

In my home State of Maine, roughly 80 percent of the population utilize heating oil to keep warm in the winter. In New England, 40 percent of homes use heating oil. As a result, on average nearly 4.7 billion gallons of heating oil are consumed by New England. This is not only an enormous cost to families across the region, but it creates massive greenhouse gas emissions and increases our country's demand of foreign oil. This is not merely a regional issue, this is a national issue and it should be a priority of Congress to reduce heating oil use in New England.

This bill builds on the current credits for nonbusiness energy property to provide an additional credit for conversion of homes using home heating oil to natural gas or biomass. Specifically, the bill provides a tax credit of \$3,500 for natural gas conversion and \$4,000 for biomass conversion. While natural gas is not available throughout the United States and is not widely available in Maine, I am hopeful that these incentives will provide an additional incentive to expand usage in regions that have access to natural gas supplies.

In regions that the rocky geology does not allow natural gas to be utilized, the bill includes a tax credit for biomass for thermal energy, such as wood pellets. Just this past July, International WoodFuels announced plans to construct a 100,000 ton per year pellet plant in Burnham, ME. This is from wood product that is harvested in Maine and can be used to replace home heating oil in the State. While I strongly believe that we must carefully develop policies to ensure that the expanded use of wood pellets will undermine existing forest industries, I strongly believe that we must encourage additional diversity of our home heating oil energy sources and wood pellets provide a viable pathway to energy diversity for the State of Maine.

I strongly believe that reducing the current consumption of home heating oil in the State of Maine, New England, and the country should be a major priority as we move forward with overhauling our energy policy, and I look forward to working with my colleagues to pass the Cleaner, Secure, and Affordable Thermal Energy Act into law.

COMMENDING SENATOR NORM COLEMAN

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I honor and bid farewell to my friend and our colleague, Senator Norm Coleman of Minnesota. Norm and I served together for 6 years in the Senate and on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. He also served on the Agriculture, Aging, Homeland Security, and Small Business Committees. He has a legislative record to be proud of.

As our colleagues know, I have long enjoyed my work with Native people. Norm, throughout his tenure, was a steadfast friend of American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian

people and a strong advocate for the interests of the tribes in his home State of Minnesota. His voice will be missed in the U.S. Senate on these issues.

As a member of the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Norm pushed for drastic reforms in our Nation's emergency response and recovery capabilities in the wake of the failed response to Hurricane Katrina. He was diligent and steadfast in his desire to protect our country and deeply engaged in efforts to increase protections for our Nation's critical infrastructure.

I will remember Norm as one who had a love and appreciation for my State of Alaska. On several occasions he enjoyed the beauty of Alaska while seeking his prized king salmon on the Kenai River. Norm further extended his Alaska ties by hiring Jennifer Mies Lowe, who is married to my former chief of staff, George Lowe. Jennifer served Senator Stevens for many years before moving to Senator Coleman's office as his chief of staff.

Norm has a long record of public service fighting for Minnesotans. He served as mayor of St. Paul before being called by the people of Minnesota to come to the U.S. Senate. I expect that we have not heard the last of him.

In closing I would like to wish Norm, his wife Laurie, and children Jacob and Sarah the very best. Norm, thank you for your service to the Nation, the Senate, and Minnesota. I know Norm and his strong sense of service to his country, and while I will miss him in the Senate, I look forward to his next opportunity to serve.

NATURAL GAS IN A CLEAN ENERGY ECONOMY

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Mr. President, I wish to discuss why we need a clean energy economy and how natural gas will be a critical component of our future energy mix.

We need legislation to move forward, to the President's desk, this year. To compete in a 21st century global economy, the United States must take immediate action to transition to a clean energy market, one that allows us to take advantage of the many different clean energy sources that our country has to offer.

Some have asked why we need to act on clean energy legislation.

Several of my colleagues this week have eloquently discussed the impacts of carbon pollution. In the West, we are already seeing indications of climate change through warmer winters and drier summers. This is a global challenge that we must address and not ignore. But, irrespective of the impacts of carbon pollution to our communities and environment, clean energy legislation really comes down to two things—our economic and national security.

Clean energy legislation will create millions of new jobs here at home and provide the basis for America's 21st century economy. Clean energy econ-

omy legislation will spur innovation in and accelerate the shift to clean and domestic energy sources. It will create a new industrial sector employing millions of Americans in the research, development, manufacture, sale, installation, and servicing of new energy technologies. With the U.S. leading the way, we will sell our new technologies to other countries throughout the world.

Clean energy legislation will also help strengthen our national security. The most obvious reason, of course, is that switching to clean, domestic sources of energy will reduce our dependence on foreign oil by shifting America toward cheaper, cleaner alternative energy sources like natural gas and wind power. Our current economy unfortunately depends on the importation of foreign oil from nations that do not have our best interests at heart, which creates threats to America's national security and puts our troops in harm's way.

Where does this leave us?

We need to jump-start our clean energy economy, and that means we need to invest in the wide range of energy sources that are available now, as well as research and development of future energy sources.

This is not about a silver bullet answer to our energy problems: it is, rather, like silver buckshot.

On the ground, that means we should encourage energy development of new renewable energy sources, find cleaner ways to use traditional energy sources like coal and oil, and expand our use of clean, mature technologies like nuclear and natural gas.

Natural gas, in particular, often does not get the attention that it deserves among our diverse portfolio of clean energy sources.

Natural gas will be the bridge between today's economy and our clean energy future.

It is the cleanest of the fossil fuels and has the lowest greenhouse gas emissions per unit of energy, emitting about half of the CO₂ of coal when burned for electricity generation.

Furthermore, the technology is already being used by utilities across the country. Let me emphasize again—this is mature technology that is already in use across the country to power our homes and businesses.

In fact, natural gas accounts for 24 percent of the energy consumption in this country and approximately 98 percent of U.S. natural gas consumption originates right here in North America, principally from the United States and Canada.

Using natural gas means that we do not have to depend on foreign governments determining the cost of our energy or whether or not we even have access to it. And increasing natural gas production and use means that we are creating jobs and supporting families here at home.

Natural gas is an abundant resource across our country.