that fills our hearts with pride. On March 2, 165 years ago, a solemn convention of 54 men, including my great, great grandfather Charles S. Taylor, met in the small settlement of Washington-on-the-Brazos. There they signed the Texas Declaration of Independence. The declaration stated:

We, therefore . . . do hereby resolve and declare . . . that the people of Texas do now constitute a free, sovereign and independent republic.

At the time, Texas was a remote territory of Mexico. It was hospitable only to the bravest and most determined of settlers. After declaring our independence, the founding delegates quickly wrote a constitution and organized an interim government for the newborn republic.

As was the case when the American Declaration of Independence was signed in 1776, our declaration only pointed the way toward a goal. It would exact a price of enormous effort and great sacrifice. My great, great grandfather was there, signing the Texas Declaration of Independence. As most of the delegates did, he went on eventually to fight in the Battle of San Jacinto, and Texas would finally become an independent nation.

He didn't know it at the time, but all four of his children who had been left back at home in Nacogdoches died trying to escape from the Mexican troops who they feared were coming after them.

This was known as the ''runaway scrape,'' when the women and children in the Nacogdoches Territory fled toward Louisiana because they feared Indians and Mexican troops, and they were trying to go to safety. But the rigors of the trip were very harsh and all four of their children were dead when he returned.

Fortunately, he and his wife, my great, great grandmother, had nine more children. But it is just an example of the sacrifices that were made by people who were willing to fight for something they believed in. That, of course, was freedom.

While the convention sat in Washington-on-the-Brazos, 6,000 Mexican troops held the Alamo under siege, challenging this newly created republic.

Several days earlier, from the Alamo, Col. William Barrett Travis sent his immortal letter to the people of Texas and to all Americans. He knew the Mexican Army was approaching and he knew that he had only a very few men to help defend the San Antonio fortress. Colonel Travis wrote:

Fellow Citizens and Compatriots: I am besieged with a thousand or more of the Mexicans under Santa Anna. I have sustained a continual Bombardment and cannonade for 24 hours and have not lost a man. The enemy has demanded surrender at discretion, otherwise, the garrison is to be put to the sword, if the fort is taken. I have answered the demand with a cannon shot, and our flag still waves proudly over the wall. I shall never surrender or retreat. Then I call on you in the name of Liberty, of patriotism, of everything dear to the American character, to come to our aid with all dispatch. The enemy is receiving reinforcements daily and will no doubt increase to three or four thousand in four or five days. If this call is neglected I am determined to sustain myself as long as possible and die like a soldier who never forgets what is due his honor and that of his country—Victory or Death.—William Barrett Travis, Lt. Col. Commander.

What Texan or otherwise can fail to be stirred by Colonel Travis' resolve. In fact, Colonel Travis' dire prediction came true, 4,000 to 5,000 Mexican troops did lay siege to the Alamo.

In the battle that followed, 184 brave men died in a heroic but vain attempt to fend off Santa Anna's overwhelming army. The Alamo, as we all in Texas know, was crucial to Texas independence because those heroes at the Alamo held out for so long that Santa Anna's forces were battered and diminished. Gen. Sam Houston gained the time he needed to devise a strategy to defeat Santa Anna at the Battle of San Jacinto just a month or so later on April 21, 1836. The Lone Star was visible on the horizon at last.

Each year on March 2, there is a ceremony at Washington-on-the-Brazos State Park where there is a replica of the modest cabin where the 54 patriots pledged their lives, honor, and treasure for freedom.

Every year, in, on, or around March 2, I read Colonel Travis' letter to my colleagues in the Senate. This is a tradition started by the late Senator John Tower, my friend. This is a reminder to all of us of the pride that Texans share in our history and in being the only State that came into the Union as a republic.

I am pleased to continue the tradition started by my friend, Senator Tower, because we do have a unique heritage in Texas where we fought for our freedom. Having grown up in the family and hearing the stories of my great-great-grandfather and my great-great-grandmother and her heroism as well as his, it was something that was ingrained in us: fighting for something we believe is right and for maintaining the vigil for freedom throughout our country to this day.

