

As I explained when I first introduced this bill 1½ years ago, the Securities and Exchange Commission has already attempted to do this by regulation. So bravo, SEC. In other words, they acted, and bravo to them. But Congress needs to act now because of a decision by a Federal appeals court. In 2006, the DC Circuit Court of Appeals overturned an SEC administrative rule that required registration of these same hedge funds. That decision effectively ended all registration of hedge funds with the SEC unless and until Congress takes action—hence, my legislation.

The Hedge Fund Registration Act would respond to the court decisions by narrowing the current registration exemption and bring much-needed transparency to hedge funds. Most people say the devil is in the details. Well, let's go over the details so I am not trying to hide something.

The bill would authorize the Securities and Exchange Commission to require all investment advisers, including hedge fund managers, to register with the SEC. Only those that meet all four of the following criteria would be exempt. No. 1, managed less than \$50 million; No. 2, had fewer than 15 clients; No. 3, did not hold himself out to the public as an investment adviser; and, No. 4, managed the assets of fewer than 15 investors, regardless of whether investment is direct or through a pooled investment vehicle, such as a hedge fund.

The Hedge Fund Registration Act is a first step in ensuring that the SEC simply has clear authority to do what it already tried to do and the courts said it could not do. Congress must act to ensure that our laws are kept up to date as new types of investments appear. Unfortunately, this legislation, introduced more than a year and a half ago, has not had many friends. These funds do not want people to know what they do and have fought hard to keep it that way. Well, I think that is all the more reason to shed some sunlight on them, to see what they are up to so maybe a couple years from now we are not dealing with problems the hedge funds have caused.

I urge my colleagues to cosponsor and support this legislation, as we work to protect all investors, large and small. It does not prohibit anything. It just makes sure these folks are registered and that you know who they are and how many there are. That is something we ought to know. It does need to be emphasized that we ought to know that in this day, when we are dealing with the problems we are here on this Friday night and Saturday and Sunday and Monday to find a solution to, the Wall Street problems this country now faces.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

Mr. BOND addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. WHITEHOUSE). Will the Senator withhold his suggestion of the absence of a quorum?

Mr. GRASSLEY. Oh, yes. I am sorry. The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

Mr. BOND. Thank you very much, Mr. President.

THE ECONOMY

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I commend our ranking member on the Finance Committee for the excellent job he has done. He has talked a good bit about what needs to be done for the future to make sure we do not get into another crisis such as this. I share his view, and I believe now this body will have to address, as soon as we come back after the elections, a wide range of articles and bills that have been introduced.

I sent a letter, about 2 weeks ago, to the Secretary of the Treasury, the Chairman of the Fed, and the Chairman of the SEC, with copies to the leaders of the Banking Committee, talking about some of these pieces of legislation.

One of the things the Senator from Iowa mentioned is the need to have more transparency—transparency in hedge funds. Transparency has been lacking. We have seen Wall Street develop many new products, derivatives. There is a new thing called a credit default swap, which I see that New York is regulating as an insurance product. Obviously, that has played a significant role in financial activities and could provide a problem if there is not proper oversight either as an option or as an insurance product. That is something we are going to have to address.

A couple days ago, I introduced legislation which had been recommended by the Secretary of the Treasury for a Mortgage Origination Commission. Essentially, right now, we have too many people who are offering mortgages that are not regulated under the existing systems. Banks and savings and loans, obviously, are regulated at the State level. But we have many people who are offering mortgages by fax and by e-mail. I cannot get good enough spam filters on my computer at home to avoid getting those mortgage offers. But I can tell by looking at them that they are too good to be true.

Many of these people offered subprime mortgages or alternate "A" mortgages, which essentially said: We will give you a mortgage, but we are not going to check your financial statement, we are not going to see if you are bankrupt or have a criminal record or even if you have a job. They issued these mortgages at very attractive rates, with a significant spike after the initial term and penalties for prepayment, and then they went out and the geniuses on Wall Street sliced them and diced them and they took these toxic products and spread the poison throughout our financial system and throughout the world's financial system. That is why we are in a major crisis.

Another major savings and loan went down last night. We have had too many

toxic products out there that have not been regulated. The Mortgage Origination Commission would set up the primary Federal regulators of products such as this to set standards for State regulation.

Having been a Governor, I believe that where a State regulation can handle the protection of its citizens, it ought to do so. I hope my colleagues will consider the Mortgage Origination Commission bill I introduced and act on it because we cannot have unregulated mortgage originators going out and offering "too good to be true" deals to people who may be overly anxious to jump at too good a deal.

This and the emphasis on trying to get people in no downpayment home mortgages have been a significant part of the problem. As I have tried to say, taking a no downpayment mortgage sets you up to see your American dream turn into your American nightmare. Home ownership does not come without headaches. I know about those headaches. We had to have our basement pumped out a few weeks ago. I have had a furnace go down on me. We have to finance it. If you do not have the money to make a downpayment, you probably are not in a position to take on the responsibilities of a mortgage. Beyond that, before people take a mortgage, they need to understand their financial conditions.

