

## ENERGY REFORM

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I would like to change the subject. I wish to talk a little bit on the perils of energy sprawl. Right behind the health bill may come an energy or climate change bill. There has been a lot of discussion about that. I would like to talk about it in a new and different way.

I just went over to an organization called Resources for the Future that is run by former Congressman Phil Sharp, a group that has done a lot of good work in the conservation area, most recently in coordinating the Outdoors Resource Review Group's recommendations that included permanent funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

There were about 200 conservationists there. I wish to talk to my colleagues a little bit about the message I shared with them. I began with them in this way: As many Americans did last week, I spent a number of hours watching Ken Burns' film on our national parks. I am also reading Douglas Brinkley's book about Theodore Roosevelt, called "The Wilderness Warrior: Theodore Roosevelt and the Crusade for America." I had a few minutes to visit Douglas Brinkley, who was in Washington, DC. Doing this reminded me that the men and women we honor most in the conservation movement, and who founded many of our most important organizations, were not always so honored when they spoke up. Many who spent the last century protecting our landscapes, our air and our water and our habitats were regarded as trivial, eccentric or even went unnoticed.

John Muir, founder of the Sierra Club, was an obscure hermit when he began to preach nature like an apostle. To some, President Teddy Roosevelt must have seemed a little daffy when he declared he would protect pelicans and warned a country, enamored with Manifest Destiny, that we should keep nature unmarred. President Lyndon Johnson used to make jokes about Lady Bird Johnson running around the White House with Laurance Rockefeller protecting flowers, as he would say. Today, we honor those men and women for having had the wisdom and courage to recognize that preserving our natural heritage is essential to the American character. Italy may have its art, India may have its Taj Mahal, but we have the Great American Outdoors.

That is why a recent paper by the Nature Conservancy, a scientific paper, titled "Energy Sprawl or Energy Efficiency: Climate Policy Impacts on Natural Habitat for the United States of America," will one day, I believe, occupy a place among the pioneering actions we honor in the conservation movement. The paper warns, in the next 20 years, new energy production, especially biofuels and wind power, will consume a landmass larger than the State of Nebraska. This so-called "energy sprawl," as the authors termed it, will be the result of government cap and trade and renewable mandate pro-

posals designed to deal with climate change. The paper should serve as a "Paul Revere ride" for the coming renewable energy sprawl. There are negative consequences from producing energy from the Sun, the wind, and the Earth, just as there are positive effects. Unless we are as wise in our response to this as the authors were in their analysis, our Nation runs the risk of damaging the environment in the name of saving the environment.

The first insight of the Nature Conservancy paper is in describing the sheer size of the sprawl. The second insight is in carefully estimating the widely varying amounts of land consumed by different kinds of energy production. Finally, the paper suggests four ways to reduce carbon emissions, while minimizing the side effects of energy sprawl on the landscape and wildlife habitat. The first recommendation is energy conservation. Second is generating electricity on already-developed sites, such as when solar panels are put on rooftops or when a chemical company uses byproducts from its production processes to make heat and power. The third recommendation is to make carbon regulation flexible enough to allow for coal plants that recapture carbon or nuclear power plants that produce no carbon or for international offsets. Fourth, the paper suggests careful site selection.

This makes me think of my own experience as Governor of Tennessee 25 years ago. The Presiding Officer was a very successful Governor of our neighboring Commonwealth of Virginia. Twenty-five years ago, our State banned new billboards and junkyards on a highway over which 2 million visitors travel each year to the Great Smoky Mountain National Park. Then, that decision attracted very little attention. Today, that decision helps to preserve one of the most attractive gateways to any national park. It is hard to imagine what that road would be like today if we hadn't made that decision 25 years ago. We know that if the billboards had gone up then, they would be impossible to take down today. It would be the same with wind turbines in the foothills of the Smokies or along the Blue Ridge Parkway, with wind turbines, solar thermal plants, and other new forms of energy production—once they go up, it would be hard to take them down.

My purpose today, with Resources for the Future and with the conservation groups, was to challenge those organizations who have traditionally protected our landscapes, air and water and wildlife habitat to do the same for the threat of energy sprawl. I asked for them to suggest to us in the Senate, Members of the House, and others in government what are the most appropriate sites for low-carbon or carbon-free energy production. Second, I asked the conservationists to do something that gives many of them a stomachache whenever it is mentioned—to rethink nuclear power. Because, as the

Nature Conservancy's paper details—while not endorsing nuclear—in several ways nuclear power produces the largest amounts of carbon-free electricity with the least impact.

