and have noted that in the past 20 years, every time the Senate is controlled by a party opposite the President, there is a slowdown of the confirmation process. It happened during the last 2 years of President Reagan's administration in 1987 and 1988 when Democrats won control of the Senate in the 1986 election. It happened in the last 2 years of the administration of President George H.W. Bush, and during the administration of President Clinton where we Republicans controlled the Senate for the last 6 years, it was exacerbated. It was even worse in blocking President Clinton's nominations.

As I have said on this floor on occasion, I voted with the Democrats. I thought the Republican caucus was wrong and said so. But each time it has been exacerbated and become more intense.

Then this body saw a very sharp debate in 2005 where there was the consideration of the so-called nuclear or constitutional option, which would have changed the filibuster rule from 60 to 51. Now we are, again, in a period of gridlock. There is no doubt that the very low public opinion ratings of us are due to the public realization, the public disgust about all the bickering that goes on here. The public sees it on many items, the partisanship and the effort at a partisan advantage. But I do believe the public does not have an understanding of these arcane rules, like filling the tree. They can hardly have an understanding since most Members of this body don't understand exactly how it works.

Mr. President, this is not a matter that comes to me this afternoon or yesterday or the day before. I have been watching it for a considerable period of time, and 18 months ago, on February 15, 2007, I introduced S. Res. 83, a resolution to amend the Standing Rules of the Senate to prohibit filling the amendment tree. So far there has not been a hearing and not been any action on that, but I intend to press this issue. I intend to try to bring some understanding to the American people beyond the confines of this Chamber.

I don't think I am going to have a whole lot of effect on my colleagues this afternoon because there are none of my colleagues here this afternoon, except for the—no, no, I know the distinguished Senator from Maryland is here—except for the distinguished Presiding Officer. And I compliment my colleague, Senator BEN CARDIN, on his fast start in the Senate. Of course, he had a lot of advanced training having come from the House of Representatives and been a leader in the Maryland Legislature. I work with him on the Judiciary Committee, and he is a first-class Senator. That extract can be used—let's see, you ran in 2006—you can use it in 2012, 2018, 2024, and 2030, Senator CARDIN, but beyond 2030, I am reserving my judgment.

But Senators are busy, and I am not in any way critical of Senators not being here, but I intend to speak on the subject repetitively. I don't know that will do any good, but I intend to do that.

For years, Senator Proxmire used to stand at his seat on the aisle speaking about genocide. Every day he came to the Senate floor, and he was motivated because there was no television at the time he was speaking about genocide. I think television came while he was still speaking on the subject. Senator Proxmire was a remarkable Senator in many ways. My recollection is that he had 17,000 votes, which he didn't miss. I am not sure about the exact statistic, but I am sure he spoke extensively on genocide, and he had an impact. And now we know that genocide has been picked up as a crime against humanity and has been the subject of prosecutions under the War Crimes Tribunal.

So I intend to speak about this subject with some frequency, and I intend to press for a hearing on my resolution. I intend to press to see if we can get some action because if the American people knew what was going on, the American people would not like it. The American people live under the illusion that we have a United States Senate. The facts show that the Senate is realistically dysfunctional. It is on life support, perhaps even moribund. The only facet of Senate bipartisanship is the conspiracy of successive Republican and Democratic leaders to employ this procedural device known as filling the tree. It is known that way to insiders, and it is incomprehensible to outsiders.

Once known as a unique legislative institution, the Senate was referred to as the world's greatest deliberative body because any Senator could introduce almost any amendment on virtually any subject and get a vote on it. That was, as noted, the distinguishing feature from the House of Representatives, which is tightly controlled by the Rules Committee to restrict the parameters on what amendments are in order.

A principal reason, perhaps the main reason for the use of the procedural device of filling the tree, was to save the majority from taking tough votes. That backfired on Republicans in the last Congress, where the filling the tree rule was used in order to avoid bad votes. And, of course, we know the procedure backfired pretty hard for Republicans to lose control of the Senate. In the 2006 election we had to lose seven seats, a virtual impossibility, but we managed to do it.

But more important than the partisanship, more important than the increased use by both Democratic and Republican majority leaders is the impact it has on this institution. And more important than that is the impact it has on the legislative process and the working through legislation, which ought to be considered and, where warranted, enacted for the benefit of the American people.

Mr. President, in the absence of any Senator seeking recognition, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SESSIONS. 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.

AMERICAN ENERGY POLICY

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, the American people are very frustrated with the failure of Congress to act on the great problems facing our country, a lot of problems, but I believe they are especially concerned about surging gasoline and energy prices. They are angry. They do not believe we have done enough in this Congress, and I think when they find out the leadership of this Congress, the Democratic leadership, is proposing legislation that will raise, not lower gas prices, they will not be happy.

Indeed, I received a note today from my staff that an experienced reporter at the Birmingham News, Mr. Tom Gordon, today wrote that my home county in Alabama, Wilcox County, again leads the Nation in the percentage of income that its citizens spend monthly on motor fuel, 16 percent, because the county has low incomes and people drive long distances to work.

It is a big deal. It is absolutely a real matter of importance. I think we need to do something about it. They want us to reduce our dependence on foreign oil, to produce more clean American energy, to show we are taking steps to contain and I think maybe even hopefully reduce the surging prices.

These prices are threatening the family budget. They are threatening American jobs and the American economy. Turn on any news program and read any news magazine. We are on track to spend $500 billion abroad this year to purchase 60 percent of the oil we consume; 60 percent-plus is being imported. This balance-of-trade deficit weakens our dollar, requiring even more dollars to purchase the same amount of oil. With the dollar getting weaker, you need more dollars to buy the same amount of oil. We are creating jobs and wealth in nations around the world with our money when this missing wealth in our country that we send abroad reduces our own jobs.

Families are routinely paying $50, $75, $100 more a month for the same or even less gasoline than they were a few years ago. When this added expense reduces the ability of hard-working middle-class Americans to purchase what they need to get by on, or to take care of their families, and when this reduction in spending on oil reduces spending on things other than oil that the American people need, is it any wonder the economy is struggling, I ask? Is it

any wonder millions of American are struggling to get by? Is it any wonder Americans from the suites in New York to the rural roads of Alabama are worried?

