

In my home State of Maine, roughly 80 percent of the population utilize heating oil to keep warm in the winter. In New England, 40 percent of homes use heating oil. As a result, on average nearly 4.7 billion gallons of heating oil are consumed by New England. This is not only an enormous cost to families across the region, but it creates massive greenhouse gas emissions and increases our country's demand of foreign oil. This is not merely a regional issue, this is a national issue and it should be a priority of Congress to reduce heating oil use in New England.

This bill builds on the current credits for nonbusiness energy property to provide an additional credit for conversion of homes using home heating oil to natural gas or biomass. Specifically, the bill provides a tax credit of \$3,500 for natural gas conversion and \$4,000 for biomass conversion. While natural gas is not available throughout the United States and is not widely available in Maine, I am hopeful that these incentives will provide an additional incentive to expand usage in regions that have access to natural gas supplies.

In regions that the rocky geology does not allow natural gas to be utilized, the bill includes a tax credit for biomass for thermal energy, such as wood pellets. Just this past July, International WoodFuels announced plans to construct a 100,000 ton per year pellet plant in Burnham, ME. This is from wood product that is harvested in Maine and can be used to replace home heating oil in the State. While I strongly believe that we must carefully develop policies to ensure that the expanded use of wood pellets will undermine existing forest industries, I strongly believe that we must encourage additional diversity of our home heating oil energy sources and wood pellets provide a viable pathway to energy diversity for the State of Maine.

I strongly believe that reducing the current consumption of home heating oil in the State of Maine, New England, and the country should be a major priority as we move forward with overhauling our energy policy, and I look forward to working with my colleagues to pass the Cleaner, Secure, and Affordable Thermal Energy Act into law.

COMMENDING SENATOR NORM COLEMAN

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I honor and bid farewell to my friend and our colleague, Senator Norm Coleman of Minnesota. Norm and I served together for 6 years in the Senate and on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. He also served on the Agriculture, Aging, Homeland Security, and Small Business Committees. He has a legislative record to be proud of.

As our colleagues know, I have long enjoyed my work with Native people. Norm, throughout his tenure, was a steadfast friend of American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian

people and a strong advocate for the interests of the tribes in his home State of Minnesota. His voice will be missed in the U.S. Senate on these issues.

As a member of the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Norm pushed for drastic reforms in our Nation's emergency response and recovery capabilities in the wake of the failed response to Hurricane Katrina. He was diligent and steadfast in his desire to protect our country and deeply engaged in efforts to increase protections for our Nation's critical infrastructure.

I will remember Norm as one who had a love and appreciation for my State of Alaska. On several occasions he enjoyed the beauty of Alaska while seeking his prized king salmon on the Kenai River. Norm further extended his Alaska ties by hiring Jennifer Mies Lowe, who is married to my former chief of staff, George Lowe. Jennifer served Senator Stevens for many years before moving to Senator Coleman's office as his chief of staff.

Norm has a long record of public service fighting for Minnesotans. He served as mayor of St. Paul before being called by the people of Minnesota to come to the U.S. Senate. I expect that we have not heard the last of him.

In closing I would like to wish Norm, his wife Laurie, and children Jacob and Sarah the very best. Norm, thank you for your service to the Nation, the Senate, and Minnesota. I know Norm and his strong sense of service to his country, and while I will miss him in the Senate, I look forward to his next opportunity to serve.

NATURAL GAS IN A CLEAN ENERGY ECONOMY

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Mr. President, I wish to discuss why we need a clean energy economy and how natural gas will be a critical component of our future energy mix.

We need legislation to move forward, to the President's desk, this year. To compete in a 21st century global economy, the United States must take immediate action to transition to a clean energy market, one that allows us to take advantage of the many different clean energy sources that our country has to offer.

Some have asked why we need to act on clean energy legislation.

Several of my colleagues this week have eloquently discussed the impacts of carbon pollution. In the West, we are already seeing indications of climate change through warmer winters and drier summers. This is a global challenge that we must address and not ignore. But, irrespective of the impacts of carbon pollution to our communities and environment, clean energy legislation really comes down to two things—our economic and national security.

