It is also part of our custom to thank our staffs and Members. For some this sounds routine, but it never should be.

My thanks go to the ranking member, Senator MCCAIN. His leadership helped forge this bill through the committee.

I next acknowledge our former chairman particularly, Senator WARNER, because of everything he did to make this bill possible and to get to the point where we are today. Working within arm's reach of JOHN WARNER for the past 29 years has truly been one of the highlights, if not the highlight, of my Senate career. He is truly a good friend, not just to me and my wife Barbara but also to this institution and to the Nation. He has stood watch over national defense for almost three decades, with unwavering dedication. Before that, he stood watch because of his being Secretary of the Navy. Because of his being in the Navy, the Marines, he is truly a profile in courage. Next year, we promise we will pick up his banner. We will carry on in his honor, just as he has always done for the Nation.

I thank our majority leader, Senator REID, and his floor staff and give them a special word of thanks for giving us the time to get this bill to the Senate and through the Senate.

To our committee members, thanks for your great work on a bipartisan basis the entire year. This bill could not have gotten to this point, with all of our problems, all the bumps in the road—and there are many that lie ahead—but we could not have gotten to this point without the bipartisan support of the Armed Services Committee and our staff.

We have one-quarter of the Senate on our committee. We have worked together in committee, and our differences on this bill did not divide us, as we reported the bill by unanimous vote.

To Charlie Armstrong in the Office of the Senate Legislative Counsel, thank you for drafting about 300 amendments. We wish more of them could have been adopted, but, nonetheless, they had to be drafted, and we had to do what we do, which is to do everything we can to get Members' amendments passed.

To our committee staff members, thank you. That is about all we can say. You have earned our thanks and the recognition of the Senate for the time and dedication you have shown on this legislation. Rick DeBobes, who is our staff director, and Mike Kostiw, who is our Republican staff director, and their talented staffs worked amazingly hard.

We have a lot of work ahead of us to get to the point where we can pass a bill in the next couple of weeks. We have a huge amount of work. I hate to tell them that, but they know it. They also know, I hope, how appreciated they are. They work 24/7, and they work magic, and they always seem to believe that sleep is overrated. It is not. I hope they can get some in the next few days. So thank you to our staff. They deserve tremendous recognition for their professionalism. As an expression of the gratitude of the members of our committee, I ask unanimous consent that the names of the members of our staff be printed in the RECORD.

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

STAFF OF THE COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

Richard D. DeBobes, Staff Director; Michael V. Kostiw, Republican Staff Director; June M. Borawski, Printing and Documents Clerk; Leah C. Brewer, Nominations and Hearings Clerk; Joseph M. Bryan, Professional Staff Member; William M. Caniano, Professional Staff Member; Jonathan D. Clark, Counsel; Ilona R. Cohen, Counsel; David G. Collins, Research Assistant; Christine E. Cowart, Chief Clerk; Madelyn R. Creedon, Counsel; Kevin A. Cronin, Staff Assistant; Marie F. Dickinson, Administrative Assistant for the Minority; Gabriella Eisen, Counsel; Richard W. Fieldhouse, Professional Staff Member; Creighton Greene, Professional Staff Member; Gary J. Howard, Systems Administrator; Paul C. Hutton IV, Professional Staff Member; Mark R. Jacobson, Professional Staff Member; Gregory T. Kiley, Professional Staff Member; Jessica L. Kingston, Staff Assistant; Michael J. Kuiken, Professional Staff Member; Mary J. Kyle, Legislative Clerk.

