

publicly acknowledged that the safeguards would last “in perpetuity.” There is no provision to terminate this agreement immediately in the event that India conducts another nuclear test, as it last did in 1998. Even though this is the first agreement of its kind to require an exemption under the Atomic Energy Act, because India is not a signatory to the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, the Congress is being pushed to override the statutory period for consideration of the agreement.

At a time when the United States is strengthening its sanctions on Iran to halt its uranium enrichment, India has joined in non-aligned movement statements supporting Iran’s nuclear position in its negotiations with the West and is a major supplier of refined petroleum products for Tehran. In addition, shortly after the House vote on the Hyde Act in 2006, the State Department reported that Indian entities were believed to have sold sensitive missile technologies to Iran.

According to those in the non-proliferation community, this agreement creates a dangerous distinction between “good” proliferators and “bad” proliferators and sends misleading signals to the international community with regard to Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty norms, making the task of winning international support to contain and constrain the nuclear programs of North Korea, Iran, and potential proliferators more difficult.

We need to let the process work. There is no rush. The Congress will still be here come January. India will still be around come January. The Indian government may even have filed its facilities declaration with the International Atomic Energy Agency by January. Only President Bush will be leaving in January, but, if this agreement is approved, I can assure him that his Administration will get all due credit for negotiating it. Let us take a step back from this mad rush we are in, and do our job as the Founders intended, as a deliberative body, not a rubber stamp.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, momentarily we will be introducing a bill, but my colleague from New York is here and wants to be heard. I just wanted to take 30 seconds, if I could. We have wrapped up the debate on the U.S.-India nuclear accord and there will be no more discussion I know of about that at this point. I will maybe insert some materials in the RECORD but I did want to thank Senator BIDEN’s staff and others. There is a list which I will put in the RECORD, but Brian McKeon, Ed Levine, Anthony Wier, Fulton Armstrong, and, from Senator LUGAR’s staff, Kenny Myers and Tom Moore, just did a great job on this. I want my colleagues to reflect the effort of staff who have worked for years on this. I appreciate immensely their efforts. There will be a vote later this evening on that matter.

I yield the floor to my colleagues whom I know want to address the financial crisis issue or some other points. As soon as I have the amended version of the bill, I will send it to the desk for their consideration.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from New York is recognized.

Mr. GREGG. Will the Senator from New York yield for a unanimous-consent request?

Mrs. CLINTON. Yes.

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that at the conclusion of the statement of the Senator from New York, I be recognized for 10 minutes, and then other Republicans speaking on the rescue plan be allotted 10-minute segments from the Republican side.

Mr. DODD. Reserving the right to object, I am going to offer a unanimous-consent request that covers that. I will have my colleague look at it as well, so we may need some modification.

Mr. GREGG. I don’t believe it covers the 10 minutes.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection? The Senator from Montana is recognized.

Mr. BAUCUS. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, I would like to be able to get in this line too, so I ask unanimous consent that I speak following the Senator from New Hampshire.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection?

Mr. DODD. Let me object to this particular request of my colleague, and I will get back to it in a minute. I don’t want to get to a situation where there are limits without some consideration to make sure there is a balance to it.

Mr. GREGG. Let’s go forward with the Senator from New York.

Mr. DODD. Then the Senator from Montana.

FINANCIAL CRISIS

Mrs. CLINTON. Mr. President, I appreciate very much the extraordinary work that has been done with respect to the rescue package, led in a bipartisan fashion, which has certainly produced significant changes in the original request that came to the Congress from the Treasury Department. Tonight we will vote on legislation none of us wish we were considering and none of us can afford to see fail.

The costs of inaction are far too great. We are already seeing the consequences of a freezing credit market that will only worsen. I hear across my State of New York that small businesses are struggling to find affordable loans to keep their doors open and their inventories stocked. Even larger businesses are being pushed to the breaking point. Throughout the country, the impact of this credit crisis is beginning to be felt with students who are seeing the sources of student loans dry up, interest rates on car payments are rising, families who had saved up

and acted responsibly are seeing higher mortgage rates shrinking their dream of home ownership.

Our economy runs on credit. Underlying that credit is trust. Both the credit and the trust is running out. Essentially, what we are doing in an intangible way is restoring trust and confidence, and in a very tangible way helping to restore credit. Banks will refuse to lend to businesses and even to one another; investors continue to withdraw to the safest investments: Treasury bills, even cash. Tens of thousands of jobs in New York have been lost. A study this morning projected that New York alone would lose at least 120,000 jobs.

I think we are here in some respects because we failed to tackle a home mortgage crisis. Now we are facing a market crisis. If we fail to tackle the market crisis, we risk an even deeper economic crisis. I do not think any of us want to see irresponsibility on Wall Street compounded by ineffectiveness in Washington.

