

from offering amendments. This undercuts the basic tradition of the Senate to allow Senators to offer amendments. Regrettably, this has been a practice developed in the Senate by majority leaders on both sides of the aisle, so both Republicans and Democrats are to blame.

On June 12, 2008, I voted in favor of cloture on the motion to proceed on S.3101, legislation similar to H.R. 6331, to prevent the reduction in Medicare payments to physicians. At that time, I was assured by Majority Leader REID that he would not make a procedural motion to fill the tree. Following the failure to obtain cloture on the motion to proceed to S.3101, Finance Chairman BAUCUS and Ranking Member GRASSLEY began to negotiate a bipartisan bill that could be brought before the Senate. I have concerns with some provisions that may have been contained in such an agreement. However, the prospect of the Senate working its will and allowing myself and other Senators to offer amendments to such a bill is more favorable than filling the amendment tree.

The posture of the Senate is such that for the Majority Leader to complete action on H.R. 6331 and send it to the President before the physician payment reduction is scheduled to go into effect at the end of June, the Senate must pass the same legislation the House of Representatives passed. This is the case because the House of Representatives adjourned for the Independence Day recess prior to the Senate vote on cloture on the motion to proceed to H.R. 6331. Since the House will be out of session, there will be no possibility for the House to consider a Senate amended Medicare bill. To guarantee that the same Medicare legislation will be passed by the Senate, no amendments to the legislation were permitted. By bringing this legislation up at the last minute after the House of Representatives adjourned the Majority Leader prevented the opportunity to offer amendments and undermined Senate procedure.

If cloture were to have been obtained on the motion to proceed to H.R. 6331 the legislation would have been vetoed by President Bush. That veto would have resulted in a further delay, since the House would not be in session to override the veto and the scheduled physician payment reductions would go into effect at the end of June. There was an expectation that the Senate would extend the current physician payment rate for 30 days and prevent the pending reduction from going into effect. However, when this legislative extension was offered by Senate Republican Leader MCCONNELL it was objected to by Majority Leader REID.

This vote was a crass partisan political exercise. The majority leader has been aware of this issue for some time and scheduling should have accommodated for the amendment process. I have consistently voted in favor of increasing Medicare physician payments

and will continue to, but I am not going to vote in favor of cloture when there is no opportunity to amend the legislation that comes before the Senate. I will not submit to procedures that prevent the Senate from performing its traditional duty. This is why I voted against cloture on the motion to proceed to H.R. 6331. I expect that this very important issue will be taken up as soon as we return from the Independence Day recess so we can correct this grave problem in a manner that allows the Senate to work its will.

PAKISTAN COALITION SUPPORT FUNDS

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, in the wake of 9/11, Congress developed a new program to provide financial assistance to allied countries as they joined us in combating al-Qaida. This program reimbursed partner countries for defense spending above and beyond their normal military budget. And of the 27 coalition partner countries who receive this assistance—also known as Coalition Support Funds—Pakistan has been by far the largest recipient, receiving more than \$5.5 billion out of a total \$7 billion allocated for this program.

This program could have been an important part of our global fight against terrorists who pose a very real threat to our country. But a new Government Accountability Office report shows that, in fact, the outcome was just the opposite. Over the past 7 years, U.S. taxpayer dollars have continued to flow with only minimal oversight while we have still not found Osama bin Laden and his senior officials and while al-Qaida has developed a safe haven in Pakistan.

The GAO report details numerous examples of this wasteful spending, including \$20 million paid to the Pakistani Government for road construction and \$15 million to build bunkers—with no evidence that either was ever built. Or what about the more than \$200 million provided for air defense radars with no analysis into whether such technology was needed to fight al-Qaida—an organization not known to have air force capacity? Confronting the threat of al-Qaida and its affiliates must be our top national security priority, and this GAO report sends a strong signal that we need to seriously step up our oversight when providing U.S. taxpayer dollars to our partners in this fight. We can not give them a blank check and expect to them to take care of the job.

The Defense Department's carelessness and negligence has led to a situation where billions of U.S. taxpayer dollars cannot be fully accounted for. With so many domestic programs here at home feeling the brunt of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan this is simply unacceptable. And given the implications for our national security both here at home and abroad, it cannot continue.

