

the middle class pays a greater percentage of their income in taxes than the wealthiest 400 Americans?

It is this very small segment of our population that has made out like bandits—frankly, some of them are bandits—during the Bush administration. We have to recognize that when we talk about who is going to pay for the bailouts.

In my view, we need an emergency surtax on those at the very top in order to pay for any losses the Federal Government suffers as a result of efforts to shore up the economy. It should not be hard-working people who are trying to figure out how they are going to keep their families economically above water, people who are working longer hours for lower wages, people who have lost their health care, people who cannot afford to pay their fuel bills this winter. Those are not the people who should be asked to pay for this bailout. If there is a bailout that has to be paid for, it should be the people, the segment of society that has benefited from Bush's economic and tax policies over the last 8 years.

Before I complete my remarks, I would like to step back for a minute and examine this current crisis in the context of whom our Government represents.

What does it say about an administration that is prepared to put \$85 billion at risk to bail out AIG but fights tooth and nail against dealing with the economic crises facing working families in this country? Mr. President, \$85 billion at risk for AIG, some \$30 billion for Bear Stearns, perhaps trillions for Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. For those folks there seems to be an endless supply of money. Don't the American people deserve a Government that views their economic needs as being as important as the health of large corporations and Wall Street executives?

Since President Bush has been in office, nearly 6 million Americans have slipped out of the middle class and into poverty. What was the administration's response? Was there a bailout for those people who lost good-paying jobs and are now working for significantly lower wages? Did President Bush come and say we have to protect those kids in a society which has the highest rate of childhood poverty of any major country? Are we going to bail out those families? I didn't hear that from the White House.

Over 7 million Americans have lost their health insurance. More than 4 million Americans have lost their pensions. Over 3 million manufacturing jobs have been lost. Total consumer debt has more than doubled since President Bush has been in office. Median income for working-age Americans has gone down by over \$2,000 after inflation. Where has the Bush administration been in bailing out those families? Where has the Bush administration been in saying we are going to provide health care to all Americans? I didn't hear them come forward.

But when it is AIG, when it is Bear Stearns, my goodness, how quickly they respond. If you are a CEO of a large insurance company, they are there for you. But if you are a working mother whose kid does not have any health insurance: I am sorry, we can't afford to take care of you.

I can go on and on about the priorities established by this administration. The American people should know this President wanted to cut emergency food assistance for nearly a half million seniors, mothers, and children. He wanted to cut job training for 161,000 people and cut childcare assistance for 200,000 children. There is not enough money to take care of those people. I guess they don't make a whole lot of campaign contributions.

The President wanted to raise fees on veterans getting health care, which we, of course, stopped. He fought giving 3 million children access to health care. He wanted to cut \$1 billion from rural housing when we have a major housing crisis in rural America.

No money for children who don't have any health insurance, no money for people living in dilapidated housing, no money available for veterans health care. We can't do that. But if you are AIG, if you are a large corporation, this Government is there for you.

These people, working families, seniors, veterans, the unemployed—their problems do not warrant, apparently, an urgent response from the President. But big insurance companies, big investment houses, companies that get engaged in risky subprime lending and credit swaps, my, my, how quickly we respond to them.

The American people deserve better. We need to reject the failed economic policies and priorities of George W. Bush and JOHN MCCAIN. Americans need a Government that is not going to let the rich and large corporations loop our economy. Americans need a Government that will put regulatory firewalls back up in the financial sector and end the use of unregulated credit swaps. Americans need a Government that is going to prevent speculators from robbing them at the gas pump. Americans need a government that breaks up companies that are too big to fail. Americans need a government that is going to view their problems as seriously as they view the problems of corporate America. Our job is to give the American people that kind of government.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

PHILIP CLAPP

Mr. BINGAMAN. Mr. President, I wish to speak very briefly to express my sadness on the death of Philip Clapp, who was the president and chief executive officer of the National Environmental Trust, from its founding in 1994 until it merged with the Pew Charitable Trusts this year, and who served as the deputy managing director of the Environmental Group of the Pew Charitable Trusts.

There are few of us in the Senate who have not had contact with Philip and seen the effectiveness of his advocacy on environmental and energy issues. He formerly served on Tim Wirth's staff when Tim served as a colleague of ours in the House of Representatives.

Under his guidance, the National Environmental Trust was one of the major nongovernmental organizations that contributed to international summits and agreements on climate change-related issues.

I wish to express my condolences to his family and to his many colleagues here and abroad who will greatly miss him and his leadership on these issues.

