

You can buy the products from which you make methamphetamine, in many States, across the counter. This is a deadly drug causing havoc for so many people.

If you talk to law enforcement people about dealing with methamphetamine, they will tell you that when they arrest someone involved in methamphetamine, they don't quite know what they are going to get. These are people who can become the most enormously violent people in the world, or they can be passive. You don't quite know what you are going to find, what you are going to get. It contributes to substantial crime and destroys lives. I appreciate the comments of my colleague, the majority leader.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I come to the floor to make a brief statement on something I know the majority leader and also the Democratic leader, Senator REID, have been speaking about in recent days, and that is the issue of the creation of an independent commission to evaluate exactly what kind of preparedness exists in this country and to evaluate this country's response to a natural disaster or to a terrorist attack.

It is important, it seems to me, in this case, to stare truth in the eye. We don't do that with fiscal policy. We don't stare truth in the eye with respect to trade policy. Both have the highest deficits in the history of the country at this point. There are many areas where we try to ignore what is going on, and we do so successfully, regrettably, much to the detriment of the future of this country. The question of what we do with disaster relief and disaster preparedness, preparedness to try to deal with a terrorist attack, is a different issue.

I noticed today in the newspapers and on television, the folks in New Orleans are beginning to clean up. Even as there remains the search for bodies and survivors, and so on, there are folks out sweeping the sidewalks in front of businesses, those businesses that have not been inundated with water. There are folks hauling away trash. There is a resiliency, a spirit that is irrepressible. Already people are starting to talk about their future, to clean up. So must we. So must we clean up and begin to repair.

None of this discussion should ever be about Republicans or Democrats. It is about success or failure. All of us looking truth in the eye must understand that the response by this country to what happened in the Gulf was a failure. Whose failure? I don't know. Perhaps the failure of all of us: Congress, the President, State and local officials—perhaps all of us. But I believe we ought to get to the bottom of it and evaluate how we change that which failed so miserably.

When you wake up this morning to the news that 34 people were left to die

in a nursing home—yes, in the United States of America 34 people were left to die in a nursing home at the advent of an oncoming hurricane and breached dike and flood—you ask the question, Is this really the United States? What on Earth could have happened? We need to find out.

I know some of the Members of Congress have talked about creating a special committee in Congress to look at it. All right. It doesn't substitute for an independent commission, in my judgment. The President talked about his investigation, and, that is fine. What we need, most of all—what we did with respect to 9/11 is an independent commission with the kind of authority and power to get to the bottom of what happened. Why? Because if we do not fix what went wrong and make it right, we will remain unprepared in the advent of a terrorist attack or another natural disaster.

This was, we think, the worst natural disaster in this country's history. It can happen again. But we know terrorists will want to commit a terrorist attack in this country. We know there are thousands of nuclear weapons that exist in this world. We know there are people worried about terrorists acquiring a nuclear weapon, detonating it in a trunk in a rusty Yugo sitting on a dock in one of America's major cities. What kind of response, what kind of disaster preparedness exists to deal with a terrorist attack?

I know why there are some who do not like independent commissions: you can't control them. You can't control information. You can't control direction. You lose control with an independent commission.

But we need an independent commission to investigate exactly what has happened, what went wrong at all levels, and try to evaluate how we put together a process that really does work, that represents the best of this country.

We know this country works. It has great ingenuity, great capability, but something happened that went wrong in a very significant way. This was a mess. It is not about blame, it is about accountability. Who is accountable? How are they accountable? How do we make them accountable?

So I believe we have a desperate need at this point to move quickly to put together an independent commission that can begin putting the pieces together. Even as the folks in New Orleans begin putting their city back together and cleaning up, so, too, should the President and Congress begin putting this together and cleaning up and evaluating it through the best work of some of the best minds in our country, some of the best people we can call on to serve on an independent commission to evaluate and investigate what went wrong and how do we, as a country, fix it.

ENERGY COSTS

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, there is one additional point I would like to make on legislation I have introduced. I notice the Energy Information Administration just released its short-term outlook. They forecast dramatic increases for residential energy costs this upcoming winter.

I come from North Dakota. We don't exactly have balmy weather in February and January, the middle of winter. We can sometimes have some pretty tough winters. It is a great State, but we have some tough winters. The ranges for heating fuel expenditures for natural gas in the Midwest, according to the EIA, are 69 to 70 percent increases in the winter in the Midwest.

We have a lot of folks who are going to have a devil of a time trying to pay these costs. I made the point before, and I know there are people in this Chamber who chafe at this, that the major integrated oil companies have gotten larger through mergers. They are much more powerful. They have the capability, working with others, to determine what happens in pricing and supply. We have OPEC people sitting around a table talking about pricing supplies. Then we have a futures market which is supposed to provide liquidity—which it does, but it provides much more than that nowadays. It is rampant speculation in spot markets. The result of that is the highest prices we have seen in this country.

Last year, the price of oil was \$34.50 a barrel—January 31, 2004. At that price the oil companies are making record profits. Now it is \$30 above that. That is \$7 billion a month in extra profit, \$80 billion on a yearly basis of extra profit. That, in my judgment, is unfair. Flowing through it is a 70-percent increase in natural gas prices to those trying to heat their homes, or flowing through the gas pump where you put in 15 gallons and pay \$52. That is unfair. I think there ought to be a windfall profits tax recapturing that windfall and using it in rebates to consumers. I don't begrudge anyone a fair profit, but this is not a fair market and I believe Congress should take some action. This issue existed long before Hurricane Katrina formed and hit this country, and I believe it behooves this Congress to address these issues, especially before we go into the winter heating season and the folks, particularly in the northern Great Plains and other States, are going to pay 70 percent increases—in some cases a price they simply cannot afford to pay for something as basic as heating their homes.

This Congress needs to act. I hope one of the actions will be to consider the legislation I have introduced.

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

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.