I learned a long time ago it helps an audience to know where its speaker is coming from so I reminded them that I grew up hiking and camping in the great Smoky Mountains National Park, and I still live 2 miles from the park boundary today. I reminded them that, as a Senator, I have fought and still fight for strict emission standards for sulfur, nitrogen, and mercury, because too many of us still breathe polluted air. I have introduced legislation to cap carbon from coal plants because I believe human production of carbon contributes to global warming. I have helped to create 10,000 acres of conservation easements adjacent to the Smokies because it preserves the views and the wildlife needs the space. I drive one of the first hybrid plug-in electric cars because I believe electrifying our cars and trucks is the quickest way to clean the air, keep fuel prices down, reduce foreign oil use, and help deal with climate change. I object to 50-story wind turbines along the Appalachian Trail for the same reason I am the co-sponsor of legislation to end the coal mining practice called mountaintop removal, not because I am opposed to coal plants or wind power in appropriate places but because I want to save our mountaintops.

Let me offer a few examples to give a clearer picture of what this coming energy sprawl may look like. As the Nature Conservancy paper notes, most new renewable electricity production will come from wind power, which provides about 1.5 percent of our country's electricity today. Hydroelectric dams produce about 7 percent, and some of them are being dismantled. Solar and all other forms of renewable electricity produce about another 1 percent. President Bush first suggested that wind power could grow from 1.5 percent today to 20 percent by 2030, and President Obama has set out enthusiastically to get this done. In fact, the combination of Presidential rhetoric, taxpayer subsidies and mandates have very nearly turned our national electricity policy into a national windmill policy.

To produce 20 percent of America's electricity from wind turbines would require erecting 186,000 1.5 megawatt wind turbines, covering an area the size of West Virginia. According to the American Wind Energy Association, 1 megawatt of wind requires 60 acres of land; in other words, that is a 1.5-megawatt wind turbine every 90 acres. These are not your grandmother's windmills. They are 50 stories high. If you are a sports fan, they are three times as tall as the skyboxes at the University of Tennessee football stadium. The turbines themselves are the length of a football field. They are noisy, and you can see their flashing lights for up to 20 miles. In the Eastern United States,

such as in Tennessee and Virginia, where the wind blows less, turbines work best along scenic ridge tops and coastlines.

The National Academy of Sciences says that up to 19,000 miles of new high-voltage transmission lines would be needed to carry electricity from 186,000 wind turbines in remote areas to and through population centers.

So many wind turbines can create real threats to wildlife. The Governor of Wyoming has expressed concern about protecting the sage grouse's diminishing population in his State as a result of possible habitat destruction from wind farms. The American Bird Conservancy estimates that each wind turbine in this country may kill as many as seven or eight birds each year. Multiply that by 186,000, and you can predict the annual death of close to 1.4 million birds each year. Then there are the solar thermal plants, which use big mirrors to heat a fluid and which could spread over many square miles. Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar recently announced plans to cover 1,000 square miles of federally owned land in Nevada, Arizona, California, Colorado, New Mexico, and Utah with such solar collectors to generate electricity. DIANNE FEINSTEIN, the senior Senator from California, who has spent most of her career trying to make the Mojave Desert a national monument, strongly objected to a solar thermal plant in the desert on Federal land just outside the Mojave National Preserve that would have covered an area 3 miles by 3 miles. Plans for the plant were recently canceled.

The only wind farm in the Southeastern United States is on the 3,300-foot-tall Buffalo Mountain in eastern Tennessee, not far from my hometown. The wind there blows less than 20 percent of the time, making the project a commercial failure. Because of the unavailability of wind power, renewable energy advocates suggest that we southerners use biomass, a sort of controlled bonfire that burns wood products to make electricity. Biomass has promise, to a point. Paper mills can burn wood byproducts to make energy. Clearing forests of dead wood and then burning it not only produces energy but can help to avoid forest fires. According to the Conservancy's paper, biofuels and biomass burning of energy crops for electricity take the most space per unit of energy produced. For example, the Southern Company is building a new 100-megawatt biomass plant in Georgia. Southern estimates it will keep 180 trucks a day busy hauling about 1 million tons of wood a year to the plants. One hundred megawatts, the size of that plant, is less than one-tenth the production of a nuclear plant, which will fit on 1 square mile. To produce the same amount of energy as one nuclear plant would require continuously foresting an area one-third larger than the 550,000-acre great Smoky Mountain National Park. You can make your own estimate of the

number of trucks it would take to haul that much wood.