What is it our constituents are asking us to do? I think they want us to get busy doing what we know works. What works does not mean this $6.7 trillion cap-and-trade plan that has been introduced here that will burden the American economy by driving up the cost of gasoline by another 50 cents in the next number of years, 20 years; driving up the cost of electricity by 44 percent; driving up the price of gasoline three times that 50 cents in the years to come in the distant future; and drive business away from America.

It will make our manufacturing industry less competitive than the global marketplace at a time when we are already struggling to compete and stay up. As I have noted, it will drive up unemployment, and we unfortunately saw a very large surge in unemployment last week, to 5.5 percent.

First, it is not a horrible rate of unemployment, but a horrible increase in unemployment of five-tenths of 1 percent. As one economist said, I would not have been surprised to see 6 percent unemployment over the next 12 months. I did not expect to see half of that occur in 1 month.

People know we have a problem and they understand it. I guess the question is, is there anything we can do about it or are we hopeless? Is there something we can do to bring down the price of oil and make more sense in our economy to confront the danger that high energy prices, gasoline prices pose to America's well being?

Yes, there is. There is. Fundamentally we need to do what works, and we know a lot of things work. It is past time to get started in taking the long road back to a sound energy policy that can and will bring down or at least contain the price of crude oil and gasoline.

I propose that we work together on common ground, liberals, conservatives, Republicans, and Democrats. It is within our grasp and the people are ready for our leadership. We have an opportunity to address our Nation's crisis. The challenge is truly bipartisan in every way. After all, high energy prices affect Democrats, Republicans, and Independents all in the same way. While conservation and increasing the production of American oil and gas in an environmentally sound way can help contain the surge in prices, we need to do that. We must seek common ground further to develop and deploy technological breakthroughs necessary to solve our Nation's energy crisis.

We must commit ourselves as a nation to the production of clean and affordable energy sources. We must commit to policies that will move us beyond oil in a financially and prudent way. Only by championing national interests over any special interests will we be able to secure the common interests and lower energy prices and have a cleaner environment, both of which I believe are possible.

But we are far behind. Business-as-usual policies crafted to benefit favored constituents are no way to develop sound energy solutions to our Nation's needs. That is why I am proposing legislation to direct the Department of Energy, which I think can do more and should do more, to evaluate the host of national incentives we have now on the books to create alternative sources of energy, some of which have worked well, and to recommend changes based on what is in the national interest.

The national interest is to utilize those incentives to the maximum amount possible to create the most amount of clean American energy. Frankly, there is too much in some areas and not enough in other areas. We need to utilize incentives to jump-start industries that can help build a source of clean American energy. For example, we did succeed in creating an ethanol industry through a very sizable incentive. That has worked. We have drawn it down some now. The Agriculture bill that passed the Senate reduced some of those incentives. Perhaps they should have been reduced more since it has been such a healthy enterprise. That money could have been applied to other areas and other aspects of alternative energy that could jump-start those sources.

Congress also suffers too often from a short-term focus on the pressing issues of the day. Too often, we fail to adequately plan for the future needs of the country. That is why I propose that the Department of Energy develop a comprehensive, long-term energy strategy to anticipate unforeseen needs and to promote continued development of innovative energy sources. In order to achieve these goals, the Department would have to report its recommendations to Congress frequently.

I am not ashamed to say that I have a lot of issues on my plate. I am on the Armed Services Committee, the Judiciary Committee, and the Energy Committee. The Department of Energy has a huge staff, a large number of personnel. They spend all their time every day working on energy issues. We should have leadership from them. They should tell us what is working and what is not. They should help Congress set good policy. They could do more in that regard. They should not be timid about it. They should help us, step forward, make some proposals, and be more aggressive.

There are many things we can do now to lower the price of gasoline and promote clean American energy. Indeed, progress will be made by a thousand steps, large and small, but they must be smart steps. They don't need to be steps that cost far more than they will ever return in terms of energy per cost. They don't need to be political pork.

In 2005, Congress directed the Department of Interior to study the oil reserves in the Outer Continental Shelf. That is the deep waters off our coast, not right on the beaches. The study found that 8.5 billion barrels of oil are currently known to exist off our Nation's shores. In addition, the study estimated that approximately 86 billion barrels of oil exist in these waters. We spend maybe $5 billion a year on oil. That includes the 60 percent we import. The U.S. Geological Survey and private industry also estimate that approximately 25 billion barrels of oil exist on shore in the lower 48 States and Alaska. This totals approximately 119 billion barrels of oil alone and would be enough to power millions of automobiles for a century—not every automobile in the country for a century, but it would carry us a long way until we continue to work hard to have those breakthroughs that get us off oil maybe completely. The sooner the better for me.

These are not the only reserves known to exist from studies. These are reserves estimated from studies made 30 years ago. Further exploration and modern seismographic work will certainly locate far more reserves.

The question fundamentally is, to the American people and my colleagues, do we import more and more of our oil and gas from places that produce it in the North Sea and the Persian Gulf and the Caspian Sea off the coast of Africa and South America or do we produce it safely off our own shores, where the money stays at home, where we are not sending $500 billion of American citizens' money to people who build palaces in the desert with nothing more than basically money they have taxed us with? The price of oil today is set in large part because OPEC has reduced production, creating a shortage in the whole world. That is the fundamental problem. There are a lot of others, but that is the fundamental problem. We need to fight back. The way we fight back is to keep more of our money at home and send it less to these countries. How simple is that? But the policies we are having here go the opposite direction. They are not allowing us to produce more oil and gas in America, safely and cleanly.

We have and can move forward a lot of other sources of oil. One could be oil from oil shale. Some estimate those reserves to be approximately 1.8 trillion barrels of oil—a lifetime of oil in oil shale. There are a lot of things that have to happen to make that be produced. We have to be sure it is done in an environmental way. But we have major corporations that are willing to spend billions of dollars to see if they can produce it in that fashion. We blocked them from doing that last year. When I say ''we,'' I didn't agree to it, but the Congress slipped that in in conference committee and basically blocked that in the dead of night without any hearings to discuss the merits.

For example, Saudi Arabia, which has the largest amount of oil known in

the world, has only approximately 267 billion barrels of oil, whereas we have 1,800 billion barrels of oil in oil shale. It is primarily located in the West in governmental lands.

