

Again, the President has not made it easier, but he must make it easier to produce American energy. The President can begin by increasing the number of permits issued for exploration in the Gulf of Mexico. It is my understanding there are only 25 deepwater rigs active in the gulf right now. I understand 34 deepwater rigs were active in the gulf at this time in 2010. The administration needs to approve more permits and to do it immediately.

The President should also increase access to other offshore areas. He should provide access to offshore areas in the Atlantic and the Pacific Oceans. In November, the President proposed an offshore oil and gas leasing plan that amazingly excluded the Atlantic Ocean and the Pacific Ocean. He excluded areas off the coast of Virginia, even though both of the Senators from Virginia who are Democrats, as well as the Governor of Virginia who is a Republican, all support such exploration.

The President should also increase access to onshore areas. The President should open areas of Alaska, and we should support proposals to open ANWR. Both Senators—a Democrat and a Republican—and the Governor of Alaska strongly support opening ANWR for energy exploration. The President should too.

The President should also take steps to facilitate onshore production in the West. Specifically, the President should scrap new regulations requiring "Master Leasing and Development Plans." These regulations were put into place over 2 years ago by the Secretary of the Interior. It is unclear to me why the Secretary issued these regulations. They add more redtape, they cause more bureaucratic delay, and they slow down American energy production.

Of course, there are other regulations that are driving up the cost of American energy—specifically, the EPA's forthcoming tier 3 regulations that will affect America's refineries. A recent study shows this rule could increase the cost of manufacturing gasoline by 6 to 9 cents a gallon. This rule could also raise annual compliance costs for refineries by billions of dollars. And it will almost certainly increase the pain at the pump that is being felt by American families. To me this is unacceptable. The President should at the very least delay the issuance of this rule.

In addition to providing more access to Federal lands and waters and eliminating burdensome regulations, the President should address delivery bottlenecks. Specifically, he should address all the bottlenecks the Keystone XL Pipeline would relieve. Here, of course, I am referring to the 100,000 barrels of oil each day that Keystone would ship from Montana and North Dakota. That is right—homegrown American energy from Montana and North Dakota.

Right now there is not sufficient pipeline capacity out of North Dakota and Montana. Do you know how they

are getting the oil out of there? Well, they are shipping it on trucks and in trains, and that is a lot more expensive than shipping it by pipeline.

The Keystone XL Pipeline would reduce the cost of shipping American oil. In addition, the pipeline would ship about 700,000 barrels of oil a day from Canada. The Canadian oil would replace oil imports from OPEC and thus increase our Nation's energy security. Approving the Keystone XL Pipeline is an easy decision, and the President should make that decision immediately.

Again, the President must abandon his support for policies such as this legislation that is ahead of us today, which will only increase the pain at the pump. He must also abandon plans which will put our Nation's security further at risk. Instead, the President must make it easier to produce American energy. He should increase access to Federal public lands and waters, eliminate costly regulations, and approve the Keystone XL Pipeline.

It is my hope the President will take all of these steps and do so immediately so the American public does not continue to suffer the significant pain at the pump that continues to affect our country today.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. BEGICH. Mr. President, I would like to enter into a colloquy with my colleague from Louisiana.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. UDALL of Colorado). Without objection, it is so ordered.

ENERGY PLANNING

Mr. BEGICH. Mr. President, just as I expected, we have been in this back-and-forth show-and-tell on oil and gas issues instead of spending the time and working on a real energy plan, one that is important for not only my State, my colleague's State, but for the whole Nation. So we go back and forth, and it is politics as usual in this Chamber. We just heard a nice presentation by my colleague from Wyoming about how it is all the President's fault the prices are going up and all these other issues.

Let me just say this—and I know my friend from Louisiana knows this—in Alaska, there is a clear indication what we believe when it comes to energy prices. We have communities that pay \$9, \$10 a gallon for heating fuel. We understand when costs go up what happens to our economies in our rural communities.

We also are a producer of oil and gas, and we understand the potential and job opportunities. But this last week, when we started on this bill, I know my colleague and I were just two of four people who said, no; we are not moving on this bill because we expected exactly what is going on now. We are just doing a little show-and-tell, having a little argument back and forth, and in

another 24 hours or maybe 30 hours we will be off this bill and we will not have an energy plan.

When I go back home for our break, when I am talking to Alaskans—and I know the Senator will be talking to folks in Louisiana—they will complain about gas prices and heating costs and how much it costs to fill their cars or their RVs if they are trying to go somewhere on the weekends, and we have not done anything to make a dramatic change.

Of course, this idea of eliminating these incentives for the oil and gas industry I have opposed from day one, for a variety of reasons. One, if we are going to do real tax reform, then we should do a broader sweep, and no industry should be left off the table. Everyone should be part of the equation.