That is the second important insight of the Nature Conservancy report: a careful estimate of the widely different amounts of land each energy-producing technique requires. The gold standard for land usage is nuclear power. You can get a million megawatt hours of electricity a year—that is the standard unit the authors chose—per square mile, using nuclear power. The second most compact form of energy is geothermal energy. To generate the same amount of power, coal requires 4 square miles, taking into account all the land required for mining, extraction, and waste disposal. Solar thermal takes 6. Natural gas takes 7. Petroleum takes 17. Photovoltaic cells that turn sunlight into electricity requires 14 square miles for the same unit of power. Wind is even more, taking 28 square miles to produce the same unit of electricity. That doesn't include lands consumed by the up to 19,000 miles of new transmission lines.

These differences in land use are pronounced, even though the Nature Conservancy paper's analysis is conservative. The authors include upstream inputs and waste disposal as part of their estimate of an energy producer's footprint. They add uranium mining and Yucca Mountain's 220 square miles to the area our 104 nuclear reactors actually occupy. If one were to consider only each energy plant's footprint, to produce 20 percent of U.S. electricity would take 100 nuclear reactors on 100 square miles; or, to visualize it a different way, 186,000 wind turbines on 25,000 square miles.

Visualize the difference this way. Thru hikers regularly travel the 2,178 miles from Springer Mountain, GA, up through Tennessee and Virginia to Mount Katahdin, ME. A row of 50-story wind turbines along the 2,178-mile Appalachian Trail would produce the same amount of electricity produced by four nuclear reactors on 4 square miles.

Because of all these wide differences, policymakers have the opportunity to choose carefully among the various forms of producing carbon-free electricity, as well as to think about where such energy production should go and should not go.

There are four ways that The Nature Conservancy suggests we approach these decisions:

First, focus on energy conservation. That is hard to argue with, and that is their preferred alternative to energy sprawl. It is hard to see how anyone could disagree. To cite one example, my home State of Tennessee leads the Nation in residential per-person electricity use. If Tennesseans simply used electricity at the national average, the amount of electricity we would save each year would equal two nuclear plants. Oak Ridge National Laboratory scientists have said that fuel efficiency standards have been the single most important step our country has taken to reduce carbon emissions.

The second recommendation for energy sprawl is, in scientific terms, end-use generation of electricity which already occurs on already-developed sites. The example is cogeneration that occurs at a paper factory, for example, that uses waste product to produce electricity and heat to run its facility. A more familiar and promising example is solar power on rooftops. In other words, since rooftops already exist, covering them with hundreds of square miles of solar panels would create no additional sprawl. There are still obstacles to the widespread use of solar panels. In the Southeast, solar still costs four to five times what the Tennessee Valley Authority pays on average for other electricity. There is the obstacle of aesthetics. But companies are now producing solar film embedded with attractive roofing materials, although that costs more. And there is still the problem that solar power is only available when the Sun shines. Like wind, it cannot be stored in large quantities. But unlike wind, which often blows at night when we have plenty of spare electricity, the Sun shines when most people are at their peak power use. As former Energy Secretary James Schlesinger wrote recently in the Washington Post, because of their intermittence, wind and solar systems have to be backed up by other forms of electricity generation, which adds to their cost and land usage.

The third recommendation is to make carbon regulation flexible, allowing for carbon recapture at coal plants, for nuclear power, and for international offsets. So far, the sponsors of climate and energy bills in the Congress have not heeded this advice, I am sorry to say. In fact, both the Waxman-Markey bill in the House and the Bingaman Energy bill in the Senate contain very narrowly defined renewable electricity mandates. Instead of allowing States to choose their methods of producing the required amount of carbon-free electricity, the legislation tilts heavily toward requiring wind power. For example, the legislation allows existing and new wind turbines within the renewable mandate, but only new hydroelectric power. It does not count nuclear power, which is carbon free, or municipal solid waste or landfill gas as renewable.

