

foremost in General Vaughn's mind. In recent years, the Army Guard has reversed a downward trend in filling its ranks and boosted enlistments tremendously. We have a more educated and a healthier force with more full-time personnel. In his last months on the job, General Vaughn has laid out a sensible plan to build readiness within the Army Guard, ending the harmful practice of counting untrained and transient soldiers against the end-strength of various units.

Working closely with Congress, General Vaughn has also ensured that the Guard has more modern equipment. The Army Guard has much better gear today than it did 4 years ago.

Lieutenant General Vaughn is a leader who forthrightly lays out his views, whether to Congress or his counterparts in the active Army. It is this deep honesty and intelligence that has made him an inspiration to his subordinates and a close adviser to his superiors. Lieutenant General Clyde Vaughn knows and loves the Army National Guard, having lived and breathed with this force of citizen-soldiers for more than three decades. The country owes General Vaughn, as well as his wife Carol and kids Chad and Kristi, our thanks and hearty congratulations on a job, very well done.

NOMINATION OF DEMETRIOS JAMES MARANTIS

Mr. BAUCUS. Madam President, today I would like to recognize one of the finest members of my staff to ever work for me, the State of Montana, and the U.S. Senate. Demetrios James Marantis has served in the Senate since 2005, and on Wednesday, the Senate approved his nomination to be Deputy U.S. Trade Representative.

When Demetrios first joined my staff more than 4 years ago, he came with a chorus of support and an impressive set of skills and experience. This week, he leaves the Senate for his next challenge with an even larger group of supporters and another impressive list of accomplishments.

Demetrios was at the center of the largest expansion and reform of trade adjustment assistance since its creation four decades ago. He was critical to our granting permanent normal trade relations to Vietnam, and instrumental in keeping U.S.-China economic ties on track in challenging times. Demetrios helped me and the Senate extend trade preference programs to the world's poorest nations, and worked to lay the groundwork for the important pending trade agreements that I hope that the Senate will consider in the coming months.

He did all of this with an unwavering commitment to this country, and an unassailable reputation for fairness and openness to supporters and opponents alike. And as many of my colleagues and their staff will always remember, Demetrios never failed to bring a little bit of fun and a good sense of humor to even the hardest job.

But what I will remember most about Demetrios is his commitment to the people that our economic policies affect. In Montana, Demetrios made a point to know the ranchers in Molt, the seed potato farmers in Manhattan, and the wheat farmers in Three Forks. Demetrios's intelligence and experience helped guide me and the Senate through the letter of our trade laws. But his good character and heart reminded us what those trade laws are really about America's workers, farmers, ranchers, and families.

I congratulate Demetrios on his nomination, thank him for his good work, and wish him the best of luck as Deputy U.S. Trade Representative.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, I wish to speak a few words about Demetrios Marantis, who was confirmed last night by the Senate to be a Deputy U.S. Trade Representative.

Demetrios is well known to all of us on the Finance Committee. For 4 years, he has very ably served Chairman BAUCUS—most recently as the Democratic chief international trade counsel. So he has played a central role in all of the committee's efforts on trade policy during this time.

Not only is Demetrios a very sharp trade lawyer and policy adviser, he is also a skilled negotiator. That will serve him well in his new position. I am grateful for the genuine spirit of bipartisanship that Demetrios brought to the Finance Committee, and I am sorry to see him depart. His energy and good nature will certainly be missed.

At the same time, I am comforted by the fact that our Nation will continue to benefit from Demetrios' commitment to public service. He assumes a very important portfolio at the Office of the United States Trade Representative, as a trade Ambassador to Asia and Africa, and also with responsibility for the trade and development portfolio, as well as for labor and the environment.

I therefore look forward to engaging Demetrios in efforts to open up new market opportunities for U.S. exporters in the Asian region. I also look forward to working with him on a reform of our unilateral trade preference programs. We must address these key trade priorities in the 111th Congress, so I expect that we'll continue to see Demetrios on a regular basis for some time to come.

In closing, I commend Demetrios for his outstanding service to the Finance Committee, and I wish Ambassador Marantis every success in his new position.

IDAHOANS SPEAK OUT ON HIGH ENERGY PRICES

Mr. CRAPO. Madam President, in mid-June, I asked Idahoans to share with me how high energy prices are affecting their lives, and they responded by the hundreds. The stories, numbering well over 1,200, are heart-breaking and touching. While energy

prices have dropped in recent weeks, the concerns expressed remain very relevant. To respect the efforts of those who took the opportunity to share their thoughts, I am submitting every e-mail sent to me through an address set up specifically for this purpose to the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD. This is not an issue that will be easily resolved, but it is one that deserves immediate and serious attention, and Idahoans deserve to be heard. Their stories not only detail their struggles to meet everyday expenses, but also have suggestions and recommendations as to what Congress can do now to tackle this problem and find solutions that last beyond today. I ask unanimous consent to have today's letters printed in the RECORD.

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

I am sending you this email in regards to our gas prices. I feel that the taxes that Idaho has on the gas should be dropped in our state.

So many people are already unemployed. People are suffering enough trying to keep the jobs that they have. Many people travel from Caldwell and Nampa to jobs in Boise. They are only making \$9, maybe \$10, an hour. That is just two gallons of gas. Because of this, we will only be adding to our unemployment line. This only takes away the money coming into our state from the taxes from their paychecks.

My daughter is trying to find work herself. Do you have any idea the hardship of this? She cannot find a job because she cannot put the \$8 for two gallons of gas into her car to find a job. If you removed the gas tax, she would have at least a fighting chance!

My son lives in Boise and works in Nampa. He had to leave his car on the freeway because he ran out of gas and had just put in the last of his money he had in his pocket.

What about our elderly and all the others on fixed income? We have to get a hold of this situation now. Thank you for your time and consideration in this important matter.

GERALD and TONIE, Nampa.

Thank you, Senator, for asking for input. Yes, we need to protect our planet from excess wrongful pollution; yes we need to have alternatives to the current fossil fuel dilemma. Yes, drilling here and drilling now needs to happen, although it will not give relief for many years to come and at what loss to business and individual Americans, prior to our becoming more energy independent?

It is time to steal a page from the Democrats play book of 2000 and dump oil from our strategic reserves, referenced http://schumer.senate.gov/SchumerWebsite/pressroom/press_releases/2004/PR02640.Gas051904.html, in the market place to lower prices at the pump.

This will have many-fold positive effect. It can boost the economy by helping business to maintain pricing at lower levels. It will cause a price lowering on the world market needed by many other nations, i.e., French truckers causing gridlock by blocking roadways. We replenish our reserves at a lower cost oil than today, and it ought have an adverse effect on those speculators that are driving the price of oil through the ceiling. How many of the speculators buying futures contracts for oil are foreign investors wanting to drive up the price of their oil? These positive reactions can only have positive impact.

For the future, alternative fuel sources other than our food, wheat, rice, corn ought