

They did 60 hearings a year for 7 years. They were started with \$15,000 appropriations, and they saved \$15 billion for the American taxpayer. If ever we need that kind of a committee, it is now.

Three times I have offered that on the floor of the Senate—three times. Every vote on the Democratic side of the aisle has been to say, yes, we need it. Every vote save one on the Republican side of the aisle objected and opposed and we have not been able to get this done.

I used this example because it was on the front page of the New York Times just last week, about a company that gets \$300 million that appears now to have been largely wasted—American taxpayers' dollars once again just poured down a rat hole. I use this example to say we ought to be embarrassed to not have the kind of oversight we should.

I am proud to say everyone on this side of the aisle has voted three times to establish a special bipartisan committee called the Truman committee. We know this works. We have done it before.

I have held up on the floor so many examples. A little white towel that Halliburton was ordering for the troops because they have the LOGCAP contract to supply these things, a little white towel their buyer, Henry Bunting, was ordered to buy for the troops. So he orders the white towel and the supervisor says: You can't do that. You need to order a white towel with KBR, the subsidiary, Kellogg Brown & Root, embroidered on the towel.

Henry says: Well, that will triple or quadruple the cost.

The supervisor says: That doesn't matter. This is a cost-plus contract. The taxpayer will pay for that.

That is a small example, and there are so many large examples. Whistleblowers have told us \$85,000 brandnew trucks were left beside the road in perfectly safe areas, to be torched because they didn't have a wrench to fix the tire. The attitude was, it doesn't matter; the American taxpayer bought those trucks, and they will buy the replacement trucks on a cost-plus contract. It is unbelievable.

A woman named Bunnatine Greenhouse came to testify before the policy committee which I chair. I have held almost all the hearings which have been held on these issues. The policy committee doesn't have the subpoena power, but you would be surprised how many whistleblowers want to talk about what is happening.

Bunnatine Greenhouse became the highest ranking civilian official in the Corps of Engineers, judged to be outstanding by all accords. She said the awarding of these contracts in the Pentagon for reconstruction—the LOGCAP contract, RIO contract, all of these contracts—is the most blatant contracting abuse she has seen in her career. For that, this courageous woman was demoted. She paid for it with her job, but she would not be silenced. Now

her career is behind a curtain over in the Pentagon. No one will comment.

The American people should not stand for this. We should not stand for it. I intend again to offer the amendment that would establish a bipartisan committee to aggressively investigate waste, fraud, and abuse in contracting in Iraq; waste, fraud, and abuse in all of the other adjunct areas because I believe the American taxpayer is getting fleeced, and I believe American soldiers are being disserved by what is happening.

I can speak for hours about this subject because I have had somewhere around 15 or 17 hearings on this subject. I have had whistleblowers come to tell me they were at a camp that was serving food to 5,000 soldiers a day under the contract, but they were billing for 10,000 soldiers.

I have seen the reports that Halliburton was billing for 42,000 meals a day, and they were serving 14,000. They were overbilling by 28,000 meals. It is just unbelievable when you see the evidence of waste, fraud, and abuse and so little interest in pursuing it.

There is much more to say about this. I did want to say that the story in the New York Times yesterday ought to once again be a wake-up call. There is a commission that has been established, which is outside of this body. The Senator from Virginia, Mr. WEBB, and Senator MCCASKILL and others have worked hard to establish the commission. I think that is a step forward—evaluating and looking at waste, fraud, and abuse. But that is not, in my judgment, a substitute for—it certainly is a complement to but not a substitute for the Congress having a select committee with subpoena power. Without subpoena power and the select committee being able to investigate things like a company getting \$243 million to rehabilitate 140 health clinics in Iraq, 3 years later the money is gone and there are only 20 places they have rehabilitated; otherwise the money is gone. So what happened to all the money?

We had testimony from a very courageous Iraqi yesterday who said \$18 billion, mostly American money, has disappeared. At least disappeared within his eyesight because he was in charge of anticorruption in the Iraqi Government. He was in charge of the anticorruption unit in the Iraqi Government. They tried to kill him three times. He finally left because he said the corruption was so unbelievable, and he was so unable to stop it. He said \$18 billion of American taxpayers' dollars—he believes most of it American taxpayers' dollars—has been wasted.

