

and one-half years. Although there are these and other serious problems noted in the park's safety and health record, overall federal injury, illness, lost work-time, fatality and workers's compensation rates show the United States Postal Service leading the pack in almost every category.

Postal workers injuries and illnesses represent 42 percent of the government's lost-time cases. From 1992 to 1997, the Postal Service paid an annual average of \$505 million in workers' compensation costs and its annual contribution accounted for almost one-third of the federal program's \$1.8 billion price tag. These alarming statistics made my decision to slowly bring the federal government into compliance rather easy.

In 1982, the Postal Service became fiscally self-sufficient—depending entirely on market-driven revenues rather than taxpayer dollars. They should be congratulated for that. Today, the United States Postal Service handles over 43 percent of the world's mail—delivering more mail in one week than Federal Express and the United Parcel Service combined deliver in an entire year. With annual profits that exceed \$1.5 billion, if the Postal Service were a private company, it would be the 9th largest business in the United States and 29th in the entire world.

Realistically speaking, the Postal Service is hardly a federal agency. It's better characterized as a self-sufficient, quasi-government entity. It is the only federal agency where its employees can collectively bargain under the 1935 National Labor Relations Act. It's the only federal agency that posts annual profits exceeding \$1.5 billion. In fact, the Postal Service exhibits almost every characteristic of a private business, yet it never had to fully comply with federal occupational safety and health law—until now. Last month, Representative GREENWOOD, author of the House bill, took the initiative to pass the Postal Employees Safety Enhancement Act in the House and sent it on to the President.

Since the bill's enactment, I learned that OSHA and the National Park Service, have entered into safety pact. I commend both agencies for this commitment to workplace safety and health. It is my understanding that other federal agencies could do the same. I hope that such agreements with OSHA represent a way to introduce third party consultations as a means of bringing a greater number of federal worksites into compliance.

The enactment of S. 2112 and the previous two bills marks the first significant step toward modernizing the nation's 28 year-old occupational safety and health law. I believe that these incremental accomplishment were achieved because this Congress is committed to improving conditions for America's workers. We have a long road ahead of us and that road, so far, had been too slow to save American lives. This debate will not end when

Congress completes its work this year. I fully intent to press forward—well into the 106th Congress. More hearings on this important issue are necessary. We need a bipartisan effort—making headway in every area we can reach agreement. We need to dedicate some time to reaching that agreement. This will not happen by accident! Good legislation will ultimately be achieved and increased compliance will undoubtedly result if we simply remain committed to it.

I want to conclude my remarks by thanking members and staff for making occupational safety and health such a successful issue during the last two years. I want to first thank my House colleague and friend JIM TALENT. His impressive knowledge of labor law, complemented by his labor counsel, Jennifer Woodbury, helped bring the SAFE Act to the attention of all House members. I look forward to work on many more bills with JIM TALENT in the coming years. I would also like to thank Congressmen BALLENGER, GREENWOOD, and MCHUGH and their staff. They, too, should be complimented for their efforts. Senators GREGG, FRIST, and JEFFORDS also deserve tremendous thanks. Their staffs spent many hours considering OSHA legislation. Finally, I want to thank my Democratic colleagues on the Senate Labor Committee. Senator KENNEDY was especially considerate in listening to my concerns and I want to extend my appreciation to him and his staff. I am confident that this relationship will pick up next year where it left off.

PASSAGE OF COALBED METHANE LEGISLATION

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, I want to take a minute before the Senate adjourns to thank a few Members who have been very helpful on an issue of critical importance to my state.

Yesterday evening, the Senate adopted by unanimous consent, S. 2500, a bill to preserve the sanctity of existing leases and contracts for production of methane gas from coal beds. An affirmative U.S. Government policy has been the legal basis for these contracts for nearly eighteen years and it was the intent of this bill to preserve the existing rights of all the parties in light of legal uncertainties cast by a July 20, 1998, 10th Circuit Court of Appeals decision.

On September 18, I introduced the bill to protect these people, with my colleagues, Senator JEFF BINGAMAN of New Mexico and Senator CRAIG THOMAS of Wyoming. The affected people live all across America, but most of the actual lands are in the western states, primarily New Mexico, Utah, Colorado, Wyoming, and Montana.

