

from its inception to that moment, was \$5 trillion; in 8 years President Bush doubled the national debt.

Many people believe it is going to continue to grow because of some of the decisions he made. One was to wage a war and not pay for it, adding almost \$1 trillion to our national debt in the process. Many other decisions, such as cutting taxes at a time when our country couldn't afford it, and it turned out to be foolhardy and with little positive impact on our economy. President Obama inherited that. Now he is faced with not only that debt, which my colleague from Oklahoma has aptly described, but also an economic crisis that cannot be ignored.

We were told a week ago that the gross domestic product of the United States of America had declined precipitously for the first time in 25 years. It is an indication that our sense of economic decline has been borne out by the numbers and statistics. We see it in every State with increased unemployment. So President Obama is faced with a terrible situation: the largest deficit and debt in the history of the United States, left by the previous President, and the worst economic crisis in 75 years.

Well, my colleague who spoke is a medical doctor. He knows the first thing you have to do in the most serious trauma cases is to try to stabilize the patient, and that is what President Obama is trying to do, stabilize the economy. Every economist—virtually every one—liberal and conservative, agrees that you cannot stabilize the economy by cutting spending. You have to do the opposite. You have to encourage economic activity, economic growth, business, jobs. Those are the things that have to be done, and the Government must spend money, even if it is in debt. Failing to do that will cause our economy to decline even further, and more suffering will be borne by the families and businesses across America.

So when the Senator from Oklahoma comes to the floor and says this is the wrong time to spend money, I have to tell him that there is no recourse but to try to get this economy moving forward by creating good-paying jobs in America, investing in our future, making sure we are moving toward energy independence, trying to prepare our educational resources for the 21st century by modernizing labs and libraries and classrooms, trying to bring the kind of changes to health care where technology will make health care more affordable and safer for patients across America. These are investments that will not only help us through the current recession but will pay off for decades to come.

We are clearly spending this money in a deficit situation because we have no choice. Across the Rotunda in the House of Representatives, when President Obama's recovery and reinvestment bill came forward, not a single Republican Representative would vote

for it. That is unfortunate. The President reached out to them personally and asked them to join him in a bipartisan effort, both political parties cooperating and working together. Sadly, it didn't occur.

I hope that is not the case in the Senate. I trust that some Republican Senators will come forward and realize that we are making a good-faith effort to accommodate any reasonable change they want to make to the program. If they want to reduce spending in some areas, we are open to it. If they have ideas that are better than ours, we are open to them as well. I tried to make that clear. I think my colleagues on this side and the White House have tried to make that clear.

At the end of the day, we are going to have to face reality. We will be spending money now to try to stop this economic tailspin. Once we get the economy stabilized and start investing toward growth again so people have peace of mind about their jobs and businesses, savings, and the future, then we can address responsibly, as we must, the deficit and debt situation. I look forward to working with the Senator from Oklahoma when that day arrives. Right now, we have to stabilize the patient.

I say to my friend, Dr. COBURN, join us in this important effort, and then we can join hands together and try to find the way through the fiscal problems we are currently facing.

SITUATION IN SRI LANKA

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, The ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka that has waxed and waned for decades costing the lives of tens of thousands of people has exploded into a full scale war, and it is civilians who are bearing the brunt of the carnage.

The origins of the conflict arise from decades of the Sinhalese majority's systematic discrimination against the Tamil minority and its denial of the Tamils' meaningful participation in the political process. The Sri Lankan army is almost exclusively Sinhalese. Successive Sinhalese-dominated governments have failed to effectively address these longstanding injustices.

Over the years, peaceful demonstrations by Tamils have been met with violence by Sinhalese extremists, which has in turn fostered violent extremism on the Tamil side.

In recent weeks, as the Sri Lankan army has seized control of most of the northern strongholds of the Tamil Tigers, or LTTE as they are otherwise known, the situation has gone from dire to the verge of catastrophe for the estimated 250,000 vulnerable civilians who are trapped in a so-called "safe zone."

