

health costs and their meager coverage.

I stand for the millions of Americans who have lost their health coverage along with their jobs.

And, I stand for the small businesses that cannot afford to cover the costs of their employees.

That is why I am joining Senators RON WYDEN, BOB BENNETT, and many of my other colleagues in taking the first steps towards a bicameral, bipartisan, comprehensive solution for all called the Healthy Americans Act.

The Healthy Americans Act recognizes that our health care system is fundamentally broken and requires Congress, the President, and the Federal Government as a whole to engage in a serious dialogue about our country's health care priorities and the solutions that can make those priorities attainable.

The Healthy Americans Act guarantees affordable, high quality, permanent health coverage for all Americans. It provides benefits equal to those available to Members of Congress, and gives incentives for individuals to make a commitment to prevention, wellness, and disease management.

It changes the crumbling foundation on which we have built our system, challenges the status quo, and makes a commitment to the right of all Americans to live their lives without fear of losing, or not being able to afford health coverage.

This solution is affordable for us. In fact, according to independent studies, this piece of legislation is fully paid for using the \$2.2 trillion currently spent on health care in America and saves \$1.48 trillion over 10 years.

The benefit to Americans will be profound.

The Healthy Americans Act changes the way we think of health care in America through the modernization of fundamental relationships in our current system. By redefining the relationship between employers, employees, and health insurance, we give the American people a choice when it comes to the coverage, the cost, and the benefits they need for their families and their health.

The Healthy Americans Act marks the beginning of a comprehensive, bipartisan effort to health care reform. There will be many challenging issues to consider as my colleagues and I work to provide every American with quality coverage. These include concerns over the potential disruption that such a profound change to the system would have on those with existing coverage, as well as the lack of a publicly sponsored health plan option.

I hope to work with Senators WYDEN, BENNETT, and my Senate colleagues in ensuring that this legislation addresses those concerns, as well as others that may be raised in the future.

Although complex, the health care crisis is one that we cannot afford to ignore any longer. Together, we can turn the health care system in Amer-

ican into a transparent, affordable, efficient and healthy system that can help those that need it most.

NEW MARKETS TAX CREDIT

Mr. SMITH. Mr. President, I wish today to talk about the impact the new markets tax credit has had in revitalizing distressed neighborhoods in my home State of Oregon.

The new markets tax credit has become a vital financing tool to organizations throughout Oregon, like United Fund Advisors and Portland Family of Fund, to invest in and nurture business opportunities in our low income communities that are in need of investment capital.

The New Markets Tax Credit was signed into law in 2000 with the goal of using a modest Federal tax credit as an incentive to attract private investment capital to viable urban and rural markets that private investors often overlook and I am happy to report that the credit has done just that.

The Treasury Department reported that as of July 1, 2008, the credit is responsible for \$11 billion of new investment going into economically distressed communities across the country. More than \$600 million in NMTC-supported projects have been launched in Portland alone with the promise to create more than 9,000 construction and permanent jobs for city residents.

United Fund Advisors and its sister organization Portland Family of Funds are but two organizations using the credit in my home State, but I hold up their works as an example of how the NMTC can work.

United Fund Advisors and Portland Family of Funds recognized the potential of downtown Portland. Since 2002, through their CDEs, they have been awarded \$165 million in credits, which they have used to attract investors to finance vital community services, as well as businesses in neighborhoods that have suffered from chronic poverty and disinvestment.

In downtown Portland, the credit has financed several community facility projects, including the Community Transitional School, which is an elementary school that serves homeless children throughout the city. The school serves over 200 homeless children a year and has been in operation since 1990. However, it was unable to secure the financing it needed to support the \$3.5 million rehabilitation of its facility to create a safe, stable and permanent home for the school. The credit was used to attract financing from U.S. Bancorp to make the project possible and the school now expects to open the doors to its new 9,500-square-foot facility this fall.

The credit also provided the gap financing necessary to develop a drug rehabilitation facility within the Union Gospel Mission and to rehabilitate a theater and community space in the Portland Armory, which had been lying vacant for about 35 years.

The credit has been used to reclaim abandoned commercial space and encourage business development and economic activity in downtown Portland. Portland Family of Funds used the credit to assist a minority developer finance the development of two business condominiums designed to bring minority- and women-owned businesses into the downtown Portland market. In addition, the credit financed the Portland Small Business Loan Fund which provides financing to new and emerging small businesses operating in low-income neighborhoods in the city.

