

Last year, under desperate but necessary circumstances, the U.S. Government had to rescue AIG from total collapse. This was done not to rescue the company itself but to rescue our financial system. AIG would not even continue to exist today except for the infusion of \$170 billion in taxpayer funds. The American people now own essentially 80 percent of the company, and AIG is supposed to be doing everything possible to right itself. Well, they haven't.

There is no rational way to justify these bonuses to people who have caused untold damage to our economy. This is not pay for performance, it is pay for failure, which makes no sense at all. Why should they get the golden parachutes when their company and our financial system have been crashing to the ground? The bonuses these individuals are receiving for their failure is more than most Americans make in a lifetime. The American people simply should not be in the position of rewarding the failure of high-flying Wall Street bankers who brought their company and our economy crashing down.

That is why I have joined today with Senator SCHUMER and other colleagues in writing to Edward Liddy, the chairman and CEO of AIG. We are telling him if these bonus contracts are not renegotiated immediately, we will offer legislation that will have the effect of making American taxpayers whole. AIG needs to step up and do the right thing. But if AIG doesn't take action on its own to correct this outrage, we stand ready to take the difficult but necessary step of enacting legislation that would allow the Government to recoup these bonus payments through the Tax Code.

If we are forced to do this, we will impose a steep tax, possibly as high as 91 percent, that would, in effect, recover nearly all the bonus money. Now, I am like most Americans; I don't like to see taxes raised. But in this instance, I think all of us can make an exception. If they refuse to do the right thing, then it is only fair to impose this kind of tax against the people who have done such great harm to our financial system. They can't walk away with millions of dollars.

They may be laughing all the way to the bank right now, but if AIG can't or won't fix this problem, these people will soon be crying all the way to the tax office. These people seem to think they can operate with a height of arrogance and irresponsibility. This is not just a business outrage, it is a moral outrage.

I am also concerned that in addition to the bonuses already handed out, AIG has plans to spend an additional \$450 million in bonuses over the next 2 years. Based on what we know now, can we trust that these bonus payments go to the people who deserve it—the people who fix the problems rather than people who just make the problems?

AIG is set to go into the history books as a company that symbolizes

the type of greed and recklessness that has weakened our economy. Where I come from, we reward those who work hard and play by the rules and we take responsibility when we screw up. I believe the administration and Congress should do everything in their power to block these payments and demand accountability.

Now, we know this is also an insult to the many good, strong, healthy financial institutions across this country—the small banks such as those we have in Minnesota; healthy financial institutions that didn't engage in these high-flying dealings that shouldn't be punished. Their stockholders shouldn't be punished because of what companies such as AIG did.

As a prosecutor for 8 years, I dealt with criminals all the time. I have to say the white-collar crooks were often the worst to deal with because they claimed their crimes were an honest mistake and that there weren't any victims. As far as I am concerned, it didn't matter if someone stole with a crowbar or a computer or that they committed their crimes in a nice office or out on the streets, they need to be held accountable under the law.

Time will tell, and the Justice Department and other prosecutors and police will sort this financial wreck out to see when and where crimes were committed, but it is clear that what we need is accountability. If AIG's leadership won't demand it, we will.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arkansas is recognized.

Mrs. LINCOLN. Mr. President, I rise to join some of my colleagues to express our deep frustration with the financial institutions that have made the very poor decision of handing out multimillion dollar bonuses at taxpayers' expense—AIG being the latest in the line of continuing irresponsible behavior coming from Wall Street.

I have hard-working families—and there are hard-working families all across this great Nation—who are saying: Enough is enough.

This is not the kind of behavior Americans should be accepting at this time. It is completely irresponsible. Times are tough and people are sacrificing. People all across this country are sacrificing. Many employees in my State are seeing their hours cut or they are finding themselves out of work altogether. How are they caring for their families? They are working hard to look for that next job to put dinner on the table or to get their kids to school or making sure they can keep their families together.

I have talked to recent retirees who have been devastated because the nest egg they have been saving all these years has been slashed by 40 or 50 percent in just a matter of months. Now they are having to dramatically downsize their quality of life or go back to work, if they can even find work. I met a gentleman this weekend who is beginning to have college-age

kids. He spent his entire life working to save for those college funds only to find that in these last several months they too have been slashed in half.

These people are realizing the impact of what is happening not only in our country but globally. They are standing up as Americans. They are willing to make sacrifices. They are working hard to keep body and soul together. But it is absolutely, unequivocally totally unacceptable for failed financial institutions that have received taxpayer assistance to be rewarding their employees with bonus payments at this time. It is outrageous and it will not be allowed.

We are the stewards of the taxpayers in our States and of the dollars we have provided in good faith as an investment in these companies to try to make sure they, too, can make ends meet. But this isn't making ends meet—handing out tremendous bonuses to just a select few. It is absolutely irresponsible.

During the debate of the recovery package, Senator WYDEN and Senator SNOWE and myself offered an amendment that put an excise tax on bonuses and financial institutions that had received TARP dollars. We did so because we feared this very thing would continue to happen. Unfortunately, our proposal was taken out of the package in the conference. So I am pleased to hear many of my colleagues who are now in agreement that something must be done to correct this travesty.

Make no mistake, if these companies handing out multimillion dollar bonuses do not rectify the situation, do not change their ways, we stand ready to work to enact legislation that recoups these tax dollars and these taxpayers' funds. Our taxpayers have worked hard and they are suffering as much as anybody else. But we do not need to see these major corporations and financial institutions that are handing out these unbelievable enhanced bonuses at a time when we should all be pulling together, pulling together to make our economy strong, to set it back on track and to make sure we can embrace and continue the kind of quality of life that all Americans need to be able to realize.

I yield the floor.

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:30 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. BURRIS).

REVOLUTIONARY WAR AND WAR OF 1812 BATTLEFIELD PROTECTION ACT—MOTION TO PROCEED—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington is recognized.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for 7 minutes as in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

NEWSPAPER INDUSTRY

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, we have a lot of interesting landmarks in my home State of Washington, especially in Seattle. But one of my favorites has always been the globe that sits on top of the Seattle Post Intelligencer's building on Elliott Bay. The words, "It's in the P.I." wrap around that globe, and it is more than just another quirky part of our skyline. It has symbolized the importance of the paper to generations of readers.

