

Experts now say some areas of the country will be short of power within one or two years. Climate change is but one aspect of a looming energy crisis created by increasing demand and decreasing capacity to meet that demand.

While Wyoming's elected representatives in D.C. are sympathetic and understand these issues, many in D.C. aren't spending a lot of time on the energy supply issue. The desire to reduce greenhouse gas emissions quickly without regard to our national economy and giving short shrift to technology-driven solutions, and the growing demand for power are about to collide and form, excuse the cliché, the perfect storm.

Second, while all Americans need to start being more efficient with their energy usage, energy conservation cannot meet the nation's power needs alone. While the development of more renewable resources helps diversify and strengthen our energy supplies, they are not the silver bullet solution to climate change. We need everything we can get our hands on in the near future, just to keep the lights on, to say nothing of a long-term energy policy.

Third, to avert an energy crisis, the federal government must exercise true leadership. Without that leadership—without a sound, responsible plan—government risks not only the reliability of our electric system, but literally the ability of many Americans to be able to afford to pay their electric bill. Consumers could be paying a higher bill each month without the guarantee the lights will stay on.

Folks in Wyoming and across the country need to start a dialogue with their elected officials at every level by asking the following questions:

Balancing electricity needs and environmental goals will be difficult. How much is this effort going to increase my electric bill; what will you do to make it affordable; and in the end, will these emissions reduction goals have a global impact?

Experts say our nation's growing electricity needs will soon go well beyond what renewable energy and energy conservation and efficiency can provide. What is your plan to make sure we have the electricity we'll need in the future? What are you doing to fully fund the research required to make emissions free electric plants an affordable reality?

I encourage you to contact your representatives and senators and ask them these questions and ask they pose the same questions to their colleagues.

You don't need to be an energy expert to ask questions. You I do need to be aware you may not be able to pay your utility bill in the future, or that there might not even be a utility bill to pay! Asking questions helps find the answers to solve the problem of balancing climate change goals while keeping your electricity reliable and your bills affordable.

Right now members of Congress, as well as state elected officials, are hearing from lots of different interest groups with ideas about how to address climate change or global warming or emissions reductions, whatever you want to call it. While I write this as the Executive Director of the Wyoming Rural Electric Association, the problems we face are pretty much universal, and the one group that, to date, has been left out of the conversation is the consumer. We need a plan people can live with today while we deal with the long-term issue of balancing energy policy and environmental policy.

To make things easy there is a website to allow you, the consumer, to contact your Congressional delegation and ask them the questions mentioned above. The website www.ourenergy.coop was established by the

National Rural Electric Cooperative Association but you don't have to be a member of a co-op to ask these questions, you just have to be concerned about the approach D.C. is taking.

Policy makers far too often don't ask questions until something goes wrong. We believe it makes sense to know the answers before the laws are passed. You can help your elected officials and yourself by having this conversation.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority has 2 minutes 20 seconds remaining; therefore, the Senator from Pennsylvania is recognized.

Mr. CASEY. I know my time is limited, Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I will make sure my friend from Pennsylvania doesn't lose a second of his time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There is 1 minute 56 seconds.

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent that the Senator from Pennsylvania have 3 minutes.

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

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that morning business be closed so that I might file cloture on a motion to proceed to the speculation bill we tried to move on earlier and that once the motion is stated, the Senate return to morning business.

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

STOP EXCESSIVE ENERGY SPECULATION ACT OF 2008—MOTION TO PROCEED

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XXII, the clerk will report the motion to invoke cloture.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, hereby move to bring to a close debate on the motion to proceed to Calendar No. 882, S. 3268, the Stop Excessive Energy Speculation Act of 2008.

Harry Reid, Jeff Bingaman, Byron L. Dorgan, Christopher J. Dodd, Amy Klobuchar, John F. Kerry, Daniel K. Inouye, Patrick J. Leahy, Patty Murray, Bernard Sanders, Jack Reed, Sheldon Whitehouse, Bill Nelson, Richard Durbin, Frank R. Lautenberg, Tom Harkin, Maria Cantwell.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Pennsylvania is recognized.

(The remarks of Mr. CASEY pertaining to the introduction of S.J. Res. 44 are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alabama.

ENERGY

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, I know we are moving to the bill that deals with speculation, which is designed to bring down the price of gasoline. I think there is a bubble out there of some kind in the price of gasoline, at least I hope so. If that is so, I think we could see that bubble burst or some of the steam come out of it. I think it is something we ought to encourage.

Some of my colleagues on the Republican side of the aisle, justifiably, are concerned that we are trying to pass a law that will end the right to contract, end the right to protect yourself from rising costs, and those kinds of things. I, frankly, am not that worried about it. I think there is a danger we could overregulate the futures market. I do not think, historically, we have ever attempted to do that in any fundamental sense.

