Environment, Waterkeeper Alliance, Gulf Coast Environmental Defense, Ocean Protection Coalition.

So we have even offered the Republicans exactly what they claim to want—votes on drilling, oil shale, and nuclear power—and they have said no to this point. Hopefully, they will say yes. They have said no. So if the American people are wondering why Congress has not passed legislation on gas prices, it is because Republicans refuse to take yes for an answer.

Democrats will continue to propose ideas to address the energy crisis. Unlike our Republican colleagues, we are offering solutions. Democrats await the day that Republicans tire of endlessly talking about the energy crisis and decide it is time to join us in actually getting something done. Any Republican effort to confuse the debate on this package of bills with the debate over energy is disingenuous.

So I hope we will see this unfortunate obstruction end the way the lands package ended in April: After a delay and Republican political gamesmanship and unnecessary headaches, the legislation passed 91 to 4.

Everyone should understand our legislative days are very limited. Last week, the Republicans killed for the year LIHEAP legislation. I don't know what we are going to do to help those senior citizens, disabled, and low-income people come these cold winter months. We also have these 34 bills packaged together today that we will not be able to pass. We will have to wait until we get a new Congress and a new President. It would be wrong and unconscionable to defer the hope of many people—the hope of Kathie Barrett from Sparks, NV, and all of those who suffer from Lou Gehrig's disease—any longer. For them—for the victims of unresolved civil rights-era crimes, for homeless children, for victims of child pornography, and for the 30 other meritorious bills sponsored by Democrats and Republicans—it is time to put aside the delay, put aside the politics, put aside the obstruction, and pass the Advancing America's Priorities Act into law.

I say again, those Senators who walk down here and vote no on these proposals, they are going to have to answer to their constituents, to voters. How do you justify voting against these measures?

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

DEALING WITH HIGH GAS PRICES

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I am heartened by the consent agreement the majority leader was about to offer a while ago, and I think it indicates that we are finally getting serious here about doing something significant about the price of gas at the pump. I appreciate the spirit in which that was offered. As I indicated, I will be getting back to him later this afternoon.

But make no mistake about what has been going on. The press has understood it. There has been a lot of bobbing and weaving, cancellations of Appropriations Committee meetings in order to avoid votes on offshore drilling or getting rid of the oil shale moratorium which was put in place just last year by the new majority. Great efforts have been underway, to the point where even the Washington Post a few days ago was calling on the Speaker of the House of Representatives—the Washington Post was calling on the Speaker of the House of Representatives—to allow votes on drilling.

There is no denying there has been a great effort to try to kick this can down the road and not deal with it. For example, the senior Senator from New York, who is the campaign chairman, if you will, for the Democratic Senate candidates, was quoted in the Post just this weekend as saying we should just wait until there is a new President before dealing with this issue; in other words, we should put it off for 6 months. In the meantime, consumers continue to pay these extraordinarily high prices at the pump while the chairman of the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee recommends we just wait to deal with it until, he hopes, he has a better political lineup with which to deal. Look, we don't need to wait 6 months. We need to do it this week—this week.

The New York Times—I rarely cite the New York Times—in an editorial just this morning indicated that even though they don't share my view and the view of the majority of my Members who think increased domestic production will have a positive impact on the price of gas at the pump—while they don't share that view, this is what they had to say about the speculation bill which our good friends on the other side would like to pass essentially with nothing added to it—in other words, a speculation-only bill. The New York Times this morning on the speculation-only bill:

> Democrats' misbegotten plan to curb speculation and oil futures.

This is the New York Times, not the Wall Street Journal.

They go on:

> Democrats should know that financial speculation is not what's driving oil prices, and that curbing futures trading could hamper the ability of companies like airlines and oil refineries to manage their risks by locking in the price of oil. Putting them together is compounding one bad idea with another.

Again, this is the New York Times, not the Wall Street Journal.

The Times goes on:

> A report by government agencies—including the CFTC, the Federal Reserve, the Treasury and Energy Departments—found that speculative trades in oil contracts had little to no effect on the rise of prices over the last five years.

