

The National Tropical Botanical Garden is a national resource for education and career development. Over four decades, it has developed a full spectrum of educational offerings that provide opportunities for the next generation of scientists. Over 5,000 school-aged children are educated each year in conservation principles and practices. The Horticultural Internship Program trains undergraduates in horticulture, botany, and conservation.

In addition, the National Tropical Botanical Garden is a national resource for medical research. Its researchers have developed and hold patents on a potential anti-HIV drug called Prostratin that is currently going through clinical trials and are also working to find the cause for Alzheimer's and Parkinson's diseases. Once a year, it holds a course accredited by the American Medical Association that provides 16 credits to medical professionals in herbal remedies derived from plants. By enacting this provision into law, I am hopeful that the National Tropical Botanical Garden will be able to continue with its important work for years to come.

The Paleontological Resources Preservation Act, title VI, subtitle D, helps protect and preserve the Nation's important fossil resources that are found on Federal lands for the benefit of our citizens. As a matter of clarification, this bill covers only paleontological remains on Federal lands and in no way affects archaeological or cultural resources under the Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979 or the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act.

The provision to preserve paleontological resources, in its original and amended form, never intended to undermine the current practice of casual collecting that is being enjoyed on Federal lands. Notwithstanding the educational benefits and the major fossil discoveries made by amateur collectors and curio hunters, this title addresses the increasing problem of intentional fossil theft on Federal lands. Vertebrate fossils are rare and important natural resources that have become increasingly endangered due to an increase in the illegal collection of fossil specimens for commercial sale. Recognizing that there was no unified policy regarding the treatment of fossils by Federal land management agencies, I worked to include this provision in the act to help protect and conserve fossil specimen, a valuable scientific resource. This act will provide uniformity to the patchwork of statutes and regulations that previously existed. Further, it will create a comprehensive national policy for preserving and managing fossils and other artifacts found on Federal land, and will prevent future illegal trade.

Title VI, subtitle E, the Izembek National Wildlife Refuge Land Exchange, addresses the needs of a rural and indigenous Alaska Native community. This subtitle allows developing a road

that would provide dependable and safe year-round access for the residents of King Cove in Alaska to the nearby Cold Bay Airport. I believe that the 800 residents of King Cove, most of which are native Aleut, have an absolute right to a reliable means of transport that is accessible under all weather conditions. This provision will help address many of the community's safety, health, and medical concerns. The United States has a responsibility to its indigenous people, and I am proud this provision will enable this community and appropriate State and Federal stakeholders to move forward on this initiative.

Passage of this act was an extensive, challenging, but ultimately fulfilling journey, and I am pleased with today's enactment of the Omnibus Public Lands Management Act of 2009 into law. I am confident this act will promote and strengthen opportunities to preserve Hawaii's and the Nation's environmental and cultural heritage. This landmark Act will serve as a stable foundation for us to continue to build upon.

HOUSING AND ECONOMIC RECOVERY ACT

Mr. SPECTER. Mr. President, I have sought recognition to discuss S. 253, a bill introduced by Senator JOHNNY ISAKSON to expand the home buyer tax credit. I support this legislation and have asked to be added as a cosponsor.

A robust home buyer tax credit will spur consumer demand and help to stop the fall in home values, which continues to affect millions of Americans. This decline is destroying the savings and net worth of Americans, whose homes are their most valuable asset. Many now have mortgages that exceed the value of their homes.

The Housing and Economic Recovery Act of 2008 created a tax credit for first-time home buyers of \$7,500 through June of 2009. However, taxpayers were required to repay the tax credit in equal installments over 15 years, which greatly reduced its effectiveness. The 2009 Stimulus bill waived the repayment requirement for purchases made in 2009, increased the value of the credit to \$8,000, and extended eligibility for purchases made through November of 2009.

Further improvements are necessary, in my judgement, to bring about a recovery in the housing market that will ultimately contribute to the turnaround of the broader economy. First, S. 253 would increase the value of the credit to 10 percent of the home price capped at 3.5 percent of Federal Housing Administration loan limits. These limits are geographically dependent and would yield a credit ranging between approximately \$10,000 and \$22,000.

Second, S. 253 would make the home buyer tax credit available to any individual who purchases a home, not just first-time home buyers. Doing so would

stimulate demand for the entire range of homes on the market.

