

So if we bring that spirit to this priority of stabilizing our economy, I think we can move forward and have a much stronger economy. If we choose not to and choose to focus on issues that will divide us when it comes to foreclosures, I think we are going to be off on the wrong track.

INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY AND WATER COMMISSION TRAGEDY

Mr. BINGAMAN. Mr. President, I would like to take a few minutes today to express my sadness regarding the tragedy this week involving officials with the International Boundary and Water Commission, IBWC. On Monday, an airplane carrying U.S. Commissioner Carlos Marin; Mexican Commissioner Arturo Herrera; and also Jake Brisbin, Jr., Executive Director of the Rio Grande Council of Governments; and Matthew Peter Juneau, the pilot, was reported as missing when it failed to arrive at its destination of Presidio, TX. Wreckage of that aircraft was located yesterday, and it was confirmed that there were no survivors. I offer my condolences to the family members of all of the individuals who were on the aircraft.

I would like to say a few words in particular about Commissioner Marin, who I had the pleasure of working with on a range of IBWC matters in New Mexico. Commissioner Marin was appointed to his position by President Bush in December 2006 after 27 years of service to the Commission. Previous to that, he worked with the Bureau of Reclamation after receiving a bachelor's degree in civil, engineering. He took over the IBWC at a tumultuous time, and quickly gained the respect of his colleagues and employees with calm and steady leadership of the agency. He was a problem-solver, focused on the IBWC's mission, and someone who was always readily accessible to my staff and me. Recently, my staff worked with him on the management plan for the Rio Grande in southern New Mexico. Commissioner Marin was instrumental in moving this project along after an impasse of many years. We will miss his effective leadership and his warm personality. My sympathies go out to his wife Rosa and two adult children.

DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, the 2008 Defense authorization bill contains a number of provisions that I strongly support. I support a pay raise for our troops, elimination of the SBP-DIC offset—which I was pleased to vote for—and extra funding for barracks maintenance. I also strongly support the provision limiting the outsourcing of private security functions in war zones. During this time of incredible strain on the women and men serving in the Armed Forces, it is essential that we provide them the best quality of life we possibly can.

However, I voted in opposition to the bill because it contains \$70 billion to continue the war in Iraq but no language mandating that we safely redeploy our troops. Seven years after September 11, we remain bogged down in a conflict that is undermining our efforts to combat those who attacked us. We must redeploy from Iraq so that we can focus on the global threat posed by al-Qaida and its affiliates, particularly with respect to al-Qaida's safe haven in Pakistan along the Afghanistan border.

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:

My family runs a purebred cattle ranch. Two years ago, my oldest son decided he wanted to join us in the ranching business, so we doubled our cowherd and made some changes. It was a challenge to feed another family, but one we were willing to take. Last year, we had to refinance the farm to get a little breathing room, but within one year, the margin we gave ourselves by refinancing was gone with the skyrocketing cost of feed, fertilizer, and fuel—all as a result of the cost of fuel. Now our power rates have increased, also. There was not money in the budget for my son and he had to take a job in town. Now I am left with twice the work and half the help.

I have two other sons that stated recently a business installing dairy lockups. They have taken on a lot of debt for equipment and also have to support a family. Within just a few months, they have seen the rising cost of diesel eat into their business to the point that I think they will have to take out bankruptcy and try to piece their lives together afterwards. A pretty rough start for a 22-year-old newlywed and an 18-year-old. They watch their spending, but right now they are maxed out on their credit because of fuel costs and cannot even afford to get to their job sites. All our government officials need to be doing more. Absolutely open up our own oil fields. We need more refineries and more alternative fuel sources. I think hydrogen has excellent possibilities. And Idaho is an excellent source of wind. Something has got to be done and I mean now or this state will blow away.

— MIKE, *Gooding*.

Short term: gas prices, depending on how soon we can start pumping oil, let us start

drilling and refining here in the US. Same with nuclear power.

Long term: Honda just announced a new hydrogen fuel cell hybrid car that is three times as fuel efficient as the current hybrids. Will not be ready for about ten years, they say. Let us have these vehicles ready to purchase in three years, not ten. Same with electric cars. And give these businesses some kind of a [tax] break to keep the price of these vehicles down so everyone can afford to buy them, not just the movie stars in Hollywood!