What about coal? We are the Saudi Arabia of coal. We have 25 percent of the world's coal reserves, which is enough to last approximately 250 years at the current rate. Surely long before then, we will have developed alternatives to carbon fuels. Converting this tremendous resource into liquid transportation fuel using proven technology can bring down the price of gasoline. It really can.

At this very moment, private companies are prepared to convert coal to liquid fuel and sell it to the Air Force for aircraft, sequestering the carbon so it is not emitted into the atmosphere, at approximately $85 a barrel. That is $40 less than the world market price of oil today, which is over $130 a barrel. They are prepared to do that. Somebody slipped in language to block that from occurring, so the Air Force now is in limbo as to whether they can enter into a long-term contract necessary to guarantee domestic sources of clean fuel made from American coal, all the money staying in the United States, helping enhance our national security. We need to repeal that provision. We need to let the Air Force go ahead with this. It would mean tremendous opportunity to affirm the Air Force's initiative and to verify as a practical matter whether this large amount of fuel can be converted from coal. The way they do it, they heat the coal, and off comes the gas, and then you can reconvert that back to a liquid. It comes out cleaner, just spotless clean. It cleans the engine instead of making it dirty. It is a fabulous fuel.

Diesel fuel—let me share this with you. These are some things we can do and get busy now, that we should already have done. Diesel fuel is more efficient than other fuels. According to Popular Mechanics magazine—recently they did a comparison; I can't guarantee everything they said because the numbers are pretty astounding, but in a sense it is good news—the next generation already in existence of clean diesel engines runs approximately 38 percent further on a gallon of fuel than a similar size automobile that is a hybrid automobile. The magazine found that a 2007 Volkswagen Polo Bluemotion diesel automobile travels 38 percent farther on a gallon of fuel than a 2007 Toyota Prius hybrid.

We know for a fact that diesel gets 30, 35, 40 percent better mileage than a gasoline engine. In fact, Europe has 50 percent of its automobiles diesel. Why? Because it gets better gas mileage. We have gone the exact opposite direction. We only have 3 percent of our fleet diesel. Why are we not creating policies that will help Americans move to more fuel-efficient diesel engines and do something about this odd circumstance when diesel fuel is now considerably more expensive? It is about 15 percent more expensive, but it gets at least 30 percent better mileage. It is still a buy, even at the prices at the pump today for diesel. In addition to being fuel efficient, diesel-powered vehicles release fewer CO_2 emissions than similar hybrids or gasoline engines; CO_2, the global warming gas, less of that from a diesel engine. It is so much cleaner today than people's memory of smoky diesels in the past. It is an entirely new engine, an entirely new procedure.

According to the Popular Mechanics field test, the Volkswagen model tested by the magazine emitted 5 percent fewer greenhouse gases per mile than a Toyota Prius. I was able to drive a Prius the week before last around Alabama. It was very impressive. Why are we not thinking about diesel as we seek to clean up our air and reduce our importing of foreign oil? Diesel engines today run on ultra-low sulfur diesel that is 97 percent cleaner than older diesel fuel. It is the cleanest fuel in the world. It is cleaner than the European fuel—the Europeans are environmentally conscious—and our own regulations require that.

New diesel technology, the Mercedes BlueTec engine—I visited their Alabama facility last week—reduces carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxide, and particulates.

According to the EPA, if 33 percent of American drivers switched to diesel vehicles, oil consumption would be reduced by approximately 1.5 million barrels of oil a day, which would cut our imports 10 percent. They say if you drill in ANWR in Alaska, an area the size of the State of South Carolina—and they would like to explore for oil and gas in an area the size of Dulles Airport—if it comes in and it is only a little over a million barrels a day, that is about 10 percent of our import amount. So if we had more diesel and production in Alaska, that would reduce our imports 20 percent.

Already Americans are conserving more. They have reduced consumption at least 5 percent this year. So now we are down 25 percent. That is the kind of thing we can do that will make a difference in the price of oil and help make this a stronger country.

Now, ethanol represents a viable alternative energy source, I am convinced. According to the Congressional Research Service, 6.5 billion gallons of ethanol were produced in the United States last year. This amounts to approximately $19.5 billion—let me be sure I get this correct because my mind is probably like some of my colleagues. That is 6.5 billion gallons as opposed to barrels I was talking about earlier. Mr. President, 6.5 billion gallons of ethanol were produced in the United States last year. It amounts to approximately $19.5 billion that stayed in our country to create American jobs and pay good wages here. It did not go to buy oil from some foreign country so that the wealth goes there.

It is estimated that we are on track to produce 9 billion gallons of ethanol this year. So we go from 6.5 billion to 9 billion gallons this year. We are soon reaching the maximum production, I think, for most ethanol that comes from corn, which most of this does. But that has been helpful to us, I submit to you. So this would result in approximately $36 billion that will be invested in America, paying wages to American citizens, who pay taxes to our cities and counties, for schools, and to the Federal Government. We want them to have good jobs with good wages.

According to Renewable Fuels Association, the price of gasoline would rise approximately 31 percent if ethanol was eliminated. Is that right? That is an advocacy group for renewable fuels, but this week Barron's Magazine had an analysis and quoted figures similar to that and noted that consumers were saving several hundred dollars a year as a result of ethanol. Whether it is a great benefit to us in net reduction of CO_2, we do not know. Originally, the environmentalists certainly believed so and advocated it. Some now question that. Regardless, as an economic matter and as a matter of national security, it has reduced our dependence on foreign oil, kept wealth at home, and helped protect our national security and create jobs.

But there are limits on ethanol, so that is why we need to seek technological breakthroughs that will allow us to produce cellulosic ethanol on a commercial scale. Cellulosic fuel can be produced from sources that do not place strains on other end users.

There is tremendous potential in our country to utilize waste wood from sawmills, paper companies, waste wood that is left in the forest from when the timber is cut and hurricane recovery. I talked to a FEMA hurricane emergency response official today about the potential of utilizing cellulose that is downed and thrown away in landfills after a hurricane, where thousands and millions of trees are blown down, to create energy. I think it is a realistic possibility. Every city and county in the country is constantly hauling out large amounts of wood and trees from their city. It cannot be utilized effectively for lumber or other uses. Instead of going to landfills, this could create energy. I think there is a great potential here.