I have heard this from the industry—I know my colleague has heard this from the industry—that they are willing to be part of the bigger picture, but do not single them out because poll numbers say they are a demon of some sort or people do not like them. Let's talk about real tax reform. That is one debate.

The other debate is, if we really want an energy plan, then let's really do one. Let's focus on opportunities, and let's quit putting out pieces that one side puts down because it sounds good for their brochure, and then the other side puts one down. Let's really focus on something that will make a huge difference to this economy.

As I mentioned, in Alaska fuel is expensive in our rural communities for heating, and communities in Fairbanks, which is a very urban area, can pay upwards in the winter of \$1,000 or maybe more per month in heating costs, making their ability to survive very difficult.

As we work on these energy projects and what is important, let me put another thing in perspective from Alaska. People think in Alaska all we care about is oil and gas. Well, we do. It adds a lot of jobs. But we also care about renewable energy. I know I have been on the floor of the Senate talking about that. My colleague has been on the floor talking about renewable, alternative energy. It is all part of the equation, how to ensure we develop a plan. We diversify our energy resources, and then we deliver it for the betterment of this country and economically in order for us to survive.

In Alaska, for example, as we work on our oil and gas development, we are also moving forward on renewable energy. In our State, just about 25 percent of our energy production for use in the State is renewable energy, with the goal to be at 50 percent by 2025. We have a plan because we understand the value of it.

I want to show a chart I have in the Chamber, and then I know my colleague has comments, and we will probably go back and forth a little bit. But I want to show you this one chart.

When I came into office—and my colleague over here talked about ANWR. I

support ANWR. I am aggressive about it beyond belief. My colleague has been. Before I got here, she was pounding away on this issue also. It is important.

We have four regions in Alaska that are of high value. When we talk about oil and gas in Alaska, at least from our office, we talk about everything that is possible. We talk about ANWR. We talk about the National Petroleum Reserve which—let me make that point—is designed for petroleum production. We have the Chukchi Sea over here, and the Beaufort Sea over there. These four regions have huge value to the oil production of this country.

When we talk about this, where are we today? What can it do? What can it replace? It can replace countries such as Libya and Nigeria and Saudi Arabia, where we get oil from. We could actually produce it here, and the good news is we are on the path to do that.

Now, has it been long and tedious? Yes, it has. But are we moving in the right direction? Yes. We have seen for the first time in 30 years the opportunity to develop in the Arctic that we have not seen before. We are seeing for the first time—this summer, Shell is moving their ships up to the Chukchi Sea because the potential between the Chukchi Sea and the Beaufort Sea alone is 24 billion barrels of oil.

Let me repeat that. I know we deal with these numbers in our two States: billions, billions. When we look at the Chukchi Sea, 15.4 billion barrels of oil; plus a little side product, gas, and we love gas because it is clean burning, 77 trillion cubic feet; the Beaufort Sea, 8.2 billion barrels of oil—this is what we know best today in our estimates—where they are doing exploration now, so we are going to find out more opportunities—gas, 28 trillion cubic feet.

NPR-A, the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska, 1 billion barrels of oil is what we know of, and they are in production this year.

ConocoPhillips will be developing in what they call CD5.

ANWR is still a struggle, but 10.4 billion barrels of oil. It is still an important piece, where a small, little component of this would be developed, 2,000 acres out of 19 million acres. That would be the footprint we would utilize.

But the point I am trying to make is, if we want to get on to a real energy plan, then let's do that. I know the folks on our side did their vote. It was amazing. It shocked me, actually, that they voted to move forward. They had not done that ever since I had been here on that bill. It is because they wanted to do show-and-tell for a week, get some press, and beat up the President because of Presidential politics.

I have my differences with the President. We fought him a lot on these issues. But what I am interested in, what I came here for—and I know the Senator came years ago for—is to do a real energy plan that involves our country being more self-sufficient on

our own energy resources, and let's do it the right way.

Let's have the real debate that will make the difference for consumers. So when I go home, and my colleague goes home, and someone says thank you because we have set in motion a trend that will lower or stabilize gas prices for our homes, for our cars, for our businesses, for transportation in general, that is what we should be doing. But instead we are going to burn up a few days here and make a lot of speeches, and then we will move on.

Well, I will tell you, and I think my colleague will agree with me on this, that the two of us are not going to stop. We are going to talk about an energy plan because that is what we need in this country if we want to grow this economy and make ourselves more self-sufficient and more secure nationally.

What is happening in the Middle East? The price is going up. It is not anything we are doing. But we have some good news. Even though it is predominately private land that has been the growth factor of oil and gas, we are seeing more domestic production for the first time in 10 years. I do not know, but to the Senator from Louisiana, I think that is a good thing; right?

Ms. LANDRIEU. It is a good thing. The Senator from Alaska is right on as usual on this subject and in the main stream of what most Americans, I believe, are thinking about.

