

Office and the Government Printing Office. The use of this software serves 2 major purposes: First, it allows the Senate Enrolling Clerk and the Government Printing Office to print legislation directly from our electronic files, eliminating the need to retype and proofread each file; and secondly, it allows the Secretary of the Senate, the Library of Congress, and the Government Printing Office to post legislation on the Internet in an easily searchable format.

The current version of the software contains a table tool that allows us to include tables in legislation if the tables fit into one of the templates provided in the table tool. I met this past week with the staffs of the Secretary of the Senate and the Government Printing Office and they have concluded that the table tool does not have templates that can be used to prepare all of the funding tables contained in the committee report. In fact, the Government Printing Office currently scans the funding tables as camera copy in order to print the committee report and does not convert the tables into the electronic format that would be necessary to include the tables in legislation. As a result, this Office is unable to prepare or print legislation which includes those tables.

In addition, even if templates are developed for the table tool, we will not be able to prepare the tables for inclusion in legislation unless the data in the tables can be electronically imported directly into the legislation we prepare. The committee report for the next fiscal year contains at least 180 pages of tables. Since the Office is currently unable to directly import the data in the tables, it would require our staff to spend hundreds of hours to input the data from these tables, proofread the tables for accuracy, and then make any necessary edits. We do not have sufficient staff to do this while continuing to meet our other responsibilities.

In my opinion, this is really more of an information technology issue than a legislative drafting issue. If the Senate decides to require the text of the funding tables to be included in legislation, the Government Printing Office would need to develop the necessary templates for the table tool and the Committee staff or others preparing the tables would have to conform to uniform standards for electronic formatting of the tables to ensure that the data could be imported directly into legislation.

Please let me know if I can provide you with any additional information or if you have any further questions regarding this matter.

Sincerely,

JAMES W. FRANSEN,
Legislative Counsel.

Mr. LEVIN. Now, Mr. President, I ask the Senator from Vermont the following question: whether the Senator would be willing to proceed in morning business.

Mr. SANDERS. Yes.

Mr. LEVIN. I thank the Senator.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now proceed to a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein.

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

The Senator from Vermont is recognized.

ECONOMIC POLICY

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, a little while ago Senator GRASSLEY of

Iowa was down on the floor critiquing Senator OBAMA's tax plan in some detail. Right now, I am not prepared to refute what Senator GRASSLEY said, although I strongly disagree with his conclusions. But I did wish to talk a little bit about some of the differences I perceive between Senator MCCAIN and the proposals he is bringing forth in terms of what Senator OBAMA has been talking about.

I, also, most importantly, wish to make the point—and I think Senator MCCAIN would be upfront in admitting—that if he is elected President, what we are going to be seeing is 4 more years of the policies we have seen in this country for the last 8 years, which have been a disaster for the middle class and working families of this country. I wish to spend a few moments on that.

Since President Bush has been in office, nearly 6 million middle-class Americans have slipped out of the middle class and are now in poverty. I can tell you that all over this country—in my State of Vermont but all over this country—people who used to believe they were securely in the middle class, people who looked to the future with optimism, are now lining up in front of emergency food shelves because the wages they are earning are simply not enough to sustain their families. We are seeing a run on emergency food shelves all over America from working families.

I can tell you that in Vermont and throughout the northern tier of this country, people are frightened to death about the coming winter because in many instances they simply do not have the money to pay the fuel bills which will keep their homes warm this winter.

Since George W. Bush has been in office, median household income has declined by over \$2,100 for working-age Americans. That is a huge drop.

Since President Bush has been in office, over 4 million Americans have lost their pensions. People who have worked their entire lives at a company with the expectation that when they retired there would be a defined pension plan available to them—that has not happened in 4 million instances.

Since George W. Bush has been President, 7 million Americans have lost their health insurance and the cost of health care has soared and more and more people are underinsured.

Since President Bush has been in office, more than 3 million manufacturing jobs have been lost, as corporate America has thrown people out on the street, moved to China, moved to Vietnam, moved to any country where they can pay people a few pennies an hour.

Since George W. Bush has been in office, nearly half a million jobs have been lost over the last 6 months alone, and the unemployment rate today is over 6 percent.