Later this week, I am going to speak at greater length about the waste, fraud, and abuse issue because we have to stop ignoring it. We have to start confronting it. My colleague, Senator REID, has been very strong and assertive in wanting to address this issue. All of my colleagues on the Democratic side have voted three times to establish a Truman committee.

Let me just mention one additional point. Three weeks ago I met a man named Herman Wouk. He is one of the great authors in American history. He wrote the books "The Caine Mutiny" and "War and Remembrance." I believe he is 91 years old. He has an unbelievable command of a lot of things. I was so impressed by him. It was a great honor to meet one of the great American authors, Herman Wouk.

He said to me, somewhat with a twinkle in his eye, he said: Senator DORGAN, I don't know much beyond 1945, but I know everything 1945 and back because I spent my life studying that history. I was part of it in the military. But, he said, I have written about it, I studied it. He said: I know everything about this period.

He said: You know what you ought to do in the Congress. I am reading about all of these things. You ought to do something, establish a Truman committee. Have you ever heard of a Truman committee?

I said: Mr. Wouk, I have. I offered an amendment to do that three times.

Then we talked about what the Truman committee had accomplished when a Democratic President was in the White House and a Democratic Senator wanted to put together that kind of investigative committee. People were concerned about it. The fact is, it got done, and the American taxpayer was served.

This war in Iraq has lasted longer than the Second World War. This amount of waste, fraud, and abuse is the greatest in the history of this country, I am convinced, and we are not near what we should be doing to provide the oversight. It is not the fault of this side of the aisle. It is not the fault of the majority leader. He has been aggressive and so have we. We have offered it time and time again, and we are not going to stop. The American taxpayer deserves better.

I yield the floor and make a point of order a quorum is not present.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

STRATEGIC PETROLEUM RESERVE

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, before I leave the Chamber, I do wish to mention the Energy Department has made an announcement last week which, once again, stands logic on its head. They have announced they would continue putting oil into the Strategic Petroleum Reserve underground. They are putting about 60,000 barrels of oil underground right now, at a time when the price of oil is \$100 or \$110 a barrel. They are busy putting 60,000 barrels a day underground.

It makes no sense at all. The Strategic Petroleum Reserve, which is where we store underground that amount of oil we want to use in an emergency is 97 percent full. So the Strategic Petroleum Reserve is 97 percent filled at a time when oil is at a record high. This administration is taking sweet light crude oil, which is a subset of all oil, and a highly valuable subset of oil, and putting 60,000 barrels of oil a day underground.

They have announced beginning in August of this year, they hope to get contracts to do just that. We know that in addition to that, they want to increase that, almost double that, to be around 120,000 barrels a day underground for the second half of the year. They are going to use their royalty-in-kind authorities and likely some of the \$585 million they had received when they sold reserves because of supply disruptions caused by Hurricane Katrina.

So here is where we are: We have oil prices that are akin to a Roman candle, going right through the roof, and instead of doing things that would put downward pressure on oil and gas prices, the administration is taking oil through royalty-in-kind transfers, oil payments off the Gulf of Mexico wells, and sticking it underground in the Reserve and taking it out off supply.

I mean, that absolutely makes no sense at all. I followed a car once down a road in North Dakota, an old beat-up car with a back bumper hanging by one hinge. He had a bumper sticker, and the bumper sticker said, "We fought the gas war and gas won."

I thought, that is not so unusual. I mean, the other side always wins. But at least this administration, this Congress, ought to insist that we not put oil underground and stick it in the Reserve, when it is 97 percent full. We have to pay \$110 a barrel for it and you take oil out of supply, which puts upward pressure on gas prices.

I do not understand who is advising them, but whoever is, I hope perhaps they can find someone with a little deeper reservoir of good judgment at the moment to suspend putting oil underground in the Reserve.

I have a piece of legislation I have introduced that does the following: It would suspend immediately the putting of oil underground in the Reserve for the remainder of 2008 unless oil comes back below \$75 a barrel. But as long as it is over \$75 a barrel, and the SPR is 97 percent full, let's at least stand up on the side of the average family out there that is trying to figure out how they can get a bank loan to fill their gas tank.