Christine G. Lang, Receptionist; Gerald J. Leeling, Counsel; Peter K. Levine, General Counsel; Thomas K. McConnell, Professional Staff Member; Michael J. McCord, Professional Staff Member; William G. P. Monahan, Counsel; David M. Morriss, Minority Counsel; Lucian L. Niemeyer, Professional Staff Member; Michael J. Noblet, Professional Staff Member; Ali Z. Pasha, Staff Assistant; Christopher J. Paul, Professional Staff Member; Cindy Pearson, Assistant Chief Clerk and Security Manager; John H. Quirk V, Security Clerk; Lynn F. Rusten, Professional Staff Member; Brian F. Sebold, Staff Assistant; Arun A. Seraphin, Professional Staff Member; Travis E. Smith, Special Assistant; Robert M. Soofer, Professional Staff Member; William K. Sutey, Professional Staff Member; Diana G. Tabler, Professional Staff Member; Mary Louise Wagner, Professional Staff Member; Richard F. Walsh, Minority Counsel; Breon N. Wells, Staff Assistant.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

## ADVANCING AMERICA'S PRIORITIES ACT—MOTION TO PROCEED

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I move to proceed to Calendar No. 894, S. 3297, and I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, hereby move to bring to a close debate on the motion to proceed to Calendar No. 894, S. 3297, the Advancing America's Priorities Act.

Harry Reid, Max Baucus, Sherrod Brown, Thomas R. Carper, Robert Menendez, Sheldon Whitehouse, Richard Durbin, Ron Wyden, Jon Tester, Patrick J. Leahy, Charles E. Schumer, Dianne Feinstein, Claire McCaskill, Ken Salazar, Benjamin L. Cardin, Daniel K. Inouye, Christopher J. Dodd.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I now withdraw that motion.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The motion is withdrawn.

## RENEWABLE ENERGY AND JOB CREATION ACT OF 2008—MOTION TO PROCEED

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I move to proceed to Calendar No. 767, H.R. 6049, and I believe there is a cloture motion at the desk that the clerk will report.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, hereby move to bring to a close debate on the motion to proceed to Calendar No. 767, H.R. 6049, the Renewable Energy and Job Creation Act of 2008.

Harry Reid, Max Baucus, Sherrod Brown, Thomas R. Carper, Robert Menendez, Sheldon Whitehouse, Richard Durbin, Ron Wyden, Jon Tester, Robert P. Casey, Jr., Patrick J. Leahy, Charles E. Schumer, Dianne Feinstein, Claire McCaskill, Ken Salazar, Benjamin L. Cardin, Daniel K. Inouye, Christopher J. Dodd.

## MORNING BUSINESS

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

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

Mr. REID. 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. 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.

## THE ECONOMY

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, since I took office last year, I have held more than 115 roundtables in nearly all of Ohio's 88 counties—from Ashtabula to Cincinnati, from Bryan the Gallipolis—as I bring together 15 or 20 people from a community and listen to them talk about their hopes and their dreams and what we can do together to make Ohio a better place and to move this country

forward. But more than anything else, as I listen to people in communities such as Bucyrus and Mansfield and Wauseon, I hear about widespread economic anxiety and a betrayed middle class.

Ohioans have understood that for years, especially in the first 6 years of the Bush administration, this government allowed the drug companies to write the Medicare laws, allowed the oil industry to dictate energy policy, had allowed Wall Street to push through job-killing trade agreements through the House and the Senate.

They feel the middle class was betrayed by our Government. I hear from Ohioans worried about record high gas prices, worried about food prices, worried about good-paying jobs continuing to move overseas, worried about health insurance that costs more and covers less.

Some of these worries can be blamed in part on our current recession, but that misses the larger point. For the last 7 years, the labor force workers have worked harder and harder, leading to huge gains in productivity. The productivity of workers in our economy has gone up like this. Yet CEOs' salaries and bonuses went through the roof while middle class Americans' wages stagnated and more families slipped below the poverty line. Again, productivity has gone up like this, meaning workers are creating more wealth for their employers, but wages have been stagnant for 80 or 90 percent of the workforce.

In other words, as workers have produced more, as workers have been more productive, as workers have made more money for their bosses, if you will, they simply have not shared in the wealth they created. They are not getting raises. They are paying more for health insurance, they are seeing their pensions begin to disintegrate, as they are making more and more money for their employer.

At the same time, while China manipulated its currency and ignored labor and environmental standards, corporations took the bait and abandoned American communities. While hedge fund managers irresponsibly leveraged real estate holdings, millions of Americans lost their homes to foreclosures. In other words, while Wall Street enjoyed an inflated stock market and a so-called economic expansion, most Americans actually became worse off.