The LTTE has a history of suicide bombings and other indiscriminate attacks against civilians, using civilians as shields, and preventing civilians under their control from escaping to government areas. Several hundred

local staff of the United Nations and international humanitarian organizations are reportedly trapped because the LTTE refuses to allow them to leave. The LTTE has been designated a foreign terrorist organization by the United States.

For its part, the Sri Lankan army insists it is targeting the LTTE, not civilians. But the army has also acted in ways that have blurred any meaningful distinction between itself and the LTTE. It has reportedly shelled areas populated by civilians, including hospitals, causing hundreds of casualties, summarily executed suspected LTTE sympathizers, and detained those who have fled LTTE areas, including women and children, in militarized camps where they are exposed to great hardship and danger.

The United Nations says a compound sheltering U.N. national staff inside the safety zone was shelled on January 24 and 25, killing at least 9 civilians and wounding more than 20. On January 26, another artillery attack reportedly narrowly missed UN local staff working in the safety zone but caused dozens of civilian deaths. The International Committee of the Red Cross has said that "[h]undreds of patients need emergency treatment and evacuation to [a] hospital in the government-controlled area."

In the past 2 days, another hospital was reportedly shelled multiple times, resulting in more civilian deaths and injuries.

Human Rights Watch reports that since last September, when the Sri Lankan government ordered the withdrawal of most UN and nongovernmental humanitarian organizations, as well as journalists, from the conflicted area, a grave humanitarian crisis has developed with acute shortages of food, shelter, medicine, and other humanitarian supplies.

The Sri Lankan government has a duty to respect the rights and protect the safety of all Sri Lankan citizens, whatever their ethnic origin or political views. Instead, the government has embarked on a strategy to defeat the LTTE militarily and in doing so has shown disregard for the laws of war. Rather than protecting the Tamil people, the government has often contributed to their suffering. Its strategy has been to cordon off the area and blame everything, including its own violations, on the LTTE.

Since 1984, successive peace talks have failed, as both the LTTE and the Sri Lankan government have reneged on their agreements, and the government has failed to provide the vision and leadership necessary to build a multi-ethnic consensus. Both sides' extreme ethnic nationalist agendas have caused widespread human suffering. Both sides are accountable.

I have no sympathy for the LTTE, which has brought misery upon the Tamil people it professes to represent. But while the LTTE has been severely weakened, it is unlikely to disappear,

and the cycle of violence may continue.

It is imperative that the government and the LTTE agree to an immediate cease-fire to avoid further loss of life, permit access to U.N. monitors and humanitarian organizations, and permit civilians to leave for areas of safety. The Obama administration, the British, Indian and other concerned governments, should be publicly urging the same.

Over the longer term, if lasting peace is to come to Sri Lanka, the government must effectively address, in negotiations which include all the main Tamil and Muslim parties, the core issues that have fueled the conflict including laws and policies that unfairly discriminate against Sri Lanka's minorities.

There is a related issue that needs to be mentioned, and that is the imprisonment for the past ten months of J.S. Tissainayagam, a journalist, and N. Jashiharan, a publisher, and his wife, V. Valamathy. They were arrested for articles critical of the government, and are being held in violation of their right to freedom of expression. Another of Sri Lankan's most respected journalists, Lasantha Wickrematunga, was gunned down in broad daylight a few weeks ago. According to Navi Pillay, the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights, “[t]he killing of . . . Wickrematunge . . . was the latest blow to the free expression of dissent in Sri Lanka. The searing article he wrote prophesying his own murder is an extraordinary indictment of a system corrupted by more than two decades of bloody internal conflict.” The High Commissioner noted that there have not been any prosecutions of political killings, disappearances and other violations committed in recent years. That in itself speaks volumes about the Sri Lankan government's credibility.

For many years, the United States and Sri Lanka have enjoyed good relations. A close friend of mine, James Spain, was our Ambassador there years ago. He often told me of his deep affection for the Sri Lankan people, and of the country's extraordinary natural beauty.

When the tsunami crashed ashore in December 2004, a member of my staff was on the island. The American people responded generously to help Sri Lanka rebuild.