For 146 years, the Seattle P.I., as everyone in Seattle calls it, has informed, investigated, enlightened, entertained, and, yes, sometimes irritated the people of our community. The P.I. staff has put politicians, businesspeople and bureaucrats to the test, and their work has distinguished the paper and won them well-deserved awards—from our cartoonist David Horsey's Pulitzers to a long list of prizes for public service journalism.

But, today the P.I. published its last print edition. Its owner, the Hearst media chain, put it up for sale and hasn't been able to find a buyer.

Hearst has said it will replace the paper with a smaller online edition, but it won't be the same.

We have been lucky to live in a two-newspaper town. Two-newspaper communities used to be common, but they are rare these days.

In Seattle, the Times and the P.I. had a Joint Operating Agreement for 26 years, but they were always rivals when it came to breaking news.

Competition made both papers dig a little deeper and push a little harder. That competition meant everyone from corporate leaders to school officials to sports team owners were held to a higher standard.

Our community is a better place as a result.

Unfortunately, the P.I. is not the first major paper in our country to stop publishing this year. Last month, Denver's Rocky Mountain News closed its doors. And the P.I. may not be the last to close either.

The reality is that newspapers have been struggling and cutting back for several years now. Many of the major papers across the country are worried about whether they will make it through the economic downturn.

Like so many other companies, they are victims of the recession and a changing business environment.

The depth of the problem hit home for me earlier this year when I visited the press in Olympia, our State's capital city.

In 2001, there were 31 reporters, editors, and columnists covering the state house there. Now there are nine—nine.

We have all noticed the shrinking press corps here in Washington, DC, too.

Not too many years ago, we had more than a dozen reporters here covering the Washington State delegation. We have seen that number shrink to just a couple in the last year.

This is really troubling to me because at the end of the day, newspapers aren't just another business. And if more close—and there is nothing to replace them—our democracy will be weaker as a result.

For generations, newspaper reporters have been the ones who have done the digging, sat through the meetings, and broken the hard stories.

A newspaper broke the Watergate scandal—and the story about horrible conditions at Walter Reed Medical Center.

Newspapers have exposed graft and corruption at every level of government. They have uncovered environmental threats posed by strip mining, hog farming, and contaminated waterways.

They have used the power of the press to expose injustice, prejudice, and mistreatment of people who don't have the power to speak up for themselves.

And most importantly, newspaper stories have led to real change.

In my community, the P.I.'s reports on asbestos led me to introduce my legislation to ban it and the P.I.'s investigation on the shortage of FBI agents in the Pacific Northwest has led to my work to increase the number of agents in Washington State.

We need reporters to root out corruption, shine a light on the operations of government, and tell the people what is really going on in our communities.

We need them to go to school board meetings, cover local elections, and attend congressional hearings.

And, yes, we need them to push for information, to investigate, to request public records—and to fight when the government stands in the way.

We are still working out what role the Internet will play in the Fourth Estate—and what role TV and radio have in the new media environment.

There has been a lot of talk recently about whether online publications can—or will—adequately replace the paper editions.

While there is something comfortable about the fact that we can pick up a paper, spread it out on the kitchen table, and cut out articles to stick on the fridge, what's most important to me is that if the media environment is really changing, someone will be there to step in and do the work newspapers do for our communities now.

I really hope what we are seeing is just an evolution in the news business.

I hope that when it all shakes out, the media will end up as strong as ever. I am going to miss the Seattle P.I., and I know all of Seattle and the Pacific Northwest will as well.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas is recognized.

Mrs. HUTCHISON. I thank the Chair.

(The remarks of Mrs. HUTCHISON pertaining to the introduction of S. 614 are

located in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa is recognized.

2010 BUDGET TAX INCREASES

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, today is St. Patrick's Day. St. Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland, is revered by Irish and non-Irish alike, for many things. Among the many legends is one regarding snakes. St. Patrick drove snakes off the Emerald Isle. In looking at the President's budget, you could see that we might need St. Patrick to come back and drive all the extra taxes out of the budget. Certainly, like the snakes in Ireland, all of these new taxes, if left unchecked, could bite a lot of hard-working American taxpayers.

Nineteen days ago, President Obama sent his first budget up to Capitol Hill. The deficits and debt proposed in that budget are eye-popping. President Obama is correct when he says that he inherited a record budget deficit of \$1.2 trillion. I have a chart here that shows the pattern of the Federal debt.

But, from the statements from the congressional Democratic leadership, you would think they just got the levers of power this January. You would think they had no role in creating that deficit President Obama inherited. In fact, congressional Democrats and the last Republican administration agreed on the fiscal policy in the last Congress. The congressional Democratic leadership, together with the George W. Bush administration, wrote the stimulus bills, housing bills, and the financial bailout. The congressional Democratic leadership wrote the budgets and spending bills in 2007 and 2008. So let's be clear. President Obama inherited the deficit and debt, but the inheritance had bipartisan origins—the Democratic Congress and the last Republican administration. What's more, the budget the President sent up would make this extraordinary level of debt an ordinary level of debt. What is now an extraordinary burden on our children and grandchildren would become an ordinary burden.

In the last year of the budget, debt held by the public would be two-thirds, 67 percent of our gross domestic product.

The President's budget does contain some common ground. Whenever President Obama wants to pursue tax relief, he will find no better ally than we Republicans. Likewise, if President Obama wants to embrace fiscal responsibility and reduce the deficit by cutting wasteful spending, Republicans on Capitol Hill will back him vigorously. From our perspective, good fiscal policy keeps the tax burden low on American families, workers, and small businesses and keeps wasteful spending in check. For the hard-working American taxpayer, there is some good news in the budget. President Obama's budget proposes to make permanent the lion's share of the bipartisan tax relief plans

that are set to expire in less than 2 years. Republicans have been trying to make this bipartisan tax relief permanent since it was first passed.

It will mean families can count on marriage penalty relief and a doubled child tax credit. It means workers will be able to count on lower marginal tax rates. It means low-income seniors, who rely on capital gains and dividend income, will be able to rely on low rates of taxation as they draw on their savings. It means middle-income families will be able to count on relief from the alternative minimum tax, AMT. President Obama will find many Republican allies in his efforts to make these tax relief policies permanent.

