

have to raise taxes on new people to extend it for a few more years. So there are no offsets for the continuation of existing tax policy.

It also includes the Ensign-Cantwell energy tax incentives, an unoffset provision which was approved by the Senate by a vote of 88 to 8. This means an overwhelming majority of this body were willing to pass energy extenders without requiring offsets.

So why, if we have a vote of 88 to 8 to extend energy tax credits for a few years, and we do not have to offset it—how does the other side get the idea that if you had other tax policies that maybe have been on the books for decades and sunset, you have to have offsets for that? I do not understand the inconsistency.

The bottom line is, we need a package that can garner 60 votes in the Senate and get a signature by the President of the United States. So Senate Republicans will seek to proceed to the Senate Republican leadership bill which contains a package of proposals that have bipartisan agreement.

Mr. President, I yield the floor, and since I do not see other Members ready to speak, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, this morning we had two more opportunities to address rising gas prices and do something immediately as the price of gas per gallon goes over \$4 in Steubenville and almost \$4 in Dayton and even higher in some places in my State and in the Presiding Officer's State of New Jersey. We had two more opportunities to address rising gas prices immediately and longer term.

We need to start immediately to invest in renewable energy rather than the other choice of continuing to line the pockets of big oil. We could have helped to begin to create tens of thousands of good-paying, green-collar jobs right here at home. Once again, the Bush administration opposed our efforts and Republican Senators joined the Bush administration and refused to put middle-class families first.

The Consumer-First Energy Act is a good first step in providing immediate relief to drivers in Ohio and across the land who are faced with soaring gasoline and diesel prices.

The other night I had a conference call with 20 truckers. Think about what this has done to them. Many of them have had to sell their trucks. They are simply not able to afford the \$4.50 and up per gallon price of diesel. Oil prices are setting record highs, it seems, every week, and yesterday closed at over \$136 a barrel.

This legislation will help in the short term and allow us to get through and

offer some assistance to motorists to get through the summer driving season. The policies that created this gas price crisis didn't happen overnight. Before we attack the long-term problems, Ohioans need help now to get through the summer to keep trucks running, to keep the economy moving, to keep food prices in check as the cost of energy ripples through the whole economy and causes prices to go up generally.

Cities throughout Ohio are struggling to pay gas bills for the police cars, for EMS, for fire department vehicles, school buses, garbage trucks, and mass transit services.

We need to roll back the massive tax breaks for oil companies which would generate more than \$17 billion to be used for green energy, for renewable energy, and for energy efficiency. We will impose a 25-percent windfall profits tax on companies that fail to invest in increased capacity and renewable energy sources. We will ensure purchases for the Strategic Petroleum Reserve do not resume, especially when we are paying \$120, \$130, \$140, \$150 a barrel to put oil in the reserve. We will provide protection for consumers from price gouging. We call on the Justice Department again to be active and take on the oil companies as they seem to price gouge. We will work to stop market speculation, prevent traders of U.S. crude oil from routing transmissions through offshore markets to evade speculative limits.

Ohioans play by the rules. Americans play by the rules. So should the oil industry. So should the speculator. So should Wall Street.

There is so much we need to do. I call on my friends on that side of the aisle to join with majority Democrats: no more filibusters and let's get to work. Let's do the right thing short term to help American motorists deal with these outrageously high prices, long term to, in fact, after 30 years become energy independent and create the kinds of green jobs a good energy policy can create.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

NATIONAL HUNGER AWARENESS DAY

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I rise today in honor of National Hunger

Awareness Day. On this day, we focus on the more than 35 million people in the United States without enough to eat and reassert our commitment to assist those in need.

Millions of families live each day not knowing if they will have enough to eat. Rather than thinking about what the next meal will be, these parents worry if there will be a next meal. Rather than concentrate on homework, these children are trying not to think about their hunger pangs. In a nation as economically wealthy and agriculturally abundant as ours, this is inexcusable. If children—or adults—are hungry in America, that is a problem for all of us.

This administration has seen the number of people living in poverty rise from 31.6 million in 2000 to 36.5 million in 2006. The number of people living in households facing food insecurity rose from 31 million in 1999 to 35.5 million in 2006. In Illinois, over 158,000 households experienced hunger in 2005. If we include households that have had to struggle to put food on the table or have had to skip meals to make sure the food would last through the week, it adds up to 500,000 households in Illinois living with food insecurity. These are working families who just aren't able to make ends meet.

At a time when millions of middle class Americans are struggling to keep up with higher gas prices, grocery bills, and health care costs, more and more families are looking to Federal programs for assistance. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, applications for food stamps are on the rise at the same time recipients are making more frequent use of food pantries to fill gaps in their grocery needs. Over 26 million people nationwide are dependent on the Federal Food Stamp Program. In April, 594,590 families in Illinois received food stamps, an increase of 5.84 percent from last year and the highest level ever in Illinois, equating to 1.3 million people. And since December, participation in the Women, Infants and Children, or WIC, food assistance program has increased 4 percent to a total of 296,000. But for the millions of people who don't have assistance, everything is different.

We know hunger is a reality in our communities. We see long lines at our food pantries. We have heard from seniors forced to choose between groceries and medication. And children are in our schools who have not had a decent meal since the previous day's school lunch. We see families showing up a day earlier than normal at the food pantry because the monthly pay is not stretching as far it once did. Parents are giving up their own meal to make sure their child has something to eat at night.

In the Nation that prides itself as the land of plenty, we cannot hide the fact that we need to do a better job at making sure everybody has at least enough to eat. The passage of this year's farm bill is a strong first step toward better