The circumstances faced by interest owners would be severe. Personal and corporate bankruptcies would have led to local bank insolvencies and the multiplying effect on unemployment and

loss of confidence in western states would have been devastating. In this time when Congress is working to offer a \$4-7 billion aid package to provide certainty for crop farmers, I am pleased that we have been able to reach agreement to provide some certainty for people in the oil patch—and we did it without spending a single federal dime.

The 1998 Circuit Court decision has clouded all existing lease and royalty agreements for production of gas out of coal where the ownership of the oil and gas estate differs from ownership of the coal estate. This uncertainty jeopardizes the expected income of all royalty owners and the planned investment and development of all existing lessees.

The legislation we passed yesterday addresses that problem faced by owners and lessees by preserving the policy status quo for valid contracts in effect on or before the date of enactment. The legislation applies only to leases and contracts for "coalbed methane" production out of federally-owned coal. It does not apply to leases and contracts for gas production out of coal that has been conveyed, restored, or transferred to a third party, including to a federally recognized Indian tribe.

It is important to note that many older leases and contracts for gas production on coal lands were negotiated prior to "coalbed methane" becoming a term of art. It is, therefore, necessary to clarify that we do not mean to exclude those valid leases and contracts that convey rights to explore for, extract and sell "natural gas" from applicable lands simply because they do not include the term "coalbed methane." That is a possible ambiguity that arose very late in the process, after the time when we could have reasonably perfected the bill, but it is important to note because before this year, "coalbed methane" has been considered in the field, to be part of the gas estate. We chose the term "coalbed methane" because using the term "natural gas from the coalbed," left uncertainty about the gas rights in light of the 10th Circuit ruling. The Department of Interior suggested we use "coalbed methane" so as to be very clear regardless of whether the Courts rule "coalbed methane" to be part of the coal estate or part of the natural gas estate in the future.

While the bill has yet to be completed in the House, I want to thank some of the members who have helped us craft legislation that addresses what we intended to cover. Without any of them, we would not have been able to go forward. Because of very limited time, we had to expedite the process, and we could not have done it without an enormous amount of help. Senator CAMPBELL, and his Indian Affairs Committee staff, were supportive in working out the provisions covering the tribes. Senator MURKOWSKI, and his Energy Committee staff, were very helpful in working out the details of the bill and moving it through that Committee. Senator BUMPERS, and his com-

mittee staff, were very cooperative and provided many helpful suggestions.

The Department of Interior Solicitor's office provided good counsel and worked with us through the process. And the people out in the field, the coal companies, who have valid concerns about their existing and future leases to main federal coal, were great to work with. Nothing in this bill should be construed to limit their ability to mine federal coal under valid leases, nor should anything be construed to expand their liabilities to coalbed methane owners covered by the bill. The gas producers and land owners really came together and proposed reasonable solutions to solve the problems. Without their cooperative effort, this bill would not have happened.

So again, my appreciation goes out to all the people who helped us remove the possibility of devastating situation—extensive private property takings, retroactive liabilities, and mountains of combative litigation. On behalf of thousands of Wyomingites, thank you.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

ROLE OF THE SENATE SUBCOMMITTEE ON COMMUNICATIONS

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I want to take this time to recognize the important role and work of the Senate's Subcommittee on Communications this Congress and emphasize the challenges that lie ahead.

The communications world encompasses so many areas that personally touch the lives of practically every person in America—from the telephone to the television to the computer. The ways we interact is a fitting reflection of the fast times in which we live and the constant evolution of technologies. Traditional systems are changing. Options are expanding. Companies continue to shift gears and take the necessary risks to bring fruition of the landmark 1996 Telecommunications Act to the marketplace and to consumers.

Enacting policies to encourage, and not hinder, such activity is Congress' challenge. Mr. President, I believe the members of this subcommittee are ready and willing to embrace that challenge.

I want to express my sincere gratitude to my colleague and friend, Senator CONRAD BURNS of Montana, for his yeoman's work as chairman of the subcommittee during the course of this Congress. His guidance has been instrumental in bringing focus to the many issues that merit attention. His inclusive and enthusiastic approach has engaged all who work with him, and I appreciate that.

Mr. President, many contentious policy areas were considered by the subcommittee during the 105th, and consensus proved elusive. I am confident, though, that the stage has been set for several productive debates in the first

session of the 106th—from Federal Communications Commission reauthorization, to international satellite privatization, to transition to digital, to competition issues, to Internet privacy and content.

