

The bill would also provide significant and much-needed additional funding for public corruption enforcement. Since September 11, 2001, Federal Bureau of Investigation, FBI, resources have been shifted away from the pursuit of white collar crime to counterterrorism. FBI Director Mueller has said recently that public corruption is now among the FBI's top investigative priorities, but a September 2005 report by the Department of Justice inspector general found that, from 2000 to 2004, there was an overall reduction in public corruption matters handled by the FBI. More recently, a study by the research group Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse found that the prosecution of all kinds of white collar crimes is down 27 percent since 2000, and official corruption cases have dropped in the same period by 14 percent. The Wall Street Journal reported recently that the investigation of a Federal elected official stalled for 6 months because the investigating U.S. Attorney's Office could not afford to replace the prosecutor who had previously handled the case.

We must reverse this trend and make sure that law enforcement has the tools and the funding it needs to address serious and corrosive crimes occurring right here at home. Efforts to combat terrorism and official corruption are not mutually exclusive. A bribed customs official who allows a terrorist to smuggle a dirty bomb into our country, or a corrupt consular officer who illegally supplies U.S. entry visas to would-be terrorists, can cause grave harm to our national security.

This bill goes further by amending several key statutes to broaden their application in corruption and fraud contexts. This series of fixes will prevent corrupt public officials and their accomplices from evading or defeating prosecution based on existing legal ambiguities. For example, the bill includes a fix to the gratuities statute that makes clear that public officials may not accept anything of value, other than what is permitted by existing regulations, given to them because of their official position.

The bill also appropriately expands the definition of what it means for a public official to perform an "official act" for the purposes of the bribery statute and closes several other gaps in current law.

Finally, the bill raises the statutory maximum penalties for several laws dealing with official misconduct, including theft of government property and bribery. These increases reflect the serious and corrosive nature of these crimes, and would harmonize the punishment for these crimes with other similar statutes.

This bipartisan bill is supported by the Department of Justice and by a wide array of public interest groups that have long advocated for vigorous enforcement of our fraud and public corruption laws, including the Campaign Legal Center, Common Cause,

Democracy 21, the League of Women Voters, Public Citizen, and U.S. PIRG.

If we are serious about addressing the kinds of egregious misconduct that we have recently witnessed in high-profile public corruption cases, Congress must enact meaningful legislation to give investigators and prosecutors the tools and resources they need to enforce our laws. Passing last year's ethics and lobbying reform bill was a step in the right direction. But we must finish the job by strengthening the criminal law to enable Federal investigators and prosecutors to bring those who undermine the public trust to justice. I am disappointed that Republican objections have prevented the full Senate from passing this critical bill. I ask those Republican Senators who are objecting to proceeding to this anticorruption legislation and to passing it to please reconsider before it is too late. Let us join together in taking bipartisan action.

ECONOMIC STIMULUS

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, these are very difficult times for the American economy and America's working families. For most of the past 2 weeks, the headlines have been dominated by news of Wall Street's financial meltdown. But our Nation's economic woes stretch far beyond financial institutions.

The American people are watching the fluctuations in the stock market; they see investment banks failing and the values of their own 401(k) accounts and money market funds decline. Gas is still hovering near \$4 a gallon, their grocery and heating bills continue to skyrocket, and yet their wages remain stagnant. Millions of families do not know how they will make ends meet this winter. While they believe that something must be done to fix the problems in the credit markets, they need and expect us to help them too.

It has been a week since the President sent to Capitol Hill a three-page bill asking for unprecedented authority to increase the American people's debt even further—to \$11.3 trillion—and to use that money solely to purchase troubled assets from failing financial institutions, while demanding no accountability from their executives. It is no surprise that the American people have solidly rejected that plan. Bewildered, they ask Congress, "Where is the help for my family, for my community?"

This week bipartisan efforts on the bailout continue in the Senate and House. We are working to craft a responsible plan to guarantee strong oversight of the system that created this disaster, limit exorbitant executive compensation and bonuses on Wall Street, and restore confidence in our markets. But we also recognize that much more must be done.

Senate Majority Leader REID and Appropriations Chairman BYRD have developed a thoughtful, comprehensive

package that will begin to help our entire Nation recover. Regrettably, yesterday 42 Republicans rejected efforts to provide help beyond Wall Street. By voting against the motion to proceed, they denied the Senate the opportunity to even debate a plan for Americans' personal economic recovery.