I wanted to ask the Senator from Alaska, following his comments—I mean, why does my colleague think our friends on the Republican side want to spend this week beating up on the President as opposed to doing something that might help energy policy advance in the country? I do not know if they do not realize that people are very frightened and anxious and upset about these prices or what does the Senator think is driving this sort of theater on the Senate floor?

Mr. BEGICH. Well, I think the Senator said it in the question in a way. It is a lot of Presidential politics. I think what I hear when I go home is—and the Senator probably hears it too—that people are frustrated with that activity.

Think about this: Just a couple of weeks ago, we passed a bipartisan transportation bill. Unbelievable. People say we cannot do things together. Seventy-four votes moved a bill, with very diverse views, as we all know. But we worked it out. We spent 5 weeks doing it after all the committees' months and months of work. And what did we end up with? A great product that went over to the House, that now sits there languishing and not having anything happen to it.

What is interesting, if we do not do a good energy plan, here is what happens: asphalt, which is a petroleum-based product which builds those roads, only goes up. When that goes up, that means now the roads we want to build become less. It is not complicated.

Why are they not doing this—I think even some of their own Members were surprised that they had to be told by their leadership to change their votes and do a certain type of vote. Now we are in this no-end product. In other words, we are not going to end up with anything. I do not get it. I know they will go home just like the Senator and I, and they will hear the same thing: jobs, gas prices, and construction and the housing market, what is happening? These are things we hear about. I am surprised.

Ms. LANDRIEU. I am surprised myself. I hope when we do go home constituents in all of our States will say: Stop the bumper sticker politics on the floor of the Senate and get down to passing an energy bill. I think we most certainly, if we stop electioneering and start legislating, could actually do that.

Now the Senator from Alaska and I—and I have been here a few years longer than the Senator, but he has been a most welcome addition to this issue because he is knowledgeable. He comes from a State that is larger than almost half of the lower 48. His State is rich in resources. I have had the great pleasure to go to Alaska. I am looking forward to traveling there again this summer and actually going to the North Slope because in Louisiana we build many of the ships that actually operate in Alaska for their exploration activities.

Mr. BEGICH. If I can make a comment that the Senator just christened one of our new ships coming up. It has Icebreaker capacity to work for Shell to do what? Go right here.

Ms. LANDRIEU. That ship was just christened this weekend in Louisiana. So the relationship between Louisiana and Alaska goes back a long way. I am very happy to have the Senator here advocating for a smart and effective energy policy.

This debate some people are having—I do not believe I am included in that because we are having our own colloquy about serious issues. But this so-called debate that everybody else is having is going to result in nothing, just a lot of sound bites. There will be no energy policy that comes out of this because the fact is—and everyone knows this that follows this—both parties are guilty for not having the right kind of energy policy, Democrats and Republicans alike.

Democrats, from my perspective, do not appreciate the way they should the need for more domestic drilling. So they resist sometimes the need for more domestic drilling. I think Senator BEGICH and I have pointed out there are some places where there are people—Governors and Senators, Democratic Senators—who are open to drilling. We could go to those places and do a better job of developing onshore and offshore.

But Republicans are not good at all when it comes to conservation. They resist helping the auto industry, for instance, to retool itself, which we know

has had an absolute direct bottom line on less petroleum products being used for gasoline.

Many of the new automobiles coming out of domestic manufacturers, because of what Democrats and President Obama, who led this effort—which he never gets enough credit for on the other side—have done to retool Detroit so that just this week in the newspaper, I believe it was the Washington Post—I wanted to ask the Senator from Alaska if he saw this article. The most amazing thing that has happened over the last 10 years is that our imports of foreign oil have decreased for 2 reasons: One, we are producing more oil and gas at home, although there have been some setbacks with this administration which we are not happy about, the two of us, but also because of the conservation we have done in this country.

Mass transit is a part of that, which many Republicans reject. Conservation initiatives are a major part of that, which Republicans reject. Helping the domestic auto industry, which they—even Mitt Romney, their leader on the Republican side, said that was a mistake to help Detroit, Ohio, et cetera, Michigan and places in Ohio.

So I am coming to the floor to say this blame game is not going to work because both parties are almost equally at fault. Senator BEGICH and I would like to believe that we represent a little bit of the Democratic side, a little bit of the Republican side, coming from States—both of us being Democrats but from States that know something about drilling.

I want to put up my map of Louisiana so people believe when I say that we know something about drilling.

This is what my State looks like. Some people might not like this picture. This is the oil and gas infrastructure in Louisiana. To someone who is a purist and does not like pipelines and does not like oil wells and does not like leases, they may recoil at this. But people in Louisiana like this because this is about money, and it is about domestic energy self-sufficiency and independence.

These are pipelines. There are 9,000 miles of pipelines under south Louisiana. We have been drilling onshore and offshore for the last 50 years. Until the Macondo Well blew up in spectacular fashion and killed 11 people, which is very unfortunate and the fault of BP and some of the contractors who were not doing their jobs correctly, it has been mostly successful. We have drilled 40,000 wells—40,000.