I ask you: Do we need to continue these economic policies which have been such a disaster for the middle

class and working families in our country? Do we need 4 more years of these disastrous economic policies?

Since George W. Bush has been President, total consumer debt has more than doubled. Everybody knows that. Everybody we know almost is in debt. We have a personal savings rate in this country today which is zero.

Since President Bush has been in office, home foreclosures are the highest on record. There are huge numbers of foreclosures all over this country. In 2007, the typical American family paid over \$1,700 more on their mortgage payments.

Is that a record, is that a series of policies that this country wants to continue for another 4 years? I think not—not for ordinary people. If you are a millionaire or a billionaire, I could understand that but certainly not for the average American family.

Since George W. Bush has been President, Americans are now paying \$2,100 more for gasoline, \$200 more for food, \$1,500 more on childcare expenses, \$1,000 more for a college education, \$350 more for health insurance, \$600 more for afterschool costs, and so forth.

The bottom line is, the Bush economic policies have been a disaster for the middle class and for working families and the only people who have benefited from these policies are the people on the top. I do not believe we need a President in Mr. MCCAIN who is going to emulate these economic policies to the detriment of tens of millions of working families.

When Bill Clinton was in office—and I have to tell you, as an Independent, I had strong disagreements with President Clinton on a number of issues, including his trade policies, but when President Clinton was in office, 22.7 million new jobs were created over that 8-year period. That is a strong record of job creation. Since President Bush has been in office, we have created fewer than 6 million new jobs. Mr. President, 22.7 million, fewer than 6 million, that is a real difference.

Under President Clinton, 6 million Americans were lifted out of poverty. That is pretty good. Under President George W. Bush, over the same period of time, 6 million Americans have slipped out of the middle class and into poverty. Under President Clinton, 6 million people rise above poverty; under President Bush, 6 million more Americans slip into poverty.

Are those the economic policies we want to continue for another 4 years? We have a national debt right now which is an incredible disgrace. It is a debt we are leaving to our kids and our grandchildren. I always find it ironic that our Republican friends pose as the party of fiscal responsibility. Yes, they are staying up nights worrying about earmarks, worrying about everything.

Under President George W. Bush, the national debt has increased by \$3 trillion. We are closing in on \$10 trillion. Under President Clinton, we had record-breaking surpluses as far as the eye could see.

I think there is a real difference between the economic policies we have seen under President Bush over the last 8 years and the economic policies we saw under President Clinton the previous 8 years. The difference is that under President Clinton, the middle class grew and expanded, poverty went down. Under President Bush, the middle class shrunk, poverty went up.

But I have to be honest. Under President Bush, there have been people who have done very well. While 90 percent of the American people have seen their incomes go down in the last 8 years, we do have to acknowledge that the people on top are not only doing well, they are doing fantastically well. As an economic stratum among the top 1 percent, those folks are doing better than at any time since the 1920s. In fact, the wealthiest 15,000 American families received a 57-percent increase in income under President Bush.

We now have—and we do not talk about it too much—the absurd situation that the top one-tenth of 1 percent earn more income than the bottom 50 percent. Now, I know a lot of folks get up here and they talk about family values and they talk about morality. Let me go on record as saying I believe it is immoral that the top one-tenth of 1 percent earn more income than the bottom 50 percent.

While the middle class shrinks and poverty increases, the average income of the top 400—top 400—American tax filers—and that represents 3 out of every 1 million taxpayers of this country—has more than doubled under President George W. Bush, going from a mere \$104 million in 2002—how do you get by on a mere \$104 million? They were scraping by. But the good news is, by 2005, that \$104 million went up to \$214 million a year.

Adding insult to injury, the effective tax rate of the richest 400 people, whose incomes are exploding, has nearly dropped in half, from 30 percent in 1995 to only 18 percent in 2005, because of the Bush tax cuts for the rich.

It is not just income; it is wealth, also. The wealth—that is the accumulated income of the richest 400 Americans—has also soared under President Bush, going from a mere—now, we are talking about 400 families. Mr. President, 400 families had an aggregate wealth of \$290 billion. When President Bush came in, their wealth was \$290 billion, and it went to \$1.5 trillion by the year 2006—\$1.5 trillion for 400 Americans, and in our country today, we have the highest rate of childhood poverty of any country on Earth. We have 46 million Americans without any health insurance.