None of the projects that I just described would have been completed without the new markets tax credit. Last year the GAO published a report on the NMTC and found that 88 percent of the NMTC investors would not have invested in the low-income community or business without the subsidy provided by the credit.

I am a strong supporter of the NMTC because of its potential to bring communities and businesses that have traditionally been left out of the mainstream financial market into the mainstream market.

I hope my colleagues will join me to support the extension of the new markets tax credit, which is currently set to expire at the end of this year. Our cities and rural communities need this program, and I will do all I can to see that it is extended and expanded.

IDAHOANS SPEAK OUT ON HIGH ENERGY PRICES

Mr. CRAPO. Mr. President, in mid-June, 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 energ_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—I am getting sick and tired of hearing from Easterners who live in New York or Washington, DC, and can walk to the corner store and who have mass transit options readily available constantly harping about raising gas prices even higher in order to get people to use less gas. The logic is absolutely heinous.

We live seven miles east of Mountain Home; we have no other options but to drive to get anywhere, and, if it is snowing real hard, our only option is our supposedly-evil

SUV; our other cars won't make it out of our steep driveway. Buying gasoline is not a choice, it is not a luxury—it is a necessity. We've already cut our consumption, we've limited our trips into Boise to the absolute minimum and we even try to consolidate our trips into town as much as possible.

Any further cuts will require some major changes—the biggest one would be my seriously considering quitting school. I'm currently pursuing my Master's degree in History at BSU, I hope to graduate in May—but if gas prices go up to the eight or ten dollars a gallon that I've heard many of the so-called environmentalists advocate, I won't be able to continue driving up to Boise three to four times a week. We also have to limit our driving to one trip to Mountain Home each day to my husband's office in our most gas-efficient vehicle, and none on the weekends. If that means that one of us has to sit around for hours waiting for the other one to be it. Our trips to the base to the Commissary and BX will have to be made in conjunction with a workday trip in to town, and we may stop making them altogether unless they were in conjunction with a trip to the hospital—the savings would probably be outweighed by the gas costs.

Moving is not an option—my husband and I are both Air Force retirees who invested our savings, an immense amount of sweat equity, and a lot of love in our ultimate dream house on a beautiful lot on forty acres. This is our home. We love living in the country the same way many people love living in the city. They have their rapid transit that is highly subsidized by the government; why are we paying for their lifestyle so that they can play holier than thou and harp about mine being evil?

My husband and I are actually quite lucky—we're retirees who can make choices about when and where we want to be places—they're hard choices, but at least they're our choices. Most people do not have that luxury. I keep thinking about the many people who were out here working on our house, most of whom drove from Boise. They didn't have a choice, they had to make the drive. They did, however, have an alternative funding source—they could pass their costs on to us, which is what is now happening with all businesses and commodities—and everything is just going to keep getting more and more expensive as this goes around in a lovely little circle. Remember the 70s and inflation? If we do not find a way to stop this pretty soon, we're going to see inflation like we've never seen it before. . .

I'm all for "alternative energy;" I'd be thrilled to use a vehicle that runs on "alternative energy"—if there was one available and I could afford it. Additionally, the government has been funding research into "alternative energy" for years now—do not make me raise even more funds for it every time I fill up my gas tank. On top of that—do not you think that whoever it is who finally makes a vehicle that does run on "alternative energy" will be able to make an awful lot of money on it? Why should I be paying for the R&D for their huge profits? Stop wasting your time and my money conducting show trial hearings of oil executives and do something useful like maybe suspending the stupid rules about mandatory floors on ethanol usage—with the floods in the midwest and the even higher corn prices that is going to raise gas prices even higher. Drill everywhere we can get oil. Use the shale oil. Build nuclear plants. Do it now so that ten years from now your successor won't be saying "oh, well, we would have had to do that ten years ago for it to have done any good so we might as well not do it now that gas prices have risen to fifteen dollars a gallon. . ."

Oh, and by the way—why haven't the Republicans been all over the Democrats about the fact that they were going to fix everything that was wrong in the world once they had control of Congress? Could you guys please make some noise about the fact that some things aren't George Bush's fault but should be laid at the feet of the Democratically-controlled Congress?