So when the Senator from Alaska says we know something about oil and gas drilling, trust me; it would be like asking the Senators from Michigan: Do you know something about building cars? We know about that. We have been fracking. We have been using horizontal drilling. We know there is a lot of oil and gas still to be found, and the Senator talked about some of his reserves.

I know the Senator is aware that Louisiana—just off the coast of Louisiana—produces just about as much oil as we import from Saudi Arabia every year. I do not know if the Senator knows that.

How are the reserves looking in Alaska?

Mr. BEGICH. Well, absolutely. As a matter of fact, as we know, this line—this is the pipeline that brings resources from here down to Valdez and ships it throughout the country and the world. It is about 10 percent of the oil for our country that comes from Prudhoe Bay up here.

What is amazing about this development is, as it moves forward, it will obviously provide even more. Also, as the Senator said, with the map there, it is about jobs. I mean, when we think about this development, this could be upwards of 54,000-plus jobs estimated by an independent research arm. Plus these jobs pay very well: on an average, \$117,000 a year. I do not know about you; I think that is a good-paying job.

Ms. LANDRIEU. It is a very good paying job. This is a very good point because I have tried to remind everyone here that this oil and gas industry that exists in Louisiana and Alaska does not just support the people of our States. Think about it. There are only 500,000 people in Alaska. If that is going to create 50,000 jobs, that would be 1 for every 10 people. But people fly in and fly out. They will work for 2 weeks or a month and fly back. We have people working on our rigs that are from Maine or from Colorado or from New Mexico or from New York.

Most of the people who work offshore are from the Gulf Coast States, I might say. You can tell this when you drive through the parking lots and see the license plates which are easy to spot. But I can tell you there are people from all over the country who work in this industry.

If I showed you a supplier line, you would see supplies coming from all over the United States to fund the operations like, for instance, the boat that is going to be operating in Alaska was built by people from Louisiana. Some of those boats are built in Mississippi, and some of that may even come from the east coast. I do not know if the Senator is familiar with that.

Mr. BEGICH. Some of those ships will be refurbished and some of the work that is being done is out of the Port of Seattle and Tacoma and that region. It is a nationwide aspect. Think about this. In 2011, the oil and gas industry produced 9 percent of the new jobs in this country.

Let me repeat that: Nine percent of all of the new jobs in this country came from the oil and gas industry. It is the fastest growing industry at producing jobs.

Ms. LANDRIEU. It is also producing great wealth. I do not think people understand because a lot of the land in the West is public land. So we hear this

debate about public land, et cetera. But most of the land in my State is private land. In fact, the Federal Government owns less than 2.5 percent.

Now, we are at polar ends of this debate. We are at opposite ends because in Alaska the Federal Government owns 90 percent of that State. It only owns 2.5 percent of my State, and the farther east you go it is less and less and less.

So when there is more drilling, like in Louisiana, it is private land owners who are getting wealthy. In many of these instances, such as in the Haynesville shale, which is up along this area in Louisiana, northwest Louisiana, farmers whose land was virtually worthless or who were growing crops but not really making it very well, now the gas has been discovered on their land, so they are getting royalty checks for \$10,000 a month, \$20,000 a month. That is more money that people have made or ever dreamed about making. I have heard of royalty checks of \$50,000 a month that people are getting. So they take that \$50,000, they are not even drilling for oil and gas; they have just leased their property. They go out and start a business in their hometown or they go out and buy two new automobiles for their family or a new pickup truck for their operations.

I know the Senator understands the indirect impact. It is not just the direct jobs for the industry, but the wealth that is created personally, and the U.S. Government collects quite a bit of taxes from this industry as well.

Mr. BEGICH. If I could add, in this Chukchi/Beaufort, for example, it is estimated that the cumulative state, local, Federal value over the next 50 years in terms of revenue stream is upwards of \$100 billion. If we then talk about the payroll over the next 50 years for the same two areas, it is \$150 billion.

What happens to that \$150 billion that people get paid? Exactly. They buy a house. They maybe put their kids through college or they are vacationing or they are improving their lifestyle. They are moving up, and that kind of money is significant.

It has a multiplier effect that is hard to measure, but it is real. Anybody seeing somebody making \$117,000, they are spending that money in the economy. That is why we see the job growth we see here. Again, to the principal debate we are having tonight—and we are the minority of the minority in a way—we need to get back to the basic issue of what do we want in this country in a diversified, well-delivered energy plan. We can get there. For example, we had a bill, and the other side threw down the same old talking points a few weeks ago—to drill everywhere one could imagine. It is about drilling but doing it responsibly, in the right areas, with the right design. They had Bristol Bay, the fish basket of the country, where 40 percent of the fish are caught. They want to drill there. I cannot vote for that. It is a balanced approach that we need.

