

on [the oil] industry so very vital to the nation's economy and infrastructure.

How long must we wait for Congress to stop the ongoing damage to our dollar, cost of living (including food), and our transportation infrastructure? What could be more important to both the short-term and long-term wellbeing of this country and its citizens in your list of priorities?

On another but still related issue, where is this nation's long range planning? If I might cite an example; Japan after WWII as a nation set its sights on consumer electronics and the automobile. Look where they are today with those technologies and look at our once proud auto industry, now a cripple. Kennedy pointed this nation toward the moon—within ten years. It was a national plan and a priority. What are this nation's long-term goals? Do you know? Why do not we the people know?

These items should rise above petty politics. They should be without party ownership and bickering. And a declaration of persona non grata made toward the oil lobby and their bought and paid for elected officials.

Thank you for asking for my story, but it is really a much larger story than my story; it is our story.

JOHN.

Dear Senator Crapo: It is good to hear from you and know that at least one politician in Washington has their head on straight. Thank you for representing those of us who do not buy the "man-caused global warming" hoax. I believe it is a natural cycle the earth has gone thru many times before and will continue to undergo.

I believe all Americans want clean air, water and a healthy environment which can all be accomplished while simultaneously drilling in ANWAR, off coast regions and exploring other natural resources available domestically.

Sincerely,

MIKE, Emmett.

Dear Senator Crapo: Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on what I think is the most important issue we should have faced at least twenty years ago. Yet, I know that mustering the political will to make the changes we needed to make would have been very difficult then. Nonetheless, here we are in 2008 and, being Americans, we will face this crisis with intelligence and determination.

Frankly, I put the rising prices into this perspective. I drive a Hyundai Accent and average about 34 mpg and drive about 11,000 miles per year. So, I buy about 325 gallons annually. Gasoline has increased \$1.75 over the last short while. So, on average I'm paying an additional \$47 per month. Sure, I'd rather spend that on something else, but that really is not that bad. My wife drives our Toyota 4 Runner. Her commute is short and other than that, we only use that vehicle for recreation . . . about 4,000 to 5,000 miles per year. Again, I can live with it.

To my way of thinking, the increased gas prices have been a blessing. It has finally brought the discussion of energy management to forefront where it has needed to be for some time. Not only is our economic well being at stake, but the security of America as well. Were it not for oil, would we have ever even heard of Saddam Hussein? And, too, we are finally coming to agreement that climate change is real and are showing signs that we may actually address it. If higher gas prices are the cost of getting to have this discussion, so be it.

What should we do about gas prices, you ask? Nothing. Market forces will bring down gas consumption which should have a moder-

ating effect on prices. People are opting for more fuel efficient cars which may stimulate the auto industry. And finally, I think the federal government should take a more active role with our currency issues to keep the dollar from falling much further. I know there is reluctance to that idea, but the circumstances seem to warrant it.

Regards,

PETE, Boise.

Dear Senator Crapo: I do not agree with your assessment regarding the high price of gas. We are being gouged by the oil companies, and I will prove my point.

Oil is at about \$130 a barrel. There are 42 gallons in a US barrel, which equates to \$3.09 a gallon for crude. Add to this the price for refining say \$0.40 distribution \$0.25. State and federal Taxes and about \$0.25 a gallon a gas station makes and you will see that we are already over \$4 a gallon.

How do the oil companies make these massive profits every quarter? In the United States, we have to import 40% of our oil the other 60% comes from Alaska, Texas, California, the Gulf, etc. Are we paying \$130 a barrel to the oil companies for oil coming out of our own back yard? You people blame China and India for the cost of fuel today. For your information, I have been to both countries. They do not have the amount of cars we Americans have. In fact, they are a bicycle society.

I am fed up with Congress and the Senate for not taking any action on this issue; in fact, President Bush is quiet on the subject.

I have always been [conservative], but I fear that this coming election [conservatives will not fare well], mainly due oil prices which has a ripple effect and cause unemployment, rise in food prices etc. The hardest hit people in our society are the old people of which I am one.

Sincerely,

GEORGE.

Our current monthly gas budget has almost tripled with the increase during the past year. With my husband working out of town (300+ miles weekly commute) and I'm working for a non-profit that reimburses me @\$40/mile, we are going in the hole. As our state representative, you and your family should be feeling the same affects of the energy prices that we are, and helping correct this problem. Are you?

Respectfully,

MARCIA.

