

together in the face of constituent pressure and none of the elements of a serious plan that would actually lower the price of gas or reduce our dependence on the Middle East. The Democrats will have to do better than this if Americans want to see their gas prices go down.

Here is their plan. First, they propose curbing speculation. Democrats want us to forget that no reputable economist thinks speculators alone are the reason for the spike in gas prices or that a recent report by the 27-nation International Energy Agency chided politicians who blame speculators alone as searching for a scapegoat instead of looking for real answers.

Naming speculators alone is not a serious proposal for lowering the price of gas. We do need more cops on the beat at the CFTC, but if Democrats think the answer to \$4-plus-a-gallon gasoline is curbing speculation alone, then they are obviously asking the wrong question.

Second, their plans call on the President to release 10 percent of the oil contained in the Strategic Petroleum Reserve. It is encouraging to see our friends on the other side acknowledging that increasing supply has an effect on price. But at best, this is a polite nod in the direction of supply; it is nibbling around the edges. Again, it is very timid.

Even if we were to tap 10 percent of the Strategic Petroleum Reserve, as they suggest, that would only allow for the release of 70 million barrels at a time, when Americans are using more than 20 million barrels of oil a day.

Let me say that again. Even if we were to tap 10 percent of the Strategic Petroleum Reserve, as is suggested by our friends on the other side of the aisle, that would only allow the release of 70 million barrels, and we use 20 million barrels a day now. In other words, this is a 3-day solution. It should go without saying that a 3-day supply of oil is not a serious proposal for lowering the price of gas.

Next, the Democratic plans for high gas prices call for increasing production on 68 million acres already leased to oil companies. This is the so-called "use it or lose it" provision that says scolding energy companies for not producing fast enough will magically cause gas prices to go down.

Let me remind my friends that this is why we call it "exploration." Those who do it should be encouraged, not threatened. The fact is, the Secretary of the Interior already has this authority to revoke a lease if it is not being used according to the original terms of that lease.

Democrats do not mention this at their press conferences, nor do they mention that many of these leases are simply unproductive, nor do they mention that the Federal Government has declared 85 percent of offshore land and 62 percent of known offshore oil reserves completely off limits to new exploration. Nor do the Democrats men-

tion that, because of them, 100 percent of Western oil shale is off limits, despite the fact that experts estimate the Western States that have oil shale deposits are literally floating on a sea of oil roughly three times the size of Saudi Arabian oil reserves. In other words, "use it or lose it" is already the law of our land. "Use it or lose it" is not a serious proposal for lowering the price of gas.

Finally, the Democratic plan says we should stop exporting oil that is produced domestically. Well, that is an interesting idea. Last year, America exported only 10 million barrels of crude oil overseas—that is half of what we use in a day—including sales to Puerto Rico. Today alone, America will use more than 20 million barrels of oil. This is a half-day solution to a year-long problem. It is, in other words, a joke.

The crisis is real. Americans are suffering from high gas prices. They deserve better from their elected leaders in Washington than half-day or 3-day solutions and bad jokes. They deserve a year-round solution.

Americans deserve a solution that says if prices are going to go down, supply needs to go up. They deserve a plan that lifts the ban on offshore exploration and oil shale development, even as we continue to promote conservation.

Americans know this crisis is not only a demand problem; it is a supply and demand problem. Until more of our friends on the other side acknowledge this, record-high prices will persist.

Now, some of our friends are beginning to acknowledge the undeniable. As of today, ten Democrats have expressed at least some level of willingness to explore offshore. They are acknowledging a groundswell of public opinion, even among self-described liberals, in favor of more domestic supply.

Republicans have a proposal that was designed specifically to attract their support and the support of any other Member of the Senate who actually is interested in achieving a result. It promotes energy-efficient vehicles such as plug-in electric cars and trucks. It addresses supply and demand by lifting the ban on Western oil shale development and opening exploration far from the shore of States that want it.