Auburn University has spent a lot of time on switchgrass, another cellulosic form. They will be bringing up, June 19, to Washington their gasification unit that is portable. It is the size of a tractor-trailer rig. You put wood chips in one end, the wood is heated, a gas comes off, and that gas is converted to a liquid fuel. It is proven it can be done. This is not impossible. What we need to do is accelerate the science to prove whether it can be commercially feasible. I think it can be. I am proud of Auburn. They have won a national award for that. They are No. 1 in the country in that area of research, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

The next is the plug-in hybrid technology, which holds exceedingly great potential. By utilizing and improving current battery technology, plug-in hybrids will be able to travel father using less gasoline—perhaps dramatically less gasoline—than conventional hybrids or any other kind of automobile. In addition to greatly displacing imported oil, plug-in hybrids can reduce the amount of pollutants and greenhouse gases in the air by relying on clean nuclear energy to recharge their batteries.

Let's just talk about this briefly. We will talk a little more about nuclear energy. But if you have a commute each day of 10 or 15 miles and you can create a battery that will run 30 miles without any hybrid engine having to be turned on to charge and recharge the battery, a person could commute back and forth to work every day if that car would only run 30 miles. When they come home at night, they can plug it in and recharge the battery from the power socket. And particularly charging it from 11 p.m. to 5 a.m., it will use base load power, often not even being fully utilized. If the power source is nuclear power, it emits no pollutants into the atmosphere whatsoever, and that will completely eliminate the need to utilize any oil or gasoline in the car. Now, that is close to being reality.

Certainly, we will produce more wind and solar power. We support those energy sources. The Congress has provided incentives for that. Few would dispute that large increases in clean American base load electricity in large amounts is essential, and we cannot get there by conservation only because a number of things happen. No. 1 is that our population is going up. By 2050, we will have a substantial increase in the American population. So even if every American used less, the Nation is projected, by every expert I am aware of, to utilize more energy. Another thing that happens: You may well develop new lightbulbs, which I hope every American will utilize and turn off lightbulbs when they are not using them, but we have other things that come up. For example, how many of our people want to give up plasma TVs? They use a lot more electricity than the old kind. And computers. When we projected the increase in the cost of the utilization of electricity in the 1970s and early 1980s, we did not expect the size of the computer revolution and the amount of energy that would add. So there is always something out there. That is all I am suggesting. It is just not smart for us to project in a way that is contrary to the experts that we are going to utilize less electricity.

So after much study—and I have spent a good bit of study on this—it is clear to me that nuclear-generated electricity is the serious solution for a clean energy future and an alternative to a future filled with ever-increasing regulations and more regulators and more lobbyists and more political fights such as this cap-and-trade bill—all of which produce no energy but drain our American economy. Nuclear power is American based. It is a proven technology. It helps enhance our national security. It is competitive costwise. It is not outrageously expensive like some of the ideas that are being floated. It emits no pollutants into the air, neither NO_X nor SOx nor mercury nor particulates. And it 100 percent meets our global warming goals, which is to reduce CO_2, carbon dioxide—zero, zilch.

Twenty percent of our electricity today is nuclear, and we have not built a plant in 30 years. France produces 80 percent of its power from nuclear power, and Japan is over 50 percent. They are heavily committed to nuclear power, and it is paying off for them. Britain just announced five new nuclear plants. So we are running behind.

But the good news is that after the Energy bill Senator DOMENICI worked so hard on and the legislation he offered, 30 new applications for nuclear powerplants have been submitted. That is 30—up from zero just a couple years ago. But we must strive to ensure this nuclear renaissance continues and completes.

There is this tremendous possibility that base load nuclear power, particularly in the night, offpeak time, could be utilized to charge automobile batteries so we could run our automobiles without any fossil fuel being burned. Nuclear power is the one energy source that could create large amounts of hydrogen, the hydrogen necessary if we are to develop effectively fuel cell hydrogen automobiles that also favor a clean concept. Both of these are postoil, postcarbon energy sources that can power our automobiles, which is where our crisis is today.

Renewable energy sources also have an important role to play. According to the Department of Energy, renewable energy provided approximately 9 percent of the total U.S. electricity generation in 2005. While this is not large, there is significant room for growth. Wind energy has led this growth, increasing from approximately 3,500 megawatts in 2001 to almost 17,000 megawatts today. Solar power has also increased, although cost and storage remain serious issues. Geothermal energy has not expanded as rapidly as wind has, but it has potential. According to MIT, the United States has approximately 100,000 megawatts of enhanced geothermal capacity which can be developed by 2050.

A few weeks ago, this Senate voted on a plan that would have taken the first steps to produce many of these untapped energy resources by allowing more energy exploration off our coasts and in Alaska. But we do need to move beyond petroleum-based transportation fuels. We need to do some other steps, such as enhancing the batteries for electric cars, as this bill would have done, which could have allowed us to move to plug-in hybrids. I think that is within our grasp right now, and it would help clean up our environment.

Mr. President, I see the majority leader on the floor. I will just conclude by noting that with prices at record highs, I think the American people can be excused for wondering what their Congress is doing. They expect us to get busy—to get busy now—to produce more clean American energy. That will be the only thing that is going to help reduce our dependence on foreign oil and our ability to be hijacked by prices driven up by OPEC nations that are restricting supply.

I thank the Chair and yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I extend my appreciation to my friend from Alabama for giving up the floor.

UNANIMOUS-CONSENT AGREEMENT—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. President, this is a consent request to have a vote on three district court judges tomorrow.

I ask unanimous consent that on Tuesday, June 10, after the cloture vote or votes with respect to S. 3044 and H.R. 6049, regardless of the outcome, and notwithstanding rule XXII, the Senate then proceed to executive session to consider concurrently Calendar Nos. 539, 540, and 541; that there be a total of 10 minutes equally divided and controlled between Senator LEAHY and Senator SPECTER; that upon the use or yielding back of time, the Senate proceed to vote on confirmation of each nomination in the order listed above; that there be 2 minutes between each vote, and after the first vote, the vote time be limited to 10 minutes each; that upon confirmation, the motions to reconsider be laid upon the table en bloc, no further motions be in order, the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action, and the Senate resume legislative session, without further intervening action or debate, and the Senate then stand in recess until 2:15 p.m. for the respective party conference meetings.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

UNANIMOUS-CONSENT REQUEST—S. 3036

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I now ask unanimous consent that S. 3036 be returned to the calendar.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection?

Mr. SESSIONS. There is objection. I object.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, may I inquire, has my colleague from Alabama completed his remarks? You have?