Speaking of the Internet, let me take this opportunity to mention my deep admiration for the contributions made by retiring Senator DAN COATS in this area. Although not a member of the Commerce Committee, he has tirelessly advocated against the Internet becoming a dirty book for our children, while responsibly taking into account first amendment concerns. I have the utmost respect for his efforts, and will truly miss his wisdom and his counsel.

Mr. President, I appreciate the contributions of each of my subcommittee colleagues this Congress, and look forward to working with them next year in tackling some tough issues and ushering in a truly new era of communications.

NATIONAL BIBLE WEEK

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, one of our country's most important observances is National Bible Week sponsored by the National Bible Association. This year, as in the past, it will be observed by houses of worship and individuals of all faiths during the week in which Thanksgiving Day falls. That will be from Sunday, November 22 through Sunday, November 29.

It is my great and underserved honor to be this year's congressional co-chair of that observance. In that capacity, I would like to recommend to all my colleagues, and to the American people, that, in this season of strife and division we look to National Bible Week as an opportunity to join together in prayerful reflection.

The German poet Heinrich Heine called the Bible "that great medicine chest of humanity," the greatest cure for the worst ills of mankind. And he observed how—during the great fire that destroyed the Second Temple of ancient Israel—the Jewish people rushed to save, not the gold and silver vessels of sacrifice, not the bejeweled breastplate of the High Priest, but their Scriptures. For the Word of God was the greatest treasure they had.

It remains our greatest treasure today. The lessons it teaches, and the morality it commands, are the foundation on which a free people build self-government. In that sense, the Bible is the charter of our liberties. Daniel Webster put it this way: "If we abide by the principles taught by the Bible, our country will go on prospering."

That has never been a partisan sentiment, and neither should it be so today. Two great political rivals of the early twentieth century, both of whom achieved the Presidency and attained world leadership, agreed on this one point.

Teddy Roosevelt said, "A thorough knowledge of the Bible is worth more than a college education." And Wood-

row Wilson, a university president at Princeton before reaching the White House, counseled, "When you have read the Bible, you will know it is the word of God, because you will have found in it the key to your own heart, your own happiness and your own duty."

Here in the Senate, as in the House of Representatives, there are several small Bible study groups. Members of all faiths regularly come together, away from the public spotlight, to learn from one another and seek inspiration from sacred Scripture.

For my part, I find in those sessions both enlightenment and challenge. For any time we read the Bible with an open heart, we may find ourselves falling short, in some way, of the standard it sets for us and the promise it offers us.

In that way, reading the Bible can be like a spiritual work-out. And if, in the process, we feel the spiritual equivalent of a few sore muscles, we can remember the saying, "No pain, no gain." And the gain that Scripture offers lasts a lifetime—and even longer.

For that reason, it is especially appropriate that Thanksgiving Day comes during National Bible Week, for the Bible itself is something for which we should give thanks, on that day and every day.

TITLE BRANDING LEGISLATION

Mr. CAMPBELL. Today I express my appreciation to the majority leader, Senator FORD, Senator GORTON, and Senator MCCAIN for their hard work and efforts on S. 852, the National Salvage Motor Vehicle Consumer Protection Act. I believe S. 852 will deter automobile theft and protect consumers by providing them with notice of severely damaged vehicles. I would like to emphasize one provision contained in the bill. It is my understanding that the process of reducing salvage and nonrepairable vehicles to parts cannot begin before receipt of a salvage title, nonrepairable vehicle certificate, or other appropriate ownership documentation under state law. If a vehicle could be dismantled prior to the receipt of the appropriate ownership documents, then the parts from a severely damaged vehicle could skirt the titling system which this bill has put in place to deter automobile theft. Is my understanding correct?

Mr. LOTT. Yes, that is correct. A vehicle that would qualify as a nonrepairable or as salvage vehicle cannot be taken apart for its parts before appropriate ownership documentation has been received for that vehicle.

Mr. President, I appreciate that the Senator from Colorado has taken the time to address this important issue.

MEDICARE HOME HEALTH FAIR PAYMENT ACT OF 1998

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, as we begin to wrap-up the 105th Congress,