Let's see downward pressure on gas prices rather than allowing this administration to announce on Friday they want to continue to put upward pressure on gas prices by seeking to enter into contracts to continue filling the Strategic Petroleum Reserve.

Now, the Secretary of Energy says: Well this does not matter much. This is

a small amount. It is 60,000 barrels a day. What he does not understand, I think, is it is a subset, this is sweet light crude, the most valuable subset of oil we have.

We had testimony before the Senate Energy Committee that clearly indicates this is putting upward pressure on gas prices. We do not know how much. One expert who came before the Energy Committee said 10 percent. But why should we sit idly by and have the administration have a policy of taking oil off the market and putting it underground, especially the sweet light crude?

This is not a debate about whether it is increasing gas prices, it is. The debate is simply: How much does it increase gas prices, and why should we have anyone in this town busy doing things that increase gas prices? How about standing up for the driver? How about standing up for ordinary families for a change?

So I wished to say I noted the press release put out by the Energy Department as a matter of policy. They are wrong, dead wrong. One way or another we are going to deal with it. I chair the subcommittee that funds the Department of Energy. I will have a chance to write the Chairman's mark. That will be a couple months from now. But I definitely intend to deal with that in the Chairman's mark. But I hope before then we can stop 60,000 barrels or more of oil a day from going underground because that is a policy that, in my judgment, flies in the face of good sense.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CARDIN). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, is the parliamentary procedure that we are on the Mortgage Foreclosure Protection Act?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. At the present time, we are still in morning business.

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, I will speak as in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is recognized.

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, I do wish to say a word about the Mortgage Protection Act, the protection against foreclosure on mortgages. Last Thursday, I had offered an amendment that will be considered perhaps tomorrow and will be voted on and it is a commonsense amendment which says that in order to save somebody's home and not have their mortgage foreclosed on, if they have a pile of cash sitting over in their retirement account, the 401(k), that they would be able to go in

and get \$25,000 out of their 401(k) retirement plan to use in order for them to forestall a foreclosure upon their home and, therefore, stay in their home.

Now, that is plain common sense, to be able to do that, pull it out, without paying the 10-percent penalty under current law that you would have to pay in order to take money out of that retirement fund and set it aside. Why is it common sense? Because the symmetry of the current law is you can take money out of the retirement fund without paying the penalty in order to buy a home. If you can do that to purchase a home, why would you not want to give a homeowner the opportunity to keep their home from foreclosure by allowing them to go into the retirement fund or 401(k) fund?

It makes common sense, and I am hoping the Senate is going to favorably consider that when we vote on this amendment. It is offered by me and a host of other Senators who are cosponsors.

SEATING DEMOCRAT DELEGATES

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, the reason I asked to speak as in morning business is because I wish to talk on another subject that is not the subject of the Mortgage Foreclosure Protection Act but is the continuing saga we have about seating the Democratic delegates to the national convention from the States of Florida and Michigan.

Over the weekend, in the State of Florida, the State party met. Having already elected the delegates under their rules from the various congressional districts, the only thing to complete the election of the Florida delegation was the remaining delegates who are selected at large of the whole State, proportionate to the amount of votes both Senators OBAMA and CLINTON got in the January 29 primary—a primary, by the way, that had a record turnout of 1.75 million, almost 2 million Florida Democrats who turned out and voted. As a result of that, in that proportion to which Senator CLINTON got 50 percent of the vote and Senator OBAMA got 33 percent of the vote, the rest of the delegation of the total of 211 delegates were selected.

So Florida's delegate selection process has gone through under the normal procedures set out by the rules and bylaws of the Florida Democratic Party. So the question now is, now that we have our delegates duly elected, are they going to be seated? Well, of course, you know the position of this Senator from Florida, who has been trying for 9 months now to work a compromise by which we can get the delegates seated. But the Democratic National Committee has completely rejected all the attempts.

Just think, if we had done this last August and September, when we were trying this and had this issue behind us in Florida, how much easier it would be