

cared more about the hedge fund managers' ability to use offshore accounts to avoid paying taxes than they did whether we were going to solve this energy problem by making an investment in new energy. So again we had a blocked vote that prohibited us from taking action and taking our country in a new direction.

That same day we tried a second vote and again were blocked in a comprehensive effort to get oil companies to either reinvest a portion of their astronomical profits into these needed areas of infrastructure or pay the tax so we could help clean energy solutions. And you guessed it, it was also blocked and held up.

About 6 weeks ago, on June 17, there was another blocked attempt when we tried to come up with a resolution to the long overdue extensions of clean energy tax incentives. Again, a strict party-line discipline maintained a filibuster, and companies across America started to lose hope that we were going to keep this investment cycle.

The problem is, without the tax incentives every year, where we have failed to produce a coherent policy on clean energy, we have seen astronomical drops in investment. As this chart of wind energy investment shows there was a 73-percent drop in 2001 to 2002, and a 77-percent drop from 2003 to 2004, the two times Congress allowed the Production Tax Credit to expire. And this is where we have gotten in 2007—this level of investment in wind energy resources. Yet now it is collapsing right in front of us because certain Senators would not pass legislation to make continued investments and continued predictable policy that the clean energy industry can use to put up new power plants.

In fact, around this time I got a letter from a company that I think illustrates the mistake we made. It came from a solar company named Abengoa and the Arizona Public Service, a local utility company. They told me that the Senate's failure to pass clean energy tax incentives was going to lead to the cancellation of a 280-megawatt concentrating solar plant near Phoenix. That is a \$1 billion investment down the drain, and 2,000 construction jobs that will not happen, as well as 80 full-time jobs lost that would have run the plant.

So we tried many times, but they continued blocking these critical bills. The filibustering just this week just further illustrates this issue.

It is frustrating because we have even heard from those who have been in the oil industry such as T. Boone Pickens and others who say that unless we aggressively act to reduce our dependence on oil and get off of foreign petroleum, we could see, as Mr. Pickens told us at one of our Senate hearings last week, \$300-a-barrel oil.

I don't think any of my colleagues want to see that. So I hope my colleagues go home and understand that our future lies in providing opportunities to find more renewable production,

not drilling hoaxes. I hope they will quit holding clean energy hostage for the oil company executives; quit holding up the good legislation that could move our country forward.

I hope my colleagues will come back to the Senate in September with the notion in mind that reducing by 50 percent our dependence on foreign oil by accelerating the transition to plug-in electric vehicles should be our goal. That they will realize that holding up good legislation hostage for the 1 percent—the 1 percent—we might get from our Outer Continental Shelf drilling is risking our country's future.

This is the time to make the transition, and I hope my colleagues will hear that and understand it is not time to keep perpetrating hoaxes backed by and focused on by the oil companies. Rather its time to stop the politics and get serious about implementing a plan that gets our country off our dependence on oil. So I hope when we get back in September the other side of the aisle will quit holding up these critical clean energy bills and work with us to move forward on a desperately needed new energy strategy for the United States that will provide real price relief for Americans.

I thank the Presiding Officer, and I yield the floor.

RAILROAD SAFETY ENHANCEMENT ACT

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Commerce Committee be discharged from further consideration of H.R. 2095, and that the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration.

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

The clerk will report the bill by title.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 2095) to amend title 49, United States Code, to prevent railroad fatalities, injuries, and hazardous material releases, to authorize the Federal Railroad Safety Administration, and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that a Lautenberg-Smith substitute amendment, which is at the desk, be agreed to, the bill, as amended, be read a third time and passed, the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate, and any statements related to the bill be printed in the RECORD.

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

The amendment (No. 5259) was agreed to. (The amendment is printed in today's RECORD under "Text of Amendments.")

The amendment was ordered to be engrossed and the bill to be read a third time.

The bill (H.R. 2095), as amended, was read the third time and passed.

ELWOOD "BUD" LINK DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS OUTPATIENT CLINIC

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Veterans' Affairs Committee be discharged from further consideration of H.R. 2245 and that the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 2245) to designate the Department of Veterans Affairs outpatient clinic in Wenatchee, Washington, as the Elwood "Bud" Link Department of Veterans Affairs Outpatient Clinic.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the bill be read a third time, passed, the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, with no intervening action or debate, and that any statements be printed in the RECORD.

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

The bill (H.R. 2245) was ordered to a third reading, was read the third time, and passed.

SSI EXTENSION FOR ELDERLY AND DISABLED REFUGEES ACT

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Finance be discharged from further consideration of H.R. 2608 and the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 2608) to amend section 402 of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 to provide, in fiscal years 2008 through 2010, extensions of supplemental security income for refugees, asylees, and certain other humanitarian immigrants, and to amend the Internal Revenue Code to collect unemployment compensation debts resulting from fraud.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. SMITH. Mr. President, I rise to extend my appreciation that the Senate will pass the "SSI Extension for Elderly and Disabled Refugees Act." I thank Chairman BAUCUS and Senator GRASSLEY for their help in moving this important legislation to the President. This is a bill that I introduced in the Senate with Senator KOHL and it will make a significant impact in helping our most vulnerable asylees and refugees. I also want to thank Senator SPECTER for his tremendous support of this bill and help in negotiating a final package. The passage of this bill sends a message that we have not and will not turn our back on those whom we have welcomed to our country.