In the last few weeks, we know things have gotten worse. The Government has been forced to seize Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. Lehman Brothers, an institution on Wall Street for 150 years, filed for bankruptcy on Monday. It is also reported that for the 8th straight month, our Nation has lost jobs. The national unemployment rate is now 6.1 percent—a 5-year high. We know what happened to AIG today.

Mr. President, 9.4 million Americans are officially unemployed, 2.2 million more than a year ago—tens of thousands in my State of Ohio. In fact, you have to go back more than 15 years, to December 1992, to find a time when more Americans were forced to rely on the Government for their income.

In my State of Ohio, middle class workers are facing even more bad news. DHL, the cargo express carrier, has announced that more than 8,000 workers at Wilmington Air Park, the largest privately owned airport in the United States, will lose their jobs. Norwalk Furniture halted operations earlier this month, sending 500 employees home. General Motors is closing its plant in Moraine, a decision that will cost 1,200 Ohioans their livelihoods.

Do you know what. The worst part is this: The administration is proud of this record. They are proud of the free trade agreements that have protected corporate interests, that have eliminated good-paying manufacturing jobs, that have brought unsafe food, drugs, and toys into American homes. They are proud of these free trade agreements, and they want more of them.

They are proud of the tax cuts that went overwhelmingly to the wealthy and ignored the plight of the middle class. We know what that has meant. It has meant budget deficits as far as the eye can see. It has meant more money for the wealthiest people in this society, paid for by the middle class, and paid for by our children and our grandchildren of the future. Yet they are proud of these tax cuts that go overwhelmingly to the rich. The administration is proud of the financial deregulation that allowed greed on Wall Street to run amok.

These days, Republicans respond to critics by saying: Things aren't so bad. JOHN MCCAIN, our colleague from Arizona, said: The foundations of the economy are strong. Former Senator Phil Gramm, the mentor of Senator MCCAIN, the chief economic adviser to Senator MCCAIN, said: The recession is in our heads. It is a mental recession, he said.

I guess if you think things are going well, you advocate for more of the same, which is why Republicans continue to push for more tax cuts for corporations that outsource jobs overseas, pushing more energy policies that enrich oil companies and reinforce our dependence on foreign oil, pushing for more subsidies for private HMOs participating in Medicare, pushing more antiunion policies that undercut workers' power to bargain collectively and join the middle class, pushing for more hypocrisy that says we can afford to spend $10 billion a month in Iraq; we just cannot find the money to help uninsured children in Columbus or Zanesville or Dayton or Chillicothe or Springfield or Xenia.

In fact, since we had our last vote, about an hour ago, we have spent some $19 million on the war in Iraq. In the last hour, we have spent about $19 million on the war in Iraq. Think what that could do for health care, for education, for rebuilding our infrastructure in Lima and in Portsmouth and in Chillicothe. Perhaps most troubling of all, Republicans are still, unbelievably enough, pushing for the privatization of Social Security. Can my colleagues imagine—Senator SANDERS and I were talking about this a moment ago—if 3 years ago, when George Bush, DICK CHENEY, and JOHN MCCAIN were fighting to privatize Social Security, and people in this institution, including Leader REID and Senator SANDERS, when he was in the House of Representatives, and many of us fought against that privatization of Social Security—can my colleagues imagine if that had passed in early 2005? If the President and Senator MCCAIN had had their way on the privatization of Social Security, can my colleagues imagine what this week would look like? Can my colleagues imagine, if 50 million retired Americans had had their entire life savings locked up in the stock market—can my colleagues imagine 50 million Americans opening their Social Security records, their mailing they get from Social Security and looking at what happened to their private accounts; money they had put in the stock market because George Bush and JOHN MCCAIN insisted on this risky scheme to privatize Social Security? Can my colleagues imagine what that would do to seniors in our society? Can my colleagues imagine what that would do to their future—if you are 65 and already on Social Security, if you are 50 and your mother is on Social Security, if you are about to join the ranks of Social Security? Can my colleagues imagine what one would think with food prices going up, with gas prices going up and all of a sudden, because you have these John McCain-George Bush privatized Social Security accounts, can my colleagues imagine what would be happening to their lives this week and the weeks ahead?