I raise these issues to talk about what is going on in our society today economically, to point out that the policies of President George W. Bush have very clearly worked if you are a millionaire or a billionaire. They have been a disaster for you if you are in the middle class or a working person. I commend Senator MCCAIN for being

pretty honest and straightforward in saying he wants to continue those policies: more tax breaks for millionaires and billionaires, more tax breaks for the largest corporations in our country, more efforts to privatize Social Security, more efforts to cut back on programs desperately needed by working families and low-income people.

So the thrust of what I wished to say this evening—and I was compelled to come down here because I heard Senator GRASSLEY speaking before; and Senator GRASSLEY, as I indicated earlier, was very critical of Senator OBAMA's tax policies, and I disagree with Senator GRASSLEY's conclusion. But I think if one is going to talk about Senator OBAMA's tax policies, it is important to talk about Senator MCCAIN's overall economic policies which are going to be 4 more years of Bush's policies. This country—at least the middle class of this country, in my view—cannot survive 4 more years of those policies. So that is about all I wanted to say this evening.

I thank you, and I yield the floor. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. 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. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

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

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, earlier this evening, my colleague and friend from Iowa, Senator GRASSLEY, came to the floor and spoke about the tax proposals of both BARACK OBAMA, the Democratic candidate for President, and JOHN MCCAIN, the Republican candidate for President. I am happy he brought that debate to the floor. It is an important one. I think it will be an important part of the decision process for most Americans on November 4. But I, to no one's surprise, see it quite differently from my friend from Iowa.

As I see it, we have a clear choice in this election. We know what has happened over the last 8 years. Under President George W. Bush, we have followed the classic neoconservative Republican approach to the economy and taxes. That approach started long ago and continued by President George W. Bush, who believes that we can, in fact, generate more economic growth and prosperity in America by lowering the taxes on the wealthiest people in our country. That is chapter and verse, that is the Bible, the economic Bible according to President Bush and his loyal followers. They have implemented that plan, creating tax breaks which have been historic and unusual; historic in that they have now driven tax rates to the point where the wealthiest people have seen tax breaks

that are creating the largest deficits in the history of the United States of America. Last week, there were reports in Washington of a national deficit this year of \$407 billion—the largest ever.

Remember: When George W. Bush took office from the Clinton administration, he inherited a budget surplus. It was the first surplus in 30 years. It was a responsible budget process that actually paid off debt. It gave longer life to Social Security. It meant less of a burden on our children. But when President Bush took office, he changed all that. He took that surplus and squandered it. He will now leave office with the lowest approval rating in the history of the Presidency and with the biggest deficit in the history of the Presidency. He managed that because he did something no President has ever done in history. He called for cutting taxes in the midst of a war. No President has ever done it because it makes no sense. A war is an added expense to a nation such as ours. We have our ordinary expenses for highways, prisons, medical research, education, and health care, and along comes a war costing \$10 billion a month, and President George W. Bush said: Don't worry. We won't pay for the war. We will add it to the deficit and, in fact, we will cut taxes. It made no sense. Because of this desperate and poor economic and tax planning, we find ourselves with the biggest deficit in the history of the United States of America.

I say that because JOHN MCCAIN, the Senator from Arizona and Republican candidate for President, has endorsed President Bush's economic and tax policies. He has said that if he is elected President, he will continue the Bush economic policies which have driven our economy into the ditch.

We know what is going on. Last weekend, the Secretary of the Treasury, Henry Paulson, called me in Illinois and said: Well, I want to let you know it has reached the point where the taxpayers have to take over Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. Those are two government-sponsored agencies responsible for half of the mortgages in America and they were about to go bust. So Secretary Paulson moved in and said we have to take them over. I don't quarrel with his conclusion. The alternatives were bleak. If those two agencies failed, we could see our economy fall deep into a recession and a global recession following it. I really believe that. He did what he had to do. But we had to do it because the Bush economic policies have failed so miserably.

