

Address, and I hope we can pursue them in committees and then bring them to the floor quickly. Again, challenge, action, solutions.

Those are some of the things we need to be doing over the next 5 weeks. There is a lot to do in a very short period of time, but I am convinced that with determination and focus and by leading on principle, we can and we must govern with meaningful solutions on the issues that matter, and they can be delivered to the American people. We can make America stronger, we can make America safer, and we can make it more secure. We must keep America moving forward.

#### RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

#### MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will be a period for the transaction of morning business for up to 60 minutes, with the first half of the time under the control of the majority leader or his designee, and the second half of the time under the control of the Democratic leader or his designee.

The Senator from Montana.

#### ENERGY

Mr. BURNS. Mr. President, this morning the leader touched on a lot of problems we have before us as we come back from Easter break. I know most of us have been home and listened to the folks at home. Most of us have probably come back with more challenges than when we left. Here are a couple of issues.

I was glad to hear the leader bring up the situation on insurance premiums, especially for small businesses and the self-employed. Senator ENZI of Wyoming and I have been working on the small business health plans for almost a year now. That is nothing new. It is not a new idea. Ever since I joined the Small Business Committee and even under the chairmanship of my good friend from Arkansas, Senator Bumpers, prior to 1994, we were working on the same issue, but we were unsuccessful then and have been unsuccessful up until now in striking a balance. There is broad support for the approach being taken by the chairman of the HELP Committee.

If you talk with folks engaged in small business, Montana businesses with 10 employees or less have little or no leverage when it comes to buying group insurance or trying to broaden their pool to keep their insurance premiums at a minimum. I look forward to that debate when the bill comes to the floor, and I look forward to final passage and getting it to the President for his signature.

I took a drive across the State of Montana over Easter Recess, all by myself. I just jumped into my pickup and took off and talked with rural Montanans. I fight awfully hard for rural Montanans for the simple reason that, right now, they are sort of being pushed into the background when we start talking about what is happening in our economy. Even though our livestock prices are decent, the grain producers, and many other folks, still have a real problem because they cannot get their arms around this business of containing costs, and the cost of energy is their main issue.

Whenever gas and diesel prices go up, it goes up on the farm also, and the cost of putting a crop in and getting it out has increased substantially due to these high energy costs.

We are a big State. We are a mobile State. We are 147,000 square miles. Yes, we only have 900,000 people, and some could probably make the case it is getting a little crowded up there. We have to drive long distances just to do business around the State, and these energy prices are impacting all of us.

Everybody wants to stand around on the floor of the Senate pointing fingers, when we could be looking at the real case of cumulative effects—of what we have done in policy and what has to be done to produce more energy for a growing society and a growing economy.

We are driven by agriculture in my State. Farmers and ranchers are price takers; in other words, we sell wholesale, we buy retail, and we pay the freight both ways. Any time we talk about freight, whether it is delivering or receiving, energy is involved.

So we are caught in what some would think is a perfect storm. We haven't hit the \$3 mark for gasoline in Montana yet, as other parts of the country have, but we are nearing it. In fact, we are so close to it that folks are afraid of what will happen if we do hit it.

I will tell you this: We have a situation in northeast Montana and northwest North Dakota called the Williston Basin. This area is quite a large producer of oil and gas. When we start quoting the price of oil on the New York Mercantile Exchange, we are not really talking about what the cash or spot price of oil is costing today. Do you realize, even though everybody is talking about the price of \$73 a barrel, that market price is not being paid to our oil producers today? It is a long way from that \$73. In fact, it is from \$25 to \$35 lower than even the spot price. Why? We are finding more oil, we are doing a better job of finding oil and lifting it, but the infrastructure of transportation—in other words, getting the crude to the refineries—and the refineries' capacity to refine it has not kept pace even with our own production in the United States. Therein lies a problem, and it is one we have to address.

We have not built a refinery in this country for 30 years—35 years, I think,

if you want to get very particular. The ability to expand refining capacity in the present-day facility is becoming very expensive and cannot be done without expanding outside the boundary.

If anybody has the idea that the refiners are making a lot of money, look at their return on investment. It is not very big. So people point their fingers at the refiners. Do they point their fingers at the big oil companies? Yes, they do, and in some cases justifiably so. We can sit here and poke holes in that argument. But our basic problem is siting and building facilities to satisfy a growing demand.

If you want to build a new refinery, or if you want to build a new pipeline to move the crude to the refining areas, I will tell you, you are going to have sticker shock when you look at what it costs just in permitting and siting for that facility. It is unbelievable. 25 percent of the estimated construction cost of a new refinery now will be eaten up in permits and siting, and all because of some laws and regulations that basically do not serve this country very well.

Am I justifying the prices today? Somewhat. But I think what we are seeing is a perfect storm of cumulative effects, of not keeping pace with our ability to produce and lift oil from the ground.

Alternative fuels and renewable fuels are also an important part of our energy program.

In 2002, we actually got a title into the agricultural bill that dealt with renewables and agriculture. We knew that we were going to have an energy bill and that title would dovetail into some of the policies that we wanted to put forward in an energy bill. We knew that an energy bill should come pretty quick. However, it did not come quickly. It came some 4 years later. After dragging and stalling and putting up all kinds of barriers, we finally got an energy bill in 2005, and we did dovetail some of the elements on renewables as it relates to agriculture.

In 2007, we will renew the Agriculture bill. And I would not be a bit surprised if we do not see energy even in the main title because we can produce renewables and we can produce alternative fuels to make sure we wean ourselves off of our dependency on foreign oil. We have to do that. We are going to get it done even though there are people who will obstruct and drag their feet in setting the policy.

I see my good friend from Utah is in the Chamber. Whenever you are producing oil at post-1970 production in the State of Montana, that means we have crude oil, like the crude oil that could go to refineries today in his State of Utah, from pipelines that are fed out of Montana, as well as to refineries in Montana and also in Colorado. Do you realize a 36-inch pipeline moves something like 86 thousand barrels a day? We can't even get on that pipeline. That pipeline is owned by Canada,