Despite 7 years of this tired thinking and of the wrong-headed economic policies that betray our middle class, American workers are standing strong and continuing to fight for a better future.

At my roundtables—as I mentioned, I have done some 1,500 roundtables in most of Ohio's 88 counties, in Cambridge and in Steubenville and in Defiance and in Miami County, all over—I still hear the hope and determination that defines this great Nation. I hear from community leaders. I hear from entrepreneurs with exciting plans for the future. What is happening with the incubator in Youngstown? What is happening with small business in Delaware? I hear about what people in Mansfield, my hometown, are doing to fight back. I hear from small business owners who are continuing to do the right thing. I hear from their loyal workers who take pride in their work and are valued by their employers. They tell us we need a government that similarly values loyalty and work ethic.

For too long, those in power have simply turned their back on American workers. They have ignored their needs and their dreams—the dreams of the middle class. They have instead catered to the wealthiest Americans. We know that a strong middle class builds a prosperous society and is the engine that makes this country go. But it doesn't have to be the way we have seen in the last few years where this Government in Washington—that allowed the drug companies to write the Medicare law; that allowed the oil industry to write energy policy; that allows Wall Street to push through job-killing trade agreements—all of this betrayal of the middle class from George Bush to DICK CHENEY to JOHN MCCAIN, to far too many of my colleagues in this body and down the hall in the House of Representatives—people have had enough of this betrayal of the middle class. It doesn't have to be that way. The sooner we change direction, the sooner our economic woes will be behind us.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont is recognized.

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to address the Senate.

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

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, let me begin by concurring with Senator BROWN. He raised a very important issue, and that is: In the midst of a major economic crisis, when people today—especially senior citizens on fixed incomes—are wondering about how they are going to heat their homes, how they are going to purchase the food they need—I wonder about 3 years ago, had we listened to President Bush, if we had listened to JOHN MCCAIN, if we had listened to the Republican leadership and we had privatized Social Security—can one begin to imagine the anxiety that would be existing all over this country in terms of senior citizens wondering what kind of retirement they would have, what kind of funding would be there for their remaining years? So thank goodness we did not follow the advice of President Bush and JOHN MCCAIN and the Republican leadership; thank goodness we kept Social Security strong.

Yesterday I came to the floor to discuss the interconnection of the two great crises that are currently facing our country. The first, of course, is the financial crisis—the collapse of major Wall Street firms—and secondly is the very serious problem of high and volatile energy prices, whether it is $3.70 for a gallon of gas to put in your car, or whether it is very high oil prices this coming winter to heat your home. Both of these problems clearly are having a major impact on middle-income families from one end of this country to the other.

In terms of the financial crisis, the American people are finding it harder and harder to get a mortgage or a home equity line of credit. They are seeing the equity in their homes going down, and they are seeing the values of their savings, including their 401(k) savings, plummeting. What anxiety is existing all over this country. People have put money into their 401(k), the stock market is going down rapidly, and people are wondering what is going to take place for their economic future.

In terms of the energy crisis, the American people have been forced to pay tens of billions of dollars more in inflated energy prices because of the outrageous price levels caused by speculation occurring in unregulated energy markets. We have heard testimony from energy economists who are telling us that between 25 percent to 50 percent of the cost of a barrel of oil today has nothing to do with supply and demand, it has nothing to do with marketplace fundamentals; it has to do with speculation on the part of financial institutions that are driving oil prices higher, and now, by the way, with that money coming out of oil futures, driving prices down, creating a lot of volatility.

I laid out yesterday the connection between those two crises. Both of these crises are tied to the same extreme economic ideology—an ideology which says the Government should play no role—or a minimum role—in protecting consumers; that we should put all of our trust in the honesty and the integrity of the heads of large multinational corporations.