GAS PRICE REDUCTION ACT

Mr. SPECTER. Mr. President, I have sought recognition to discuss legislation introduced yesterday entitled the Gas Price Reduction Act. I have agreed to join over forty of my Republican colleagues to cosponsor this legislation because I believe Congress needs to take action to address high oil and gasoline prices, as well as America's overall energy security going into the future.

My cosponsorship of this bill does not mean that every provision has my full support. My office received the final legislative text late yesterday morning and I have not had a great deal of time to analyze all of the details. That said, I have reluctantly decided to cosponsor this bill to signal my concern with the state of our Nation's energy situation. I have long supported efforts to reduce U.S. oil demand through conservation and efficiency whenever practical, as well as increase domestic oil production in an environmentally safe manner, and encourage energy markets that are free of price manipulation.

I am extremely concerned about the high cost of oil, gasoline, diesel and other fuels which are exacerbating our nation's already difficult economic situation and truly hurting American consumers and families. With oil near \$140 per barrel and gasoline over \$4 per gallon, we are facing an unsustainable situation.

The legislation introduced today proposes to increase the supply of oil, promote technology to lower fuel consumption, and increase oversight and transparency of energy markets. Specifically, the bill would allow consideration for oil exploration and production on the Outer Continental Shelf on the Atlantic and Pacific coasts with appropriate environmental protection at the request of a State's Governor and State legislature. Any authorized drilling could only occur beyond 50 miles offshore and only if the federal government determines that leasing would not create an unreasonable risk of harm to the marine, human, or coastal environment. Further, all existing environmental laws would have to be followed.

The second part of the bill would allow the Department of Interior to move forward with leasing of land in the Western U.S. to develop oil shale. It is my understanding that there are very large deposits of energy resources that could be tapped with significant investments in rock extraction technology. This resource is much less understood than oil and natural gas drilling. I support locating as many domestic resources as we can in an environmentally safe manner. However, I am concerned about claims made by opponents that opening these lands at this time is premature until Congress and the executive branch have the ability to study the results of research and development efforts. Further, some argue that Congress should first review regulations drafted by the Bureau of Land

Management, but which are under review by the Office of Management and Budget. Finally, we should be fully informed about the energy and water inputs that may be necessary for extraction, as well as the greenhouse gas emissions associated with production of oil from shale.

The third title of this bill seeks to increase research, development and deployment of advanced plug-in electric cars and trucks. There is a great deal of emphasis being placed on the promise of plug-in electric vehicles as a replacement technology for today's fuel-consuming vehicles. The potential benefits of plug-in electric vehicles includes much higher energy efficiency, elimination of the need for oil, and use of existing and expanded electric infrastructure. The legislation under consideration would increase research and development for advanced batteries, which will be required to allow these vehicles to drive long distances without needing to recharge. The bill also authorizes a loan program for the retooling of advanced battery manufacturing facilities. Finally, it calls on the federal government to purchase plug-in electric vehicles to the extent practicable to help increase market penetration of the technologies and make significant reductions in government-related fuel use.

Finally, this legislation attempts to strengthen futures markets. There are concerns that the role of speculation in these markets is impacting today's oil and gasoline prices. Therefore, this bill authorizes increased funding and staff for the Commodity Futures Trading Commission—CFTC. It requires the President's Working Group on Financial Markets to conduct a study of international regulation of energy commodities markets. It codifies recent CFTC action on position limits and transparency for foreign boards of trade that are involved in the U.S. oil trading market. Finally, it requires the CFTC to gather information on index traders and swap dealers. Many of these proposals result from the fact that a lack of information in the oil markets is making it very difficult to pinpoint whether and to what extent new actors in the oil markets may be causing some of the price increases we have experienced.

I have been working for many years to tackle the high price of oil and gasoline and improve U.S. energy security. I have long been concerned about OPEC—Oil Producing and Exporting Countries—fixing the price of oil, which makes up the largest share of gasoline prices. I continue to work with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to pass S. 879, the No Oil Producing and Exporting Cartels Act—NOPEC. NOPEC clarifies that it is unlawful under the antitrust laws for OPEC members to agree to limit the production or distribution, or to set or maintain the price, of petroleum products or natural gas.