— RICK.

Please put politics aside and get serious about solving the energy crisis. You are the leaders of this country. You are representing the country very poorly. I am so amazed and ashamed of the way our leaders are putting themselves before the good of the country. Our forefathers were patriots! There are a few of you that are trying to solve the energy crisis. Quit throwing road blocks in front of those people.

My husband and I are retired, and the high cost of fuel is really hurting us. We live in a small town in Idaho, and we do not have public transportation. It is not like living in a city. Everything is spread out, so we have to drive almost everywhere. We have no choice. We bought a fifth wheel and a diesel truck when we retired. We planned on taking a summer trip in our RV to the Oregon Coast, but that will not happen. We just hope that we can take our RV to Arizona this winter. We have saved all our lives for our retirement, and the energy situation is wiping out our savings.

Let us see action [to back up the words we hear from our leaders]. Get off of foreign oil and become independent. Do the right thing and plan ahead. If it takes ten years to develop domestic oil wells, then get with it. This is a serious problem that is really hurting Americans.

— LINDA, *Fruitland*.

I am concerned about the price of energy. Gas prices have gone up, and this is disconcerting and expensive. I am a mother of three and a devoted conservative. Last year we made plans to take a vacation on the Oregon coast this summer. Since we made those plans, gas prices have almost doubled. Now that we paid our deposit on the beach house, we cannot really back out, and it is still unaffordable to fly a family of five there, but we are afraid it is going to cost \$600-900 in gas just to get there. When we made our plans, we were thinking more in the \$300-400 range. But if this sounds bad, my brother and his wife who are going with us, both schoolteachers, with their six kids between the two of them (it is a blended family) will have to take two cars. So what was once a fun affordable summer vacation is now in the ridiculous range, just to get there, without food or hotel or fees for anything fun.

Why can't we drill for oil here in America? Why is our dirt so much more sacred than the dirt in the rest of the world? Let us look in our own country's wealth of resources to address this issue.

I am also highly supportive of exploring all our other resources: nuclear, water, wind, coal, etc. I know there are Native American reservations that want to build nuclear plants and they have been forbidden because of safety concerns. They should be allowed to build these plants, and I believe Americans are committed to the safety of our citizens in the process of exploring these other options. I am all for nuclear energy, with it is cost effectiveness and cleanliness.

I also believe here in Idaho we should be jumping at the chance to expand our public transportation in the form of a light-rail train. At this time of expensive gas, it would really be serving our community if we as citizens could look ahead and vote for it. I have lived in Utah and utilized their light rail (it runs full nearly every run) as well as traveled throughout Europe on their train systems. The convenience of traveling to downtown Boise from Meridian, or to BSU would be great. Not having to worry about parking or gas is wonderful. Can you imagine what this would do for the students of the valley if they could take the train to BSU? It was about four years from the time Utah voted it in until they could actually ride it. Let us begin!

Thank you for taking this issue seriously. Let us drill, let us build a train, and let us build a nuclear plant here in Idaho.

TAWNA, *Meridian*.

[Partisan policies have kept this issue from being resolved for many years.] The solution has been very obvious for a very, very long time. Simply "explain" to the oil companies that they have a choice. That is to either pay a huge windfall tax, or to immediately invest those windfall profits in new drilling in all the areas we already know we have an abundance of oil—and, by the way, process the huge supply of oil shale—if you recall, they said, "when oil gets to \$50 a barrel, it would be profitable!" Well, what have they been waiting for?!

By the way, just the mention of this will cause the price of oil to drop \$50 a barrel, if not more! But [there is too much special interest and environmentalist influence to take this simple solution.]

Plus, once you have that in place, the economy and the dollar are immediately strengthened. The next obvious step is to mandate that corn and other food stuffs will not be used for fuel, such as ethanol. There are many byproducts and non-food stuffs that are easily accessible and readily available that will produce that which is now obtained from corn. Consequently, not only will the price of gasoline, diesel and home heating fuels, etc. drop drastically, but the price of food and other products will drop back into line.

Of course, this would require that [partisanship be put aside and that small minorities and special interest groups take a back seat to the public interest.] Take action and set this country back on track and bring its economy back under control.

Like to hear from yuh . . . good luck,

BRUCE.