TAMARA, *Mountain Home.*

Honorable Senator, I am absolutely astonished and even sickened at the shameful interrogation of the oil company executives that was conducted by Senator Durbin, Maxine Waters and others. Also, Senator McCain for insinuating that the 'Speculators' are to blame for the high price of oil. Why is so much time being spent pointing the finger of blame at people who did not cause this problem in the first place?

These committees should be spending their time removing the restrictions that have minimized access to the resources of our own country as quickly as possible. I urge you to meet with the Senators who somehow do not understand that it is their own actions that have brought us to this place.

They have stifled production, placed their own taxes on our fuel supply and even threaten to penalize and take away profits from the very companies who can invest those profits back into increasing the available supplies, finding new resources in an environmentally friendly way and developing cleaner fuels. With sufficient resources, the private sector will be able to solve this problem.

You must convince other congressmen that the only solution is to get out of the way and remove the restrictions that prohibit qualified companies from increasing domestic production of energy.

Thank you for the work you do on our behalf.

RAMONA.

Dear Senator Crapo, I would first like to thank you for the way you voted in the recent issues. I would also like to have my voice heard on the energy crisis. I feel that you should take the restrictions off the oil company and allow them to drill for oil. I feel that the U.S. is getting into a situation such as Germany and Japan during World War II. They did not have the resources so that they were in a position of weakness. I feel that the energy crisis is brought about because of special interest at the expense of our national security. I also feel that they should allow nuclear energy. It would certainly solve many problems and other countries have been using it.

Sincerely,

JACKIE, *Pocatello.*

Senator Mike: I am not severely damaged by the gas prices because I can still afford to drive. But I am more cautious, and am much more conservative in my driving. The cost between \$2 gas and \$4 gas is about what many families pay for the cell phone service per month. Most people haven't put things into perspective properly.

There are lots of explanations of the reason for the high prices and they seem to point at two reasons: foreign demand (China and India) and the commodity speculators. Neither of these can be fixed. However, the exchange value of the dollar can be fixed, and we can announce that we are going to start new oil exploration and drilling in the Gulf of Mexico (Not ANWR).

Those two solutions sound reasonable and obtainable. Thanks for listening.

BOB, *Gooding.*

Fuel prices are seriously affecting my family's income. My wife and I are new parents,

and my wife is staying at home with the baby most of the time. I am a struggling mortgage loan originator, fighting to try and keep my family afloat in a suffering housing market. I live in Emmett, and my office is in Boise, so like many, many other folks from Emmett, I commute to work. The increase in fuel prices has caused me to cut down the amount of time I spend at the office. What used to cost about \$27 to get back and forth to work 4 times now costs over \$50. And that is with driving my 32 mpg Hyundai.

Gas prices didn't used to be a deciding factor in the work and recreational activities that we did. But, at \$4 a gallon for fuel, we cannot afford to get out as much as we used to, which limits the amount of money we spend on other activities. I'm sure I'm not alone and, with hundreds of thousands of Idahoans not spending as much money on recreational activities, it is further hurting our local and national economies.

I firmly believe that we as a nation are able to and need to develop alternative fuels AND drill for fossil fuels in an environmentally-responsible way. With advances in technology, I am sure that it is possible. No one needs to drill through the head of a caribou in order to get oil. With the oil available in ANWR and the newly-discovered North Dakota oil reserves, we have the potential for enough fuel to sustain our nation and stimulate the economy until further advances in alternative energy sources can be achieved.

Please do everything you can to minimize the hurt we Idahoans are feeling due to the sky-high energy costs. Struggling young families like mine are fighting just to keep our heads above water and gas prices are threatening to push us under.

Sincerely,

HOUSTON, *Emmett.*

My wife and I live in a small rural community in Idaho. We try to make one big trip each summer, and we visit my wife's family in Utah once a month. We both drive mid-sized American-made cars that are fairly economical, but [the cost] to fill our gas tank has gone from \$30 to \$60.

This is \$30 less that we can spend on groceries. Our grocery bill has also increased by \$20-\$40 a month. We have one small child and hope to have another next year, and I know my salary is not going to keep up with 7% inflation. It is not just fuel we are worried about. Our house is entirely electric because natural gas is not available in our neighborhood and, before we switched our utility bill to level pay, we were paying outrageous charges to heat and cool our house. Idaho has some of the cheapest electric power in the nation, and our electric bill in January was nearly \$400.00. Idaho seems to be anti-coal fired plants, but I am not. I lived next to a coal-fired plant in West Virginia and didn't notice any ill effects. However, I would rather see increased hydro, nuclear, and geothermal energy production. Nuclear is clean, and I think it is the way to go.