That is why we must act, even as we do so with regret and reservations, because we have little choice. The proposal we are considering is far from perfect, but it is a far cry from the original plan sent over by the Treasury Department that instilled virtually unlimited powers in the hands of the Treasury Secretary. As I said when we first examined that original three-page proposal, we needed a plan that included checks and balances, not a blank check.

Thanks to the leadership in the Senate and in the House, we have negotiated through the Congress, on a bipartisan basis, a better alternative that instills taxpayer protections, asserts oversight, and maintains greater accountability.

As is the case very often in effective compromises, no one is happy. But we cannot let the perfect be the enemy of the good—or in this case, the enemy of what is necessary. But as we vote for this proposal tonight, we must do so considering what steps we will take next.

On the floor at this moment are three of the leaders who shaped this plan under the very able leadership of Chairman DODD, and the chief Republican negotiator, Senator GREGG, and, of course, the chairman of the Finance Committee, Chairman BAUCUS. But I think we all recognize this is not the end but the beginning of what we must do. I believe there are three big goals we will have to address even after we pass the rescue package tonight in the Senate and send it over to the House.

First, we must address the home mortgage crisis. For 2 years, I and others have called for action as wave after wave of defaults and foreclosures crashed against communities and the broader economy. We are not yet through the woods. Millions of mortgages are underwater or under the specter of adjustable rates set to rise.

I am proposing what we are calling the Home Owners Mortgage Enterprise,

an acronym obviously spelling “home,” to rewrite mortgages and homes so that creditworthy, responsible families can keep their homes and keep making affordable payments. Through such a HOME program we would also be able to consider freezing adjustable mortgage rates and even placing a short-term moratorium on foreclosures.

When our country enacted a similar program in the Great Depression, we saved 1 million homes without costing the taxpayers a dime. In fact, the program ended with a surplus. Only by rewriting the terms of the debt held by families whose mortgages can be salvaged will we recoup a great deal of the value of the debt we are purchasing from Wall Street firms.

I also believe we need to consider a real tax credit for home buyers to jump-start the housing market. This has been an effective tool in the past, and it can be an effective tool again. We have too much supply and too little demand. Getting the liquidity that will be injected into the credit markets to work its way through the entire economy will take time. I think we need not only a supply of liquidity but an increasing demand, particularly in the housing market.

Second, we must be vigilant on behalf of taxpayers, putting in place safeguards so the Treasury is maximizing the value of the assets purchased with taxpayer dollars.

We need to have the flexibility to ensure we are not just subsidizing investors and executives, but we should tie this debt relief to strong recapitalization requirements and greater accountability.

I also want to be sure that companies do not take undue advantage of this program and sell securities to the Treasury with one stroke of the pen and claim a deduction for the losses on those assets—in essence, double dipping, dumping their bad assets on taxpayers and getting a tax break as well.

I am proposing we build on a very creative provision in the bill before us and establish an e-TRUST program. That will stand for Transparent Rules Used to Safeguard Taxpayers. In the bill there is a provision that transactions be put on the Internet. I wish to ensure that the assets bought and sold by the Treasury Department are reported online in real time so any American can log on and see how their tax dollars are being spent. All assets bought and sold must be available on a publicly accessible Web site that discloses the buyers, sellers, and values of these assets. The American people are buying these securities, and so the American people must have easy access to their portfolio.

It is also important to the American people to understand that lying behind these complex transactions with all kinds of long names that you read in the newspaper—collateralized debt obligations and credit default swaps and all the other words that are used in some way explain the complex finan-

cial transactions that brought us to this place—are real assets. There are real homes owned by real people on real land in real communities across America.

So we want to know how those securities that stand in for these real assets are being traded, bought and sold, and we want to be sure we realize for the taxpayer the benefits of these transactions.

Third, I think there is general agreement we must pursue a broader reform. That is one of the lessons of this turmoil. I know Chairman DODD and others will be holding hearings to try to untangle how we got to where we are. We know we have to rein in executive compensation by giving shareholders a greater role in and eliminating loopholes that allow boards to conceal the value of salary packages. We have to end the quarter-by-quarter mentality in which long term prosperity is subverted by short-term stock valuations. Obviously, we have to end the culture of recklessness in our financial markets endorsed by an ideology of indifference in Washington.

If the American people invest in these companies, I think we should ask the companies to invest in the American people. I think we should consider requiring financial institutions participating in this Treasury plan to create an American priorities fund, to be part of their portfolio, to invest in clean energy, infrastructure, mass transit, manufacturing, education and other public goods and goals that would be well served by greater private investment.

