

awesome potential of her vocation: "I touch the future," she said. "I teach." While we may bring to the debate on education differing views, it is my hope that we ultimately remember this is a profoundly important issue which should be above politics and ideology. It is all about the future of this country—and the future, after all, is in very small hands.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Dakota is recognized.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ACT

Mr. JOHNSON. Mr. President, I come to the Senate floor to speak about the importance of reauthorizing the Violence Against Women Act before September 30. Since enactment of the Violence Against Women Act in 1994, the number of forcible rapes of women have declined, and the number of sexual assaults nationwide have gone down as well.

Despite the success of the Violence Against Women Act, domestic abuse and violence against women continue to plague our communities. Consider the fact that a woman is raped every five minutes in this country, and that nearly one in every three adult women experiences at least one physical assault by a partner during adulthood. In fact, more women are injured by domestic violence each year than by automobile accidents and cancer deaths combined.

In South Dakota alone, approximately 15,000 victims of domestic violence were provided assistance last year. Shelters, victims' service providers, and counseling centers in my state rely heavily on VAWA funds to provide assistance to these women and children. VAWA reauthorization assures that states and communities will continue to have access to critical funds for domestic violence services. We must not allow this opportunity to pass us by.

As you know, legislation to reauthorize VAWA has received broad, bipartisan support in both the House and Senate. I am pleased to join 68 of my Senate colleagues in cosponsoring VAWA legislation that unanimously passed the Senate Judiciary Committee in June. Similar legislation in the House has 233 bipartisan cosponsors and was also approved in June by the House Judiciary Committee.

Since the Violence Against Women Act became law, South Dakota organizations have received over \$6.7 million in federal funding for domestic abuse programs. In addition, the Violence Against Women Act doubled prison time for repeat sex offenders; established mandatory restitution to victims of violence against women; codified much of our existing laws on rape; and strengthened interstate enforcement of violent crimes against women.

The law also created a national toll-free hotline to provide women with crisis intervention help, information about violence against women, and free

referrals to local services. Last year, the hotline took its 300,000th call. The number for women to call for help is: 1-800-799-SAFE.

In addition to reauthorizing the provisions of the original Violence Against Women Act, the legislation that I am supporting would improve our overall efforts to reduce violence against women by strengthening law enforcement's role in reducing violence against women. The legislation also expands legal services and assistance to victims of violence, while also addressing the effects of domestic violence on children. Finally, programs are funded to strengthen education and training to combat violence against women.

A woman from South Dakota recently wrote me about this issue, and I'd like to share her story with you because I believe it makes the most compelling case for reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act.

The letter begins:

My story is that I was abused as a child, raped as a teenager, and emotionally abused as a wife. I survived that, but I almost didn't emotionally survive the last two and a half years knowing that my grandchildren were being abused and having my hands tied to be patient while our laws worked. My son has been fighting for custody of his triplets.

The letter continues:

Their story is horrible. While in the custody of their mother and her live-in boyfriend, they were battered, bruised, emotionally and sexually assaulted.

She writes that one of her grandchildren got her ear cut off, another had his head split open, and the third child's throat was slit.

Thankfully, the woman writes that her son finally got custody of her grandchildren and removed them from the abusive environment.

The letter concludes:

This is my story, and at least it has a happy ending, but there are hundreds of women and children out there still living in danger. Please reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act. Don't let another woman go through what I went through, and please don't let another child go through what my grandchildren have gone through. You can make a difference.

Simply stated, reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act will provide much needed resources to prevent domestic violence in our country. I appreciate that we have many worthwhile legislative priorities remaining to be decided, including a majority of appropriations bills that must be passed this year. However, I can think of no better accomplishment for Congress than to reauthorize VAWA and help keep wives, daughters, sisters, and friends from becoming victims of domestic violence.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota is recognized.

Mr. DORGAN. Am I recognized in morning business under a previous order?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. That is correct.

THE REMAINING BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, we are nearing the end of the session of the 106th Congress. I believe we have 13 appropriations bills that we are required to enact and required to be signed into law to provide funding for all of the various things that are done in public policy and by our agencies of Government.