In the same way, 75 percent of the so-called renewable electricity subsidies enacted since 1978 have gone to wind developers. A study by the Energy Information Administration shows that wind gets a subsidy of 31 times that of all other renewables combined. These policies have created a heavy bias toward the form of renewable electricity—wind power—that could consume our treasured mountaintops and be very destructive to wildlife. A national policy that encourages wind power in the Southeast, such as Tennessee or Virginia, where the wind barely blows, makes about as much sense as mandating new hydroelectric dams in the Western desert where there is no water.

It is my opinion that if we are truly seeking to reduce our carbon output, the policy that would create the least energy sprawl would be a carbon-free electricity standard allowing for the maximum flexibility for those renewable electricity techniques that consume less land and require fewer transmission lines.

Finally, to deal with energy sprawl, The Nature Conservancy suggests paying attention to site selection. This is where the conservationists can be a big help to the Senators. Those who have spent their time protecting treasured landscapes and protecting wildlife could help us ask the right questions and know the right answers. For example, should energy projects be placed in national parks or national forests? If so, which forests and which energy projects? Should there be generous taxpayer subsidies for renewable electricity projects within 20 miles of the Grand Tetons or along the Appalachian Trail? What about the large amounts of water needed for solar thermal plants or for nuclear plants? Should turbines be concentrated in shallow waters 20 miles or more offshore where they cannot be seen from the coast? And should transmission lines run under water? Couldn't wind turbines be located in the center of Lake Michigan where the wind blows more strongly instead of along its shoreline where people can see them? Should there be renewable energy zones, such as the solar zones Secretary Salazar is planning where most new projects could be placed and where the most appropriate locations for those zones and those transmission lines could be picked?

In a recent op-ed in the *New York Times*, the Massachusetts secretary of energy and environmental affairs asked this question: Wouldn't it make a lot more sense to place wind turbines offshore in the Atlantic and run transmission lines underwater than to build new transmissions lines to carry wind power from the Great Plains to Boston? Should the subsidies for cellulosic ethanol be larger than those for corn ethanol? Or should there be no subsidies at all? And should there be a special effort to encourage conservation easements on private lands that protect treasured viewscapes and habitats?

These are the questions that the American people and the conservation groups that have traditionally protected our landscapes and our habitats could help us answer properly.

According to the *Wall Street Journal*, on August 13, ExxonMobil pleaded guilty in Federal court to killing 85 birds that had come into contact with crude oil or other pollutants in uncovered tanks of wastewater facilities on its properties. The birds were protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act which dates back to 1918. The company paid \$600,000 in fines and fees for killing those 85 birds.

Should the migratory bird law be enforced against developers of other en-

ergy projects—for example, renewable electricity and transmission lines? One wind farm near Oakland, CA, estimates that its turbines kill 80 golden eagles a year. The American Bird Conservancy estimates the 25,000 wind turbines in the United States kill somewhere between 75,000 and 275,000 birds a year. "Somebody is getting a get-out-of-jail card free," Michael Fry of the Bird Conservancy told the *Journal*. And what would be the fine for the almost 1.4 million birds that 186,000 turbines might kill? For those who think birds may not be as important as some other subjects, read Douglas Brinkley's book about Teddy Roosevelt. Almost all of his wilderness activities started with his interest in birds. According to Mr. Brinkley, the largest spectator sport in America, even ahead of NASCAR, is bird watching.

These statistics raise the question of whether there ought to be some kind of parity among all energy companies in the application of laws and policies. For example, oil and gas companies receive taxpayer subsidies, but they bid to lease and drill on Federal land and waters and then they pay a royalty for the privilege. Should taxpayer-subsidized developers of renewable electricity projects also be required to pay a royalty for the privilege of producing electricity on Federal lands and waters? And if so, could this be a source of permanent funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund or other conservation projects on the theory that if the law allows an environmental burden, it ought to require an environmental benefit?

Based on estimates from the Joint Committee on Taxation and the Congressional Budget Office, taxpayers will pay wind developers a total of \$29 billion in Federal subsidies over the next 10 years to increase wind power production from 1.5 to 4 percent of our total electricity.

There are an estimated 500,000 abandoned mines in our Nation—47,000 in California alone. To date, Congress has allocated a total of about \$4 billion for their cleanup, and the end of the cleanup is nowhere in sight. Would it not be wise before the energy sprawl occurs to require bonds on Federal lands for the removal of energy equipment that is abandoned or not used anymore? Wind turbines wear out in 20 or 25 years. Solar thermal farms can cover hundreds of acres. Policy subsidies and prices can change.