It is very important we remember the people who sacrificed, the 184 men who died at the Alamo, the men who died at Goliad later that same month, and those 54 men who met at Washington-on-the-Brazos putting their lives in danger as well by signing that declaration of independence and becoming traitors for a cause. Their deaths gave birth to Texas independence, and we became a nation, a status we enjoyed for 10 years before we entered the United States as a State.

I might add, we entered the Union by a 1-vote margin in the House and a 1-vote margin in the Senate. In fact, we were originally going to come into the United States through a treaty, but the two-thirds vote could not be received in the Senate for ratification. Therefore, President John Tyler, for whom one of our great cities in Texas is named, introduced the resolution into Congress. He said: No, we will pass a law to invite Texas to become a part of our Union. And that law passed by 1 vote in the House and 1 vote in the Senate.

I am very pleased Senator Tyler thought enough of us to ask us to join the Union and fight for our ability to do that. We have contributed a lot to the United States, and we are very proud of our heritage and the history of fighting for freedom that has been passed through the generations in my family, as well as in the families of so many Texans.

I am pleased to commemorate our great heritage and the history of Texas—Texas the republic and Texas the State.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BUNNING). The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. ALLARD. 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. ALLARD. Mr. President, I rise today to introduce some legislation which I send to the desk.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Colorado is recognized.

Mr. ALLARD. I thank the Chair.

(The remarks of Mr. ALLARD pertaining to the introduction of S. 425 are located in today's RECORD under ''Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.'')

Mr. ALLARD. Mr. President, I 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. NELSON of Florida. 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. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to be allowed to proceed for 10 minutes.

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

(The remarks of Mr. NELSON of Florida pertaining to the introduction of legislation is are located in today's RECORD under ''Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.'')

Mr. NELSON of Florida. 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. CRAPO. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

EXTENSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. CRAPO. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the period for

morning business be extended until 2 p.m. with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

Mr. CRAPO. Mr. President, I 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 (Mr. FITZGERALD). Without objection, it is so ordered.

STARTLING ENERGY FACTS

Mr. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I rise to share with my colleagues circumstances that should be evidenced in prompt action on the energy bill which has been introduced as a bipartisan bill by Senator BREAUX and myself, Senator LOTT, and a number of other Senators.

I have said for some time that we have an energy crisis in this country. Let me share some startling facts.

The majority of the Fortune 500 corporations in this country, reporting fourth quarter earnings, have indicated their earnings have come in far less than projected as a consequence of the increased cost of energy in this country. There is a multiplier associated with that.

This has an effect on inventories, an effect on transportation, on virtually every facet of our economy from buying furniture to big-ticket items such as automobiles. Think for a moment that 50 percent of the homes in this country are dependent on natural gas. The average billing for energy for those homes has gone up 50 percent in the last year. There is no end in sight.

We have a situation where companies that traditionally make fertilizer—urea, the technical name—and use natural gas in the conversion of the fertilizer are no longer making fertilizer. They are reselling their supply of gas because they have some relatively low-cost gas sources. We have aluminum companies in the Northwest that are no longer manufacturing aluminum. They have shut their aluminum production down and are reselling their electricity because they have long-term contracts at favorable rates. In other words, it is cheaper to resell the power than it is to make the aluminum from the standpoint of return on investment. We have in Colorado copper mines that are no longer operating as a consequence of the cost of power. More and more people are becoming unemployed in these industries as a consequence of a lack of an energy policy.

It is not my intent to point fingers because that doesn't get us anywhere. We have to recognize that we have a crisis, and we have to recognize how we are going to get out of it. We are not going to get out of it by drilling our way out, nor are we going to get out of it by conservation. We are going to have to go back to the basics of our conventional energy sources, as well as the prospects for greater dependence on alternatives and renewables, and recognize the use of our technological capabilities to achieve a balance because our energy supply is out of balance.

We haven't built a new coal-fired plant in this country since the mid 1990s. Why? A number of reasons: Permitting, costs, the problems associated with removing high sulfur, and the realization that we have had to take many of our old coal-fired plants, which became inefficient and no longer could meet permits, out of the mix.