Gas prices have affected my family. How have we responded? We have chosen to conserve energy by driving less! We bike as much as possible, and are more mindful of when and where we choose to drive. In addition we drive relatively fuel-efficient vehicles. I disagree with the notion that we need to invade every last corner of our wonderful country in order to try to squeeze as much oil out of our domestic reserves as possible. That approach seems very short sighted to me. Clearly the heyday of cheap, readily available oil is over. Not only is oil bad for the environment, but it is not renewable. Our focus must be first on conservation. We should be focusing on increasing mass transit opportunities in Idaho and across the nation. We should also work on developing and rewarding businesses that are developing new, innovative green technologies such as electric cars. Secondly, we must be focusing on clean, renewable energy resources such as solar and wind power. But the major emphasis must be to limit the wastefulness that we have become accustomed to in this nation.

KRISTIN, *Boise*.

This has been a great concern to our family and we have wondered why there has not been more help from our government with this problem. If it were just the gas prices it might be something we could struggle through, but everything has increased in cost, much of which, I believe, is a direct result of the skyrocketing gas prices.

Our family is a blended family. We live in Rexburg, Idaho, but transfer children on two weekends to Logan, Utah, and on the other two weekends to Salt Lake City, Utah. At least this is what we are supposed to be doing. We were already spending around \$300-\$400 a month in gas before the prices jumped so high. We had to cut back our visits because we started going more and more in debt just to put gas in our car. It became a choice of securing our family relations and seeing some of our children or putting food on the table, maintaining a relationship with sons and daughters or keeping ourselves from going bankrupt. There are children we see sometimes less than once a month because of this. We cannot attend their school plays, their sports events, and have even missed their first dates and dances. There has been nothing we can do about it and it has been very emotionally painful for all of us. My last trip to Salt Lake cost \$177 in gas. It made me sick to have to spend that much just so I could see my daughter graduate, and as I sat at the pump watching the numbers climb, I knew I was just going farther into debt but I could not imagine missing that event.

Please, please keep trying to find an answer. We have fuel resources here. Why are not we using them? Yes, we need to protect the environment, but I do not think that will matter much to anyone if we cannot buy food or drive to work. I see articles all the time about cars that run on water or even air. Is this true? If it is, why are they not available to us? I believe there are answers and alternatives that do not require using our food crop to fill our cars. I do not know all the facts or have all the answers, but I do know that we cannot continue this way. It will not take long to become a bankrupt nation if we do not make some changes and fast. Thank you for trying to resolve this.

BEVERLY, *Rexburg*.

I have lived and worked as an auto mechanic in Boise for nearly 30 years. A couple of years ago I became ill and suffered some physical damage, which has forced a change in professions. I have taken some schooling and become an instructor of auto mechanics.

Finding a job as a new automotive teacher has been a challenge, as there are few opportunities scattered around the Treasure Valley. I now begin my second year of teaching for the Canyon Owyhee School Service Agency, a consortium of five small rural school districts. I am required to travel among Parma, Notus, Wilder, Marsing, and Homedale High Schools. I am proud of the students I am training, and feel that I have found a worthy role to play in the lives of our youth. The catch is that I must drive about 120 miles per day. Because only one of these schools is equipped with an actual auto shop, I must carry with me substantial weight in tools, auto parts, training devices, and I have even towed cars from time to time.

My transition to teaching may seem like a logical move for a man in my physical situation, but it has cut my income considerably. I also carry the burden of residual medical bills and the cost of the continuing education required for my teaching credentials. I do receive a small mileage allowance, for miles driven within the district, but those are about half of the miles I drive. (Miles to and from my home in Boise are excluded.)

Obviously, rising fuel and maintenance costs have substantially contributed to economic hardship as I struggle to rebuild some kind of a career. Fuel has risen in price more than eighty cents per gallon throughout this past school year, so I now must pay about \$14 each day, out of pocket, for my daily commute. I fear that between the real issues of an inadequate teaching salary and skyrocketing fuel costs, despite my efforts to remain a productive citizen, I will be forced out of my home, or even into unemployment lines.

KELLY, *Boise*.