Ms. LANDRIEU. We don't have to drill everywhere. The resources are so spectacularly promising. I have to get back to this blaming President Obama. I don't know if my friends on the other side remember who the President was when the Governor of Florida, Jeb Bush, a Republican, opposed drilling off the eastern gulf. The President at the time, his brother, George Bush, honored that no drilling pledge. I remind my friends on the other side that their party is not blameless in this debate. They could do a lot better for the country if they would stop trying to throw President Obama under the bus every minute—although I don't agree with all his energy policies; I didn't agree with the moratorium in the gulf and other things. I think they made some strong points. But this should not be about hurting anybody; it should be about helping our country. We do that by using a balanced approach, such as the Senator from Alaska said. It is how we came together on the Transportation bill. It was balanced, a compromise, and it was a little of this and a little of that. We put a jobs bill together that will help our Nation.

We could put an energy bill together if we have both parties stop beating up on people. One beats up on the companies and the other beats up on the President and the poor people are the ones who suffer.

I wish to show you something about oil and gas taxes. People say: There goes LANDRIEU again; she is defending the oil and gas industry. Frankly, some of them, and the industry itself, should be defended because it is an honorable, good industry. It has provided jobs. It provided the oil we needed to win World War II. How do you think the allied troops got across Europe? They didn't do it on a wish and a prayer. That oil came out of the Permian Basin in Texas. We have a long patriotic history in that industry. We get our dander up when people beat up on the industry.

People say the oil industry gets these subsidies. I wish to put two things into the RECORD. It says that according to the Energy Information Administration—which is our administration, not a third-party spinmeister group. It says in the study published in 2008 that oil and natural gas received only 13 percent of the subsidy but produced 60 percent of the energy needed to power our country. I will repeat that. The oil and gas industry receives only 13 percent of all the subsidies, but we produce 60 percent of the energy that keeps the lights on in this building and powers everything in the country. We spend about \$16.6 billion on U.S. energy subsidies over the course of 1 year on everything, and renewables, refined coal, nuclear, and others accounted for more than 85 percent of the subsidies.

So the oil and gas industry got less than 13 percent of the subsidies, but they continue to be the bogeyman in all this. In addition to receiving only 13 percent of the subsidies—and my friend

from Alaska will know this as well—look what tax rate they pay. ConocoPhillips paid 46 percent. This was the effective tax rate from 2006 to 2010. Chevron paid 43 percent. They made a lot of money. They are absolutely making a lot of money. These are public companies, and their executives are paid well. I think they are probably paid a little more than I would pay, but that is what they are paid. These are public companies, and the shareholders are making money as well. But they are paying this very high rate in taxes.

Look down here on the chart. Walmart only paid 33 percent. Philip Morris only paid 27 percent. PepsiCo—a very good company—only paid 24 percent. These are effective tax rates. My favorite—although I like them very much, but GE only paid a 9-percent effective tax rate.

When the Senator says we need tax reform, we most certainly do. If you came to me and said in a major bill we are going to have an energy bill and have some tax reforms to balance this out, I would be for that. But in good conscience, I cannot take away the subsidy from oil and gas when they only represent 13 percent of the overall subsidies but produce 60 percent of the energy. I certainly don't want to raise taxes on an industry now with prices at the pump being so high. If we do, we are just going to drive them up, which is the last thing we want to do, particularly when this is the truth about the tax rates. The Senator from Alaska is again absolutely correct. This debate we are not having but everyone else is having is not getting us very far.

Mr. BEGICH. If I can, I will add one more point before we finish. If these incentives are so bad, then why are we at a 10-year high in production? Why do we see in Alaska more independence than ever before? Probably in the Senator's State I venture to guess—I remember Anadarko, a very small company, which is now a very big one. We can look at these different companies and part of the incentives are utilized to take hard-to-get areas and make them more profitable so they can produce them. The result is that we now have more gas, for example, than we have ever had, and the price dropped so far that people are excited about it, which happens—if we talk to the petrochemical industry, they love these low prices because they are producing more opportunities in this country to produce products we used to produce overseas. So there is a ripple effect. People say these are bad incentives. Actually, we are producing more. They are paying one of the highest tax rates, as the Senator said. So we are getting money back on our investment. They are high prices because we don't have a comprehensive energy plan to have diversified energy portfolio and make sure we deliver it everywhere we can. It is not complicated.

Ms. LANDRIEU. The Senator is right. I am glad he mentioned this as

well because I happen to also represent a State that has a tremendous petrochemical industry. Of course, that is because the Mississippi River is there, as well as the great finds in the 1950s and 1960s for gas. So when big companies—particularly petrochemicals but big manufacturers—look around in the world to where they go, one thing they look at is the tax rate. But that is not the most important thing. The other thing is to make sure they can find the skilled labor they need. They need cheap energy costs because they cannot produce steel competitively, for instance, if we don't have cheap energy.