I should mention that both of these crises are also tied to the work of one former Member of the U.S. Senate, and that is the former chairman of the Senate Banking Committee, Phil Gramm of Texas. To a significant degree, a lot of what we are experiencing today is related to the disastrous changes to Federal law that deregulated both the energy industry and the financial industry, and that effort was led by former Senator Gramm.

To recap, as chairman of the Senate Banking Committee in 1999, then-Senator Phil Gramm, spearheaded legislation that bears his name, and that is the so-called Gramm-Leach-Bliley bill that broke down critical regulatory safeguards that the Government put in place after the Great Depression to prevent exactly what we are experiencing today. Having laid the groundwork for our crisis in the financial sector, the very next year, amazingly enough, Senator Gramm is credited with slipping legislation into a largely unrelated bill that deregulated the electronic energy market. Shockingly, when he slipped this measure into the law, a measure we now know as the Enron loophole, Senator Gramm's wife, Wendy Gramm, had recently been on the board of directors of—you guessed it—the Enron Corporation.

This deregulation of the energy markets has allowed speculators to drive up the price of a barrel of oil to as high as $147 and, as I mentioned earlier, there are many economists who believe the volatility and the high price of oil today is not supply and demand primarily, but it is because of speculation on the part of financial institutions and hedge funds.

Now, as bad as things were yesterday, last night they got even worse. Last night, the Bush administration nationalized the world's largest insurance company: AIG. The Bush administration claimed it had to put $85 billion of taxpayer money at risk because AIG's collapse would have brought down perhaps our entire economy—the entire economy of this country—and had a major impact on the entire world's economy. Let me ask the same question about AIG today that I asked yesterday about the energy and financial crises this country is facing, and that is: Is this bad luck? Why is this happening? We need to understand that, because the risks are enormous and the amount of money we are dealing with—trillions and trillions and trillions of dollars—is literally beyond comprehension. I think very few people can understand the scope and the magnitude of what we are dealing with.

Well, it turns out the AIG situation is closely tied to the same rightwing economic ideology that has been pushing us toward economic disaster, and the responsibility for AIG's near collapse lies, again, with that same philosophy which has been led by former Senator Phil Gramm.

As a very recent online article from Time magazine explains, AIG's traditional insurance business seems to be doing well in what they have been doing for many years. They are, in fact, making money. But what AIG got involved in was more than the traditional insurance business. They got involved in risky derivative schemes that about three people in the world understand called credit default swaps, or CDS's that allow big companies to guarantee each other's risky lending practices. This is extremely complicated stuff—a long way away from where we were 10 or 15 years ago.

Now in order to give the American people a full understanding of the risks posed by these unregulated credit default swaps—unregulated credit default swaps—I wish to read a short September 15 article by Professor Peter Cohen, a graduate of the Wharton School, that deals with the full scope of the problem we face and the role that Senator Gramm had in its creation. I apologize to anybody who is listening. What is following is technical, it is a bit boring, but when we are dealing with trillions of dollars, I think it is important that we try to understand this. This is what Professor Cohen writes:

> Lurking in the background of this weekend's collapse of two of Wall Street's biggest names is a $62 trillion segment of the $450 trillion market for derivatives that grew huge thanks to John McCain's chief economic advisor, Phil ''Americans are Whiners'' Gramm.

Let me just go through these numbers again, because these numbers are so huge. When the Presiding Officer and I represent our State, we fight for a few million dollars here and a few million dollars there, and that makes a lot of difference to the people of Colorado or the people of Vermont. What we are dealing with is so incomprehensible: It is a $62 trillion segment of the $450 trillion market for derivatives. Who can even understand what that means? A $450 trillion market, what does that mean?

Now, all of this occurred, all of this deregulated activity, of which the Government plays no role, took place because in December of 2000, Senator Gramm snuck in—snuck in—a 262-page amendment. That is what goes on around here. We can sneak in 262-page amendments to a government reauthorization bill that created what is now the $62 trillion market for credit default swaps, or CDS's.

