

resistant—many companies have. Many companies that hear it want to deal with it immediately, but some do not. Under our legislation, these agencies will have the necessary leverage to demand that those private companies responsible for feeding our Nation follow strict safety standards, and it means that when mistakes are made, public safety is not compromised.

I have partnered in this initiative with Representative DIANA DEGETTE, a Democrat from Colorado. She and I sat together on the Health Subcommittee of the Energy and Commerce Committee. She still sits there and has been a long-time advocate of making a generally good food-safety regimen in this country even better. This is one major step in doing that.

In 2004, the GAO concluded that the current recall system, which relies on voluntary action by industry, is flawed and that the USDA and FDA must do better to ensure recalls are prompt and complete. The administration seems to have reached a similar conclusion, asking Congress late last year to provide FDA with mandatory recall authority.

So consumer groups want it, the FDA wants it, the President wants it, and an awful lot of us in this Chamber think the FDA and USDA should have authority to do mandatory recalls. I hope the FDA food safety legislation currently being drafted in both Chambers ultimately includes mandatory recall provisions and that we get a chance to vote on such a proposal this year.

It is imperative both USDA and FDA be given this authority. We can't afford to continue to put the public's health at risk by waiting for some kind of comprehensive legislative package. A simple fix such as the one in my and Representative DEGETTE's SAFER Meat, Poultry, and Food Act, could solve this glaring deficiency in our food safety system. I implore my colleagues to support our legislation.

I yield the floor, and 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. SANDERS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. SANDERS. I ask consent to speak as in morning business.

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

LIHEAP

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, in response to the outrageously high cost of fuel all across this country, and the fact that people both in the southern part of America and the northern part of America are very worried about how they are going to stay warm next winter and stay cool this summer, I introduced S. 3186, the Warm In Winter And Cool In Summer Act, which will pro-

vide immediate relief to millions of senior citizens, families with children, and the disabled who are struggling to pay their home energy bills. Specifically, this bill would nearly double the funding for the highly successful Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program, that is the LIHEAP program, in fiscal year 2008, taking LIHEAP from \$2.57 billion to \$5.1 billion, a total increase of \$2.53 billion. I mention that is, in fact, what this program is authorized for.

I thank Majority Leader REID for completing the rule XIV process. My hope is that this legislation, this bill, will be on the Senate floor either this week or next week because it is imperative that we move it as quickly as possible.

There are many Members of the Senate, Democrats, Republicans, Independents, who have been active on the LIHEAP issue for a number of years. I want, at this time, to announce that we have now 40 Senators who are cosponsors of this tripartisan legislation. That includes 10 Republicans. It includes 30 Democrats and 1 Independent in addition to myself, making 2 Independents.

The cosponsors of this legislation are Senators OBAMA, SNOWE, Majority Leader REID, SMITH, DURBIN, COLEMAN, MURRAY, SUNUNU, LANDRIEU, COLLINS, LEAHY, MURKOWSKI, CLINTON, GREGG, CANTWELL, LUGAR, KERRY, DOLE, KENNEDY, BOND, SCHUMER, LEVIN, CARDIN, BROWN, KLOBUCHAR, MENENDEZ, CASEY, BINGAMAN, LAUTENBERG, STABENOW, BILL NELSON, BAUCUS, LIEBERMAN, SALAZAR, ROCKEFELLER, WYDEN, JACK REED, DODD, WHITEHOUSE, and TESTER.

In other words, we have very strong tripartisan support, from the northern part of our country, from the southern part of our country—all over. People look at the degree of partisanship that takes place in Congress. I am happy to say this bill is bringing all kinds of people from all kinds of ideologies together to say we have a crisis now; that in the United States of America people should not freeze to death in the winter; in the United States of America people should not be dying of heat exhaustion in the summer.

In addition to engendering widespread tripartisan support in the Senate, another bill, exactly the same, is being circulated in the House with very good cosponsorship. Furthermore, I am happy to say we have over 200 groups, national and local groups from all over the country, that are supporting this legislation. They include, among many others: AARP, the city of Phoenix, AZ, Catholic Charities, Salvation Army, the American Red Cross, the American Association of People with Disabilities, et cetera, et cetera—tremendous grassroots support from all over the country.

Let me quote from the AARP which, as you know, is the largest senior group in this country. This is what they say:

AARP fully supports the Warm in Winter and Cool in Summer Act. This legislation

will provide needed relief for many older persons who may not receive assistance—despite their eligibility—due to a lack of funding. Older Americans who are more susceptible to hypothermia and heat stroke know the importance of heating and cooling their homes. They often skimp on other necessities to pay their utility bills. However, today's escalating energy prices and the Nation's unpredictable and extreme temperatures are adding to the growing economic hardships faced by seniors. LIHEAP is underfunded and unable to meet the energy assistance needs of the program's eligible households.