Along with the rescue package will be a number of tax credits that will be passed by the Senate tonight. Again, Chairman BAUCUS has done yeoman's work getting these tax credits put together. The Senate supported them before. In it is a fix for the alternative minimum tax and an energy production tax credit.

In fact, we will be stimulating the economy for Main Street while we pass this rescue package for our credit markets. I think that is the right combination. But we need to do more. Instead of toxic securities that nobody can understand, are so complex and lack all transparency and accountability, banks should be investing in clean energy facilities in Buffalo or new auto manufacturing plants in Detroit to build more fuel-efficient cars.

We should be repairing our bridges, our roads, our tunnels. We should be investing in high-speed rail and making sure Amtrak is not a second-class railroad but competes with the best anywhere in the world.

I think the agenda before the Congress is a very important one for our country. We cannot continue to shuttle from crisis to crisis. This is a sink or swim moment for our country. We cannot merely catch our breath. We must swim for the shores and we must do so together, not only as a united Congress but as a united country. There is so

much work to be done in America, so many investments that make us richer and stronger and safer and smarter that will enable us to look in the eyes of our children and grandchildren and tell them we are leaving our country in as good, in fact, better shape than when we found it.

At this moment, we cannot say that. But I am absolutely sure, based on the bipartisan cooperation we saw on this bill, in responding to a real crisis, that we will see more of that in the months ahead.

Our new President will certainly demand it of us, but we should be demanding it of ourselves and demonstrate to the American people that the Congress will lead the way into a much more confident and optimistic future for America.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, I wish to thank the Senator from New York. She was eloquent and hit right on the exact theme. I think this is a sad moment in many ways but a moment we have to confront. As she so aptly describes, it is our job now not just to deal with this crisis but to put our country on a better footing. So I thank her for her message and her words today.

Mr. GREGG. I ask unanimous consent that I be recognized for 10 minutes, and at the conclusion of my remarks, the Senator from Montana be recognized.

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

Mr. GREGG. I further ask unanimous consent that when we get into the debate and the time has been divided, the Republican Members have 10 minutes to speak on the matter.

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

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, first, I wish to recognize and acknowledge the Senator from Connecticut, the chairman of the Banking Committee, for the tremendous work he has done over the past few days to bring this piece of legislation to this point.

This is an emergency. This is a crisis. Those terms are often overused. In this instance, they are not being overused. We know the financial markets are under extreme duress. We have seen some of our largest and most significant financial institutions fail or be reorganized in the last few weeks.

We also know, regrettably, that the credit markets are basically locked up and that credit on Main Street is disappearing, that people are not able to get financing for the payrolls, financing for inventory, financing to buy a car, send children to school, rebuild the local hospital, rebuild the local school system. This is not a virtual event, it is not an event of theory, this is a real event of very severe economic consequences.

Action has to be taken. The chairman of the committee, working under

a bipartisan, bicameral format with the Secretary of Treasury, has come up with this proposal to try to address this issue. Is this the answer to the entire problem? Obviously not.

The way I describe this is we have a patient who has suffered a severe wound and is bleeding profusely. We are going to try to put a tourniquet on that patient so we can stabilize their condition, get them to the hospital, and hopefully take other action which will cure them and get them back on their feet, specifically get the economy back on its feet, make sure Americans are able to go to work and enjoy a prosperous lifestyle.

This proposal, as it came from the Treasury, was simple, with a purpose of basically going forward with a significant amount of taxpayers' dollars, \$700 billion, taking those dollars and buying investments. That is an important point to remember, because there has been a lot of misrepresentation, regrettably, demagoguery and hyperbole about how we are throwing money at Wall Street. That is not the case.

What is happening is we will be purchasing assets, assets that have value. The Federal taxpayer will own those assets. Down the road, we will probably sell those assets, and we will actually get money back in for the taxpayer, into the Federal Treasury. We may actually break even, we may lose some money, but it is more likely, in my opinion, that we will come close to breaking even, and we may actually, some people tell us, make money for the taxpayer. But this is not \$700 billion out the window.

In doing this effort, we are going to free up credit, credit on Main Street, that makes it possible for people on Main Street to do what they usually do. America runs on readily available, reasonable, affordable credit. Every American has credit on something: their credit card, their home, their car, their kids going to school, the little company they work for, if they work for a mom and pop, and even a middle-sized company probably has credit to make their payroll, probably has credit to buy the inventory. All this is necessary in order to keep the economy going. Yet today we are seeing it dry up and we are seeing it freeze up.

We are going to try to relieve that pressure so Main Street can operate as it should. In addition to what the Treasury Secretary felt he needed to free up that credit, we as a Congress felt we needed to do some other things. We needed to protect the taxpayer, and we have done that in this bill. Every dollar that comes into the Treasury as a result of reselling these assets will go to reduce the Federal debt, it will not go to create new programs, it will go to reduce the Federal debt.