Sadly, they have taken the view that Government should not be responsible for oversight of the major elements of our economy. They have failed to keep their eye on the middle class of America, which is the strength of our economy. They have given tax breaks to the wealthiest people, and JOHN MCCAIN promises more of the same. Let me correct that. JOHN MCCAIN promises to do even more than Bush did. In fact, his proposals for tax cuts for corporations would literally mean multibillion

dollar tax cuts—additional tax cuts—for the oil companies in America. Can you think of a more deserving taxpayer than ExxonMobil? Is there any case you can think of more compelling when it comes to compassion than to give a tax break to ExxonMobil? Those poor people reporting record-breaking historic profits need a tax break.

Have you heard any suggestion from my colleagues on the Republican side or John McCain to give tax breaks to those who are struggling in America? We know who they are: middle-income taxpayers. They are the ones paying for gas and groceries. They are the ones who are worried about college education expenses. They are the ones worried about health care expenses. They are the ones who are being shunned and ignored by the McCain-Bush approach to taxes.

Senator GRASSLEY comes to the floor and says: Oh, this BARACK OBAMA, his tax plans are going to hurt small business. Well, I can stand here and tell my colleagues he is wrong—and I believe he is—but I may not be as credible as a nonpartisan group such as the Annenberg Public Policy Center. They took an analysis of the McCain tax policy, which is Bush tax policies all over again, and they took a look at Senator OBAMA's proposal, and this is what they say:

Senator McCain has repeatedly claimed that Obama would raise taxes for 23 million small business owners.

That is from the Annenberg Policy Center. Their response:

It's a false and preposterously inflated figure.

They say:

We find that the overwhelming majority of those small business owners would see no increase because they earn too little to be affected. Obama's tax proposal would raise the rates only on couples making more than \$250,000 or singles earning more than \$200,000.

They go on to say:

McCain argues that Obama's proposed increase is a job killer. He has a point. It's true that increasing taxes on those at the top would leave them less money for other purposes, including investment and hiring in the case of business owners. But the number of business owners who would see their rates go up would only be a small fraction of what McCain says. Many would see their taxes go down.

That false claim about a new burden on small businesses was repeated on the floor today by my friend and colleague from Iowa. It won't work.

At the same time they are calling for tax cuts for the wealthiest people and the most profitable corporations in America, JOHN MCCAIN, inspired by George W. Bush, is not providing the kind of tax relief which Senator OBAMA is talking about for those in middle-income categories across America.

That is the real difference. At a time when Americans are struggling with soaring costs, JOHN MCCAIN will provide more tax breaks to corporations that ship American jobs overseas, and JOHN MCCAIN would provide no direct tax relief at all for more than 100 mil-

lion middle-class families. Those are the focus of the Obama tax relief plan—those families.

JOHN MCCAIN doesn't have a plan to insure every American, and under his plan you would pay taxes on health care for the first time ever. JOHN MCCAIN wants to change the way we get health insurance in America. It gets back to the President Bush ownership society, and do we remember the motto of the Bush ownership society? "Just remember, we are all in this alone." Well, Senator MCCAIN, inspired by this concept, believes we ought to get away from group insurance through our employment and be given a little check and let's all go out in the market and do our best. Well, you know what that means. If you happen to have a family with a sick child or you happen to have a history of illness in your family, watch out. What you are going to have to pay is dramatically more. You are no longer in a pool with the risks shared; you are on your own. So JOHN MCCAIN would say if your employer then is going to provide you with health insurance, we are going to tax it. We are going to tax that as income. That is a first, and that isn't going to help. It certainly isn't going to extend health care coverage to more families—something we desperately need.

Now, what BARACK OBAMA would do as President is simplify and reform our Tax Code, and it is long overdue. In George Bush's billion-dollar giveaways to big corporations and the wealthiest in our society, the Obama plan will reform our Tax Code so that it is simple, fair, and advances opportunity, not the agenda of some lobbyist or oil company. He will shut down the loopholes in tax havens and he will use the money to help pay for middle-class tax cuts that will provide \$1,000 in tax relief to 95 percent of workers and their families across America. The Obama plan will make oil companies such as Exxon pay a tax on their windfall profits and he will use the money to help families pay for skyrocketing energy costs and other bills.

He would eliminate income taxes for retirees making less than \$50,000 a year because he believes that every senior deserves to live out their life in dignity and respect.