Finally, S. 253 would increase the income eligibility threshold to individuals earning up to \$125,000, or \$250,000 in the case of a joint return. Currently, the credit is reduced for individuals with modified adjusted gross income, AGI, of more than \$75,000—\$150,000 for joint filers—and is zero for those individuals with modified AGI in excess of \$95,000—\$170,000 for joint filers. Again, doing so would stimulate demand for the entire range of homes on the market.

The need for a robust home buyer tax credit is clear. According to the National Association of Realtors, pending home sales hit a record low in January 2009. The pending home sales index, which measures the number of sales contracts signed each month, fell 7.7 percent to 80.4, the lowest mark since 2001 when tracking began.

At the same time, the housing affordability index rose 13.6 percentage points to a record high of 166.8. A value of 100 means that a family with the country's median income has exactly enough income to qualify for a mortgage on a median-priced existing single-family home. The higher the index, the better housing affordability is for buyers.

These two figures, taken together, demonstrate that a robust home buyer tax credit is needed to spur demand from Americans that are hesitant to buy homes for fear that prices will not stabilize.

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:

The rising cost of fuel along with the slowdown of the housing industry has had a big effect on my family. My husband is a residential contractor who builds homes all over the valley. There are days when he spends

more time in his vehicle than at the office. With the housing market slump plus the rising cost of gas we have already had to take pay cuts which will now put us in jeopardy of being able to pay all of our bills. We have also reduced the comfort level (temperature) of our home so that we can continue to pay our electricity and natural gas bills.

The most difficult thing I encounter is to my weekly trips to the grocery store. We have four growing children and it is not cheap to feed them and ourselves. Each week I purchase fewer groceries, yet my food bill does not diminish. Because of the interest in bio-fuels, essentials like vegetable oil, flour, and wheat are skyrocketing. The cost of vegetable oil has more than doubled in the last six months.

My biggest source of frustration is the lack of action the government is taking. It upsets me to no end that as a nation we are paying trillions of dollars every year for oil to nations that would very much like to destroy us. I believe that other methods for fuel need to be looked into, but first we need to be independent from outside oil. Let's use our resources and pay Americans to find, drill, and to refine our own oil! Let's help our economy by keeping the trillions of dollars we are pouring into the Middle East inside our own country. Not only would we keep our money here, but we could employ thousands of Americans as well. I feel like the leaders of this nation have lost sight of what is important to the people. Get rid of the laws that are restricting our prosperity, remember that the well being of human beings is more important than animals, fish, bugs etc. and accomplish something that will bring relief to hard working families.

Thank you for your time and for this opportunity to express my feelings and concerns. I have felt so powerless for so long when it comes to what is happening in this world, and I have prayed to know how I can make a difference. I hope that this will help you and that it will be an answer to my prayers as well. I appreciate the service you give to our State and Country.

SARAH, *Meridian*.

Like all Americans I am disturbed by the current state of affairs in this country that are due to energy costs. There are a number of things I believe the federal government can do to either ease the burden in the short term, or to urge the country forward to a much more independent state.

Short term suggestions:

Let us allow oil exploration in the currently prohibited coastal areas, the Alaska National Wildlife Refuge, the Rocky Mountains etc. A policy which ensures reasonable protections for the environment yet provides the energy the American people need, cannot be beyond the capacity of Congress to develop.

Encourage President Bush to direct all Executive Agencies to allow work shifts of four 10 hour days per week, for as many employees as possible. He and Congress should further encourage all employers in this country to do the same where possible. A 20% reduction in commuting fuel use for employees will help not only them, but reduce congestion, and therefore fuel use, for everyone else as well. Those employers who can shut down their operation for a day per week as well, will save substantially in overhead energy costs. If it is possible to implement an incentive for employers to do this the federal government should provide one.

