

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

going to find ourselves not able to live as we have for so many years. Spending will stop, businesses will cut back or even close their doors, unemployment will go up and we will be just like any Third World country with its people literally starving to death. We the people of the United States have a false hope that government will come to the rescue. I would hope so but, Mr. Crapo, I do not think you have the power any more to do so. I hope and pray that Congress are on their knees humbling yourselves and getting help and direction from above.

A concerned citizen,

MAC.

I do not support increasing gas supplies. If our politicians weren't so short-sighted, we would have plenty for our needs.

Why do you suppose that Idahoans drive so much? Because we have no mass transit! If you really want to help your constituents, get them out of their cars.

I have an 18-year-old son who is planning to attend BSU next year. We live right here in Boise, and it is inexcusable that he will not be able to rely on our bus system to get to campus. What if he has a night class? What if he needs to be on campus on Sunday for study? What if he has a date and they would like to go out to the mall for a movie or to hang out with friends?

Wake up, Mr. Crapo—Idaho needs smart leaders who will make us energy independent and it can start with a real transit system. Oh, and how about some real incentives to get us off of oil? Like tax credits for solar so the average homeowner could actually afford it? Like major incentives for businesses that support telecommuting? How about tax cuts for innovations like fuel cells and electric vehicles?

SUSAN.

The biggest group to blame about high energy prices, Mr. Crapo, is you and your colleagues in the United States Congress. Congress has put this country in a hole that it quite possible can never dig itself out of. The unfriendly energy legislation that has been passed over the years is unbelievable. You (Congress) have put the U.S. in a great security risk, with our dependence on foreign countries for our energy needs. Shame on you all. France of all countries gets roughly 80% of its power from nuclear energy. Germany plans on building 27 new coal fire plants by 2020. Yet, due to poor planning by the U.S. government, those types of plants have absolutely no chance of getting built in the U.S. today. The other powers in the world are just sitting back and watching us crumble from within. The Energy policy or lack there of is dandy; you push ethanol so now not only do we pay high prices for gas; we pay high prices for food products. When was the last time a refinery was built? The headaches the U.S. government has put in place make it impossible to build one. Why should an oil company build one here when they can do it in another country for less hassle?

The average American is getting killed by high energy prices and what has been done by Congress to help? Absolutely nothing. You sit in Washington and bicker back and forth like children. When will Congress realize that if you do not take action soon it will be too late? You need to absolutely treat this as a national security threat. Why aren't we pushing for hydrogen technology? Car makers have cars ready but the infrastructure is not in place. We will spend \$100 billion in Iraq, but that money is better spent in our own country building our hydrogen infrastructure. Good job again boys! When are you going to make our country the priority? Obviously hydrogen technology is

not the only answer. We need legislation to promote energy independence not legislation that hinders it.

Everyone can see what our future looks like under the current trend. You are putting my children's future in jeopardy with inaction. How does it feel knowing that your generation is responsible for the destruction of the greatest country in the history of the world?

DAN.

I lived in rural Idaho and enjoyed a wonderful place out in the Lake Lowell area. We had a park-like setting out in the country with farm fields all around us. It was quiet and peaceful, a great place to raise the kids. The drawbacks were becoming too detrimental to overcome. Along with all the advantages to living out there, the disadvantages started to add up. They were not disadvantages until we got into a stupid war with the Middle East. We have had one after another setback with the refineries due to natural occurrences and "scheduled maintenance" taking the refineries offline. I lived five miles to the closest grocery store, so I would call my wife every day before returning home to combine a trip. The kids had to go seven miles one way to school (my wife does not trust the bus companies since they do not offer seatbelts (another hard thing to take—the seatbelt law). I rode the commuter bus from Nampa into Boise. It was very inconvenient; I had to drive a ways to catch any buses, and then they only operate during a two-hour window in the AM and the PM.

I ended up selling my house, moving to Boise and eliminating my commute. We rarely drive any more. It is not that we cannot now afford it, but things are close enough to reach by walking. It certainly is not because we improved our public transportation situation. I still have to walk a quarter-mile to the closest bus stop, and I live on Curtis Road between Northview and Fairview. The problem with this bus system is the lack of it. When I was commuting, I had extensive contact with the management and people involved in public transportation, trying to understand it. Literally, nobody knew what was going on outside of the level they worked, up or down, within any aspect of that operation. I could go on and on the issues I raised with them, offering ways to increase funding, ridership, the like. All shot down with excuses. I had even contacted the County Commissioners, the City Commissioners. Nothing but excuses. Idaho does not want to fix it, and they will not. It will take a major commitment by City, County, and State officials. They even fought about who had the right to widen Ustick Road. The County and the State fighting over territory (ridiculous).

