

centralize ministries or offices to encourage international travel to their countries. The example of North Dakota should be a lesson for the entire country. The U.S. offers unique and diverse destinations for travelers—a small investment in national coordination has the potential to create a significant windfall for our economy.

The Travel Promotion Act of 2009 will promote travel to the U.S., including areas not traditionally visited, highlighting the U.S. as a premier travel destination. The bill will improve communication of U.S. travel policies and perceptions of the process—negative perceptions can often deter foreigners from traveling here. Our communities will benefit from growth of this multibillion-dollar industry—with an increase in visitors they will experience an expansion of jobs and local economies.

The bill initiates a nationally coordinated travel promotion campaign established in a public-private partnership to increase international travel to the United States. It creates a Corporation for Travel Promotion, an independent, nonprofit corporation, to run the travel promotion campaign. The program will be funded equally by a small fee paid by foreign travelers visiting the U.S. and matching contributions from the travel industry.

This is a great country, and we should welcome visitors to our shores to meet our people and experience our culture.

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 well over 1,200, are heartbreaking and touching. While energy prices have dropped following the submissions, those prices are now on the way back up and the concerns expressed remain very relevant. To respect the efforts of those who took the opportunity to share their thoughts, I am submitting every e-mail sent to me through an address set up specifically for this purpose to the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD. Today marks the last of the submissions, a process that has taken approximately ten months to complete. But this concern—our national energy policy—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. These 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:

Not too long ago, I was considering purchase of a residential solar array. I have read examples about people in other states (California, Massachusetts, etc.) who had implemented a solar array at home (including an inverter), which enabled them to generate some of their own power/electricity. Most importantly, they are able to sell their excess power via the inverter to the grid when they are not using it. This is an equal rate, meaning that the utility company would buy it at whatever their current rate was at that time of day. Basically, your electricity meter spins backwards according to the amount you contribute to the utility. In this way, people are able to "bank" kilowatts into the grid so that the power they used at night was somewhat paid for (depending on the size of their array, rate of usage and amount of sunshine available, obviously).

After talking to some people locally, I have heard that Idaho Power does not have anything remotely like this policy in place. In fact, it sounded like they are only required to pay 50% the value of the power your array might generate and feed to the grid via your inverter, and only for a set volume. After reaching a particular level, the utility would be capturing a lot of that resident provider's power for free. This appears to be an unfair practice to me, and really tramples on any incentive for buying and implementing a residential solar array. There is a federal tax credit available, but that just addresses start-up costs, not long-term usage and maintenance.

I am no energy expert and do not claim to have validated all of the data I put forth above, but I am very interested in pursuing a solar-energy based solution to cut my long-term energy costs. Given the days of sun per year in southwest Idaho, this seems like a no-brainer.

Please tell me about your position on residential solar energy implementation practices here in Idaho, and specifically how you would vote on a bill that would require our local energy provider (read: Idaho Power) to fairly compensate residential energy providers, using the scenario I mentioned above. This will directly impact how I vote in the future.

JOHN, Boise.

Senator Crapo, this information seems to be right on. I hope you will take the time to read it.

MARY, Sandpoint.

Dear Mary,

On several occasions in the past few months, I have written about the impact of skyrocketing fuel prices on airline customers—in their daily lives and when they travel (Final Approach May 1 and Final Approach May 28). In the long run, to lower oil prices for all Americans, we need to increase domestic supply, increase exploration, alternative energy sources and conservation. However, one near-term solution to the problem is for government to investigate and rein in oil speculators.

What is the Commodities Market?—Commodities are raw materials purchased by manufacturers of finished products such as food manufacturers, oil refiners or builders. Businesses that are highly dependent on oil—refineries, heating oil dealers, airlines and trucking companies among others—lessen their risk of significant price fluctuations by purchasing future delivery contracts at predetermined prices in what is known as the commodities or futures markets. The two largest U.S. commodities markets or futures exchanges are the Chicago Mercantile Exchange and the New York Mercantile Exchange, where people trade standardized futures contracts; that is, a contract to buy

specific quantities of a commodity at a specified price with delivery set at a specified time in the future.

What is the Problem with Oil?—There is a significant disconnect between the paper market for oil (speculators) and the physical market for oil (consumers). In recent years, speculators have taken advantage of actual consumers of oil by bidding up the price for futures contracts. If a speculator purchases a contract for delivery of oil at a high price six or 12 months in the future but has no intention of actually taking delivery of the oil in that contract, then a physical customer who needs that oil—to deliver home heating oil, to operate trucks or airplanes, or even to process in a refinery—will be forced to pay the higher price in order to obtain the oil that is needed.

How Do They Get Away with That?—Increasingly, sophisticated institutional investors have managed to manipulate the rules and regulations governing commodities transactions through a series of exemptions and waivers, including the so-called "Enron loophole," low margin requirements and the dodging of U.S. public disclosure requirements. These complex arrangements have a similar impact: They put people engaged in oil-related businesses at a disadvantage with those who gamble relatively small sums that the price of oil will increase out of proportion to marketplace demands. If that happens, as it has regularly over the past few years, those who need oil for their businesses pay a premium, which is passed on to you—the consumer.

What Can Government Do Now?—In the near term, Congress needs to address the impact of unchecked speculation in the commodities market.

Commodities trading is overseen by a small, but very powerful government agency known as the Commodities Futures Trading Commission (CFTC). Congress can require the CFTC to implement a host of controls such as imposing limits on the quantity of commodities contracts speculators may purchase, closing the loopholes that allow speculators to trade exempt from any government oversight or regulation, and requiring reporting by those who are engaging in speculation.

Experts say that closing regulatory loopholes in the trading of commodity futures will result in a significant reduction in fuel prices.

What's Next?—Congress is expected to debate some of these issues in the next few weeks and it is urgent that they hear your voice. To facilitate public participation in the debate over speculators, we have launched a broad-based coalition, S.O.S. NOW, that provides a wide array of information on speculation and its impact on the price we all pay for oil. S.O.S. NOW stands for Stop Oil Speculation Now, and we urge you to go to the Web site www.stopoilspeculationnow.com and send a message to Congress about oil speculation.

AIR TRANSPORT ASSOCIATION.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO DR. KANU CHATTERJEE

● Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I am pleased to pay tribute to world-renowned cardiologist Kanu Chatterjee as he retires from the University of California at San Francisco—UCSF—Medical Center after 34 years of dedicated service.

Dr. Chatterjee was born in what is now Bangladesh and moved with his