

plausible strategy is to keep production up while cutting consumption and embarking on a serious program of alternative fuels.

Let me add to this conversation a topic which I think we have been loathe to address on the floor because of its political controversy which was driven home to me over the weekend. I believe our energy conversation has to parallel an environmental conversation. We have to talk about the consumption of energy and the impact it has on the world we live in.

I would say to the Senator from California that in the Midwest, we live in tornado country. I was raised with them. I know how to run to the basement when we hear the air raid sirens, to protect our children, which rooms to go in, which corner of the house. It is just built into our lifestyle in the Midwest. So far this year, we have had over 272 reported tornadoes, early in the tornado season. Last year, we had 50; so 272 to 50.

I would just say to anyone who would like to come challenge me: Is this worth asking a question or two? What is going on with the extreme weather patterns we are seeing more and more? In a given year, one might say these things happen. But as these patterns emerge—last year, Chicago experienced the biggest blizzard in its history in February and then in June the largest rainfall in 1 hour in its history. We think to ourselves: This is not the world in which we grew up. Things are different out there. Are these within our control or beyond our control? I think we have to rely on experts and scientists to lead us in that conversation. But let's at least embark on that conversation by understanding the connection between energy and the environment.

As we find more efficient ways to move our cars and move our economy, as we burn less energy in doing it, there is less damage to the environment. That is a positive. It also rewards innovation, creation and new business and industry so the United States can lead in this area as we have led in other areas before.

I thank the Senator from California. She is on the floor now with a bill which she has spoken of time and time again, the new Federal Transportation bill. There is no single piece of legislation that will create more jobs—specific jobs that can be identified—than this bill. We have spent 2 weeks—2 weeks, if I am not mistaken, or 3—the Senator from California would know better—3 weeks on the floor of the Senate arguing about contraception on the Federal highway bill, arguing about whether we are going to embark on a foreign policy amendment to the Federal highway bill, so 3 wasted weeks trying to come to a conclusion about a handful of amendments. Unfortunately, this is what gives our Senate a bad name. We should have resolved this long ago and moved to this bill so we can say, if we want a real jobs bill—a real jobs bill—the Senate is leading the

way. To do it, we need bipartisan support.

At noon there will be a vote and those who are following the proceedings can take a look to see how many on both sides of the aisle will support moving forward on this bill. I think our earlier vote was 85. If I am not mistaken, 85 Senators said let's move forward on this bill. I hope we can do that again.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. ISAKSON. I ask unanimous consent to speak for up to 10 minutes in morning business.

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

GAS PRICES

Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, I am glad to be able to come to the floor. I wish to talk about a subject that was talked about to me a lot during the Presidents Day break back in Georgia. I spent most of that week traveling in my State, going to townhall meetings, listening to Georgians from Savannah, GA, to Murray County, GA, and everywhere in between. It was absolutely easy to tell what the No. 1 issue for the average American or the average Georgia family is; that is, what the price of gasoline is doing to their budget.

Gasoline prices continue to escalate. In fact, I have a Chevrolet Silverado pickup truck that I use from time to time and I had to fill it last weekend. It cost \$78 to fill it, and it wasn't totally empty. That is a big pricetag to fill a pickup truck. When I think of every carpenter or farmer or landscaper or student taking their goods back to school to their dormitory room and how much they have to pay for gasoline to deliver those goods and services or that furniture, I realize how harmful current gas prices are and I fear how high they are going to go.

We need a comprehensive energy policy in the United States of America. I was listening to the distinguished majority whip speak before me. He made an interesting comment about the Keystone Pipeline. He said, even if we approve the Keystone Pipeline, it would not do anything for gas prices today. He is right because we have to build the pipeline. But if we had approved it 2 years ago and it was operating, we would have 700,000 barrels of petroleum more a day coming into the United States. So to say that just because it would not be ready today doesn't help gas prices is not keeping our eye on the ball.

What we have to recognize is, in the absence of a comprehensive policy, in the absence of foresight, in the absence of putting all the general items on the table that generate energy, we are putting off the day in which the United States of America is energy independent. Because we are not energy independent, then what goes on in Iran, in the Strait of Hormuz, and in Venezuela affects the speculation on gasoline and petroleum which affects the prices of gasoline in the United States.

I am not one of these "burn gas right and left, drill as much as you can, fossil fuels are fine." I know we have problems with carbon. I drive a hybrid vehicle, not because I am trying to drive a point but because it makes sense. Anytime you can reduce carbon, that makes sense. But you cannot eliminate it. You cannot eliminate it. What we have to do is we have to put all sources of energy on the table. And one of those is to continue to explore for gasoline and petroleum in the domestic United States of America—off the Gulf of Mexico, off of our coastline, in our national lands that we own where we know we have shale oil and where we also know we have natural gas.

