

think as much as we in the Congress, for the next couple of weeks and months, even leading into a new administration, will debate policies that pertain to financial markets—what about credit, what about capital, all these terms, “liquidity,” the things we are hearing a lot about as they pertain to Wall Street—and regulation is going to be an important part of what we do—but as we debate all of those issues, I think we have to get back to the fundamentals about why we are living through this nightmare.

Part of it is the failure of this administration to do something in an aggressive way about regulation. Part of it is greed. But what resulted from that greed and from that inability to regulate markets and to oversee mortgages in an appropriate way is the fact that we have foreclosures. So if the Congress wants to respond to this in a positive way, to get something done, we have to do something about foreclosures, to bring that number down, to keep people in their homes and thereby to strengthen neighborhoods and our economy overall. If we keep neighborhoods strong, keep people in their homes, it will affect the whole world's financial markets and certainly our economy.

So what do we do? Well, I think what we can do—there will be a lot of proposals about how to get there—but just broadly—and I will conclude with these thoughts—to get there broadly what we have to do is to say: If in the July legislation—which was not everything that all of us wanted; I know the Presiding Officer and I probably wanted a lot more in that bill than we got, but what we did in that bill was to create an opportunity for 400,000 people to stay in their homes by getting the borrower and the lender in the same room, so to speak, to work out a modification, to work out some arrangement to keep that family in that home. What we have to do is take that 400,000 and expand it exponentially to at least a million and, beyond that, if possible, to do everything possible to keep those families in their homes.

If there is nothing else the Congress does for the next couple of months but focusing on the prevention of foreclosures, we will have contributed significantly to preventing some of the trauma we see on Wall Street and, as we have been hearing over and over again, on the Main Streets of America in the lives of our families.

There are a lot of ways to do that. One of those strategies is making sure that the prevention of predatory lending is a higher priority. But I think focusing on individual mortgages and the relationship between an individual lender and that homeowner is going to be critical to this. So we have to expand what we have already done and do more on keeping people in their homes.

We will talk more about it. But do you know what. All the answers to

these questions do not simply reside in what we talk about in the Senate or what happens in the House or here in Washington. A lot of good ideas are coming from our communities.

I point to one example. In Philadelphia—one of the places in Pennsylvania where the foreclosure rate has been far too high, even though other places have escaped it so far—in the city of Philadelphia, the court system, Judge Darnell Jones, and others, the mayor of the city, Michael Nutter, a very effective and capable mayor, came together with activists and people who understand how to keep people in their homes and said: Let's develop a program at the local level, and let's try to implement it.

They developed the Residential Mortgage Foreclosure Diversion Pilot Program. I have spoken about this before. But it is a kind of example we should expand upon and use as an example to keep people in their homes. In a word or two, it is an early intervention program. Instead of letting these mortgages go so far out of control where someone cannot stay in their home, they intervene earlier. The courts are able to facilitate loan workouts and other solutions to keep homeowners and their families in their homes.

It is an effort, as I said before, by the city and the mayor's office, Mayor Nutter, of being able to bring together housing advocates, volunteer attorneys, lenders, and servicers who all share the same goal of keeping people in their homes.

Now, the interests of these groups are divergent, but they have set aside those differences, and they realize that stemming the tide of foreclosure helps everyone. It obviously helps the homeowner and the family and the community. But it also helps lenders and, in a very substantial way, our economy.

So that is one example. We will talk more about it later in detail. But we need to enact policies that make sure those kinds of good examples coming from our communities become part of national policy. If we do that—if we are able to keep more and more, instead of 400,000 people staying in their homes, we make that 1 million, or even higher than that; if we do that, I think we can begin to stabilize the root cause of a lot of our problems.

In addition to that, we have to do more in regulation. We have to do much more in holding government agencies accountable that should have been the cop on the beat, so to speak, when it comes to what happens to lending practices and to mortgage practices.

So there is much to do, but I think the best thing we can do is focus on the root cause of this, which is foreclosures and the prevention of those foreclosures through counseling, through good programs, and through bringing people together at a time of real stress

in the life of families. I think we can do that. I think we have done that in the past. I think it is a bipartisan wish. What we are going to need here is leadership beyond the finger-pointing that we often see here in Washington.

So if we bring that spirit to this priority of stabilizing our economy, I think we can move forward and have a much stronger economy. If we choose not to and choose to focus on issues that will divide us when it comes to foreclosures, I think we are going to be off on the wrong track.

INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY AND WATER COMMISSION TRAGEDY

Mr. BINGAMAN. Mr. President, I would like to take a few minutes today to express my sadness regarding the tragedy this week involving officials with the International Boundary and Water Commission, IBWC. On Monday, an airplane carrying U.S. Commissioner Carlos Marin; Mexican Commissioner Arturo Herrera; and also Jake Brisbin, Jr., Executive Director of the Rio Grande Council of Governments; and Matthew Peter Juneau, the pilot, was reported as missing when it failed to arrive at its destination of Presidio, TX. Wreckage of that aircraft was located yesterday, and it was confirmed that there were no survivors. I offer my condolences to the family members of all of the individuals who were on the aircraft.

I would like to say a few words in particular about Commissioner Marin, who I had the pleasure of working with on a range of IBWC matters in New Mexico. Commissioner Marin was appointed to his position by President Bush in December 2006 after 27 years of service to the Commission. Previous to that, he worked with the Bureau of Reclamation after receiving a bachelor's degree in civil, engineering. He took over the IBWC at a tumultuous time, and quickly gained the respect of his colleagues and employees with calm and steady leadership of the agency. He was a problem-solver, focused on the IBWC's mission, and someone who was always readily accessible to my staff and me. Recently, my staff worked with him on the management plan for the Rio Grande in southern New Mexico. Commissioner Marin was instrumental in moving this project along after an impasse of many years. We will miss his effective leadership and his warm personality. My sympathies go out to his wife Rosa and two adult children.

DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, the 2008 Defense authorization bill contains a number of provisions that I strongly support. I support a pay raise for our troops, elimination of the SBP-DIC offset—which I was pleased to vote for—

and extra funding for barracks maintenance. I also strongly support the provision limiting the outsourcing of private security functions in war zones. During this time of incredible strain on the women and men serving in the Armed Forces, it is essential that we provide them the best quality of life we possibly can.

However, I voted in opposition to the bill because it contains \$70 billion to continue the war in Iraq but no language mandating that we safely redeploy our troops. Seven years after September 11, we remain bogged down in a conflict that is undermining our efforts to combat those who attacked us. We must redeploy from Iraq so that we can focus on the global threat posed by al-Qaida and its affiliates, particularly with respect to al-Qaida's safe haven in Pakistan along the Afghanistan border.

IDAHOANS SPEAK OUT ON HIGH ENERGY PRICES

Mr. CRAPO. Mr. President, in mid-June, I asked Idahoans to share with me how high energy prices are affecting their lives, and they responded by the hundreds. The stories, numbering over 1,000, are heartbreaking and touching. To respect their efforts, I am submitting every e-mail sent to me through energy_prices@crapo.senate.gov to the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD. This is not an issue that will be easily resolved, but it is one that deserves immediate and serious attention, and Idahoans deserve to be heard. Their stories not only detail their struggles to meet everyday expenses, but also have suggestions and recommendations as to what Congress can do now to tackle this problem and find solutions that last beyond today. I ask unanimous consent to have today's letters printed in the RECORD.

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

My family runs a purebred cattle ranch. Two years ago, my oldest son decided he wanted to join us in the ranching business, so we doubled our cowherd and made some changes. It was a challenge to feed another family, but one we were willing to take. Last year, we had to refinance the farm to get a little breathing room, but within one year, the margin we gave ourselves by refinancing was gone with the skyrocketing cost of feed, fertilizer, and fuel—all as a result of the cost of fuel. Now our power rates have increased, also. There was not money in the budget for my son and he had to take a job in town. Now I am left with twice the work and half the help.

I have two other sons that stated recently a business installing dairy lockups. They have taken on a lot of debt for equipment and also have to support a family. Within just a few months, they have seen the rising cost of diesel eat into their business to the point that I think they will have to take out bankruptcy and try to piece their lives together afterwards. A pretty rough start for a 22-year-old newlywed and an 18-year-old. They watch their spending, but right now

they are maxed out on their credit because of fuel costs and cannot even afford to get to their job sites. All our government officials need to be doing more. Absolutely open up our own oil fields. We need more refineries and more alternative fuel sources. I think hydrogen has excellent possibilities. And Idaho is an excellent source of wind. Something has got to be done and I mean now or this state will blow away.

MIKE, *Gooding*.

Short term: gas prices, depending on how soon we can start pumping oil, let us start drilling and refining here in the US. Same with nuclear power.

Long term: Honda just announced a new hydrogen fuel cell hybrid car that is three times as fuel efficient as the current hybrids. Will not be ready for about ten years, they say. Let us have these vehicles ready to purchase in three years, not ten. Same with electric cars. And give these businesses some kind of a [tax] break to keep the price of these vehicles down so everyone can afford to buy them, not just the movie stars in Hollywood!