Geothermal and hydro are both regular and efficient methods of producing power. I am not in favor of wind farms; their source of energy is inconsistent at best, and I do not think the technology is quite good enough to place solar power above nuclear or coal. I support drilling in ANWR and other offshore sites in the U.S. ANWR is some of the most desolate and unattractive tundra wasteland you will ever see. Drilling could be accomplished there with virtually no ill effects to humans and very minimal effects to the few species who can survive the harsh tundra climate. Anything we can do to research and drill for that shale-oil found throughout the mountainous West would be beneficial. I would hope that American auto makers can

use technology to make more fuel-efficient vehicles that are less reliant on petroleum. I think ethanol is a piece of the puzzle, but it can never replace petroleum and is not the ultimate solution. I'm sure you do not want a novel, so I'll end on that note.

CHRIS, *Burley*.

Dear Mr. Crapo, You're so right about the gas prices affecting those of us in Idaho. So many of us are in rural areas that do not offer the services of a bigger city, i.e. specialized physicians, food and clothes shopping, automotive and farming equipment and supplies, etc. While you say the average Idaho household is spending \$50 more/month, I can attest to the fact that it is more like \$100 more/month, especially where we must travel approximately ten miles to the nearest town. Those people who are on repeat chemo or dialysis treatments are really taking it in the pocket book!

We need to tap into the alternative energy resources in our country and stop relying on other Third World countries who commit atrocities against humanity. Meanwhile, since it is an emergency in terms of the USA economic status, let us try, just try, to depend on the oil reserves and resources in the U.S. and Canada and see where that takes us. I do not see (in my limited experience) how it would make us any less of a super power. Frankly, we'd be setting a good example.

Thank you for considering my request to be heard as a lifetime citizen of Idaho and the USA.

MELANIE, *Silverton*.

I am a recently (February) divorced woman; mid-50's living in Blackfoot. I have been doing okay, being able to make ends meet. Recently I had to change my taxes. At the present time, I have no real estate, which should change by December. Being single again my taxes have changed to take out another \$284.00 per month.

Meanwhile, I have a mother, widowed, in her late 80s that I have to travel to Idaho Falls from Blackfoot to help with bills, doctor appointments, grocery shopping, keeping the yard mowed and all the things that go with helping to assist in the care of an elderly parent. She is fairly competent, and I am really lucky, but she is getting weaker and shakier. I worry.

Just last month alone, my gas bill went from \$100.00 per month to \$180.00. This is huge for me. Considering I work for a salary and receive no overtime, I guess you could say I have a 'fixed' income. I really cannot get a second job because I really need to be able to leave at a moment's notice if I need to take care of her needs. The gas is actually dipping into my savings I pay myself each month.

This has caused a lot of emotional feelings for me. I am torn between where I should be and how much it is going to cost me to get there. These choices should not be weighed between gas prices and a mother in need.

I hope something can be done about this. When I purchase gas, I get physically sick in my stomach and I feel angry. My car gets 28 mpg on the freeway, thank goodness. Imagine if I had a truck or something less conservative.

Sincerely,

CATHY, *Blackfoot*.

The Honorable Senator Crapo: I appreciate the opportunity to share the personal feelings on high fuel costs, and the impact these high energy costs are having on us. I believe that legislative bodies need to get together and "act" in a way that will ensure that my children, and theirs, will have a way of life free from most of the stress and concerns concomitant we are struggling with today,

in the way of high energy costs. We must execute a well-thought-out plan that does not band-aid the current situation, at the expense of the future. Quite frankly, I would rather pay my share now, if it means my children will have the opportunity to live in a world where they can focus on being all they can be, without fear of making trade-offs between the fuel it takes to get them to work, and the food or health care that they need to survive. Finally, we need to act now (not next session, or the one after that). Election year, or not . . . I will be more prone to vote out candidates that procrastinate on this urgent topic, at the expense of being popular with their constituents in an election year (and I believe that candidates would actually be more popular, if they acted, rather than delayed).