Continuing to quote:

I realize it is painful to read about yet another Wall Street acronym, but this is important because it will help us understand why the global financial markets are collapsing. CDSs are like insurance policies for bondholders. In exchange for a premium, the bondholders get insurance in case the bondholder can't pay. . . . In the case of the 1.4 trillion dollars' worth of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac bonds, the Government's nationalization last Sunday triggered the CDSs on those bonds. The people who received the CDS premiums are now obligated to deliver those bonds to the ones who paid the premiums.

Professor Cohen continues:

Gramm's 262-page amendment, dubbed ''The Commodity Futures Modernization Act''—

We have heard that term—

''The Commodity Futures Modernization Act,'' according to the Texas Observer, freed financial institutions from oversight of their CDS transactions.

That is the important thing, they became deregulated. The Government no longer was able to see what was going on.

''Prior to its passage, they say, banks underwrote mortgages and were responsible for the risks involved.''

You went to a bank, you got a mortgage, the bank took responsibility, they lost money, they made money, that was the transaction.

''Now, through the use of CDSs—which in theory insure the banks against bad debts—those risks are passed along to insurance companies and other investors,'' wrote the Texas Observer.

Still, in Professor Cohen's article:

How does this relate to Lehman's bankruptcy? ''CDSs were a key factor in encouraging lenders to feel they could make loans without knowing the risks or whether the loan would be paid back.''

When you and I were younger, Mr. President, banks knew the people to whom they made loans. They didn't give a loan to somebody they knew would not be able to pay it back. But that is no longer the case.

''The Commodity Futures Modernization Act freed them of Federal oversight . . . '' And it was due to these CDSs that Wall Street held an emergency session yesterday to try to minimize the damage of Lehman's CDSs and other derivatives. Unfortunately, the session did not produce much, thanks to the built-in lack of knowledge of the risks in these transactions that Gramm's legislation ensured. You are going to be reading more and more about CDSs over the months ahead.

Professor Cohen continues:

It will become as familiar as the phrase subprime mortgage—

Which, unfortunately, many of us now are familiar with—

was in the year 2007. Unfortunately—

Get this, this is quite amazing—

there were ''only'' $1.3 trillion worth of subprime mortgages and the CDS market is 48 times bigger than that.

Forty-eight times bigger than the subprime market—

and more than four times bigger than the U.S. GDP. And since nobody has ever had to deal with this volume of CDS unwindings, it is impossible to calculate how much they will cost.

In other words, what has happened as a result of Senator Gramm's legislation is, unbelievable amounts of money have been traded, accumulated without anybody really knowing what is going on. Now we are left trying to pick up the remains of those problems.

Professor Cohen's article is compelling because it tells us how huge this crisis is and why we have every reason to fear that AIG may well be just the first of many companies involved in risky investments that the American people will have to bail out.

The time for hand wringing is over. This Congress needs to put an end to the radical deregulation that was pushed by Senator Phil Gramm and many other Republicans, and there were Democrats who went along with that as well. We need to put the safety walls back up in the financial services sector. We need to regulate the electronic energy markets. We need to end the use of unregulated credit default swaps. In other words, what we need to do once again is have the U.S. Government play an important role in protecting the people of this country against the greed of large corporate interests.

Unfortunately, the response from the administration and Wall Street is not to do that but to push for further consolidation in the financial services sector. Here is just an amazing thing. The argument we are hearing over and over again is that AIG was too big to fail, and what we are now creating are institutions that are even larger than AIG. And 10 years from now, when these institutions are threatened with collapse, there will be people coming up saying: Oh my goodness, we can't allow those to fail; we have to bail those out as well.

This country can no longer afford companies that are too big to fail. If a company is so large that its failure would cause systemic harm to our economy, if it is too big to fail, then it is too big to exist. If it is too big to fail, it is too big to exist. We need, as a Congress, to assess which companies fall in this category. Bank of America is certainly one of them. Those companies need to be broken apart. We cannot have companies so huge that if they go under they take the world economy with them.