Ours is a serious proposal that directly addresses the price of gas at the pump. It is not a gimmick. It is not a half-day Band-Aid on a year-round problem. It is a solution. It is what the American people are demanding of us.

High gas prices are a serious problem and demand to be taken seriously. It is time our friends on the other side put partisan differences and timid, peripheral half-measures aside and get serious about this urgent situation. The American people expect and deserve it.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to a period of morning business for up to 1 hour, with the time equally divided between the two leaders or their designees and with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each and with the Republicans controlling the first 30 minutes.

The Senator from Georgia is recognized.

ENERGY

Mr. ISAKSON. I wish to commend the Republican leader on his remarks. I wish to follow up on those remarks on what is the crisis of the day in the United States of America, which is that the Congress of the United States has chosen, all of us—I am not pointing fingers at anyone—to argue about partisan politics over energy while the American people are paying numbers they have never had before in their lives. The future of oil is only looking higher and higher and higher.

Quite frankly, in the United States of America, the Congress of the United States is sitting on a ham sandwich starving to death.

This is a problem we have solutions for, if we will put our partisan differences aside and develop a comprehensive mandatory plan to address the supply and demand on petroleum. Yesterday the President removed the executive order prohibiting offshore drilling. That is absolutely something we ought to do. We need to be exploring our domestic resources to reduce our dependence on foreign imports. It is good for America not only because it is our energy, it is good because it is in the geopolitical interests of the United States. Every barrel of oil we are dependent on from the Middle East is a geopolitical problem, not just an arithmetic problem or a cost-of-oil problem. We should be exploring every resource we have. Some Members of the Senate have come together to realize there are things we can do and things we can't. We should be focusing on the things we can do. For the purposes of my remarks, I want to outline all of those things that are doable today.

No. 1 is offshore exploration with the States and their general assemblies and Governors having the authority to authorize it. We know we have significant offshore resources in terms of both natural gas and petroleum.

Second, we ought to reenergize the nuclear energy business. It is absolutely ridiculous that the most industrialized country in the world, the country that brought nuclear power and nuclear electric generation to reality, now sits on the sidelines while the rest of the world generates safe, carbon-free, inexpensive energy on a daily basis. In the Nation of France, 87 percent of their energy is generated for electricity by nuclear energy. It emits

zero carbon. The French use the MOX system to recycle their spent fuel rods and use them a second time, reducing nuclear waste by 90 percent and getting the maximum use out of the uranium to generate energy.

Synthetic fuels. It is absolutely important that we work as hard as we can to have the tax credit, tax incentive, and depreciation necessary to incentivize companies to rapidly develop synthetic fuels that do not depend on petroleum. Our military has proven this can be done. It is a matter of Congress directing tax policy and research and development to see to it that we do it.

Wind and solar. There are those who say that won't solve our problem. Well, they won't, but they will help. In those States, 40 of them where wind energy actually will produce a significant amount of energy for the grid, we ought to be incentivizing it through tax credits, rapid depreciation, and other procedures that the Congress has the power to do today. Renewable sources of energy, ethanol, both cellulose and corn based, are essential. It has its place. It won't solve the problem, but it will help.

It is very important for us to understand that if this Congress decided to adopt a comprehensive policy to increase the supply of resources for energy, the cost of petroleum would begin coming down immediately, because those who speculate on the future would understand the United States has finally had enough. We are going to develop our resources. We are going to incentivize the private sector, and we will get the job done. This country has accomplished amazing things in difficult times. These are difficult times, but we know what the solutions are, and we know where they lie. They lie domestically with our own production of petroleum. They lie in research and development and ingenuity, and they lie in a Tax Code that needs to incentivize the development of energy.

