We must pass this supplemental for the full rest of the year without timelines and provide the troops the support and the weapons systems they need.

I thank the Chair, and I yield the floor to the Senator from Arizona.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, may I inquire how much time is remaining in morning business on this side?

The Acting President pro tempore. There is 18 minutes.

Mr. CORNYN. I thank the Chair. I will take 9 minutes of that and then Senator THOMAS will take the remainder.

RISING GAS PRICES

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, yesterday I came to the floor with the Senator from Arizona and the senior Senator from Texas to talk about rising gas prices. The sticker shock at the pump is something all Americans are noticing. We can talk in esoteric sorts of ways about national energy policy, but when people drive up and have to fill up their tank to be able to drive to work, or to the hospital when there are family situations and they have to get to the doctor, or to the hospital when there is a single party in charge, there is a responsibility to act.

As our leader on this side of the aisle, Senator MCCONNELL, has noted, divided Government actually provides an opportunity for us to take on some of these big problems, some of these big challenges that are harder to tackle when there is a single party in charge, but it takes a spirit of cooperation. It takes a spirit of cooperation to actually work together to solve problems, if we are going to have press conferences, as our colleagues are going to hold next week, but that is not enough.

So let me end by saying that this is an opportunity for us to work together but not if we are going to have press conferences and do nothing, talk tough that way, in this availability of our colleagues. We need to pass the supplemental, as the Senator from Arizona and the senior Senator from Texas were decrying the fact that they are in charge now.

I thank the Chair and yield the floor.

The Acting President pro tempore. The Senator from Wyoming is recognized.

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, I wish to join my friend from Texas in talking about the interest in energy. I don't think there is anything, frankly, when we look at it, that impacts our future and our jobs and our families anymore than energy and the availability of it. I think about it for a moment, what we actually use, each of us, every day. We drive here in our cars; energy; the lights up here; energy; air-conditioning or heat; energy; then, of course, in the workplace, energy; we talk about some of it in the context of high gas prices and, of course, Americans are experiencing that right now.

I am on the Energy Committee, and we have passed good energy policy in the last couple years. We have already begun to see some of the benefits of that passage, there is no question about that, but there is much more that can be done. Unfortunately, we have gone along a good deal of the time this year and haven't done much about it, so we need to accomplish some things. The high price of gas, of course, touches all of us, but it is particularly important in a State such as mine, where people have to drive for school or work or other obligations.

Yesterday, the Energy Committee, of which I am a member, scheduled a hearing on short-term energy outlook for oil and gas. This hearing will be held next week, but that is not enough. Having hearings is not enough, as having press conferences is not enough. We need to move forward.
What is the answer to high gas prices? Of course, the simple economics of it is supply: Supply and demand. One option is to drive less, of course, and we can do some of this. We can have more efficient cars and those kinds of things. We can drive less, we must drive. We have to have energy. So there are some things we can do. But the other issue, and the one we can deal with, is increasing supply. My friend from Texas makes a good point. We paid up in bills and amendments sometimes, but we have to ask ourselves: What can we add? What can we regulate? What needs to be repealed? We cannot repeal the law of supply and demand. That is where the impact is on the price. That economic fact must inform this debate. We certainly can consume our energy in more efficient ways, and we should do that. I support those efforts. I am glad to be a cosponsor of a bill, S. 992, that does this. We have to have alternative fuels, and I am for that. But I think we have to be honest on alternative fuels as to what kind of an impact that is going to have in a relatively short time. I am all for these kinds of efforts, whether it is wind or Sun or whatever, but it is years down the road before it will be able to do the kinds of volume that is necessary for energy.

So I think my real point is that in the meantime, as we look for alternatives, as we look for various things, there are things we can do now, and that is what we need to do to deal with our needs in the interim while these other things are being decided.

So I am hopeful the majority will bring legislation to the floor that allows us to provide Americans with secure, affordable, and responsible sources of energy. I am convinced that unless we move forward, the majority is not moving in this direction, and I think we must.

Last week, we marked up a biofuels bill in the Energy Committee. The bill focused on ethanol from corn and feed stuffs, a good thing. However, these fuels raise the cost of corn. They raise the cost of livestock feed and, subsequently, meat and other groceries. They cannot be transported in our existing system. You cannot put ethanol into pipelines and move it. The advanced technologies are not commercialized anywhere yet in the world.