My thoughts and comments may not appear too concise, but I have fought this fight and met resistance and stupidity on every level trying to make it better. I ask the questions and get ridiculous answers. They forward my emails around commenting to each other, "I am glad this was not directed at me!" Very frustrating, but if you can do anything about public transportation, [I would appreciate it].

JAMES.

I would like to express my concerns regarding energy prices. I live in a rural community in southeast Idaho where everything is miles away. We have to drive a minimum of 20 miles each way to just get to the grocery store and back. As there is no industry in our area, I also commute over 120 miles round trip to work every day. The housing market in rural Idaho is also depressed, which precludes me from selling to move closer to work. In addition, since the food at

the store needs to be trucked a long way; the cost of diesel is being passed through as increased prices in the store upping our food bill. The cost of our gas is up over \$100 per month compared to last year making a severe impact on our family's budget, leaving little extra for other purchases.

In addition to this, we have to heat with propane as that and electricity is the only sources of heat available. Our propane bill to heat our home this last winter was approximately \$2,800 as the price of propane has increased dramatically. That is close to a \$1,000 more than the previous year, even with the thermostat set at 69 degrees. I have considered purchasing electric heaters instead of using my propane forced air furnace (which is only 5 years old and quite efficient). However, with the loss of the BPA credit on our power bills and the talk of 25-45% increases in electricity cost, I am not sure this will help very much.

I would like to respectfully suggest that you as members of the Senate look at ways to provide some relief to those of us in the West where long distances prohibit other means of getting around other than driving. I would respectfully suggest that legislation be presented that would remove some of the environmental restrictions so the oil companies can increase their refining capabilities and be allowed to drill in areas with known oil reserves which would increase supply, reduce costs and dependence on foreign sources of oil. This would be only a short-term fix and I would suggest that the Senate also look at increasing funding for research or incentives to encourage development of alternative sources of energy that will reduce the need to rely on oil (i.e. nuclear energy, wind and solar power, increasing hydro power generation, hydrogen fuel cell technology, synthetic fuel production from coal, methane generators utilizing the methane from old landfills, etc.).

With the demand from China and other rapidly developing countries continuing to climb which reduces supplies of oil available for us, this problem is going to continue to escalate exponentially. We are already behind the curve and, even if we act quickly, the problem is still years away from improving. The time for sitting on our hands is past. We need to act quickly to protect our countries way of life, economy, defense, and to make sure our kids have the energy resources they need in the future.

TOM, Clifton.

I am not telling you something that you do not already know. Our country, including Idaho, is very dependent on transportation for survival. Most everything we sell needs to move out of Idaho and everything we use needs to be brought in, and we pay the freight both ways. When the transportation system collapses due to high fuel costs, the economy will collapse also. We need to get our act together and develop our own oil reserves and refineries, if it is not too late. We need to develop nuclear power, if it is not too late. Our crisis is real, and it seems that Washington is just sitting around waiting. Our food supply is a national security issue and energy is the cornerstone of everything is enjoyed and need.

Thanks for all you do,

RALPH, Island Park.

We are all affected because of the inaction or our elected representatives. There have been no efforts to correct our dependence on oil from others. The same with our drug costs!!! We have been sold out to the chemicals Companies in this country; there is no way that they should be so high. We must go to Mexico, Canada and India to get our meds. Do something please about these problems.

Because of the greedy, this country is going to socialism.

MARLIN.

I have to put almost all of my gas purchases on my credit cards because of the huge increase in costs. This has greatly increased my credit card debt, and continues to increase my payments on my credit cards, with no end in sight. I am not getting any pay raises at work due to economy, and my wife has taken extra jobs to help make ends meet yet we are still falling behind. I owed next to zero on my credit cards a year and a half ago; I now have over \$12,000 related mostly to the increase in cost of fuel. Why cannot we reintroduce 55 mph speed limits? This would greatly cut down the demand for fuel, which should decrease the cost.

REX, *Rigby*.

Although we were warned in the early eighties, there was no effort made to correct our path. We are seeing the repercussions of past failures to act on this threat. Although the cost of energy is a serious detriment to the economic stability of America, I still believe that the invasion of our country by Mexican nationals in the future will prove to be a far more serious problem. Still our Congress deals with the use of steroids and other trivial matters, rather than dealing with immigration, Social Security and national security. As today's youth would ask—what is up with that?

BILL.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

BOYER VALLEY COMMUNITY EDUCATION

• Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, in Iowa and across the United States, a new school year has begun. As you know, Iowa public schools have an excellent reputation nationwide, and Iowa students' test scores are among the highest in the Nation.

I would like to take just a few minutes today to salute the dedicated teachers, administrators, and school board members in the Boyer Valley Community School District, and to report on their participation in a unique Federal partnership to repair and modernize school facilities.