Then once we break them up, if a company wants to act in a risky manner, if they want to take risks in order to make some quick bucks, that is OK. If they want to take the risk and they want to lose money, that is OK. The American people should not have to, and would not be under those circumstances, be left to pick up the pieces.

Finally, in terms of dealing with this unfolding disaster, we need to make sure working Americans, the middle class, do not foot the bill. If the economic calamity requires a Federal bailout, it should be paid for by those people who actually benefited from the reckless behavior of people empowered by the extreme economic views of Senator Gramm, President Bush, Senator MCCAIN, and many others.

In other words, the point I am making is that in the last 10 years, many of these people have made billions and billions of dollars. It is unfair to simply ask the middle-class working families who are trying to figure out how they are going to pay their fuel bills, how they are going to send their kids to college, to bail out these large institutions from which many people made huge amounts of profits.

We don't talk about this too often, but today the wealthiest one-tenth of 1 percent earns more income than the bottom 50 percent. The top 1 percent owns more wealth than the bottom 90 percent. And the wealthiest 400 Americans in this country have not only seen their incomes double, their net worth has increased by $640 billion since George W. Bush has been in office.

Can you believe that? Four hundred families, four hundred people, less than the Congress, have seen a $640 billion increase in their wealth since President Bush has been in office. And, amazingly, these 400 families are now worth over $1.5 trillion—400 families. On average, they earn over $214 million a year.

As a result of President Bush's policies, amazingly enough, their tax rates have been cut almost in half to only 18 percent on average. Amazingly, the wealthiest 400 Americans pay a lower tax rate than most police officers, teachers, firefighters, and nurses. So if you are one of the very wealthiest people in this country, if you are earning $214 million a year on average, you pay a lower tax rate than somebody who is a police officer, a teacher, a firefighter, or a nurse.

That may make sense to somebody; it does not make sense to me. What does it say about us as a nation when

the middle class pays a greater percentage of their income in taxes than the wealthiest 400 Americans?

It is this very small segment of our population that has made out like bandits—frankly, some of them are bandits—during the Bush administration. We have to recognize that when we talk about who is going to pay for the bailouts.

In my view, we need an emergency surtax on those at the very top in order to pay for any losses the Federal Government suffers as a result of efforts to shore up the economy. It should not be hard-working people who are trying to figure out how they are going to keep their families economically above water, people who are working longer hours for lower wages, people who have lost their health care, people who cannot afford to pay their fuel bills this winter. Those are not the people who should be asked to pay for this bailout. If there is a bailout that has to be paid for, it should be the people, the segment of society that has benefited from Bush's economic and tax policies over the last 8 years.

Before I complete my remarks, I would like to step back for a minute and examine this current crisis in the context of whom our Government represents.

What does it say about an administration that is prepared to put $85 billion at risk to bail out AIG but fights tooth and nail against dealing with the economic crises facing working families in this country? Mr. President, $85 billion at risk for AIG, some $30 billion for Bear Stearns, perhaps trillions for Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. For those folks there seems to be an endless supply of money. Don't the American people deserve a Government that views their economic needs as being as important as the health of large corporations and Wall Street executives?

Since President Bush has been in office, nearly 6 million Americans have slipped out of the middle class and into poverty. What was the administration's response? Was there a bailout for those people who lost good-paying jobs and are now working for significantly lower wages? Did President Bush come and say we have to protect those kids in a society which has the highest rate of childhood poverty of any major country? Are we going to bail out those families? I didn't hear that from the White House.

Over 7 million Americans have lost their health insurance. More than 4 million Americans have lost their pensions. Over 3 million manufacturing jobs have been lost. Total consumer debt has more than doubled since President Bush has been in office. Median income for working-age Americans has gone down by over $2,000 after inflation. Where has the Bush administration been in bailing out those families? Where has the Bush administration been in saying we are going to provide health care to all Americans? I didn't hear them come forward.

But when it is AIG, when it is Bear Stearns, my goodness, how quickly they respond. If you are a CEO of a large insurance company, they are there for you. But if you are a working mother whose kid does not have any health insurance: I am sorry, we can't afford to take care of you.

