able to shop for electricity as they now shop for long-distance telephone service.

While the specifics remain very much up in the air, the country is progressing toward restructuring electricity generation and distribution. While there are many clear economic benefits to a deregulated energy market, without incentives like the one I am proposing, green, renewable energy production like biomass is unlikely to be able to survive in deregulated market.

The legislation that I have introduced would expand the eligibility of the biomass tax credit to include conventional biomass plants. This legislation is designed to encourage a source of energy generation that offers substantial air quality, waste management, and greenhouse gas reduction benefits. The national biomass industry currently uses over 22,000,000 tons of wood waste a year. The waste the biomass industry converts into energy otherwise would be disposed of in one of three ways: burned in an open field, which generates pollution not energy; landfilled, where it fills limited landfill space and biodegrades, emitting methane, carbon dioxide, and other gases, or left in the woods or fields, increasing the risk and severity of forest fires.

The air quality benefits of biomass energy are of particular importance. According to the Northeast States for Coordinated Air Use Management, an organization of all the Northeastern States Air Quality Bureaus, biomass energy produces less nitrogen oxide than biomass alternatives, and furthermore, it generates virtually no sulfur dioxide, particulate matter, or mercury. Biomass energy production also results in a net reduction of greenhouse gases, as I have previously stated.

In addition to their environmental benefits, biomass plants contribute to the economy of many rural towns throughout America. Because of their dependence on organic waste, biomass facilities are usually located in rural areas where they are often important engines of economic growth. For example, in the small town of Sherman, ME, a biomass facility provides 56 percent of the property tax base. It also directly employs 23 individuals and indirectly provides work for hundreds of truck drivers, wood operators, mill workers and maintenance contractors.

In another small town of Maine, Athens, ME, a biomass facility provides a third of that small town's tax base and directly employs 20 people, while supporting a local wood operator who, in turn, employs 40 people.

The point is, the economy in many of the small towns in Maine, in towns such as Livermore, Ashland, Greenville, Fort Fairfield, Stratton and West Enfield benefit considerably from these biomass facilities. In total, there are over 100 biomass facilities in the United States, representing an investment in excess of $7 billion. These facilities contribute jobs, property taxes and a disposal point for waste products. In addition, rural biomass facilities also provide ash for use by local farmers, reducing their purchases of lime. I understand there is regularly more demand for the ash produced by these biomass plants than there is supply.

With biomass energy production, nothing is wasted. Biomass turns waste products—the byproducts of timber, paper or farming operations—into needed energy, wasting nothing. Even the ash is returned to the Earth to grow organic matter yielding both crops and waste to generate still more electricity.

We in Congress often discuss ways to help rural America. I know that is of great concern to the Presiding Officer. This proposal offers an opportunity to do so in a way that not only benefits the economy of small towns in rural America but also in a way that generates considerable environmental benefits that we all can enjoy.

This measure makes both economic and environmental sense. I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this important legislation and working for its passage.

Thank you, Mr. President. I yield the floor.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be recognized for 15 minutes following the presentation of the Senator from Oregon.

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

PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that Anthony Blaylock be granted the privilege of the floor during morning business this morning.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered. The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. WYDEN. Thank you, Mr. President.

JUVENILE VIOLENCE

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, this is going to be an important week in the Senate. I am very glad there is going to be a discussion—a long overdue discussion—on juvenile violence and steps that can be taken to prevent it in our country.

BOOK SELLING IN AMERICA

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I turn for a few minutes this morning to an issue that many Senators may not have heard much about but one that has great implications for the consumer, for intellectual freedom and the quality of life in our communities across the country.

The issue I intend to focus on specifically is the proposed acquisition by Barnes & Noble of the Ingram book company. The price tag on this acquisition is $600 million, and it involves the Nation's largest bookstore chain, Barnes & Noble, joining forces with the Ingram book company, the world's largest book distributor.

I am concerned that this deal will give Barnes & Noble a competitive stranglehold on the bookselling business in America. That is why last November I asked the Federal Trade Commission to investigate this proposed acquisition. Based on information I have learned in the last few days, I believe the Federal Trade Commission will soon make a decision on this proposed acquisition. I am very hopeful that when the Federal Trade Commission comes down with that decision, they will come down foursquare for the consumer.

Right now across this country, thousands and thousands of Americans have stopped at small bookstores to sign petitions urging that this proposed acquisition be blocked. In fact, there is a special phone line at the Federal Trade Commission because there has been such a tidal wave of interest on this specific proposal. I will briefly outline this morning what I find troubling about this proposed deal.

For a small bookstore, if this acquisition goes forward, they will have to depend on a megastore for the products they sell. The new bookstore colossus, with Barnes & Noble coming together with Ingram, will essentially have a huge competitive advantage that could work to cause great hardship for small bookstores in our country. Because the Ingram Company has information about sales and volume and ordering habits of small bookstores, is the new megastore going to use that information in a fair way? I am very concerned about it, but I can tell you that small bookstores across this country are very troubled when it comes to getting fair access to the titles they need, when it comes to how that information which Ingram has, that will be part of the new operation with Barnes & Noble, is used. I can tell you that small bookstores across this country believe this issue is literally one of life and death for them.

Second, I am concerned about issues relating to intellectual freedom. My concern is that with this deal and the potential that there will be just a handful of big bookstores in our country dominating the Nation, what they will stock are largely the best sellers.

I have had some experience with this. My father, who passed away, was an author and had a small publishing company. He said there is always room at the big stores in titles involving sex and drugs and rock and roll.

But I am concerned about what is going to happen when we have just a handful of these megastores, whether we are going to see intellectual freedom prosper and those titles that are not always on the best seller list accessible the way they are today.