

Murray	Schumer	Thune
Nelson (FL)	Sessions	Vitter
Nelson (NE)	Shelby	Voinovich
Pryor	Smith	Warner
Reed	Snowe	Webb
Reid	Specter	Whitehouse
Roberts	Stabenow	Wicker
Rockefeller	Stevens	Wyden
Salazar	Sununu	
Sanders	Tester	

NOT VOTING—3

Kennedy	McCain	Obama
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The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There is 2 minutes of debate equally divided on the nomination of G. Murray Snow.

The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, I yield back the remainder of time on this side, and I am advised on the other side they yield their time. There is no need for a rollcall vote.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Time is yielded back.

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.

Mr. REID. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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. REID. For the information of all Members, Senator LEAHY and Senator SPECTER have agreed that we can have the judge's vote by voice, and we will do that in a minute. But I wish to inform everyone that the Republican leader and I, following this judge being approved—we will go into a quorum call, and we will be in a position, hopefully, in the next 15 minutes, half hour—you know how time is counted in the Senate. Jack, who used to work down here—one night I came in here and he gave me a dog chain. I said: Why did you do that? He said: Because the Senate goes on dog time.

We will try to do something very quickly. But we will go into a quorum call following the judge being approved, and Senator MCCONNELL and I will be back with the next chapter of the saga as quickly as we can.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is, Shall the Senate advise and consent to the nomination of G. Murray Snow, of Arizona, to be United States District Judge for the District of Arizona?

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The motions to reconsider are laid on the table, en bloc, and the President will be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will now return to legislative session.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. NELSON of Florida). Without objection, it is so ordered.

The majority leader is recognized.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, we do not have our path forward yet, and that is an understatement. But we are working on it. There are a number of Senators, both Democrats and Republicans, who want to speak in morning business.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now be in a period for the transaction of morning business for a period of a half hour, that the time be divided equally and I, of course, ask this time count against postclosure time on the FISA matter on which we are working.

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

The Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, is the business before the Senate that we are in morning business?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. It is.

OUTER CONTINENTAL SHELF DRILLING

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, for years, we have had an energy policy that was written by big oil for big oil, and the result has been good for big oil but a disaster for the American people.

Gasoline is now at over \$4 per gallon, and the Bush-McCain plan is to do more of the same. My colleagues on the Republican side of the aisle have continuously sought to help big oil while at the same time they have blocked Democratic attempts to develop real policies to end our addiction to oil. The result is that under the Bush administration the price of oil has shot up to \$125 per barrel and more, and the price of gasoline has more than doubled.

Despite this history of gas prices going up and up because of failed policies, the Republican Party continues to block measures that will help create change in this situation. Every time we offer sensible policies to address the oil crisis, my friends on the other side of the aisle say no. They said no to the Consumer-First Energy Act that would finally clamp down on rampant oil speculation and burst the speculative bubble that has caused oil prices to skyrocket. Then they said no to the renewable energy tax extension bill that would help continue the rapid growth of wind and solar and provide an incentive for the purchase of plug-in hybrid vehicles. This would help us begin the transition to new energy sources so we are not so vulnerable to the rising cost of fossil fuels. And then our colleagues said no to climate change legislation that lays out the framework to com-

pletely change our economy from one based on oil and other fossil fuels to an economy based on renewable energy.

Democrats have now laid out a sensible plan for change in our energy policy that will make America stronger and more independent in the short, medium, and long term, but all our colleagues can say in return is no—no to the American people and—from what I hear in terms of their response—yes to big oil.

President Bush was right when he told the Nation we are addicted to oil. But what amazes me is their plan is designed to have us continue to act like addicts. Instead of supporting real plans to conserve oil or even transition to sustainable fuels, the Bush-McCain plan is to go out in search of our next oil fix.

Ending a bipartisan 26-year moratorium to open the Outer Continental Shelf to oil is simply not a solution to our oil crisis.