Mr. SESSIONS. Yes.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be allowed to speak as in morning business.

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

HOUSING CRISIS

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, I rise this afternoon to take a few minutes to share with our colleagues the current condition of the housing situation and the steps being taken by the Senate Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs Committee—the steps we have taken in recent days and what I hope we can continue to do in the coming days over the next week or so, depending upon the agenda the leadership will set for us: our hope is to bring forth one more proposal that will complete the circle of the steps we can take as public policy setters in the area of dealing with the heart of the economic crisis, which is the housing crisis. The heart of the housing crisis is, of course, the foreclosure crisis. So this report I share with my colleagues is both a positive one—which includes the steps we are taking together to address the problem—as well as, unfortunately, a rather negative one in terms of the actual statistics and numbers that people are living with every day.

When we talk about these numbers and statistics, they actually reflect what is going on in the lives of very real people in our country who are struggling economically to make ends meet. Home ownership and the value of homes is at the heart of not only the American family dream but also at the heart of their economic success in many ways. So as I have done regularly over the past several months, I wish to share with my colleagues some of the problems we are facing in our economy and some of the steps we are taking to address them.

Three weeks ago, with overwhelming bipartisan support, we were able to pass out of the Banking Committee the Hope for Homeowners Act and legislation to reform the Government-sponsored enterprises—the so-called GSEs. These measures will help reduce foreclosures, strengthening the housing market and ultimately helping to restore our economy to healthy growth. We also added as part of that legislation an affordable housing program which will exist in perpetuity; not a short-term, 4- or 5-year program but one that will be around for years to come to assist those who are in desperate need of adequate and decent shelter, including rental housing.

The committee work in these major areas follows the work that the Senate accomplished earlier this spring when we passed the Foreclosure Prevention Act. That legislation contains several very important provisions to help homeowners, neighborhoods, and communities throughout our Nation. The legislation included $4 billion for communities to use through the Community Development Block Grant Program to purchase and rehabilitate foreclosed properties in their communities. The act also included $150 million in additional foreclosure prevention counseling, on top of the dollars we had already appropriated earlier, to assist in that area. Counseling, I would add, is a proven and very effective program that has helped struggling homeowners avoid the devastating effects of losing their homes. Finally, the act includes legislation that would modernize the Federal Housing Administration so the FHA can play an enhanced role in allowing hard-working American families to pursue and achieve the dream of home ownership through a suitable and sustainable mortgage.

I am continuing to work with our colleagues and the ranking member, Senator SHELBY of Alabama, along with other members of the committee—both Democrats and Republicans—and the Senate to enact comprehensive legislation that includes these and other provisions. These Members include Senators BAUCUS and GRASSLEY, the chairman and ranking member respectively of the Senate Finance Committee, who have contributed very important tax provisions to the Foreclosure Prevention Act.

There is no question in my mind that the almost daily information we are receiving on the performance of our economy should continue to spur action on the part of this Congress. Our economy has been limping along for the last 6 months, with growth well under 1 percent. If you take away the growth in Government and the buildup of inventories that occurs when the economy enters a recession, our economy grew by three-tenths of 1 percent in the first quarter of this year. In other words, our economy is at best stagnant, and in the view of many economists and others, we are actually in a recession.

Last week we learned that the unemployment rate in April rose by one-half of a percentage point in 1 month. That is the largest monthly increase at that rate in 22 years. We have lost thousands of jobs each and every month this year so far, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. This year, our economy has lost just under 400,000 private sector jobs, and most economists expect they will continue to lose jobs as the economy struggles. That is why I think it is critically important that we ought to provide for extended unemployment insurance benefits for those who have lost their jobs through no fault of their own as part of our response to the economic challenges we are facing. Certainly if we weren't able to do this, it would be the first time in my experience in this body for a quarter of a century that we didn't extend unemployment insurance benefits to people who have lost their jobs during periods of economic hardship. That has never happened before in my tenure here, and it is my serious hope that we will provide those extended benefits to those who deserve them.

The data we are looking at, as sad as it is, also confirms that the housing market continues to be mired in a deep recession as well. Residential construction fell by over 30 percent in the first quarter of this year. Sales of existing homes fell by 13 percent over last year. Now, let me quickly add some new data today for April that indicates sales may have finally picked up slightly, and we welcome that news. Most analysts, however, believe this uptick, if you will, in homes sales occurred only because home prices have continued to fall over the last several months. Regardless of that uptick, the number of new homes that remains unsold continues to rise, reaching the highest number in over a quarter of a century. Joining this growing number of new homes sitting vacant on the market unsold are homes where the previous owner has been foreclosed.

Foreclosures have hit a new all-time record. According to the Mortgage Bankers Association—the MBA—this data shows that almost 1 in every 11 homes with a mortgage in our country is in default or in foreclosure as of March of this year. That is the highest level since the MBA began tracking foreclosures in 1979. Foreclosure rates have been growing at record levels for some time, and last year alone 1.5 million of our fellow families in this country had their homes enter into a foreclosure.

Each and every day, over more than 8,100 families enter foreclosure. Every single day, 8,100 families on average enter foreclosure. The projections are that foreclosure rates will remain at historic highs for the foreseeable future. The investment bank Credit Suisse just released a report in which they predict that 6.5 million homes will fall into foreclosure over the next 5 years. They state:

> The coming flood of new foreclosures could put 8.4 percent of total homeowners, or 12.7 percent of homeowners with mortgages, out of their homes.

The scenario they are describing is one in which one out of eight American families with a mortgage could lose their homes. That is a chilling prediction.

Robert Schiller, the widely respected economist from Yale University who helped invent the so-called Case-Schiller Index that is used throughout the country and the markets to measure the change in home values, gave a speech recently in New Haven, CT where he said there is a good chance that housing prices will fall further, perhaps by as much as 30 percent since their peak in the late part of 2006. If that were to happen, it would mean the decline in home prices would be greater now than it was during the Great Depression back in the 1920s and 1930s of the previous century.

These are indeed historic times with historic challenges. Already we have seen home prices decline nationally for the first time since the Great Depression. For the first time since the Federal Reserve began keeping track of home equity in the 1940s, Americans today own less than half the value in their homes.