In addition, we wished to make sure nobody is going to game the system, nobody is going to make a lot of money on this at the expense of the taxpayer. So we have language in here that limits, and eliminates in some instances,

any sort of golden parachute, limits the salaries of the heads, the CEOs of these major companies who may take advantage of this, and basically eliminates, as a result of the efforts of the Senator from Montana and his good ideas, eliminates the tax deductions for high-income individuals above a reasonable amount.

In addition, as a result of the leadership of the chairman of the committee, again, we focused a lot of attention on making sure we can keep people in their homes. We do not want people foreclosed on, and interestingly enough, as a result of the Federal Government buying these assets, which we will be buying, which are mostly mortgages, mortgage-backed securities, which we will be buying at 20 or 30 percent below face value, we as a government are going to be in a position to reorganize the mortgages of people who today cannot meet their payments because they bought a subprime mortgage and, as a result, they could not make the mortgage payments when the mortgage reset.

We are going to be able to adjust those mortgages. If a person lives in their property as a personal residence, and if they have a reasonable income, hopefully, we will be able to structure it so they can stay in that property today, something they most likely would not be able to do if the economy played out in the present scenario.

So we are going to keep people in their homes and protect their opportunity to participate in a reasonable mortgage; at the same time, maybe make money for the taxpayer, because once those mortgages start to perform again, they become more valuable, and we can resell them into the market.

Fourthly, we address the issue of oversight. We create massive transparency so everybody is going to know what is happening. As was mentioned earlier by the Senator from New York, things will be going up on the Internet, so people know what is happening, plus we have significant oversight. We have a board headed by the Federal Reserve Chairman to oversee the Treasury Secretary; we have a board for the Congress to oversee the Treasury Secretary. We have a new inspector general just for this issue, a new GAO initiative just for this issue.

There will be significant oversight so taxpayer dollars are watched carefully so we know proper actions are being taken. We heard from our colleagues in the House of Representatives that they had concerns in the area of give us an option of an insurance program. So as the negotiations went forward, we put in the option of an insurance program.

We heard from colleagues on the Democratic side: Make sure the taxpayers have an option, so if we do not recover all the money we put in, if there is some shortfall, there is an ability to go back to these financial institutions 4 or 5 years from now, when they are a little stronger, and get a payment to cover that shortfall. That option is in there.

Then, in addition, we have expanded the FDIC coverage with this bill so people can have confidence in the money they are putting in their savings accounts, in their checking accounts, in banks, is going to be safe, and they do not have to move it around and maintain these artificial caps in their accounts. So that step is forward.

This is a plan that addresses the needs of the Main Street America through freeing up credit, but it also does it with a lot of efforts to protect the taxpayer, protect the mortgagee, have the proper oversight, and do it in a way that is constructive and, hopefully, returns revenue to the Treasury rather than cost the Treasury revenue.

Is it the answer to the whole problem? No. Please do not assume that after we pass this bill—and hopefully we will pass this bill—suddenly the light is going to shine on the American economy. We are in for a difficult economy for a considerable period of time. We know that. Other institutions will be under significant pressure. Regrettably, probably some of these institutions will not survive this economic situation.

But the option of not doing anything at this time is to virtually guarantee that we as economy will begin a very significant downturn of disproportionate impact on people on Main Street. People will lose their jobs, people will lose their savings, people will find that they cannot get the credit necessary to keep their businesses open or to function at a reasonable level.

There is no question that if we do not get the credit markets working again, we will face a dramatic downturn of proportions which we have not been seen in my lifetime in the United States of America and in our economy.

It is something we should not risk. We should not roll those dice. This is a program which we can do. It may not cost taxpayers anything. But if it does cost taxpayers something, it is not going to be a dramatic amount of money. We can do it with proper safeguards, as we have. As a result, it is an action we should take as a Congress, as representatives of our citizenry, in order to fulfill our obligation to make sure that when you see an impending crisis you know is going to have a huge adverse effect on the people you represent, you move on that crisis, you take action, and you try to revolve it.

That is what this proposal does. It is not the answer to all the problems we have in this economy, but without it, we are going to have a much more severe and difficult time.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. MCCASKILL). The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. DODD. Before yielding to Senator BAUCUS, I announce that I have a number of Senators who I ask consent be recognized for 5 minutes: Senators BAUCUS, MIKULSKI, BROWN, CANTWELL, HARKIN, CONRAD, CASEY, BILL NELSON, REED, DURBIN, OBAMA, SCHUMER, BOXER, MENENDEZ, and KERRY.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. BAUCUS. Madam President, reserving the right to object, I wonder if I could amend that to 15 minutes.

