

oil shale development could eventually move forward. Instigators of this prohibition want to continue the delay for another year at least.

We have heard claims that the Department is under a frenzied rush to organize a fire sale of development leases. I think it is ridiculous to consider the multiyear oil shale effort as frenzied. The recent efforts started in 2004, and included congressional debate and passage of the 2005 Energy Act, years of planning and years of studies, research and development, and a draft environmental impact statement issued last December. This has not been a frenzied rush and there hasn't been any attempt to organize a fire sale.

When attempting to sensationalize this process, opponents never make it clear we are simply trying to lay the groundwork on how to offer this resource for development. When those who are trying to stop oil shale say we are not ready to move forward with commercial oil shale leasing, and point out that Chevron believes a full-scale commercial leasing program should not proceed, I have to say: True, and completely irrelevant. In that vein, I heard my friend and colleague from Colorado earlier today read excerpts from the BLM draft oil shale regulation report. Quote after quote seemed to suggest that oil shale requires more work, but he did not mention that we aren't even trying to lease yet.

The Secretary of the Interior, a former Member of this body, said this week it would be 2015 before we have a full-scale production. Assistant Secretary Alfred said this week that "commercial development of oil shale will not begin until technologically viable."

So the point is we need to have the rules and regulations to get started. Then we can phase in for the development phase. But right now we have stopped everything dead in its tracks. You can't even move forward because of the current policies of this Congress. The fact is the moratorium is, at this point, stopping the way forward whereby industry, local officials, affected communities, and the world market would assess and prepare for the upcoming development of this massive resource.

We are not proposing a full-scale leasing program for this year or this decade. We are not there yet, and the moratorium is not stopping a full-scale commercial leasing program. The reality is it has stopped an administrative process that will allow us to see how our energy resources can be best utilized.

Before I finish here, I feel I must point out how strange it is that developing regulations for oil shale, a technology we have been exploring for decades, can be labeled as unproven and harmful by many of the same people who supported the absurdly complicated, wholly bureaucratic scheme of cap and trade for greenhouse gas

emissions. This straitjacket on the entire U.S. economy would cost billions and billions of dollars and had no workable examples, antecedents, or precedents. Yet allowing western land managers to move forward with the regulations for how to utilize oil shale is too dangerous?

Let me relate to my friends here on the floor an experience I had in the Interior Committee as the top Republican. I worked with the chairman of the Interior Subcommittee on Appropriations. We had a bill put forward and we worked out our differences. It was ready to go—it was yesterday. Then after our meeting, 4 or 5 hours later, maybe 3 hours later, I was notified that we were not going to have any more appropriations this year.

It was not Republicans who were stopping the process in the committee. It was not the Republicans on the House side who stopped the process over there when they tried to propose amendments in their Appropriations Committee to provide more supply.

This issue needs to come to the floor. We need to have open debate. We need to have an opportunity to produce amendments to support supply. It is not Republicans who are stopping the process. I can tell you from personal experience as an appropriator that it was not Republicans who stopped that process in committee. That was a directive that came down from higher up.

I have to say here that what I see happening on the floor today is nothing more than an attempt to confuse the issue, to confuse the listeners to this debate as to how important supply is to the welfare of this country. I think we need to drill more and we need to use less. That would have been reflected in the Republican package of amendments we talked about.

I encourage the Democratic leadership on the floor to rethink their current policies because I think the American people want to see us move forward. They want to see us put partisanship aside. They want to see something done about what they are paying at the gas pump. They are feeling the pain at \$4 a gallon.

Mr. President, I thank you for granting me an opportunity to spout here on the floor, and I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

MORNING BUSINESS

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

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

CYPRUS

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, on July 20, 1974, Turkish forces invaded Cyprus. The hostilities that followed led to great destruction of life and property. Today, 34 years later, we pause to mourn those who lost their lives.

Sadly, thousands of Turkish troops are still in Cyprus. The island remains divided, with significant distrust between the two sides.