It is pretty clear, if we do not have a futures market here, one will exist in some other place in the world, as they already do today. So I guess I would say, if you can come up with a good bill that does not do any real damage, that it might help reduce speculation, I would be inclined to consider it and give it a fair shake.

But I do not believe that is the problem we have today. I believe people are speculating and driving up prices from that speculation, if it is occurring—and it probably is to some small degree—because there is a shortage of the amount of oil on the world market, that the demand is greater than supply. When the price of oil on the world market was \$20 a barrel—that was not too long ago—\$40 a barrel, if the speculators were so powerful, why didn't they drive it up then?

What happened, according to most experts, is we are consuming about 87 billion barrels of oil a year, and we are producing about 86 billion. Supply is inelastic and demand is inelastic. So when the price goes up, people do not stop using it much.

We are beginning to see about a 3-percent reduction in the American use of gasoline, after a doubling of the price. So most people would like to use less, but between their work and their family and their just needs, they have to use automobiles in this country, and they are not able to go out and sell their pickup truck or their SUV and buy some hybrid automobile this week. It would be nice, but people cannot afford to give away those things they have invested large amounts of money in.

We have done the calculations on it, and I have concluded that based on 24,000 miles traveled by a typical two-car American family per year, the increase in gasoline prices, in 1 year, means that family is paying approximately \$105 more per month—per month—than they were just 1 year ago

for the same number of gallons of gasoline.

This is after your taxes are paid, after your retirement contributions are made, after your insurance is paid, after your house payment is paid. After that, there is not that much aftertax money for the average American. They have to watch how they spend it. To have, out of the blue, in 1 year, another \$105 a month out of that paycheck is something that is a real hit to them. I believe it is impacting families significantly, individuals significantly, and it is hurting our economy also. There is no doubt about it, to my way of thinking.

There are some things we can do. I wish to be frank with my colleagues. I have been disappointed in the Democratic proposals. Some weeks ago, when we first started talking about energy, the proposals that came forth had three basic criteria—three principles.

The first one had to do with taxing oil companies. Now, I am not saying we should never tax oil companies any more than they are being paid. But if our problem is a shortage of oil—and I believe fundamentally that is the situation—to tax the people who produce it is not a way to get more of it. What you tax, you get less. What you subsidize, you get more. So that certainly is not a long-term solution to the crisis we are facing today.

Another proposal that was in the package at that time was that we would sue OPEC, we would sue the oil-producing nations that collaborate together and decide they are going to constrict the world supply of oil, therefore creating shortages, therefore driving up the price of oil, and allowing them to make even more money per gallon than they were making before.

They are doing that. They are absolutely meeting to control the production of oil, with a goal to drive up the price of oil and gas on the American consumer. In one sense, as I have said for several years, when OPEC meets, they meet to decide how much to tax the American consumer. We need a systemic, long-term strategy to confront that problem politically and any other way we can do it because it is not right what has been happening.

So production in Saudi Arabia, Venezuela, Russia, and even Mexico is down. They do not have much incentive to increase their production because the price has gone from \$40 a barrel on the world market to \$140 a barrel—now dropping maybe 10 percent in the last few days. Thank goodness we are beginning to see a little better trend. But who knows whether it will be permanent. So by reducing their production, shortages have been created, and that has spiked the prices. I am very unhappy about that.

But I am a former U.S. attorney, Federal prosecutor, as the Presiding Officer is, and I am not aware of how it is possible for the United States of America to file a lawsuit against a sovereign nation to try to order them, I

guess—what court is going to do this—to order them to produce more of the oil that is in their ground, if they do not want to produce it.

I do not think we are going to be successful on that. I think that is just talk. That is just “flapdoodle.” That is not going to work. But I tell you, it might be possible, frankly, let me say, that if we had to have a lawsuit of that kind, we would probably have a better chance of having it filed against the Congress. Maybe Senator REID would accept service because this Congress is keeping America from producing our own oil and gas offshore, onshore, in Alaska, and other places.

We have systematically passed laws and regulations that have prohibited the production of our own resources. Yet we are going to complain about some other country that does not produce? I think that is rather silly. I think the speculation matter—and I am open minded. I do not have an automatic rejection of a speculating bill. I would support, certainly, more investigators to see if there is fraud going on out there, and I suspect in some places there is. But, fundamentally, I am convinced from my study that the problem we are having is we are using more and more. China is using more and more. India is using more and more oil and gas.

I visited South America a couple years ago as a part of a congressional delegation. All those countries are growing at 6, 7, 8, 9 percent a year. They are using more and more oil and gas. So the world supply is not growing. In some of the biggest countries it is declining. As a result, we have a shortage here, and we need to develop some ideas to go forward.

