

supervised election if at least 30 percent of employees want it. This bill also allows employees to form unions using another method as well.

The Employee Free Choice Act would also establish penalties for companies that coerce or intimidate employees and would provide for mediation and binding arbitration when the employer and workers cannot agree on a first contract. In short, it makes needed updates to our labor laws to better protect workers.

By allowing employees to form unions through a majority sign-up, we are supporting a worker's freedom to form a union and to bargain for better pay and better benefits. Experience has shown that this will be a good deal for the worker and a boost for America.

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, since joining this body in 1993, I have supported a number of initiatives to help the hard working men and women of this country, including increasing the minimum wage, supporting equal pay for America's workers, and promoting better trade policies. One piece of legislation that would help American workers is the Employee Free Choice Act, EFCA, and I am proud to be an original cosponsor of EFCA again this Congress. I commend my colleague, the senior Senator from Massachusetts, Senator KENNEDY, for his hard work on this legislation, as well as his longstanding dedication to improving the quality of life for America's working people.

One of the best things we can do for American workers is to remove obstacles that make it harder for them to form and join unions. As many of my colleagues will likely point out in the course of this debate, more than 60 million U.S. workers say they would join a union today if they could. Further, workers who belong to unions earn 30 percent more than nonunion workers, are 62 percent more likely to have employer-provided health care, and are four times more likely to have a pension. Better wages and better benefits help lift Americans out of poverty and into the middle class. Far too many Americans are working for wages that keep them at or below the Federal poverty line with little, if any, opportunity to bargain for better wages and benefits or advance to a better-paying position.

The Employee Free Choice Act would address some of the inequities in the current system of collective bargaining in the U.S. Many critics of this legislation focus on the card check provision, but there is much more to this legislation than just the method of voting. This bill provides for first-contract mediation and arbitration. Importantly, if an agreement has not been reached after 90 days of negotiations, either the employer or the employees can refer the dispute to the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service for mediation. Clearly, under the ideal negotiation this would not be necessary, but it is an important option for employees to have in the collective bargaining proc-

ess. The bill also provides for stronger penalties for employer violations while employees are attempting to form a union. Employers who intimidate workers attempting to unionize should face appropriate consequences.

While I understand that the vote on cloture on the motion to proceed to the Employee Free Choice Act may not be successful this week, this fight is far from over. Over the last 2 years, I have received over 1,500 letters, calls, and e-mails in support of this legislation from my constituents, and their voices mean a great deal. I support passage of this legislation for the hard-working Wisconsinites who deserve better from us. I am disappointed that more of my colleagues have not joined in supporting this bill, and I hope that they will rethink their opposition to this bill. I will continue working to pass this important legislation.

30TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE TRANS-ALASKA PIPELINE

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, on June 20, 1977—30 years ago to this day—oil began flowing through the Trans-Alaska Pipeline System. This event represents an important milestone in Alaska's history and a watershed moment in our struggle to secure America's energy independence.

My distinguished colleague from Alaska, Senator LISA MURKOWSKI, spoke at length about the history of the Trans-Alaska Pipeline before we adjourned last night. As she so vividly illustrated, its creation was a monumental undertaking which required the hard work of countless individuals.

During the long political fight to allow this important project to proceed, members of the environmental lobby claimed the pipeline would devastate Alaska. History has proven these critics wrong—responsible development and attentive stewardship have ensured the continued protection of our State's wildlife and lands.

Even after the Arab oil embargo in 1973, the Senate remained closely divided on this matter. In fact, a tie vote on the authorizing legislation was not broken until Vice President Spiro Agnew cast the decisive vote in its favor. My own vote on that bill still ranks as one of the most memorable I have ever cast.

When construction began in 1974, this project was the largest ever financed by private capital. Engineers faced staggering challenges as they plotted a route across 800 miles of rugged terrain and three major mountain ranges. Various geographic hurdles also necessitated the construction of seven airfields, dozens of bridges, and a 360-mile-long road to connect Prudhoe Bay to Fairbanks.

Just more than 3 years after construction started, however, the Trans-Alaska Pipeline was ready to operate. Since then, more than 15.5 billion barrels of crude oil have been sent from Alaska's North Slope, through the

pipeline to Valdez, and on to refineries throughout the country.

The revenues generated by this production have had a tremendous impact in Alaska and throughout the United States. Over the past 30 years, North Slope oil production has added more than \$300 billion to the U.S. economy and reduced domestic oil imports by more than \$200 billion. Energy will always cost money, but instead of sending our dollars overseas, North Slope oil production—made possible by the Trans-Alaska Pipeline—has greatly contributed to economic growth here at home.

In Alaska, the economic effects of the Trans-Alaska Pipeline are even more apparent. Last year, revenues from oil production and transportation accounted for nearly 90 percent of the State government's total income—funds which were then used to help pay for our schools, our roads, and other important projects. North Slope oil revenue also provides the foundation for the permanent fund dividend, which will help assure the well-being of future generations of Alaskans.

When oil began to flow through the Trans-Alaska Pipeline in 1977, gasoline cost a mere 38 cents per gallon. Today, the nationwide average has soared to \$3.00 per gallon, and many experts predict this price will reach \$4.00 by the end of summer.

As those of us in the Senate continue to debate a comprehensive energy policy for our Nation, we must take note of the consequences of 30 years of oil production in Alaska. Instead of the ecological disaster many predicted, the Trans-Alaska Pipeline has been an economic lifeline for our Nation. It continues to prove we can balance environmental concerns with the production of our natural resources. I urge my colleagues to heed this lesson.

TRAVEL PROMOTION ACT

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, I am pleased to speak in support of the Travel Promotion Act of 2007, which I introduced late yesterday with Senator INOUE and Senator DORGAN.

Our legislation has a simple purpose: To increase the number of foreign tourists who visit the United States.

To accomplish this goal, two complementary strategies must be undertaken: existing travel problems must be resolved, and fundamental improvements must be made to the manner in which we market our country to prospective tourists.

First, the efficiency of our border entry and screening processes must be improved. The Commerce Committee recently held two hearings on this issue, and industry leaders testified about the adverse effect September 11, 2001, has had on travel to the United States.

Heightened security measures implemented after 9/11, while necessary, continue to inconvenience many travelers. We heard witnesses describe the aforementioned difficulties international