In Germany, for example, a prominent maker of solar equipment suggested cutting the government subsidy for solar equipment because it is permanently raising the prices of German-made products, and Germans are buying cheaper panels made in China. In other words, the Germans are subsidizing Chinese manufacturing.

So if the large U.S. subsidies for wind power were to disappear, as was promised when they were created, and this led to the abandoning of some renewable projects, it might be a good idea if

someone were required to take away any abandoned equipment.

Which brought me to my last point: asking conservationists, especially in this country, to rethink nuclear power.

In our country, fears about proliferation and waste and disposal have stymied the "atoms for peace" dream for large amounts of low-cost, clean, reliable energy from nuclear power. Twelve States even have moratoria against building new nuclear plants. Still, the 104 U.S. reactors built between 1970 and 1990 produce 19 percent of America's electricity and, as I have said, 70 percent of our carbon-free electricity.

I believe that what Americans should fear most about nuclear power is this: The rest of the world will use it to create low-cost, carbon-free electricity while we who invented it will not. That would send our jobs overseas looking for cheap energy, and it would deprive us of the technology most likely to produce large amounts of carbon-free electricity to deal with climate change and to do it in a way least likely to harm the landscape and wildlife habitat.

Look at what the rest of the world is doing. Of the top five greenhouse gas emitters, who together produce 55 percent of all the carbon in the world, only the United States has no new nuclear plants under construction. China, the world's largest carbon emitter, recently upped its goal for new nuclear reactors to 132. Russia, the No. 3 emitter, plans two new reactors every year until 2030. Of the next two emitters, India has six reactors under construction and 10 more planned. Japan already has 55 reactors and gets 35 percent of its electricity from nuclear. It has two under construction and plans for 10 more by 2018.

According to the International Atomic Energy Agency, there are 53 reactors worldwide under construction in 11 countries, mostly in Asia and not one in the United States. South Korea gets nearly 40 percent of its electricity from nuclear and plans another eight reactors by 2015. Taiwan gets 18 percent of its power from nuclear and is building two new reactors.

In the West, France—we never like to give France credit for outdoing us in anything—but France gets 80 percent of its electricity from nuclear and, as a result, has among the lowest electricity rates and carbon emissions in Western Europe, behind Sweden and Switzerland, both of which are half nuclear. Great Britain has hired the French electric company EDF to help build reactors. Italy has announced it will go back to nuclear.

Where does that leave the United States? We still know how to run reactors better than anyone else, we just don't build them anymore. Our fleet of plants is up and running 90 percent of the time. No one does that well except us. We have 17 applications for new reactors pending before the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, but we have not

started construction on any new nuclear plant in 30 years in the United States.

The 104 we currently have in operation will begin to grow too old to operate in 20 years. That is why I believe the United States should build 100 new nuclear plants in 20 years. All 40 Republican Senators support that goal, and a number of Democratic Senators also are strong supporters of nuclear power.

Building 100 plants in 20 years would bring our nuclear-produced electricity to more than 40 percent of our total generation and it would all be carbon free. Add another 10 percent for hydroelectric dams—that is carbon free; 7 or 8 percent for wind and solar, now about 2.5 percent—that is carbon free; 25 percent for natural gas—that is low carbon; and you begin to get a very clean and low-cost electricity policy.

According to the National Academy of Sciences, construction costs for 100 nuclear plants are about the same as they would be for 186,000 wind turbines. New reactors could be located mostly on sites with existing reactors. There would be little need for new transmission lines. Taxpayer subsidies for nuclear would be one-tenth what taxpayers would pay wind developers over 10 years. And for so-called green jobs, building 100 nuclear plants would provide 4 times as many construction jobs as building 186,000 wind turbines. And, of course, nuclear is a base load source of power operating 90 percent of the time—the kind of reliable power a country like the United States, which uses 25 percent of the energy in the world, must have. Wind and solar are useful supplements, but they are only available, on average, about one-third of the time, and they can't be stored in large amounts.

What about the lingering fears of nuclear? Well, the Obama administration Energy Secretary, Dr. Steven Chu, the Nobel Prize-winning physicist, says nuclear plants are safe and he wouldn't mind living near one. That view is echoed by thousands of U.S. Navy personnel who have lived literally on top of nuclear reactors in submarines and Navy ships for more than 50 years without incident. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission agrees, and its painstaking supervision and application process is intended to do everything humanly possible to keep our commercial fleet of reactors safe.