Mr. DODD. Let's make it 12 minutes for my colleague from Montana.

Mr. BAUCUS. Given the gravity of this legislation, that time was a little short.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. So amended. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Montana.

Mr. BAUCUS. Madam President, a cloud hangs over the American economy. It is a cloud made up of thousands of failures, and it is casting a shadow over our country. This cloud of failure is so vast that we have a hard time seeing where it starts and where it ends. This cloud is so thick, we cannot see all the dangers it hides. We cannot tell even if there is light right on the other side. And this cloud is moving fast. It is speedier and stormier than most of us have seen in our lifetimes. This cloud over the American economy contains the failures of people whom we trusted to make this country prosper. It holds the failures of many national institutions, their failure to be prudent, to be honest. This cloud is made up of the failures of the private and public institutions that are supposed to safeguard our financial security. Instead, they let it slip away.

Americans are frustrated by the negligence that let this cloud of economic crisis take shape. This week, many Americans were angry that the Government seemed at first to want to shelter Wall Street from the rain but not America's working families. I share Americans' concerns. I share Americans' frustrations. I share their anger.

I am pleased today because the Senate has heard America's voice. The bill the Senate will consider today improves the Treasury Department's original plan. We made it better. We made this bill work better for working families who are already weathering financial storms and who now face more rainy days because of Wall Street's greed.

The collapse of the financial markets does not sound like Main Street's problem. Most Americans are too busy making ends meet to figure out how frozen credit markets and a shortage of commercial paper affect their lives.

To most Americans, banks not lending to other banks sounds like a bank problem, not their problem. But these haywire markets are everyone's problem, and here is why.

If a bank cannot get credit, neither can its customers. Its customers are the local hardware store, the car dealership down the street. Its customers are college-bound young people and the new neighbor who just bought the house next door. These good people rely on their bank to pay their invoices and make payroll on time. The funds they depend on are also now beginning to dry up. For example, a Montana

businessman called me this week. His company has an \$11 million outstanding loan, a 3-year loan. He uses it to keep his business stocked with inventory. The bank has called that loan in. That 3-year loan is now being called in. He must pay it off, according to the bank, in the next 90 days—not 3 years, 90 days. The crisis is coming home for him now, that is for sure, and that threatens other good people.

If the hardware store and the car dealership lose business, pretty soon employees and suppliers get hurt. If a neighbor cannot get a mortgage, painters, movers, and handymen will have one less paying job. The young person who cannot afford college without a loan and the lady hoping to rent out her basement apartment or the guy who sells school books might come up a bit short. This financial crisis is closer to home than we realize. It affects Americans who earn an honest living, follow the rules, and work hard.

Honest Americans about to get hit harder by the financial storm are the reason I worked to improve this plan. Working families are the reason I insisted on tax relief for struggling homeowners who can't pay the mortgage and can't afford a tax hit when their indebtedness is forgiven. Working families are the reason I insisted on help for hometown banks in Montana and elsewhere that suffered when stock prices fell because of Wall Street's greed—not their fault at all, not the bankers, the Main Street bankers in our States. Working families are the reason we all insisted on finding a way to get back much of the money spent on this plan.

The Treasury will buy assets with the money it spends. Later, the Treasury can sell those assets or hold them to maturity. In either case, there is a good chance the Treasury will get back some or all of these dollars. When I say the Treasury, those are taxpayers' dollars. This bill, therefore, gives American taxpayers a stake in the companies they are helping and a share in their future profits. The American taxpayer's pocket should be the last place companies look for a bailout, but when these companies do ask for help, the American taxpayer should be the first to benefit when the firms get back on their feet. This bill makes sure of that.

Americans taxpayers are the reason I insisted on cutting paychecks and closing golden parachutes of Wall Street executives. In just the past 5 years, the five biggest Wall Street firms paid more than \$3 billion to their top executives—5 years, five biggest firms, \$3 billion to their top executives. That is not right. It is not right for executives to get more big paychecks while their companies are getting assistance from the Government. If companies ask for taxpayer help on the one hand, they can't give out big executive bonuses with the other. This bill limits compensation to executives with golden parachutes.

The Treasury will have to issue guidelines on cutting executive com-

ensation. The Treasury Secretary will have to say: You can't play if you are going to overpay. These provisions are helpful, but we have a lot more in this legislation, even more guidance given to the Treasury Secretary on executive compensation.

I also developed some provisions to cut tax breaks companies get for executive pay and to make sure executives pay tax on more of their income than they do today. I don't want Main Street to subsidize severance pay on Wall Street.