We passed CAFE standards, on a bipartisan basis, that I think was a good piece of legislation. Several years before that was attempted—maybe 6 or so years ago—it was attempted, and some of us voted against it. I think perhaps a good case can be made that was a bad vote. Things were going along well at the time. The price of oil and gas was not too high, and we did not want to tell our consumers they had to have smaller automobiles and have more expensive automobiles that got better gas mileage.

But after the prices went up last year, a lot of us saw we had a crisis facing the country, and we have now passed a lot higher standards, which I think will help us, and we would have probably done better had we passed those standards some years before.

Likewise, I would note it was pretty clear, at that same time period, we were coming to a point where oil was going to become more valuable, we were going to have a crisis in the future, and many of us spoke—and I have spoken many times on this floor—about the need to produce from those great reserves in Alaska, the need to produce oil and gas off my coast of Alabama. Off the gulf coast, it is being produced safely. People go fishing

around the oil rigs. Large amounts of oil and gas are coming out of those wells. But huge portions of our gulf and both the Atlantic and Pacific coasts are totally blocked from producing.

We have hundreds of wells in the Gulf of Mexico, some of them way out there, that are producing large amounts. They have been so much better today in knowing how to prevent spills, and we have almost no spills occurring in the last 20 or 30 years. So we need to do more of that. We have had vote after vote after vote and people have blocked it.

So I say people who have been blocking more production need to do like some of us who were not supportive of the higher efficiency standard mandates on automobiles, to begin to rethink their position. I think that is happening. I do believe a lot of Members of this body are concerned about this increase in prices. They know it is hurting American citizens. They know it is taking money out of their pocketbooks. They know it is going to many of these rich Gulf States that have so much money they don't know what to do with it. They are building skyscrapers and five-star hotels and golf courses in the desert and all kinds of incredible things with our money. Seven hundred billion dollars a year is going abroad to purchase the 60 percent of the oil we import to use in our automobiles. Over half of the oil and gas in our automobiles is imported. This is not good. This is impacting our economy negatively. All things being equal, which would you rather? Have us produce oil off our coast and keep all that money at home—Alabama gets to share a little bit of the resources. This is what happens in the gulf today: The States that approve deep gulf production get 37½ percent. We passed this 2 years ago, 3 years ago, in this Congress. Twelve-and-a-half percent goes to the Land and Water Conservation Fund, a prime environmental fund of the U.S. Government, and 50 percent goes to the U.S. Treasury.

Now, some of us have read—and I think most Americans have seen with some positive feeling—that Brazil has identified what appears to be very large reserves off the coast of Brazil. We are so happy. We are happy they are in the Atlantic. We want them to produce, because that will bring on more supplies and can help bring down the price of oil, but we have our own right off our shores. Why would we prefer to send our money to Brazil by the billions and tens of billions, hundreds of billions of dollars to purchase oil when we can be keeping it all at home, helping this economy? I have to tell you, it is not in good shape.

This drain of wealth to buy foreign oil is a negative factor in this economy today and it is hurting us in ways a lot of people don't fully realize. If you are now paying, on top of your house note that you stretched yourself to be able to pay when you bought that house as a young person and now you have to

pay another \$105 for gasoline—and, in fact, according to the Cato Institute, electric bills have doubled in 5 years because of primarily increased energy costs—is that not a factor why a lot of people are not able to pay their mortgages? Well, I think it is. However, there are some who are so determined to fight fossil fuels that even though they are not able to stop the importing of oil into America that we burn in our automobiles, they have been successful in blocking America from producing its own. We do it cleaner and safer and protect the environment to a far greater degree than I would think any country in the world, except maybe the people in Europe who are doing it in the North Sea, which is a rougher, more dangerous area to produce oil than off our gulf.

I ask: How have we gotten ourselves in this predicament? When the great party—the great Democratic Party which has the majority in the Senate and a majority in the House of Representatives—is called upon to respond to a national crisis where the price of oil is surging and American pocketbooks are being drained every month, they propose the only bill we have now on the floor, which is a bill that is going to deal with speculation. I don't think that is good enough. I think it is not the fundamental values of most of our colleagues—Democratic or Republican.

I am prepared to look very hard with all of my colleagues in a bipartisan way to consider how we can produce more than just fossil fuels, more than oil and gas and coal and those things. Let's look at the biofuels. Let's look at solar. Let's look at wind. Wind is coming around. Wind is becoming more feasible today than we have seen it. The Government has a big subsidy in wind and that has encouraged the wind people to produce lots and lots of energy, but it is not the most reliable source of energy. Electricity, that is what it produces—electricity, not oil for our gasoline, for our car engines. I am prepared to consider other things.