The effect this is having on our economy cannot be overstated. Martin Feldstein, who served as President

Reagan's chief economist, recently wrote in the Wall Street Journal:

> The 10 percent decline in home prices has cut household wealth by more than $2 trillion, reducing consumer spending and increasing the risk of a deep recession.

That means American families have lost more than $2 trillion of wealth. Losses of that magnitude are staggering. That is almost 20 percent of our Nation's GDP. Put another way, a national loss of wealth of $2 trillion means a typical family of four would have lost over $25,000 of wealth due to the current housing market crisis. This sharp loss in wealth for the average American homeowner comes at a time when they face record high prices for essentials of American life: Food, gasoline prices—as we have heard about today the cost of gas has been increasing every day—health care, and the cost of higher education. So the so-called foreclosure crisis is affecting far more than only those facing foreclosure. It is affecting nearly all of us in every imaginable way. As one home falls into foreclosure, the value of countless other homes in those neighborhoods is falling as well. If Dr. Schiller's predictions come to bear and home prices fall by 30 percent nationally, then the loss to American families will exceed $6 trillion. That is more than half of our Nation's annual GDP. It would mean the typical family of four would have lost approximately $80,000 of wealth. That is more than most American families earn in an entire year.

The nationwide implications of this crisis help explain why consumer sentiment is at historic lows. Americans' expectations for future economic growth are at the lowest level in 35 years since the deep recession of the early 1970s.

These negative views about our economic prospects are based on the real experiences of most Americans. The Pew Center conducted a recent survey of Americans' views not only on the economy as a whole but on their personal well-being. The Washington Post characterized the Pew Center's finding as:

> Offering the gloomiest assessment of economic well-being in close to half a century, a new survey has found that most Americans say they have not made progress over the past 5 years as their incomes have stagnated and they have increasingly borrowed money to finance their lifestyles.

By almost any measure, Americans are struggling more and more than they have at any time in recent memory. Real median family income has fallen this decade as the cost of gasoline, health care, and college tuition, have risen at levels far outstripping any increases in paychecks. To keep pace with these rising costs, Americans have turned to borrowing from credit cards and their homes. But now, as the crisis in our capital markets begins to threaten sources of liquidity for people, such as mortgages, student loans, and other types of lending, the American economy is in a precarious place, to put it mildly. That is why we need new policies and new action to prevent this recession from becoming more severe, and to lay the foundation for our recovery.

The Federal Reserve is engaged in a series of interest rate cuts as they continue to aggressively use monetary policy to try and deal with the recession we are facing. But the Fed is running out of pages in its playbook to address the growing crisis of credit and confidence that has taken hold of our financial markets and threatens to undermine our Nation's economy. Until we more thoroughly address the core issue behind this recession—namely, the problems in the housing market and the foreclosure crisis—we are unlikely, in my opinion, to put our economy back on the right track. Fed Chairman Ben Bernanke understands the seriousness of this problem. In a recent speech on the subject of foreclosures, he said:

> High rates of delinquency in foreclosure can have substantial spillover effects on the housing market, the financial markets and the broader economy. Therefore, doing what we can to avoid preventable foreclosures is not just in the interest of lenders and borrowers. It's in everybody's interest.

I pledge to continue to work every day—as I know my colleagues on the Senate Banking Committee will, as well as those in the House Financial Services Committee under the leadership of Congressman BARNEY FRANK and as I am confident all of us in this Chamber will—to do everything we can to address these issues from the perspective of what we can do as part of the national legislature. That is why I am pleased to say that through these efforts, what we have brought to the floor of the Senate over the last several weeks has enjoyed broad-based bipartisan support. We will now be coming back again in the coming days. The leader of our Chamber, Senator REID, has committed that we will get to this as soon as we possibly can, given the crowded agenda he has to deal with. But we cannot, in my view, allow this Congress to continue to move forward in the coming days without addressing the remainder of these issues.

I cannot promise absolutely that everything we have offered is going to change the world dramatically. But there is one thing I hope it does do and that is restore confidence in the American families, whom the Members of this Congress serve, both Democrats and Republicans, are doing everything in their power to try and prevent foreclosures, restore confidence in the marketplace, and make it possible for the American dream of home ownership not to become the nightmare it has for far too many fellow citizens. It is at the core of everything else we are grappling with. We have seen the problem spill over into credit cards, financial services, commercial lending, student loans, and at the heart of all of this is the foreclosure problem.

That is what every single responsible economist, regardless of political ideology, has concluded. They have said there are steps we can take to make a difference—those steps we have created in a legislative manner to bring to this body. Our hope is we will enjoy the kind of broad-based support we have had in our committee. Anybody who has watched this body knows that when you get a 19-to-2 vote in committee on a matter such of this, you get some indication of the willingness of members to work together to make a difference. Senator SHELBY and I and the other members of the committee will continue to do that. We hope to put on the President's desk by July 4 this comprehensive financial services Banking Committee proposal, dealing with FHA, dealing with the government-sponsored enterprises, dealing with affordable housing, dealing with counseling, dealing with the community development block grant program, as well as tax ideas that we think could help, and the Hope for Homeowners Act, which is critical to try to put the brakes on this foreclosure problem.

I wished to take some time this afternoon to share with my colleagues that this problem grows more serious. It is growing more troublesome, spreading beyond our national borders, in terms of what the subprime market and the purchase of those mortgage-backed securities has done to the markets, not only in this country, but abroad as well.

This is our major responsibility, in my view and I think we have a commitment to address it. Senator SHELBY and I have worked very well together over the past number of weeks to try to fashion this legislative proposal.

I commend BARNEY FRANK, my friend from Massachusetts, who is chairman of the Financial Services Committee in the other body, and other Members for the job they are doing together as well. I hope that in the remaining days, before the July break—hopefully sooner than that—we will be able to present to our colleagues a final proposal bringing together these ideas for their consideration and support as we do our part to try to make a difference in getting this economy and the confidence of the American people back on track.

With that, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. CANTWELL). The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mrs. MURRAY. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

THE ECONOMY

Mrs. MURRAY. Madam President, I rise this evening amid new and very pressing concerns about the future of our economy. Today, millions of Americans are struggling to keep their homes. The price of just about everything, from gas, college, health care,

you name it, is on the rise, and families from coast to coast are wondering how they are going to make ends meet.

