in ANWR and other lands within the interior and offshore in order for us to be able to bring in additional supply into our energy stream for America. There is a possibility for us to open additional lands. There are lands, for example, within the gulf coast of Mexico, which we opened in the 2006 Energy bill, where we added some 8 million acres of additional land in the gulf that we said is now open for exploration. We have done a lot to try, in my view, to bring in additional supply in terms of our energy pipelines.

But we should not kid ourselves because we know today there are more than 60 million acres of public lands, both onshore and offshore, which have already been leased to the oil companies—60 million acres, far surpassing the acreage of ANWR, far surpassing any of the acreages being talked about now even on the gulf coast of Mexico that might be opened. So what is happening with all these public lands, resources of the United States of America under which lie significant reserves of oil? I would say there are huge opportunities there for oil and gas companies to go out and to develop the resources that are underneath those lands.

I conclude by saying, first, let us be honest about oil shale and its possibilities. Let's not oversell to the American public that this is somehow a panacea for America's energy needs.

Secondly, let's look long term, knowing there is going to be some pain but that we need to look long term at a new energy policy for the United States of America. As a parenthetical, I would say that is why these energy tax incentives we have been working on are so important for us to try and harness the energy of the Sun, the energy of the wind, the energy of biofuels, the energy of cellulosic and ethanol as we move forward on that frontier.

Thirdly, as we look at short-term solutions to help, in some way, alleviate the pain all Americans are feeling today with respect to high gas prices, that we be realistic with respect to the solutions to that particular challenge we face.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

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

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

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. SALAZAR. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

LETTERS FROM VERMONT

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, I would like to bring to the attention of my colleagues an op-ed piece by Bob Herbert that appeared in *The New York Times* on Saturday, June 14.

The editorial, entitled "Letters From Vermont," uses excerpts from powerful letters that Vermonters sent to my colleague and friend, Senator BERNIE SANDERS. In inviting these personal testimonials from Vermonters, Senator SANDERS has illuminated the debate—and, I hope, hastened action—on the struggles that millions of American families are facing in our current economy. Mr. Herbert's column has brought these letters to the attention of many, many more Americans.

So that all Members may review this illustrative and telling column, I ask unanimous consent that it be printed in the RECORD.

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

[From the *New York Times*, June 14, 2008]

LETTERS FROM VERMONT

(By Bob Herbert)

Despite the focus on the housing crisis, gasoline prices and the economy in general,

the press has not done a good job capturing the intense economic anxiety—and even dread, in some cases—that has gripped tens of millions of working Americans, including many who consider themselves solidly middle class.

Working families are not just changing their travel plans and tightening up on purchases at the mall. There is real fear and a great deal of suffering out there.

A man who described himself as a conscientious worker who has always pinched his pennies wrote the following to Senator Bernie Sanders of Vermont:

"This winter, after keeping the heat just high enough to keep my pipes from bursting (the bedrooms are not heated and never got above 30 degrees) I began selling off my woodworking tools, snowblower, (pennies on the dollar) and furniture that had been handed down in my family from the early 1800s, just to keep the heat on.

"Today I am sad, broken, and very discouraged. I am thankful that the winter cold is behind us for a while, but now gas prices are rising yet again. I just can't keep up."

The people we have heard the least from in this epic campaign season have been the voters—ordinary Americans. We get plenty of polling data and alleged trends, but we don't hear the voices of real people.

Senator Sanders asked his constituents to write to him about their experiences in a difficult economy. He was blown away by both the volume of responses and "the depth of the pain" of many of those who wrote.

A 55-year-old man who said his economic condition was "very scary," wrote: "I don't live from paycheck to paycheck. I live day to day." He has no savings, he said. His gas tank is never more than a quarter full, and he can't afford to buy the "food items" he would like.

His sense of his own mortality was evident in every sentence, and he wondered how long he could continue. "I am concerned as gas prices climb daily," he said. "I am just tired. The harder that I work, the harder it gets. I work 12 to 14 hours daily, and it just doesn't help."

A working mother with two young children wrote: "Some nights we eat cereal and toast for dinner because that's all I have."

Another woman said she and her husband, both 65, "only eat two meals a day to conserve."