Unfortunately, President Obama's budget also contains bad news for the American taxpayer. For every American who puts gas in a car, heats or cools a home, uses electricity to cook a meal, turn on the lights, or power a computer, there is a new energy tax for you in this budget. This tax could exceed a trillion dollars. The budget also raises taxes on those making over \$250,000. That sounds like a lot of money to most Americans. But, we are not just talking about the idle rich.

We are not talking about coupon clippers on Park Avenue. We are not talking about the high-paid, high-corporate-jet-flying, well-paid hedge fund managers in Chicago, San Francisco, or other high-income liberal meccas. Many of the Americans targeted for a hefty tax hike are successful small business owners. And unlike the financial engineers of the flush liberal meccas of New York, Chicago, or San Francisco, a lot of these small businesses add value beyond shuffling paper.

There is bipartisan agreement that small businesses are the main drivers of our dynamic economy. Small businesses create 74 percent of all new private sector jobs, according to the latest statistics. My President, President Obama, used a similar figure of 70 percent yesterday. Both sides agree that we ought not hurt the key job producers, small business. President Obama also mentioned his zero capital gains proposal for small business start-ups. Republicans agree with him on that.

We are still scratching our heads on why the Democratic leadership doesn't agree with the President on that small business-friendly proposal. So if we all agree that small business is the key to creating new jobs, why does the Democratic leadership and the President's budget propose a new tax increase directed at the American small businesses most likely to create new jobs?

How do I come to that conclusion? Here's how. According to a recent Gallup survey, about half of the small business owners employing over 20 workers would pay higher taxes under the President's budget. I have a chart that shows that nearly 1 million small businesses will be hit by this tax increase. Here is another chart that shows that roughly half the firms that

employ two-thirds of small business workers, those with 20 or more workers, are hit by the tax rate hikes in the President's budget.

According to Treasury Department data, these small businesses, account for nearly 70 percent of small business income. In addition, the budget would reduce itemized deductions for donations to charity, home mortgage interest, and State and local taxes. Combating tax shelters and closing corporate loopholes can be good tax policy, but higher general business taxes during a recession doesn't make much sense.

If these higher taxes were dedicated to reducing the deficit, the Democratic leadership could argue this was their version of fiscal responsibility. We Republicans would disagree with this approach, but at least we would agree with the goal. But, a close examination of the budget reveals higher taxes and higher spending. So, from an overall standpoint, deficits will remain as far as the eye can see. Drawing on our principles, Republicans will work with President Obama on making permanent tax relief for families.

We, however, will oppose tax increases that harm America's small businesses. We Republicans also will scrutinize and question a broad-based energy tax that cuts jobs and could, according to MIT, cost consumers and businesses trillions. In these troubled economic times, we ought to err on the side of keeping both taxes and spending low and reduce the deficits. That will be a necessary condition to returning our economy back to growth and providing more opportunities for all Americans.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SANDERS). The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. COBURN. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. COBURN. Mr. President, I rise to talk about the pending bill. I understand we will have a unanimous consent agreement that the majority leader and I have worked out on the omnibus lands package. Having spent 10 years in a legislative body, I understand how things work, and I know we have a bill that is a compilation of 150-plus other bills that is so peppered with individual parochial interests that the hopes of defeating the bill are somewhat diminished. However, I would be remiss in the oath I took to the Constitution to not try to inform my colleagues in the Senate as well as—and more importantly—the people of this country what is coming about with this bill.

Yesterday, one of my constituents sent me a news article described as the following: "Natural Gas Rig Shutting Means Prices May Double." Natural

gas right now is under \$4 a million British thermal units. It was as high as \$13 in the height of what I would say was the manipulation of the commodity market but also in the height of the expansion we saw in economies around the world.

Why is that important to the American public? When people look for natural resources, they look for natural resources—to find them—so they can sell them at a profit. Natural gas exploration in the continental United States—not offshore—is fraught with great difficulties in terms of finding great supplies. However, what we do know in terms of the law of economics is: If you cut exploration in natural gas by 45 percent—and that is just through February of this year versus July of last year—what is going to happen? What is going to happen to natural gas prices? Well, they are going to rise and they are going to rise significantly and, most probably, they are going to approach \$10 a year from now.

Is it a great policy we are going to pass a bill that is going to make it harder to find additional natural gas resources in this country, that shuts off 13 trillion cubic feet of known reserves right now? That is enough to supply our country for 2 years. Is it smart for us to pass a lands package that is going to take 2.8 million acres and say: You cannot ever touch it for energy, regardless if natural gas is \$45 a million Btu's, you cannot touch it?

But at the same time, if our demand rises, what are we going to do? We are going to import it. So we are doing two things highly negative in the long run that will have major effects on the average American family. One is, we are going to limit the ability to go find it; and, No. 2, we are going to continue to fund imports with our dollars to burn the same natural gas we could have developed here.

The same thing could be said for oil. We all remember oil at \$140 a barrel. We pretty well like that gasoline—in my hometown, I filled up with regular unleaded gasoline for \$1.64 a gallon this weekend versus the highest it got in Oklahoma, I think, was \$3.90 a gallon. We like that. But we are getting ready to pass a bill that says the likelihood of us going back to that era of demand—supply inequality—will be increased and that to pay for that will be a tax on every American family's budget. It is a pretty tough tax if you are commuting or if you are heating your home with natural gas or if you are buying heating oil. Many of our families in the Northeast and upper Midwest bought their heating oil at the peak of prices.

So the opposition to this bill, from my standpoint, comes from a lot of areas, and I am going to spend some time outlining that today. But I want to be a predictor of what is going to happen. What is going to happen is energy prices are going to rise. If you are the greenest of green and think we can provide all our energy from renewables,

great. But what you cannot deny is the fact that it is going to take us 20 years to get there. What this bill is going to do is markedly hamper our ability to supply needed energy products for American families. It is not just oil and gas.

Ninety percent of the known geothermal and absolutely clean, safe, environmentally friendly way to produce steam and power a turbine to produce electricity is taken off in this bill—90 percent of the known geothermal reserves. So when we say we want to use renewables and we want to get away from a carbon-based source, there are some things we have to do. One is to recognize how long it is going to take us and make sure we do not have a disruption in our supplies; No. 2, markedly increase the supplies we need in the meantime; and, No. 3, not hamstring our ability to use completely renewable sources from sources we know are available to us right now.