As many of you may know, Congress modified the Supplemental Security

Income—SSI—program to include a 7-year time limit on the receipt of benefits for refugees and asylees. To allow adequate time for asylees and refugees to become naturalized citizens, Congress provided the 7-year time limit before the expiration of SSI benefits. Unfortunately, the naturalization process often takes longer than 7 years. Applicants are required to live in the United States for a minimum of 5 years prior to applying for citizenship. In addition to that time period, their application process often can take 3 or more years before there is resolution.

Because of this time delay, many individuals are trapped in the system and faced with the loss of their SSI benefits. In fact, by the end of 2008 more than 30,000 elderly and disabled refugees will have lost their benefits and more than 19,000 are projected to lose their benefits in the coming years.

Many of these individuals are elderly refugees who fled persecution or torture in their home countries. They include Jewish refugees fleeing religious persecution in the former Soviet Union, Iraqi Kurds fleeing the Saddam Hussein regime, Cubans and Hmong people from the highlands of Laos who served on the side of the United States military during the Vietnam War. They are elderly and unable to work, and have become reliant on their SSI benefits as their primary income. To penalize them because of delays encountered through the bureaucratic process seems unjust and inappropriate.

The administration, in its fiscal year 2009 budget, acknowledged the necessity of correcting this problem by dedicating funding to extend refugee eligibility for SSI beyond the 7-year limit. This legislation builds upon those efforts by allowing an additional 2 years of benefits for elderly and disabled refugees, asylees, and other qualified humanitarian immigrants, including those whose benefits have expired in the recent past.

The Senate version requires that eligible individuals demonstrate that they are moving toward citizenship in order to gain the additional 2-year extension of benefits. While the Act provides flexibility to the Social Security Administration—SSA—and the Department of Homeland Security—DHS—in developing a procedure whereby they can verify an applicant's eligibility for the extension of benefits, it is our intent that whatever procedure SSA and DHS establish, it does not impose any undue burdens or barriers on the beneficiaries of this Act.

Additionally, the bill allows benefits to be extended for a third year for those refugees who are awaiting a decision on a pending naturalization application. These policies are limited to 2011 and are completely offset in cost by a provision that will allow the Department of Labor to recapture federal funds that are the result of unemployment insurance fraud.

I again thank my colleagues for their support of this bill and for its passage.

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Smith substitute at the desk be agreed to, the bill as amended be read a third time and passed, the title amendment be agreed to, the motion to reconsider be laid on the table, and any statements be printed in the RECORD.

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

The amendment (No. 5260) was agreed to.

(The amendment is printed in today's RECORD under "Text of Amendments.")

The amendment was ordered to be engrossed and the bill read a third time.

The bill (H.R. 2608), as amended, was read the third time and passed.

The amendment (No. 5261) was agreed to, as follows:

Amend the title so as to read; "An Act to amend section 402 of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 to provide, in fiscal years 2009 and 2011, extensions of supplemental security income for refugees, asylees, and certain other humanitarian immigrants, and to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to collect unemployment compensation debts resulting from fraud."

BRUCE W. CARTER DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS MEDICAL CENTER

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Veterans' Affairs by discharged from further consideration of H.R. 4918 and the Senate then proceed to its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 4918) to name the Department of Veterans Affairs medical center in Miami, Florida, as the "Bruce W. Carter Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center."

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the bill be read a third time and passed, the motion to reconsider be laid on the table with to intervening action or debate, and any statements be printed in the RECORD.

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

The bill (H.R. 4918) was ordered to be read a third time, was read the third time, and passed.

CHARLES L. BRIEANT, JR., FEDERAL BUILDING AND UNITED STATES COURTHOUSE

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of H.R. 6340, which was received from the House.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 6340) to designate the Federal building and United States courthouse located at 300 Quarropas Street in White Plains, New York, as the "Charles L. Brieant, Jr., Federal Building and United States Courthouse."

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the bill be read three times and passed, the motion to reconsider be laid on the table, and any statements be printed in the RECORD.

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

The bill (H.R. 6340) was ordered to be read a third time, was read the third time, and passed.

HUBBARD ACT

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of H.R. 6580, which was received from the House.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 6580) to ensure the fair treatment of a member of the Armed Forces who is discharged from the Armed Forces, at the request of the member, pursuant to the Department of Defense policy permitting the early discharge of a member who is the only surviving child in a family in which the father or mother, or one or more siblings, served in the Armed Forces and, because of hazards incident to such service, was killed, died as a result of wounds, accident, or disease, is in a captured or missing in action status, or is permanently disabled, to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to repeal the dollar limitation on contributions to funeral trusts, and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I rise in support of the Hubbard Act.

This important legislation helps our service men and women in uniform who are the "sole survivor"—only surviving child in a family in which one of their family members has died or been killed due to their military service. Under the current "sole survivor" policy of the Armed Forces, there are no standard benefits available to those who separate from the Armed Forces under this policy.

The legislation corrects a flaw, allowing sole survivors to qualify for a standard set of Federal benefits that are generally available to other veterans.

I would like to comment on the bill's other provision. Section 9 would repeal the dollar limitations on contributions to funeral trusts. In the Senate, this provision was authored by the Senator from Utah, Mr. HATCH. It has been included to offset the additional spending associated with the bill's sole survivor provisions.

As I have consistently said in the past, the Senate Finance Committee is not a piggy bank for the other committees to dip into to pay for their new