For taxpayers' sake, I also wrote a provision creating a special watchdog to track and protect taxpayer dollars. I said that American resources must be used wisely and efficiently. This bill includes my proposal to create an independent inspector general to oversee this effort, this effort and nothing else, solely designed for this problem. I designed the office of this inspector general to be truly independent, with the necessary resources to fight for every taxpayer dollar. I designed this inspector general to be accountable only to Congress and to the American taxpayer. It will be my personal mission to make sure this watchdog does his or her job. I want this inspector general on the ground in New York inside the firms that facilitate Treasury auctions, watching every dollar that comes and goes. This investigator will hear from the Finance Committee as we work to protect the American people's interests in this effort.

Finally, America's working families are the reason I am so glad this bill now includes tax relief. Last night, Senators REID and MCCONNELL announced that this bill would include Senate-passed legislation—that is, earlier passed—that will create and extend tax incentives for renewable energy to protect 20 million Americans from paying what is called the alternative minimum tax and also extend a number of vital expiring tax credits for businesses and families. This is the right call. Adding this tax relief will ensure that regular working Americans get financial help in this time of crisis.

As soon as this legislation passes, good-paying jobs will open in green energy, as wind and solar projects get up and running. Twenty million Americans who can't afford a higher tax bill are protected from the alternative minimum tax. Families will get a break on college tuition, classroom expenses, and State and local sales taxes, and companies will get tax relief to do research and development, to grow, to offer even more good-paying jobs. Adding tax relief that creates jobs, supports families, and secures a new energy future for the country makes this bill a lot fairer for hard-working Americans.

A "yes" vote on the financial rescue plan is now a vote to rescue America's working families from this financial crisis with the right tax relief at just the right time. It is now time to act.

As a Senator, I was disturbed by this administration's attempt to rush

through a bill for business. But as an American, I am disgusted also by the negligence and greed that got us into this mess. But at this time of crisis, we must not let our anger paralyze us. So many have failed to act responsibly. We must do better. We here in the Senate cannot fail. Failure to act would make today's economic cloud even bigger and more dangerous. Failure to act could unleash the lightning bolts of recession and the downpour of unemployment. Failure to act could turn this cloud into a storm that tears through our entire economy.

The plan in front of us is not perfect. I wish we did a lot more here. I wish we did not have to be where we are. I know many Americans do not want it. But this is the best way to quickly disperse this economic cloud and guard against a bigger storm. Like it or not, we must have a plan big enough to counter our economic woes in a systematic, comprehensive way.

I will vote for this legislation because America is under a cloud, and we cannot linger here. Congress must make sure this crisis does not get worse. With the addition of significant tax relief to this legislation, Congress can actually lift the cloud a bit. Tax relief will make things a little better for Americans feeling financial hurt.

With this vote, Congress must also promise the American people that this will never happen again. The lesson of the cloud must lead us to build a strong financial framework that will not falter again. The lesson of the cloud must lead us to seek a brighter future for every American family that helps us to weather this storm.

I yield the floor.

Mr. ISAKSON. Will the Chair please notify me when 7 minutes has expired? The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair will notify the Senator.

Mr. ISAKSON. Madam President, I stand before you today and perhaps later on this evening to cast what is without question the most challenging vote and the most important vote I have been asked to cast in 30 years as an elected official. I will vote in favor of the economic stabilization bill because it does precisely one thing that we can do to help unlock the credit markets and help the average working Georgian, the average Georgia retiree, the average Georgia child who is looking to the future, to benefit from what right now is a very difficult situation.

I commend Senator DODD for his leadership and Senator GREGG for his leadership. They have expended countless dollars in terms of political capital and countless hours to come up with a solution that works.

There are so many misunderstandings in the public about what this is and what this isn't. So just for the few minutes I have, I wish to talk about the core of it, why it is so important, why it makes sense, and why in the end we as a country will not only benefit but, more likely than not, we will profit from the investment our Treasury makes.

The core of this is the \$700 billion authorization to buy mortgage-backed securities that are on the books of banks, savings and loans, insurance companies, and other entities in the United States.

The first misconception is that the money is going to Wall Street. Wall Street is not being bailed out. Everybody has forgotten that Lehman Brothers went broke. Merrill Lynch sold itself for 30 cents on the dollar. Bear Stearns sold itself or merged for 10 cents on the dollar. And AIG is paying the taxpayer 8.5 points over LIBOR to borrow \$84 billion to dissolve itself. Those are no bailouts. This money goes to those who purchase the securities that were underwritten by Moody's and Standard & Poor's as investment grade and hold them on their balance sheets as an asset which is now valued virtually at zero.

As the Treasury comes in and Secretary Paulson buys these securities, he will make a market in these securities. Once he makes a market, there will be attraction of other investors to jump in for a very good reason. I don't know what price they will establish, but say it is 50 cents, 60 cents or 70 cents on the dollar. A lot of people don't realize that most of these securities, though some of them are in trouble, are not in trouble to the extent of 20, 30, or 40 percent.

