

And, finally, that following the debate on the amendments, the amendments be laid aside, with votes to occur on or in relation to the amendments in the order in which they were offered, beginning at 2:15 p.m. on Tuesday, with 4 minutes for debate prior to each vote.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BUNNING). Without objection, it is so ordered.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. MURKOWSKI. In light of this agreement, there will be no further votes today. The next vote will occur on Tuesday, at 2:15 p.m.

Mr. President, let me again thank you for your courtesy, and that of the clerks, who listened to me intently. I understand there may be some more morning business time available. I invite my colleagues to engage in the debate on the subject of ANWR at any time they appear on the floor, in my office, or outside.

Mr. President, I yield the floor and 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. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

NUCLEAR WASTE STORAGE

Mr. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I alert my colleagues that an extraordinary thing happened yesterday in the House of Representatives. The House accepted the Senate bill on nuclear waste without amending the Senate bill.

As the occupant of the Chair knows, oftentimes the House has a little difference of opinion on what is good for the country. The bill we passed in the Senate on nuclear waste had certainly a vigorous debate in this body. There were 64 votes recorded for the legislation which would resolve what to do with our high-level nuclear waste and how to proceed with the dilemma associated with the reality that the Federal Government had entered into a contract in 1998 to take this waste from the electric-power-generating units that were dependent on nuclear energy. This is the high-level rods that have partially reduced their energy capacity and have to be stored. We have had this continued buildup of high-level waste adjacent to our reactors.

The significance of this is that this industry contributes about 20 percent of our power generation in this country. There are those who don't favor nuclear energy and, as a consequence, would like to see the nuclear industry come to an end. But they accept no responsibility for where the power is

going to be made up. Clearly, if you lose a significant portion, you will have to make it up someplace else.

The point of this was to try to come to grips with a couple of things. One is that the ratepayers have paid the Federal Government \$15 billion over an extended period of time to take the waste in 1998. The second issue is the cost to the taxpayers because since the Federal Government has failed to meet the terms of the contract and honor the sanctity of the contract agreement, there are damages and litigation from the power companies to the Federal Government. That cost is estimated to be somewhere in the area of \$40 to \$80 billion to the taxpayer in legal fees associated with these claims that only the court will finally adjudicate.

By passing the Senate bill in the House—I believe the vote was 275—indeed, it moved the issue closer to a resolve. Many in this body would like to not address it. That is irresponsible, both from the standpoint of the taxpayer and from the standpoint of the sanctity of a contractual commitment. If we don't do it, somebody else is going to have to do it on a later watch.

The difficulty is, nobody wants the nuclear waste. But if you throw it up in the air, it is going to come down somewhere.

France reprocesses theirs. The French learned something in 1973, during the Arab oil embargo. They learned that they would never be held hostage by the Mideast oil barons and be subservient to whatever the dictates of those oil nations were and what it cost the French economy in 1973. As a consequence, they proceeded towards the development of a nuclear power capability second to none. About 92 percent France's power is generated by nuclear energy. They have addressed the issue of the waste by reprocessing it through recycling, recovering the plutonium, putting it back in the reactors, and recovering the residue. The residue, after you take the high-level plutonium out, has a very short life. It is called vitrification.

In any event, we are stuck still. We can't resolve what to do with our waste. But we have a bill that has moved out of the House. It is our bill. I have every belief it will go down to the White House. We will have to see if the President wants to reconsider his veto threat in view of the energy crisis we have in this country now and the fact that the administration does not have an energy policy, let alone the willingness to address its responsibility under the contractual terms to accept the waste. If the administration chooses to veto it, we have the opportunity for a veto override. In this body, we are two votes short.

I encourage my colleagues, particularly over this weekend as they go home, to recognize that this issue is going to be revisited in this body. If

they have nuclear reactors in their State and they don't support a veto override, they are going to have to wear the badge, the identification of being with those who want to keep the waste in their State. That is where it will stay. It will stay in temporary storage near the reactors that are overcrowded and that were not designed for long-term storage. It will never get out of their State unless we come together and move this legislation, if the President does not sign it now that it has gone through the House and Senate.