I wish to share a story that opened my eyes to the importance of exploring our own resources. I am ranking member of the Subcommittee on Africa. Earlier this year I traveled to Djibouti and to Equatorial Guinea. I saw a good example that the people of the United States ought to know about. Equatorial Guinea 10 years ago was the poorest nation in Africa and the poorest nation in the world. Today, it is the seventh fastest growing economy in the world. They came to America and asked American oil companies to come and explore in the Gulf of Guinea to see if they had any gas or any oil. Marathon Oil went over there, along with other smaller companies from Texas, and found gas in the Gulf of Guinea. Ten years later, when you go to Equatorial Guinea and the island of Malbo, and you go to the Marathon plant that liquefies natural gas for shipment around the world to places such as the United States, Russia, wherever it might be needed, you see tanker after

tanker after tanker anchored in the Gulf of Guinea, loading up \$25 million, the value of a tanker full of liquefied natural gas, to go around the world.

Equatorial Guinea has gone from a country that could not feed itself or take care of its people to a country building hospitals, universities, schools, highways, building the prosperity of their people, all because they had the willingness to explore. From an environmental standpoint, there has been no environmental impact. We know and have learned that we can drill offshore safely and securely and proved we can withstand even the most dangerous of hurricanes as happened in Katrina. There is no excuse for the United States not to be exploring offshore and be exploring today, no reason whatsoever we should not be reenergizing nuclear energy, no reason we should not be working on renewable sources of energy such as wind and solar, no reason we shouldn't expedite the development of synthetic fuels, coal liquefaction, and clean coal technology. America has every resource we need to be energy free, from coal to petroleum. All we to have do is have the political will and common sense to make it happen.

I call on my colleagues, Republicans and Democrats, to put their elephants and donkeys in the barn and look at the needs of the American people, understand if we leave this year without a comprehensive declaration for energy policy and energy independence, we have done a disservice to the people of the United States, and we will not have fulfilled our constitutional responsibility. It is time to get out of the chair, get off the ham sandwich, and understand that we have everything we need here to begin an end to high gas prices, high oil prices, and dependence on the Middle East for foreign oil.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Alabama.

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, I thank my colleague from Georgia. That was such a good summary of where we are, and we do need to put aside partisanship. We do need to acknowledge that a lot of things have changed and those changes require this Government to make some decisions that can help us deal with the crisis we are facing. I am not a negative person. I believe we will work our way through this. But I am going to say some things that are honest and discouraging and worrisome about where we are today as a nation. The surging price for energy is a crisis that is moving our economy into a recession, and it is absolutely savaging the family budget. Record prices that we are facing today have a real impact on small businesses and family budgets across my State. My home county was rated the No. 1 county in America for the percentage of money spent on oil and gas, because it is a rural area, a poorer area, and people drive a long way to work. A larger percentage of their wealth is spent on

buying fuel than any other county in America. So it is personal to me.

The average price of regular unleaded gasoline climbed to \$4.10 a gallon as of yesterday. One year ago it was \$2.84, and 2 years ago, it was \$2.62. As a result, the typical American family with two automobiles driving an average of 24,000 miles a year is paying approximately \$1,260 more per year for the same amount of fuel, according to the Energy Information Agency. That amounts to \$105 a month of disposable after tax, after house payment, after retirement, after Social Security, after insurance, the little after tax money that people take care of their families on, \$105 more a month coming out of that to pay for the increase in gasoline over the past year.

I hear we are now going to soon be having a LIHEAP bill which would be a bill, I suppose, as it usually is, to increase funding for people who have to buy heating oil and heating in the winter. The Government will subsidize that energy for those people, give them more money so they can buy more of the product. That is the policy we are having from our Democratic leadership. Has anybody thought maybe we should encourage people to use solar energy or geothermal or wind to heat their homes? We know the reason why that is not being suggested. That is, it is not ready yet in mass production. In many areas of the country, it is not feasible. Solar energy is four times as expensive as nonsolar energy. That is why people can't afford the current rates. They certainly can't pay four times as much. I say that to ask, what are we going to do now? That is the question. What is ready to help us deal with this crisis now?