By way of example, the worst foreclosure rate in the United States is the State of Nevada—19 percent. If you had a mortgage-backed security that was 100 percent mortgages in the State of Nevada, then, with a 19-percent foreclosure rate, if those foreclosures sold for nothing at sale, then that bond would be worth 81 cents on the dollar at maturity. If somebody paid 50, 60, or 70 percent for it, they would have an 11-, 21-, or 31-percent margin in that security. The power to hold it to its maturity and the power to buy the security and make a market is what makes this a genius proposal from the standpoint of getting to the heart of the American problem.

Then what it does is it establishes three things. One, it establishes a floor. I want to go back to what Senator GREGG said a few minutes ago. Inaction on the part of the Congress this week on this plan will continue a downward spiral that will accelerate, will deepen, and will touch the life of every American citizen, and it will touch it and harm it for a long period of time.

If we are able to pass it, and quickly go to the marketplace and establish the market for these securities, we create a foundation from which, over time, we can grow out of this. Americans' credit will be back again, albeit much tighter than it has been before. And it should be because we should have learned the lessons from some of the excesses of lending operations before. But credit will return.

What will happen is people will continue to have their jobs. What will happen is people who need to sell a house

will now see that people are coming back into the marketplace so they can sell it. All in all, by loosening what is now a clogged credit system at mainstream banks and savings and loans all over the United States of America, we will return a sense of normality to the American economy. The failure of the Congress to do that will establish a continued downward spiral that will be a disastrous for the individual average American in whatever State they live.

So for me this is a difficult vote because you never want to find yourself in this situation. But tonight is not a night to say no to the future of the American people. Tonight is not a night to say no, we do not have a responsibility to help. Tonight is not a night to try to find some philosophical way to figure out how somebody else ought to do it.

It is on the shoulders of the Congress of the United States of America. The people affected are our citizens, the people who have voted for us and sent us here. It is absolutely critical we unplug the financial markets, free up credit to the average American and, over time, restore the American economy to what it has been and always will be: the best entrepreneurial capitalistic system in the world. But failure can sign an end to that very reputation this country so loves and so deserves.

I yield back the remainder of my time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland is recognized.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Madam President, I believe I am part of the Democratic queue. Therefore, I seek recognition to discuss the so-called rescue plan.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is recognized for up to 5 minutes.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Well, Madam President, I am here to talk about this rescue plan. Regrettably, a rescue plan is needed because I am afraid if we do not act today and we do not act with resolve, our economy could come to a crashing halt. I am afraid of massive layoffs. I am afraid of small businesses folding. I am worried that retirement and pension funds could shrink. Therefore, I will vote for this bill, but know that, like the taxpayers, who I know are angry and mad as hell, so am I. We all agree that greed on Wall Street and lax regulatory practices of this administration got us into this mess. Taxpayers who played by the rules are asking tough questions. What are their questions?

BARBARA, what did you do to prevent us from getting into this? What are you going to do to make sure it does not happen again? And what are you going to do to make sure that heads roll?

Well, let me tell you this: Heart and soul, I am a regulator and a reformer. Time and time again, we have seen the consequences of a lax regulatory culture and very wimpy enforcement. Time and time again, I voted for more teeth and better regulation. I voted for

regulation and more teeth in the Consumer Product Safety Commission to get lead paint out of toys and the lead out of the bureaucracy. I voted to strengthen FDA regulation to make sure it did not approve dangerous drugs. I also worked to stop predatory lending and flipping in the mortgage market.

I remember way back in 1999 how all this banking mess got started. Phil Gramm, a Senator from Texas, and Bliley, a House Member, advocated something called the banking deregulation bill. It passed, and it got us into this mess because it got rid of the distinction between investment banks and commercial banks, and lowered the bar on regulation. It allowed for casino economics.

During that debate, and that vote, I was one of nine Senators who voted against it because I said with what we were doing we were going to create an environment where we were creating whales and sharks, and the minnows would be eaten alive. Well, regrettably, my prediction proved right. During that debate, I was told: Get with it, BARB. We are in a global market. You are kind of old-fashioned.

You bet I am old-fashioned. I believe in old-fashioned values called honesty, integrity, putting the public good above private interests. Wall Street went around acting as if they were masters of the universe. Now they have taken us into a black hole in our economy.

We need to get back to basics, whether it is regulating toxic securities or tainted dog food. Our leader, Senator DODD of Connecticut, has done a masterful job in improving this bill.

