

wouldn't want to do anything to hurt small banks, but the market may just force us if your amendment becomes law.

This is ridiculous. With Visa and MasterCard having 100 percent of the market for signature debit cards, they are the market. The market is going to force them? Guess what. They are the market. They set the rules. They fix all the fees now. Small banks and credit unions are so afraid of Visa and MasterCard—they are quivering—and their big bank allies, they do not believe they can support any regulation of the interchange system no matter how reasonable. Small banks are afraid to take the risk that these giant corporations might decide to wield their enormous market power against them.

Ironically, that is the world in which small businesses, merchants, and other acceptors of payment cards live today. Small businesses have no choice today but to accept Visa and MasterCard and the fees and rules they establish.

Today at my hearing, Wendy Chronister of Springfield, IL, my hometown, who is CEO of the Qik-n-EZ convenience stores, about 11 of them in central Illinois, came and testified. I know her family well. They live a few doors away from me. I know her dad who started the company 40 years ago. She is a spectacular young woman who is the CEO of this small company that has these convenience stores.

The No. 1 cost in her business is labor, the No. 3 cost is utility bills, and the No. 2 cost is interchange fees to Visa and MasterCard. They represent about half of the charges they pay for labor and represent about twice as much as they pay for utility bills. That is how big a factor this is in a small business. She has no power to negotiate, no power to compete. She is at a loss.

She was sitting at the table with a representative of the Federal Government who said we are in the same boat. We do \$8 billion a year accepting cards from Visa and MasterCard and cannot get them to negotiate with us a lower interchange fee for the sake of taxpayers and reducing the deficit. That is the kind of power they have.

I am going to wrap up because I see Senator GRASSLEY is anxious.

When I heard this argument today that the Federal Government was unable to get Visa and MasterCard to negotiate an interchange fee, they are so powerful, these private companies, I had a flashback—a flashback to one of my favorite movies of all time. It was released in about 1963 or 1964. It is entitled "Dr. Strangelove." In this movie, Peter Sellers played three different roles, and one of the roles was a British military officer named Lionel Mandrake. He was at a base where they thought another world war was about to break out, a nuclear conflict. He was trying to find a telephone to call someone in Washington to bring an end to this nuclear war. At that point actor Keenan Wynn came in playing the role

of COL Bat Guano. Sellers said to Colonel Guano: I need change to make a phone call to Washington to stop this world war.

Colonel Guano said: I don't have any change.

Peter Sellers said: You shoot up with your gun the Coca-Cola machine, and I will take the money out and make the phone call.

He said: You want me to shoot up the Coca-Cola machine. I will do it, but you are going to have to answer to Coca-Cola for this.

That is what I was reminded of today when I heard that our Federal Government, with \$8 billion in business with Visa and MasterCard, can't get them to sit down at the table. That shows the power of these private companies.

What is going on here? This isn't competition. They are not some sainted entity. They represent a business, and they are supposed to be a competitive business with the other credit card companies. But they are not. They are dictating fees to small businesses that are hurting, reducing their profitability and their employment at a time when we desperately need jobs.

Small banks should come to understand the predicament that their colleagues in the small business community face, as both live in a world that is too often run by card networks and big banks. It is time for the interchange system to change. We need to end this system where Visa and MasterCard have the market power to set fees and establish rules however they want.

I extend my apologies to Senator GRASSLEY. If I had known he had to leave, I would have wrapped up a lot earlier and saved my comments about "Dr. Strangelove" for a later time. I thank him very much. He has been a good friend and patient.

AGGRESSIVE OILSPILL RESPONSE

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, America is facing a catastrophe in the gulf. I rise today to speak about the President's address to our Nation last night and my recent trip to the gulf.

I agree with the President that BP must stop the leak, clean up the oil, and end the economic hurricane they have caused on the gulf coast. I agree that BP—not the taxpayers—must be liable for costs of cleaning up the mess, for compensating businesses, fisherman and families, and for their economic losses. BP must set aside a fund of \$20 billion or more today that they don't control to pay all economic claims in a fair and timely way.

I like that the President focused on the Nation's long range energy needs. We do need to move our energy policy forward. And I am so pleased the President picked Dr. Don Boesch for the new National Commission to prevent and respond to future spills like this one. Dr. Boesch has strong ties to Maryland. He has been president of UMD Center for Environmental Science since 1990

and serves as Governor O'Malley's science adviser. He's also a man of Louisiana, born in New Orleans and a graduate of Tulane. He knows the issues of Louisiana and he's got a special place in his heart in looking out for Maryland.

I also agree with Billy Nungesser, president of Plaquemines Parish, LA. He believes we should bring every asset we have to fight this thing. The people of Louisiana need to see more action on the ground and we can't just rely on BP's word to get the job done.