I can go on and on about the priorities established by this administration. The American people should know this President wanted to cut emergency food assistance for nearly a half million seniors, mothers, and children. He wanted to cut job training for 161,000 people and cut childcare assistance for 200,000 children. There is not enough money to take care of those people. I guess they don't make a whole lot of campaign contributions.

The President wanted to raise fees on veterans getting health care, which we, of course, stopped. He fought giving 3 million children access to health care. He wanted to cut $1 billion from rural housing when we have a major housing crisis in rural America.

No money for children who don't have any health insurance, no money for people living in dilapidated housing, no money available for veterans health care. We can't do that. But if you are AIG, if you are a large corporation, this Government is there for you.

These people, working families, seniors, veterans, the unemployed—their problems do not warrant, apparently, an urgent response from the President. But big insurance companies, big investment houses, companies that get engaged in risky subprime lending and credit swaps, my, my, how quickly we respond to them.

The American people deserve better. We need to reject the failed economic policies and priorities of George W. Bush and JOHN MCCAIN. Americans need a Government that is not going to let the rich and large corporations loop our economy. Americans need a Government that will put regulatory firewalls back up in the financial sector and end the use of unregulated credit swaps. Americans need a Government that is going to prevent speculators from robbing them at the gas pump. Americans need a government that breaks up companies that are too big to fail. Americans need a government that is going to view their problems as seriously as they view the problems of corporate America. Our job is to give the American people that kind of government.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

## PHILIP CLAPP

Mr. BINGAMAN. Mr. President, I wish to speak very briefly to express my sadness on the death of Philip Clapp, who was the president and chief executive officer of the National Environmental Trust, from its founding in 1994 until it merged with the Pew Charitable Trusts this year, and who served as the deputy managing director of the Environmental Group of the Pew Charitable Trusts.

There are few of us in the Senate who have not had contact with Philip and seen the effectiveness of his advocacy on environmental and energy issues. He formerly served on Tim Wirth's staff when Tim served as a colleague of ours in the House of Representatives.

Under his guidance, the National Environmental Trust was one of the major nongovernmental organizations that contributed to international summits and agreements on climate change-related issues.

I wish to express my condolences to his family and to his many colleagues here and abroad who will greatly miss him and his leadership on these issues.

## LEGAL DRINKING AGE

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, the debate over the legal drinking age has continued for decades.

As a physician and surgeon, I have repeatedly dealt firsthand with the traumatic results of underage drinking.

Recently, a number of college presidents from across the country signed a public statement petitioning that the current legal drinking age be lowered to age 18.

I believe changing this law would pose a danger to our youth and communities.

Wyoming's First Lady, Nancy Freudenthal, wrote an important editorial addressing drinking on college campuses. It was printed in the Wyoming Tribune Eagle and the Casper Star Tribune. I believe Mrs. Freudenthal presents a compelling argument for keeping the minimum drinking age at 21.

I ask unanimous consent to have the editorial to which I referred printed in the RECORD. There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

LOWERING THE DRINKING AGE IS NOT A GOOD IDEA

(By Nancy Freudenthal)

When the leaders of our nation's institutions of higher learning have something to say, we naturally assume that it will be well-reasoned, responsible and grounded in factual evidence. That is why it was disappointing to see more than 100 college presidents and chancellors have signed on to what is now being called the Amethyst Initiative, which seeks to lower the legal drinking age from 21 to 18 because, as its proponents claim, ''Twenty-one is not working.''

I am very pleased the University of Wyoming has not signed on to this initiative, and in fact is addressing drinking on campus on many fronts, including ''education, training, enforcement and changing the environment around alcohol use,'' according to Dean of Students Dave Cozzens.

By viewing this issue through the narrow lens of alcohol-related problems on campus, these college presidents are ignoring the broader societal implications of throwing in the towel on the health and well-being of our young people.

The Amethyst Initiative's solution for reducing binge drinking and preventing underage drinking is to make alcohol more readily available to young people, which will only