But while we are looking at reform and regulation and rescue, there are those who also say: Are there going to be any heads that roll? Well, you bet. What we are doing here is for those who said "let the good times roll," we are making sure we are bringing in the FBI so that heads roll.

I went to work when I smelled this crisis coming in January and at an Appropriations hearing said to Director Mueller of the FBI: What is happening in terms of mortgage fraud? He said: Senator MIKULSKI, we now have over 2,000 investigations going on. It has now tripled in number. I said: Do you need money?

He did not want to answer because OMB, the Bush administration, did not want to say they did. But working on a bipartisan basis, we added several million dollars to hire more FBI agents. And right this minute, they are investigating mortgage fraud, predatory practices, deceptive marketing, lending schemes, and so on.

So Senator MIKULSKI, while voting for reform, also made sure she has the FBI coming in against the scam artists who also helped get us into this mess.

So, yes, I have supported reform. Yes, I have supported going after the real crooks and the bad guys. Because not everybody in the mortgage market or

in mortgage securities or in our financial matters is a crook. But we have to restore confidence. The way we will restore confidence is to vote for this rescue plan. It will deal with the credit crisis. If we do not deal with the credit crisis, I believe that Main Street economies will pay the bill, we will have to pay the bill for the bailout, and we will pay the bill once again in lost jobs, the ability to get a loan, and also with shrinking retirements and pensions. So, Madam President, I will vote for this bill. But I have heard the taxpayers loudly and clearly.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. DODD. Madam President, once again, I thank my colleague from Maryland. We have served together a long time here over the years, and her passion, her eloquence are consistent in that same voice I heard several decades ago as a new Member of the House of Representatives. She has never retreated from those values. Once again, I heard them again today.

She is absolutely right, in my view, and I will speak at some length why this legislation is necessary, but also, as importantly, that the steps be taken so we never see America face another day such as this one again. So I thank my colleague from Maryland.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE—H.R. 1424

Mr. DODD. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that with respect to H.R. 1424, in addition to the controlled time specified in the order for consideration of the measure, any other available time until 7 p.m. today be equally divided and controlled between the leaders or their designees, and that when appropriate Members speak in an alternating fashion—Democrat, Republican—that if two Members of any one party speak sequentially, due to availability, then it be in order for two Members of the other party to speak sequentially, if available; that prior to the vote on passage of H.R. 1424, as amended, if amended, the leaders may use whatever leader time they deem appropriate, and that the remaining provisions of the order with respect to this measure be in effect.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

PAUL WELLSTONE MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION EQUITY ACT OF 2008

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to H.R. 1424, which the clerk will report by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 1424) to amend section 712 of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974, section 2705 of the Public Health Service Act, section 9812 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to require equity in the provision of mental health and substance-related disorder benefits under group health

plans, to prohibit discrimination on the basis of genetic information with respect to health insurance and employment, and for other purposes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. DODD. Madam President, as to that last unanimous consent agreement, let me translate that into English. Sometimes these unanimous consent agreements get a little confusing. What we are going to try to do over the remaining 3½ hours or so is to divide the time equally. The minority side has agreed to limit their Members to 10 minutes each. I have not made a similar request here, but I will at some point if Members are not understanding of the desire of everyone to be heard—or almost everyone—on this matter.

At a point in the next few minutes, I will share some remarks that will explain how this bill has arrived to the point that it has and why I think it is important we support this effort this evening.

Again, I am very grateful. I will have some comments to make about JUDD GREGG, my colleague from New Hampshire. Certainly, MAX BAUCUS, the chairman of the Finance Committee, has been an incredible ally and supporter over these last 2 weeks trying to fashion something that would give us a sense of confidence about emerging from this economic crisis. But I will reserve some comments in a few minutes about all that.

I see my colleague from Tennessee, who I would like the RECORD to reflect, while he is, I think, the most junior member on the minority side in the Banking Committee, his contribution should never be calibrated by the seat in which he sits in terms of seniority. I want my colleagues to know while BOB CORKER has not been a longtime Member of this body, his contribution is that of a very senior Member of this body. It has been invaluable.

He is knowledgeable, thoughtful, pragmatic, and made wonderful and comprehensive suggestions to the product we have before us today. I want my colleagues to recognize that. So I thank Senator CORKER of Tennessee for being a very good Senator in a moment such as this, which is a sad day, as I said earlier, but a day which we must address.

So with that, let me yield the floor for Senator CORKER to make some comments.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. CORKER. Madam President, I say to the Senator: Mr. Chairman, I thank you very much for those comments. I want to tell you, I have been in the Senate now for about a year and 9 months, and the way the Senate has responded over the last 10 days I am very proud of, and I thank you for your leadership on the Banking Committee.

I think the negotiations that took place right after the, quote, Paulson plan came forth have created a vehicle that will be successful.