Again, this is not the Wall Street Journal and not Investors Business Daily. This is the New York Times about the underlying bill which our good friends on the other side of the aisle had been hoping to pass without any additional amendments.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the article be printed in the RECORD.

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

[From the New York Times, July 28, 2008]

GAS PRICE FOLLIES

Add high energy prices to a sagging economy in an election year and politicians will inevitably come up with bad policies, like converting the corn crop into ethanol or John McCain's proposal to suspend the federal gas tax—neither will provide real relief at the pump while both are guaranteed to create other problems.

The good news is that Congress failed last week to cut a deal on two more bad ideas: Republicans' misguided push for offshore drilling and Democrats' misbegotten plan to curb speculation in oil futures.

Republicans should know that allowing more offshore drilling might marginally trim oil prices—in about a decade—while sacrificing important environmental protections. Democrats should know that financial speculation is not what's driving oil prices, and that curbing futures trading could hamper the ability of companies like airlines and oil refineries to manage their risks by locking in the price of oil. Putting them together is compounding one bad idea with another.

Of course, there is plenty of evidence that markets can be manipulated by fraudulent speculation—recall the Enron mess. Yet all evidence suggests that speculation has little to do with the rising price of crude. From rice to iron, commodity prices are all rising, even without much financial speculation, due to a variety of factors including a weak dollar and growing demand from China and India.

A report by government agencies—including the Commodity Futures Trading Commission, the Federal Reserve and the Treasury and Energy Departments—found that speculative trades in oil contracts had little to no effect on the rise in prices over the last five years.

Oil futures are financial contracts for future delivery of oil. Their price has been responding to the same factors: growing world demand in the face of stagnant supply and the expectation that this dynamic will continue.

Like some of the other ''cures,'' offering to solve Americans' energy woes by drilling or slapping Wall Street around merely feeds the myth that there is a quick and easy solution out there. There isn't. Expensive oil is likely here to stay. Americans must burn less oil and find alternative sources of energy that do far less damage to the environment.

Mr. McCONNELL. Hopefully, Mr. President, we will be able to construct later this afternoon a process by which we can go forward and consider amendments that would really have an impact on the problem. I look forward to getting back to the majority leader later in the afternoon on the prospects of entering into a consent agreement that will allow us to consider all of these important items—not 6 months from now but this week.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, when the bill is laid down, would the Chair announce how much time there is for Senator MCCONNELL and me to divide?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Chair will do so.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

ADVANCING AMERICA'S PRIORITIES ACT—MOTION TO PROCEED

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the motion to proceed to S. 3297, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar 894, S. 3297, the Advancing America's Priorities Act.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the time until 4 p.m. shall be equally divided between the two leaders or their designees.

Mr. REID. So we each have approximately 15 minutes?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator is correct.

Mr. REID. I designate that Senator DURBIN take 7½ minutes and Senator BOXER take 7½ minutes.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Who yields time?

Mr. DOMENICI. Mr. President, I wish to just ask a question.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from New Mexico.

Mr. DOMENICI. While my leader, the Republican leader, is here on the floor, I had thought that I was going to speak for 5 minutes following you, but I understand that our side will only have 15 minutes.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I would say to my friend from New Mexico, I have spoken, so whatever time remains on this side——

Mr. DOMENICI. You want him to have? That is fine with me. I will speak afterward.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, how much time remains on this side?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. There is 15½ minutes.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, the time on our side will be used by the Senator from Oklahoma.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Who yields time?

The Senator from California is recognized.

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I understand the time is divided between myself and Senator DURBIN. How much time do I have?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator has 7½ minutes.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that following Senator BOXER, we go to Senator COBURN and then to Senator DURBIN.

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

Mr. COBURN. Reserving the right to object, if the majority leader would agree, I wish us to have a back and forth debate. I would let Senator DURBIN have the last word, if that is OK with the majority leader.

Mr. REID. I don't understand that. We don't have that much time.

Mr. COBURN. I suggest that the last 2 minutes of debate be controlled by Senator DURBIN, and the rest be divided equally among us, as we have it divided now.

Mr. REID. That is fine with me, Mr. President.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from California is recognized.