RICK.

Please put politics aside and get serious about solving the energy crisis. You are the leaders of this country. You are representing the country very poorly. I am so amazed and ashamed of the way our leaders are putting themselves before the good of the country. Our forefathers were patriots! There are a few of you that are trying to solve the energy crisis. Quit throwing road blocks in front of those people.

My husband and I are retired, and the high cost of fuel is really hurting us. We live in a small town in Idaho, and we do not have public transportation. It is not like living in a city. Everything is spread out, so we have to drive almost everywhere. We have no choice. We bought a fifth wheel and a diesel truck when we retired. We planned on taking a summer trip in our RV to the Oregon Coast, but that will not happen. We just hope that we can take our RV to Arizona this winter. We have saved all our lives for our retirement, and the energy situation is wiping out our savings.

Let us see action [to back up the words we hear from our leaders]. Get off of foreign oil and become independent. Do the right thing and plan ahead. If it takes ten years to develop domestic oil wells, then get with it. This is a serious problem that is really hurting Americans.

LINDA, *Fruitland*.

I am concerned about the price of energy. Gas prices have gone up, and this is disconcerting and expensive. I am a mother of three and a devoted conservative. Last year we made plans to take a vacation on the Oregon coast this summer. Since we made those plans, gas prices have almost doubled. Now that we paid our deposit on the beach house, we cannot really back out, and it is still unaffordable to fly a family of five there, but we are afraid it is going to cost \$600-900 in gas just to get there. When we made our plans, we were thinking more in the \$300-400 range. But if this sounds bad, my brother and his wife who are going with us, both schoolteachers, with their six kids between the two of them (it is a blended family) will have to take two cars. So what was once a fun affordable summer vacation is now in the ridiculous range, just to get there, without food or hotel or fees for anything fun.

Why can't we drill for oil here in America? Why is our dirt so much more sacred than the dirt in the rest of the world? Let us look in our own country's wealth of resources to address this issue.

I am also highly supportive of exploring all our other resources: nuclear, water, wind, coal, etc. I know there are Native American reservations that want to build nuclear plants and they have been forbidden because of safety concerns. They should be allowed to build these plants, and I believe Americans are committed to the safety of our citizens in the process of exploring these other options. I am all for nuclear energy, with it is cost effectiveness and cleanliness.

I also believe here in Idaho we should be jumping at the chance to expand our public transportation in the form of a light-rail train. At this time of expensive gas, it would really be serving our community if we as citizens could look ahead and vote for it. I have lived in Utah and utilized their light rail (it runs full nearly every run) as well as traveled throughout Europe on their train systems. The convenience of traveling to downtown Boise from Meridian, or to BSU would be great. Not having to worry about parking or gas is wonderful. Can you imagine what this would do for the students of the valley if they could take the train to BSU? It was about four years from the time Utah voted it in until they could actually ride it. Let us begin!

Thank you for taking this issue seriously. Let us drill, let us build a train, and let us build a nuclear plant here in Idaho.

TAWNA, *Meridian*.

[Partisan policies have kept this issue from being resolved for many years.] The solution has been very obvious for a very, very long time. Simply "explain" to the oil companies that they have a choice. That is to either pay a huge windfall tax, or to immediately invest those windfall profits in new drilling in all the areas we already know we have an abundance of oil—and, by the way, process the huge supply of oil shale—if you recall, they said, "when oil gets to \$50 a barrel, it would be profitable!" Well, what have they been waiting for?!

By the way, just the mention of this will cause the price of oil to drop \$50 a barrel, if not more! But [there is too much special interest and environmentalist influence to take this simple solution.]

Plus, once you have that in place, the economy and the dollar are immediately strengthened. The next obvious step is to mandate that corn and other food stuffs will not be used for fuel, such as ethanol. There are many byproducts and non-food stuffs that are easily accessible and readily available that will produce that which is now obtained from corn. Consequently, not only will the price of gasoline, diesel and home heating fuels, etc. drop drastically, but the price of food and other products will drop back into line.

Of course, this would require that [partisanship be put aside and that small minorities and special interest groups take a back seat to the public interest.] Take action and set this country back on track and bring its economy back under control.

Like to hear from yuh . . . good luck,

BRUCE.

Gas prices have affected my family. How have we responded? We have chosen to conserve energy by driving less! We bike as much as possible, and are more mindful of when and where we choose to drive. In addition we drive relatively fuel-efficient vehicles. I disagree with the notion that we need