Longer term suggestions:

The US Postal Service has a very large fleet of vehicles which would benefit from re-

generative braking systems. I'm specifically speaking of the Grumman Long Life Vehicles (LLV's). They are on the road six days a week, for a substantial portion of the day, and spend the majority of that day stopping and going repeatedly. Eaton Corporation is currently in partnership with Peterbilt to produce garbage trucks with hydraulic regenerative braking systems (http://www.greencarcongress.com/2004/10/eaton_and_peter.html). A group from UCLA has made substantial progress in using compressed air as a storage medium in passenger cars. As the USPS LLVs are all basically the same, a system could be retrofitted to them at a reasonable cost, and it would substantially lessen their fuel consumption. The Eaton system is designed for trucks in excess of 7000 pounds, and UCLA's system is not fully flushed out at this time. Nevertheless, I see this as an area the federal government can take the lead in, assisting in the proving of the technology, and in getting to the necessary economy of scale needed to bring these systems into the mainstream. I believe the USPS will be able to break even on the investment in a short enough period of time to make this viable.

The fleet of vehicles used by most government agencies is diverse. Including a choice for full electric vehicles is appropriate. While clearly a BLM ranger in Idaho won't be able to function with an electric car with a 100 mile range, I'm sure there are a number of applications for that same vehicle in the DC area. GSA's vehicle contracts should bring these vehicles into being within a few years.

We have the Renewable Fuels Standard (RFS), law on the books now, but it is not as good a law as it should be. It is written to reward industry for per gallon production of biofuels. The easiest fuel for them to produce is ethanol, which has about half the energy of gasoline, cannot be run in unmodified engines, and has such an affinity for water that we cannot use the existing fuel pipelines to transport it. (It absorbs any water it encounters so it must be reprocessed to remove that water.) This law should be modified to reward industry for the production of readily usable fuels, and do so on a gasoline energy equivalency scale. This will encourage more production of biodiesel, and butanol. Butanol is a 4 carbon alcohol (ethanol has two carbon atoms), it can be run in unmodified engines in much higher concentrations than ethanol, it is energy density is close to that of gasoline and it has nowhere near the affinity for water that ethanol has. Biodiesel is roughly equal to petroleum based diesel in energy, and requires very little if any modification of standard engines.

My understanding is that part of our gasoline price problem is due to the limited number of refineries in this country. Further the oil companies are not building new ones due to the onerous environmental regulations which apply to new facilities. (The older ones being grandfathered in with lower requirements.) I'm having difficulty separating the truth from the propaganda on this issue. If the preceding statements are indeed correct, we need to reevaluate the standards which a refinery must meet, and produce legislation which encourages the creation of new facilities. As an example, allow one refinery to be built which meets a lower pollution standard for each two new ones which meet the current requirements. Or allow a new refinery to meet lower standards for the first three years of operation, before it must be brought up to the higher standard. Or allow a new refinery to meet the lower standards, but require it only be built in areas which can tolerate the impact more readily.

The Federal Government needs to initiate an effort on par with the Apollo program or the Manhattan Project to relieve us from dependence on foreign oil. We need research into better batteries, capacitors with higher energy density, hydrogen storage systems with higher energy density, more efficient solar cells, inexpensive cellulase enzyme production, and other technologies which will allow this country to declare our independence again. I wouldn't mind if the financing came by reducing the foreign aid to countries which are not acting as our friends at this time. I sincerely hope that you, and your fellow Senators and Congressmen can help move the country forward from this untenable state,

STEVE, *Boise*.

With the higher energy prices, we are allocating more money for fuel and less to other items which in the long run will slow different parts of the economy...we have less money to use on discretionary items. We are becoming part of a nation that will only be able to work and will no longer be able to enjoy any free time to vacation or buy needed things that wear out because we cannot afford them. Only work and work—nothing else.

(1) I am for opening all aspects of drilling and we have the technology and expertise to drill responsibly. Drill offshore and open all venues to drill for the oil we have.

(2) Suspend production of different blends of fuel, one blend with different octane ratings for gas will free up production. Pick a blend and stay with it throughout the U.S.

(3) Streamline in months not years the application process for nuclear plants.

(4) This should be #1...remove all fuels and food products from the hands of big speculators. These were developed to hedge farm, and oil field production, let us get it back that way and smaller speculators can still supply liquidity to the market.

(5) If #4 does not work, then have safety valves by government intervention in order to keep undue hardship from befalling most Americans from high food and fuel prices?

(6) Urge Mr. Bernanke to raise interest rates to strengthen the dollar.

(7) Use monies sent overseas to other countries to pay off national debt to strengthen dollar.

(8) Raise taxes on people making over \$200,000 to help pay off national debt to strengthen dollar. We paid it off once. Let us do it again the same way. No need to re-invent the wheel; just get it done!