Dear Senator: I am a hard-working Idahoan who has to change my behavior because of high energy costs, but I also understand that sometimes you have to pay the piper. Nobody likes to go on a diet or take medicine. Yet in order to get well, we have to do things we do not like. This is one of those times. The answer to our energy problem is not to find some way to ignore or go around what made us fat and sick. And, I mean that quite literally. Furthermore, you know as well as I do that local oil will be the same price as global oil. The market price is the price regardless of where it comes from. You do no favor to the public with this tactic. Feel free to quote me.

JIM.

We are unable to see our children who live 500 to 1000 miles away due to gas prices. We are getting older and live on retirement income, thus we are unable to help them out with gas for making a trip to Idaho. I expect we will never get to see them again.

ROBERT and PEGGY, Emmett.

Senator Crapo for the last three years, I have been traveling to Missoula, Montana,

for medical treatments for cancer and I had a stint placed. I was traveling every three weeks for treatments and I am happy to say that the cancer is in remission as of now but Non Hodgkin's Lymphoma cannot be cured, it can be treated usually but not cured, and it keeps coming back. I am not only faced with expenses at the Cancer Center and doctor, but I have a diseased liver and they have no idea why the tests are showing such high levels in the tests. It seems all of this has hit more or less all at once in traveling and taking the tests. I have to stay overnight at times, and this, of course, creates more expenses which the government or the insurance and Medicare does not cover. My nest egg for retirement is getting eaten up each month, and it will run out. I worry about my wife if something happens to me.

I hope that someone reads this that can help me and others in the same boat. Thank you for giving me this chance to air my concerns about my health and what all it is taking to handle the situation so far.

Sincerely

GEORGE, Salmon.

OBJECTION TO THE NOMINATION OF HUSEIN CUMBER

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I stand today to object to any unanimous consent agreement in connection with the nomination of Mr. Husein Cumber to be a member of the Surface Transportation Board, or STB. I don't take this action lightly, and I would like to take a few moments to briefly describe why I am placing a hold on his nomination.

Railroads and transportation infrastructure are the lifeblood of our economy. My home State of Oregon has recently been the victim of a short line railroad that has subverted consumer protections established by Congress in an attempt to reduce service and raise rates. The STB is the last line of defense against companies that are more interested in maximizing profits than they are in their legal obligations as a common carrier.

To be an effective safeguard against this activity, the STB needs board members with in-depth experience and knowledge of a broad range of rate, service and railroad merger issues. The law says that members of the STB should possess professional standing and demonstrated knowledge in the fields of transportation or transportation regulation. I am very concerned that Mr. Cumber doesn't possess any of these qualities.

Mr. Cumber's nomination requires this body to seriously review his record of accomplishment in light of these requirements and demonstrated abilities. I have compared Mr. Cumber's record with those of other current and former members of the STB, and I would like to share some of my findings with you today.

First, Chairman Charles Nottingham, a licensed attorney. Chairman Nottingham has 4 years of experience in the Federal Highway Administration working on everything from funding analysis to policy development. He has an additional 4 years at the state level as the Transportation Commissioner and CEO of Virginia DOT. He was the counsel to the Committee on Government

Reform in the U.S. House of Representatives. Chairman Nottingham is unquestionably qualified for the duties required of a board member and a good example of what the STB needs in a nominee.

Vice Chairman Francis Mulvey, with a Ph.D. in Economics, is likewise qualified. He has legislative experience as the Staff Director for the Railroad Subcommittee in the House of Representatives. He was the Deputy Assistant Inspector General for Rail, Transit, and Special Programs in the Department of Transportation. He was the Assistant Director charged with analyzing transportation issues at the GAO. His experiences outside government are equally valuable: He was the Programs Manager for the National Academy of Sciences, Transportation Research Board. He was also the Vice President for Research with the American Bus Association. Again, Vice Chairman Mulvey is an exemplary member and a model for future nominees.

Former Chairman Linda Morgan, an attorney with a Georgetown law degree, was supremely qualified to work on the STB. For 15 years she held various positions with the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation. While there, she was responsible for much of the legislation that established the framework for today's surface transportation system. She also served as the general counsel of the committee.

Former Chairman Roger Nober was the counselor to the Deputy Secretary of Transportation for a year before joining the STB. Before that he spent 4 years as the chief counsel for the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure of the House of Representatives. For the 4 years before that, he held a variety of positions on that committee's staff. And for the 4 years before that, he put his Harvard law degree to use in New York City. His breadth of experience, most of it relating to transportation issues, made him very well qualified to serve as a board member and chairman.

