Unfortunately, that agreement is a full year behind schedule, with shipments from 1993 through 1999 representing only 80 tons of highly enriched uranium—30 tons short of the minimum goal by the end of its seventh year in force. Moreover, even if the agreement were moving ahead at full speed, it would still cover only a fraction of Russia's excess weapon-grade uranium (500 of 1,200 tons), and none of its plutonium. A frustrated Russia can't understand why America wants to move so slowly.

Meanwhile, terrorism is spiraling out of control in and around Moscow, war is breaking out again in the Caucus and the nuclear materials from thousands of dismantled Russian warheads continue to pile up in poorly protected makeshift warehouses scattered across several time zones, many of them far from the central government's watchful eye.

All of which begs the question: How long can things go on this way, before we run out of luck? Or, in other words, how long can Russia's hundreds of tons of missile materials be stored so haphazardly before small but significant amounts begin winding up in the hands of terrorists or rogue states?

The time has come for Washington to finally put its money where its mouth is and use part of the enormous budget surplus to purchase as much of Russia's fissile materials—both uranium and plutonium—as Moscow is willing to sell, and as quickly as Moscow is wiling to sell them.

The case for taking such a bold step should be easy to make with the American people.

First, the sticker price would be remarkably low—less than $20 billion. And since the U.S. government would presumably one day sell most or all of the uranium and plutonium for use as nuclear fuel, the expense would not have to be counted as an expense—an argument sure to resonate well with fiscal conservatives eager to keep pace with Gramm-Rudman.

Second, one could compare the price tag with the hundreds of billions of dollars America spent to defend itself and its allies against nuclear weapons during the Cold War; the trillion dollars of human life that would result if a small nuclear device were ever successfully detonated in a place such as downtown Washington; and the billions of dollars that rogue states and terrorist groups have already offered Russian nuclear workers for extremely small amounts of the same nuclear material.

And there is the tremendous sense of relief in purchasing the very stuff that for so long threatened America's very survival, and which now threatens the whole world.

With the 2000 election cycle beginning to pick up steam, and with the possibility of a viable third-party presidential candidate growing by the day, one would think that the two major parties would be scrambling to take the lead on this most serious of national Security issues.

[From the Wall Street Journal, Sept. 9, 1999]

NUKES FOR SALE

(By Brett Wagner)

Strangely absent from the debate over how to spend Washington's projected $1 trillion surplus has been any discussion of Russia's longstanding offer to sell its stockpiles of excess weapon-grade uranium. The time has come to take Russia up on this offer.

Russia has never developed a reliable system for protecting the enormous stockpiles of weapon-grade uranium and plutonium it inherited from the Soviet Union. These stockpiles are often stored in makeshift warehouses, some protected only by $5 combination locks and soldiers who occasionally desert their posts in search of food. Small caches of these nuclear materials have already begun leaking out of Russia. It would only take 20 or 30 pounds of highly enriched uranium to arm a device capable of leveling a city the size of lower Manhattan.

In February 1993 Presidents Clinton and Boris Yeltsin signed an agreement for Russia to sell the U.S. highly enriched uranium extracted from its dismantled nuclear warheads in exchange for hard currency. Russia is currently dismantling thousands of warheads. Unfortunately, this unprecedented opportunity to advance U.S. and international security has fallen behind schedule at nearly every turn, primarily because Washington is constantly distracted by less important issues. So far Russia has shipped only 50.5 tons of highly enriched uranium—almost 30 tons short of the agreement's stated goal by this point.

One major holdup has been the U.S. enrichment Corp., a recently privatized company selected by the U.S. government to implement the American side of the accord. It has resisted accepting delivery of Russia's enriched uranium because, among other reasons, it claims that the materials are not pure enough for U.S. nuclear plants. But the corporation has a fundamental conflict of interest. Since it also produces enriched uranium, it wants to limit Russian competition in the international market.

The question is: How long do we have before we run out of luck? How long before some of Russia's uranium winds up in the hands of terrorists like Osama bin Laden or regimes like Saddam Hussein's?

Washington should switch the power of executive agent from the U.S. Enrichment Corp. to the Department of Energy. Given that most of the delays in implementing the agreement have stemmed from America's insistence that the highly enriched uranium be blended down into nuclear fuel in Russia, Washington should reverse this policy and accept Moscow's offer to ship its undiluted uranium directly to the U.S.

As soon as the agreement gets back on track, Washington should ask Moscow to expand it to include all of Russia's excess weapon-grade uranium, not to mention its excess plutonium. It makes no sense to purchase one stockpile of unsecured fissile material while leaving others in jeopardy.