Last week the Energy Information Administration and the Cambridge Research Associates reported that the price of natural gas surged to more than \$12 per million Btus. That is up from \$8.94 in February. That is a one-third increase in a few months in natural gas prices. Of course, this represents an enormous economic hit to the American family, businesses that have to be competitive in the world marketplace, and the economy. Congress cannot go home until we take some action that addresses these issues. According to T. Boone Pickens—you may have seen his ads, an old oil man now into the wind business and favors utilization of natural gas for automobiles, which I think has real possibilities; it is much cleaner than gasoline—we are on track to spend this year \$700 billion in American wealth overseas to purchase 60 percent of the oil we utilize in this country. This represents one of the greatest threats to our economy we have ever faced. When the price of oil goes up, the stock market goes down. That is almost a daily occurrence. This is because virtually every industry is affected by high oil prices.

In addition, this export of our national wealth decreases the value of

the dollar. When the dollar falls, the balance of trade deficit increases, which is increasing steadily, which further erodes the economy. Companies forced to spend more to purchase the same amount of energy a year or so ago are not able now to expand their businesses and create new jobs. In addition, electricity is going up; 20 percent of our electricity is generated by natural gas. Those prices have been surging. According to the Cato Institute, the price of residential electricity has doubled over the past 5 years, from an average of \$5.43 per kilowatt hour in 2003 to \$10.31 per kilowatt hour this year. A key factor is the cost of natural gas and other sources of energy.

High energy costs also drive energy-intensive businesses overseas where prices are lower. If we had passed this cap-and-trade bill that, fortunately, was blocked and pulled down after it failed to gain the necessary support, it would have driven up electric bills by as much as \$100 a month for families and driven up the price of gasoline by another \$1.50 per gallon according to the EPA.

Let me give an example. According to Dow Chemical Company, for every \$1 increase in natural gas prices, that adds \$3.7 billion in cost to the chemical industry. This will lead chemical companies to outsource their operations overseas where their feedstocks, their energy, their natural gas is cheaper. From 2003 to 2005 alone, rising natural gas prices have forced Dow to shift its production overseas, leaving the company to close 27 facilities and eliminate approximately 15 percent of its workforce.

Let me read you the latest from a Forbes magazine article on Dow and what they have done to adjust to this surge in energy prices that are some of the highest in the world, and there are a lot of lower priced areas for natural gas around the world. They are shifting their commodity lower margin business "into joint ventures with partners in emerging markets like the Middle East, China, Russia, and Brazil. Dow contributes the technical know-how for producing plastics and chemicals, while its partners provide low-cost feedstocks"—basically natural gas—"and access to new markets. Dow ends up with lower capital expenditures and less risk."

Well, that is jobs. That is American jobs that are going abroad, directly as a result of an increase in natural gas prices.

So I was very pleased that yesterday President Bush took an important step to address this initiative by lifting the moratorium on oil and gas exploration in the Outer Continental Shelf. With this action, the President has removed an important obstacle to reducing our dependence on foreign sources of oil, and particularly natural gas, because there is a great deal of natural gas offshore.

While the eastern Gulf of Mexico would remain off limits to exploration

until 2022, this decision could potentially allow access to significant oil and natural gas reserves right here at home at a time when global supply is struggling to keep up with demand.

In 2005, this Congress directed the Department of the Interior to study the oil and gas reserves in the OCS. The study found that 8.5 billion barrels of oil and 29.3 trillion cubic feet of natural gas are currently known to exist off our Nation's shores. In addition, the study estimated that approximately 86 billion barrels of oil and 420 trillion cubic feet of natural gas also exists in these waters.

Now, we utilize 7 billion barrels of oil a year, and approximately 4 billion of that is imported. Eighty-six billion barrels of oil lie offshore, and we have a lot of reserves onshore. If we produce that, how many years is that? Four into eighty-six? Mr. President, 25 years, 20 years of zero imports if we were to do this.