So a lot of these companies came to Louisiana in the 1960s because we had cheap energy. That changed, and a lot of them left. Maybe we did other things to drive them offshore. You know what is happening today. Because of this \$2 gas, they are all coming home. You should see the building we have going on. That is why the Texas unemployment rate is the lowest in the Nation. I know the Governor would like to take all the credit for this. My Governor likes to take all the credit for this too. They are two outstanding Republican Governors, and they may be pretty good, but it is the low price of energy that is driving this. That could happen in Colorado, it can happen in Illinois, if we just support the oil and gas industry in a balanced way, instead of choking it off.

Not only does that money go to them, it helps undergird this entire industry which employs millions more people, and it helps us to compete better with China, with India, and I know the Senator understands that. He doesn't have as much heavy construction or refining in Alaska because of a little bit of the isolation. But I think he can appreciate what happens in New Jersey and Louisiana and Illinois, as an example.

Mr. BEGICH. Absolutely. I will tell the Senator we have been exporting for 40 years. We have been doing that because of our ability to do so and being able to get to the Pacific Asian market. Overall, the State here—through all its natural resources, we are a net positive in our export trade. We help lower the trade deficit for a variety of reasons—our fish, minerals, gas, and natural resources. So we are a huge contributor to this economy in a lot of ways.

I have been here only 3 years, and I still wake every day being hopeful. I am hopeful that at some point we will debate and have a real energy plan discussion. When we do that, the net result is that Americans will win, consumers will win, and national security will win. Everything wins if we have a good dependable energy policy that looks not only at today but down the road.

I think my friend from Louisiana made a very good point about conservation, about those issues. Thinking about the automobile industry, we came to their rescue and we got a lot of

criticism—all of us, the President included—but what is the result? Those folks paid back their loans, and they are more innovative than ever before. But they are also producing more fuel-efficient cars, which saves fuel, and it saves on the long-term dependency on foreign products.

Some people say that is not conservation; that was a bailout. It is a combo. It is multifaceted. For whatever reason, the other side sees that as just another government thing. I cannot remember, but it was a pretty good interest rate we got on that money and they paid it back and now they are being more innovative. Most recently, our automobile industry is building more natural gas fuel vehicles. They want to move forward in that area. I don't know if that will be successful, but they are moving forward because the price is lower. We have a lot of it, and that is an industry that is stronger than ever before.

As we sit talking about the importance of energy and how we have to develop our plan and have a diversified plan of action from all sources, as the Senator went through the list of the subsidies, we do it in every arena. We are trying to create a diversified energy portfolio for economic security, and it also creates innovation. We cannot depend on one type of fuel source. It is all part of it. People who say it can just be oil and gas are in another world. We have to have a multifaceted approach and then we have to do it and deliver it for the benefit of the American people. There is a way to do that.

Again, I struggled tonight because of the vote I took yesterday—one of four—that said we are not moving forward because I saw what was going to happen. By this weekend, I will be home talking to Alaskans and sharing their concerns about high energy costs in small villages and urban areas, and they will be asking the question: What are we doing? I wish I could say here is the answer and the price will go down. For the 3 years I have been here—and the Senator from Louisiana has been here longer—we have had a debate with no real substantive beef. People have put something out on the table, and the other side votes against it, instead of having a meaningful, real comprehensive energy bill. We have tax incentives here and there but not something that says this is what are going to do, so 20 years from now, all of us, including my colleague from Louisiana and my colleague from Colorado, can look at our kids and grandkids and say we did the right thing because we are stronger because we diversified our energy resources.

That is the fundamental issue we will not get to. We are in our own debate because we are a group of four. Two of them are out tonight. The rest are in a different debate.

Ms. LANDRIEU. Yes. I wish to reemphasize too the importance of getting back to the basics on energy policy. I have been privileged to be here long

enough where I have helped to pass comprehensive energy bills. I remain hopeful when I wake too. I am a person with the glass half full and not half empty, and I try to remain optimistic in the face of evidence to the contrary. I remain hopeful we can continue on the path of more energy independence for our country. That is why that article, written this week, which I will put in the RECORD, was very telling to me, because I have been saying, similar to the Senator from Alaska, are we making any progress? I believe if we cannot manage, we cannot measure. What is the measurement? One of the measurements is, are we importing more or less oil from dangerous places in the world. And when I saw that had dropped by 15 percent, I was very encouraged.

And the article pointed out two reasons, not one—not drill, baby, drill or conserve and conserve only but both, because America has been doing a better job. Despite the setback of the moratorium, despite the setback with the Deepwater Horizon, despite some of the President's slow policies on drilling, and despite the Republican resistance to conservation, we have been doing something right, because we have reduced our dependence on foreign oil, which is good.