Just last week, we saw new and shocking statistics illustrating this crisis. With the price of the American Dream going up, working families seem to be facing new challenges every day. Last week, it was a new report from the Department of Labor. They told us the overall unemployment rate rose from 5 percent to 5.5 percent in May, up from 4.5 percent just 1 year ago. That is 861,000 new unemployed people in 1 month, bringing the total to 8½ million people unemployed in America today in May. Today, there is even more bad news. Gas has, for the first time, hit an average of $4 a gallon.

Madam President, the American people are hurting. While job creation and wage levels are dropping, prices are going up. Everything costs more, but families don't have enough money to spend. The bottom line is the American Dream is slipping through the fingers of too many Americans, and we have to do something about it.

Now, this evening I want to talk specifically about oil and gas prices because this week the Senate is going to have an opportunity to take a step in the right direction and put consumers first. Tomorrow morning, we are going to vote on a Democratic bill that seeks to address the root causes of these high gas prices because we are committed to putting consumers first and to fixing the root causes of high gas prices so these solutions have a real lasting effect.

We want to force big oil to pay its fair share and invest in clean and affordable alternative energy sources. We want to protect consumers from price gougers who rip off Americans and greedy oil traders who manipulate this market. We want to stand up to OPEC and countries colluding to set high oil prices. These basic, commonsense steps will attack the root causes of high gas prices, but they are only the beginning.

Step 2 has to include a long-term strategy to decrease our dependence on oil and promote clean renewable energy. That is why later this week we are going to propose billions of dollars in tax breaks to promote those new energy sources. Our plan seeks to address the high price of gas at the pump now, but it will also help to ensure that energy is affordable for years to come.

With gas prices on the rise, there has been a lot of finger-pointing in recent weeks, but you don't have to look very hard to see who is to blame and who is benefiting from these skyrocketing prices. While our working families have been scrimping, the economic downturn hasn't even registered for big oil. The major oil companies reported record increases in profits last quarter. ConocoPhillips recorded first quarter profits of $4.1 billion, beating their previous record by $600 million, with Shell and BP also reporting huge gains.

The reason is that over the last 7½ years, Republicans have backed an energy policy that does little but give oil companies tax breaks and special favors while our middle-class families pay the price. In the first month of the Bush administration, oil prices averaged $29.50 a barrel. Now, almost 8 years later, the price has more than quadrupled. It is over $130 a barrel this week and pushing toward $140 a barrel. When President Bush first took office, Americans were paying $1.46 a gallon to fill their tanks, and this week gas prices are averaging a whopping $4 a gallon. We have gone from $1.46 to over $4 a gallon in this Bush administration.

What is most disturbing to me and to American families all across the country is how fast these gas prices are rising. Six weeks ago, I came on the floor of the Senate and spoke on the same subject, saying a lot of the same things, and at the same time I was saying how shocking it was to see the national average at $3.60 a gallon. But in just a few weeks prices have gone up another 40 cents a gallon. I am a little scared to do the math and see what increase that is going to translate into by the Fourth of July, just a few weeks away or, even worse, Labor Day. Instead, I think it is time we come together for action in the Senate.

I mentioned the national averages already, but in my home State of Washington and the home State of the Presiding Officer, drivers are paying even more. The average cost of a gallon of gas in Washington State is now $4.22. Yesterday, in my State, I paid $4.29 a gallon. Right now, AAA is saying that gas costs $4.22 in my State. That is the average. That is 44 cents higher than just a month ago, 95 cents higher than a year ago, and 20 cents higher than the national average. And our truckers are being hit really hard. AAA found the average price of a gallon of diesel is $4.89 a gallon in my home State. That is 40 cents higher than a month ago and $1.84 higher than just a year ago.

When I travel around Washington State, gas prices are the first thing people talk to me about, and they have written me countless letters asking for help. Everyone asks what we are going to do about this matter. While they are cutting back their budgets in my home State, they do not see any action in Washington, DC. And I have told them time and again that Democrats want to act, but we need help to do that from our Republican colleagues. They will have a chance to help us do that tomorrow.

But I am concerned that Republicans are more interested, from what I am hearing, in just blocking our progress and whatever we want to do here than actually taking any meaningful action for the people who are hurting so badly at home today. In fact, for the past several days, we have already seen, from what I have heard, a parade of Republican Senators out on the floor complaining about high gas prices, and in many cases blaming Democrats for failing to address this crisis over the past 16 months. They are bringing out their charts and showing the price of gas when Democrats took over Congress and what the price is now, and they ask us all to simply forget the real reason for this crisis—the misguided energy policy that this administration has pursued for years.

But I don't think the American people are going to forget that. They are not going to forget it was this administration that asked oil and gas companies to write their energy plan. The American people aren't going to forget the only real idea coming from the other side is to drill our way out of the problem. And they are not going to forget that this is an administration closer to the oil and gas industry than any in our history. We are not going to forget either, and that is why we are fighting for change. We have already won higher fuel economy standards and new investments in renewable energy sources, but we know we need to do more because Americans know that we cannot rely—we cannot rely—on big oil to solve our energy problems.

Madam President, the energy policy isn't the only area where Republicans have put special interests ahead of our American families. For 7½ years, President Bush and the Republicans in Congress have chosen to stand by while our highways are crumbling, hundreds of thousands of our veterans go homeless every night, and millions of our families struggle to keep a roof over their heads. In the last year, our new Democratic majority has had to fight Republicans and the administration for resources to address everything from veterans health care to the foreclosure crisis our families are facing. I think the legacy of this administration is going to be nothing but red ink and broken promises.

People in my home State of Washington are very worried about the future. They want to be sure their children will have economic security. They want a solution to our energy problems that are going to keep us safe and protect our environment for the long run. And the same is true, I know, across the country. Americans are hurting because of these high gas prices. It doesn't matter whether they are Republican or Democrat, they want help.

I know Republicans and oil companies are not going to give up on the status quo easily here. But Democrats on our side have been fighting for policies that will help us cut those prices, create jobs, and keep our air and water clean and, most importantly, our Nation secure.

We are committed to taking strong action that will stop rewarding these oil companies and start looking out for our American families. We are going to keep up that fight. If my Republican colleagues want their constituents to have help, if they want to take action that will stop this pain at the pump, the solution is very simple: Vote yes with us tomorrow morning so we can move to a bill that will begin to solve this problem.

(Mr. SANDERS assumes the Chair.)