Further, on May 7, 2008, I questioned top oil company executives on high oil

and gasoline prices at the Senate Judiciary Committee. Among other points, I asked them to justify the record profits their companies have earned while Americans pay record high prices at the pump. When I was chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, I held two hearings in February and March of 2006 to consider the effects of consolidation in the energy industry and whether such concentration had resulted in increased prices of gasoline, other petroleum-based fuels and natural gas. Those hearings prompted me to introduce the Oil and Gas Industry Act of 2006 to require U.S. antitrust agencies to further consider whether mergers within the oil and gas industry have violated antitrust laws and if such mergers and information sharing among companies should receive further scrutiny.

Dating back to 2002, I was the lead cosponsor of fuel savings legislation, including the Carper-Specter amendment to save 1 million barrels of oil per day by 2015 and in 2003 the Landrieu-Specter amendment to save 1 million barrels per day by 2013, which passed by a vote of 99–1. I believe the foundation we laid in the Senate helped lead to the eventual passage of the first automobile fuel efficiency standard increases since the 1970s. On December 19, 2007, the President signed the Energy Independence and Security Act which contained legislation I cosponsored to increase automobile fuel efficiency standards to 35 mpg by 2020. This increase in efficiency, and the anticipated decrease in consumption, could substantially decrease oil use and bring down prices over time.

I commend my colleagues on both sides of the aisle for their proposals to address today's unacceptable oil and gasoline price situation. However, I do not think any purely partisan exercise will ultimately prove successful. While I joined my Republican colleagues in introducing legislation today, I am convinced that we must work in a non-partisan fashion to tackle this issue of paramount importance to our constituents and the economic health of our Nation. As evidenced by the unification of the parties that occurred in December 2007 with the Energy Independence and Security Act, when the parties work together, the American people benefit. I recommend we all rise above politics and work toward constructive solutions to the energy crisis we currently face.

As we consider the Gas Price Reduction Act and other proposals, it is essential that we not act in haste, but rather consider all potential consequences. When we talk about opening new areas for domestic oil production, we must have all of the facts not just about the potential oil reserves, but also about the precise environmental impacts and the status of the advanced technologies like directional drilling that are purported to mitigate these impacts. When Congress involves itself in very complex energy markets, we

ought to be very cautious to avoid unintended consequences that could exacerbate the high and volatile prices we have seen in recent months and years.

I look forward to working with my colleagues on these difficult, but extremely important matters.

IDAHOANS SPEAK OUT ON HIGH ENERGY PRICES

Mr. CRAPO. Mr. President, earlier this week, I asked Idahoans to share with me how high energy prices are affecting their lives, and they responded by the hundreds. The stories, numbering over 1,000, are heartbreaking and touching. To respect their efforts, I am submitting every e-mail sent to me through energy_prices@crapo.senate.gov to the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD. This is not an issue that will be easily resolved, but it is one that deserves immediate and serious attention, and Idahoans deserve to be heard. Their stories not only detail their struggles to meet everyday expenses, but also have suggestions and recommendations as to what Congress can do now to tackle this problem and find solutions that last beyond today. I ask unanimous consent to have today's letters printed in the RECORD.

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

SENATOR CRAPO: Thank you for letting me respond to this subject. Energy prices are hitting every family hard in their pockets. With prices going up on fuel it effects every product that we buy. These energy prices are causing more inflation on America than any other number one item we have. This country is purchasing 60-70 percent of our oil from foreign sources. What we need to do is become energy independent. We need to do everything we can do to meet this goal.

To me, the way we do that is doing everything such as; renewable nuclear, solar, wind, hydro, biomass energy. But just doing renewable energy is not enough. We still need oil for lots of things, so we need to be deep drilling off shores, drilling in Alaska, using shell oil and also the use of coal. We also need new refineries to meet our future needs.

I know that all of this will take a little bit of time to accomplish but its time to get started. Please do not just think of today but way out in the future. If this country becomes energy independent it will lower our prices and help keep inflation low.

So, please, all Senators and Representatives, work together to make this country strong and energy independent.

Sincerely,

WILLIAM, Hayden.

My husband and I are riding our bicycles to work. We wish there were incentives for communities to expand their walking and biking paths. (I lived for two years in Holland 30 years ago and loved the bicycle paths that were totally separate from the motorized vehicle roads). Families there used public transportation and bicycles. I would hope that the government would encourage citizens to get back on their feet and their bikes by creating safe paths and creating communities that encourage gathering rather than urban sprawl. We will be richer and healthier.

I am also getting my name on a waiting list for a hybrid vehicle. Government should