We don't want to be dependent on Venezuela, and we don't want to be dependent on the Mideast, particularly Saudi Arabia. They have been somewhat of an ally, but they do not share all our values, let's be honest. Women just got the right to drive this year—no, actually, to vote this year. I don't think they have the right to drive yet officially. So do we share those values? No.

So why don't we kind of get back to the basics here of drilling more at home, promoting and expanding our nuclear industry safely. And I mean drilling where it is safe and not everywhere, as some Republicans suggest—let's drill everywhere. We don't have to drill everywhere; we just have to be smart and strategic about where we drill, compromise some about the places that are really opposed to it. We can drill more, have revenue sharing, which makes sense with the coastal States of Alaska, Louisiana, Virginia, Mississippi, and Alabama because that builds a strong partnership and stakeholders between the local, State, and Federal governments.

I think we could do more on building efficiency. We can do more on natural gas vehicles. Wouldn't it be wonderful to have the kinds of vehicles that run on electricity or on—and I don't know if this is possible yet, but we could experiment on electricity, on natural gas or on petroleum fuels or on diesel or bio so that if the price of natural gas was low, you would just sort of power yourself on natural gas. If your electric bill is low because you are on nuclear and the nuclear price is low and you are getting your electricity from your nuclear powerplant, you just plug in your automobile and you pay very little.

Why can't we break this dependency by producing more of everything at home and transforming our auto industry, which is the big pull on fuel. You know, our industries run on coal or natural gas or some oil, but the real pull on this oil is our automobiles.

So that is why Republicans are wrong. They do not want to fund this transformation, but we have to fund the transformation to help America move from an old-fashioned petrochemical, where we just fill up at the pump because we only have one thing to get—and that is petroleum—to where we can fill up with several other things. This isn't pie in the sky, this is happening right now. But with a little more government investment, it could happen more, and wouldn't that be a relief?

The Senator from Alaska will know this, and I don't want to misquote here because I could get in trouble, so I will be careful, but if we had a system like that and the price of gasoline was \$10, no one would care. Do you know why? Because they wouldn't have to use it. Think about that. You wouldn't have to buy it. You wouldn't need it for your airplanes, you wouldn't need it for your trucks or your cars because we would have created a system of choice. And choice is power for the consumer—really good choice. They could fill up their car with natural gas or they could fill it up with another source. That is where we need to go. Then we will break it. We will break the dependency because it could be \$10 or \$100 a gallon and who would care, because no one would have to buy it.

So that is where we need to go. We can get there. We are sort of creeping there. That is what this article also said—in by inch we are getting there, but we could accelerate it—no pun intended—if we get off this ridiculous “blame the person in the White House so you can win the next election and then get back to doing nothing.”

So I will turn the conclusion over to the Senator from Alaska by saying that the debate with sound bites for elections coming up and bumper stickers to put on cars will not help, but I am ready for a real debate.

We have introduced several pieces of legislation. I have been a cosponsor of every piece of legislation since I have been here on any kind of major Energy bill, but it has to have a conservation component, it has to have an environmental safety component, it has to have more drilling, revenue sharing, and then I think an expansion of nuclear power would be very important and the right subsidy mix for the kinds of energy we would like to produce in this Nation. That would make our Nation much stronger when it comes to energy, but it would make us so economically powerful and it would make us militarily more powerful because we would negotiate treaties differently if we didn't have to get on our hands and knees and ask countries that don't even share our values to pump a little

more gas for us when we could pump it ourselves.

I yield to the Senator from Alaska.

Mr. BEGICH. I thank my friend from Louisiana, and I will conclude by saying again that her point about being smart and strategic is what we are saying. No one is saying either/or, that it has to be this or that. It is a combination of things. Some will be more expensive today but maybe less later.

Think about the technology around the cell phone the first time it came out, which used to be a box about this big, and you plugged it in your car and the big receiver would be in your trunk. It cost several thousand dollars to buy that technology, if you remember, and people were saying: No one is ever going to do that. Now you can go to the 7-Eleven—or in my State it would be the Holiday store—and buy throwaway phones. It is amazing what can happen when you allow some expansion of this knowledge and technology.

Oil and gas bring new technology. The Senator mentioned directional drilling, for example, which is new technology being developed in our State and her State to bring opportunities that Shell gas is now doing—all kinds of opportunities.

When you think of the security level, I know the Senator from Colorado, our Presiding Officer here, has been in the Armed Services Committee, where we talk about this all the time. How do we get the biggest consumer—the military—to find new alternatives? And they are experimenting.

But what is amazing—and we heard it last week and the week before—is that our friends on the other side are wondering why the military is looking at alternative fuels. They actually asked, what gives you the authority to do that? Well, actually, when it costs you almost \$400 a gallon for diesel fuel on the front lines of Afghanistan, I think that is a good reason. They should be looking at what kinds of alternatives they can use.