So the American Petroleum Institute reports that producing all our domestic reserves we have will provide enough oil to power 60 million cars for 60 years and enough natural gas to heat 60 million homes for 160 years. Yet these estimates are based on old data. Exploration for oil and gas reserves in the Outer Continental Shelf has not occurred since the early 1980s. Technological advances have made it possible to explore for reserves in areas previously ignored due to scientific limitations. The scientific advancement also reduces the number of dry holes. They can tell better what the prospects are when you drill a well and not drill as many dry holes. When deepwater wells cost over \$1 billion, better technology is important.

By acting now to increase supply, we can be sure to reduce the price of crude oil and natural gas. This is the most reliable way to end the largest wealth transfer in history, keeping our money here at home in our economy, creating jobs here, creating taxpayers here, and improving our economy.

Let me add, parenthetically, I am not for a carbon economy. I want us to move beyond a carbon economy. But I would wish to say that 10, 15, 30 years from now we are still going to be dependent on fossil fuels. We do not have the option right now.

So I see the production of more fossil fuels at home not only as keeping American wealth at home but as a bridge to a new energy world in which we have wind and solar and biofuels, especially cellulosic ethanol that I am seeing in my home State of Alabama from wood products—I believe that has real potential—geothermal, clean coal, and nuclear power with plug-in hybrid automobiles where you plug in your car at night using clean nuclear power, with no CO₂ emitted, and run your car back and forth to work, never using a drop of oil. All those things are in the works and will happen, but it does not mean we should not be productive at home.

So even with the President's decision yesterday, Congress must still take action to remove the congressional moratorium on oil and gas exploration in 85 percent of the Outer Continental Shelf. Every day Congress refuses to act is another day Americans are forced to pay higher prices at the pump.

I urge the majority leader to bring legislation to the floor that we can work on, in a bipartisan way, to lift this ban so the Senate can pass good legislation before the August recess and bring relief to the taxpayer. I cannot imagine we would fail to do that. There are a lot of things we can do right now that will not impact the environment in any negative way but will produce more energy at home and help our economy create jobs and wealth at home. I believe we can do this, and I am hopeful that will occur.

Mr. President, I see my colleague from Texas, Senator CORNYN, in the Chamber.

I am pleased to yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, might I ask how much time remains in morning business on our side?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. There is 8 minutes 10 seconds.

Mr. CORNYN. I thank the Acting President pro tempore.

Mr. President, I wish to join my colleague from Alabama, my friend, Senator SESSIONS, in talking about the item that is at the top of everyone's agenda in America; that is, high gas prices.

But, first, I wish to say that in 2006, much to my chagrin, the Democratic Party won control of both Houses of Congress. I say that because it is more fun being in the majority than it is being in the minority. But with becoming the majority and Senator REID having become the majority leader, he has the complete power to schedule legislative action on the floor of the Senate. With that power comes responsibility. I wish to point out a few areas where I do not think we are living up to the responsibility that the American people would have us live up to.

There is good news. The good news is, it took only 145 days for us to pass the reauthorization of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act. The problem was, in those 145 days, our intelligence officials were hampered in their ability to listen in on conversations between terrorists. Thank goodness, at least so far as we know in the public domain, that has not resulted in other attacks against Americans. But the fact remains, it took 145 days to get that done, and it should not have.

It has been 602 days since the Colombia Free Trade Agreement has been pending. Now, why is that important? Well, in my State, we sell about \$2.3 billion worth of agricultural products and manufactured items to Colombia. Because we have not acted on the Colombia Free Trade Agreement, they bear a tariff which makes those more

expensive than they should be. Correspondingly, when Colombian items are sold to American markets because of another agreement, they do not have any tariff at all. So this is a burden, a millstone around the neck of American manufacturers and farmers that is unnecessary and unfair. It has been 602 days since that matter has been pending without any action by the Democratic leadership in the House and the Senate.