Unfortunately, this would put the waste ultimately in Nevada where we have had 50 years of nuclear testing out in the desert, an area that has already been pretty heavily polluted. We have spent over \$7 billion in Nevada at Yucca Mountain where we are building a permanent repository. Quite naturally, the Nevadans, my colleagues, will throw themselves down on the railroad track to keep this from happening.

But the point is, you have to put it somewhere. In my State of Alaska, we don't currently have any reactors.

As chairman of the Energy Committee, my responsibility is to try to address this national problem, with a resolve. What we have, obviously, is this legislation that has passed both the House and the Senate. It will be back. It will be revisited. I encourage my colleagues to recognize that we have a responsibility to address this on our watch. If we put it off, somebody else is going to have to address it. It is going to cost the taxpayer more. Now is the time, since we finally have a bill that has gone through the House and Senate.

The interesting thing is, had the House taken up our bill and amended it, we would be hopelessly lost because there would be a filibuster on appointment of conferees. It would take 9 days or something like that. It could not be done.

That didn't happen in the House. I commend the Speaker, DENNY HASTERT, for keeping a commitment. I commend our leader, Senator LOTT, who made a commitment that we were going to bring this up. Not only did we bring it up but we passed it.

I alert my colleagues, again, what goes around comes around. We are going to get this back. If you are against it, you had better come up with something else that is a better idea. Otherwise, it will stay in your State. If you want to get it out of your State in a permanent repository, you had better get behind this bill, if we have to go for a veto override.

I thank the Chair and 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. CRAIG. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. CRAIG. Mr. President, are we in morning business at this time?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. We are in morning business, and the Senator from Idaho controls 60 minutes.

ENERGY CRISIS

Mr. CRAIG. Mr. President, earlier today I came to the floor, as did several of my colleagues, to discuss what I believe is now nearing a crisis in our country; that is, the tremendous runup in the price of energy that we have watched for well over 3 months creep up on the reader boards at the local gas station or in fuel bills for those in homes heated with fuel oil.

A lot of Americans are scratching their heads and saying: What is happening? Last year, at this time out in Northern Virginia, I purchased regular gasoline for 78 cents a gallon. There was a bit of a price war going on at that time that probably bid the price down 10 or 12 cents, but there is no question that America's driving public a year ago was paying at least 100 percent less, in some instances, than they are paying today.

It is right and reasonable to ask why? What has happened? What happened is obvious to many who watched the energy issue. I serve on the Energy Committee. For the last several years, we have become quite nervous about the fact that we as Americans have grown increasingly dependent on foreign sources of crude oil to fuel the economy of this country. Several speakers on the floor today, and over the past several days, have talked about a dependency that has gone up from 30-plus percent in the 1970s to over 55 percent today for oil flowing in from outside the United States.

Why is that happening? Why don't we have a policy stopping it? Why are all these things happening at a time when our economy is doing so well?

This morning I joined some of my colleagues to discuss some of the whys. This country, for at least the last 8 years, has been without an energy policy. When the current Secretary of Energy, Bill Richardson, came to that seat, I asked him in his confirmation hearing: If we don't have an energy program, can't we at least have an energy policy that looks at all aspects of the energy basket—both, of course, crude oil for the hydrocarbons and for all that it provides for our country, a recognition of electrical generation in this country, both nuclear, hydro, and certainly coal fired and oil fired? He assured me that would be the case.

Of course, today, that simply isn't the case. In the budgets this Department of Energy has presented to this Congress in the last 2 years, there has been a tremendous increase in the money the Clinton-Gore administra-

tion has wanted to allocate for solar and wind, but they have constantly dropped the research dollars on hydro production or clean coal production for the use of coal in the firing of our electrical generating facilities.