A woman who has been trying to sell her house for two years and described herself as "stretched to the breaking point," told the senator, "I don't go to church many Sundays because the gasoline is too expensive to drive there."

Many of the letters touched on the extremely harsh winter that pounded Vermont and exacerbated the economic distress. With fuel prices skyhigh, many residents turned to wood to heat their homes. A woman with a 9-year-old son wrote: "By February, we ran out of wood and I burned my mother's dining room furniture. . . . I'd like to order one of your flags and hang it upside down at the Capitol building. . . . We are certainly a country in distress."

Senator Sanders, an independent who caucuses with the Democrats, remarked on the disconnect between the harsh economic reality facing so many Americans and the Pollyanna claims of the Bush administration and others over the past several years.

The assertion that the economy was strong and getting stronger, repeated with the frequency of a mantra, hid the reality that working Americans have been taking a real beating, said Senator Sanders.

He pointed out that over the past seven or eight years, millions of Americans have lost health insurance coverage, lost pensions, and become deeply mired in debt. During that period, the median annual household income

for working-age Americans fell by about \$2,400.

"Americans work the longest hours of any people in the industrialized world," the senator said. "We even surpassed Japan."

But despite all that hard work—despite explosive improvements in technology and increased worker productivity—the middle class is struggling, losing ground and there's a very real possibility that the next generation of workers will have a lower standard of living than today's.

The letters to Senator Sanders offer a glimpse into the real lives of ordinary people in an economic environment that was sculpted to favor the very rich. One of the letters was from a woman in central Vermont who said she and her husband are in their mid-30s, are college-educated and have two young children.

"We are feeling distraught," she said, "that we may never 'get ahead' but will always be pedaling to just keep up."

IDAHOANS SPEAK OUT ON HIGH ENERGY PRICES

Mr. CRAPO. Madam President, a day or so ago, I asked Idahoans to share with me how high energy prices are affecting their lives, and they responded by the hundreds. The stories, now numbering close to 800, are heartbreaking and touching. It is not just filling the tank; these high energy prices touch every aspect of our lives—family time, food prices, work commutes, the list goes on and on. Many Idahoans have taken efforts to cut back on the niceties to accommodate the necessities, but now far too many face the choice of which necessity to ignore—gas or food, job or family. For years, Congress has unsuccessfully grappled with a national energy policy; now we are at a point where decisions must be made, compromises must be negotiated if we are to finally be forward-thinking. This isn't only a question of what we are handing future generations; it's affecting families right here, right now. It is not just Idahoans. It is an issue that touches the live of every single American, no matter their socioeconomic status.

In an effort to seek solutions rather than focus only on the trouble, I have also asked Idahoans to share how they want Congress to resolve it, and the suggestions are voluminous and wide-ranging. Some start simply with conservation efforts, something that I have long supported, while others encourage increased offshore oil drilling and increased domestic production, more sustainable alternative and renewable energy sources, stronger support for nuclear energy options and more efficient transportation options. Nearly all have expressed concerns for not just their future, but for the future of their children and grandchildren. And they are adamant about Congress moving beyond half-truths and partisan politics to find solutions. While I may differ in my opinions on some suggestions, I am thrilled that so many have taken time to share their thoughts with me. Some have shared research, videos and book rec-

ommendations. To respect that effort, I plan on submitting every e-mail sent to me through energyprices@crapo.senate.gov to the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD. And to keep attention on this matter, I will be submitting them a few at a time every day until every one has been submitted. This is not an issue that will be easily resolved, but it is one that deserves immediate and serious attention. I plan to continue working to find other ways to bring these stories to the attention of my colleagues in Congress. Today, I am starting this process with the following comments from Idahoans.

I ask unanimous consent to print in the RECORD comments from Idahoans.

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

DEAR SENATOR CRAPO, I am very interested in the debate concerning rude oil and energy prices. I am a wheat farmer by profession and have been excited about the increased wheat prices, however, all of the input costs have significantly increased due to the fact that all inputs have either direct or indirect links to the price of crude oil. Freight costs have significantly increased across the board. Manufacturing costs for steel have soared, partly due to the energy costs. Pivot prices have increased by 20% this year and are expected to significantly increase next year also. Fertilizer prices, which were already unrealistically high last year have tripled from last year's prices. Although the price of wheat will likely be more than commensurate with the input costs this year, if commodity prices fall before the decline of input prices, (including and especially energy prices) farmers throughout the country will be in serious trouble.

