

into the ground because there was no other statutory framework to apply. This has caused coalbed methane producers to go through all kinds of extensive regulatory procedures and generally depressed coalbed methane production activities. The EPA never really wanted to regulate, and in fact, argued that hydraulic fracturing did not need to be regulated at the federal level because it had caused no environmental problems and the state programs were working well. Unfortunately, the court ruled against the EPA because the law which governs this activity was written at a time this activity barely existed. I have introduced legislation which would allow the states to continue their successful regulatory programs. Yet we have been unable to get the kind of support from the administration and the EPA that would allow us to produce this clean form of gas all across America. It would be good for our country. That is an example of the no growth, no production policy of the administration.

We have taken out of the mix, the possibility of drilling in so many of our western lands that are Government owned. There are huge areas out there with very large reserves of gas and oil. Yet, this administration has systematically blocked production. They have vetoed legislation—which we almost overrode—to keep us from drilling in ANWR. They have refused to drill off the coast of California. They have refused to drill and are proposing to limit drilling in the Gulf of Mexico. In fact, Vice President GORE recently, stated he favored no more drilling in the Gulf of Mexico and in fact would limit, perhaps, leases that had already been let.

That is a big deal. Electric energy in America is being produced more and more through the use of natural gas. In addition to home heating, it is being increasingly used to generate electricity. It is generating it far cleaner than most any other source of energy. Almost every new electric-generating plant in this country has been designed to use natural gas. It comes through pipelines. Most of it is coming out of the Gulf of Mexico. There are huge reserves off the gulf coast of my home State of Alabama and throughout the gulf area. That ought to be produced.

It is unbelievable that we would not produce that clean natural gas, but instead continue to import our oil from the Middle East and allow a huge tax to be levied on American citizens by the OPEC cartel members. It makes no sense at all. As anybody who has been here knows, they know what the policy is. The policy of the extreme no-growth people in America is to drive up the price of gasoline. They figure if they drive it up high enough, you will have to ride your bicycle to work, I suppose. But most people don't live a few blocks or miles from work. A lot of people are elderly. A lot of people have children to take to school, and they have to take things with them when they go to work. They have errands to run and

family obligations to meet. They cannot use bicycles or rely on windmills to do their work.

That is the policy of this administration, to drive up energy costs. That is the only way you can see it. Systematically, they have blocked effort after effort after effort to allow this country to increase production. We have to change that. Our current energy problems will only get worse if we do not.

We have tremendous energy reserves in America. If we insist on sound environmental protection but not excessive regulation, if we make sure that production in areas such as ANWR in Alaska is conducted as previous Alaskan oil and gas production has been conducted we can make great strides in controlling our energy prices. The Trans-Alaskan Pipeline, has been delivering oil for two decades now and has had a minimal impact on the environment and not destroyed anything. The caribou are still there. The tundra has not melted. America has benefited from the Trans-Alaskan Pipeline and the energy that has been produced there. We certainly cannot stop producing oil and gas in the Gulf of Mexico, as the Vice President has proposed. That idea is stunning. It is a radical proposal. It is a threat to our future. We cannot allow it.

We cannot assume, we cannot take for granted one moment the belief that this release of a supply equal to 1½ day's demand is going to deal with our long-term problem. We have an administration that is cheerfully accepting, increased prices American must pay for energy. Those prices are going to continue to increase unless we do something about it. It does not take a huge increase in supply to help better balance demand and supply. So if we can begin to make even modest progress toward increasing our domestic supply, I think we can begin to see the price fall in a relatively short term. However, we cannot do it with the kinds of no-growth policies this administration is talking about.

I do believe in improving the environment. I support the policies that do so. I support research in many alternative energy sources and hope we will see some break throughs. I hope we will continue to develop technologies to increase the quality of the energy sources, which could make the use of energy cleaner and more efficient. I think these are good prudent steps to take.

But with the world demand we are facing, these efforts have not yet led to a big step—a good step, but not a big step. We are going to see increased demand in the United States and around the world. The experts tell us there is energy here in the United States. We need to be able to produce it and not continue to allow the wealth of this Nation to be transferred across the ocean to a few nations that were lucky enough to be founded on pools of oil.