There have been a lot of claims this bill is not controversial. Well, coming from an energy-producing State, it is controversial as all get out for Oklahoma. When we say we are going to shut off large portions of this country forever to future energy exploration, it does not just impact—Oklahomans have cheap energy. We are the least impacted by it. What the American citizens ought to be asking is: What did we get individually that can put 150 bills together that will make your Representative in Congress vote for something that in the long term is damaging to our energy independence and will keep us more dependent on people who are supplying energy who do not necessarily believe in freedom, do not necessarily like our way of life, and do not necessarily believe we ought to have the standard of living we have?

This bill has 1,248 pages—1,248 pages. There is a total of 170 unique, different bills. This bill, also, is going to cost the American taxpayer—our kids—\$10 billion, and it has \$900 million of mandatory spending that is going to be spent no matter what anybody in Congress says. So we are going to add another \$11 billion to our spending. It is opposed by over 200 different groups. Whether it is property rights groups, the Chamber of Commerce, energy-producing groups, recreation interests across the country, they are uniform in their opposition to this bill.

It is not necessarily just in their own self-interests they are in opposition to it. They know what is coming. They are not thinking short term. They are not thinking about how I look good at home. They are thinking about what is in the best long-term interests of our Nation.

One hundred of these bills have no effect on us as individual Americans. They will not have an effect on energy. They will not have an effect on property rights. There probably is no problem with them. But 70 of these bills will markedly impact every American.

When this bill went through the House on suspension—and it is impor-

tant you know what “suspension” means: You get a vote on it, but you do not get any opportunity to amend it—it did not pass the requirement to pass the House without amendment.

This bill has been smoldering here for 2 years. I wish it would smolder a whole lot longer. I will have to admit that. This is the first time in 2 years we are going to be able to offer an amendment to change this bill. It is going to be a limited set of amendments: six amendments on 1,248 pages of legislation, on \$11 billion worth of spending, but, more importantly, on a significant decline in the American people's standard of living because energy costs are going to rise. They are going to rise anyway, but they are going to rise dramatically because of what we are going to do in this bill.

It is a massive collection of unique provisions, some quite controversial. There is actually a section of wilderness area in one Congressman's district that nobody from his district wants and neither did he, but it got put in the bill, and he has no ability to amend the bill. So we are going to take a section out of one of our States and put it in a wilderness area, where the citizens do not want that to happen and the Congressman does not have the ability to try to stop it. That is what happens when you start playing games in trading things in Congress to pass a bill that cannot pass any other way except for buying off votes with something that looks good at home.

It creates 10 new National Heritage Areas. It creates three new units of the National Park Service. We have a \$9 billion backlog in just keeping the buildings maintained in our national parks right now, and we are going to add three new parks—at a time when we are going to have an over \$2 trillion deficit. We are going to have a deficit that will add \$7,000 per man, woman, and child, \$28,000 per family this year alone—this year alone.

It creates 14 new studies to expand or create more national parks. It creates 80 new wilderness designations or expansions. It takes 2.2 million acres of direct Federal land and says: You can never touch this, regardless of how much oil is there, how much natural gas is there, how much geothermal is there. You can never touch it. No matter what our need is, we will never be able to access it.

How stupid are we when we are going to tell the rest of the world's suppliers of oil we are going to limit our ability to influence their pricing to us?

It creates 92 wild and scenic river designations—that is more than we have total wild and scenic rivers now—1,100 miles of shoreline. It is going to kill an LNG, liquefied natural gas, port in Massachusetts that is not a scenic river at all because we are so green we do not want to use natural gas, one of the cleanest carbon-based fuels we have, and we are going to eliminate the ability for people in the Northeast to have cheap natural gas. But we are going to do it.

It creates six new National Trails. I will tell you, the trails it creates have eminent domain. Even though this bill says they are not going to use it, the bureaucrats are still going to have the ability to take private property from individuals without their consent.

The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act will prohibit any gas transmission lines, any electrical lines, any utility lines, that may be in our Nation's best interest, to either pump oil from Canada or natural gas. You cannot go near the river, so you cannot cross the river. So what we are going to do is, not only are we going to raise the cost, we are going to increase the cost of getting it here because we are going to have to go circuitous routes to bring energy to people in this country.

It includes 19 specific instances where Federal lands are permanently—permanently—withdrawn from future mineral and geothermal leasing. Three million acres are impacted by this permanent withdrawal. In the Wyoming Range that is in this bill, according to the National Petroleum Council, 12 trillion cubic feet of natural gas is proven and sitting there right now—and that is enough to run our country for almost 3 years—300 million barrels of oil. That is the most up-to-date study by the BLM. Each of the 19 withdrawal provisions of the 3 million acres also excludes future geothermal leasing. Studies performed by the Bureau of Land Management confirm geo-potential on many of the designations in this bill. In other words, it has been studied. I will have a chart later to show that. We know where the geothermal sources are in this country—clean energy, cheap, abundant—yet we are going to take it away. We are going to say we are not going to use it.

The threats posed by this bill to American energy independence have grown since the last time we considered this bill. Secretary Salazar has withdrawn 77 major leases in Utah. He has withdrawn eight—and these are leases that are already completed, signed, and paid for—energy leases in Wyoming, outside of this bill. He has delayed any increase in offshore drilling because it “needs more study.” We do it with perfection in the Gulf of Mexico. The vast quantity of our oil that we produce domestically comes from there. He has delayed the development of oil shale because it needs more testing, except all the prototype plants have been highly effective in how they have utilized it.

The bill is another direct challenge from Congress to President Obama's pledge to clean up the earmark process. There are multiple earmarks in this bill for things that none of us would be proud of and none of us would say would meet with any common sense, especially in light of the fiscal and monetary difficulties in which we find ourselves.

There is \$1 billion for a water project in California to repopulate 500 salmon. There is \$5 million for a wolf compensation and prevention program for

wolves that we reintroduced in the wild that are now killing cattle. So we are reintroducing wolves, and then we are going to pay the ranchers for the cows the wolves killed.