Former Vice Chairman Wayne Burkes served in the Mississippi legislature for 14 years; 4 years in the House of Representatives, and 10 years in the Senate. He served on the Highways and Transportation Committee all 14 years. After his time in the legislature, he then spent 10 years as the Mississippi Transportation Commissioner for the Central District. His understanding of transportation issues was certainly unquestioned.

Even a cursory review of current and former board member qualifications makes it clear what kind of nominee this important regulatory body requires. I would like to bring the Senate's attention now to our current nominee, Mr. Husein Cumber. There are stark differences between what you have just heard and what I will present to you now.

Mr. Cumber's regulatory experience in transportation is limited to his short tenure as a political appointee at the Department of Transportation—1 year as the Deputy Chief of Staff, and some time as the Assistant to the Secretary for Policy. For his private sector expertise, he can point to his year as the spokesman for Florida East Coast Industries. And before that, he was a political fundraiser for President George W. Bush and Governor Jeb Bush. He was what some referred to as a fundraising wunderkind. One story noted that he "devours business cards like most mortals do potato chips." Developing these political relationships, he said, allowed him to "meet some great people and there's going to be a payoff in the end."

The President has nominated Mr. Cumber to work on a vital regulatory board with the capacity to impact our economy, our infrastructure, and the wages of hard-working Americans across the Nation. Reviewing the qualifications of other members, be they PH.D.s, attorneys, or career legislators, I see that broad experience in regulatory, policy, and economic matters surrounding rail transportation is essential. Understanding the common carrier obligation of the rail industry is essential. Advocacy for consumers in the face of enormous pressure from powerful industry representatives is essential.

Mr. Husein Cumber is, by all accounts, a hard-working man. But hard work alone is not sufficient qualification for nomination to the board of an important consumer protection agency. It is also essential that a nominee have demonstrated experience and expertise in the issues that come before the agency.

I recently met with Mr. Cumber to discuss his nomination. I found him to be polite, personable, and eager. I did not, however, find him to be knowledgeable of the critical issues that have come before the STB. His experiences in lobbying and fundraising stand out and will no doubt help him in his future endeavors outside of government. But what is important here is what he has been nominated to do while serving in a government position.

Members of the Surface Transportation Board have to make important decisions affecting our Nation's transportation policy from the moment they are sworn in. They do not have time for on-the-job training.

Mr. Cumber's nomination to the STB may in fact be "the payoff in the end" he has been working toward. But a seat on the Surface Transportation Board shouldn't be a payoff. It's not a prize to be won—it is a job to be done. And it is a job to be done by someone armed with credentials and credibility, not by someone armed with only cash and connections.

I am compelled to object to this nomination for the reasons I have provided.

My hope is that the administration will acknowledge the importance of the STB in their search for a qualified nominee and keep looking for one.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

RECOGNIZING MONFORTON SCHOOL

• Mr. BAUCUS. Mr. President, I wish today to recognize the achievements of an outstanding teacher and her seventh grade students. This is a story of community and folks coming together to make their town a better place to live. The students at Monforton School in Bozeman, MT, with their teacher, Sally Broughton, saw a playground at the school that was outdated and unsafe. These ambitious young people then sprung into action and set out to inform the principal, school board, other students, and community members of the subpar condition of the playground and gathered input and support for building a new playground.

In the Montana spirit of folks working together to make their community a better place to live, local businesses pitched in by donating nearly \$40,000 worth of supplies and labor toward completion of the playground. Monforton parent and carpenter, Alan Ripley, worked with students to design the octagonal climbing structure for the playground. The students spent countless hours with volunteers in building the playground.

Thanks to the work of these students, their teacher, and the community all Monforton students now have a safe playground at their school. The efforts of these fine young people have not gone unnoticed. The Corporation for National and Community Service honored the students and their teacher, Sally Broughton, with the 2008 Spirit of Service Award, and We the People: Project Citizen presented them with the Montana Project Citizen Award for their contributions to the community.

This spirit of service is prevalent at Monforton School as all students participate in service-learning projects. Classroom lessons are combined with meaningful service to their community. Through these efforts students have been responsible for improving the food service at the school, constructing a walking path, and informing the larger community about the need for a new jail and a warning system for Hyalite Dam among other projects.

I would like to join the chorus recognizing the seventh grade students of Monforton and their teacher, Sally Broughton. They are a perfect example of how Montana's world-class education system is preparing children across Big Sky country to meet the challenges they will face. These outstanding young people are the future of