I have seen what they are doing. They are doing some amazing things with solar panels and small devices. And what is important about that for the military is they can move more rapidly through areas so they won't have to worry about where is the diesel truck for energy. But for rural Alaska, it is important in our rural villages where it is \$10 or \$11 a gallon for heating fuel, and now there is technology that, instead of taking up a whole room, is portable, and they can move it, they can use it, and it saves consumers.

So there are all kinds of things we should be doing.

I know the other side will say: Those things cost too much; these things cost too much. When you are at the R&D stage, things always cost too much because you have to move slowly to develop and create the markets. But the military is a huge driver of a market, so I am excited that they are in these

areas. And I oppose the idea of some Republican Senators and House Members who are saying they shouldn't be doing anything experimental. Absolutely, they should. They are a consumer of the product. Let's have them give us some innovation.

People may forget that the same people who were doing the energy development in the early 1960s are the ones who started the Internet, from which we all now benefit. Imagine in the 1960s if we had said to the military: Oh, we don't want you testing whatever they were calling that Internet system. That is bad. You get out of that business. Where would we be today? Now, as the parent of a 9-year-old, I might have a different view on this. I may not want my son on the Internet. But it made a difference in our economy and everything else that is going on.

To conclude, I would say we have a chance to develop, to diversify, and to deliver a real energy plan if we focus on it. That is what we should be doing. So I thank my colleague from Louisiana, and I thank the Senator from Colorado, who is our Presiding Officer tonight, for allowing us to have a little rant time here in our own world. But I think the world we talk about is the same world almost everyone in America is living in, with high gas prices and wanting real solutions.

Anyone who says there is a magic bullet and the price will go down—that isn't happening. I support the Keystone Pipeline, and I know my colleague from Louisiana supports that, but that won't lower prices tomorrow. I support, for a variety of reasons, a long-term plan—jobs and other things—but it won't lower prices tomorrow. Drilling in Chukchi and Beaufort is important to me. I think in the long term it will create jobs and it will lower gas prices but not tomorrow. But these are the kinds of things we should be doing.

Will our investing in conservation to ensure that our commercial buildings and houses are more efficient turn a dollar right away? A little bit. But over the long haul—I am doing an energy retrofit to my house in Anchorage. I am going to save some money. It will go in and go out because I have to put some money aside for my son's education. But I will have more money. So it pays over time. Nothing happens overnight. It drives me crazy when I hear the other side say that this is like magic and tomorrow things will change. I wish that were the case. We all do. But we have to have a plan to get there.

I thank the Senator from Louisiana for joining me tonight. I thank her for standing tall when we took our vote yesterday. I think we made our point, and now we need to move forward, and hopefully we can get other people to follow our lead and do a comprehensive plan.

Ms. LANDRIEU. I thank the Senator.

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION ACT

Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, while I am on the floor, I would like to speak for a few more minutes, if I might, on another subject but one that is equally important. The Senator from Alaska and I just spent some time talking about a balanced approach to energy production and the fact that if we could get there, we could create jobs. The Senator was saying that no matter what we do, it won't create jobs overnight, and he is right again. It will take a long time, it won't lower the price overnight, and it will create jobs.

But there is a bill that actually will create millions of jobs overnight that is pending, hanging around this Capitol, that if we could get passed would mean a great deal immediately—tomorrow, literally the day after the bill is signed by the President—and that, Mr. President, is the Federal highway transportation bill which last week was passed and compromised by one of the most liberal and progressive Members of this body and one of the most conservative Members of this body, Senator BOXER of California and Senator INHOFE of Oklahoma, who worked for over a year and a half to put a transportation bill together, a 2-year transportation bill. Many of us would have liked it to be 5 years or 6 years, but 2 years is what they could negotiate. And you know what, it is a lot better than the short-term 3-month, 6-month, 2-month, or 3-month temporary measures we have been under for the last several years. That gives no consistency—none—for our States and our counties and our cities.

If you talk about uncertainty, the business community, real estate developers, planners, community planners, transit planners—these entities do not know what it is going to look like 6 months from now or even next year. This bill would give at least 2 years of certainty, and then we could come back, hopefully, and pass a long-term extension of 5 years or 6 years. But 2 years is much better than 30 days or 60 days or 90 days, which is what the House is contemplating.

I am proud the Democrats and some Republicans are standing up in the House and saying no short-term extension. We have a bill. We have the Senate bill that got over 74 votes of Republicans and Democrats, compromised again between a more progressive and a more conservative Member for the benefit of our country.

There are 1.9 million jobs at stake. For the gulf coast Senators, there is an extra bonus. Besides funding our rail, our highways, and our transit, the gulf coast Senators and House Members from the States of Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida got a very significant amendment to fund coastal restoration and flood control protection and economic development in the gulf coast, directing the fine money that is going to be levied against BP sometime in the next few weeks or months. Instead of that