The most recent statistics on employment and inflation reveal why their choice was wrong and why an immediate and forceful response is needed.

The unemployment rate stands at 6.1 percent the highest rate since September 2003. This bill would have extended unemployment benefits by 7 weeks for all States and by an additional 13 weeks in high unemployment States, and it would have provided \$300 million for employment and training activities for dislocated workers. These funds would have helped more than 79,000 people receive training, and job search and career counseling.

Over the past 2 years, food costs have increased by nearly 15 percent. This bill would provide an additional \$50 million for food banks and \$60 million for senior meals program, increase food stamp benefits by 10 percent and add \$450 million for the WIC Program.

Energy prices are up by nearly 40 percent in the past 2 years. This bill would have added \$5.1 billion for low-income home energy assistance programs and \$500 million to help make low-income homes for energy efficient through weatherization.

The majority of State governments are in dire economic straits. My home State of Maryland faces a \$1 billion shortfall for the next fiscal year, and cuts in programs and services are already being planned. This bill would have boosted state coffers by providing a 4-percent increase in Federal help for State health care programs and \$1.2 billion extra for the National Institutes of Health, NIH, headquartered in Bethesda, MD. This bill would have allowed NIH to award 3,300 new research grants to help discover new treatments and cures for devastating diseases.

Foreclosure rates are at the highest in our country's history and home values are plummeting. This bill included \$37.5 million for the Legal Services Corporation to help families whose homes are in foreclosure, \$52 million for the FHA to bolster its staff and resources to ensure that its mortgage fund remains solvent, \$250 million to help public housing agencies rehabilitate vacant rental units, and \$200 million to help families in rental housing who are displaced by foreclosure find safe, affordable places to live.

The Wall Street meltdown has vastly reduced the availability of credit for our small businesses and endangered the survival of many businesses. This bill would have provided \$200 million to support reduced-fee loans to small businesses and \$5 million to support microloans.

The defeat of the cloture vote today truly represents a missed opportunity

to answer Americans' call for aid. I want to commend Majority Leader REID and Chairman BYRD for their work in crafting this much needed bill. I would hope that before this Congress adjourns, we will have the opportunity to debate and pass this necessary measure.

RACIAL INTIMIDATION

Mr. SMITH. Mr. President, I come to the floor today to speak about a recent act of hate and intimidation in my home State of Oregon.

On Tuesday morning, September 23, 2008, the custodial crew at George Fox University found a life-size cardboard cutout of Senator BARACK OBAMA hung by fishing wire from a tree on the campus. Attached to the cutout was a sign that read, "Act Six reject." George Fox is a Christian university of 1,800 undergraduate students in Newberg, OR. In an effort to expand diversity on campus, George Fox instituted a university scholarship program—Act Six—that provides full scholarships to students chosen for their leadership potential from Portland high schools. While not a requirement, many of the recipients are from a minority group.

Sadly, this crude and incendiary act of racial intimidation highlights our continued need to address the issue of civil rights in our country as racism still lurks in many dark corners of our Nation. Hate crimes and acts of racial intimidation seek to marginalize entire groups of Americans—and it simply cannot be tolerated in a democratic society.

The freedom and opportunities in the United States are the envy of the world. And while our Nation has made significant strides in protecting minority groups, the recent event at George Fox is a reminder that the civil rights struggle remains far from finished.

I praise the actions of George Fox President Robin Baker for acting quickly to unite the campus in expressing outrage to the act, and in urging students to show that the incident has no place in our society.

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 well over 1,000, are heartbreaking and touching. To respect their efforts, I am submitting every e-mail sent to me through an address set up specifically 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:

Instead of getting out the state crying towel and airing a lot of sob stories about how people are suffering from high energy prices, why does not Congress start a meaningful course toward reducing oil prices by doing the following:

1. Open some of the areas of known oil reserves that have been placed "off limits" by irrational environmentalists bent on destroying this nation's economy (it is working, by the way) and encourage drilling in such places as the ANWAR, the known oil and coal fields in southern Utah, drilling off the western coast of California (let the bastards look at the Sierra Nevadas for scenery if they do not believe they'll like what they see with national security pouring from offshore rigs);

2. Encourage and authorize the construction of more refineries and decentralize them so that natural disasters (like Katrina) will not do irreparable damage to the oil supply system of this nation;

3. Hasten the construction of new nuclear reactors, even breeder reactors, for the safe and clean production of electricity. There are plenty of open, remote areas in Idaho, Nevada, Wyoming, Montana and Oregon to place several high-capacity nuclear reactors which would offer a significant bolster to power production and release oil for gasoline and diesel production instead of powering filthy gas-guzzling electricity generation plants;

4. And lastly, but not least, trash the ill-conceived corn-fed ethanol generation plan. What makes sense about using 1.2 gallons of energy to produce a single gallon of ethanol? Which idiots in your no longer august institution bought into that lunacy?