That must remain our goal. That is what I and others will continue to work for in this Congress.

I thank the Chair and yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kansas is recognized.

Mr. BROWNBAC. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak in morning business for up to 10 minutes.

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

ENERGY CRISIS

Mr. BROWNBAC. Mr. President, I join my colleague from Alabama in noting that what the President is doing on SPR, in my view, is a diversion. It is not solving the fundamental problem we have with the energy supply in this country—either the refining capacity that has been limited, as the Senator from Alaska, Mr. MURKOWSKI, has spoken of, or the supply of the raw resource, about which the Senator from Alaska and others have spoken. We need to be able to get access to that, and this administration has stopped that from taking place. They stopped it from taking place on our shores and stopped an expansion of biomass, biofuels, and ethanol production. They have not been supportive of expansion there as well. They stopped expansion in places such as in Central Asia, in which I have done a fair amount of work. There are large reserves of hydrocarbons and oil and gas there. They have done nothing to bring this online. Yet countries in that region of the world—many of which most people haven't heard of—have, I believe, the third largest pool of hydrocarbons in the world. They are seeking ways to get it out to the West in an oil and gas pipeline. This administration hasn't done anything to get that started.

So here we are today with high fuel prices, with no end in sight. Despite the President's diversion by using SPR and the misuse of this program—the way it was set up at least, the fundamental problem remains. We have to deal with the supply issue, and this administration hasn't done that. I applaud my colleague from Alabama for addressing that issue.

Mr. SESSIONS. Will the Senator yield?

Mr. BROWNBAC. Yes.

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, the Senator has been here, as I have, for nearly 4 years now. I want to just ask him this: Has Senator MURKOWSKI, who chairs the Energy Committee, and others in this Congress, been warning for years about this, saying that we were denied American production, that it was going to come back to haunt us and prices would go up and it would drain our wealth? Have they been urging this administration for years to deal with it and support some production?

Mr. BROWNBAC. Absolutely. He has been stating that for a long period of time. The administration, each step along the way, has continued to thwart, stall, and say things that were positive but with no action. That is what I have seen taking place in pushing for marginal well tax credits for

small oil well production such as we have in Kansas. We need to encourage this domestic production. Let's have a tax credit for these marginal oil wells that produce less than 10 barrels a day. You get positive comments from the administration, but then nothing happens. On biofuels or Central Asia, there is enormous capacity in that region for oil and gas. Yes, this takes place, but what are you going to do to cause this to happen? What is your strategy? Nothing is put forward.

Here we are with high gas prices and high heating oil. My parents burn propane to heat their home. They are paying a significant premium price now. All of these things are taking place, and then their answer is to tap this 1½ day supply, instead of dealing with fundamentals which they have failed to do over a period of time. So we have been warned. I hope we can press the administration, and I hope this is something to which people pay attention.

Mr. SESSIONS. I thank the Senator for those comments, and I do think it is important for America. The average citizen doesn't have time to watch debate here and hear what goes on in committees, but this has been a matter of real contention for a number of years. There have been warnings by people such as Senator MURKOWSKI, who chairs the Energy Committee, and others, that this would occur, and it has now occurred. I think it is particularly a condemnation of the policy when you have been told about the consequences and warned about it publicly and still you have not acted. That, to me, is troubling. I appreciate the Senator's comments.

I yield the floor.

THE PACKERS AND STOCKYARDS ENFORCEMENT IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 2000

Mr. BROWNBACK. Mr. President, I rise to address something about which the occupant of the chair has a great deal of concern. A bill was introduced recently by Senator GRASSLEY from Iowa. I support his bill, the Packers and Stockyards Enforcement Improvement Act of 2000. I think this is a commonsense approach to a very difficult agricultural antitrust concern taking place. I applaud Senator GRASSLEY's approach and endorse his Stockyards Enforcement Act of 2000.

Concerns about concentration and market monopolization have risen in recent years, with the remaining low prices that farmers have received and the struggle that we have had to adopt and adapt to the globalized commerce that we see taking place.

I was visiting yesterday with my dad, who farms full time in Kansas, and my brother who farms with him, about concerns regarding the concentration and the low prices taking place and what is happening around them.

