For example, Colombia has implemented a preferential trade agreement with Argentina and Brazil. As a result, U.S. farm products are rapidly being displaced in the Colombia market by products from those countries. So it is not even that between 2008 and 2010, U.S. agricultural exports to Colombia fell by more than half, and it looks like matters are going to get even worse. A Montana wheat grower who testified at yesterday's hearing noted that in 2006, 80 percent of his wheat was sold in the United States. This year, only 60 percent is going to be sold there. And the share of Colombia's wheat market fell from 73 percent in 2008 to 43 percent in 2010. He also stated that following implementation of the Canada- Colombia Free Trade Agreement, which is expected to occur this year, U.S. exports of wheat to Colombia will drop to zero unless the United States implements its trade agreement with Colombia. So U.S. agricultural exports to Colombia are already falling. U.S. manufactured goods and U.S. services will be next.

It doesn't have to be this way. We do not have to continue giving away the growing Columbia market to our competitors. If we want to boost our exports to Colombia, all we have to do is implement the U.S.-Colombia Trade Promotion Agreement.

The Obama administration had earlier stated that it wanted to address Colombia's internal labor situation before moving ahead with the agreement. But the administration delayed taking any meaningful steps to address their concerns with the Colombian government for years. A few months ago, the administration finally got serious about engaging with Colombia. And, lo and behold, in a matter of weeks—in a matter of weeks—they were able to develop a labor action plan that addressed their concerns in a meaningful and concrete way. The administration discovered that, in their own words, they had a willing partner in Colombia. The fact is that Colombia has been taking steps for years to address issues related to violence against unionists and has always been willing to do more. Why it took the administration so long to figure it out is a mystery to me.

So the Obama administration has now negotiated an action plan that addresses its concerns regarding the labor situation in Colombia. You would think we would have clarity that, once the action plan is filled, the administration would submit the agreement to Congress for its consideration. But we do not have this clarity. There has been no clear answer to this very simple question. Instead, there seem to be more preconditions on implementing the agreement. What we'll find out is that Colombia's trade promotion authority procedures in April 2008, the Democratic leadership refused to allow the agreement to come up for a vote. Instead, they changed the rules, and the agreement has since languished for almost 5 years. It is time for the excuses to end. Resolution of unrelated issues, such as trade adjustment assistance and PNTR for Russia should not be used as further barriers to submission of this agreement.

Colombia is taking the steps laid out by the Obama administration that the administration has said are necessary before the Trade Promotion Act will formally submit the agreement to Congress. Once those steps are taken in June, I fully expect the administration to finally fulfill its end of the bargain and formally submit the agreement for congressional approval without further conditions. If not, the administration is making a conscious decision to continue denying U.S. exporters improved access to the Colombian market, and to undermine our standing as a credible ally in Latin America.

It is a no-brainer to realize that Colombia is one of our best friends. When you compare it to some of its neighbors, such as Venezuela—and I can name other countries that are undermining our very country as we sit here and stand here. The fact of the matter is, Colombia is a friend. Friends should not be treated this way. It is ridiculous what is going on. There is very little need for trade adjustment assistance in this particular deal. It is just another way of sucking more money from the taxpayers more money for purposes that literally do not exist.

I hope the administration will wake up and realize this would be a tremendous achievement for them. There is no reason in the world why they should not want to do this. It would be a sure creator of jobs at a time when we need jobs. It will even up a situation that up to this point has been sad. And it will help our country. Let's quit playing games with this free trade agreement. Let's get it up. Let's vote on it, and let's restore our relationship with Colombia to the great relationship it deserves to be.

Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. FRANKEN.) Without objection, it is so ordered.

BIG OIL

Mr. LAUTENBERG. Mr. President, as I stand here today, I am trying to figure out what our activities look like to the average American. They know we still have the serious problems, though we are on a good track, and I think it is fair to say we are feeling a little bit better. But we were cautioned
by President Obama the other day—those of us who had a chance to sit in a room with him—that while things are looking up, there is still a long way to go before our people are back to work and before they can afford the basics they need to take care of their families.