Since 1974, U.N. peacekeeping forces have had to maintain a buffer zone between the Turkish Cypriots in the north and the Greek Cypriots in the south.

But today we have renewed hope for a solution to the Cyprus problem. The new peace process underway there offers the brightest opportunity we have had in many years to reunite the island.

The election of the Greek Cypriot leader Christofias in February helped usher in a new era of opportunity.

Along with his Turkish Cypriot counterpart, Talat, the two sides are making progress to help the United Nations-led negotiations on the future of Cyprus succeed.

I commend both leaders for showing the political will needed to set the stage for a resolution.

The leaders met for the first time on March 21 of this year. Soon after, in a demonstration of goodwill on both sides, they agreed to open a new crossing at Ledra Street in Nicosia.

The leaders are working together to develop a timeline for future negotiations, including another meeting this Friday, on July 25. I urge both parties to demonstrate their commitment to peace negotiations at that time.

I hope the United Nations will continue to play a constructive role in supporting the Greek and Turkish Cypriot leaders as they find a way forward.

Cyprus's goal is to reunify the island as a bicomunal, bizonal federation. Resolution of the Cyprus problem would untie so many other knots, with implications for Europe and beyond. I encourage both sides to use this moment of opportunity, and continue their important work with the United Nations, to achieve this goal.

FOURTH OF JULY

Mr. SPECTER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the article I wrote in response to a request by the Philadelphia Inquirer be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Philadelphia Inquirer, July 4, 2008]

SALUTING AMERICA, A WORK IN PROGRESS

(The Inquirer asked a group of prominent Philadelphians to share their thoughts about July Fourth and what it means. Here are their responses.)

The values and ideals embodied in the Declaration of Independence have made the United States the envy of the world. Thomas

Jefferson's historic call for "decent respect," his assertion that "all men are created equal," form the cornerstones of modern democracies. On this 232d anniversary, we should reflect that these goals are works in progress, and that much more needs to be done here and abroad to attain them.

While the Declaration speaks about all men being created equal, what about women, who didn't get the right to vote until 1919, or slaves who were owned by Washington and Jefferson? What of the phrase separate but equal, from the Supreme Court decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson*, which defined the rights of so many African Americans until 1954?

The United States is challenged today by world opinion that we do not accord "decent respect" to human rights by "enhanced interrogation," denial of due process at Guantanamo, and failure to observe the Geneva Conventions. We make mistakes. We acknowledge them. We correct them.

The work in progress continues. Our judicial system invalidates executive excesses. Our First Amendment rights, due process of law, and separation of powers take time, but they remain the universal gold standard. Our current congressional agenda contains initiatives to expand civil-rights legislation; it is likely to be enacted soon to reverse the Supreme Court decision limiting women's rights to sue for equal employment opportunities.

The work started here in Philadelphia with the Declaration of Independence, leading to our magnificent Constitution.

U.S. SEN. ARLEN SPECTER, (R., Pa.)

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES RULE

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, In 1973, the U.S. Supreme Court carefully crafted the *Roe v. Wade* decision to serve as the balanced foundation on which the reproductive rights of women could rest. Now, in 2008, the Bush administration is making a late-stage power grab based on a foundation of flawed ideology.

A flawed ideology that has the potential to harm millions of American women.

Today, I join many of my colleagues in telling this administration that their ideology has no place in the health care system that American women depend upon.

Last week, it came to my attention that the Department of Health and Human Services is circulating a draft regulation that would jeopardize the reproductive health of women and their fundamental freedom of choice.

Studies show that the use of family planning reduces the probability of a woman having an abortion by 85 percent. But this rule could severely limit a woman's access to these family planning resources by adopting an alarmingly broad definition for the term "abortion."

This definition would allow health care professionals to classify contraceptives like birth control pills, intrauterine devices, IUDs, and emergency contraceptives as "abortions." Based on this classification, health care professions could refuse access for women who need these resources.

As such, this proposal would greatly increase the chances of women encoun-

tering hospital and clinic staff who would prevent them from receiving the information they need to make thoughtful, personal decisions about their health, and may even refuse to write prescriptions for basic birth control.