That exploration ought to be replete throughout the country, so we are expanding our supply and reducing our dependence on foreign imports. The best way to lower the price of gasoline in the future for Georgians and for Americans is for the Congress of the United States and the President of the United States to have a comprehensive energy policy that embraces all forms of energy.

To the credit of the President, he approved not too long ago the loan guarantees on reactors 3 and 4 at Plant Vogtle. They will be the first nuclear reactors built in the United States of America since Three Mile Island. Nuclear energy is a safe, reliable, carbon-free—carbon-free—generation of energy. Every time we can expand our nuclear capability we are lessening the pressure on domestic and foreign oil to be burned.

We know in the Haynesville shale and the Marcellus shale, which has been discovered in Pennsylvania and Louisiana and Texas, that we have gone from having a finite supply of natural gas to an infinite supply. Yet, because there is some contest over whether hydraulic fracturing is good or not good, we are not exploring that gasoline as we should or that natural gas as we should. We should be exploring it as much as possible, because it is a cleaner burning fuel than liquid petroleum and gasoline. We ought to be doing renewable energy wherever it makes sense. But we have seen renewable energy has its limits. We spent \$6 billion a year subsidizing ethanol in hopes that it would have reduced foreign imports, but it has not. It has had its own problems with two-cycle engines. But ethanol has a place. It is scalable on the farm in some cases. That is a good source of energy.

Solar is a good source of energy where it works. But it only works as a supplement. It is not a primary supply or source. And wind, great. But it is only great in the Midwest and down toward the Southwest. But we ought to be using and encouraging it.

What we ought to be doing is encouraging all forms of exploration, all forms of generation, and all of them domestically in the United States of America. That will bring down gas prices.

The distinguished majority whip was right: It will not bring it down today, because we have put off having an energy policy. But once we finally develop an energy policy, and we stick to it, and we explore all forms of renewable energy and all forms of fossil fuel and all forms of coal, and we enhance nuclear, then we will have a plethora of energy and we will have a lower price and less competition with foreign oil and foreign petroleum, which is where the United States of America needs to be.

Right now, we all realize what is going on in the Middle East is the root cause of most of the increase in the cost of oil, because of speculation. Every time we can improve our position and be free of those influences is better for the United States of America and, most importantly, it is better for the average citizens we all represent.

My message from the people I represent in Georgia, the ones I talked to all during the Presidents Day recess and that week is: Do everything you can to expand your supply of energy wherever you can find it. Take us out of a dependence on foreign imports and get us independent of foreign oil; that will bring down the price of oil. As a byproduct, that will be in the best national security interests of the people of the United States of America.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. President, as February came to a close, it left behind an unfortunate new record, \$3.73 per gallon, the national average, for unleaded gasoline, the highest ever recorded during this month. Prior to this morning's drop of three-tenths of a cent, gas prices had been on the rise for 27 straight days. In just 3 years, gas prices have doubled, and they are not stopping there. Back home in Arkansas, the average price of a gallon of regular gasoline is up over 25 cents from a month ago. Many analysts are predicting we will hit \$4 a gallon by summer.

Think about what that does to the economy. For our small business own-

ers and farmers, it means much higher overhead. Those costs ultimately get passed on to the consumers. In very dire cases, which many of our small businesses are facing today due to reduced profit margins, threats of higher taxes and increased regulations, high gas prices could be the final straw.

It puts extra pressure on budgets of already cash-strapped local governments. Just the other day I was reading a story from the Booneville Democrat that documented the negative effects the price of gas has on Logan County, AR. The county judge, Gus Young, noted if gas prices reach \$4, it is "going to take away from the other things that need to be done."

In Blytheville, AR, which is a 300-mile trek from Booneville, those same concerns are being voiced. In the Blytheville Courier News, former mayor Barrett Harrison described how in recent years, despite efforts to use more fuel-efficient vehicles and to cut down on idle time, the city would still end up having to amend the budget at the end of the year due to the high fuel costs.

For hard-working Arkansans, it is changing the way they live, and not for the better. It is especially painful for our seniors and single parents who live on fixed incomes. The high price of gas is one of the top issues I am hearing about in letters, calls, and during my visits across the State. I also recently posed the question about how the rising price of gasoline in Arkansas is affecting them on my Facebook page. I want to share a few of the responses I received.

Tim in Rogers, AR said, "The more we have to pay for gas, the less money we have for the other necessities and pleasures of life and living."

Melody in central Arkansas said it costs her family "nearly sixty-five dollars to fill up their truck" and said they have limited their driving to only their doctor in Hot Springs and the grocery store.

And it goes on from there. Many respondents said that it limits their spending at places like the grocery store and will affect their vacation plans. The overwhelming common thread in those responses is that Washington needs to do something about the high cost of gas.