There is \$3.5 million to celebrate the 450th anniversary of St. Augustine in 2015. Do we really think right now we ought to spend \$3.5 million to plan a birthday party in 2015 when we are stealing every penny we are going to spend this year—in the remaining portion of this year—from our kids and our grandkids? Is that really something we want to do?

We are going to spend a quarter of a million dollars to study whether Alexander Hamilton's boyhood estate in St. Croix, the U.S. Virgin Islands, is suitable as a new national park. Well, let's do it after we get out of the mess we are in; let's don't do it now. Let's not spend a quarter of a million dollars. What would a quarter of a million dollars do? It would buy at least 20 families health insurance for a year, 20 families who don't have it. It would supply lots of small businesses with the working capital they require to keep going and keep their employees on board instead of laying them off.

This bill gives \$5 million for the National Tropical Botanical Garden to operate and maintain new gardens in Hawaii and Florida. Is that really a priority for us right now? Is that something—if we were a family, would we be making those kinds of decisions? It gives us a new ocean exploration program which has as its No. 1 job to locate, find, and document historic shipwrecks. It may be a good idea in a time of plenty, but in a time of hurt it is a terrible idea.

There is \$12 million for the Smithsonian to build a new greenhouse for a national orchid collection. Is that something we should do now? A full waiver for the Cave Institute in New Mexico to be fully funded by the American taxpayers rather than by the State of New Mexico. It just happens to be one of those little things snuck into the bill.

What about property rights? There is little transparency. It is estimated the Federal Government now owns 653 million acres, 1 out of 3 acres in the United States, and 1 out of 2 acres in the Western United States. The 10 national heritage areas—what does that mean? The Park Service funds advisory committees in these heritage areas which means they have an advantage over the local residents because they have money. So they come in and pass requirements and code changes that impact private property rights in all of these areas.

So if you are in the heritage area or if you are abutting it, you now have the Federal Government funding a group that may be counter to your own private property rights. Eighty wilderness areas and another 2.2 million acres. Recent court decisions have now said being in the wilderness area isn't enough. If you are close to it, you can't

have your rights; we will decide what you do with your land.

Ninety-two national scenic rivers—again, eminent domain—anything touching it or anything they want to have touch it, they have eminent domain to take private property, and we are creating 92 of those. So if you live along one of those rivers, you should worry about whether you are going to have the freedom to do with your property as you want, whether you are on the river or not. You just have to be in proximity.

Six national trail designations. The underlying National Trails Act grants land acquisition and eminent domain authority. So if they want to put a national trail through your backyard, they can come and take your home. Do we really want to give that kind of capability, and is now the time to do it?

Here is a quote from the National Property Rights Advocates:

This bill is a serious threat to all property owners in this country. Over the past several decades there has been a proliferation of programs dedicated to the preservation of land that has extended the grasp of the Federal Government and its influence over private property rights.

Amen.

As a result of this legislation, landowners will see their property value diminish due to increased land use regulations and outdoor recreation enthusiasts will find new restrictions on both public and private land.

So you can have private land where you allow people to horseback ride, but if you are next to one of these areas and they are not allowed in that area, you are not going to be allowed. So you may actually even lose income because you no longer have that as a capability of your property.

The experts go on and say:

This legislation should never arbitrarily attempt to seize land from the public and restrict its use as this package will.

The problem is, there is no priority in this bill—there is no priority for energy independence or less dependence. There is no priority to protect rights that are guaranteed under the Constitution.

Let's think for a minute about what we have tasked the American agencies with. The National Park Service, here is what they are responsible for: 84 million acres of land in the National Park Service, 391 different units; 54 national wilderness areas which include 44 million acres; 15 wild and scenic rivers, and we are getting ready to add 92 to that; 40 national heritage areas, and we are getting ready to add 12; 28 national memorials, 4 national parkways, 120 national historic parks, 20 national preserves and reserves, 24 national battlefields, 18 national recreation areas, 74 national monument areas, 10 national seashores, 4 national lake shores, 3,565 miles of national scenic trails, 12,250 miles of unpaved trails, 46 miles of Canadian border, 285 miles of Mexican border to patrol and manage, 27,000 historic structures—27,000 historic structures that are falling down—

26,830 camp sites, 7,580 administrative and public use buildings, 8,505 monuments and statues, 1,804 bridges and tunnels, 505 dams, 8,500 miles of road that they have to maintain yearly, 680 waste water treatment systems, and 272 million visits annually.

The National Park Service has a \$9.6 billion maintenance backlog, so severe that the backlog grew \$400 million since the time we first passed this bill and its coming back to us. The backlog has grown by \$400 million, which includes some of our treasures—the USS Arizona Memorial, where 1,117 American sailors were killed—and faces a backlog of \$33.4 million. It is not getting fixed; Gettysburg National Battlefield, 51,000 casualties in 3 days, \$29 million backlog; the Grand Canyon National Park, \$299 million backlog; the Statue of Liberty Park, \$197 million backlog; The National Mall in Washington, DC—The Mall that is just west of here—\$700 million backlog. There is even miscellaneous and supposedly noncontroversial provisions in the bill that could pose a threat to American families. It is not intended; it is just that it is a consequence.

In this bill is a little provision that if you are on Federal lands and you happen to pick up a rock—not intentionally to steal a fossil, but if it is a fossil, 5 years in jail, and they can confiscate your automobile, plus a fine. One of the amendments we have tries to fix that. We don't have a big problem with fossils being stolen, but we are going to fix a problem that isn't great by this amendment, by this bill, and we need to clean it up.

There is a provision to codify an existing agency program at the Bureau of Land Management which will, in fact, consolidate power over 38 million acres of land onto a few anti-energy, anti-recreational bureaucrats. This jurisdiction will extend the wilderness study areas lands, many of which have been deemed already nonsuitable for wilderness.

I am going to make a point later in the presentation just to show my colleagues—as a matter of fact, I will make it right now. One of the things the law requires is that we, in fact, do studies on the applicability of lands for wilderness area. My staff just had time to go through California, Oregon, and Washington. By law, it is mandated there has to be a study to see if it is suitable. I am going to read through some of these.

Granite Mountain, CA. It is not suitable for wilderness recommendation because resource conflicts in the WSA include modern to high geothermal resource potential. It should never get a wilderness designation. We are going to designate it a wilderness area.