Fundamentally, this Bush administration proposal undermines everything we have worked to achieve in the last 35 years.

It could endanger access to birth control and upend the federal title X family planning program. In 2006 alone, title X provided family planning services to approximately 5 million women and men through a network of more than 4,400 community-based clinics.

It could endanger State laws and regulations like the one in my State that require equitable coverage for contraceptives under insurance plans that cover other prescriptions.

And it could even endanger a sexual assault or rape victim's access to emergency contraception in a hospital emergency room. An unimaginable thought for the millions of American women every year who turn to emergency contraceptives following a traumatic event in their lives.

Seventy-six percent of voters strongly support doing everything we can to reduce the number of unintended pregnancies through commonsense measures.

This is an assault on a common goal of preventing unintended pregnancies and reducing the number of abortions in this country.

And it is unacceptable.

For the millions of women across this Nation, I strongly urge this administration to reconsider their stance and put reproductive health above partisan politics and ideology.

VETERAN VOTING SUPPORT ACT OF 2008

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, yesterday I introduced Senate bill S. 3308, the Veteran Voting Support Act of 2008, with Senator KERRY, and our cosponsors: Senators REID, OBAMA, SCHUMER, LEAHY, CLINTON, MURRAY and WYDEN.

This is a simple, straightforward bill that shows our veterans the respect that they deserve. They have supported our nation, some at great risk and sacrifice. If the government is providing services, veterans should receive every opportunity to voice their vote.

More than a year ago, I learned of a controversy that emerged in California—where the Department of Veterans Affairs had been fighting since 2004 to bar voter registration services at a VA facility. Over the last 16 months, we have tried to encourage the VA to establish a fair, nonpartisan, standard policy that provides the best available support to veterans served by VA facilities.

The answers I received from the VA have been conflicting. First, the VA stated that they considered the possi-

bility of following the National Voter Registration Act—but then determined it would be too costly. Given the only resources needed is a photocopy of a voter registration form, I find that hard to believe.

Then this year, Senator KERRY and I had exchanged multiple letters on this issue with the VA. The response then changed. VA officials asserted that they believed that providing support or allowing groups would violate the Hatch Act.

The Hatch Act is a prohibition of partisan political activities conducted by Federal employees, on official time. It has not been interpreted to include nonpartisan voter registration by the Office of Special Counsel, which interprets the Hatch Act. Furthermore, the veterans served by VA facilities are generally not Federal employees.

The VA then argued that nonpartisan voter registration services would cause "disruptions to facility operations."

That claim is even more dubious. Unless "Rock the Vote" comes to VA facilities, voter registration drives are about as tame an activity as you can get.

The circumstances in this situation raise great concern. Our country faces issues of war and peace, challenges in foreign relations, and serious questions as to the treatment of our veteran population.

The most recent Census data we have—from a 2005 report—indicates that more than 20 percent of our veterans are not registered to vote. That means that almost 5 million veterans do not have an opportunity to cast their ballots.

The VA runs a massive program to assist our veterans to heal, as well as ensure that they thrive on their return from military service.

This is true whether the veteran is recently discharged for tours in Iraq, or served in World War II.

A recent report characterized the VA's services as including "a 'safety net' for the many lower-income veterans who have come to depend on it."

The question has emerged: Will this make the right kind of impact? Will this cause more veterans to be registered? The VA serves large numbers of veterans—in a variety of care facilities.

For example, the Veterans Health Administration operates 155 medical centers, 135 nursing homes, 717 ambulatory care and clinic facilities; 45 residential rehabilitation treatment programs, and 209 vet centers.

In total, there are 1,261 total facilities; where as many as 5 million veterans who are not registered to vote may use each year. That strikes me as a critical need unmet.

And it is a rational step for the government to make.

The National Voter Registration Act requires at least as much—if not more—from the States. Every State social service agency and motor vehicle agency is required to assist persons who use their agencies.