

at it; don't touch it; don't consider it. Are they saying that because we do not need it when we import 55 percent of our oil, or are they saying things have to be done perfectly to proceed and, unless things are done perfectly, we are never going to proceed?

It seems to me we have to have a balanced approach to energy development in this country. We cannot continue to send our Secretary of Energy—which is where I understand he is this week—to meet with OPEC hat in hand, saying to these foreign countries, please, please, give us more oil, when at the same time we are not doing nearly enough to develop the legitimate resources in our own country.

If we had an aggressive development and production program in our country, we would not be importing 55 percent of the oil we need to run America. Yet when we say we are not going to do anything between Canada and Mexico and between Canada and Florida and we are only going to do it off Louisiana, Texas, and Mississippi, that is not a balanced approach to energy development in the United States.

Some say: We don't want to have it off our coast because it may pollute the environment; we may have an oil spill from an offshore platform. The truth is, it is far more dangerous to import oil in tankers every day than it is to produce in offshore waters. There was a study done by the National Academy of Sciences—and it is on the minerals management web site—which talks about where oil is coming from that is polluting the waters of the world. Does it come from offshore production? No. Offshore oil and gas development is actually 2 percent of the oil that is found in offshore waters around the world. A little less than 2 percent comes from offshore development.

Where does it come from? It is no surprise: Importing oil and moving oil around the oceans of the world in ships. Marine transportation accounts for 45 percent of all the oil that is found in the ocean waters that is not supposed to be there. Municipal and industrial waste and runoff, which comes from when it rains and the rain runs off the streets and works its way ultimately to the oceans of the world, accounts for another 36 percent. Atmospheric fallout is about 9 percent, and natural seepage, which comes up from the ocean floor, is about another 9 percent. But less than 2 percent of the oil that is found in oceans comes from drilling for oil and gas off the coast of the countries where oil can be found.

I do not know what the answer is. There is no simple answer. I know the President made some proposals in a radio address this week. I encourage the administration to continue to seek solutions to the problem.

I have a suggestion, and one of the suggestions is right from the minerals management office. They have a chart

that talks about the undiscovered resources in areas that are currently under moratorium. They make an estimate of how much oil is in areas of the country that we cannot even enter. Their estimate is probably the most accurate in the world.

For areas under moratorium—either congressional or Presidential moratorium—they estimate there are 15.2 billion barrels of oil sitting out there in areas where we are saying: Don't even go look. And there is an additional 61.5 trillion cubic feet of natural gas that could be found in these areas. But you know what. If we don't look, we will never know. It would seem to me that as long as we have these huge areas where we have x'd out any ability to take a look to see what energy is there, we are not on very solid ground when we blame OPEC for the problems we are facing today.

With 55 percent of the oil used in the United States being imported, OPEC has the ability, by turning that faucet off just a little bit, to bring this country to its knees. Can you imagine what it would do if they turned a full turn and really reduced it?

No nation should ever allow itself—certainly not a nation as strong as the United States—to become dependent on foreign sources for things that are critical to our economic well-being and our national security and, indeed, our survival. Yet over the years we have allowed just that to happen with regard to energy.

We would not allow it to happen in the area of food. We would not allow it to happen in the area of planes or tanks or warships or anything else that we depend on for our national security—except in this one area. We have made a conscious decision to say: It is all right to import over half of the energy we use.

It is unacceptable. It is bad public policy. It needs to be changed; otherwise, every so often we will be faced with what we are faced with today.

In his radio address, the President has made some suggestions which I have noted. One was the creation of an environmentally sound home heating oil reserve for the Northeast. My question is, Where does the oil for that reserve come from? Are we just going to buy it from OPEC at \$30 a barrel? That is not going to solve the problem of high energy prices for the Northeast if we are filling up their oil reserve with oil coming from OPEC at \$30 a barrel. It would come out of the reserve at the same price.

The second suggestion is to immediately reauthorize the Strategic Petroleum Reserve, which is located in Louisiana and Texas, where we have oil underground. I am all for doing that, but we are going to be putting oil in the Strategic Petroleum Reserve at \$30 a barrel because of what OPEC has done to us.

Neither one of these two suggestions domestically produce any additional oil. It will continue to be filled with 55 percent of oil coming from foreign sources at \$30 a barrel or at whatever price OPEC determines.

The President has some other suggestions on promoting energy efficiency. We are all for that. He has some suggestions for tax incentives for energy efficiency. I am for that. He has some suggestions on promoting the use of alternative fuels—I am for that—and also support for domestic oil production, which I think is very positive.

But if you have all of these areas that are roped off, if you will, and you say, "Don't go here," when we know some of these areas have as much as Saudi Arabia exports to us—such as, in the Arctic Wildlife Refuge—I suggest that as long as we have huge areas, thousands of miles of areas where we are saying don't even look for energy, then we are never going to address the heart of the problem, which is a lack of energy self-sufficiency for the United States of America. We cannot ever say we are going to be energy self-sufficient just by producing energy off the coast of one or two States.

Certainly, the Congress in the past has accepted the fact that we would let these areas be roped off. I guess the thought is always: Let's produce it somewhere else.

That is what we are doing. We are producing it somewhere else. It is called OPEC. Its nations have formed a cartel. They have done very well in controlling the price. They know they can bring this country—indeed, the world—to its knees simply by turning the valve off just a little bit. They will continue to do that.

I hope they open up the spigot just a little bit, but as long as we are importing 55 percent of the energy for the United States of America, they will always have the ability to bring us to our knees. That is something that should be unacceptable for the United States of America.