What Senator GRASSLEY has done is request a GAO study, and he found that the USDA has not adequately put for-

ward efforts of enforcement in the packers and stockyards field, and that needs to take place. He is taking the GAO study and putting it into legislative language. I believe it would be prudent and wise for this Congress to pass that language.

Senator GRASSLEY's bill spells out specific reforms that will make a direct difference in the way antitrust issues and anticompetitive practices are dealt with. Specifically, the bill will require USDA to formulate and improve investigation and case methods for competition-related allegations in consultation with the Department of Justice and the Federal Trade Commission; integrate attorney and economist teams, with attorney input from the very beginning of an investigation, rather than merely signing off at the end of the inquiry.

It turns out that the GAO study reports that the economists are looking at the cases early on but the attorneys are not. The attorneys need to be involved at the very outset. By the nature of these charges, they are legal issues and should be looked at by attorneys at the very outset. It would establish specific training programs for attorneys and investigators involved in antitrust investigations. It would require a report to Congress on the state of the market and concerns about anticompetitive practices.

Senator GRASSLEY, today, chaired a hearing that further illuminated the problems, needs, and solutions.

Senator GRASSLEY's bill comes after a thorough examination of USDA's enforcement of the Packer's and Stockyards Act by the GAO. That report, released last week, found numerous problems in the way the agency approaches these investigations. I have to say, as somebody whose family is directly involved in farming, who has been secretary of agriculture for the State of Kansas, it troubles me when the Department is having difficulties enforcing this very important area of the law.

This bill simply puts into law these GAO recommendations for USDA reform. This bill is necessary because USDA has been struggling to address many of these concerns raised by the GAO in terms of antitrust enforcement over the past 3 years. This issue has been raised in the Kansas State Legislature this last session with a great deal of concern about really who is watching. Are they properly prepared and adequately staffed to look into these antitrust investigations and allegations? This bill gets reforms done within a year and ensures that the law is being enforced.

Today's agricultural markets are in tough shape. Prices are too low. We cannot, however, make assumptions about concentration as the cause without having accurate information and thorough investigations. Under Senator GRASSLEY's bill, this process will be greatly improved because it requires USDA to retool and devote more re-

sources to the area of antitrust enforcement.

This bill avoids the pitfalls of lumping the innocent in with the guilty and instead sorts out anticompetitive practices where they occur. These reforms are necessary to restore producer confidence in the Packers and Stockyards Act and USDA's ability to police this increasingly concentrated industry.

Again, I thank Senator GRASSLEY for his wise approach on this tough issue and his continued sincere concern for the farmers of this Nation. This has been an excellent effort to move forward by Senator GRASSLEY.

THE VETERANS CLAIMS ASSISTANCE ACT OF 2000

Mr. BROWNBACK. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Veterans' Affairs Committee be discharged from further consideration of H.R. 4864, and the Senate then proceed to its immediate consideration.

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

The clerk will report the bill by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 4864) to amend title 48, United States Code, to reaffirm and clarify the duty of the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to assist claimants for benefits under laws administered by the Secretary, and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to the consider the bill.

AMENDMENT NO. 4189

Mr. BROWNBACK. Mr. President, there is a substitute amendment at the desk submitted by Senators SPECTER and ROCKEFELLER.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Kansas (Mr. BROWNBACK) for Mr. SPECTER and Mr. ROCKEFELLER proposes an amendment numbered 4189.

Mr. BROWNBACK. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

(The text of the amendment is printed in today's RECORD under "Amendments Submitted.")

Mr. SPECTER. Mr. President, I have sought recognition to explain briefly an action that I, as chairman of the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs, propose to take today with respect to a House-passed bill, H.R. 4864. I take this action with the concurrence and support of the committee's ranking member, Senator JAY ROCKEFELLER and Senator PATTY MURRAY, the original sponsor of Senate legislation, S. 1810, to reinstate VA's duty to assist claimants in the preparation of their claims.

In 1999, the United States Court of Appeals for Veterans claims issued a ruling, *Morton v. West*, 12 Vet. App. 477 (1999), which had the effect of barring the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) from offering its assistance to