We need to organize and mobilize our own government. Right now we are acting like a bureaucracy rather than a fighting force to protect the beaches and the people from the consequences of the oilspill. I hope in the coming days, the President will insist on defining what success is.

This administration needs goals and metrics for shore clean up that will be adequate. They must establish a mechanism for monitoring, oversight and relentless follow-through. Right now, no one but BP knows what is going on. There has been a lot of reporting on inputs—but not enough on outcomes. We need structure for oversight and we need to know the outcomes of our actions.

The President also needs to insist on expediting permits. When I was on the gulf coast last week, I heard from locals that their ideas on how to protect coasts are stuck in bureaucracy. We need to unstick the bureaucracy. This is a national emergency that needs an aggressive national response. We are all in this together.

I went to the gulf coast as chair of the Commerce, Justice, Science Appropriations Subcommittee, which funds the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, NOAA. NOAA is in the gulf right now telling us where this oil is going, helping to cleanup the shores and marshes and assisting fishermen who are hurting.

I also went as the Senator from Maryland. I wanted to talk to scientists first hand to find out how the spill could impact Maryland. Will it affect our beaches and treasured Chesapeake Bay?

Last week, I saw the catastrophe in the gulf. We met the people, we saw the beaches, and we saw the impact on the wildlife. And everywhere we went, we saw oil and the consequences of oil. I spoke to people whose livelihoods depend on the gulf. When we talk about what we saw—words like "Louisiana," "Grand Isle" and "Pelican Island"—I also think of words like "Ocean City" and "Assateague," Maryland's own barrier island. What we saw was the good, the bad, and the ugly.

First, we met with the people, and I saw just how resilient they are. They have real grit and are determined to do something to save their communities. We coastal people need to be on their side. We saw communities where they would ordinarily have thousands of visitors with busy fishing charters.

Now, it's like a ghost land. The beach looked more like a military base than an ocean resort, with trucks going up and down, carrying booms and all kinds of response equipment. And when you go out to sea, on a boat or in a helicopter, you see this oil creeping closer and closer to the shoreline. We are concerned about the environmental impact, but we are also concerned about the human impact on lives, livelihoods, and safety.

Next, we asked—is the oil going to come up the east coast in this so-called “loop current or loop stream?” We were told the beaches of Ocean City will be safe. Even in the worst case scenario, the oil won't get beyond the Carolinas. Second, we were told that the seafood is safe. It is being inspected locally by NOAA and the FDA, so what is coming to the American marketplace is safe. That's what we were told, but I believe what Ronald Reagan said: “Trust, but verify.”

Maryland's economy is tied to the Louisiana economy. Our seafood restaurants and markets rely on what's caught in the gulf. I am holding a Maryland delegation meeting to make sure that we bring in ocean scientists and seafood inspectors to verify that our Atlantic coast beaches and our Chesapeake Bay will stay oil free and our seafood will be safe to eat.

That was the good news. The bad news is BP. The BP people have to fix this. BP is cutting corners, minimizing the situation, and now here we are. The oil will continue to gush, and it will gush until August. But the oil coming out of the well will take 6 weeks to get to shore, so we are going to feel all of this well into September. And that is the best case scenario.

I support our President in calling for an escrow account for BP to put \$20 billion aside for economic damages. I fear the hoarders will take charge. I fear BP will file for bankruptcy and will want the taxpayers to bail them out. The American taxpayer will not bail out the oil companies. The oil companies must put aside the money to pay damages and cleanup costs.

Our own bureaucracy needs reform. We saw the can-do spirit there among the people, but the permit process is slow—whether it is the EPA, Corps of Engineers or NOAA. This needs to be reformed. And this stuff, called dispersant sounds like if you pour chemicals on the oil the oil will disburse and everything's fine. I am concerned that dispersants could be causing more problems than they are solving. I am concerned about the toxic impact on human beings and marine life creating dead zones off the coast of Louisiana.

That is why I plan to hold a hearing. To learn more about the effects of these dispersants—what do we already know, what do we need to know, and what research needs to be done—because I don't want dispersants to turn out to be the DDT or Agent Orange of the oilspill. It is our job in Congress to push the bureaucracy, to push BP to

get the job done and protect the American people.

Then, we saw the ugly. The so-called protective booms were dysfunctional and in disarray, saturated with sticky smelly oil that had been there for days and no one had come to pick them up or clean them up. They were breaking loose and some washed up in marshes, causing far more damage than the oil. If they couldn't protect the few miles around the pelicans areas, how can they protect the beaches? They have got to do a lot better job. It took four Senators going to Louisiana to get the booms cleaned up near Grand Isle.