These are my positions. I am no authority. I believe a plan like this could be achieved, if we could all learn to work together (particularly the Legislature) and assemble a 20-year plan that alleviates much of our dependence on foreign oil, to wit:

Our oil companies are doing just fine, thank you. While I would not be in favor of a windfall tax on oil profits, that would merely be passed along to consumers, in the form of further fuel price increases, I would be in favor of a large tax deduction for increasing refinery capacity so long as an equal investment was made in alternative forms of energy development (wind, solar, seas, geothermal, etc).

Establishing legislation that requires all automakers selling cars in the U.S. to develop, by 2018, models of reliable, economical, and efficient electric-based commuter vehicles, enabling local transportation, thus decreasing pollution and allowing consumer cost avoidance for fossil-fuel unless traveling longer distances. This would include fuel-cell, rechargeable, etc. vehicles.

Speed up the approval of nuclear power generating permits to ensure we have the generating capacity to begin the shift to electric vehicles.

Mandate approval of local option taxes as the Federal level, allowing citizens to tax themselves for transportation plans that reduce CO₂ emissions (it is clear our own State Legislature is asleep at the wheel on this subject). Like No Child Left Behind, we have proven it is possible to require state governments to "act" in positive ways.

Open up ANWR to exploration, drilling, and oil production, along with environment preservation regulations that require "logical" and "thoughtful," yet inexpensive ways of minimizing our footprint in this, and all areas (including offshore) that may produce the fuels we need to get to an electric-based commuter mentality. Require environmentalists to "prove" the impact, not speculate, and enact the needful, but minimum.

Require all oil companies to invest in infrastructure that allows for the delivery of alternative fuels (e.g., hydrogen) in a stepwise, U.S.-wide plan that allows for a complete mapping of these services in the next fifteen years.

Provide tax-incentives, or perhaps Federal Grants to companies that can develop technologies that allow for the generation of clean power right in our homes (advanced solar cells, fuel cells, etc.).

We need to act now, as the answers are sure to be long in the making. But we also need to take some chances (ANWR) that allow us to make it to the next stage of technological maturity. We need this balance: Current energy exploration and local production along with equal investments in the deployment of new energy source technologies. We also need to enable investments in all the underpinning services and infrastructure

that make this future vision come to fruition (alternative fuel delivery infrastructure, home power transfer technology, etc.).

PAT, *Boise*.

HONORING TROOPER DAVID SHAWN BLANTON, JR.

Mr. BURR. Mr. President, I wish to honor the life of North Carolina State trooper David Shawn Blanton, Jr., who was tragically killed on June 17 during a routine traffic stop near Canton, NC. David is the 59th North Carolina State trooper to have been killed in the line of duty.

David was only 24 years old and was a 2-year veteran of the North Carolina Highway Patrol. He was a native of Sylva, NC, and a 2002 graduate of Smoky Mountain High School, where he was a football and wrestling star.

We are all grateful for David's dedication to protecting the citizens of North Carolina. He lived in Cherokee with his wife Michaela, who had just given birth to their son Tye 2 weeks prior to his untimely passing.

David was a member of the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indian Tribe and the first member of that tribe to serve with the highway patrol. In addition to being a State trooper, David volunteered as the junior varsity softball coach at Smoky Mountain High School.

Along with his wife Michaela and son Tye, David is survived by his father David S. Blanton Sr., stepmother Jennifer Blanton, mother Jeanell Youngbird, younger brothers, Jerry R. Blankenship, Jim Kye Blankenship, Jesse J. Blanton, and sister Natalie E. Blanton.

David's friends, family, fellow troopers, and the people of North Carolina are mourning this very tragic loss.

I know that there are no words that I can offer to help comfort Michaela and other members of the Blanton family, but I hope my colleagues in the Senate will join me in keeping them in our thoughts and prayers.

David gave his life in service to our State, and this ultimate sacrifice should never be forgotten.

I send my deepest condolences to all who had the privilege of knowing this young man who gave his life in service to our State.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO BARBARA MORGAN

• Mr. CRAPO. Mr. President, I am proud to announce the return of NASA mission specialist, teacher in space Barbara Morgan, not to Earth—that was 10 months ago—but to Idaho and Boise State University where she has been hired in a newly created position that will develop education initiatives in science, math, engineering, and technology. Barbara flew on the Shuttle *Endeavor*, Mission STS-118, from August 8-21, 2007. She served as a mission specialist onboard *Endeavor*, working as a robotic arm operator in the