

focus on building a strong economy. We do have to focus on being a more frugal government. However, I say to my colleagues, getting rid of congressionally designated projects is really a false journey to be on. If we eliminate every congressionally designated project—otherwise known as earmarks—we won't do anything to reduce the deficit because congressionally designated projects are less than one-half of 1 percent of total Federal spending. What it will do, however, is make it harder to meet compelling human and community needs many of us hear about from our constituents. Without these congressionally designated projects, often their needs will be cast aside by a big government or a big bureaucracy.

I believe we need to fight for real deficit reduction, and the way we do it is to look at the recommendations of the various commissions that are being put forward, whether it is Simpson-Bowles or Domenici-Rivlin or others.

What I do think is that we also should maintain our constitutional prerogatives of fighting for our constituents and fighting by being able to put special projects into the Federal checkbook.

I have been clearly on the side of reform. We have had many requests for earmarks in my Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science. I got \$3 billion worth of requests, including \$580 million for police officer technology. Another \$980 million came for fighting crime, drugs, and gangs through enforcement, prevention, and intervention. Also, we got \$220 million worth of requests in science and in education. We cannot fund those at those levels. In fact, we severely reduced them and stayed within what we think are acceptable limits. So we need the local communities to keep our communities safe, to educate our children in science and technology, and make sure we keep our police officers safe with earmarks of \$3 billion.

There have been abuses of congressionally designated projects. That is why I support reform, and the leadership is focused on reform. In 2007, new Senate rules began to require full disclosure of these projects. In 2009, Senator INOUE insisted on more significant reforms: Every project must be posted by Senators on their Web site. Every project must be less than 1 percent of the discretionary budget.

Today, congressionally designated projects—otherwise known as earmarks—are 50 percent below what they were when the Republicans controlled the Congress. Mr. President, I emphasize that under Democratic leadership, we reduced earmarks by 50 percent below what they were in 2006, and we made the process open and transparent. I think this is very important.

In the Commerce-Justice bill, I instituted my own reforms. I even went a step further. I established criteria that met community needs and must be supported by a viable organization, and it must have matching funds.

I have also fought and led the subcommittee in a more aggressive reform effort. I provided robust funding to inspectors general to be the watchdogs of the agencies. I am the first Senator on an appropriations subcommittee to insist that the inspector general testify at every one of my subcommittee hearings of an agency on issues relating to waste and abuse.

I established an early warning system on cost overruns, and then I reduced overhead by 10 percent by getting rid of lavish banquets and conferences and also cutting the amount that could be spent on tchotchke giveaways at the conferences they did have. That might sound like a small thing, but, my gosh, getting an inspector general there, we found all kinds of things under every rock where another couple million were hidden and we worked to get rid of that. We also got rid of things such as the \$4 meatball or \$66 for bagels for one person at a Department of Justice breakfast. So we said: Let's get rid of the folly, let's get rid of the fraud, let's into get into a more frugal atmosphere, and we were able to do this.

I would hope we could institutionalize these reforms. There are reforms we could put in place that are common sense, but it would enable colleagues to exercise their constitutional prerogative of not letting big bureaucracies and big government determine the destiny of our communities. I am always going to fight for Maryland. I am not here to defend earmarks, but I am here to defend my ability to help Maryland. So I oppose Coburn.

Coburn would have a moratorium for 3 years on appropriations bills, authorizing bills and tax bills. I oppose it because I do not think, first of all, it will reduce the Federal deficit; secondly, it takes away my constitutional power—the power of the purse that was given to Congress—to be able to help my constituents; and lastly but most of all, I wish to have every tool at my disposal to make sure big bureaucracies don't forget the little people who pay the taxes. So I hope we defeat Coburn.

At the same time, what I want to be able to do is stand on the side of reform. I can assure my colleagues, if Coburn is defeated, I will do everything in the institution to follow the leadership already established by Senator INOUE—a real reformer—to further reform our process. Let's get rid of abuse, but let's not give away our ability to stand and fight for our constituents.

Let me close by giving a couple examples. The Port of Baltimore provides over 1,000 jobs. I want to be ready when those big ships come through the Panama Canal, so I have a dredging earmark in that makes my port fit for duty for the 21st century.