LEGAL DRINKING AGE

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, the debate over the legal drinking age has continued for decades.

As a physician and surgeon, I have repeatedly dealt firsthand with the traumatic results of underage drinking.

Recently, a number of college presidents from across the country signed a public statement petitioning that the current legal drinking age be lowered to age 18.

I believe changing this law would pose a danger to our youth and communities.

Wyoming's First Lady, Nancy Freudenthal, wrote an important editorial addressing drinking on college campuses. It was printed in the Wyoming Tribune Eagle and the Casper Star Tribune. I believe Mrs. Freudenthal presents a compelling argument for keeping the minimum drinking age at 21.

I ask unanimous consent to have the editorial to which I referred printed in the RECORD. There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

LOWERING THE DRINKING AGE IS NOT A GOOD IDEA

(By Nancy Freudenthal)

When the leaders of our nation's institutions of higher learning have something to say, we naturally assume that it will be well-reasoned, responsible and grounded in factual evidence. That is why it was disappointing to see more than 100 college presidents and chancellors have signed on to what is now being called the Amethyst Initiative, which seeks to lower the legal drinking age from 21 to 18 because, as its proponents claim, "Twenty-one is not working."

I am very pleased the University of Wyoming has not signed on to this initiative, and in fact is addressing drinking on campus on many fronts, including "education, training, enforcement and changing the environment around alcohol use," according to Dean of Students Dave Cozzens.

By viewing this issue through the narrow lens of alcohol-related problems on campus, these college presidents are ignoring the broader societal implications of throwing in the towel on the health and well-being of our young people.

The Amethyst Initiative's solution for reducing binge drinking and preventing underage drinking is to make alcohol more readily available to young people, which will only

exacerbate the public health concern of underage drinking.

We believe that such an approach is irresponsible and would lead to more of the tragic consequences associated with underage alcohol use documented in the U.S. Surgeon General's 2007 Call to Action to Prevent and Reduce Underage Drinking.

Teen deaths and injuries, traffic accidents, physical assaults and other violent acts, risky sexual behavior, and school failure, among other potentially lifelong consequences, would increase as a result.

Lowering the drinking age also runs counter to scientific research that shows underage drinking can affect brain development, which we now know continues into the mid-to late twenties. Scientific evidence further shows that underage drinking is related to future alcohol dependence and other substance abuse.

Approximately 96 percent of alcohol-dependent adults started drinking before the age of 21.

For the past 20 plus years, so many have worked tirelessly and diligently to keep our youth and our communities safe and healthy by reducing the prevalence of alcohol use among those under 21, with the current legal drinking age limit a large part of our success.

Although we are under no illusion that problems persist, we must continue to confront them head on, vigilantly and responsibly, and resist easy efforts to turn back the clock and undo years of steady progress.

Seventy-eight percent of Americans oppose lowering the drinking age from 21 to 18, so the public gets the message.

We recognize that colleges have a tremendous problem with binge drinking.

Young people are drinking more aggressively than ever before. The solution is really about changing the culture of alcohol consumption. In many respects, we have achieved this change in culture for youth tobacco use. We must now change the culture as it relates to underage drinking.

The bottom line is children who are connected to family, community and society are less prone to drink alcohol.

It's just a shame that some college administrators didn't do their homework, and our children are the ones who would pay the price.

When children drink, America loses.

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 the e-mail address set up for this purpose 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:

The increased energy costs have had a profound effect on my ability to meet the needs of myself and my family. My oldest son broke his leg in June 2007. It was a life-threatening break, he is not healing properly and will continue to be unable to work for another six months at a minimum. The family was evicted from their home and are struggling to survive. They receive food stamps and medical assistance, but nothing else. Fortunately I have a trailer house, which they were able to move in to. I currently pay their electricity and transportation to and from medical appointments, getting groceries, etc. not to mention extracurricular activities for the children, as well as my own utilities and gasoline. I have paid nearly \$500 per month during the winter months for our electricity and am still paying over \$300 each month. My job requires me to travel daily, and I average 500 miles per week in mileage. With the excessive costs of gasoline and electricity, I am currently working 45-50 hours each week and still falling behind on my bills. I do not have credit card debt, but have a student loan I cannot pay and one other small loan. My only other debts consist of a house payment, car payment, and property taxes. I am at risk of losing my house in a year because I cannot pay the taxes. My ex-husband is threatening to take the property away because I cannot afford to pay him \$100 per month to finish buying him out. I will be 51 this month and am not in the best of health—but I do what I have to in order to provide for myself and my family. I take medication but am not able to get my prescription filled because I owe the doctor \$44 and he will not call in a new script until he is paid. That payment to the doctor is one tank of gas—that is all—and I could die, or worse have a stroke, without my medication. Something needs to change, and soon.