My family and I have been affected in surprising ways by the increase in oil prices. We have always tried to be careful and conservative in our use of all of our country's resources and oil and gas are no exception. So it was a surprise to us that when our car's gas price went up above \$4 per gallon, we were suddenly more thoughtful about how and when we drive the car. We had thought we were as conservative as we could comfortably be with the amount we drove the cars, but it turns out that, overnight, we thought of many ways and times that we could leave the car in the garage and take the bus or ride a bike or even combine multiple trips into one weekly trip. It is only been a short time that the change has occurred and it has been in the summer time that offers many options. However, we are very pleased with the changes and are even considering getting rid of one of our cars as it they are both now sitting in the garage so much of the time.

I hope that this state and nation takes on the challenge of giving greater and greater incentives to alternative/renewable energy production and that we can work toward reducing greenhouse gases that this country is producing at such high rates. We are a country full of creative citizens and technological skills. I hope that we can start being a leader in this area rather than the most slow of followers. I know that this has not been your perspective but I hope that you can see the advantages to our citizens and growing technological community in supporting future climate change incentive and deceptive bills.

ELIZABETH.

I now have a choice—medicine or gas, doctor appointment or gas; I cannot afford both, health or gas. Guess I could go on welfare and live off of the state. I drive ten miles to work, my husband drives 30 miles (both one way). We could move, but try to sell a house in this economy. So the middle class is out of luck again. Please do something.

JO.

Since the fuel price increases have become a part of my day-to-day concerns, I have observed a \$240 increase in my monthly spending in fuel for my vehicle. I only use my vehicle to go to work. I buy groceries within two miles of my work place, and that is the extent of my driving. My groceries are running about 40% higher, but I am sure that it something to do with using our tax dollars to subsidize the corn growers to build the ethanol plants what are of no significant value other than to help someone's friend make money and secure their job. But I digress; the subject is the fuel pricing and how it affects me. In the past, I would commute to Boise once a week and enjoy a dinner out because there are no restaurants in Mt Home that [I enjoy], but that, too, has past because of the fuel pricing. I am sure there are others in the same situation, and it must be hurting the restaurants and all other businesses in that area because we are dedicating our money to the rising fuel costs. Nevertheless, I will go on cutting my spending to accommodate the rising fuel costs until something

better comes along. No! I will not get rid of my Ford F-150 because I am a tall person and require the leg and head room. I know that comes at a price but I would rather do that than to sacrifice the comfort.

STEPHEN, *Mountain Home AFB.*

TRIBUTE TO THE POLYNESIAN VOYAGING SOCIETY

Mr. INOUE. Mr. President, today I would like to recognize the Polynesian Voyaging Society. For more than a quarter century, members of the Polynesian Voyaging Society have dedicated much of their lives to voyages of exploration and discovery that have retraced every major migratory route of the ancient Polynesians. These voyages are not recreational but rather journeys that illustrate the scientific prowess of the Polynesian people and the strong connection between science and culture. Their commitment to the legacy of oceanic exploration seeks to integrate traditional voyaging into quality education. The Polynesian Voyaging Society has renewed interest in maritime exploration and reawakened Native Hawaiian pride in environmental awareness and ocean stewardship.

In today's age of modern technology, much can be learned from the past. Hawaii's past and future will always be intimately tied to the ocean for recreation, commerce, and transportation. The society exemplifies the importance of raising awareness of and protecting the unique treasures Hawaii's culture offers, and serves to enlighten a new generation of young people. Its members are truly a testament to Hawaii's oceanic heritage.

PROTECTION FROM CHILD PREDATORS

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, today I joined as a cosponsor of two bills to protect children: S. 1738, the Combating Child Exploitation Act; and S. 519, the Securing Adolescents from Exploitation-Online—SAFE—Act.

I am cosponsoring S. 1738 to signal my support for this bipartisan effort to create a nationwide network of highly trained law enforcement experts to track down and prosecute child predators who exploit children, but it is my hope that Congress would enact the modified version of this legislation that was included in bills separately introduced by the majority leader—S. 3297—and Senator COBURN—S. 3344.

Unfortunately, both bills have been held up by partisan gridlock despite widespread support on both sides of the aisle. In fact, the House version of the SAFE Act—H.R. 3791—passed the House of Representatives by a vote of 409-2 in December 2007. That is why I believe that both bills H.R. 3791 and the modified version of S. 1738 could pass by unanimous consent if they were called up and passed together.

