going—to public education, the environment, historic preservation, and to Native American communities—instead of corporate bank accounts.

Mr. President, this is an unbelievable story. The Interior Department's Mineral Management Service—MMS—simply wants to collect the money these companies owe the public. Interior Secretary Babbitt says:

Many of the industry's largest companies are underpaying royalties.

Just recently, Mobil Oil agreed to a $56.5 million settlement of Federal and State lawsuits alleging underpayment of royalties. That is what has been going on. And there has been a flurry of such settlements: $2.5 billion in Alaska, $350 million in California, $17.5 million in Texas, $10 million in Louisiana, and $8 million in New Mexico. MMS has now billed 12 of these companies $260 million for overdue royalties. Now the Justice Department has joined a lawsuit under the False Claims Act alleging fraud. According to Justice, several of these oil companies have been deliberately underpaying their royalties.

Remember, this oil belongs to the public and to Native American tribes. We are leasing the mineral rights to them, but only under one condition. We are saying, ''Go ahead, take the oil; all we ask is a 12.5 percent cut on the fair market value.'' I don't think that is too much to ask. Nor do the people of this country think it is too much to ask. But apparently the oil companies do.

Let me be clear about one thing. This has already come up in the debate. Senator DURBIN spoke to it, and Senator BOXER spoke to it as well. We are not talking about all the oil companies. We are not talking about mom-and-pop independents. We are talking about the large integrated companies who sell to affiliates at undervalued prices. They make up only 5 percent of all the oil companies drilling on Federal land, but they account for 68 percent of all Federal production.

For over 2 years, the Interior Department has been developing regulations to put a stop to this highway robbery. This is not new authority. Interior already has statutory authority to collect royalties on the ''fair market value'' of this oil, but the new regulations would keep oil companies from manipulating ''fair market value'' to underpay their royalties. The oil companies don't like that.

Here is the question I ask colleagues: Do these companies, do these huge integrated oil companies, really deserve our sympathy? I don't think so. They have been caught—let me repeat that—they have been caught underpaying their royalties.

Since when do we have such tremendous sympathy in the U.S. Senate for people who are cheating the public? It is interesting to me. We pass crime bills all the time. Now we have the Juvenile Justice Act—a crackdown on children. Very little sympathy there. Put children in adult corrections facilities; very little sympathy for these children.

We passed a welfare bill. We don't really know what is happening. We know women have been taken off the welfare rolls. We know the children have been taken off the rolls. But we don't know what kind of jobs they have, what kind of wages. We don't know whether there is good child care for those children. Very little sympathy for these families either.

We tried to bring an amendment to the floor to increase the minimum wage so that working people can make a decent living. There is very little sympathy on the floor of the Senate for any of these folks.

But in through the door walks a CEO from one of these oil companies—large integrated oil companies that have been underpaying their royalties, oil companies who happen to be heavy campaign contributors—and all of a sudden we have sympathy to spare. We have sympathy coming out the wazoo. We feel their pain. All of a sudden it is, ''At your service, sir. What can we do for you, sir? How can we serve you better?''

These companies have been caught red-handed. The cops are after them. Law enforcement is closing in. They are in deep trouble, and they are desperate for someone to come to their rescue, and fast.

So who do they call? They call their friends. They call the U.S. Congress. And guess what. Congress answers the call without a moment's hesitation. With a rider in this bill, Congress comes to the rescue and rewards them with a ''get out of jail free'' card.

The Boxer amendment would revoke this sweetheart deal that lets oil companies keep ripping off the public, lets them keep shortchanging education, even after they have been caught cheating. If there ever was a time to be tough on crime, this is it. In fact, I say this is a time for zero tolerance. The rider in this bill sends law enforcement on paid holiday. The Boxer amendment puts the cops back on the beat.

I say to my colleagues, we have to ask ourselves a question: What is our purpose here? Are we elected to fight for people or for the oil companies? Were we elected to fight for good government or for corporate welfare? Are we going to do what the public wants us to do, or are we going to do what the oil companies want us to do?

I urge my colleagues to join in a broad coalition that opposes this $66 million corporate welfare giveaway. That is what this amendment speaks to. That is what this debate is all about, and all of us will be held accountable.