There are no performance standards to make sure BP or the government are doing what they say they are doing and that it is working. There must be relentless follow-through by the government. The Coast Guard is treating BP as if it were another government agency, when the Coast Guard needs to take BP to task. They need to make sure that they have performance standards and they need to make sure that there is follow-through.

After witnessing the catastrophe in the gulf and seeing the way the oil is impacting the people, the communities, and the environment, I am so glad that we in Maryland opposed offshore drilling. No matter what is the energy policy I will always oppose offshore drilling off of the Mid-Atlantic coast. We can never let what's happening in the gulf happen to any other communities.

Our first responsibility will be to the Nation's taxpayers, not to the oil companies. Our second responsibility is to the people of the gulf, to do all we can to protect them. We need to make sure that we contain the oil and can clean it up so they can get on with their lives and their livelihoods.

I was honored to be able to go and represent Marylanders there because we are coastal people too. When I talked to the people down there who fish and crab, we talked about how we use the same kind of bait, we use the same kind of line, the same kind of ways. We cook them a little bit different—but we eat them all the same. And when they held our hands, they said when you go back to Maryland and Washington, don't ever forget us. And we won't. We are all Americans, we are all coastal people, and we are all in this together.

58TH ANNUAL NATIONAL PRAYER BREAKFAST

Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, I had the privilege of co-chairing the 58th Annual National Prayer Breakfast with Senator KLOBUCHAR. I ask unanimous consent that a copy of the transcript of the 2010 National Prayer Breakfast proceedings be printed in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

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

58TH NATIONAL PRAYER BREAKFAST

Senator Amy Klobuchar: Good morning, everyone. I am Amy Klobuchar, the Senator from Minnesota. Welcome to the 58th annual National Prayer Breakfast. For anyone from warmer climates, we know it is a little snowy, but in Minnesota we would call this, “fair to partly cloudy.” What a gathering. This is a very different scene from the first National Prayer Breakfast all the way back in 1952—that was attended only by a couple hundred people and they were all men. And now what we have today is over 3,000 people from all 50 states and over 140 countries. Although the National Prayer Breakfast may look a lot different than it did in 1952, one of the great traditions of this event is that it is bipartisan, as you can see from our head table up here, as well as the fact that we have a Democratic and a Republican co-chair. In that tradition, I am very proud to introduce to you my Republican co-chair and good friend, the Senator from Georgia, Johnny Isakson.

Senator Johnny Isakson: Thank you. We do welcome you because what began as a very small group in 1952 has become a group that has influence around the world in countries all over this world. We are so delighted that you traveled near and you travelled far to be a part of the National Prayer Breakfast here in the United States of America. Amy and I are both members of the Senate but one important thing to know is that we alternate years—this happened to be the Senate's year to chair the National Prayer Breakfast. But next year, the House will as well. We do so in partnership, we do so in brotherhood, and we do so in love, and we do so in faith. I now want to begin by introducing my side of the head table, and then Amy will introduce her side of the head table. First, the Vice President of the United States of America, Joe Biden; the Secretary of State of the United States of America, Hillary Rodham Clinton; the distinguished Senator from the state of Utah, Orrin Hatch; the luckiest thing that ever happened to me 41 years ago, my wife, Dianne; the distinguished senior Senator from the state of Oregon, Ron Wyden; the co-chair of the House prayer breakfast, from Missouri, Representative Todd Akin; a lady who has the voice of an angel and later you will hear her sing, God Bless America, Sergeant First Class MaryKay Messenger, the lead vocalist of the United States Military Academy Band; and my, friend and the artist who will sing the closing hymn, Ralph Freeman.

Senator Klobuchar: Johnny put the music together this morning and you are going to love it. President Obama and the First Lady will be joining us shortly; His Excellency Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero, the Prime Minister of Spain is with us; my husband, John Bessler who made our daughter's lunch at 5:30 this morning while I was getting ready for this; Admiral Mike Mullen, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; 2007 Heisman Trophy winner, Tim Tebow; the co-chair of the House prayer breakfast, Representative Charlie Wilson of Ohio; and the Heisman Trophy winner of Senate chaplains, Rear Admiral Barry Black.

Johnny and I wanted you all to hear this morning from our friend, Senate Chaplain, Barry Black, who like all Senate chaplains since 1789 opens each session of the Senate with a prayer. To me and Johnny, Barry is a friend and a spiritual adviser but he is also an embodiment of the power of faith and discipline and hard work. From his impoverished childhood in Baltimore to his distinguished 27-year career in the U.S. Navy, to his service in the Senate, Chaplain Black's “only in America” story, a story he has detailed so eloquently in his book, From the