That is from the AARP. I reiterate, Mr. President—what I know you know—there are some Americans and maybe even Members of Congress who do not know that when we talk about LIHEAP, we are not just talking about the problems that occur in my State where the weather gets 20 below zero or in your State. We are talking about problems that take place in Arizona and Texas, where temperatures get to be 110, 115 degrees. With a declining economy and escalating utility bills, many people—seniors, disabled, lower income people—cannot afford their electric bill. Their electricity is being disconnected. You are finding elderly people, people with illnesses, in a very horrendous position.

This is not just a northern State issue. It is not a New England issue. This is, in fact, a national issue and that is why we have cosponsorship for this bill from all over the country.

I have talked in the past and will talk again, obviously, about what LIHEAP means for northern States such as my own, but let me say a few words about what it means for southern States. Let me quote from the city of Phoenix, AZ.

This is from Phoenix, and the person there is saying:

I am writing to express my support for the Warm in Winter and Cool in Summer Act. Currently Arizona can only provide assistance to 6 percent of eligible LIHEAP households. To make matters worse, Phoenix continues to experience extreme heat. In the past month alone we have had 15 days with temperatures at or above 110 degrees. This extreme heat is especially hard on the very young, the elderly and disabled who are on fixed incomes and can no longer afford to cool their homes.

Arizona Public Service reported that there was a 36 percent increase in the number of households having difficulty in paying utility bills and an increase of 11,000 families being disconnected compared to a year ago. Rising energy and housing costs are placing enormous strains on households across Arizona.

Now, imagine being ill or elderly, having your electricity disconnected with temperatures day after day after day being 110 degrees. That is a serious health problem. But the issue obviously is not only in the South.

In my State there is a newspaper called the Stowe Reporter. This is what they say, very briefly, in an editorial:

It could be New England's own Katrina disaster. Hundreds of homes rendered uninhabitable, families' finances stretched to the limit, some driven away altogether to take

shelter with friends or family. But unlike Katrina, this calamity is clearly visible on the horizon and we have months to prepare.

With home heating oil prices nearly twice what they were one year ago, and no price relief in sight, thousands of Vermonters will be struggling this winter to keep their homes warm. The financial effect of an additional \$500 to more than \$1,000 on the winter's oil bill will force many to choose between heat and other necessities, such as food.

So what we are looking at in the northern tier of this country is our own Katrina, if you like: people being forced out of their homes, people becoming ill, people leaving the northern part of this country because they cannot pay these outrageously high energy costs. This is, in fact, a life-and-death issue. Unlike hurricanes or tornadoes, you are not going to see CNN there. But as my friend from Maine, who is just walking in, understands, in her State and in my State, we are seeing people struggle in a life-and-death fashion. This is very important for people to know, because it does not get a lot of publicity, but according to the Centers for Disease Control, over 1,000 Americans from across the country died from hypothermia in their own homes from 1999 to 2002, and those are the latest figures we have available.

In other words, they froze to death because they could not afford to heat their homes. How many of these deaths were preventable? Well, according to the CDC, all of them were preventable. If people were living in homes that were adequately heated, those folks would not have died. It is important to understand that it is not only heating oil prices that are skyrocketing but electricity prices are also soaring.

Recently, USA Today ran a headline on its front page that said: "Price Jolt: Electricity Bills Going Up." According to this article, utilities across the United States are raising power prices up to 29 percent, mostly to pay for soaring fuel costs. In other words, the situation that exists in the southern part of the country is that the electricity is disconnected because you cannot afford the huge increases in your electric bill, and if the temperatures are 110 degrees in Arizona, Texas, New Mexico, you are in serious trouble.

Before I yield to my friend from Maine, I did want to mention some information in our southern and southwestern States. Due to a lack of LIHEAP funding, the State of Texas only provides air conditioning assistance to about 4 percent of those who qualify. Recently I received a letter from Shawnee Bayer, from the Community Action Committee in Victoria, TX. In her letter, Shawnee Bayer told me that LIHEAP funding for their elderly and disabled clients ran out on May 1 of this year. As a result, they have had to turn away over 500 elderly and disabled families seeking assistance with their air conditioning bills.

According to Ms. Bayer:

The temperatures in our area have been 100 to 110 degrees for 16 consecutive days. I fear

it is going to be very tragic at the current pace we are going with so little funding available. There are so many who need our assistance, like the elderly lady in her 80s who recently almost died due to kidney failure; now she doesn't want to use her air conditioner because she is afraid she won't be able to pay the bill and that we won't have funding to assist her when she needs us.

She just called me last Thursday and has pneumonia; she could hardly talk. Last year she was placed in the hospital in ICU due to a heat stroke as a result of using only a fan, not the air conditioner. I see children every day who have not eaten because the parents, grandparents and in some cases great grandparents are just trying to keep the electricity on. The electric bills in our area have tripled.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator's time has expired.