Then, yesterday, we had a forum on judicial nominees. There have been 747 days during which some nominees, who have been nominated to the Federal bench by President Bush, have waited for a simple up-or-down vote on the Senate floor.

To the point of my main remarks: It has been 813 days since Speaker PELOSI, when she was running, hoping she would become speaker, in the 2006 election—that her party would have the majority in the House and she would be elected Speaker—it has been 813 days since she said Democrats, if elected, would have a commonsense plan to bring down the price of gasoline at the pump.

Well, what has happened since that time, in 813 days?

As to gasoline, which I am sure seemed too high then—on January 4, 2007, it was \$2.33 a gallon. And there are some people today who are pining for the good old days when gasoline was \$2.33 a gallon because the average price of a gallon of gas today is \$4.11 a gallon. There is no indication at all it is going to go down. Every indication is it is going to go up.

I wonder how long it is going to take the distinguished majority leader, Senator REID, to recognize the American people are hurting and the impact these high energy prices are having on not only the lifestyle, not only the daily routine but the ability of the American people to do the bare essentials they need to do in order to provide for their family and in order to get their children to school and in order for them to get to work. How long will this go on? Will it take \$5-a-gallon gas? Will it take \$10-a-gallon gas? How long will it take before the majority leader will allow us to vote on a balanced plan that will allow us to deal with this crisis?

Already, if you compound the price of energy, including gasoline, along with the other burdens Congress has imposed on the American working family, things such as Federal taxes—it takes 74 days of every year for people to pay their Federal taxes; another 39 days for them to pay their State and local taxes; another 60 days to pay for housing; health care, about 50 days; food, 35 days; and transportation, 29 days.

So even in things such as food, we have seen because of the price of energy—of course, there is the diesel and the gasoline our farmers use in order to bring their crops in and actually produce them—the price of food continues to go up. A large part of that is

because of the price of energy, the price of diesel, the price of gasoline.

The squeeze continues on the American people.

So what is the solution? Well, I have seen the majority leader wants to bring a bill to the floor that deals with speculation. Of course, that deals with the way oil is bought on the futures trading platform, the commodity futures trading system, which allows people to guess basically what the price of oil will be in the future and to bid at that price. Of course, for every willing buyer, there is a willing seller willing to buy it.

Of course, we do need to police the commodity futures trading system to make sure there is not abuse, that there is complete transparency. We need to make sure we have more people, more analysts—more cops on the beat, so to speak—to make sure they have the personnel to be able to do their job. But it is shortsighted and, frankly, naive to think Congress can continue to suspend the laws of supply and demand. So just dealing with that narrow component of the problem is not enough. Is that part of an overall balanced energy package? Yes, it is. But it is not enough by itself.

We have to deal with this by finding more and using less. What do I mean by that? Well, using less means we need to be more efficient. We need to be less wasteful. We need to conserve energy. America consumes about 20 percent of the oil produced worldwide every day. We need to find ways to be more efficient. That is why I think our manufacturing sector, whether it is producing plug-in hybrid vehicles in 2010, which eventually, hopefully, will provide an alternative, or the CAFE standards, the corporate fuel efficiency standards Congress has passed—those help. But it is not enough because you cannot conserve your way into energy independence or energy self-sufficiency.

So how about “the find more” part? Well, the fact is, there is about 85 million barrels of oil consumed globally every day—85 million barrels globally every day. So even if America were to use less, that does not mean China and India are going to use less. In fact, they are not going to use less. They are going to use more because their economies are getting bigger, their people are becoming more prosperous. They want to buy cars. They want the same sort of things Americans have come to expect as commonplace. They want more, and they are going to consume more, because they know energy drives their economy. In particular, in countries such as China, you are going to see they are growing at 10 percent gross domestic product a year, and it is because they are building two coal-powered plants every week and they are consuming more energy. So we are going to have to produce more energy while we use less in order to just allow us to transition to using renewable fuels and the research we need to do on

things such as clean coal technology. We are going to need some time to transition into more energy independence and a clean energy future. That is only going to come by producing more oil here at home.