There is no denying that rising fuel prices are hurting Americans and further complicating our efforts to revitalize the economy. There is also no denying that we are not moving fast enough to address these concerns. Americans want to know why, while their gas bills mount, Washington still does not have an energy policy. It is past time that we move forward on one and that begins with increasing our energy production here at home.

We have the largest recoverable resources of oil, gas and coal of any nation on the planet. America's recoverable resources are larger than the combined supply of Saudi Arabia, China and Canada. Despite that, we depend on

hostile regimes—and nations that have agendas that are often at odds with our own—for much of our oil.

The current tension between Israel and Iran only serves to make matters worse. If Israel strikes Iran, there is a good chance that the Iranians could attack Saudi Arabia's oil fields to retaliate against the West.

It doesn't have to be this way. The Keystone XL Pipeline, Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, ANWR, and drilling in the eastern Gulf of Mexico alone would produce 3 million barrels of oil per day. The lack of will in Washington to increase production here at home is unnecessary. It is a literal road block. It prevents our economy from picking up, increases the costs Americans pay for fuel, and it creates an enormous liability for our national and economic security.

President Obama has said that increased domestic oil production is unnecessary as he contends it is at the highest it has been in 8 years. However, you only get those numbers by relying heavily on production on private lands in North Dakota, Texas and Alaska. We simply are not utilizing the resources we have been blessed with on public lands.

We can make a major dent in the problem simply by opening the Outer Continental Shelf and ANWR to drilling in an environmentally responsible way. The Outer Continental Shelf alone is estimated to contain enough oil and natural gas to meet America's energy needs for about 60 years. Energy exploration and production in ANWR would take place on just a small portion of the 1.5 million-acre northern coastal plain, yet will allow us to safely produce 900,000 barrels of oil per day for the next 30 years. I have been there. I have seen firsthand that this can be done in an environmentally safe way.

Similarly, the Keystone Pipeline would transport 700,000 barrels of oil per day from Canada to U.S. refineries in the gulf coast. And it too can be constructed and run in an environmentally safe manner. Tapping into Canada's oil sands—one of the world's largest oil reserves—would help ease our dependence on hostile regimes for oil. As global demand for oil surges and the Canadians increase production, the addition of the Keystone pipeline would allow us to get reliable and secure oil from our largest trading partner and trusted ally.

Unfortunately, President Obama has punted on every opportunity we have given him to move the Keystone Pipeline forward. That is why I am supporting legislation to approve the project under Congress' authority enumerated in the commerce clause. This same Congressional authority was used to move the Alaska Pipeline forward 40 years ago, which has dramatically increased the amount of oil produced here at home.

I have long supported legislation that puts a heavy investment into researching wind, solar, hydrogen and other

technologies. These will ultimately ease our dependence on foreign oil and gas. But we need relief now and American oil is necessary and available.

For the foreseeable future, our economy will rely heavily on fossil fuels. While we certainly need to encourage the market for alternative energy sources, it has yet to be fully developed. But there is no denying that by stalling domestic production, we create an unnecessary burden on an already weak economy and are hurting our efforts to meet our energy needs. We need to lift the moratorium on offshore oil development, open ANWR for exploration and move the Keystone Pipeline forward instead of further postponing the decision.

As I mentioned earlier, the people of Arkansas are demanding action from Washington. They are frustrated by the higher totals that appear on the receipts every time they go to fill up their gas tank. They are tired of seeing more and more of their disposable income being eaten up at the pump. Let's start providing them relief by increasing production here at home.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California.

Mrs. BOXER. What is the order at this time?

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

MOVING AHEAD FOR PROGRESS IN THE 21ST CENTURY ACT

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of S. 1813, which the clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 1813) to reauthorize Federal-aid highway and highway safety construction programs, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Reid amendment No. 1761, of a perfecting nature.

Reid amendment No. 1762 (to amendment No. 1761), to change the enactment date.

Reid motion to recommit the bill to the Committee on Environment and Public Works, with instructions, Reid amendment No. 1763, to change the enactment date.

Reid amendment No. 1764 (to (the instructions) amendment No. 1763), of a perfecting nature.

Reid amendment No. 1765 (to amendment No. 1764), of a perfecting nature.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the time until 12 noon will be equally divided and controlled between the two sides, with the final 10 minutes equally divided and controlled by the two leaders or their designees, with the majority leader controlling the final 5 minutes.

The Senator from California.

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, we are back in our fourth week trying to get a

transportation bill through this body. To me, it is a very sad statement about the dysfunction of this body that we spent approximately 3 weeks dithering over a contraception amendment that has nothing to do with the highway bill and other threats to offer foreign policy amendments, and so on.