Mr. President, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the time until 4 p.m. shall be under the control of the Senator from Wyoming, Mr. THOMAS, or his designee.

The distinguished Senator from New Hampshire.

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to yield myself 10 minutes on the time of Mr. THOMAS.

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

(The remarks of Mr. GREGG pertaining to the introduction of S. 2249 are located in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

(The remarks of Mr. GRASSLEY pertaining to the introduction of S. 2252 are located in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. GREGG). The Chair, in his capacity as a Senator from the State of New Hampshire, asks unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, the Senate stands in recess until 3 p.m.

There being no objection, at 2:38 p.m., the Senate recessed until 2:59 p.m.; whereupon, the Senate reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. HUTCHINSON).

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maine is recognized.

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I thank you for your graciousness in allowing me to precede you on the Senate floor this afternoon. It is typical of my friend's graciousness and friendship. I appreciate it.

SENIOR CITIZENS FREEDOM TO WORK ACT

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, Americans today are leading healthier and longer lives than ever before. By the year 2030, one-fifth of our American population will be age 65 or older. Given the demographics of the 21st century, it is clearly in our national interest to encourage people to stay in the workforce longer. Today, however, older Americans age 65 through 69 are currently discouraged from working since they lose \$1 in Social Security benefits for every \$3 they earn over \$17,000. I am, therefore, very pleased this week the Senate will consider H.R. 5, the Senior Citizens Freedom to Work Act, to eliminate the Social Security earnings test that unfairly penalizes senior citizens who need or want to keep working.

The elimination of this penalty will be particularly helpful to women. Women frequently have interrupted work histories because they take time off to raise their families. Historically, unfortunately, they also earn less than men. As a result, women are twice as

likely to retire in poverty as men. Many women do not have sufficient savings or a private pension, and they depend upon the money they earn to supplement their Social Security benefits in order to make ends meet. These low-income seniors are particularly hard hit by the earnings test, which amounts to a 33-percent tax on their earned income over and above what they are already paying in Federal, State, and Social Security payroll taxes.

Moreover, the Social Security earnings penalty takes money away from seniors that is rightfully theirs. According to the Social Security Administration, 800,000 senior citizens sacrificed some of their benefits last year by exceeding the earnings limit. These were benefits they had earned through a lifetime of hard work in contributions to the Social Security system.

Finally, this penalty is most burdensome for those seniors who have to work and depend upon their income for survival. More well-to-do seniors generally supplement their Social Security benefits with what we refer to as "unearned income" from savings and investments, none of which is affected by the current earnings limit.

Earlier this month, in an overwhelming display of bipartisan cooperation, the House of Representatives voted unanimously to repeal this unfair penalty on our senior citizens. They voted to say no to discriminating against seniors and discouraging them from working. It is my hope the Senate will follow suit this week with another unanimous vote on this historic measure.

Our Nation's seniors should be free to work without penalty. Older workers have the skills, the wisdom, and the judgment that all employers value. Given our tight labor market and our historically low rate of personal savings, it simply does not make sense for Washington to discourage the most experienced workers we have from remaining in the workforce when they want to do so. I hope all of our colleagues will join me in passing this important legislation before the end of the week.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. HUTCHINSON. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. COLLINS). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. HUTCHINSON. Madam President, I associate myself with the eloquent remarks of the Senator from Maine regarding the elimination of the Social Security earnings test.

I rise in support of the Senior Citizens Freedom to Work Act, H.R. 5. I am

pleased the Senate is considering this legislation expeditiously and that the legislation reflects the intent of Senator ASHCROFT's bill, S. 2074, of which I am a cosponsor.

Arkansas is a State that has one of the highest percentages of senior citizens in the Nation. We traditionally are just behind Arizona and Florida—very high. When you look at the population of our State, there are about 2.6 million senior citizens.

But when you look at low-income or lower income senior citizens, we are easily at the top and by far the leading State as a percentage of our population that has senior citizens who are in economic deprivation or lower income. These are the individuals, as the Senator from Maine so eloquently said, who are most in need of equity in the way we treat their Social Security income.

Earlier today I had lunch with a doctor who is a dentist in Arkansas and has his practice in primarily a retirement population area. He was relating to me how many of his patients are now 65-plus, many 70, 75 years old, and about the remarkable health that they enjoy today and the opportunity, from a physical standpoint, that they have to go out and be a part of our labor market. In being a part of that labor market, they can use the experience and the expertise they have gained through a lifetime in our society and contribute that to the economy of today.

I think this is long overdue. The law that we are proposing to change is truly a vestige of the 1930s. It begs for its elimination. Our Nation's working seniors deserve immediate relief from the earnings limit—a longstanding and outdated provision of law. Persons aged 65 to 69 are losing \$1 in program benefits for every \$3 they earn beyond \$17,000, creating a very clear and a very real disincentive to work at all.

According to the Social Security Administration, more than 800,000 seniors lose either part or all of their Social Security benefits because of the program's earnings limitation. That is almost one million working seniors. That is 12,755 people in the State of Arkansas whose lives will improve if we pass this legislation and the President signs it into law.

Since I was elected to Federal office on the House side a few years ago, I have witnessed a steady commitment among the Republican leadership to provide greater flexibility, training, and financial relief to our Nation's workforce. We have advocated legislation that would provide private sector workers with the choice of flexible weekly work schedules—a perk that has been enjoyed by all of us on the Federal payroll for over 20 years.

In 1998, we passed a comprehensive overhaul of America's job training laws, giving more funding and flexibility to States, municipalities, and