Of course, this is a national security issue because we buy a lot of our oil from dangerous regions of the world, such as the Middle East, or from our enemies, such as Hugo Chavez in Venezuela. So why does it not make sense for us to rely less on them—people who don't necessarily wish us well—and rely more on ourselves while at the same time create more jobs right here at home, here in America?

I know attitudes are changing. We look at things such as the Rasmussen poll, which shows now that 67 percent of all of the respondents say we ought to produce more American natural resources right here at home. I know there are folks on the other side of the aisle, such as our distinguished Presiding Officer, who are trying to work to find a bipartisan solution, and we need to do that. Frankly, we should not leave here in August without addressing this issue and doing it in a meaningful way. By that, I don't mean just trying to go after the speculation part. We need to deal with all of this in a balanced sort of way that will allow us to give the American people some relief at a time when they need some relief because of the squeeze that continues to be put upon the average working family when it comes to high energy costs, which, in turn, ripples into high food costs.

Hopefully, we will be successful in weathering this financial crisis we have seen because of the subprime mortgage market and the housing crisis, but unless we do something about high energy prices, we are going to end up in a technical recession. I have no doubt about that. So we can weather those—and I hope we do—and still find ourselves in the ditch from an economic standpoint if we don't do something about high energy costs. Frankly, now that the President has lifted his Executive order banning offshore exploration and development, the only thing that remains to be done now is for Congress to get out of the way and to be part of the solution rather than part of the problem.

I wish our side of the aisle could do it. We can't because we are not in the majority. Only the majority leader has the power to call this up and allow debate and a vote on a commonsense energy plan that will allow us to find more and use less. I am asking them again today, as a number of us have, to please, please listen to what the American people are telling us. They are telling us that they are hurting, that their costs are going through the roof, whether it is food prices or just the price of filling up their cars at the gas station. Really, it is the U.S. Congress that is part of the problem. We need to be part of the solution. We need to listen to them and do what we can to help make their lives just a little bit better.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The time under the control of the minority has expired.

The Senator from South Carolina is recognized.

Mr. DEMINT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for a few moments as in morning business on my amendment that will be voted on at 11.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

PEPFAR

Mr. DEMINT. Mr. President, I wish to take a few minutes to speak on the rather large foreign aid bill we are addressing this week in the Senate. I have already expressed my concern, and I will do it again.

As the Senator from Texas was just talking about, we have a serious energy problem in our country today. Americans are hurting, and it is probably not a very good time to be talking about sending billions of American dollars around the world, despite how good the cause may be. Nevertheless, we are going to be voting on various amendments related to what we call PEPFAR, which began as an aid to Africa bill, and that is one of the issues I wish to address this morning.

The PEPFAR Program that the President started in 2003, which I supported, took \$15 billion over 5 years and focused it on the AIDS epidemic in Africa. Other countries were allowed to participate. The primary focus was on AIDS and malaria. There has been some success, so the President would like to reauthorize that program.

Unfortunately, as it has worked its way through Congress, it has gone from a \$15 billion expenditure to a \$50 billion expenditure, sending more money overseas than we spend ourselves on research for AIDS in America or breast cancer or juvenile diabetes and the problems we have here. We are sending the money overseas.

This bill does not go according to its label anymore. This is no longer an aid to Africa bill. It expands across three more continents, including China and other countries that might be better off financially than we are at this point.

I proposed an amendment to limit the scope of the PEPFAR bill to its original intent, which included Africa and other authorized countries in the original bill, so that we can focus these dollars in a way that would allow them to work rather than allow them to create a global fund that spreads the money so thin that we are no longer effective in any area.

The vote at 11 also includes a very important amendment that is attached to the amendment to keep the focus on the countries in the original bill. This amendment would prohibit PEPFAR funds from going to organizations that are involved with forced abortions and forced sterilization in countries such as

China. Again, countries such as China don't need our money, particularly at a time when they are actually much better off financially than we are. American taxpayers should not be forced to send their money to organizations in China that force abortions.