ROBERT.

It seems the Senate and Congress have done nothing to help Americans when our way of life is being downgraded by high fuel, taxes, groceries and many other things. It seems the only thing they can pass is a pay raise for them, if their work performance was what a pay raise was based on, they would not have had one for decades. They would be fired at any other job. There should not be one power plant in our country using oil to make electricity. There should be a tax credit and time limit on every household that heats with oil to convert to electricity or something else. Why do we allow the cost of natural gas and propane to climb along with oil when we do have plenty of supplies? There are so many things broken in our country while the Congress and Senate do nothing that I wonder if there will be an America in 20 years.

BARRY.

Hardest hit are Idahoans who have to drive to work every day in order to pay their bills, provide for their families and pay their taxes, and I feel sorry for them. Not far behind are senior citizens trying to make ends meet. I worked 34 years with one company, for which I am paid a modest monthly pension. That pension has not changed since my retirement in 1980. And you know what has happened to the cost of living since then. "Skyrocketed" would be a close one-word definition. I am fortunate that I do not have to drive every day, but I do have to drive to the doctor's office, to the grocery store, to the pharmacy. I have cut out all pleasure travel to such favorites as Cascade, McCall and Sun Valley. Can no longer afford air travel. I now

pay three times what I once paid for gasoline, and that increase has to come from somewhere, right? It comes out of the grocery money, prescription drug costs, and living expenses, which are also on the rise.

I am sadly disappointed in our government for allowing the U.S. to become dependent on Middle Eastern countries for our most of our energy needs. Now we are at their mercy, and they are not big on mercy, as we have found out. Everybody saw this coming, but nobody did anything about it. Big food distributors could have and should have decentralized long ago. Instead of wasting money on ethanol, windmills, and finger-pointing, our government should have been busy solving its problems. It should have opened the way to real alternate energy sources (including nuclear). It should have allowed, even encouraged, more refineries. It should have allowed, even encouraged, the tapping of our vast oil reserves. (If the intent was to save it for a rainy day—that day is unquestionably here.) And it should have pursued ways of discouraging wasteful uses of energy.

I can remember the day when Japan copied our inventions. Now Japan has taken the lead in research and development. They are acting responsibly. They are on their way to mass producing a vehicle that will run (really!) on nothing but water. What ever happened to our Yankee ingenuity? Why did not Detroit think of this first?

WILLARD, Boise.

Because of rising energy costs, we have been driving less, biking more. We have started to implement changes to our business whereby we will use less fossil fuel overall. (My husband and I are artists who use a propane-fired furnace to produce our work.) We are marketing our artwork more locally instead of nationally because of high shipping costs. We are considering building a greenhouse to grow some of our own food and have joined a Community Supported Farm.

I do support diversifying our energy sources, especially wind, and solar and some hydropower. I also support programs that would encourage conservation and teach people about the real costs (war and pollution, to name a few) of our energy consumption. In addition, I would especially support any programs that include public transportation as a priority; yes, even in Idaho. We have public transportation over Teton Pass and in Jackson, Wyoming, and it is widely used and appreciated. There are also private shuttles that operate bringing people from southeast Idaho to the Salt Lake City airport. They are very reasonable and also widely used. I also support any legislation which can encourage the development and production of truly energy efficient vehicles, some kind of tax break for those who buy them for instance.

I do not support drilling for oil in some of our most pristine areas which support rare wildlife. Once these areas are destroyed or heavily impacted, they are gone forever. I do not trust that mining in these areas would be done in an environmentally conscious way. There is very little mining that is done consciously.

I think the overall emphasis needs to be using less, rather than finding more oil. It is, after all, a finite resource. We have essentially been living on borrowed time with regards to our consumption.

MARY, Driggs.

We seem to be worry about just the cost of gas, but it is going to affect everything we do, buy and consume. I am a single man and on a tight budget. I am aware of what things cost. I have even been seeing the cost of groceries starting to inch up. Eventually everything will go up in price and we in the US are