This fall marks the 10th year of the Iowa Demonstration Construction Grant Program. That is its formal name, but it is better known among educators in Iowa as the program of Harkin grants for Iowa public schools. Since 1998, I have been fortunate to secure a total of \$121 million for the State government in Iowa, which selects worthy school districts to receive these grants for a range of renovation and repair efforts everything from updating fire safety systems to building new schools or renovating existing facilities. In many cases, this Federal funding is used to leverage public and/or private local funding, so it often has a tremendous multiplier effect in a local school district.

The Boyer Valley Community School District received a 2002 Harkin grant totaling \$1 million which it used to help build an addition to the school in Dow City to provide a multipurpose

room that could be used by the community as well as the school. The district collaborated with the City of Dunlap to build an addition to the middle/high school to house the community/school library. This school is a modern, state-of-the-art facility that befits the educational ambitions and excellence of this school district. Indeed, it is the kind of school facility that every child in America deserves. The district also received a \$25,000 fire safety grant.

Excellent schools do not just pop up like mushrooms after a rain. They are the product of vision, leadership, persistence, and a tremendous amount of collaboration among local officials and concerned citizens. I salute the entire staff, administration, and governance in the Boyer Valley Community School District. In particular, I would like to recognize the leadership of the board of education—Ken Dunham, Pat Putnam, Julie Wood, Steve Puck, Paul Klein, Mark McAllister, and Randy Mitchell, and former board members Roger Waderich, Theresa McAllister, Ruth Sherwood, Sam Cogdill, Sam Head, and Jane Davie as well as superintendent Thomas Vint and former superintendent Debra Johnsen. I would also like to recognize the city of Dow City and mayor Ace Ettleman, the city of Dunlap and treasurer Dwaine Hack and the late mayor Giles Lacey and the committee that worked to pass the bond referendum for the new schools.

As we mark the 10th anniversary of the Harkin school grant program in Iowa, I am obliged to point out that many thousands of school buildings and facilities across the United States are in dire need of renovation or replacement. In my State of Iowa alone, according to a recent study, some 79 percent of public schools need to be upgraded or repaired. The harsh reality is that the average age of school buildings in the United States is nearly 50 years.

Too often, our children visit ultra-modern shopping malls and gleaming sports arenas on weekends, but during the week go to school in rundown or antiquated facilities. This sends exactly the wrong message to our young people about our priorities. We have to do better.

That is why I am deeply grateful to the professionals and parents in the Boyer Valley Community School District. There is no question that a quality public education for every child is a top priority in that community. I salute them, and wish them a very successful new school year. •

COLUMBUS COMMUNITY EDUCATION

• Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, in Iowa and across the United States, a new school year has begun. As you know, Iowa public schools have an excellent reputation nationwide, and Iowa students' test scores are among the highest in the Nation.

I would like to take just a few minutes today to salute the dedicated

teachers, administrators, and school board members in the Columbus Community School District, and to report on their participation in a unique Federal partnership to repair and modernize school facilities.

This fall marks the 10th year of the Iowa Demonstration Construction Grant Program. That is its formal name, but it is better known among educators in Iowa as the program of Harkin grants for Iowa public schools. Since 1998, I have been fortunate to secure a total of \$121 million for the State government in Iowa, which selects worthy school districts to receive these grants for a range of renovation and repair efforts—everything from updating fire safety systems to building new schools or renovating existing facilities. In many cases, this Federal funding is used to leverage public and/or private local funding, so it often has a tremendous multiplier effect in a local school district.

The Columbus Community School District received a 2004 Harkin grant totaling \$500,000 which it used to help replace the heating and cooling system with a geothermal system at the high school. Additionally, in 1998 and 1999, fire safety grants totaling \$50,000 were used to update the electrical wiring and the installation of new alarm systems and fire doors at the middle and high schools. The Federal grants have made it possible for the district to provide quality and safe schools for their students.

Excellent schools do not just pop up like mushrooms after a rain. They are the product of vision, leadership, persistence, and a tremendous amount of collaboration among local officials and concerned citizens. I salute the entire staff, administration, and governance in the Columbus Community School District. In particular, I would like to recognize the leadership of the board of education, Mike Braun, Marsha Gerot, Ed Smith, Dan Peters, and Georgia Kost. I would also like to recognize superintendent Richard Bridenstine and staff members including Tanya Purdy, Todd Heck and Mike Jay, and the community leadership of Mark Huston and Wade Edwards.

As we mark the 10th anniversary of the Harkin School Grant program in Iowa, I am obliged to point out that many thousands of school buildings and facilities across the United States are in dire need of renovation or replacement. In my State of Iowa alone, according to a recent study, some 79 percent of public schools need to be upgraded or repaired. The harsh reality is that the average age of school buildings in the United States is nearly 50 years.

Too often, our children visit ultra-modern shopping malls and gleaming sports arenas on weekends, but during the week go to school in rundown or antiquated facilities. This sends exactly the wrong message to our young