Mr. President, how much time do I have left?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator has 7 minutes left.

Mr. WELLSTONE. With the indulgence of my colleagues, I ask for a couple of minutes. I have been trying to give a speech for 3 days on what is happening in Burma. It will take me about 4 minutes. I ask unanimous consent that I have 4 minutes as in morning business.

Mr. DOMENICI. At this moment?

Mr. WELLSTONE. I am not taking near the 15 minutes.

Mr. DOMENICI. And you are not going to take the rest of the 15 minutes?

Mr. WELLSTONE. No. I thought my colleague wanted to hear me repeat the statement.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. If there is no objection, the Senator is recognized for 4 minutes.

Mr. WELLSTONE. I think this is a statement with which every single Senator will agree.

BURMA

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, I rise to express my outrage at threats toward Burmese opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi made Tuesday in the government-controlled press in Rangoon. Completely without justification the press called for Aung San Suu Kyi to be deported from Burma. The regime has again made the ridiculous charge that Aung San Suu Kyi is not entitled to Burmese citizenship. This charge is made on the xenophobic and insulting basis that she married a foreigner. The regime has long tried to discredit Aung San Suu Kyi with the Burmese people with this type of nonsense—it hasn't worked.

The Burmese people voted for Aung San Suu Kyi's party overwhelmingly in 1990—electing opposition candidates to 80 percent of the parliament seats. She remains the hope of a repressed people longing for democracy and human rights. The military regime, which used to call itself the SLORC, has tried to improve its image by changing its name to the State Peace and development Council. But it is the same regime. It has had to prevent Aung San Suu Kyi from speaking publicly because she was drawing huge crowds to the front of her home. It has had to prevent her from traveling freely to visit her supporters since they fear her popularity.

Far from being a foreigner, Aung San Suu Kyi embodies the very history of Burma. She is the daughter of the founder of the Burmese army and the leader of Burma's independence movement, General Aung San. Like her father, Aung San Suu Kyi has devoted years of her life to the Burmese people at great personal sacrifice.

The Burmese people strongly identify Aung San Suu Kyi with her father's legacy and his struggle to bring independence and ethnic unity to Burma. In fact, displaying pictures of General Aung San has become a symbolic act of defiance and show of support for the opposition. University students began demonstrations in 1996 and again in 1998 by displaying portraits of Aung San as a rallying signal. The authorities can't take action against those

displaying his picture since he is also revered by the regime as the nation's founder.

The regime rightly fears the power of these symbols but their attempts to separate Aung San Suu Kyi from her legacy and deprive her of citizenship will fail. The Burmese people see through it. The people clearly do not want her deported.

I urge the regime to treat this courageous woman with the respect she deserves and to ensure that no harm comes to her. She has stood up to the repressive tactics of the military regime for over 10 years now. In recent months, she has sacrificed her personal comfort and risked her health facing down the authorities. When denied the ability to travel freely she spent 10 days waiting in her car for the authorities to allow her to move. Her exceptional fortitude and her commitment to challenging the regime through nonviolent actions are an inspiration to those working for human rights around the world.

I also express my concern about recent detentions of several hundred of Aung San Suu Kyi's supporters. Last week, the regime reacted with typically heavy-handed tactics to prevent her party from convening the members of parliament elected in free and fair elections held in 1990. The regime has never allowed the parliament elected in 1990 to take office because the voters overwhelmingly elected opposition members. Aung San Suu Kyi recently called on the regime to convene the parliament. When that request was ignored her party decided to convene a ''People's Parliament'' on its own. The reaction of the military junta was predictable. They simply rounded up any opposition politician who might attend the planned events and ''detained'' them. Hundreds of party members are still being held.

This outrageous tactic violates the rights of the Burmese people to exercise freedom of assembly and political expression. Although this behavior is nothing new or unexpected for this repressive regime we must persist in condemning it. I call on the regime to immediately release all opposition party members detained and to enter into genuine dialogue with the opposition and ethnic minority group about restoring democracy to Burma.

And, again, I call on the military regime to treat Aung San Suu Kyi with respect as the legitimate leader of the opposition and to withdraw the threat of deportation and respect her rights as a Burmese citizen.