The pricetag for such a deal would be remarkably low. The cost of purchasing 500 tons of Russia's highly enriched uranium, the quantity covered in the agreement, is approximately $8 billion. Beyond what the agreement covers, Moscow has some 700 tons of additional weapons-grade uranium it has deemed ''excess.'' That would increase the price to around $19 billion. And for an additional $1 billion or $2 billion. Moscow would probably throw in its excess weapon-grade plutonium, which it has also been trying to sell for use as nuclear fuel.

With Russian parliamentary elections scheduled for later this year and a presidential election next June—which may well bring in a government less friendly to the West than Mr. Yeltsin's—the time to act is now rather than later.●

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. MURKOWSKI. I ask consent that there be a period for the transaction of routine morning business, with any Senator permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes.

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

NATIONAL SALVAGE MOTOR VEHICLE CONSUMER PROTECTION ACT

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I am proud to add the American Automobile Association (AAA) and the California DMV to the long list of organizations that support S. 655, the National Salvage Motor Vehicle Consumer Protection Act that I introduced during this session to protect consumers from title fraud.

Other supporters of my title branding legislation include the American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators (AAMVA), state DMV directors around the country, the Michigan Secretary of State and other Secretaries of State, the International Union of Police Associations AFL–CIO, International Association of Auto Theft Investigators, National Odometer and Title Fraud Enforcement Association, American Automobile Manufacturers Association, Association of International Automobile Manufacturers, National Automobile Dealers Association, National Association of Minority Automobile Dealers, National Independent Automobile Dealers Association, Honda North America, Nissan North America, Carfax, CarMax, American Service Industry Association, American Automotive Leasing Association, American Car Rental Association, American Salvage Pool Association, Automotive Engine Rebuilders Association, Automotive Parts and Accessories Association, Automotive Parts Rebuilders Association, National Association of Fleet Resale Dealers, National Auto Auction Association, and State Farm Insurance.

I also think it is worth recognizing 23 of our colleagues who have actively signaled their intention to protect motorists in their state and throughout the nation by formally supporting S. 655. Senators MCCAIN, BREAUX, STEVENS, CONRAD, BURNS, HUTCHISON, FRIST, ABRAHAM, MACK, WARNER, BENNETT, SESSIONS, MURKOWSKI, SHELBY, INHOFE, GRAMS, THOMAS, ROBERTS, HATCH, THOMPSON, ENZI, KYL, and HUTCHINSON are to be commended for cosponsoring this important consumer protection measure.

The American Automobile Association represents over 40 million drivers. It is a nonpartisan organization that champions the interests of the driving public in virtually every city, county, and state across this great land. AAA supports S. 655 because it shares my belief that national standards for titling salvage, rebuilt salvage, non-repairable and flood damaged vehicles will help prevent the fraudulent sale of damaged vehicles and protect consumers from unknowingly purchasing them. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to

print AAA's letter of support for S. 655 in the RECORD.

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

AAA WASHINGTON OFFICE,
Washington, DC, November 17, 1999.

Hon. TRENT LOTT,
Majority Leader, U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR LOTT: As a representative of 42 million motorists, AAA appreciates your effort to establish more uniformity in the titling and registration of salvage and other damaged vehicles.

AAA shares your concern about the practice of unscrupulous individuals buying damaged vehicles at low cost, rebuilding them, and then retitling them in another state with less or no protections. A ''washed'' title does not disclose previous damage to a vehicle and therefore, subsequent purchasers have no knowledge of the damage. Unwitting consumers are the victims of such fraudulent practices.

In an effort to help AAA members avoid the pitfalls of buying damaged or rebuilt vehicles, AAA provides tips on ways to identify damaged or flood vehicles. AAA also recommends that consumers have used cars checked for safety and reliability by a reputable auto technician before they purchase the vehicle.

Minimum standards for titling salvage, rebuilt salvage, non-repairable and flood-damaged vehicles will help present the fraudulent sale of damaged vehicles and protect consumers from unknowingly purchasing them. However, because states often have unique and various problems relating specifically to salvage vehicles, AAA believes states should be provided flexibility to enact stricter standards that address individual state concerns as your bill allows.

S. 655 represents an important step toward addressing the problem, while recognizing the legitimate role states have in motor vehicle licensing and titling laws. AAA commends your leadership in working with all parties to craft a workable solution and is pleased to support your bill.

Sincerely,

SUSAN G. PIKRALLIDAS,
Interim Vice President,
Public & Government Relations.