BARBARA, *South Central Idaho.*

I received your email asking for Idahoans' stories related to the increase in gas prices, and I appreciate that these prices are affecting everyone and that you are working to fight them. Further, I support that you fought the Warner-Lieberman bill, though probably not for the reasons that you did. However, I am writing to ask that you do, in fact, seriously consider Representative Ed Markey's new bill, "Investing in Climate Action Policy Act." While I admit that I am unsure of the impact that this bill will have on gas prices, I seriously believe that we must begin to enact bills that combat climate change. Being from Idaho, I am sure that we both appreciate the outdoors and how beautiful places like the Sawtooths and the Frank Church Wilderness are. However, I feel that the beauty that we are currently able to find here is threatened by global warming, and I entreat you to do something about it. Representative Markey's bill is a good start.

You asked about the priorities that Congress should set in resolving the oil crisis, with "increasing domestic oil production" at the top of your list. However, I do not believe that this is a reasonable option. The U.S. hit peak oil years ago, there simply is not that much more to get out of here. Also, when you think of domestic oil, please think of ANWR. Imagine if, instead of in ANWR, oil was found in the Sawtooths. Could you really, in good faith, support taking oil out of the Sawtooths?

Instead, I believe that one of the options you suggested is by far the best. There should be incentives for conservation of oil. Ultimately, the incentive will be more money in your pocket, because quite honestly, I believe the oil prices will keep going up until it becomes too expensive for people

to use so freely and they begin to conserve it in order to save money. However, a good short term idea would be to set up incentives and to invest in alternative fuels. Ultimately, we will run out of oil and I only hope that when that time comes we are prepared for it, and prepared to switch entirely to renewable energy sources.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

SAMANTHA, *Boise.*

I am married, with three young kids, ages 9, 7, and 5. I am a detective for the Ada County Sheriff's Office, and I make just over \$60,000 a year. My wife works part-time out of our house as a Pampered Chef consultant, and probably makes about \$10-15,000 per year, after taxes and deductions.

We have a strict cash budget, and have no debt except for our house. We own a 7-year-old Dodge Durango, and a 14-year-old Chevy Camaro, both gas guzzlers. We are actually in a pretty good financial position, and are blessed.

We currently budget \$100 every two weeks for fuel. This increased from about \$60 recently. Part of the increase was because we sold our Toyota Corolla (good gas mileage), and got our Camaro (not so good). However, I would blame most of the increase on the rising gas prices. (We sold the Corolla because it was our last debt that we wanted to pay off, and start over debt free.)

We are able to survive on this \$100 because we have reduced our driving dramatically. We put a lot more thought into our daily errands, etc. We have been riding our bicycles as much as possible, but only for short distances because of our young kids.

Unfortunately, all of this "thinking" about our driving limits our freedom. I have not felt this limited by fuel costs since I was in high school, and barely had a couple bucks to put in my gas tank. This past weekend I took my boys camping. I wanted to go to a favorite place I went to as a kid, but it is four hours away. Because of gas prices, I was not able to do that, and settled on CJ Strike Reservoir, which must be similar to ANWR, a mosquito paradise, so we left a day early after my son got bit 31 times.

We regular citizens are frustrated at the lack of action by our Congress. I am not an economist, but I believe the very statement by our government that we are going to begin using our own natural resources for energy, would potentially reduce gas prices. I realize that the liberals in Congress are the problem. In Idaho, we are blessed by some pretty good representatives.

I appreciate all you can do for our families. Take care, and God Bless.

MATT, *Meridian.*

You have got to be kidding!! Only \$50 more per month? My fuel bills have doubled in the last year and you only think they have gone up \$50? What world are you living in? The fact of the matter is, for a farmer in Idaho, our fuel bills have nearly doubled. My fuel bill to deliver my fish has gone from \$800 per week to over \$1500 per week.

To answer your question, I believe the CEO from Shell when he said to the Senate, the real cost of oil should be between \$35 and \$60 per barrel—all costs over and above that amount are because of government.

You do not listen, you do not know, and you pretend to care. (There are many issues that have come before Congress that have not taken the public's best interests to heart, and have caused us more expense and trouble. Among those issues are the Public Employees investment funds, domestic oil drilling, Chinese allowed to drill right off our own coast when we cannot, NAFTA, nuclear power support, devaluation of the dollar, terrorists given rights by the Supreme Court.)