We may have people who stand up and say this is not going to happen, but \$2 billion in the first year of this program is designated to the U.N. Global Fund. It is indicated that such sums that would be spent over the next 4 years would be allocated to it, which means it is likely that there is going to be \$10 billion over 5 years that goes to the U.N. Global Fund. All one has to do is go to the Global Fund Web site, go to China, and see that there is over \$70 million in grants that has gone to the organization in China that actually enforces the one-child policy, enforces the forced abortion policy in China. The law of the land here in this country is that we don't use taxpayer dollars for forced abortions anywhere in the world. Actually, the PEPFAR bill itself prohibits those funds. Yet there is a loophole in that as funds from PEPFAR go to the U.N. Global Fund, they will go to organizations such as we have in China that are involved in forced abortions.

Some of my colleagues will say this is unnecessary; it is already the law. If it is, I hope they will go along with this amendment and support it and not vote to table it this morning. This is a very real and serious problem. The U.N. Global Fund is very well known for supporting organizations in China and elsewhere that promote forced abortions and forced sterilization on women. This is not only an abortion issue; it is a human rights issue that we all need to stand up and support.

So as we head to 11 o'clock, I wish to remind my colleagues again, because sometimes we confuse so many things together here that people don't know what we are voting on. The majority leader has moved to table my amendment—the amendment that says we can't add three new continents to this bill—because he knows that attached to it is this amendment that would prohibit funds from being used for forced abortions. The whole reason for the big debacle we had here in the Senate last Friday where people were brought back late is because the majority leader would not allow me to offer this amendment that would prohibit taxpayer dollars from being used for forced abortions in China and other places in the world.

So this is a very important vote at 11 o'clock. My colleagues need to know that if they vote to table my amendment, they are voting to do two things. First, they are voting to divert funds from this Africa fund and other countries that were authorized in the first bill—the countries that are suffering from widespread epidemics—they will be voting to divert these funds to countries where there are very isolated problems. The money will ultimately

be spread around the world to organizations that waste this money instead of focusing it where we can really make a difference. Also, voting to table this amendment means you are supporting using PEPFAR funds, which are supposed to be for AIDS in Africa, you are supporting using those funds to promote forced abortions and forced sterilization in China and in other countries.

So I want my colleagues to be clear. I am not sure how the majority leader and others will present this motion to table, but the reason they are attempting to table it is because they want to stop the amendment that would not allow these funds to be used through the U.N. Global Fund to organizations in China that promote forced abortion. So I urge my colleagues to vote no—to vote no to table this amendment on these amendments so they can receive a fair vote in the Senate.

With that, I yield the floor, and I note the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. MCCASKILL). The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mrs. MURRAY. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

AERIAL REFUELING

Mrs. MURRAY. Madam President, I have come to the floor this morning to raise a very important concern. As all of my colleagues are aware, our Nation's aerial refueling tanker fleet is aging and badly in need of repair and replacement. We are in the process of selecting a new plane right now that can serve our military for 40 years or even more. Those tankers are the backbone of our global military. They are stationed today throughout the world, and they refuel aircraft from every branch of the Armed Forces. I think everyone would agree, especially in a time of war, that as we work to replace that fleet, there is nothing more important than buying the best planes for our men and women and for our taxpayers.

Last month, in its decision sustaining Boeing's protest of the competition, the Government Accountability Office found that the Air Force made significant errors when it evaluated the bids by Boeing and the European company Airbus. The GAO found that the competition was skewed toward Airbus even though Airbus failed to meet even basic requirements of that contract.

I was pleased last week when the Pentagon announced that it would rebid the contest and take over the selection process. I had hoped it would ensure that we finally hold a fair and transparent competition and get this contract right. But instead of a fair do-over, I am concerned that it appears