We haven't built a new nuclear plant in this country in nearly 20 years. Why? It is not because we don't have the technology. Nuclear contributes about 20 percent of our energy. It is emission free. The reality is that we have not been able to address what to do with our nuclear waste. We can't come to grips with the technology or with how or where we are going to dispose of it. As a consequence, nobody in their right mind would build a nuclear plant in this country. We talk about hydro, but we have limited the hydro available. We are debating whether to take some dams down, but there is a tradeoff. If you take the dams down, you eliminate the ability to move traffic by barge, so you put it on the highways.

So we have turned to natural gas as our preferred source of energy. A year ago, natural gas was about $2.16 per thousand cubic feet; now it is $8 or $9, and it has been up as high as $10. The point is that we are pulling our natural gas reserves down at a very rapid rate. The realization is, as we have seen in the California dilemma where they have become dependent on outside energy sources within their State of about 25 percent, the danger of becoming dependent on outside sources.

Let me conclude with a reference to oil, which is something I know something about. Currently, 56 percent of our oil comes from overseas, primarily the Mideast. The CSIS study shows that for the next decade we are going to increase our dependence on hydrocarbons. That doesn't mean we are not conserving more, or should not, or develop more alternatives. The realization is we are simply using more energy. Society moves by computer and e-mail, by technology, and it is fostered by energy.

The picture I am painting today is not very pretty, but there is one more facet of concern to this Senator from Alaska. When do we begin to compromise our national security interests by increasing our dependence on imported oil? I have said this in this Chamber on many occasions, and I will say it again.

If we look at our policy toward Iraq, a country we fought a war against in 1991 and 1992 to ensure that Saddam Hussein didn't invade Kuwait and go on into Saudi Arabia and basically control the world's supply of oil, isn't it ironic that since that time we have flown over 20,000 sorties, enforcing the no-fly zone, and the cost of that to the American taxpayer is difficult to calculate. You might say it is a Pentagon energy tax, but it costs each one of us to enforce that no-fly zone.

The other day, the raids in the northern part of Iraq were carried out to destroy Saddam Hussein's technical capability that he developed with his radar sensing system, which endangers our aircraft and our pilots. If you look at that scenario—and I have said this before—we seem to have an arrangement where we buy his oil, 750,000 barrels a day, and we put it in our airplanes, and then we go bomb him. That may be an oversimplistic statement, but I think it is fairly accurate.

What does he do with our money? He develops his missile capability, the delivery capability, and his biological capability. At whom is it aimed? Our greatest ally in the Mideast, Israel. So we have some inconsistencies.

I was asked the other day to explain at what point I thought we would compromise our energy security interests by increasing our dependence on imported oil from the Mideast. I thought for a while, and I responded by saying: I guess we have already been there. We fought this war and lost 147 lives. We have had 427 wounded. Now, the Department of Energy says we are going to be close to 63-, 64-, 65-percent dependence in the early years of the 2007 period, or thereabout. If we are going to increase that, at what point are we really vulnerable to being held hostage by the Mideast, Mr. President?

What does that mean? Well, it means that since we have become so dependent on one source—the Mideast, which is a very unstable part of the world—we face the reality of them controlling the price to the point where they can pretty well dictate the terms of our addiction to oil. They can do that simply by reducing the supply at any given time, and they have shown the discipline to do that. As a consequence of that, they can increase the price.

The point of my discussion is to suggest to you that we should all come to grips with the reality that this administration has to adopt an energy policy with great dispatch. It has been estimated that the high oil prices are reducing our U.S. economic growth by as much as 2 percent a year. Our lost GDP has been estimated at about $165 billion a year. It is estimated that we are losing approximately 5.5 million jobs that we would have had, had we had the availability of relatively low-cost energy.

The last point I want to make is as to our vulnerability. As I indicated in my opening remarks, we are not going to drill our way out of this, by any means. We are not going to conserve our way out. We have to go back to the basics and get the balance. There is legislation introduced in this body to put the