While all of that has been going on, there has been something else that I find fascinating and extremely disturbing: a progressive effort to lock up exploration and development of our public lands and public areas where the last of our oil reserves exist. The administration has not tried to encourage domestic production. In most instances, they have openly discouraged it or they have set the environmental bar so high that no one company can afford to jump over it.

Over the course of the last 5 or 6 years, we have seen a tremendous number of our production companies leave this country. In fact, the CEO of one company sat in my office 5 years ago in a rather embarrassing way saying: Senator, after having been in this country drilling, developing, and producing oil and gas for almost 100 years, my company is being forced to leave the United States if we want to stay profitable or productive.

Of course, that company did largely go overseas. That is an American company and they will be producing oil and gas. But they are, in most instances, producing for a foreign government, and they don't control their supply. Most importantly, that supply is not a U.S. supply. It is a foreign supply being brought into this country, dramatically changing our balance of trade. Of course, many of those nations are members of OPEC or are other oil-producing nations that are, in part, causing the problems our consumers are currently experiencing.

I have found it fascinating over the last several years as we have watched this administration refuse to acknowledge our vast reserves of oil and gas, offshore, and in Alaska. The Senator from Alaska, chairman of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee, was on the floor to speak for the last hour about one of the great remaining reserves in northern Alaska that could be tapped, and tapped in a sound and safe environmental way so the beautiful area would not be damaged. Literally, tens of thousands of barrels a day of oil could be produced from that region of our country and brought into the lower 48 to be refined and sold.

The Rocky Mountain overthrust belt in my area of the country is largely now off limits to further exploration and production. Yet in the 1970s and the early 1980s a lot of the new domestic production in our country came from the overthrust belt areas of Wyoming and Colorado.

We have seen the Clinton administration recently announced a ban on any future exploration of many areas of the Outer Continental Shelf, where some of

the largest oil reserves exist today, all in the name of the environment. Even though some of the great new technologies have allowed the kind of development in the Gulf of Mexico and other areas where the chance of a spill is almost nonexistent today. In fact, the greatest concern for a spill is not drilling and development and transfer onshore of crude oil; it is the shipping in the great supertankers from all around the world. That is where the greater risk to our oceans exist, not offshore oil production. Yet this administration, all in the name of the environment, says, no, we will not develop our offshore capabilities.

In 1996, the administration resorted to the little-used Antiquities Act. I mentioned that earlier this morning. They made 23 billion tons of low-sulphur mineable coal off limits to production in southern Utah. The U.S. Forest Service issued road construction policies designed to restrict the energy industry's ability to explore for gas and oil on Forest Service lands. The Clinton-Gore administration has vetoed legislation that would have opened the coastal plain, as I mentioned, in the remote Alaska National Wildlife Refuge, where an estimated 16 billion barrels of domestic oil may be found.

The administration has ignored a report prepared by the National Petroleum Council requested by the Energy Secretary explaining how the Nation can increase production and use of domestic natural gas resources from about 22 trillion cubic feet per year to more than 30 trillion cubic feet per year over the next 10 to 12 years.

Doable? Yes. Environmentally sound? Yes. A clean fuel source? Yes. Then why aren't we doing it? Because we have an administration that is hostile to the idea of actually producing in this country and providing for this country, and their 8 years of record clearly show that.

The Clinton-Gore administration has shown little interest in solving these kinds of domestic problems and, as a result, as I mentioned earlier, we have watched our dependence on foreign crude tick up to 56 percent of our total crude demand. The price last year of a barrel of crude was around \$10 and peaked last week at somewhere near \$34 a barrel.

Did we see it coming? You bet we did. Has the administration known it? Yes, they have. On two different occasions, and in two very well-developed reports over the last several years, that message has been so clearly sent to this administration.

Why would they ignore it? There are probably a lot of reasons, and I have already expressed some of those reasons why this country cannot use its energy resources.

Yesterday, my distinguished friend from West Virginia, Senator ROBERT