(9) Quit [partisan] bickering. These policies can help everyone; poverty knows no party. We need solutions and we need them now!

(10) Hefty windfall profits tax to companies that are exploiting us and jail time to the people that are making large profits from things that are necessities of life. Some are not eating, some are not heating their homes, some are dying because of it. Shame on them, and our seniors who are lifelong taxpayers are being shunned and left to die.

JIMMY.

I am a large fish farmer from the Magic Valley. Our energy costs have escalated over the past few years and unfortunately we deal with very perishable food. Our trout must be shipped directly to buyers without changing hands so we must cope with the huge cost of fresh transport across the nation. Idaho is a fabulous place to live and what makes it so nice are the wide open spaces between us all. So, just like having to send fish in a hurry, the citizens of Idaho must travel large distances. I grew up in Iowa, and there is a town

every five to ten miles. Here we must travel sometimes 50 to 80 miles between towns. Sometimes farther to purchase items from larger cities.

I think it is wise to look at the bigger picture and try to figure out where we can save fuel and where we cannot. I think that shipping products by rail is one very, very efficient way to use fuel. Unfortunately for most shippers the slow movement of products by rail discourages most of us from using this efficient means of transportation. If our government provided railroads with the funds needed to improve their infrastructure by double, triple, or even quadruple tracking the most efficient corridors, we may divert the thousands of inefficient trucks from using so much diesel fuel. It is possible to move products by rail nearly as fast as trucks can. This may in turn reduce demand and thus reduce the cost of fuel for the average citizens of Idaho.

DIRK.

I think that the oil companies should increase the production because it is putting our nation's truck drivers out of business and without truck drivers who will carry our freight.

CHARLIE, *Boise*.

I am from Burley, but am presently teaching English in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. I am sure you know that these gasoline prices Americans are now paying have been this high, or generally, much higher, in Europe, Asia, and Africa. We Americans do not have any room to whine, but rather we simply need to learn how to cope, like the rest of the world. Gas is ten bucks a gallon in the UK. Thailand is around the same, as is Japan. I say let us Americans experience what the rest of the world has been experiencing for many years.

BOB.

I am a retired federal employee, after 40 years of federal service as an air traffic controller, and six years military. I feel I have a voice as to what should happen in my retirement. My fuel costs have now exceed my food costs, which means less food. Having a small retirement fixed income means sacrifices in food, medical treatment, and other necessary expenses. The irony of it all is it is not necessary. Stop China's offshore drilling into our oil, authorize ANWR, stop exporting our Alaskan oil, listen intently to the Governor of Alaska and her solutions for some of our energy problems. Get all of our alternative energy systems up and running now, not next year, now. Just because other governments have failed, is it just fashionable that we should cause ours to fail??? Also, we as a people should be very embarrassed, with the way we have conducted our political fiasco the last few months. It has been a total disgrace.

GENE.

I am sending you this email in response to your questions on how energy prices are affecting me. I have a family of eight. We cannot downsize to a more fuel-efficient vehicle. We will have driven about 5,000 miles this summer just for family vacation, family reunions, and church camps. That is about \$1,300 in gas, assuming it averages \$4.00 per gallon. In addition, we are the kids' taxi for soccer, piano, guitar, dance, scouts, and other activities. Rising energy prices are causing a noticeable rise in the food prices for a family of 8. I am also a small business owner struggling to keep my business going. I have to travel. Airplane and rental car prices have gone up noticeably.

To address this issue, I think first priority is to increase drilling in the Gulf and ANWR

and build new domestic refineries. We know how to do that—we can do it relatively quickly. Once our foreign oil sources see that we are serious about domestic production, they will lower the prices to get us to forget about it and be complacent again. It will be a few years before our new oil rigs and refineries come online but the message to the world will be clear. Do not let the government impact big oil with extra taxes or limits. Nuclear and other alternative energy sources are good but will take too long to come online and have an impact. But we need to foster companies to develop those sources. Conservation by getting people to change their behavior is impractical and temporary. Conservation by developing new technologies will help our energy situation. I am helping develop technology with a client, Green Plug (www.greenplug.us), that will conserve electrical energy. In summary, let big oil and other energy companies flourish. Let capitalism work its wonders.

GARY, *Boise*.

