

great minds of this Nation and the great technology that has been developed; as the Nation needs so desperately more oil and more gas, particularly natural gas; with the prices so high so that supplies can be increased and, hopefully, demand can be reduced, prices can come down, prices can stabilize, and the entire economy, from the Midwest to the Northeast to the far West can benefit from that effort, I wanted to show a graph of what I am speaking about because I think a picture is worth a thousand words, and I know I only have a few more minutes. This is why I continue to come to the Senate floor to say that the gulf coast is America's only energy coast.

This represents the miles and miles of pipeline, rigs, and infrastructure that have been developed in the Gulf of Mexico since the first well was drilled off of Creole, LA, in the gulf in the 1940s. By the way, that community was just completely wiped out in the last hurricanes, Hurricanes Rita and Katrina. But right off of Creole, a tiny little community in southwest Louisiana, the first offshore oil platform was drilled. Subsequently, over decades this infrastructure has been built and it has been built better and better and stronger using better technology, and as a result this country has benefited significantly from this contribution.

Another way to look at it is the oil and gas leasing that has occurred—which Secretary Kempthorne will now be responsible for, how these leases occur, where they occur, and when they occur. As you can see, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas have served as hosts to this industry, and we have served proudly. But there is a crisis now in the Gulf of Mexico, and it was brought to the televisions of every American—every American—with the landfall of Katrina and Rita and the subsequent flooding.

This is the devastation that has occurred along the gulf coast, the flooding in the city of New Orleans and in communities throughout Louisiana, and the frightening and real erosion of America's only coastal wetlands the coastal wetlands of Louisiana. We have lost over a million square miles of wetlands, and we are losing 33 football fields a day. Thirty-three football fields a day are being lost in this great and extraordinary wetland.

When people say: Senator, how are the beaches in Louisiana?

I say: We don't have beaches in Louisiana. We love the beaches that are in Florida, Alabama, and Mississippi. We have vacationed on them our whole lives. But we have the greatest delta system in America, built over a million years by the Mississippi River itself, the land that we actually live on. On this land are great wetlands that supply fishing, that host and serve as the home of the mighty Mississippi River, and serve as a platform for oil and gas.

As the Secretary will come to know, this oil and gas could not be retrieved or mined from the Gulf of Mexico with-

out the partnership of these Gulf Coast States. So what we are asking for is fairness. We are asking for a percentage, a percentage in dollars, from this drilling to come back into this area and help us restore our wetlands and invest in the infrastructure necessary to protect this great coast so that we can provide our people with a bright and strong economic future.

I am going to submit a longer statement for the RECORD. Again, I submit, looking at this chart, and just showing one more, that when we say the gulf coast is America's energy coast, these are the pipelines that come from the Gulf of Mexico. You can see even the Rocky Mountains. We are proud of the production that goes out West. We are proud of that production. But as you can see, a lot of our gas is coming from Canada and, hopefully, more of our gas will come from Alaska.

I see my friend and colleague from Alaska, the senior Senator, on the Senate floor. We hope we can get more gas from Canada and from Alaska because we need it. But I want people to see where the gas is coming from. The gas is coming from Louisiana, and if you want more of it, then, No. 1, help us to save our State from washing away in the gulf; and, No. 2, help us to share in some of these revenues that will go right back into these communities to support the industry and the people and the schools and the churches and the towns that make this all possible. And, if not, then go find your gas somewhere else. I mean that. Go find it somewhere else because we have a lot of it down here. We are happy to give it, but we need some respect and cooperation on this point.

The Senator from Alaska is here to speak, and I am going to be back later this afternoon to finish the remarks that I want to put in the RECORD. I see Secretary Kempthorne standing here. I appreciate him being on the floor to hear these remarks. I am looking forward to having him come to Louisiana. I said he is not much use to us with a broken foot, so he has to get that foot fixed and then come on back so we can take him out to offshore oil and gas rigs. He has promised to do that, and I am sure he will get up to Alaska sometime soon to see the great work that Alaska does. He, of course, is very familiar, having been the Governor of Idaho, with the West. But, Governor, we are looking forward to having you come down and visit us on the gulf coast.

I yield the floor.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate will now return to legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska is recognized for 10 minutes.

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, I would like to change the order in terms of the time agreement. I ask that I be

recognized for 10 minutes. Following my presentation, Senator REED be recognized for 10 minutes, Senator SPECTER for 10 minutes, Senator BYRD for such time that he may require, and following Senator BYRD, Senator MCCONNELL be recognized for such time as he may require.

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

ENERGY

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, yesterday the House of Representatives passed the bipartisan American-Made Energy and Good Jobs Act. This bill directs the Secretary of the Interior to establish and implement a leasing program to enable the exploration, development, and production of Alaska's oil and gas resources in the Arctic Coastal Plain.

I come today to commend our House colleagues for taking this action. Opening the Coastal Plain to development will help stabilize energy prices, spur economic growth, and enhance our national security. The Coastal Plain is believed to be the second largest oilfield ever discovered in North America, capable of producing at least 1 million barrels of oil per day. The National Defense Council estimates the development of the resources in our Coastal Plain will create between 700,000 and 1 million American jobs.

A majority in both Houses of this Congress and 70 percent of all Americans support exploration and development of Alaska's Coastal Plain. Our Senate colleagues should join those in the House and act to authorize development of these domestic resources.

Going forward, the United States must increase domestic production to secure our energy independence. Our Nation is in the midst of an energy crisis. In 2003, gasoline cost \$1.56 per gallon. This week, prices at the pump are averaging \$2.88 per gallon in my State and in some places over \$4 a gallon.

In the 1990s, natural gas prices in the lower 48, as we call it, averaged \$2.50 per thousand cubic feet. Today, natural gas costs approximately \$6 per thousand cubic feet, more than twice as much. This situation will only grow more serious. It is estimated that our LNG imports will increase by 500 percent in the near future. We also now face increased competition for that LNG from foreign nations.

In the last 14 years, India's oil consumption has doubled. China was the second largest oil importer in the world in 2004. According to the Energy Information Administration, by 2025, the world energy consumption will increase by 57 percent.

Americans cannot conserve our way out of this problem, and we cannot suspend the law of supply and demand. If we continue to lock up our lands, this country will not have the energy needed to keep up with the global economy. Conservation and alternative fuels are part of the overall solution, but to end