I also have another earmark in for Ocean City beach replenishment, which we have already done. It protects millions of dollars of real estate along Maryland's coast, where we generate over \$10 billion in tourism.

I have also funded small projects but big in the hearts of my constituents, such as helping with the building of a children's hospice. Imagine having a child so sick they require hospice care. The least America can do and the least the Senate can do is to partner with families, the local government, and people at great institutions, such as hospice, to make sure children at the end stage of life have a place to be.

So do I fight for congressional projects? You bet I do. Has it made a difference in the lives and economy of Maryland? You bet it does. So we can have this moratorium, but I will predict we will be back 15 months from now to reinstate it. I say: Let's keep it, let's reform it, let's have a stronger economy, safer communities, and a more frugal government.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Minnesota.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I wish to first acknowledge the Senator from Maryland and to say I appreciate her work in reforming the system of congressionally initiated projects.

I also wished to mention, before I get to my main topic today, which is the expiration of the volumetric ethanol excise tax, the important vote we are having this evening on food safety. As the Chair knows, coming from the State of Minnesota, we had three people who died during the last foodborne illness tragedy—the salmonella in peanut butter episode. One of those individuals included Shirley Ulmer, mother of Jeff Ulmer, who has worked so hard to get this bill passed, and we are hopeful we have finally gotten the votes to improve our food safety system, which hasn't been improved since the 1930s. Clearly, we have seen a lot of changes to our food supply since then, and so this is long overdue.

VOLUMETRIC ETHANOL EXCISE TAX

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I rise to underscore the need to invest in homegrown energy and to reduce our dependence on foreign energy. Our Nation's ability to produce a reliable low-cost domestic source of energy is both an economic issue and a national security issue.

Two years ago, our Nation got a wake-up call. Gas prices exceeded \$4 a gallon, even \$5 in some places. It was a chilling reminder that the United States spends more than \$400,000 per minute on foreign oil. That money is shipped out of our economy, adding to our enormous trade deficit and economic woes, and leaving us reliant on unstable parts of the world to meet our basic energy needs.

Some of our colleagues have called for the volumetric ethanol excise tax credit—known as VEETC—to expire at the end of December. This tax credit was created 5 years ago to help bring ethanol from our farms to our gas pumps. It has helped us start to invest in the farmers and the workers of the

Midwest instead of the oil cartels of the Mideast.

My colleagues talk about how we need to let the free market solve our dependence on foreign energy. Well, I wholly support free markets, but I say: Let's have a level playing field and let the best ideas succeed. I would like to know if my colleagues truly think there is a level playing field for those trying to compete with the oil industry. We have an oil industry that has received decades of government support. Yet we have an emerging biofuels industry, powered by American farmers, that is starting to grow the crops, to improve the ethanol that is finally displacing our demand for oil. Over the last few decades, more than \$360 billion worth of taxpayer subsidies and loopholes have lined the pockets of oil companies. This is nearly 10 times greater than the investments we have made in homegrown biofuels. Meanwhile, in just the last 5 years, the top five oil companies recorded \$560 billion in profits.

Since the ethanol tax credit was first adopted, it has helped the renewable fuels industry grow and grow not just with the same kind of renewable fuel but to begin to expand—as you know, from our home State of Minnesota—into cellulosic ethanol, into using water and, a better part of the process, into conserving water and into using all kinds of new ideas. But to pull the rug out from under this new growing industry, when it is competing against the big guys—against big oil—is the wrong thing to do. In our State alone, employment and economic output from the ethanol biofuels industry has doubled. This year's biofuels production in Minnesota is expected to exceed 1 billion gallons, employing nearly 8,400 people and creating an economic impact of more than \$3 billion. Instead, do we want to give all those jobs to the Mideast, to give them to countries we don't even want to be doing business with?

Nationally, homegrown ethanol displaces about 5 percent of our oil consumption or about 350 million barrels. The ethanol industry employed nearly half a million Americans to produce the ethanol right here in our country. Letting this tax credit expire would almost certainly put thousands of jobs in jeopardy and would also increase our dependence on foreign oil, thereby hurting our national security. The oil spill in the gulf was a poignant reminder. Our addiction to oil comes with serious cost and it is time our Nation gets serious about investing in alternatives.