My husband and I returned from Arizona yesterday, after being away from home for six weeks. The reason that we went to Arizona was to visit the Mayo Clinic, since the ailment my husband had was unable to be treated here. We are blessed to have family in the Phoenix area, so we were able to stay with them. The very big expense was the price we had to pay for fuel going and coming back. We live in McCall, and any time we need to see a specialist we have to drive to Boise which is a 100 miles away. Again the price of gas is choking us. It is sad to know that we have oil available in this country, but that Congress does everything to stop us from getting it. We listened to President Bush's speech today, and agree wholeheartedly with what he said. Our view is also that we need to develop nuclear power, and any other means of keeping this country self reliant.

LOUISE, *McCall*.

I am writing concerning the high cost of fuel, and in hopes that you and your fellow Senators will act and do something to give us relief. My husband and I own a small business doing demolition and excavation. We own one tractor truck and several pieces of heavy equipment. We are a "one-man" operation. Just the other day we paid \$4.34 a gallon for off-road diesel. On road diesel is even higher. It takes almost \$1,000 to fill the tanks on the truck. Because of the slowdown in the building market around here, jobs are hard to come by. We can only afford to raise our rates so much—then we lose the business all together.

On a different note, my mother and sister have both been unemployed for a few months. They both just got jobs in another city about 15 miles away. They both get paid \$9.00 an hour and work about 30 hours a week. We are very excited that they are now able to stop receiving government aid. However, with the price of gasoline over \$4 a gallon in the end they will hardly make enough to pay their rent and other bills. (They work in different places doing one-on-one care for special needs children and are unable to car-pool either.) This, to me, is a sad state of affairs when people should be excited about supporting themselves, but are still unsure of whether they can.

I grew up in Texas during the oil boom in the 80s. Drilling for oil there did not hurt anyone I knew. I am sure that technologies have improved over the past two decades, so any environmental concerns should be taken care of. I do not understand why we are not taking advantage of the resources we have in our own country to provide for ourselves as well as provide much needed jobs for our

citizens. Please lift the ban on off-shore exploration, oils shale production, and drilling in ANWR. Also, has the idea of suspending the federal fuel tax for period of time been dismissed? This would provide immediate short-term relief. Please encourage your counterparts to consider the working class of America. We need a break!

SHELLI.

I am very concerned about ever-increasing energy costs. I completely agree with your policy of searching for alternative sources of energy. Also, [I am concerned that Congress is out of touch with regular Americans] Please talk to your peers about doing whatever it takes to get things going on alternative means of energy and increasing exploration and refining facilities for oil.

ROBERTO, *Payette*.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES DURING ADJOURNMENT OF THE SENATE

Under the authority of the order of the Senate of March 26, 2009, the following reports of committees were submitted on March 27, 2009:

By Mr. CONRAD, from the Committee on the Budget, without amendment:

S. Con. Res. 13. An original concurrent resolution setting forth the congressional budget for the United States Government for fiscal year 2010, revising the appropriate budgetary levels for fiscal year 2009, and setting forth the appropriate budgetary levels for fiscal years 2011 through 2014.

SUBMISSION OF CONCURRENT AND SENATE RESOLUTIONS DURING ADJOURNMENT OF THE SENATE

On March 27, 2009, under the authority of the order of the Senate of March 26, 2009, the following concurrent resolutions and Senate resolutions were read, and referred (or acted upon), as indicated:

By Mr. CONRAD:

S. Con. Res. 13. An original concurrent resolution setting forth the congressional budget for the United States Government for fiscal year 2010, revising the appropriate budgetary levels for fiscal year 2009, and setting forth the appropriate budgetary levels for fiscal years 2011 through 2014; from the Committee on the Budget; placed on the calendar.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

The following bills and joint resolutions were introduced, read the first and second times by unanimous consent, and referred as indicated:

By Mr. AKAKA (for himself, Mr. BAUCUS, and Mr. BEGICH):

S. 734. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to improve the capacity of the Department of Veterans Affairs to recruit and retain physicians in Health Professional Shortage Areas and to improve the provision of health care to veterans in rural areas, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

By Mr. BAUCUS (for himself and Mr. GRASSLEY):

S. 735. A bill to ensure States receive adoption payments for fiscal year 2008 in accordance with the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008; to the Committee on Finance.