To defend the senseless Bush-McCain plan to open all our shores to drilling, my colleagues on the other side of the aisle have been playing fast and loose with the facts. They claim opening our shores to future drilling will somehow affect gas prices. As I recently pointed out on the floor, this argument flies in the face of projections by President Bush's own Energy Information Agency. They project that even if we opened the entire Outer Continental Shelf to drilling off the East Coast, off the West Coast, and opened the entire eastern Gulf of Mexico, nothing would happen to gas prices—not today, not tomorrow, not ever.

Now, it seems that Senator MCCAIN cannot keep up the charade any longer. On Monday, he admitted he did not expect his plan to provide relief at the pump, but that his plan would have a psychological impact that would be "beneficial." Psychological games are not going to reduce the price of oil. The American people are sick and tired of Republican politics that try to use political spin rather than sound policy to solve our problems.

Another fact that the other side of the aisle wants to keep from the American people is that 80 percent of the oil and natural gas resources in our Federal waters are already open, already open for exploration. Oil companies are sitting on 68 million acres of oil and natural gas leases where they have not produced any oil or natural gas. I joined my colleagues, Senator DODD and Senator DURBIN, to introduce a bill, the Responsible Ownership of Public Lands Act, that will charge oil companies an escalating fee for leased acres they put aside and do not use for oil and natural gas exploration. This will give these companies the incentives they need to stop hoarding the resources they have instead of seeking access to environmentally sensitive areas.

One other factor that has not been discussed properly in this debate about

high gas prices is the effect of President Bush's disastrous economic policies. The weak dollar means it simply takes more money to buy the same barrel of oil than it did at the beginning of President Bush's term. In 2000, one Euro was equal in value to \$1. Today, one Euro is worth close to \$1.60.

In large part, this weak dollar has been caused by the enormous domestic budget deficits this administration has rung up to pay for the war in Iraq. Instead of actually paying for this mistake, the administration has been printing money and piling up huge debts. We are spending over \$12 billion a month in Iraq, and this foreign policy disaster is now adding up to be a fiscal policy disaster. It is time we finally end the war and get our fiscal house in order. In turn, this would strengthen the value of the dollar and help lower the price of gasoline.

But perhaps the most disturbing thing about the misinformation campaign to sell the Bush-McCain plan to open all our oceans to drilling is that they refuse to discuss how drilling will be economically and ecologically devastating to our coasts.

On June 3 of 1979, an exploratory oil well in the Gulf of Mexico blew out. The resulting 140 million gallon spill was the second largest in world history, over 10 times larger than the Exxon Valdez spill. As you can see from this map, the spill traveled 600 miles to blanket the coast of Mexico, Texas, and Louisiana, causing tremendous damage.

I think we all remember that on March 24 of 1989, the tanker Exxon Valdez ran aground in Prince William Sound, AK. The oil tanker ruptured and spilled over 10 million gallons of oil. The result was an oil spill over 600 miles that created one of the largest environmental disasters in history. We were told we had state-of-the-art technology then, in terms of carriers, tankers, and everything else. Well, that was 600 miles of devastation.

I am about to show images of the devastation following the spill, and certainly I would ask if there are any children watching, or those who are sensitive to the plight of animals, they should probably look away from some of the images.

The Exxon Valdez coated the Alaska shoreline, turning a pristine environment into a toxic waste cleanup site. Over 11,000 people worked to try to clean oil washed up onshore. Even today, there is estimated to still be over 20,000 gallons of oil on Alaska's sandy beaches. The spill killed thousands of animals immediately. It killed hundreds of otters and seals, as many as half a million sea birds, and over 200 of the very symbol of America itself—the Bald Eagle.

Anyone who saw these devastating images from this incident cannot forget them. But what is important to remember from these disturbing images is that if we open the east and west coast to drilling, the same thing could happen to places here in the lower 48.

My colleagues from the Commonwealth of Virginia want to open the coast of Virginia to drilling. They seem to think that oil drilling will only affect the State of Virginia. But oil spills do not sit still. Remember that oil drilling spill in the gulf that traveled 600 miles, and the Exxon Valdez spill off the coast of Alaska was over 600 miles wide. So what would a similar spill look like on the east coast? It would mean a devastated coastline from New York down to South Carolina. The environmental impact would be immeasurable, and the economic impact would be enormous.