Why have we created a system in America in which 97 percent of our automobiles burn gasoline, whereas in Europe 50 percent of the cars are diesel? We have new clean diesel technology today. Diesel engines get 35 to 40 percent better gas mileage than our gasoline engines. Can you imagine that, 35 to 40 percent better gas mileage. It is actually better. According to Popular Mechanics, it gets better gas mileage than a hybrid engine. Why don't we go back to more diesel energy and work in that way? I am seeing in my home State several facilities that are coming on line that I believe will soon prove we can take waste wood product and convert it to a liquid fuel that we can burn in our automobiles. Ethanol—or biodiesel, which is even better fuel than ethanol—and we can do it well below the world price of gasoline. I have my fingers crossed. I believe that is going to happen. I have

been looking at that closely and I have supported the efforts that will promote that.

About 5 percent of the fuel we utilize in automobiles is ethanol, which comes primarily from corn. The next step is to use wood, particularly waste wood products that are left in the woods after sawn logs are cut. Wood is taken out of cities that you have to pay to landfill and it becomes a waste product. Paper, automobile tires, all of this can be converted to fuel and maybe we can get that up to 10, 12, 15 percent of our supply on biofuels.

We are also excited about the possibility of plug-in hybrid automobiles. These are automobiles that have a hybrid engine, but you plug them in at night, you charge your battery from 11 p.m. to 5 a.m. when the grid has a low demand on it, charge your battery, and be able to drive back and forth to work. The goal is 40 miles without ever using a drop of gasoline, all electricity coming out of the grid. It is clean, more cleanly produced, more friendly to the environment, and reduces our dependence on foreign oil because our electricity is all American produced.

Finally, let me not ignore what I believe has perhaps the greatest potential for America and the world environmentally and economically, and that is nuclear power. We have 104 nuclear powerplants in America today. They produce about 20 percent of all electricity. Not a single American in the 40 years we have been producing electric power has died as a result of a nuclear accident—not one. It has continued to be more and more efficient. In fact, right now the cost is as low as any source of energy we have.

I say to my colleagues, we are getting to a point now where the lines between electricity and automobile transportation are being blurred. Energy is energy. We will be able to transform electricity into a power source to turn the wheels of our vehicles and that will be a tremendous advance. If that electricity is produced at a very cost-effective rate by nuclear power that emits not one bit of CO₂ into the atmosphere, that emits no pollutants into the atmosphere—you only have this small amount of nuclear waste that I believe should be reprocessed.

Senator DOMENICI and I have offered legislation to do that, but the amount of waste that is now being produced is still very small in size. Every bit of it in the United States can be placed on one football field and not too many feet deep. It is not a problem that can't be solved, and it doesn't blow up. You have to reprocess it or put it away from people so it doesn't damage anyone or the environment.

I think we are heading in the right direction. I believe our Nation is getting its feet on the ground. I think the American people know—they know, they are not going to be fooled; they have no misconceptions—the way to contain the growth in the price of en-

ergy is to reduce our demand by conservation and increase our supply, and it will help our economy dramatically if the increase in supply is American energy, not imported energy. Those ought to be our goals. We can do that. We can reduce CO₂. We can use more biofuels. We can use more clean nuclear power. As a result, this economy can continue to function and be the envy of the world.

I note it should never, ever be a policy of our country to drive up the price of energy. Low-cost energy is a wonderful event for the world. It is one of the great things about this Nation. We have had relatively low-cost energy for many years. I was flabbergasted when one of the Presidential candidates, Senator OBAMA, said he wasn't worried so much that the price was going up, it just went up faster than people liked. That is not what I think is good policy. Our policy should be to take the steps now. Even if they take 5, 10, or 20 years to come to a reality, that will help ensure this surge in price does not continue; that we can maintain our American independence so we are not held hostage by foreign powers, this unprecedented transfer of wealth will end, and we can fight pollution and continue to clean up our environment.

Mr. President, I thank the Chair and yield the floor.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. NELSON of Florida). The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be able to speak as in morning business for up to 15 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

GAS PRICES

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, America faces a great many challenges today, particularly with regard to our economy, but none greater than our dangerous dependence upon foreign oil.

I have come to the floor several times in the past few months to talk about what I call the “terrorism tax.” The terrorism tax is the transfer of wealth outside of this country to import billions of barrels of foreign oil. A substantial portion of American dollars spent on foreign oil goes to countries that wish to do us harm.

This year, with regard to oil prices, the terrorism tax will total \$700 billion. That \$700 billion could have been used to pay for health care, groceries, or alternative forms of domestic energy. That \$700 billion terrorism tax is more than the annual budget of the Department of Defense and is four times the annual cost of the war in Iraq.