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I wish to spend the 7 minutes talking about four bills that are in this package from the Environment and Public Words Committee, all of which have broad bipartisan support, and I want to correct the RECORD on some of the things Senator COBURN stated about one of the bills.

The bills are the Captive Primate Safety Act, the Beach Protection Act, the Chesapeake Bay Gateway Act continuing authorization, and the Appalachian Regional Development Act amendment. These bills are all bipartisan and they represent a diverse background of support in the country and in the Senate.

The Appalachian Regional Development Act amendment reauthorizes and improves the Appalachian Regional Development Act of 1965. The ARDA is a Federal-State partnership that works with the people of Appalachia toward self-sustaining economic development and to improve the quality of life in all, or portions, of 13 States—Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, Maryland, Mississippi, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia. The commission's primary function is to support economic development in the Appalachian area, critical infrastructure to provide a climate for business, growth, and industry that will create jobs in the regions that need that help. The bill strengthens existing law and provides better assistance to counties in the region that are most at risk of becoming economically distressed. The bipartisan support for this bill is very strong. It includes Senators VOINOVICH, ALEXANDER, BROWN, BURR, BYRD, CARDIN, CLINTON, COCHRAN, DOLE, GRAHAM, MCCONNELL, MIKULSKI, ROCKEFELLER, SCHUMER, SESSIONS, SHELBY, SPECTER, and WARNER. We certainly hope this package passes because this area of the Nation requires this commission to continue its work.

Next, the Beach Protection Act. We spent a lot of time talking about offshore oil drilling. Let the RECORD show that everyone in the Senate supports offshore oil drilling. The difference between Democrats and Republicans is that they want to open pristine areas off the coast, where we protect a $70 billion coastal economy, while the oil companies hold leases to 68 million acres and they are not drilling. So we all say drill now to these oil companies. But as far as opening our pristine coast and jeopardizing the coastal economy, that doesn't make much sense. What will happen is you will give the oil companies more assets on their balance sheet, and they are still not drilling the acres they have, the 68 million acres, plus they have access to another 28 million acres in the Alaska Naval Reserve. I believe they have developed 3 million of those acres. It has about three times as much oil as ANWR. This is so much bluster and there is nothing to it—except the oil companies' power to be shown on the floor of the Senate by my friends, the Republicans.

Regardless of those differences, we want to protect our beaches. We don't want to have our kids swimming in polluted water. They want to enjoy the clean, safe, healthy, pristine beaches. The Beach Act will do that. Essentially, there are improvements that are greatly needed so that the waters are tested and people know it is safe to swim. The bipartisan support for this bill includes Senators LAUTENBERG, VOINOVICH, WARNER, BROWN, CARDIN, CLINTON, DURBIN, KERRY, KLOBUCHAR, MENENDEZ, SCHUMER, and STABENOW.

The Chesapeake Bay Gateway Act will help to connect the public with the Chesapeake Bay and its rivers to 150 exceptional parks, wildlife refuges, and historic trails. It is one of America's and the world's most important estuaries. The American people put a great amount of resources into protecting and restoring this great water body, and now this bill will help the public understand, visit, and enjoy this spectacular bay. I applaud the bipartisan work that went into this bill. The work was done by Senators SPECTER, BIDEN, CARPER, and CASEY, and the lead on this was taken by the Senators from Maryland and the Senators from Virginia.

The last one I will talk about is Captive Primate Safety Act, and why this bill will help address a serious issue. More than 132 people, including 29 children, have been injured by nonhuman primates, and the fact is they should not be pets. One of the statements I read that Senator COBURN made is that this is going to stop the ability of scientists to use these nonhuman primates in science. That is false. That is exempted from this. He also made reference to the fact that we ought to ban them from coming into the country. The fact is that, since 1975, they have been banned from coming into the country. But they are in the country and the fact is there is interstate trade here. It is a real problem.

The CDC has said they have serious concerns about the transmission of communicable diseases here, and they stated:

These animal species have been linked to transmission of certain diseases to humans, and individuals involved in transporting animals are especially at risk for infection.