Along with Senator Bunning, I offered an amendment to add coal-to-liquids, and coal-to-liquids don’t suffer from the same shortcomings as ethanol. It will have no impact on the affordability of food. It can be delivered through existing pipelines. Coal is one of our most abundant resources, as a matter of fact. It is the most plentiful supply of fossil fuels we have in this country. Coal has the potential to be converted to liquids and fluids and to electricity on the spot. These are the things which need to be done.

We spent most of 2 hours talking about this amendment, and it received a great deal of support. However, when it came down to it, it was a party-line vote of 12 to 11, and it was defeated. So I will bring it to the floor when the Energy bill comes.

I think we need to look at the short-term impacts. Here is one—conversion of coal to liquids—that can work. We are doing some of this now to a small degree. In Wyoming, we are developing a refinery that will take coal and turn it into diesel fuel. Interestingly enough, we have brought together a number of agencies or organizations that you would not necessarily imagine in that, including the AFL-CIO building construction trades, AFL-CIO Industrial Union Council, Air Transportation Association. All these people know how important it is to have energy and to have it available. There is a list of about 15 groups of this kind that are supportive.

They are not oil supporters necessarily; they are businesspeople who know they need to meet our needs, we have to have energy.

Let me read from the letter they wrote:

In this century, America cannot be secure unless its energy secure. Fostering greater reliance on domestic energy is a national security imperative. The Nation’s abundant and affordable coal reserves, matched with the proven technology, can put America on the path to energy independence by dramatically reducing our growing dependence on imported oil and reducing our burgeoning trade deficit. Domestic production of coal-to-liquids will see billions of dollars invested in new investments made in the United States and create thousands of new jobs.

That is not the end of the letter, but that is the message from groups that are not directly involved in energy but know the impacts of the shortage of energy. I could not agree more with the role these folks see in the future.

Senator Bunning and I have been asked to refrain from offering our amendment, but we did not wait. We believe strongly in the purpose of the Energy Committee to develop the best possible approach we can in dealing with the energy problem and dealing with it not only in the long-term but in the shorter term until we reach the longer term goals that may be there. So we didn’t achieve our goal there. That is why we want to move forward with this and see if we can’t get coal-to-liquids in our energy policy and get some incentives to move forward. I want to work in a bipartisan way to address the current concerns our Members have. We have the opportunity to revisit this issue.

Americans are suffering from high fuel prices. We should do everything we can to remedy that situation. We have to do more than just talk about it; we need to make a move to take our largest fossil fuel resource and make it available for domestic production.

Mr. President, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The legislative clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Ms. CANTWELL. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. (Mrs. McCaskill.) Without objection, it is so ordered.

Ms. CANTWELL. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business for 5 minutes.

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

ENERGY INDEPENDENCE

Ms. CANTWELL. Madam President, I come to the floor this morning with a lot of enthusiasm for the progress we are making in various committees toward an energy policy we can discuss on the Senate floor which will eventually lead us to greater energy independence. I am very excited about this prospect; especially since I participated in the 2005 energy legislation, which was the first with great bipartisan support. We worked together to enact this groundbreaking energy bill in 2005, which greatly benefited my State by giving tax credits to alternative energy technologies—wind and solar—and the broader use of biodiesel and including the construction of a 100 million-gallon biodiesel facility in Washington State.

There were many great things about the 2005 Energy bill but the fact that stood out to me the most was that it was a bipartisan effort. I do wish that there had been a much more aggressive effort on energy independence then, but I think today we are on the cusp of achieving this important goal.

Senator Reid has been very specific since the beginning of this legislative year that he wants energy independence to be a key priority. In fact, there are six different committees that are working on energy legislation today: the Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry Committee, the Finance Committee, the Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee, the Environment and Public Works Committee, the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, and the Energy and Natural Resources Committee. All of these committees are working hard on legislation, and more importantly, they are working on legislation in a bipartisan fashion. In fact, two of these committees have reported out significant energy legislation, working across the aisle ensuring that we are getting the best ideas onto the Senate floor and continuing to discuss those ideas on which we have not yet been able to reach consensus.

Yesterday was undoubtedly a historic day because it marked the first time in 20 years, that we have been able to, in a very bipartisan way, put a CAFE bill on the Senate floor—which I hope we will be discussing soon—that actually incentivizes the fuel standards of automobiles and hopefully lowers our consumption of foreign oil. If we can move from the current miles-per-