RUNNING IT OUT

Mr. SPECTER. Mr. President, a unique event occurred in a Philadelphia Phillies baseball game last week. The Philadelphia Phillies' shortstop, named Jimmy Rollins, who was the most valuable player in the league last year, hit a looping ball into left field—which was an easy ball to catch—and instead of running it out, he ran at a very leisurely pace down the first baseline. The left fielder on the defensive team moved in and, in a very unusual play, dropped the ball. Instead of Rollins getting to second base, he was left at first base.

The Phillies' manager, Charles Manuel, then immediately benched Jimmy Rollins, the most valuable player in the league. He put him right on the bench because he did not run it out. That took a lot of guts, and manager Charles Manuel has been complimented on that, and I renew the compliment here today. But it is a great lesson, in my opinion, about the way baseball players ought to act and Senators ought to act and everybody ought to act. We all ought to so-called run it out, with that kind of intensity.

I am an avid squash player, and one of the maxims I have developed over the years is that I am never too far ahead to lose and never too far behind to win. The game is always in play, if you run it out. I think it has some applicability to all facets of life in things that all people do, in terms of the intensity of their activity. And I think we need a lot more of that attitude in the Senate and a sense of urgency to deal with the people's business.

This relates directly to the presentation I made a few moments ago on going back to the rules of the Senate on open debate, open amendment offering, and not filling the tree. But it is a great lesson to have that rule stamped indelibly of ''running it out.'' So I congratulate Charlie Manuel. He took out a key player, whose absence could have been decisive even in that game because of Rollins' hitting and fielding ability.

But I think it is a great message and a great symbol for all of us to ''run it out.''

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

CORPORAL CHRISTIAN SCOTT COTNER

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, it is with a heavy heart that I rise today to honor the memory of Marine Cpl Christian Scott Cotner of Waterbury, CT, who died last week while serving our Nation in Iraq. He was 20 years old.

On May 30, 2008, Corporal Cotner's life was tragically cut short as he served his first tour of duty with the Marines in Al-Anbar Province, Iraq. His heroic service is remembered today by a grateful nation.

Friends and loved ones remember Corporal Cotner for his positive attitude, his great sense of humor and his pride in serving the country he loved. It was while in high school, where he volunteered to serve in the honor guards and the ROTC, that Corporal Cotner decided to serve his country, and shortly after graduating he joined the Marines.

All of us in the State of Connecticut and across the United States owe a deep and solemn debt of gratitude to Christian Cotner and to his family and friends for his tremendous service to our country. On behalf of the Senate, I offer my deepest condolences to Christian's parents Graham and Karen and to everyone who knew and loved him.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

HONORING HARP COTE

• Mr. BAUCUS. Mr. President, I have had the privilege of calling Mr. John ''Harp'' Cote of Butte, MT, my friend for nearly 40 years.

In 1973 when I was running for my first congressional seat, not a whole lot of folks knew me from Adam and the only people I was sure would vote for me were my parents. But everywhere I went I heard the same thing: ''Go see Harp.'' So I went.

Harp took his time sizing me up during that first meeting, and I remember vividly the moment when he said those magic words, ''I'm with you.'' I know his support made all the difference. I owe my first political break to Harp Cote, and I don't know if anything I've accomplished since then would have happened if he hadn't been in my corner from the start.

Harp is a pillar in Montana politics and a great American. He's a model citizen and a model father and grandfather. He and his wife, Esther raised 8 children and have 14 grandchildren. From his many successful business ventures to his leadership roles in just about every charitable organization in town—Butte, and indeed Montana, is a better place because of Harp Cote.

Mark Twain once said ''I have found out that there ain't no surer way to find out whether you like people or hate them than to travel with them.'' Well, a couple of years ago, I lead a delegation of Montanans, including Harp, to China and India to see what we could do to create more good-paying jobs and open doors for Montana businesses. After 10 days I can tell you, there is no one I like more than Harp. His familiar smile and easy personality made the trip a great success. And I'm proud of the doors we opened while we were there.

In April, I asked Harp to join me in Washington, DC, to hear Irish Prime Minister Bertie Ahern address a Joint Meeting of Congress. Each Member of Congress was allowed to bring one guest, and I invited Harp because of his unwavering dedication to Montana.

As a Butte native and proud Irish American, Harp's attendance has allowed him to further the Mining city's deep seeded Irish connections and heritage.

Like most folks in Butte, Harp has Irish blood in his veins, but he is a Montanan through and through. He is dedicated, hard working and one heck of a sportsman. His optimism, resilience and pure grit define Montanans and embody the western spirit.

I am lucky to have him by my side as we work to do what is right for Montana, making sure Big Sky country remains the Last Best Place to live, work and raise a family.

In 2006, Harp was on hand to welcome Irish President Mary McAleese to Butte. McAleese was the first Irish leader to visit the Mining city since 1919. During the visit, McAleese told a crowd: ''You can be assured that Butte matters to us as much as Ireland matters to Butte.''

I would like to echo President McAleese's sentiment.

Harp Cote can be assured that he means as much to Butte, and to Montana, as Montana and Butte mean to him.

As for myself, I know when it's all said and done and I look back on my career and my friends, one thing will be certain—one of the greatest honors of my life is the privilege of calling Harp Cote my friend.•

TRIBUTE TO ARTHUR J. SCHUT

• Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I am pleased to recognize the service that Arthur (Art) J. Schut has provided to so many in my home State of Iowa. Art is an Iowan that has dedicated over 30 years of himself to the disenfranchised of our communities. He has worked tirelessly on a local, State, and national level to provide care, counseling, and education for families, the public, and lawmakers to minimize the negative stigma and to secure funding and resources for those with addiction and mental health issues.

Art began his distinguished career nearly 40 years ago as a program director for the Des Moines Metropolitan YMCA working with youth gangs. Since that time, Art has served in a variety of roles working on behalf of those who suffer from the scourge of addiction and other mental illness. Art has served as a member of the University of Iowa faculty and as a clinical and treatment director. During this period in Art's life, he supervised several drug treatment and education programs throughout southeast Iowa, and he provided vital education for future substance abuse professionals through his position with the University of Iowa.

Art will soon be leaving the position that he has dutifully served in for 25 years as President and CEO of the Mid-Eastern Council on Chemical Abuse, MECCA. Throughout his service as the President of MECCA, Art has overseen the administration of operations and programs in three regions throughout