Clean energy legislation will create millions of new jobs here at home and provide the basis for America's 21st century economy. Clean energy econ-

omy legislation will spur innovation in and accelerate the shift to clean and domestic energy sources. It will create a new industrial sector employing millions of Americans in the research, development, manufacture, sale, installation, and servicing of new energy technologies. With the U.S. leading the way, we will sell our new technologies to other countries throughout the world.

Clean energy legislation will also help strengthen our national security. The most obvious reason, of course, is that switching to clean, domestic sources of energy will reduce our dependence on foreign oil by shifting America toward cheaper, cleaner alternative energy sources like natural gas and wind power. Our current economy unfortunately depends on the importation of foreign oil from nations that do not have our best interests at heart, which creates threats to America's national security and puts our troops in harm's way.

Where does this leave us?

We need to jump-start our clean energy economy, and that means we need to invest in the wide range of energy sources that are available now, as well as research and development of future energy sources.

This is not about a silver bullet answer to our energy problems: it is, rather, like silver buckshot.

On the ground, that means we should encourage energy development of new renewable energy sources, find cleaner ways to use traditional energy sources like coal and oil, and expand our use of clean, mature technologies like nuclear and natural gas.

Natural gas, in particular, often does not get the attention that it deserves among our diverse portfolio of clean energy sources.

Natural gas will be the bridge between today's economy and our clean energy future.

It is the cleanest of the fossil fuels and has the lowest greenhouse gas emissions per unit of energy, emitting about half of the CO₂ of coal when burned for electricity generation.

Furthermore, the technology is already being used by utilities across the country. Let me emphasize again—this is mature technology that is already in use across the country to power our homes and businesses.

In fact, natural gas accounts for 24 percent of the energy consumption in this country and approximately 98 percent of U.S. natural gas consumption originates right here in North America, principally from the United States and Canada.

Using natural gas means that we do not have to depend on foreign governments determining the cost of our energy or whether or not we even have access to it. And increasing natural gas production and use means that we are creating jobs and supporting families here at home.

Natural gas is an abundant resource across our country.

In recent years, natural gas production from conventional resources has continued to decline, but production from unconventional resources such as coal beds, tight gas sands, and particularly from natural gas shales has increased.

These are in regions—such as the Northeast—that are not traditionally thought of as gas-producing States. In fact, expanded drilling in tight gas sands and gas shales helped increase total U.S. gas production by about 9 percent in 2008 after a decade of its being roughly constant.

We also have natural gas reserves, particularly off our coasts, that have yet to be fully explored.

Now, let me be clear in that I do not support drilling for gas anywhere and everywhere. I believe certain areas, both on and offshore, should be placed off limits to development.

But we also need to take advantage of this domestic resource and develop some of these resources in an environmentally friendly way. That is why, during consideration of the clean energy bill in the Energy and Natural Resources Committee, I supported Senator DORGAN's efforts to open up the Eastern Gulf of Mexico to development.

Between recent discoveries of new domestic natural gas reserves and untapped reserves offshore, natural gas can continue to be a vital energy source for our country. The latest estimates indicate that we have enough reserves to sustain our current consumption rate for almost 100 years—and that is without new technology development or new reserve discoveries.

It is also important to understand how natural gas interacts with other energy sources, particularly renewable energy, like wind and solar. Many here in the Senate know that I am a strong proponent of a national renewable electricity standard, or RES. Colorado already has a State RES and it has been very successful in both increasing our use of renewable energy sources and bringing new jobs to our State. However, renewable energy sources alone will not be enough to fulfill our country's energy needs, especially in the short term, and electricity powered by natural gas will play a critical role in adjusting to the variability of renewable energy generation.

We can take these steps to decrease our carbon emissions and promote our domestic energy sources without increased energy costs for consumers. New natural gas combined-cycle plants are competitive with new coal plants. Natural gas plants have lower capital costs and shorter construction times than coal-fired powerplants. For example, the National Academies of Sciences recently released a report "America's Energy Future: Technology and Transformation" as part of a comprehensive look at our energy policy. The report found that, at a price of \$6 per million Btu, natural gas plants have the lowest lifetime cost of electricity of comparable energy source.