We didn't see a windmill blow up in the middle of a corn field. We didn't see an ethanol plant blowing up in the middle of a corn field.

Senators CONRAD and GRASSLEY have called for a 5-year extension of the ethanol tax credit, and I support their bipartisan legislation. Senator JOHNSON and I have introduced the Securing America's Future with Energy and

Sustainable Technologies—the SAFEST Act—with similar provisions calling for an extension of the tax credit, but it also includes a strong renewable energy standard—something we need in this country and something Senator SNOWE and I have worked on.

I see Senator KERRY of Massachusetts is here. I was devoted last year to focusing on alternative energy and ways to focus on our homegrown energy industry. I know this ethanol tax credit will not always be necessary. That is why I have also been working to develop a new more cost-effective tax credit that would replace the existing VEETC credit and would more directly benefit and focus on the farmers who are growing our transportation fuel.

No one is denying we can improve the tax credit to make it even more effective with investments in alternative fuels, but the ethanol industry, the biofuels industry, and private investors with billions of dollars in capital need to know our Nation is serious about supporting alternative fuels. Are we going to pull the rug out from under them? Are we going to put our heads in the sand and send all that money instead to the Mideast?

Allowing this tax credit to expire before we can come up with a long-term agreement about how to continue to invest in homegrown energy would send the wrong signal to investors. Letting this tax credit expire with no replacement would say America is not serious about finding alternatives to oil and we are not serious about reducing our dependence on foreign energy.

Our Nation has an unemployment rate of 9.6 percent. To meet our basic fuel needs, we continue to send \$730 million a day to foreign countries, many of which have been known to funnel money to terrorists. Now is not the time to pull that rug out from underneath the largest, most established domestic alternative to petroleum fuel. Now is not the time to put in jeopardy tens of thousands of jobs. Now is the time to extend the biofuels tax credit and invest in those farmers in the Midwest instead of those oil cartels in the Mideast. Now is the time to increase our support for alternative energy. These investments will help us to lower the unemployment rate, reduce the amount of money we send overseas to meet our energy needs, and these investments will help make our Nation less reliant on unfriendly nations—on those we don't want to be doing business with.

I hope my colleagues will listen to this argument and look at these numbers—at how much money the oil industry is getting.

I note the Senator from Massachusetts is here, and I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Massachusetts.

Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business for such time as I will consume.

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

NEW START TREATY

Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, we are in what we all understand are very difficult times—challenging in every respect and certainly with respect to the national security concerns of the country. As we speak, American soldiers are fighting a war in Afghanistan, winding down a war in Iraq, and our Nation has young men and women in harm's way in many parts of the world, engaged in a persistent challenge against global terrorism. Iran's nuclear program continues to advance, and North Korea is building a uranium enrichment facility and provoking the south on a regular basis with its military aggression.

Every single one of these is a complex challenge without any easy solution. But in the middle of all these challenges, the Senate has been given an opportunity to actually reduce the dangers our country faces. We have been given an opportunity set an example for the world. We have been given an opportunity to make the decision that would help to put greater pressure on Iran, on North Korea or on any other country that might be contemplating the notion of moving toward nuclear weapons. The Senate has been given the opportunity in the next days to express the leadership of our country with respect to moving in the opposite direction—away from nuclear weapons to greater controls, greater accountability, greater security and safety for our people.

With one simple vote before we leave here in the next days, we could approve the New START treaty and make America and the world more secure and take an important step forward in leadership as we express to the world our sense of responsibility with respect to the challenge of nuclear weapons. That is the opportunity we have. The question before every Senator is going to be whether we come here in these next days to do the business of the American people, to do our constitutional responsibility to advise and consent to a treaty negotiated by the executive department of the country.

New START is, quite simply, a commonsense agreement to control the world's most dangerous weapons and enhance stability between the two countries that possess over 90 percent of them. Just think of the statement it makes to those countries contemplating where Iran may be going when the countries that possess 90 percent of these weapons begin to dismantle these weapons and provide intrusive verification steps between us for how we will both behave. What an important statement at this moment in time with respect to Iranian behavior, with respect to North Korean behavior, and what a completely opposite, irresponsible decision it would be if the Senate just got bogged down in politics and walked