Spring Basin, oil and gas, moderate potential for occurrence based on several factors. Soda Mountain wilderness study area, California; again, the entire wilderness is considered to have a moderate potential for the occurrence of oil and gas. So we know in many of

these areas there is tremendous energy potential for us, and we are going to shut it off forever.

Sabinoso wilderness study area, oil and gas; Pinto Mountain, CA, zero acres—this is by the Bureau of Land Management—zero acres were deemed suitable for wilderness. Yet we are going to put that area in a wilderness classification. Beauty Mountain, CA, no wilderness is recommended for this wilderness study area. The wilderness values for most of the area are not outstanding at all and commonplace.

Little Jackson, Big Jackson, wilderness study area, Idaho, natural gas pipeline between it and a supposed source of minerals; Bruno River wilderness study area, geothermal resources are found at the northern and southern ends of it. The solitude of this area is frequently disrupted by flying military aircraft utilizing the U.S. Air Force bombing range just east of the wilderness study area.

I can go through Oregon, Idaho, Washington—and we will go through the rest of them before this debate is over—but the fact is, we are not even paying attention to what the law says. When we have a study that says we shouldn't be, we are putting them in wilderness areas anyway.

One of the things I would like to do is commend to my colleagues highlights of GAO-09-425T, a study released March 3, 2009, on the Department of the Interior by the GAO. I would bet my colleagues a nickel against a penny, or any multiple of that, that less than one person in the Senate besides myself has read this report because you can't read this report and come out and vote on this bill. This is the Government Accountability Office. What they say is, the Department of the Interior is essentially poorly run, poorly managed, and the safety and welfare of our people who are on BLM lands and in the national parks is at risk because of the poor management and the lack of oversight that has been carried out by Congress. It is the very same committee that brings us this bill.

Mr. President, I also commend to my colleagues the testimony of Mary Kendall, the acting inspector general for the Department of the Interior, her statement before the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies. When you read it, it will scare you to death. Here is what the internal inspector general is saying, and it mirrors what the GAO is saying. Yet this has received zero consideration from the authors of this bill; otherwise, we would see an opportunity to fix the problems that are outlined in these two documents in this bill. There has been no consideration to fix the problems and no significant oversight.

What does it find? At no point during their testimony did they agree that it was a good idea to add any additional responsibilities to the Department of the Interior, based on what has been

found: We find ourselves in the biggest mess in terms of maintenance. There is actually a public safety and health issue for people who are visiting our parks highlighted throughout both of these reports. There is no attempt to fix that, no attempt to authorize the money to get the backlog caught up with what we presently have and should be taking care of. There is no attempt whatsoever.

In the GAO report—I quoted almost \$9 billion—they are saying it is between \$13.2 billion and \$19.4 billion to get our national parks up to date and manage the things we should be managing. In contrast, the entire budget for the Department of the Interior in 2007 was under \$11 billion. We are going to take significant moneys that should be spent on the backlog of repair and maintenance and we are going to use that to implement this 1,243-page bill. I don't get it. I don't understand the lack of common sense. I understand the political drive. I understand we want to do things for people back at home. But I don't understand why there hasn't been a change in behavior given the economic situation we are in. I flat don't get it. I guess I have a lot to learn about politics.

The GAO wasn't necessarily critical of the management of the Department of the Interior, they were really critical of Congress. They said that although Interior has made a concentrated effort to address its deferred backlog, the dollar estimate of the backlog has continued to escalate. It sounds as if they need help. The last thing they need is another 3 million acres for which they have to be responsible. They classify the backlog into four categories: roads, bridges, and trails, between \$6 billion and \$9 billion; buildings, including historic buildings, between \$2 billion and \$3.5 billion; irrigation, dams, and other water structures, between \$2.4 billion and \$3.6 billion; recreation sites and fisheries, between \$2 billion and \$2.93 billion.

The Department of Interior by itself manages more than 500 million acres of Federal land, more than 1.8 billion acres of the Outer Continental Shelf, and its 70,000 employees working in 2,400 locations. Yet congressional leadership intends to add another 3 million acres and hundreds of new commitments to DOI in this bill.

In one instance of mismanagement, in this GAO report, GAO points out that the Fish and Wildlife Service is responsible for 132,000 acres of farmland, most of which it doesn't manage. However, even though these farmlands are unwanted, the Fish and Wildlife Service cannot sell these lands because they are now part of the National Wildlife Refuge System. So Fish and Wildlife owns thousands of acres of good farmland that it doesn't manage and doesn't even inspect. It is less than 13 percent of the land they inspect yearly. It is land we could use for agricultural production, but we don't use it because we in the Congress have handicapped them.

What the GAO report also said was, in describing the maintenance backlog, that the deterioration of these facilities can impair public health and safety, reduce employee morale and productivity, and increase the cost for major repairs and early replacement of structures and equipment.

Other groups have made similar observations. According to the National Parks Conservation Association, "From neglected trails to dirty or deteriorating facilities, national parks across the country are showing the strain of budget shortfalls in excess of \$600 million annually. . . ." It will be greater than that this year. "The visitor center at the USS Arizona Memorial in Hawaii is overcrowded, its foundation is cracking, and it is sinking. . . . a shortage of staff and funding limits the ability of the Park Service to maintain campgrounds at Nevada's Great Basin National Park. Broken benches, dilapidated buildings, and a crumbling boardwalk greet visitors to Riis Park in Gateway National Recreation Area in New York and New Jersey. Chaco Culture National Historical Park in New Mexico lacks funding to maintain and repair the park's 28 miles of backcountry trails. As a result, trails are damaged by heavy use and weather, compromising the experiences of visitors and the integrity of cultural resources and nearby natural resources that become trampled when visitors cannot follow the trails." They are not maintained, and that becomes an ecological problem.

According to Acting IG Mary Kendall, "Our work has documented decades of maintenance, health and safety issues that place the Department of Interior employees and the public at risk." She listed the following examples of where poor management has led to safety concerns:

The U.S. Park Police, responsible for maintaining security at national icons, "failed to establish a comprehensive security program and lacks adequate staffing and formal training for those responsible for protection [of those assets]."