We have a chance today to vote to end this dithering, and the Chamber of Commerce is asking us to do that. The AFL-CIO is asking us to do that. One thousand organizations are asking us to do that because they know thousands of businesses and well over 1 million jobs are at stake.

I wish to say I heard the tail end of Senator BOOZMAN's talk about the Keystone Pipeline. I wanted to make sure it was on the record—this is from a conversation I had with Senator DURBIN—that under this President we are drilling now more than we have ever drilled. Anyone who says “drill, baby, drill” doesn't understand that the number of rigs that are now moving are four times as many as in 2008. They don't understand we are now exporting oil. They don't understand the fact that we are importing less. Does that mean we are done? No. The oil companies have more than 50 million acres of approved leases. They ought to drill there and hands off my coast because my coast is an economic gold mine the way it is because we have tourism and recreation and fishing. Those jobs far outweigh any jobs that would come from oil drilling, which would tend to undermine the very economy of my great State. If we have to vote on Keystone, we will. If we have to vote on offshore drilling, we will. But I will be here to point out that if we care about jobs and about making sure the price of gasoline goes down, when we have Keystone, let's make sure the oil stays here, that oil is made in America and stays in America. These issues are not one-dimensional; they are many sided, as my friend knows. He and I have agreed on much and we have disagreed on some.

What we need is the kind of balance President Obama brings to the table when it comes to energy. He says we will do “all of the above,” but we will do it wisely. Interestingly, on the Keystone Pipeline—we now have the tea party talking about property rights and the fact that they have to be respected as well when we build a new pipeline such as this. So we will have votes.

May I make a plea to my colleagues. At noon, just about 50 minutes from now, we can have a clean vote; 60 of us can vote to move to this Transportation bill, to get rid of, as my friend OLYMPIA SNOWE has said, polarizing amendments. Why not move to something that was voted unanimously out of our committee, 18 to zero—Republicans and Democrats, all together; Senator INHOFE and myself, together; Senator SHELBY and Senator JOHNSON, together on the bill; Senator BAUCUS, working in a bipartisan way with his

committee; and Senator ROCKEFELLER, once they got rid of some bumps, working with Senator HUTCHISON. We now have pending an agreed-upon bill, plus we have added to the package 37 bipartisan amendments.

What more do my friends want? We have a bipartisan bill. We have added more bipartisan amendments to it. All these jobs are at stake, and today we can end all this dithering and wasting time. The people of America look at us and wonder what we are about. Vote yes for cloture.

I wish to talk about what is at stake if we don't invoke cloture and don't wind up with a bill. That is not just hyperbole; these are facts. All our transportation programs expire on March 31.

My friend in the chair served as a great Governor of his State of West Virginia. He knows how important the highway bill is. We work together with the States and with the planning organizations, and we get those funds out there. On March 31, we are done. This bill reauthorizes that program, and 1.8 million jobs are at stake. As soon as we fail, there is no more program. There is no more authority to collect the Federal gas tax that supports the highway program. There is no more authority to spend any money on transportation.

Again, 1.8 million jobs are at stake. Let's go to the next chart. I did a breakdown of the various States. In this time, I am going to highlight a few of the States. These charts will be available for everybody.

In Alabama, we are talking about only 27,000 jobs; in Alaska, 18,000 jobs—I am skipping; in California, 164,000 jobs; in Florida, 76,000 jobs; right here in DC, 18,000 jobs; in Georgia, almost 50,000 jobs; in Illinois, 65,000; in Indiana, 34,000; in Iowa, 17,000; in Louisiana, 25,000; in Maine, almost 7,000.

We will go on and give the rest of the States to give a sense of how many jobs will be lost if we do not act to reauthorize this bill.

In Maryland, 26,000 jobs; in Massachusetts, 31,000; in Michigan, 39,000; in Montana, almost 14,000; in Nebraska, 10,000; in Nevada, almost 14,000 jobs; in New Jersey, 50,000; in New York, 118,000; in North Dakota, 8,000; in Ohio, 50,000; in Oklahoma, 22,000; in Pennsylvania, 68,000; in Rhode Island, 8,000.

I will continue with another chart to show other examples. I will be sure to say what West Virginia is when I get to the Ws. In South Carolina, 22,000; in South Dakota, 9,000; in Tennessee, 30,000; in Texas, 128,000 jobs.

I call on Senators to vote yes to stop debate and get to the bill.

In Vermont, almost 7,000; in Virginia, 41,000; in Washington State, 34,000; in West Virginia, 15,133 jobs; in Wisconsin, 27,000; in Wyoming, 8,400 jobs.

When we talk about this as a jobs bill, this isn't some exercise in our verbiage; this is a fact of life. These jobs add up to 1.8 million. In our bipartisan bill, we have increased a particular program—this is a reform bill, and we have taken 90 programs down to 30. It