

the United States, having fought some of country's greatest civil rights battles.

Since its inception, the NAACP has been on the frontlines fighting for racial equality in all areas of life. A team of NAACP lawyers, led by Thurgood Marshall, fought successfully for the desegregation of public schools in the landmark case *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954. The NAACP also played a key role in ensuring the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the 1965 Voting Rights Act, laws that are essential to guaranteeing all Americans' full participation in our democracy.

Whether it is combating racial profiling, reauthorizing the Voting Rights Act, or fighting hate crimes and pay discrimination, I have been proud to stand side by side with the NAACP throughout my Senate career.

There is no better way to honor the NAACP's work than to continue its fight for justice and equal opportunity. This fight starts with getting the Nation's economy moving again, and giving every child access to quality education and every family access to affordable health care. I look forward to working with the NAACP and with all my Senate colleagues to make these goals a reality.

#### FILLING GUN LAW GAPS

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, while Congress frequently considers important matters, not every day does it pass legislation capable of actually saving lives. The Brady bill, however, signed into law November 30, 1993, has proven to be such a piece of legislation. The Brady law requires that a prospective gun purchaser undergo a criminal background check before obtaining any firearm from a Federal firearm licensee. Created to prevent felons, fugitives, domestic abusers and other prohibited persons from access to guns, the Brady law has been an important tool in the fight to keep our families and communities safe.

According to the Brady Center to Prevent Gun Violence, Brady background checks have blocked more than 1.6 million attempts by high-risk people to buy a gun from licensed dealers through the end of 2007, including an estimated 842,000 convicted felons, 236,000 people convicted of domestic abuse and 68,000 fugitives from justice. Also, during this 15-year period, the total number of robberies and aggravated assaults committed with a firearm decreased from 564,648 in 1993 to 377,331 in 2006, a decrease of 33 percent. The number of murders committed with a firearm also declined 32 percent, from 17,048 in 1993 to 11,566 in 2006.

Despite these significant reductions in crime, much more needs to be done. Brady background checks, for example, are currently only required for purchases from a licensed gun dealer, which only account for approximately 60 percent of gun sales. They are not required for sales between unlicensed

persons, such as sales at gun shows. According to the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, almost one-third of all trafficked guns are acquired at gun shows and flea markets. These types of settings provide the perfect loophole for unlicensed sellers to offer countless guns for sale with no questions asked. Someone that would not be able to pass a background check in a licensed gun store currently is able to purchase as many guns as they want at gun shows.

As we begin the first session of the 111th Congress, it is my hope that we will take this opportunity to build upon the success of this law. I urge my colleagues to pass sensible gun safety legislation that will fill the gaps in our gun laws.

#### IDAHOANS SPEAK OUT ON HIGH ENERGY PRICES

Mr. CRAPO. Mr. President, in mid-June, I asked Idahoans to share with me how high energy prices are affecting their lives, and they responded by the hundreds. The stories, numbering well over 1,200, are heartbreaking and touching. While energy prices have dropped in recent weeks, the concerns expressed remain very relevant. To respect the efforts of those who took the opportunity to share their thoughts, I am submitting every e-mail sent to me through an address set up specifically for this purpose to the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD. This is not an issue that will be easily resolved, but it is one that deserves immediate and serious attention, and Idahoans deserve to be heard. Their stories not only detail their struggles to meet everyday expenses but also have suggestions and recommendations as to what Congress can do now to tackle this problem and find solutions that last beyond today. I ask unanimous consent to have today's letters printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

First I do not know why I am writing this since I doubt that the Senate will really hear me, but since you gave me the opportunity to vent here goes.

My husband and I have been married for nine years. Our goal has always been to live within our means. He is an electrician and makes a decent wage and has good health benefits. I am a stay-at-home mom and am busy taking care of our three children (soon four). We have tried to stay out of debt our whole marriage. We currently have our house payment which takes up 27% of my husband's take-home pay each month (This can be lowered if he works overtime but for this sake it is just working a 40-hour week). We then have life insurance policies that are cash policies that take up 08% of our income. We contribute 10% to our faith each month. Then there is 11% used for utility bills, car insurance, etc. The rest is used for gasoline, food, clothing, and unexpected expenses. Last year we were saving 12.5% of my husband's income monthly. This year we are barely making it monthly and saving only 3% if possible.

We can foresee that if energy prices continue it will be hard for my husband to keep

working as an electrician. Pay has not increased as well as costs and living where we do in Idaho we cannot stay in the same town to work. Last year he was traveling over 120 miles a day to go to work and home. It is not unusual for electricians in Idaho to travel at least 60 miles one way. We have tried to accommodate his traveling and moved to the middle of where he has worked but still we figured it costs him 400 dollars a month in gasoline to go to work which is 11% of his income. It is easy to see why we are barely making it.

We are frugal citizens. I do the cooking of food, we pack lunches from home, we have no cable television or cell phones, we grow our own garden, I can our own fruit and vegetables, my husband hunts for venison in the fall which we package ourselves (being the majority of our meat source), and we try to stock up monthly on our food storage. I have been doing less storage because we have less income. I also as the primary shopper have noticed that our food is costing more to purchase.

The problem is not that gasoline is just high. Because it is high food prices are higher, parts for vehicles are higher (we do the majority of our vehicle repairs too), electricity and utilities have raised, taxes are raised to pay for the increase in cities budgets, etc. The 11% we are seeing in gas does not compensate for all the increases because of gas. If we take that into account we would probably see that number grow exponentially.

So we see what gas is doing, what are we doing about it? 1) As a family we are trying to start a business that we can do on the side from home. We sent my husband to Taxidermy School so he can maybe earn a little on the side along with being an electrician. This has been very difficult to do since it costs money and we have very little extra to spend. It has taken us a year to pay for the supplies and tools that are needed. We have spent our savings hoping that in the future it will work out. 2) We make sure he carpools with coworkers so our gas bill is minimal. This so far has been great but we cannot always count on it working out as smoothly as it has. 3) We do not travel; I go out very little and drive only about 50 miles a week. The rest of the time I am home with our kids. On the weekends we stay home and try to entertain ourselves in our yard. We have planted a larger garden to hopefully help us keep out of the grocery store less. We try to stay active as a family. We no longer for fishing, hiking, camping, or geocaching as a family. It is too expensive to go. I have not enrolled our children in anything extra such as soccer, tee ball, swim lessons, etc. because the money is not there to accommodate such wants. With such cuts we are still able to barely make it.

The time has come for people to be extremely frugal, work more than one job, or go into extreme debt to make ends meet. We once were a nation to progress, to succeed, to set the standards . . . are we now becoming a nation in steady decline? How do we reverse such a movement? Will our government written by the people and for the people help us or hinder us? Let us start the upward movement before the decline is too hard for many of our citizens to climb out of. Curbing the costs of gasoline and educating the public on financial security will help many get out of the holes they have dug themselves into, and help others from digging any holes at all. Thanks.

SESHA, Shelley.

Thank you for caring enough to listen to the folk in Idaho. Why does it matter how we feel or what we think? Nothing will change for the working man.