Opportunities for improvement remain in the security of our Nation's dams.

The Department's Office of Law Enforcement, Security, and Emergency Management still struggles with issuing centralized policy and providing effective oversight of DOI law enforcement.

In 2006, they found a National Park Service visitor center literally falling apart, severe deterioration at the Bureau of Indian Education elementary and secondary schools, and Fish and Wildlife employees working for almost 7 years in two buildings that were condemned and closed to the public.

That is how good the oversight is that we have done.

They identified abandoned mines where members of the public had been "killed, injured, or exposed to dangerous environmental contaminants"

by abandoned mines, and Congress is prioritizing a massive increase in the public lands without funding or prioritizing the true national concerns in DOI.

What was also found in the GAO report is that despite increasing fire-fighting funds fourfold, there is incompetent forest fire management. The fact is that they are made worse because of poor management. We have done nothing for that.

Her statement was:

In other words, DOI has not managed to even develop goals for maximizing fire management and prevention funds.

Another statement is:

High prevalence of waste and fraud in the procurement and Federal assistance process.

They also found problems throughout the solicitation process: a lack of presolicitation planning, a lack of competition, selection of inappropriate award vehicles, and poor administration of contracts and grants.

Mary Kendall said:

Financial management has remained a top challenge for the department.

Why don't we fix it? You cannot fix what you cannot measure. Yet we are going to add this bloated bill.

There is something everybody should know. For the Native American schools in this country, we are spending a billion dollars a year for 50,000 kids. And when you look at performance, what you see is something akin, in many areas, to Washington, DC—not all but in many. The cost per student running through that is \$20,000. We could put them in the best private schools, with the best private teachers, and bunk them, for \$20,000 a year. Yet we continue to allow this.

BLM grazing fees collected were \$12 million in fiscal year 2004—that is the latest year for which we have numbers, which tells you something about the accounting—even though the cost to implement the grazing program was \$58 million. We would be better off eliminating the grazing program and saving \$46 million.

So what is it about this bill that has had me so persistent? I will tell you. It is a great example of what we do wrong. It is a great example of the worst tendency of Congress. We were in an energy-short environment, and even though it doesn't feel that way today, it will feel that way 10, 12, 18 months from now. We are going to eliminate the potential for us getting out of it. We are going to add significant responsibilities to an agency that both the GAO and their own IG says is in trouble. Yet we don't approach anything to fix it.

We are going to make everybody feel good in this body because they all have something in the bill and they can go home and say: Look what I did, look what I accomplished. I got something that is important for our State. The problem with that thinking is that, when we only think in a parochial manner—if I only think about Okla-

homa or if the Senator from Texas only thinks about Texas or any other Senator thinks only about their State and themselves—the whole country loses. Not once in our oath does it say that our allegiance is to our State. What it says is that our allegiance is to our country. And if our country is not healthy, no State can be healthy. Yet we have allowed parochialism and the politics of the Senate to design a bill that, for sure, will pass but which in the long run is going to be harmful to the country. It is going to pass. It will have 65 or 70 votes, maybe even 80 votes, because the press release at home is more important than the principle in Washington. Consequently, not only will we spend this \$11 billion and overburden an agency that is struggling to keep itself above water, we will commit the Department of Interior to further backlogs, further problems, and we will strangle our ability to respond both with clean energy and the energy we know we are going to need for the next 20 years the next time the supply-demand balance gets upset.

The question the American people ought to ask is, Is it worth it? Is it worth it for somebody from Oklahoma to get something and to do this to the Nation as a whole? Is it responsible? Is that how our country is going to work in the future? Are we going to always place parochial interests first or are we going to go back and grab ahold of the heritage which made this country great, which says the politician doesn't matter; the principles and forbearance of our forefathers in accomplishing what is best for the nation, is that going to win the day? My thoughts are that it won't. When it doesn't win the day, I don't lose—I fought for it—but my kids lose, my grandkids lose, and so does everybody else in this country. In the name of playing the good game, what we are doing is undermining our country.

We have a lot of financial problems in front of us today. We as a nation can get out of those problems. As a matter of fact, we will get out of those in spite of the U.S. Congress because what makes America great is its people, not its politicians. What makes America great is the fact that the people get up every day, and no matter what is ahead of them, they will struggle to try to defeat the problems in front of them to make a better life for themselves, their kids, and their neighbors. We could learn a great deal from the average American citizen as we approach the legislation.

This little bill, which I assure you nobody in this body has read, is a compilation of 170 bills—some good; some don't have any of the negative effects I have described. But 50 of them are going to have devastating effects. And how we respond, how the American people respond to our doing this, is going to reflect on the character of the American people. They need to become informed about what we are doing.

Later today, we will have a unanimous consent that I thank the majority leader for. He has the toughest job in the Senate, and I recognize that. I have given him fits on this bill. I don't apologize for that. I think this bill is the wrong thing at the wrong time for the wrong reason. But we will have a unanimous consent agreement that allows six amendments, which I will offer either later this evening or tomorrow, which eliminate some of the stupidity in this bill. It won't fix the bill. It won't fix the problem I have described.

We are then going to walk out of here happy, because it will go back to the House, not have a chance to be amended in the House, and the President is going to sign a bill that is going to hurt our energy independence. We are going to hear all sorts of statements to the contrary, but that is not true. The fact is it is going to hurt our capability of becoming more self-sufficient for our own energy needs.

So a year or 18 months from now, when you are no longer paying under \$2 for gasoline, and it is \$4, I hope the American people will remember this bill, because this is the start of the battle against undermining utilizing our own resources in our own country for what is in the best long-term interest—not the short-term—for our country. And it doesn't have anything to do with climate change or global warming. Because if it did, we wouldn't worry about 20 years of carbon usage when we know we are going to go away from it.

Mr. President, I thank you for your patience and the time today. I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. KAUFMAN). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. BINGAMAN. Mr. President, I have a unanimous consent agreement that I am going to propound, and I believe it is acceptable on all sides.