To reiterate, Mr. President, I want to go on record. I express my outrage, and I think it is outrage of Democrats and Republicans, at the threats toward the Burmese opposition leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, made last Tuesday by a Government-controlled press. They are now talking about the possibility of deporting her from Burma.

She is a very, very courageous woman. The people overwhelmingly elected her in 1990. What has happened since is that this military regime, which used to call itself SLORC, which has now tried to improve its image by calling itself the State Peace and Development Council, has been just full of brutal repression for the people there.

I rise to express my concern about what is happening to this very courageous woman who has been trying to travel, has been trying to have an opportunity to speak out in her country and meet with other people. She spent recently 10 days just in her car trying to cross a bridge to meet with people, to speak with people in her own country. This regime really has her under house arrest.

In addition, this past week, what happened is that many of the people in her party decided that they would convene a people's parliament, since their elections were nullified when this repressive military government took over. They held a meeting, and hundreds of them have been rounded up and are now in prison.

I come to the floor of the Senate today to simply say that this is an outrageous practice of repression by this Government. I condemn it on the floor of the U.S. Senate. It is not always that I think I speak for almost every single Senator, but I believe Democrats and Republicans agree on this. I call on this military regime to treat this courageous woman with respect as a legitimate leader of the opposition and to release people whom they have unlawfully put in jail.

Aung San Suu Kyi is a courageous woman. She stands for the very best of what our country stands for, which is respect for human rights and democracy. We need to speak out on the floor of the Senate, and we need to send a message to this repressive Government in Burma, that not only will we not do business with you as usual—and we are not doing that—but we, as a Government, we as the U.S. Senate, will continue to speak out and condemn your actions, and we will continue to support people in Burma, those people who stand up for democracy and stand up for human rights.

I yield the floor.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 1999

The Senate continued with the consideration of the bill.

Mr. MURKOWSKI addressed the Chair.

AMENDMENT NO. 3594

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Who yields time to the Senator from Alaska?

Mr. DOMENICI. Mr. President, I would like to ask Senator BOXER—we have been going back and forth. Senator MURKOWSKI just wants to speak for 3 minutes, and I wonder if we could then have Senator THOMAS speak for up to 10 minutes.

Mrs. BOXER. Absolutely.

Mr. DOMENICI. Then we would go to your side.

Mrs. BOXER. Fine.

Mr. DOMENICI. I yield to the two Senators in that order.

Mr. MURKOWSKI addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

Mr. MURKOWSKI. I rise as chairman of the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources. I would like to advise my colleagues that we had an oversight hearing in June on the MMS oil valuation issue. The results of that hearing indicated that we should initiate a dialogue with the principals. That dialogue was entered into. I felt gratified that we were making progress relative to this complex issue and was chagrined to find at a later date that the advances we thought we were making simply had been overturned by the policymakers of the Department of the Interior and the administration.

As a consequence, this conversation about corporate welfare, big oil, and big business is incorrect because we are talking about small companies in many cases. The oil and gas industry has lost a quarter of a million jobs. This is an industry that now finds itself moving overseas where there is a favorable climate for exploration and production.

As evidence of that, Mr. President, in 1973 and 1974, we were 37-percent dependent on imported oil; today, we are 52-percent dependent. The Department of Energy suggests we are going to be 66-percent dependent in the year 2004 or 2005.

The amendment offered by Senator DOMENICI and Senator HUTCHISON during committee markup would delay the implementation of the final rules on Federal oil valuation until October 1999, or until a negotiated rule can be achieved.

The oil and gas industry is struggling in a declining market. This is an industry where we have lost a quarter of a million jobs. We are talking about implementation of regulations that would drive this industry out of the United States and make us more dependent on imported oil. It is unconscionable. The taxes paid by this industry and mortgage payments made by industry employees in their communities are contributions being overlooked in this general climate of ''well, throw it out—because somehow big business is cheating,'' if you will. And that is simply unconscionable, Mr. President.

As Senator DOMENICI and Senator HUTCHISON indicated, they personally met twice with Interior Department officials and industry executives to resolve what amounts to a handful of issues concerning the rulemaking. It is rather interesting, because if you look at the MMS proposal, it attempts to set the oil royalty away from the lease; that is, downstream, almost near the burner, not as required by law, and set it on the value added by the companies