In addition to the difficulties associated with farm input prices, my family's household income has not increased in proportion to the costs of household goods such as food, clothing, and family items. The relief check from the government will not come close to compensating for increased pricing, and will also decrease the value of the dollar and hence cause more inflated pricing, as well as increase our national debt.

Most Americans would agree that caring for our environment is important, however, a relatively small group of radical environmentalists have been using their screaming lobby to set policies which are extremely detrimental to the economy as well as the environment. How is it that oil drilled from the Middle East and freighted across the ocean is less harmful to "mother earth" than drilling in a single square mile in Alaska? I am adamantly opposed to the idea that we should be dependant upon the Middle East for oil when we have enough to last for at least one hundred years in reserve here in the United States. We are likely to have alternative technology to decrease our demand upon oil and most likely oil will be obsolete as an energy source within less than 50 years. Please listen to the less vocal majority who are pleading for drastically decreasing the restrictions and regulations on drilling and refining our domestic oil.

Sincerely,

LLOYD WARD.

DEAR MIKE CRAPO, We live on Robie Creek out side of Boise. My husband commutes to Nampa 2 days a week to work. We are also Ushers for Boise State University and have to commute to Boise for work. With the increase in Gas Price, our fuel costs have risen 148.00 in the past three months. It was al-

ready way to expensive. We are in our 70's so this is a hardship for us.

John McCain stating he will not drill in Alaska makes me so mad. I live next door to a lady who spent years in Barrow and the North Slope of Alaska. She said drilling would not hurt anything because there is nothing there. I have suggested Mr. McCain make a trip and check this out personally instead of listening to the environmentalist who has put us in this position in the first place along with the Socialist who want this country destroyed. I also think it is a shame to listen to the Stupid people who are costing us Billions to prevent global warming. The last I knew, God was in-charge and has been thru thousands of years of climate change. Who is going to pay back the tax payers when this is proven to be a political sham?

It would be so refreshing if we the people could ever get the truth about anything and have all of the agenda bleeped out.

BESS, Boise.

DEAR SENATOR CRAPO: We have noticed a big difference in prices in the past year. Instead of taking two vehicles to work five days a week, my husband and I have traveled together this past year to save on the gas. We leave our home in Firth, (our work hours are different), and he drops me off at work and travels to the other side of Idaho Falls to get to his job. I stay at work during the lunch hour and an extra hour after work until he comes to pick me up at night.

It used to cost us \$320.00 a month one year ago taking two vehicles to work. Now with one vehicle we are spending a minimum of \$340.00 just to get to work.

We also have the added concern of my husband's elderly parents. They will need our help more and we try to go see them once a month. We are spending \$100.00 per trip to get from Firth to Wendell and back.

1. Why isn't anyone concerned about the high oil consumption of container ships that bring goods from other countries?

2. Why are we allowing China and other countries to drill off of our shores when we can't drill off Florida?

3. What about all the wells that were drilled and capped in the Western Wyoming area and other areas of the U.S.?

4. Why are we not pushing harder for nuclear energy and other options and also expanding refinery capacity that could free us from dependence on other nations? They have us under their thumbs.

5. Why are the minority environmentalists controlling so much of our lives? We believe they are not being realistic and subjecting us to other nations' whims. Global warming, it snowed here last week, second week of June. Where is the global warming? There is more global warming controlled by the sun and not man. The earth has always had ups and downs in its weather patterns. Why doesn't anybody ask an environmentalist what they live in, what they wear and how they get to their protests? It seems they are protesting everything they use.

Thank you for work you are doing and asking for our opinions.

MICHAEL AND SUSAN, Firth.

DEAR SENATOR CRAPO, thank your for giving me the opportunity to write to you on this issue and also for your efforts on our behalf.

I have a PhD in Aerospace Engineering and more than thirty years experience.

I can only address the engineering aspects of this question, not the political aspects, though I am afraid that the problem is largely a political and psychological one, not a technical one.

The technological facts are these: We can have energy independence and a 75% reduction in air pollution at the same time and it