It just amazes me that JOHN MCCAIN could promise to bring us 4 more years of these awful Bush economic and tax policies, when we know what they have resulted in. Yet he is a loyal soldier. No maverick, no, sir; he is a loyalist. When it comes to the Bush economic and tax policies, JOHN MCCAIN is no maverick. He is an acolyte of the high priest of Republican tax policy, President George W. Bush. He promises more of the same—4 more years. Can America stand it? Can we take it? I don't think so.

Middle-income families and working families deserve a Tax Code that cares for them and gives them a fighting chance, not a Tax Code designed to

help the wealthiest. The Halls of Congress out here are filled with lobbyists, pretty well dressed, pretty well heeled, and living a nice life. Their job is to protect that Tax Code George W. Bush wrote. JOHN MCCAIN is their best friend. He promises that when he becomes President, the George W. Bush Tax Code is going to be even more generous to the wealthiest businesses and individuals. That is completely wrong.

The strength of this country is when middle-income families have a fighting chance to succeed. Do you know what they feel. They feel, as I do, that this country has been moving in the wrong direction for too long. We need a real change and in a lot of different areas but certainly when it comes to America's Tax Code.

For my friend from Iowa to come here and give us tales of doom and gloom about what might happen if we had real change in Washington, I say to him, what do you think of the current mess? Do you agree with JOHN MCCAIN that the fundamentals of this economy are so strong today? If you believe that, then you have not spent much time talking to real Americans.

During this last break in August, I went back and toured my State from top to bottom. It is a big, wonderful State. I spent some time in small towns and sat down for a get-together after work in El Paso, IL. El Paso is a little town just north of Bloomington; it is the birthplace of Bishop Fulton J. Sheen. There is a tavern we went to after work and had a beer, and we talked to some families about what they are up against. I wish JOHN MCCAIN could hear those stories. I wish my colleagues could. I wish they could understand what this economy has done to these good, hard-working people. These are folks who are scared to death that the Mitsubishi plant in Bloomington is going to ship out more jobs. They don't want any more trade agreements that ship jobs overseas. They are scared to death that we are going to have a Tax Code like the one we have today, which rewards companies for sending jobs overseas, a provision in that code that JOHN MCCAIN agrees with and Senator OBAMA disagrees with. These people are concerned about their kids' college education. One fellow said: My son just finished 2 years at a private college in Peoria, and he decided to come back home. He is going to try his luck at the community college to get on track. He said that he has \$60,000 in student loans. He is a sophomore, he hasn't even reached the point where he has a degree, but he has what amounts to a mortgage debt in student loans.

Those are the realities of life out there in real America. When I hear JOHN MCCAIN say he wants to continue these economic policies and tax policies of George W. Bush, I wonder, when is the last time he sat down with some of these families? He owes it to himself, if he wants to be a good candidate for President, to sit down with some of these struggling families.

I think we need a new approach. We need change in this town. What Senator OBAMA is proposing is a change in the Tax Code to give that family and others a fighting chance. That is all we can offer them. There is no guaranteed success, but we can offer them just an opportunity, a fighting chance at success. It is a chance most of our families have capitalized on and did a pretty good job for their kids. We owe that to the next generation as well.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SANDERS). Without objection, it is so ordered.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AWARENESS MONTH

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, today I take this opportunity to recognize October as Domestic Violence Awareness Month, DVAM, and to recognize the fine work of STAND! Against Domestic Violence.

I am proud to be an original cosponsor of the bill to designate October as "National Domestic Violence Awareness Month." I strongly support the motivation behind DVAM and I have worked to end domestic violence as long as I have been a Member of Congress. I authored the Violence Against Women Act, VAWA, while in the House of Representatives, and helped get it passed and signed into law after being elected to the Senate. VAWA toughened laws against perpetrators and continues to provide funding for campus safety, battered women's shelters, and training programs for law enforcement to identify and better understand cases of domestic violence. I am also proud to have introduced the Domestic Violence Identification and Referral Act to provide funding to schools for health professionals who work to prevent domestic violence.

Domestic violence can strike anyone, regardless of race, age, sexual orientation, religion, socioeconomic status or education level. Particularly tragic is the impact domestic violence has on children—physically, emotionally, and mentally. This violence witnessed in the home is often acted out in schools and communities. This negative cycle of violence has far-reaching impacts and I believe we must work together to prevent such violence from occurring in the first place.