While this is going on we have seen the most incredible courage, the most well-developed military plan imaginable. I am talking of our people who went in to apprehend Osama bin Laden. Thank goodness, nobody was hurt. It was a job well done, and the execution of a plan to bring to justice the man who helped kill almost 3,000 people at the World Trade Center and hundreds more in other attacks on American facilities—the Embassy in Tanzania, the Embassy in Kenya, the ship USS Cole—taking American lives. That is what they were determined to do.

Presidents in the last few previous administrations looking at things, trying to figure out what to do to stop these terrorist attacks on America, had the courage to make a decision that would have rested so heavily on someone in that governing position. He decided to take the risk knowing that our people were so well trained, so well committed that the chance of their failure was so slim but so very real.

Good things have happened in America. Not only did this operation against bin Laden succeed in at least slowing down, if not eliminating, some of the terrorist threats in America, it also lifted the morale of our people across the country. We all felt better about it because we fought back against this terror threat.

But now I look at where we are and listen to the debate and look at what the House of Representatives has done with their majority. At this point in time, when we are still reeling from shock, having had perhaps the greatest recession since the Great Depression of the twenties and thirties, instead of trying ways to solve the problems, our colleagues on the Republican side are trying to figure out ways to punish the public. They would say to them: OK, so you don’t have enough jobs—we are going to try to reduce the possibility that we will have enough, to reduce the possibility that a person who can learn but is not well off can get an education. They want to take away those opportunities. They want to take away programs that have succeeded.

We look back at our history in the last 90 years and ask: How did we get here? How did we get where we are? Mr. President, 400,000 Americans were killed in World War II. Then we saw growth in our country because of planning during President Roosevelt’s days in the New Deal and the planning that President Johnson offered. We had Social Security developed, and then came Medicare, and then came Medicaid—programs that help people.

On a personal basis, for me, those years I am talking about were particularly significant. I was born to a poor family. My father found it very difficult to earn a living, as did millions of other Americans. He worked in a silk factory in the city of Paterson, NJ. He was a man very conscious of his health. But the problem was that the environment was such that he contracted cancer when he was 42. He died when he was 43 years old. His brother, working in the same type of factory, died when he was 52. My grandfather, who worked in the mills, died when he was 56 years old. My life was as I saw it. Things were bleak.

My mother was a 37-year-old widow, and she had to carry on through my father’s sickness. They bought a store to make ends meet. It did not do very well, but it kept her going for a while. When all was over and my father died, I was already enlisted in the Army. My mother had no resources left. She owed doctors, owed pharmacists, owed hospitals. Every penny she had was gone. I remember one day when I walked in: Something is not fair. But I was lucky. I was able to get my education under the GI bill, as did 8 million other people who wore the American uniform during those dark days.

What does it mean to get an education? I went to Columbia University. I was lucky. My tuition was paid for. I even got some money for books and some things I might have needed along the way were provided. It made a world of difference.

I was able, with two friends, to start a business. The company is fairly well known. It is called ADP. The three of us started with nothing, the two brothers with whom I was associated. Their father also worked in the factories of Paterson. They were immigrants as were my grandparents. But along came this educational opportunity, and with that came an opportunity to start a business. Today that company, ADP, is one of the four most creditworthy companies in the United States. They are listed as a three-star company.

ADP has 45,000 employees. They work in 21 countries. Most of the operation is in America but some of it is outside. It employs over 45,000 employees and helps businesses by taking over a particular part of their recordkeeping needs. It helps make things operate better in these companies.

Every month there is a labor statistic that is done by ADP, my old company. The numbers are more reliable than those of the Bureau of Labor Statistics because the data is fresher. Every week, some 35 million people get their paychecks and that is where the data comes from. I left the company when I came here 29 years ago.

From all these experiences, I saw an America that gave people like me a chance to do things and created what is called the greatest generation in the history of America. Now, Mr. President, I am beginning to see what I believe is a great generation developing—the number of people getting to work, fewer claims for unemployment insurance, more consumer spending, and retail sales are up. The signs are good.