The New Jersey shore is a priceless treasure my home State will protect at any cost. But the shore also generates tens of billions of dollars in revenues each year and supports almost half a million jobs in South Carolina; in Myrtle Beach alone, more than \$3 billion in revenue. Do we want oil washing up onto Virginia Beach, flowing up into the Chesapeake Bay? Can Maryland's famous blue crabs survive such an environmental assault?

It is time for a real cure, based on a tough examination and reordering of our energy priorities, and not tired old policies of the past. I ask my colleagues on the other side of the aisle to end their efforts to block real reform. It is time we unite together to pass the Consumer-First Energy Act to clamp down on excessive speculation and finally burst this oil bubble. It is time we come together and pass the renewable energy tax extension bill that will promote the development of clean energy here at home, help our automakers develop cars that run on electricity, and develop advanced biofuels so we have a sustainable alternative to gasoline.

If we do not do this, we are continuously wedded to the past, continuously wedded to the addiction, continuously wedded to a failed policy. To hear our colleagues on the other side of the aisle, if we opened the east and west coasts, it would go directly, like gas, into your car. We know that is not true. That is simply not going to happen.

The American people are sick and tired of an energy policy written by big oil. It is time for our friends on the other side of the aisle to join us in real reform so we can actually achieve something that moves us in a much different direction.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

LIHEAP AND COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTERS

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, on Tuesday, I introduced S. 3186, the Warm in Winter and Cool in Summer Act. This bill would provide \$2.53 billion in emergency funding for the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program, commonly known as LIHEAP.

I take this opportunity to thank the majority leader for completing the rule

XIV process of placing this bill directly on the Senate calendar yesterday. I also want to express my deep appreciation to him for his goal of moving this legislation forward within the next month. I think there is widespread support, in a nonpartisan way, for this legislation, which impacts people when the weather gets hot and it impacts people when the weather gets cold.

This bipartisan bill is being cosponsored by Senators LEAHY, SNOWE, BROWN, SUNUNU, CARDIN, COLEMAN, KERRY, COLLINS, KENNEDY, and SMITH and I expect that the numbers of Senators from both sides of the aisle who will be supporting it will only grow. The bottom line here is pretty simple, and that is: With the cost of energy soaring, we have many millions of Americans wondering next winter how they are going to be able to stay warm, and we have got to expand LIHEAP funding to match the inflationary costs of home heating fuel.

For those people living in warm weather States, what we understand right now is that electricity rates are also soaring. There are many Americans—elderly people, lower income people—who are unable to afford the increasingly high cost of electricity. They run the danger of seeing their electricity cut off. When the weather gets 110 degrees and the electricity gets cut off, and you are a senior citizen or you are a person who is frail or who is ill, you have a problem dealing with heat problems.

So I hope and expect there will be widespread support for this legislation. Once again, I thank the leader for putting this on the rule XIV process.

I also want to say a few words about the Medicare package that was approved overwhelmingly in the House on Tuesday, and which we expect, hopefully, to take up here shortly. This bill is nearly identical to the bill put forth on the floor last week by Finance Committee Chairman BAUCUS, and I thank the chairman for his commitment and his effort in putting together this excellent piece of legislation.

There is a lot in this bill, but there is one particular section I want to focus on, and that is the section pertaining to Medicare payments to community health centers.

Specifically, this bill provides for a much needed increase in the cap on Medicare payments to community health centers, and also requires a GAO study to determine whether the current structure for Medicare payments to community health centers provides adequate compensation for the care provided. I believe it does not.

According to the National Association of Community Health Centers, the artificially low cap on Medicare payments costs community health centers \$50 million annually—money that could be used to provide primary care access to thousands more of our Nation's seniors. An overwhelming majority of community health centers—a full 75 percent—now lose money—they