It is time to stop playing politics, bring these bills to the Senate floor

and let the Senate approve them. Child exploitation is too important a problem to get caught up in partisan politics. I urge the majority leader to call up and pass these two bills without delay, and without either being attached to other legislation that could prevent them from becoming law.

I can't think of a more bipartisan step for the Senate to take this month than ending this impasse and passing these two worthwhile bills to protect children.

RED RIBBON WEEK

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I am pleased to join my colleague, Senator MURKOWSKI, in cosponsoring a resolution commemorating Red Ribbon Week. Red Ribbon Week, observed October 23-31, encourages individuals, families, and communities to take a stand against alcohol, tobacco and illegal drug abuse. During this week, students all over the country pledge to live drug and alcohol free.

The tradition of Red Ribbon Week, now in its 23rd year of wearing and displaying red ribbons, started following the assassination of U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration Special Agent Enrique "Kiki" Camarena. In an effort to honor his memory and unite in the battle against drug crime and abuse, friends, neighbors, and students from his home town of Calexico, CA, began wearing red ribbons. Shortly thereafter, the National Family Partnership took the celebration nationwide. Since then, the Red Ribbon campaign has reached millions of children, families, and communities across the country, spreading the message about the destructive effects of drugs.

In my State of Iowa, the theme for Red Ribbon Week is "Ask me, See me, Be me . . . I'm Drug Free." Schools and community groups across the State are organizing a variety of activities including pledges, contests, workshops, rallies, theatrical and musical performances. These events are all designed to educate our children on the negative effects of drugs and to promote a drug-free environment.

Research tells us that the longer children stay drug-free, the less likely they will become addicted or even try illegal drugs. This is why it is so important to maintain a coherent anti-drug message that begins early in adolescence and continues throughout the growing years. Such an effort must involve parents, communities, and young people. Red Ribbon Week provides each of us the opportunity to take a stand by helping our children make the right decisions when it comes to drugs.

In light of the growing epidemic of prescription drug and cold medicine abuse throughout the Nation, this year's Red Ribbon Week holds greater importance. I hope my colleagues will join me in passing this resolution to demonstrate our commitment to raising awareness about drugs and encourage everyone to make healthy choices.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

CONGRATULATING COASTAL WINDOWS, INC.

• Mr. AKAKA. Mr. President, I want to take this opportunity to congratulate the owners and employees of Coastal Windows, Inc., a family owned and operated business on Oahu and one of this year's recipients of the 2008 Freedom Awards presented by the Secretary of Defense and the National Committee for Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve.

Coastal Windows began their business in response to Hawaii's need for windows and doors that could endure the harsh environmental climate of the State's Sun, wind, rain, and salt air. They have been in operation for nearly 20 years and in that time have grown to an organization consisting of 62 employees. They are known for treating their employees as part of their "ohana" or family and are proud members of the community.

The manner in which they take care of their employees who also serve in our Nation's Armed Forces should inspire all of us here in Congress and across this Nation. Take for example their employee U.S. Army sergeant Mike Echiverri, who is about to be deployed for the third time as a member of the National Guard. During his absence, Coastal Windows maintains all his benefits, including health, dental, vision, and his retirement plans. He also continues to earn sick leave and vacation time, and he is given additional time off to spend with his family before and after each deployment. Coastal Windows also often sends care packages to deployed employees and maintains regular communication via e-mail. The company also extends its support to family members of deployed employees by staying in constant contact with the family members and ensuring that spouses are invited to social events.

Coastal Windows became actively involved with the Department of Defense's Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve, ESGR, program after its vice president, Bob Barrett, learned of the organization's efforts to promote cooperation and understanding between Reserve members and their civilian employers. Mr. Barrett became an ESGR employer outreach volunteer and works with ESGR Hawaii to educate employers about the benefits of hiring Guard and Reserve members. Coastal Windows also supports the military community by participating in activities like the Marine Corps' Toys for Tots program.

As 1 of only 15 companies nationwide to receive this honor, I congratulate Coastal Windows, and Mr. Bob Barrett in particular, for their dedication to their workers and for their selection as a Freedom Award recipient for 2008. They have set the standard in Hawaii as an example of how the community can take care of our soldiers, sailors,