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, my goal from the outset has been to protect used car buyers from title fraud. The solution I proposed was simple, straightforward, and modeled after the recommendations of the Motor Vehicle Titling, Registration, and Salvage Advisory Committee. S. 655 merely establishes model uniform definitions and disclosure requirements for four basic terms: salvage; rebuilt salvage; flood; and nonrepairable vehicles. Under the legislation reported out by the Senate Commerce Committee, states would be free to utilize additional terms and to provide additional disclosures beyond those provided for in this bill. States that choose to adopt the four uniform terms and related provisions would be eligible for incentive grants. No state would be penalized for non-participation or for retaining different standards.

While there is substantial and broad support for this much needed legislation, there continues to be resistance to moving forward with this legislation in the Senate. Unfortunately, this resistance has the effect of allowing unsuspecting consumers to continue to purchase and drive potentially life-threatening vehicles. Delaying this legislation will cost used car buyers another $4 billion this year and place millions of structurally unsafe vehicles back on America's roads and highways. Roads that our family, friends, and neighbors share every day.

Even though S. 655 has wide-spread support and follows the recommendations of the Congressionally-chartered Salvage Advisory Committee, a few groups have attempted to undermine this measure at every stage of the process. Unfortunately, these groups seemed to have convinced some of my colleagues that it is better to delay the implementation of clearly needed consumer protections and continue to press for the imposition of untried, untested and in many cases anti-consumer requirements. Requirements that states have rejected time and again. Provisions that focus on post-purchase redress rather than pre-purchase disclosure. Definitions and standards that would perpetuate confusion rather than promote uniformity among the states, undermining the very purpose of this legislation. These groups claim to have the interests of consumers in mind, yet the best representative of car-buying consumers, the American Automobile Association, has rejected their approach and supports passage of S. 655.

As I am sure my colleagues will agree, advancing titling definitions and standards that states have rejected, and will continue to reject, will only exacerbate title fraud. Such an approach only benefits those who prey on unsuspecting car buyers and would jeopardize the minimum standards required to make the program work, unnecessarily harm many vehicle owners and buyers by needlessly reducing the value of their vehicles, create unreasonable or untested standards, foster unnecessary litigation, impinge on states rights, and promote a scheme that states will reject.

During the 104th and 105th Congresses, this was a bipartisan, better yet nonpartisan, initiative. My only interest has been to protect consumers by encouraging the use of minimal uniform disclosure standards for severely damaged vehicles—those involved in a serious accident, severely damaged by falling objects, or vehicles that have sustained significant and lingering water damage. Whether the used car buyer is in Mississippi, California, Nevada, Minnesota, or in any other state, he or she needs the pre-purchase disclosure information that S. 655 would provide.

I have made every effort to reach consensus on this legislation. In that vein, a number of changes were incorporated throughout the legislative process to address the concerns of State attorneys general, certain consumer groups, and many of my colleagues. The latest version of this legislation incorporates the full range of changes that DMV administrators, including California's Administrator, believe are practicable. The substitute makes it very clear that there is no preemption of state law. The substitute also mirrors much of the State of California's current titling requirements, ensuring that minimal change will be required by our largest state should it choose to apply for the bill's grant monies.

Mr. President, even though I have made numerous compromises on this legislation, the goal post continues to move further away. Instead of gaining acceptance, I was recently presented with yet another round of proposed modifications. AAMVA reviewed these proposed changes and determined they would eviscerate the purpose of this legislation. AAMVA opposes these additional changes because they could potentially harm the very people this legislation aims to protect, create a mountain of unnecessary paperwork, and would create a substantial amount of bureaucracy with no added value.

It makes no sense to adopt provisions that the experts on titling matters believe are harmful to used car consumers, the very people this balanced legislation aims to protect. AAMVA, Secretaries of State, local and state law enforcement, state legislators, and the automotive and insurance industries have repeatedly pronounced their support for S. 655. AAA and the California DMV also agree that my substitute bill is the right legislative solution.

Mr. President, if we do not pass this legislation, the real loser is the unfortunate used car buyer in these and other states who unknowingly purchases a wreck on wheels, perhaps a previously totaled government crash test vehicle. Every day that Congress fails to act on this prudent title branding legislation, thousands of individuals are harmed and millions of dollars are lost to the unscrupulous practice of title laundering. Let's pass this bill now.

S. 1949

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the text of the bill, S. 1949, the ''Clean Power Plant and Modernization Act,'' introduced on November 18, 1999, be printed in the RECORD.

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

S. 1949

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,