The Senator from Maine is recognized.

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I am very pleased to join the Senator from Vermont, my friend and colleague, in discussing the need for legislation which we have introduced to increase funding for the low income heating assistance program.

As my colleague from Vermont has described, our citizens in the Northeast are facing a crisis this winter. In the State of Maine, 80 percent of homes rely on home heating oil. The average home in Maine uses between 800 and 1,000 gallons of heating oil to get through the winter season. My constituents are looking at paying as much as \$5,000 this winter to keep warm. And this is in a State that ranks 37th in per capita income. This is a true crisis. It is clear that we need to do a great deal to solve the overall energy crisis facing this country.

We need to produce more, use less, and pursue alternatives. But we also need to look for short-term help for our citizens. The legislation we have cosponsored, S. 3186, would provide an additional \$2.5 billion for the low income heating assistance program, known as the LIHEAP program.

Most of our colleagues are pretty familiar with this program. But let me remind them that it is a Federal grant program that provides vital funding to help very low-income citizens meet their home energy needs. The level of funding our legislation would provide would bring the program up to the fully authorized amount of \$5.1 billion. That is the least we can do. Due to record high oil costs, the situation for our most vulnerable citizens, particularly the low income and elderly, is especially dire.

In my State of Maine, people face a crisis as they look ahead and try to figure out how they are going to stay warm this winter.

Nationwide, over the last few years, the numbers of households receiving assistance under the LIHEAP program increased by 26 percent, from 4.6 million to 5.8 million. But during that same period, Federal funding increased by only 10 percent. The result is that the average grant declined from \$349 to \$305 at a time of record high prices.

The large rapid increase in energy prices, combined with lower levels of funding available per family, has imposed a tremendous hardship on those who can afford it least. Our bill would provide an additional \$2.5 billion as emergency funding, and the term "emergency" could not be more accurate, because that is exactly what we face.

Our Nation is in an energy emergency. Families are already being forced to choose between paying for food and paying for heat for this coming winter. One woman in Maine told me she has to turn over half of her Social Security check to meet the budget plan she is on for meeting her obligations to the oil dealer to stay warm—half of her Social Security check.

She literally is deciding if she can afford to fill the prescription she needs, can she buy the healthy food she needs. I am worried that we are going to see seniors this winter suffering from hypothermia. I am worried we are going to see deaths from carbon monoxide from bringing in unsafe grills trying to stay warm. I am worried we are going to see household fires as people try to stay warm.

I tell my colleagues, we must act and we must act now. If we can increase the funding and help people purchase the fuel they need now, it will make a real difference. As the Senator from Vermont has said, and he is not exaggerating, this is a matter of life and death. That is not an exaggeration. We must act.

I also want to mention another program that cries out for more funding, and that is the Weatherization Program. We are going to proceed separately on the weatherization front, but we must not forget that if we can help people weatherize their homes, we can help them, on average, reduce their fuel consumption by 31 percent. It is one of the few things we can do right now that would make a difference this winter. I wish to see us double funding for weatherization. The payback is enormous. It would make a real difference. Before the current price spike, the Department of Energy estimated that weatherization saved the average household \$358 per year.

This winter, with the cost of fuel doubled what it was last winter, the savings will be that much higher as well. So let's do both. Let's give speedy approval to the legislation we have introduced to increase the funding for the LIHEAP program so it reaches \$5.1 billion. And then let us, through the emergency supplemental bill that I hope will be coming to the floor, do a substantial increase in the Weatherization Program as well. It was so shortsighted of President Bush to propose the termination of the Weatherization Program. That makes no sense whatsoever.

The Energy Department's spending bill before the Appropriations Committee restores some of the money, but it is still below the level that was spent

on weatherization last winter. We should be greatly increasing funding for weatherization as well. I have been working with the Senators from Minnesota, both Senator KLOBUCHAR and Senator COLEMAN, to lead a bipartisan effort. My friend from Vermont and the Presiding Officer have also signed onto that, calling upon the appropriators to increase weatherization funding as well.

If we could provide an additional \$40 million to the Weatherization Program, it would help another 15,000 households who are in need of weatherization.

Let me end my comments by saying it is imperative we act both on the legislation to increase funding for the LIHEAP program and then proceed to also increase funding for weatherization as well. It is the least we can do to help some of the most vulnerable citizens avoid a true crisis this winter.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The time for morning business has expired.

**TOM LANTOS AND HENRY J. HYDE
UNITED STATES GLOBAL LEADERSHIP AGAINST HIV/AIDS, TUBERCULOSIS, AND MALARIA RE-AUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2008—
Continued**

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senate will now continue consideration of S. 2731, which the clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 2731) to authorize appropriation for fiscal years 2009 through 2013 to provide assistance to foreign countries to combat HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria, and for other purposes.