So when I look at what is going on in the House of Representatives, I see the stubbornness of our colleagues who refuse to step in and say: Look, we have to keep the government strong, we have to make sure we supply the kind of energy to the government that can move America along. Their response is cut, cut, cut, when all the critical social programs I mentioned were needed expansion of government services. I am not one of those who want to cut valuable programs. I am one of those who want to reduce the deficit.

Mr. President, when you look at a balance sheet, a financial statement, it carries two parts: One part is expenses—costs—and the other part is revenues. You can cut expenses all you want, but if the revenues don’t improve, you go bankrupt. It is pretty simple. It is being asked to put our future on the line. Hold the debt ceiling as ransom? For what? For what? It will destroy the competence in America. It will destroy our ability to be the country we are, the country that sends the world despite competition.

When I left home this morning, I passed an Exxon station that is fairly near my home. There was a sign on the pump that gave the price of their gasoline—$4.60 a gallon. For people who have any distance to travel, this is painful. This is painful. This is part of the income they can use for basic things that are needed.

But what do we see? We see major gasoline companies, and we ask ourselves: Whose side are our colleagues on? It appears they are on the side of the gasoline companies. I think we ought to be more conscientious about this and make sure the public understand. I think we are there for them, for the majority of people in this country who are sick and tired of seeing the price-gouging we have seen from the gasoline companies.

There was a Finance Committee hearing today, and I watched and heard the heads of these companies—the five big oil companies—say what they are worried about. Well, they are worried about the prospect of losing $4 billion a year they get in subsidies. And there was every kind of a caustic comment that might be used to American to take away the subsidies these people get. Mr. President, $4 billion a year in subsidies.

When you look at what is going on with these companies, you see astounding results. Make people who have greed is fueling their appetite, and the bigger it gets, the more they want.

During the years of World War II, there was an excess profits tax that said companies shouldn’t be feeding off the opportunity the war presented and taking advantage of the public. Well, we are at war, in case people have forgotten about it. Afghanistan is a
real war. We still have the remnants of the difficulties in Iraq, we have piracy on the seas, and we have all kinds of things we have to keep fighting for. So there ought to be some recompense for our country for the opportunity they have to make some kind of money.

There are their earnings during the first 3 months of 2011, which is still part of the recession time: Exxon, their end-of-quarter profits were over $10 billion, Shell, almost $9 billion, BP, $7.1 billion—think of after their foul mistake in the Gulf of Mexico that cost plenty of money. They still made that kind of money. And Chevron made $6.2 billion. Little ConocoPhillips only made $3 billion in that quarter.

When you think about it, the irony is how well BP has done—a company that spilled 200 million gallons of oil into the ocean last year. Why is our government shoveling billions of dollars into the pockets of their executives, their lawyers? Why don’t we use the money to invest in our own projects? Why don’t we pay down our debt? I would like to see us doing that.

Big Oil’s greed is helping to inflate our deficit. Every day, Americans are footing the bill. You would think our colleagues on the other side of the aisle would want to put a stop to this madness, to step up for the average person. Well, so far we are not doing what I would like to see being done for the public, for the average citizen. Big Oil is doing it in its power to protect its subsidies, and the Republicans are doing everything in their power to help them. The Republicans say that eliminating these wasteful subsidies will raise gas prices. That is wrong. That is plain wrong.

Look at the compensation of the CEOs here. Now, they are not selling pretzels or making potato chips; they are dealing with a commodity that is essential to the functioning of our society, of which Big Oil is just a small part. In its power to protect its subsidies, and the Republicans are doing everything in their power to help them. The Republicans say that eliminating these wasteful subsidies will raise gas prices. That is wrong. That is plain wrong.

The benefit of increased drilling will not be enough to erase the government’s wasteful oil industry subsidies. In addition to going into the paychecks of the Big Oil executives, this money is being used to line the pockets of the industry’s lawyers and lobbyists who are seen frequently and obviously around here.