Out of the 13 appropriations bills, 2 of them have been signed into law by President Clinton. Now this process is broken. It is quite clear. We have come to the end stage of this session. Most of the appropriations bills are not yet completed. Most of the very difficult and complex issues are as of yet unresolved. I say to my colleagues that all we have to do to resolve all of this is to vote—only vote.

I will give you an example of why this process is broken. I serve on the agriculture appropriations subcommittee. We passed a bill in July that appropriates money for agricultural functions. Now, the Senate passed its bill in mid to late July. The House passed its bill on July 11. I am a conferee in a conference between the House and Senate. There has never been a conference. We have never met. There have been no discussions, and no Senator or Congressman has been involved in any way to try to move this legislation forward. Why? I am not sure exactly the reason why. I suspect the reason why is that this issue—this Agriculture appropriations bill—has some very complicated and controversial matters involved in it and some don't want to vote on them. So if you don't want to vote, don't call them up, don't have a conference. Just dig in your heels and stall. That is what happened.

One of the controversial issues on that bill—and it is appropriate that it should be on that bill—is the question of whether this country should allow the sale of food to certain countries with whom we have economic sanctions. Our country has had a policy, believe it or not, of saying we will use food as a weapon.

We don't like Saddam Hussein, so we impose economic sanctions against him and his country. We impose economic sanctions against the country of Iraq. We impose sanctions against Iran. We impose sanctions against Libya, North Korea, and Cuba. Included in those economic sanctions are provisions that say we will not allow the shipment of food or medicine to your country. That doesn't make any sense to me. We ought never use food as a weapon. We ought never under any condition say that we will prevent the shipment of food to anywhere in the world. This is a policy that takes aim at dictators whom we don't like, and it ends up hitting sick, hungry, and poor people. That makes no sense.

So the Senate passed my amendment that is now in conference. The amendment says let us stop using food as a weapon; no more sanctions on food

shipments anywhere in the world. That passed the Senate. It is in conference. We are not meeting in conference. Do you know why? Because some in this Congress do not like that provision. They want to retain sanctions on food. They want to continue to use food as a weapon. They want to prevent us shipping food, for example, to Cuba and other countries. Because they don't have the votes to prevent it if we had a vote on it, they say let's not have a conference. So there is no conference.

We are now just days from the end of the session, and the Agriculture appropriations bill is not passed. It is in conference. There is no conference meeting and no House conferees appointed. So there are some who think they will do what they did last year. The Senate passed that same provision last year by 70 votes, and the conference got hijacked by House leaders. When we met, the Senate conferees said we insist on our provisions to stop using food as a weapon. At that moment, there was an adjournment by the House conferees, and it never again met. Why? Because the House conferees would have supported us, and the House leaders wouldn't let them do it. In order to prevent a vote, they adjourned the conference, and it never again met.

We come to the end of this session in total chaos in all of these bills because some want to prevent a vote. This is the center for democracy. The process of democracy is to vote, even if it is controversial—vote, and then count them, and the winning side wins.

That is what ought to happen here. This isn't rocket science.

I say to those putting this schedule together to remember the old days. Did you get a tinker toy set or an erector set when you were a kid? You put it together piece by piece. That is the way this should work.

There are 13 bills. There is a sequence by which you pass the bills, put them in conference, have votes, resolve the controversial issues, get them done, get them to the President, and meet the deadline.

But I fear what is going to happen in the next week or two is that the same people who tried to hijack this process last year could do it again this year. The losers will be the American public—the American people and family farmers who rely on us to repeal this provision that says let's continue to use food as a weapon.

It is immoral. It is wrong for our family farmers. It is immoral for our country, and a terrible thing for our family farmers. It hurts hungry, sick, and poor people around the world. We ought to stop it.

I will have more to say about that next week.

ENERGY PRICES

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, as we look ahead, aside from the wrench in the crankcase here in Congress that prevents any kind of movement to get

things done, one of the significant challenges for us both now and in the months ahead is this issue of energy. What is happening to energy prices? What is happening to the supply of energy? I want to talk for a minute about where we are.