The Senator from New Hampshire is recognized.

Mr. SUNUNU. Mr. President, I rise to speak in support of the legislation before the Senate today. This legislation is really of historic scope and importance, dealing with the global crisis of HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria.

There has been a lot said about this legislation. It is certainly not a perfect piece of legislation, and rarely do we see something that fits that description, but when we talk about infections and the impact of HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria around the world, it is hard to exaggerate the devastating

impact these diseases have had. It is also hard to fully appreciate the positive impact the U.S. leadership in this area has had as well.

Around the world, there are over 30 million people infected with HIV/AIDS. I think perhaps even more striking is that you have 2.6 million deaths attributed to tuberculosis and malaria a year. These are deaths that are preventable. That is why the funding in this legislation is so important, because we know it will not just deal with the spread of HIV/AIDS and new infections around the world, but will also help prevent deaths today, tomorrow, the year after, and the year after.

We have the ability to prevent these illnesses, to treat them as never before, and to save lives. That is why this funding is so badly needed and will be so beneficial. I think this is the greatest humanitarian crisis I have seen, certainly in my lifetime, the spread of these diseases around the world and in particular in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Many people have observed that this legislation includes a dramatic increase in funding, and it certainly does include a significant increase in funding, but it is essential that we allocate these funds to PEPFAR, the President's initiative, and to the global fight because we have seen the dramatic impact and success of the funds we have already allocated and appropriated.

Today, we can look back over the last 5 years and appreciate that 1.7 million people around the world now have the ARVs to treat HIV/AIDS that didn't have them before, 55 million people around the world have been reached with prevention efforts dealing with HIV/AIDS, and 25 million malaria deaths have been prevented. That is a dramatic success, and that is something all of those countries that have participated in this fight should be very proud of.

Under this legislation, the funding and initiative and the effort will continue, with \$4 billion to deal with tuberculosis, \$5 billion to deal with malaria, and \$2 billion in funding for the Global Fund. These are significant sums of money. Many of my colleagues have observed that with such a significant allocation, oversight and accountability are essential. I could not agree more.

We need to ensure, through every avenue possible within the U.S. Government, the Global Fund, and within other relief organizations, that every effort is made to ensure appropriate use of the funds, to ensure the use of efficient allocation, and, of course, to ensure accountability.

We are measuring success, measuring performance better today than we have ever done before. We need to continue to improve that effort. We need to make sure we understand how much it costs to reach an individual or a family with ARVs, how much it costs to get treatment for malaria into the hands of those who can most benefit, how we can reduce those costs, and so on.

The fact that we have not always been able to account for these funds as effectively as we would like is not a reason not to pursue such an important initiative. We have better benchmarks than ever before in this legislation, better standards for accountability and oversight than ever before. The cost of delay isn't measured in days or weeks; the cost of a delay of this legislation is measured in lives. That is why it is so important that we act on the legislation this week, before we break for August, and that we have it signed into law this year.

Only the United States can provide this kind of leadership in terms of public awareness and in financing. It is the U.S. leadership that has been the driving force behind the successes I mentioned earlier—the numbers reached with ARVs, the numbers reached with prevention efforts, the number of lives saved, and the number of malaria deaths prevented.

There are many reasons to undertake a piece of legislation of this scope and importance. We can begin with the humanitarian aspect. There is no greater crisis anywhere in the world than the humanitarian crisis created by the spread of HIV/AIDS and the millions who die every year from malaria, tuberculosis, and the millions of deaths that are preventable. There are the public health aspects that, in the long run, benefit not just those countries that benefit from PEPFAR, but in countries around the world, in the United States and our allies, where improvements in public health, reductions in the number of infections and, in the end, programs lead to healthier and longer lives and a better quality of life.

There are the economic impacts and benefits. It is hard to imagine a disease that has had a greater economic impact in the last 20 or 30 years than HIV/AIDS on the continent of Africa. The economic costs are borne not just by the individuals in those countries where the infection rates are high, but, again, they are borne by neighboring countries, by their trading partners, and they are borne by the economies of the Western World that are called on to provide the humanitarian relief, which could be avoided if we do a better job with prevention and treatment. So there is a humanitarian cost, a public health cost, and there is an economic cost.

Finally, there is also a national security benefit to dealing more effectively with infections of HIV/AIDS and the cost of these diseases. If a public health crisis such as this is allowed to go unchecked and the economic effects are devastating, and we see weakness and collapsing economies around the world, in particular in Sub-Saharan Africa, and the subsequent collapse of civil society brings important government institutions to a halt or renders those institutions dysfunctional, then the United States and our allies will have to deal with the crisis of a failed state.