I have seen this time and time again during my career in the Senate. I was the first Senator on the scene at the Exxon Valdez when it rammed into the Alaskan shoreline in 1989. Instead of being forthcoming and doing what they should have done, Exxon fought over every penny with the communities in Alaska—the families and the fishermen whose lives it destroyed. Instead of stepping up to pay the court-awarded damages—$5 billion—Exxon said: To hell with it. We will fight it. We will fight it all the way. And they did, for years. They knocked down the amount from $5 billion in punitive damages to $500 million. I guarantee you they paid a lot of money to the lawyers and lobbyists who would rather give it to them than to the American people. That is what that shows. In the end, it took more than 20 years for Exxon to pay for what it had done. Some victims died while waiting for the verdict that would allow them to live.

So we should not be giving Big Oil $4 billion in tax breaks each year. Their profits, which last year exceeded $300 billion, are larger than lots of countries. We should be investing in ways to break our dangerous addiction to oil. We should be investing in innovative approaches to moving people and goods, including increasing funds for transit, creating a world-class high-speed rail network, and expanding the number of electric cars on our roads. We should also boost our country’s promising clean energy industry, making sure we lead the world in the export of environmental products that are proudly stamped with the “Made in the USA” label.

Don’t be fooled—drilling will not, in the final analysis, get us out of our energy problems. We use almost a quarter of the world’s oil, but we sit on less than 3 percent of the world’s reserve. We need to drastically cut our oil needs and bring the end of our ability to produce oil. That will be the conclusion. According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration, even if we open every offshore drilling area in the continental United States, the average price of gasoline would drop by just 3 cents a gallon by the year 2030. Here, we see it: The benefit of increased drilling will save us 3 cents a gallon in two decades. That is not very promising for people who have to rely on the automobile for all kinds of things in their day-to-day lives.

Continuing to subsidize oil companies only increases our dependence on dirty fuels. And even as our children pay a heavy price—with asthma victims and other respiratory problems—it keeps us on a dead-end road to sky-high energy bills, more oil spills like the one we saw in the gulf, and dangerous pollution levels. Investing in clean alternatives to oil, cars that go further on gas, and smart transportation, such as mass transit, are the only realistic solutions to our energy challenges.

Beyond clean energy investments, we should take the $4 billion we give away to Big Oil each year and use that money to pay down our deficit. It is pretty clear that we cannot restore fiscal sanity to our government unless we start paying more attention to the revenue column in our ledger.

I was a CEO for many years. I know you cannot run a company or a country without a strong revenue flow. Ending the government’s wasteful oil industry subsidies will not be enough to erase our deficit, but it is a good place to start.

I call on my colleagues, have a citizen’s heart. Look at this as you would any other obligation you have in your life. Make sure our country is strong and that our middle-class and our modest communities can look ahead for a decent life for themselves, educating their children and protecting their parents with proper health care. Get Big Oil off the welfare rolls. Let’s end the industry’s tax breaks and end our country’s addiction to oil and other dirty fuels. Let’s invest in clean energy and smart transportation—and cut the windfalls for the oil industry lobbyists and lawyers. I want to make sure—and I am sure all of us do, down deep—our grandchildren and children inherit a country that is fiscally sound and morally responsible. I yield the floor.

2011 NATIONAL POLICE WEEK

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, this afternoon I had the honor of attending the Top Cops event hosted by President Obama at the White House. I will be honored Sunday to attend the National Peace Officers Memorial ceremony. I appreciate the support the President is showing for our law enforcement officers not just this week but every week.

Local law enforcement is critical to the peace and security of our families and communities in Vermont and across the country. In 1962, President John F. Kennedy signed a proclamation to designate May 15 as Peace Officers Memorial Day and the week in which that date falls as Police Week. Every year and during Police Week, thousands of law enforcement officers from around the country converge on Washington, DC, to honor those who have paid the ultimate sacrifice keeping all of us safe. I want to mark this week by recognizing the heroic women and men and our law enforcement who are dedicated to just that. More than 900,000 law enforcement officers guard our communities at great