It has therefore been difficult for me to watch the conflict intensify, the LTTE abuse civilians and fail to live up to its commitments, and the government threaten to expel foreign diplomats, aid agencies and journalists, and refuse appeals to permit independent observers and aid workers access to areas where Tamil civilians are trapped. And as reputable, courageous journalists have been arrested on transparently political charges or assassinated.

The Sri Lanka government will one day want the respect and support of the United States. The same can be said of

the LTTE, if and when it renounces violence and becomes a legitimate political party. How they respond to today's humanitarian appeals will weigh heavily on how the United States responds when that day comes.

60TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE IDAHO NATIONAL LAB

MR. CRAPO. Mr. President, today I wish to acknowledge a milestone of singular significance for Idaho and for the Nation. This month marks the 60th anniversary of the Idaho National Laboratory.

In February 1949, the Federal Government settled on a site in east central Idaho to host the National Reactor Testing Station—a place where scientists and engineers could come together to develop and test new ways to put the power of the atom to productive use for society. In short order, Experimental Breeder Reactor-I was designed, built and operating—producing the world's first usable amount of electricity from nuclear power and later, proving that reactors could produce, or breed, more fuel than they consume.

Breakthrough after breakthrough followed in the ensuing years, including significant contributions to national security with the development of the nuclear propulsion systems for U.S. Navy submarines and aircraft carriers. The Idaho testing station was the genesis of American civilian nuclear power, responsible for powering an American city for the first time with nuclear-generated electricity, as well as the design and construction of 52 pioneering nuclear reactors. The Idaho testing station was responsible for the development of world leading reactor safety codes and the operation of the Nation's premier materials testing device—the Advanced Test Reactor.

Building on its unsurpassed nuclear energy expertise and in recognition of its broader capabilities and unique assets, our Idaho “testing station” was formally designated a national laboratory in 1974. And the pace of innovation has only accelerated since. The lab's researchers have received dozens of R&D 100, Bright Light, Federal Laboratory Consortium and related awards for the development of technologies as diverse as concealed weapons detection systems and novel electrolyte batteries. The lab's central location within the Western Inland Energy Corridor—a band stretching from western Canada down through our nation's Intermountain and Rocky Mountain West—place it in a remarkable position to identify, assess and integrate the corridor's unmatched wind, biomass, hydropower, geothermal, conventional and unconventional fossil and uranium resources.

At 60, the Idaho National Lab's relevance to the Nation could not be greater. Its mission to “Ensure the nation's energy security with safe, competitive, and sustainable energy systems and unique national and home-

land security capabilities,” represents a pledge to serve by each of the lab's nearly 4,000 employees, as well as the management team and partners from institutions of higher education in Idaho and nationwide.

I congratulate the employees, management team and community partners of the Idaho National Lab on the occasion of its 60th anniversary and look forward to many more years of success, built on this matchless legacy of science and engineering innovation.

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 1,200, are heartbreaking and touching. While energy prices have dropped in recent weeks, the concerns expressed remain very relevant. To respect the efforts of those who took the opportunity to share their thoughts, 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:

First of all I appreciate all your efforts in this manner and hopefully some relief will become of them. Secondly this letter may be a bit different than most of the others you have received. I, like many others feel the burden of increasing fuel prices and wonder “why” prices have risen so much in the past few months. I also have deep concerns for the dependence of foreign oil this country is a slave to. However, we Americans are for the most part, myself included, are selfish, wasteful and will not give up our conveniences. Therefore I personally do not mind the higher price of fuel (but hopefully the prices will drop) in the aspect that hopefully it will encourage people to be a bit more conservative. I am fortunate that my wife and I live less than three miles from where we work (separate business) in the past we both have driven our vehicles. My personal vehicle is a Ford F250 that gets 10 mpg. I have been driving for the convenience, but recently we have begun riding together (we also have a Ford Escape at 25 mpg), walking that takes about 45 minutes, riding bicycles at about 15 minutes and I also have a motorcycle that gets 55 mpg that I have dusted off and begun to ride. So it is not all bad. I also realize most people are not that fortunate. The things that bother me the most are that in the land of plenty, our auto manufacturers are still producing vehicles that get under 15 mpg; it is way past time for that to change. Domestic oil production needs to be increased, but please do it sensibly. Consider