I commend the tireless efforts of those who work everyday to end this violence. For over 30 years, STAND! has provided domestic violence services to families and individuals throughout Contra Costa County. Through their work, STAND! strives to end domestic violence by raising awareness through

education so that individuals will become advocates, and by providing support services to those survivors of domestic violence.

As we prepare to enter Domestic Violence Awareness Month, I ask my colleagues to join me and STAND! in remembering the victims of domestic violence. I am inspired by those women who have survived domestic violence. And I mourn those who have not survived. In their memory, I will fight against domestic violence and work to empower women as long as I am in the U.S. Senate.

SEA OTTER AWARENESS WEEK 2008

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I take this opportunity to recognize Sea Otter Awareness Week 2008.

Established in 2003 by the national nonprofit organization Defenders of Wildlife, Sea Otter Awareness Week is an annual event that aims to teach the public about the vital role that sea otters play in our marine ecosystem. Acknowledged each year by numerous nonprofit organizations, educational institutions, and local, State, and Federal elected officials, Sea Otter Awareness Week helps to protect this sentinel species and its habitat.

Historically, sea otters once numbered in the hundreds of thousands and thrived along the 6,000 miles of Pacific coastline from northern Japan, through the Aleutian Islands of Alaska, down the coast of California, and into Baja California in Mexico. Sadly, because of their thick fur, sea otters were hunted to the point of near extinction throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. Thanks to an international ban on hunting, conservation efforts, and reintroduction programs, the sea otter population is on its way to recovery, though it has been a slow process.

The health and well-being of our sea otter population is indicative of the overall health and well-being of the Pacific Coast marine ecosystems as a whole. We must do all we can to protect our coastal ecosystem and foster the survival of sentinel species such as the sea otter. To ensure a healthy coast and ocean, I am proud to have reintroduced my National Oceans Protection Act, which provides a comprehensive approach to ocean management and protection, ensuring that Americans can enjoy the beauty and majesty of our oceans for generations to come.

I commend Defenders of Wildlife and all those involved in Sea Otter Awareness Week for their dedication to raising awareness about the tremendously important role that sea otters have in our coastal ecosystem. I am inspired by their work and I applaud them for their perseverance in protecting the health of our oceans and marine life. Their commitment means a brighter future for us all.

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 energy_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:

I am writing this letter out of somewhat desperation with the costs of energy lately. We live about 35 miles south of Lewiston on property that my grandfather purchased in the early 1940s. I have been disabled and am on Social Security Disability after working over 25 years in the utility and communication industry. My wife has been working in the health care insurance business for over 20 years and drives back and forth every day to work. We were budgeting and spending about \$200-\$250 per month for gas. In the last two months, it has increased to \$425 per month! I know a little about all the oil reserves in Montana, North Dakota as well as other places even offshore and the untapped areas in Alaska for drilling and several capped oil/propane wells that have already been drilled. I am familiar about the open pit mining in Centralia, Washington; Montana and Wyoming. I was working when they moth-balled the nuclear plants at WASOP. I use these areas as examples in the Northwest because this is where I live and I am more familiar with them. We have taken several conservation measures to cut our energy costs at our home, but you can only do so much! I hardly ever even leave the house anymore because I cannot afford to drive my (small) Ford Ranger F150 pickup, just only to doctor appointments.

What can you do to start helping other Americans like us here in Idaho and the Northwest? Congress should put our families first, ahead of the environmentalists! These people are driving up costs at an alarming rate! I believe in treating our resources properly and our environment respectfully, but come on, use our heads! These environmentalists are making it impossible to survive anymore. We need to decide if American people are going to survive or is it going to be a small snail, a kind of fish or a spotted owl, which, by the way ruined the lumber industry in the Northwest. After research, they found out it was a bigger owl killing the smaller ones! How much money did that cost the people and industry brought on by environmentalists? It is survival time, folks . . . let us start using our heads. We need to start using our own resources now, not later, and stop depending on other countries because you see where that has positioned us. Open up the reserves, uncap oil wells, less restrictions on open pit coal mines, put more nuclear plants on line. Stop using wheat and corn for bio-fuels because it is killing us at