

NOMINATIONS

Mr. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I listened very carefully to the comments from the majority whip relative to the next business at hand, the foreign operations appropriations bill and the issue of holding that up because of judges. It is my understanding that there are 52 judges in committee. Currently, 8 have been passed out of committee. It seems the committees could work more expeditiously to get the judges out of committee so we can address them. I understand 12½ percent of all Federal judicial positions are open at this time. As I indicated, there are 52 pending nominations with only 8 confirmations.

The reality is the committees have a lot of work to do. I encourage, as a consequence of that, they be expeditious so we can get on with the business at hand.

HOMELAND ENERGY SECURITY

Mr. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I will be speaking each day this week on the issue of homeland energy security. I have come before the Senate on many occasions to discuss our needs for national energy in this country, some form of a national energy policy. I think my colleagues' focus for the most part is on the issue of opening and exploring that small sliver of the 19 million acres known as ANWR, an area the size of the State of South Carolina. This is a sliver because it represents roughly 1.5 million acres open for exploration that only Congress can allow, and the realization in the House-passed bill that there was only an authorization of 2000 acres, not much bigger than a small farm. This is the issue of opening up ANWR in my State of Alaska.

Last spring, for example, Senator BREAUX and I proposed a comprehensive bipartisan energy policy with some 300 pages. All that most people focused on was the two pages remitted to opening ANWR. I am a man of few words. It is fair to say some of the radical environmental groups have used ANWR as a cash cow in that they have milked it for all it is worth from the standpoint of membership and dollars. It is a great issue because it is far away—the American people cannot see for themselves and understand and appreciate the dimension, size, and magnitude nor the response we had in producing Prudhoe Bay, which could be transferred to the ANWR area.

ANWR will be opened. The radical environmental groups will move on to another issue in the course of future action. Nevertheless, this discussion is not just about ANWR. I am not in favor of opening ANWR simply because it is the right thing to do for my State or it is the right thing to do for the Nation. My concern with our increasing dependence on unstable sources of energy

is not a smokescreen for narrow political gain. I am in fear of opening ANWR simply as an integral part of our overall energy strategy, a policy balance between production and conservation.

I was pleased to note the President's remarks a few days ago when he commented: There are two other aspects of a good, strong, economic stimulus package, one of which is trade promotion authority, and the other is an energy bill. Now there was a good energy bill passed out of the House of Representatives, and the reason it passed is because Members of both parties understood an energy bill was not only good for jobs or stimulus, it is important for our national security to have a good energy policy.

I urge the Senate to listen to the will of the Senators and move a bill that will help Americans find work and also make it easier for all of us around this table to protect the security of the country. The less dependent we are on foreign sources of crude oil, the more secure we are at home. We have spent a lot of time talking about homeland security. An integral piece of homeland security is energy independence, and I will ask the Senate to respond to the call to get an energy bill moving.

The facts speak for themselves. In 1973, we were 37 percent dependent on foreign oil and the Arab oil embargo brought us to our knees. How quickly we forget about gas lines around the block. In 1991, we fought a war with Iraq largely over oil. We spent billions and billions of dollars to keep Saddam Hussein in check largely in order to keep a stable source of supply coming from the Persian Gulf.

I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD an editorial from October 11 in the Washington Post by Robert Samuelson.

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

[From the Washington Post, Oct. 11, 2001]

Now Do We Get Serious On Oil?

(By Robert J. Samuelson)

If politics is the art of the possible, then things ought to be possible now that weren't before Sept. 11. Or perhaps not. For three decades, Americans have only haphazardly tried to fortify themselves against a catastrophic cutoff of oil from the Middle East, which accounts for about a third of world production and two-thirds of known reserves. Little seems to have changed in the past month, although the terrorism highlighted our vulnerability. Oil is barely part of the discussion.

Over the past 30 years, we have suffered Middle East supply disruptions caused by the Yom Kippur War of 1973, the fall of the shah of Iran in 1979 and Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990. We have fought one war for access to oil—the Persian Gulf War. How many times do we have to be hit before we pay attention? No one can foresee what might lead to a huge supply shutdown or whether the present attack on Afghanistan might trigger disastrous changes. A collapse of the Saudi

regime? A change in its policy? Massive sabotage of pipelines? Another Arab-Israeli war? Take your pick.

Even if we avoid trouble now, the threat will remain. In 2000 the United States imported 53 percent of its oil; almost a quarter of that came from the Persian Gulf. Weaning ourselves from Middle Eastern oil would still leave us vulnerable, because much of the rest of the industrial world—Europe, Japan, Asia—needs it. Without it, the world economy would collapse. Of course, countries that have oil can't benefit from it unless they sell it. The trouble is they can sell it on their terms, which might include a large measure of political or economic blackmail.

They, too, run a risk. Oil extortion might provoke a massive military response. It is precisely because the hazards are so acute and unpredictable for both sides that Persian Gulf suppliers have recently tried to separate politics from oil decisions. (Indeed, prices have dropped since the terrorist attacks.) But in the Middle East, logic is no defense against instability. We need to make it harder for them to use the oil weapon and take steps to protect ourselves if it is used.

The outlines of a program are clear:

Raise CAFE ("corporate average fuel economy") standards. America's cars and light trucks—pickups, minivans and sport-utility vehicles—consume a tenth of annual global oil production, about 8 million barrels a day out of 77 million. Tempering oil demand requires lowering the thirst of U.S. cars. The current CAFE standards are 27.5 miles per gallon for cars and 20.7 mpg for light trucks. With existing technologies, fuel economy could be raised by 17 percent to 36 percent for cars and by 27 percent to 47 percent for light trucks without harming safety and performance, according to the National Research Council. Changes would have to occur over a decade to give manufacturers time to convert.

Impose a gasoline or energy tax. People won't buy fuel-efficient vehicles unless it pays to do so. Cheap gasoline prices also cause people to drive more. An effective tax would be at least 35 cents to 50 cents a gallon. It ought to be introduced over two or three years beginning in 2003. (To impose the tax would worsen the recession.) A 50-cent-a-gallon tax might raise about \$60 billion a year. Some of this might be returned in other tax cuts; some might be needed to cover higher defense and "homeland security" costs.

Relax restrictions against domestic drilling. The other way to dampen import dependence is to raise domestic production. It peaked in 1970 and since then has dropped about 28 percent. The easiest way to cushion the decline is to open up areas where drilling is now prohibited, including the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) and areas off both the Atlantic and Pacific coasts. This would aid both oil and natural gas production.

Expand the Strategic Petroleum Reserve. Tapping the SPR is the only way to offset a huge oil loss until a military or diplomatic solution is reached. Created in 1975, the SPR was envisioned to reach 1 billion barrels. At the end of 2000, it had 541 million barrels, roughly where it was in 1992. The failure to increase the SPR in the Clinton years was astonishingly shortsighted. When oil prices are low—as now—the SPR should be slowly expanded to at least 2 billion barrels. Other industrial countries should also raise their oil stocks.

What prevents a program such as this is a failure of political imagination. There ought