I ask unanimous consent that all postclosure time be yielded back, and the motion to proceed to H.R. 146 be agreed to; that once the bill is reported, the Bingaman substitute amendment, which is at the desk, be called up for consideration; that once the substitute amendment has been reported, it be considered read; that the following list of amendments be the only first-degree amendments in order; that upon disposition of the listed amendments, the substitute amendment, as amended, if amended, be agreed to, the bill, as amended, be read a third time, and the Senate then vote on passage of the bill, that passage of the bill be subject to a 60-vote threshold; that if the threshold is achieved and upon passage, the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table; that the

title amendment, which is at the desk, be considered and agreed to and the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table; provided further debate time prior to a vote in relation to each amendment be limited to 60 minutes, equally divided and controlled in the usual form; and that no amendment be in order to any amendment prior to a vote in relation thereto; that if there is a sequence of votes in relation to the amendments, then prior to each vote in a sequence, there be 4 minutes of debate, divided as specified above, and that after the first vote in any sequence, subsequent votes be limited to 10 minutes each.

Here is the list of amendments: Coburn amendment No. 680, regarding barring new construction. The second is Coburn amendment No. 679, regarding striking provisions restricting alternative energy. The third is Coburn amendment No. 683, regarding striking targeted provisions. The fourth is Coburn amendment No. 675, regarding eminent domain. The fifth is Coburn amendment No. 677, regarding annual report. And the sixth is Coburn amendment No. 682 regarding subtitle D clarification.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered. The motion to proceed is agreed to.

REVOLUTIONARY WAR AND WAR OF 1812 BATTLEFIELD PROTECTION ACT

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill.

The bill clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 146) to establish a battlefield acquisition grant program for the acquisition and protection of nationally significant battlefields and associated sites of the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 684

(Purpose: In the nature of a substitute)

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the substitute amendment.

The bill clerk read as follows:

The Senator from New Mexico [Mr. BINGAMAN] proposes an amendment numbered 684.

(The amendment is printed in today's RECORD under "Text of Amendments".)

Mr. BINGAMAN. Mr. President, at this point I believe I intend to put a quorum call in. My colleague from Idaho is going to speak in a few minutes, as I understand it, to discuss some of the issues involved with the legislation. I plan to speak myself and then we will await Senator COBURN's return to the floor so he can call up the first of his amendments.

I am informed that the Senator from Oklahoma wishes to speak. Accordingly, I will not put in a quorum call at this time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma is recognized.

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, a lot of my colleagues have come down and talked about the outrage at the exces-

sive bonuses for AIG executives after, then, the \$180 billion bailout. I think we should be mad at a lot of people, I guess, right now—certainly the executives who were the ones who ran what was once a great company into the ground. But that is not where the blame ends. It is not where the buck stops. I know I will upset some of my colleagues when I remind them and the American people that much of the blame should be directed right here in this Chamber to Members of this body, the Senate, and to the other side of the Capitol, because that is where it all started in October.

It was October 10 when 75 percent of the Senators voted to give an unprecedented amount of money to an unelected bureaucrat to do with as he wished. This happened to be \$700 billion, the largest amount ever authorized, if you could use that word, in the history of the world. So 75 percent of the Senators in this Chamber said to both Treasury Secretary Hank Paulson and Tim Geithner—let's keep in mind he was in on this deal, too—when voting in favor of the massive bailout, to go ahead and take the \$700 billion and do anything with it you want.

How can they support giving money to a bureaucrat to "do anything you want"? There was nothing there. He gave a promise. He said it was to go buy damaged assets, but he didn't do that. Instead, that money went to banks and I don't know that there are any positive results in the way of credit as a result of that effort.

When it comes to AIG, outrage doesn't even come close. I have said from a long time, from the outset, in fact, that the Federal Government needs an exit strategy for its entanglement in the financial system. The revelation that AIG is trying to give hundreds of millions of dollars in bonuses at the same time it is the recipient of the largest government bailout in history shows why. How can you give out bonuses when the taxpayer has to rescue you from sudden failure? What are these bonuses for exactly?

I understand bonuses should be a reward for a job well done. It is pretty clear when they are getting bailed out by the taxpayers it was not a job well done. What could possibly justify the bonuses? I normally would not support having the government try to micromanage pay packages in any industry, but these are not normal times. AIG has received almost \$180 billion in U.S. taxpayers' bailouts. The U.S. Government owns 80 percent of the company. How the executives at AIG do not get the fact that these are not normal times is absolutely mind boggling.

I have been saying for a long time we need a change of course in our approach to the financial bailouts. President Obama's Treasury Secretary came out over a month ago, February 11, and he said he had a plan for changing course. We have been waiting since February 11 for that plan. Nobody has it. We do not have any idea if anybody

has a plan out there, but certainly we have not heard anything from Tim Geithner.

I don't know how people at AIG, giving out or receiving a bonus right now, can look themselves in the mirror, but my colleagues and I in Congress can look you in the eye right now and say if we do not see action on this and action on it soon from the administration, you can be sure we will do all we can to right this wrong to get these bonuses back.

There are several people working on how, mechanically, that would work. But above all, we need the people to demand a change in course when it comes to a financial rescue approach.

I hesitate saying this but—and I hope this will never happen again—at the time, October 10, when a decision was made to influence 75 percent of the Senators in this Chamber to give \$700 billion to an unelected bureaucrat to do with as he wished and then we turned around and complained about what he did with it was not reasonable. I hope this never happens again.

With that, I believe there are some things in the works now that are going to change this situation. I hope we can be successful. It is unconscionable what has happened.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. CRAPO. Mr. President, I am very pleased today to stand in behalf of and support of H.R. 146. This is what we passed earlier in the Senate as S. 22 and now, because of the procedural necessities between the House and the Senate as we seek to provide an opportunity for this legislation to reach the desk of the President, it has been amended to H.R. 146.

To call this legislation bipartisan is an understatement. This bill contains over 150 individual provisions sponsored by almost 50 different Members, almost half of our colleagues in this Senate. It represents every region of the country and has almost an equal number of bills from each side of the aisle. It is going to provide significant protections to existing public lands, improve recreation, cultural and historic opportunities, and provide important economic benefits for rural economy States such as my home State of Idaho.

Every bill in the package has gone through regular order. Most have had multiple hearings and markups in the Energy Committee. All are fully supported by the committee chairman and the ranking member. In fact, many of the provisions, such as my top legislative priority, the Owyhee initiative, are the result of years of extensive collaboration at the State and local levels