

a lot more to governing America than just being popular and saying popular things.

You have to speak straight to the American people, be sensible with them, tell them that the tax cut President Bush has proposed is, frankly, not good for this country in the long term. We cannot base this tax cut on projections of what America will look like 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 years from now, and be wrong, and find ourself back in deficits. We cannot push a tax cut which inordinately rewards the wealthiest in this country and ignores some 23 million Americans who receive literally no tax benefit from the President's tax cut proposal. We can't be backing a tax cut that is so large that it raids the Social Security trust fund and endangers the future of Medicare. And we certainly cannot back a tax cut that ends up making certain that we in America are spending more and more money to provide tax relief to the wealthiest among us and ignoring these important priorities such as education, defense, health care coverage, Medicare reform, and Social Security reform.

Alan Greenspan is a man I respect very much. He came to the Hill last week and made a statement about the future of this economy. He has made some good predictions in the past. He suggested we should consider a tax cut. I think he is right. But he also said, if you read his statement very carefully: Don't get carried away; do it in a sensible fashion; do it in a way that will keep America moving forward.

It is now up to this Chamber, and the 99 other men and women who will gather here and debate over the next several weeks, to be honest with the American people. Perhaps not the most popular statements but the most sensible statements will tell us that a tax cut is not the be all and end all, not the goal for everything in America. What is most important is that we create an economy where American families can succeed. I think we have that opportunity. I hope we don't lose it.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SMITH of Oregon). The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

#### NATURAL GAS PRICES

Mrs. CARNAHAN. Mr. President, I rise today to speak about an issue that I know is a critical concern for all of my constituents the significant rise in natural gas prices in Missouri. As we are all aware, recent brutal temperatures and energy shortages have con-

tributed to a dramatic rise in home heating bills.

In Missouri, regulators recently approved a 44 percent rate increase for natural gas purchased from one Missouri utility. The increase, from \$6.81 to \$9.82 for a thousand cubic feet of natural gas, is expected to continue into the summer and has posed serious problems for consumers.

Imagine your gas bill doubling almost overnight. People tell me that they are putting off needed purchases because they don't have any extra money—it's all going to pay the gas bill. I am especially worried about the impact of high heating bills on our retirees who already have tight budgets.

My phone lines have been barraged with distraught constituents who don't know how to make ends meet this winter. Just yesterday I heard from James Baldwin, an Army veteran and retired autoworker from Independence, MO. Mr. Baldwin, father of four and grandfather of five, worked at the Ford Assembly Plant in Kansas City for almost 36 years. Like most constituents, Mr. Baldwin has tried to cut down on energy usage by dressing warmer and weatherproofing his home, as he is on a fixed income and doesn't have much room in his budget to accommodate large increases. Mr. Baldwin paid \$99 for his gas bill in December 1999. He was shocked, however, when, one year later, he received his bill and realized that his heating costs had almost tripled to \$269. The skyrocketing increases continued last month as well. He doesn't know what he will do if increases of this size continue. Mr. Baldwin called my office to let me know about the hundreds of neighbors and autoworker retirees he hears from every day about this problem. He worries that many will fall through the cracks.

The Mid-America Assistance Coalition, an agency that coordinates emergency assistance for the Kansas City metro area, where Mr. Baldwin lives, has reported getting 100 to 200 calls per day. Many of the calls are from single moms, the elderly and the "working poor," or those who earn too much to qualify for standard energy assistance but cannot afford to pay their bills. According to the Coalition, this is the first time most of the callers have ever had to ask for assistance with their utility bills.

Another constituent, Mrs. Doris Hill from Albany, Missouri, recently wrote to share her plight. Mrs. Hill is a low-income, 83-year-old widow. She wrote that she cannot afford to call even her own family long-distance. She lives on \$460 a month from Social Security and a small interest income from savings. She struggles month-to-month and cannot afford large increases in her utility bills.

This problem is not just limited to certain geographic areas or segments

of our population. One letter I received was from Jeremy Lynn, a Boy Scout from Sikeston in Southeast Missouri. Jeremy wrote to share his concern about the effect that the high cost of gas is having on his family. Jeremy states that his father and other farmers are struggling to cope with fuel and natural gas price increases at a time when the prices they are being paid for their crops are the lowest they have received in 14 years. He is worried that many farmers will be forced out of business as a result.

These and many other stories I have heard over the last couple of months have touched me deeply. Unfortunately, these stories are much too common in Missouri.

We hear that the cause of these record increases are due to problems associated with supply, demand, industry deregulation and, possibly, price gouging. But this is a complicated issue, and I have yet to meet anyone who has an easy solution. The only thing that is clear right now is that we need to learn what has caused these sharp increases and quickly develop an appropriate response.

This is why I have decided to cosponsor Senator BOXER's amendment that would require the National Academy of Sciences to submit a report to Congress within 60 days on the causes of the recent increases in the price of natural gas, including whether the increases have been caused by problems with natural gas supply or by problems with the natural gas transmission system. The study would identify federal or state policies that may have contributed to the recent spike in prices and determine what federal action would be necessary to improve the reserve supply of natural gas.

We don't know what the results of this study will be, but I am hopeful that they will help us to determine a course of action at the federal level to relieve the current crisis that is harming so many people in so many ways.

#### NOMINATION OF GALE NORTON

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, I would like to briefly explain my recent vote to support the nomination of Gale Norton to be Secretary of Interior. At the outset, let me say that I did so with serious reservations. In fact, I find many of Ms. Norton's past positions, statements and actions most troubling.

Gale Norton has built a successful career advocating for the mining, timber, and oil industries. Her record in this respect has led many to question whether she can strike an appropriate balance between conservation and development. She has argued that several fundamental environmental laws are unconstitutional, including the Endangered Species Act and the Surface Mining Act, two laws that the Secretary of the Interior is tasked with enforcing.