While there has been concern in recent years over price fluctuation in the natural gas market, the Energy Information Administration projects that prices will range from \$6 to \$9 per million Btu or lower for natural gas for decades.

Yet natural gas is not just for producing electricity. Clean natural gas is already being used as an alternative fuel for vehicles. Developing a stronger and wider market for natural gas vehicles will reduce our dependency on foreign oil, create jobs, and benefit the environment.

As of 2006, there were about 116,000 compressed natural gas vehicles and about 3,000 liquefied natural gas vehicles in the United States. About two-thirds of these natural gas vehicles are passenger vehicles.

The benefits of creating a natural gas fuel system akin to the current petroleum system would be immediate. Average consumers would save about \$800 in fuel costs by switching to natural gas. And, again, not only is natural gas cheaper for powering vehicles but it would also emit fewer greenhouse gases than gasoline vehicles and natural gas could be produced domestically.

These facts seem almost too good to be true, but they are just that: facts. What we need now is to invest in natural gas and support creating a viable natural gas vehicle industry.

So natural gas—a clean, domestic fuel source that powers mature technology—is already a force in our electricity market and is a growing factor in our transportation system. Yet the current—the bill that the House passed does not include appropriate encouragement for this energy source.

As I work with my colleagues here to pass clean energy legislation this year, I will continue to push for incentives for natural gas powered electricity and clean natural gas vehicles. America—and Colorado—can become the world leader in clean energy, exporting our expertise, intellectual property, and products worldwide, just as we have done repeatedly throughout our history. With our budding renewable energy industry and strong support for traditional energy sources, Colorado has a tremendous opportunity to lead the clean energy revolution, and I do not want us to miss it. But that means we must take action now and that is why we need to get clean energy legislation passed this year.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

REMEMBERING THOMAS MAROVICH, JR.

• Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring the life of Thomas M. Marovich, Jr. This brave man lost his life while working to protect Californians from a forest fire.

On July 21, 2009, Thomas Marovich died during a rappel proficiency train-

ing exercise while he was assigned as an apprentice with the Chester Helitack Crew fighting the Backbone Fire in Humboldt County. He was 20 years old.

Those who knew Thomas recall that, since childhood, his dream was to become a firefighter. When he was a student at James Logan High School in Union City, he was honored as Student of the Year in the regional fire technology program. Shortly thereafter, he began his firefighting service as a member of the Cadet Program for the Fremont Fire Department at the age of 17 and became an emergency medical technician, EMT, by 18. He was hired on as a firefighter for the Modoc National Forest in the Big Valley Ranger District in Adin, CA, after working as a volunteer while completing basic fire training. In 2008, after two fire seasons, he was hired as a Wildland firefighter apprentice to train for fire management. Thomas is survived by his parents, sister, and three grandparents.

Thomas Marovich, like all those who fight fires across California, put his life on the line to protect our communities. My heart goes out to his family and loved ones and my thoughts and prayers are with them. We are forever indebted to him for his courage, service, and sacrifice.●

COMMENDING WOMEN AIRFORCE SERVICE PILOTS

• Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, today I wish to honor the members of the Women Airforce Service Pilots, WASP, hailing from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania who have recently received our Nation's highest civilian award—the Congressional Gold Medal. Joan Frost, Julia Jordan, Ruth Kunkle, Eleanor Lawry, Kristin Lent, Barbara Posey, Florence Reynolds, and Lillian Yonally exemplify hard work, courage, and commitment to their country.

The WASP were the first female pilots in America's Armed Forces. They were stationed at 120 Army air bases across America, from where they flew approximately 60 million miles in less than 2 years and in a variety of aircraft. Over 25,000 women applied to the program, a select 1,800 went through basic training, and 1,074 women graduated.

The contributions of these brave women to the success of the United States in WW II cannot be minimized, and I am truly proud that several of these extraordinary women called Pennsylvania home. To each of these women, I would like to say thank you for your contribution to aviation. By going against convention, you broke important barriers and are the reason why female pilots fly in every type of aircraft and mission, including combat sorties, today.

I am sure that each time a young person sees a black-and-white photo of a young smiling female pilot leaning out the window of her B-26 Marauder,