Go back a year, or maybe a year and a half, and the price of oil was \$10 a barrel. In fact, in North Dakota it was \$6 to \$7 a barrel. The price of gasoline at the gas pumps was about 90 cents a gallon. The price of natural gas was about \$2 per million cubic feet.

Now, fast forward: What has happened is the OPEC countries have cut their production of oil. We have seen a circumstance in this country where the price of oil has spiked up on the spot market to \$36 and \$37 a barrel. Gasoline is anywhere from \$1.50 to \$2 a gallon. Natural gas prices have more than doubled from \$2 per mcf, and in some cases \$5 to \$5.50.

We have people frightened to death with the reports that home heating fuel costs are spiking way up. Those in my State and others—particularly in the Northeast as they enter what could be a cold winter—are trying to figure out how they, on limited incomes, will pay for home heating fuel that is going to double, and in some cases triple in price. These are significant and serious issues. The question is, What do we do about it? What is causing all of this? And what can we do about it? We start out by understanding that it is complicated. It is not simple.

One of the first and most important aspects of understanding this is our country is far too dependent on foreign sources of energy. We are far too dependent especially on the OPEC countries for our oil. When we have to send people from our country to the OPEC countries to beg them to open the faucets and produce more, it has a significant impact on our economy and our future and our economic growth. We ought to understand that this makes us far too vulnerable. We need in the long term to move away from that vulnerability.

Second, with respect to consumers, they ask the question: Not only is OPEC cutting back, but why? The answer to that is, yes; OPEC is cutting back. Why? Because it is in their interest and they can do so. But they are also asking: Is somebody profiteering at the gas pumps? They see merger after merger in the energy industry. They see that British Petroleum and Amoco get married. They see Exxon and Mobil decide they are going to get hitched.

All of these big companies gather together, and then at a time when we have an energy crisis, we have a circumstance where the largest 14 oil companies show profits of over \$10 billion in one quarter—up 112 percent—and those who drive to the gas pumps, those who are buying home heating fuel, and those who are paying for natural gas prices are asking the question: Is somebody profiteering at my expense?

As I say, this is a complex issue. But all of these questions need to be answered. The Federal Trade Commission has a current investigation going on. I hope they can wrap that up soon and tell the American people what is happening with respect to prices.

The issue of supply and demand in energy is something I want to talk about just for a moment. There has been a lot of discussion in the last few weeks on this issue of energy. We have some people saying in the last 6 to 8 years we have seen a decrease in production. That is causing our problem. We have been talking about energy supplies. Let's talk about the production of oil. Let's take a look at this line of production and what you see going back to about the late 1960s or 1970s. There has been a continual and diminished production.

That has happened under Republican administrations and Democratic administrations. That has happened under a series of administrations over many years. You see the line on the chart. There is no change in it at all. There is a systematic reduction in the production of energy.

With respect to the consumption of energy, we also see what has happened. In the 1970s, we had this energy scare for a number of reasons. We had a very brief reduction. We had a significant conservation movement in this country to conserve energy. We had some brief reductions. But the fact is, we have begun to trend upward once again in a significant way. You will see that imports are continuing now to increase once again, which makes us much more dependent on foreign source energy.

This is important to everybody. I am a Senator who represents the State of North Dakota. It is important to us. When the price of gas at the pump spikes way up, or the price of diesel fuel begins to spike way up, this is what it means to a State such as North Dakota. We have farmers who are heavy users of fuel in order to put the crop in and to get the crop off the field. Higher prices for fuel means real trouble especially at a time when we have collapsed grain prices. It means people living in North Dakota, or other State such as ours, who drive a lot just to get places, that we pay a much heavier burden than others do. Do you know that North Dakotans drive almost twice as much per person as New Yorkers just to get to a grocery store? Why? Because we are a very large State with a sparse population and you have to drive long distances to get to places.

I have a friend in New York. They have relatives in New Jersey 50 miles away. I am told they pack an emergency kit in the trunk, put blankets in the car, and plan for 6 months to take a little trip to see their relatives 50 miles away. I don't know if that is true. But on the east coast, you don't travel as much. Populations are near. In North Dakota and Montana and States like those, we have to travel a lot. Therefore, we pay twice as much