On the issue of waste, Dr. CHU says there is a two-step solution. Step 1 is, store the spent nuclear fuel on site for 40 to 60 years. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission agrees this can be done safely, maybe for 100 years. Step 2 is research and development, to find the best way to recycle fuel so that its mass is reduced by 97 percent, pure plutonium is never created, and the waste is only radioactive for 300 years instead of 1 million years. That kind of recycling would take care of both the waste and the third fear of nuclear power—the threat that other countries might

somehow use plutonium to build a bomb.

One could argue that because the United States failed to lead in developing the safe use of nuclear technology for the last 30 years, we may have made it easier for North Korea and Pakistan to steal or buy nuclear secrets from rogue countries.

I concluded with this prediction: Taking into account these energy sprawl concerns, I believe the best way to reach the necessary carbon reduction goals for climate change, with the least damage to our environment and to our economy, will prove to be, No. 1, building 100 new nuclear plants in 20 years; No. 2, electrifying half the cars and trucks in 20 years—we probably have enough unused electricity to plug these vehicles in at night without building one new power plant—and No. 3, putting solar panels on rooftops. To make this happen, the government should launch mini-Manhattan Projects, like the one we had in World War II, for recycling used nuclear fuel, for better batteries, for electric vehicles, to make solar panels cost competitive, and, in addition, to recapture carbon from coal plants. This plan I have just described should produce the largest amount of electricity with the smallest amount of carbon at the lowest possible cost, thereby avoiding the pain and suffering that comes when high-cost energy pushes jobs overseas and makes it hard for low-income Americans to afford their heating and cooling bills.

My fellow Tennessean Al Gore won a Nobel Prize for arguing that global warming is the inconvenient problem. For those who believe he is right—and if you are also concerned about energy sprawl—then I would suggest nuclear power is the inconvenient solution.

Mr. President, I yield the floor. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

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#### AUTHORITY TO SIGN DULY ENROLLED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the majority leader be authorized to sign any duly enrolled bills and joint resolutions during today's session, Monday, October 5.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

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#### FREEDOM TO TRAVEL

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, last Friday the New York Times had an article which caught my eye, and the

headline was the following: "October New York Philharmonic Trip to Cuba is Off." I want to talk for a moment about this. I was extraordinarily disappointed to read this because this is an issue of the freedom to travel by the American people, specifically, the freedom to travel to Cuba.

This country has had an embargo against the country of Cuba for a long while. Cuba is a Communist country. Fidel Castro has poked his finger in the eye of America for a long time, so we have had an embargo for a long time. Part of the way to injure the Castro regime, presumably, as a part of this embargo is to prevent the American people from traveling to Cuba. The American people can travel to Communist China, to Communist Vietnam, to North Korea, but the American people are considered taking a criminal act if they travel to Cuba. There are some exceptions; the U.S. Treasury Department gives licenses to travel for certain kinds of educational and cultural things, and for trade.

So the New York Philharmonic orchestra was going to Cuba, but had to cancel the trip. Daniel Wakin wrote about it in the New York Times last Friday October 1, 2009. The reason I wanted to mention this is because it is almost unbelievable what we are still doing with respect to our travel policy with Cuba.

Senator ENZI and I have a piece of legislation that removes all travel restrictions with respect to travel to Cuba. We have over 30 Senators who are cosponsors of that legislation, but while we are waiting to pass our legislation, we are going through this nonsense of having the Federal Government and the Treasury Department tell us who can and who cannot travel, restricting the liberty and the freedom of the American people. It is outrageous, in my judgment.

Trips like the one the New York Philharmonic planned to Havana are not unusual. These kinds of trips happen all of the time. In 1959, at the height of the Cold War with the Soviet Union, the New York Philharmonic played in Moscow. It is a reasonably good thing, in my judgment, to be able to extend our culture and the hand of friendship through music.

One of the reasons I was especially interested in this is that the New York Philharmonic visited North Korea last year, and I asked conductor Loren Maazel and Zarin Mehta, President of the Philharmonic's board, to come and speak to our caucus. They described to us their performances in North Korea. They said the applause went on and on, even after they left the stage. What a great way to exchange with another country, to extend cultural enlightenment and to share with other countries. Again, the New York Philharmonic orchestra played in North Korea last year, but cannot play in Cuba without a special license.

The New York Philharmonic is going to Communist Vietnam this month.