I am unabashedly proud of what my home State has accomplished. The formation of the National Governors' Ethanol Coalition was one of the important steps. Nebraska and several other Midwestern States created this coalition that now consists of 26 States and one U.S. territory, as well as Brazil, Canada, Mexico, and Sweden. Since its formation in 1991, the Governors' Ethanol Coalition has worked to expand national and international markets for biofuels. American firms are working with India, Thailand, Colombia, and other countries to help them establish biofuels industries.

Within the State of Nebraska, during the period from 1991–2001, seven ethanol plants were constructed and several of these facilities were expanded more than once during the decade. Specific benefits of the ethanol program in Nebraska include:

$1.15 billion in new capital investment in ethanol processing plants.

1,005 permanent jobs at the ethanol facilities and 5,115 induced jobs directly related to plant construction, operation, and maintenance. Average salaries at the ethanol processing facilities range from $38,000–$56,000 depending on geographic location. The permanent jobs generate an annual payroll of $44 million.

More than 210 million bushels of corn and grain sorghum is processed at the plants annually. Economists at Purdue University and the USDA estimate that the price of corn increases from 9.9 cents–10 cents per bushel for every 100 million bushels of new demand. Local price basis increases in Nebraska range from 5–15 cents.

The trend of marketing wet distillers grains for cattle feeding generates at least $41 million in increased economic activity annually according to a 1999 report by the University of Nebraska. Of the $41 million increase, 85 percent accrues to cattle feeders in the form of reduced costs and increased gains, and 15 percent accrues to the plants.

Local tax bases are more diversified in areas where plants are located. Several smaller communities have experienced increases in housing construction and new business start-ups associated with services related to plant operations.

Jobs among the skilled trades have increased. Pipe fitters, steamfitters, steel workers, and construction engineering trades are involved in plant construction.

Value is added to grain processed at ethanol plants. Today, a $2.00 bushel of corn is processed into products worth at least $5.00. Gasoline purchased from refineries outside Nebraska is displaced by ethanol produced in the State, thereby retaining energy dollars in the local economy.

These economic benefits have increased each year during the past decade due to plant expansion, employment increases, and additional capital investment.

If each State followed the Minnesota and Nebraska models, which are different in several respects, and produced 10 percent of its own domestic, renewable fuels, America will have turned the corner and that noose of oil-import dependency and climate change will begin to loosen.

I know there is doubt among my colleagues from States without farm crops about the ability to provide the needed starch, sugar, or oil seed crops to produce biofuels and other biorefinery products. There are more than adequate supplies of cellulosic biomass in each State to meet the 10 percent goal: agricultural and forestry crops and residues; rights-of-way, parks, yard and garden trimmings; and the clean portion of the biomass fraction of our municipal waste.

A major resource commitment is needed in this country to ensure that, 10 years from now, we have established the commercial technology base to produce many billions of gallons per year of renewable fuels, in dispersed and decentralized installations around the nation. The feedstocks must be diversified with the end uses ranging from gasoline to diesel to aviation fuels. We also need to quantify the ''externality costs'' of our current imported oil dependence, in order to ensure we are not paying those costs 10 years form now.

Over the past few days, we have learned that we cannot drill our way out of our dangerous oil dependency. We have decided to support a renewable energy portfolio standard that will increase our use of renewable resources like solar, wind, geothermal, hydro, and biomass to produce electricity.

We sue very little oil to produce electricity. We use oil to power our transportation sector. That is where we are most vulnerable.

The renewable fuels standard is absolutely necessary in order to expand the biofuels industry into the use of cellulosic biomass, which is in great abundance throughout the United States.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nevada.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, Senator MURKOWSKI is present. As I indicated, he was obligated to attend a funeral this afternoon. We have a unanimous consent request we would like to offer. I want to make sure it is cleared on the other side. Until we get that done, what I ask is Senator STABENOW be recognized as in morning business for 10 minutes, and then the Senator from Missouri, Mrs. CARNAHAN, be recognized as in morning business for 6 minutes. Then we will proceed to offering the unanimous consent agreement with Senator MURKOWSKI.

As I indicated earlier, what we will do is ask that there be 60 minutes equally divided and a vote, so there will be a vote at about 5:15 today.

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

The Senator from Michigan.

PRESCRIPTION DRUG COSTS

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I appreciate the opportunity to speak to my colleagues today about an incredibly important issue, and that is the question of the rising costs of health care, particularly as it relates to the cost of prescription drugs. I think the headline in this week's Washington Post column by David Broder said it all: Our health care system is in a ''death cycle.''

The greatest country in the world, the most extensive health care system in the world, most sophisticated system, and we have a respected columnist saying it is in a death cycle. I suggest one of the major reasons for this is the uncontrollable cost of prescription drugs in this country.

There is something wrong when we are involved as taxpayers, as Americans, in funding research for prescription drugs—which I support—providing tax credits for research and development for the companies to be able to do incredibly important, lifesaving research. Yet we in the United States of America pay the highest prices of anyone in the world. That is not an exaggeration—higher than anyone in the world.

If you are uninsured—and particularly for our seniors who may use 18 different medications in a year; that is the average—if you are uninsured, if you are someone walking in and paying retail, you pay the most of anyone anywhere in the United States and the world.

This is extremely troubling. We are not talking about buying something that is optional; we are talking about lifesaving medications. Whether I am talking to my hospital administrators or the Big Three auto companies or small businesses or senior citizens or a family with a disabled child or anyone who is involved in purchasing prescription drugs, I hear the same thing over and over: We have a system that is broken. It is broken. We have to fix it.

I am here today asking my colleagues on the other side of the aisle to join with us in that sense of urgency about fixing this problem.

Whenever we talk about costs, we hear from the companies that in order to lower costs we will lose valuable research. None of us wants to lose research. We support that. We support funding research. We will do that again this year. But the facts do not show us that we have to suffer and lose research in order to lower costs.

We know that among the largest companies, on average, they spend twice as much on advertising and promotion as they do on research. We also know in an average year there will be about 88,000 people working to promote and to advertise prescription drugs and on average 48,000 people involved in research. There are 88,000 people involved in promoting and advertising, 48,000 involved in research.

I think every American knows, just by turning on the television set, that