When I traveled around the State of Missouri this spring, talking to homeowners, to housing advocates, to local officials who had seen the foreclosures sweeping across their State, they were using some of the money I joined with Senator DODD, the chairman of the Banking Committee, in introducing last year and passing last year to put \$180 million in mortgage foreclosure counseling. They were making progress on helping people restructure their loans. But the most important thing: Every single one of those people said: We need to make sure every homeowner who is thinking about buying a home has appropriate financial counseling. Because if you go into a mortgage without making sure it is a mortgage you can afford, you are asking for terrible trauma, disappointment, possibly bankruptcy, ruining your credit by taking on a home you cannot afford or more of a home than you can afford. So there are a lot of things that need to be done.

I also urge stronger regulation of our government-sponsored enterprises. I also advocated that the Securities and Exchange Commission reinstate the uptick rule, meaning you can only make a short sale if the price is above the last price, preventing a group of hedge funds getting together and driving the price of the stock so low it causes commotion in the financial community and drives that stock down to a point where the company can no longer survive.

These are some of the steps that need to be taken. I trust we will put a high priority, when we return, of making

sure these regulations are tightened, that we get the kind of regulators for GSEs we need, that we enforce vigorously the “no naked short selling” rule that should have been enforced and was not.

But, as I said earlier, we are in the middle of a crisis, and right now we have some of our very best people working on coming up with an appropriate solution to this problem.

I came to the floor Tuesday morning and said we need to act, we need to act immediately, we need to act smartly and responsibly. That is what our leaders are doing. I said the three things that were missing from the Treasury Secretary’s proposal were taxpayer protection, accountability, and transparency. Oversight is a very important part of that as well. If we do not act now, and act responsibly, we could find next week companies not able to make their payroll. Working families would find that the paycheck they are expecting does not come in, because I am hearing from people in our State and across the Nation that they cannot get credit. The credit markets are frozen. Possibly, that means no payrolls. It means for small businesses they cannot get the loans to continue to operate. They may be going out of business. Larger businesses may be put in a crisis state because they cannot get credit. If the family has home loans, and they want to refinance them, they may not be able to get them refinanced.

What this market crisis is doing to the value of retirement accounts is truly frightening. A neighbor told me that their 401(k) had dropped so much that they were going to have to work well past retirement. I said: If we can solve this crisis and get the liquidity into it that we need, you can expect that the markets will come back, you can expect that some of that which you have lost will be restored, and we will put the economy back on track to move forward.

Make no mistake about it, this isn’t just talking about big Wall Street firms; this is talking about everybody on Main Street, whether it is businesses, whether it is families. For farmers in my country, in the heart of Missouri, most farmers get operating loans in the late winter so they can get the fertilizer, the fuel they need, the seeds they need to plant, or the operations they need to support their livestock industry to make sure they can take care of their cattle, their hogs. They are not going to be able to get it.

So we need to come together as a nation on a bipartisan basis and fix this crisis. We cannot fail. We cannot leave and go home without doing something; otherwise, we are going to see the implications of this credit crunch. We will see tremendous drops in the markets if we fail to do our job. Credit will not be available and this economy will come to a crashing halt. This is the kind of outcome we cannot afford.

I was very pleased that both Presidential candidates came back to meet

at the White House, taking time off from the Presidential campaign, and that shows they are serious and they understand. We need to get this job done.

I believe most people have heard now that each body has appointed one Republican, one Democrat to sit down and negotiate with the Secretary of the Treasury. On our side, I am very pleased that the distinguished ranking member of the Budget Committee, JUDD GREGG, is a negotiator. He is a former Governor. He understands the budget implications. I think he is working to make sure the money that is recovered on the loans that are bought is paid back into a debt-reduction fund. I hope that will come out.

We need to have, as I said, accountability, transparency, and stability, and that is going to be a major part of taxpayer protection.

Purchasing the assets at the right value is going to make a big difference. I have talked to people from banks that are operating in a sound manner, and they say: Well, why are you helping the people who misbehaved? I said: We are not helping them when we pay 50 cents or 60 cents on the dollar for mortgages they hold for which they paid \$1. What we are doing is putting liquidity back in the system.

People said: Well, haven’t there been criminal violations? I have noted on the floor previously that the FBI started some 1,300 investigations, as reported in the press. I don’t have that fact of my own knowledge, but it was reported in the press that there are 1,300 criminal investigations. I hope some of these people who are peddling bad paper actually, if they did it with criminal intent, are prosecuted. Also, there will be civil and criminal investigations of the people who are operating the companies that went under. I think people want to know there is going to be a very thorough check, to see that if there is any criminal activity, it is appropriately punished. My constituents want to know that.

My constituents want to make sure there are no golden parachutes, that there are no bonuses for executives who caused their companies to crash. I believe there has been agreement among the parties and with the administration that those provisions will be included as well.

People want to see the economy get moving again. When people initially heard about this, they worried: What are we going to pay \$700 billion for? We are not paying out \$700 billion without getting something back for it. We ought to be buying it at a price where we can recover most, if not all, of what we paid.

I hope we will get equity in the form of warrants or preferred stock from companies to cover any shortfall that may occur if we are not able to realize the value from the securities we purchased of the amount we put into them.

All of these things are being worked out. If it sounds complicated, if my de-

scription is complicated, it is because this is a complicated piece of legislation. We are having to act in a manner that is going to demand the very best of all of us in this Chamber and in the other body to make sure we get it right and we can agree on it. I hope we will be able to take what our negotiators have presented and not try to pick it apart because if we pick it apart, we are likely to see the whole thing fall and not get it done.

So we have JUDD GREGG on this side. On the House side, my constituent and good friend ROY BLUNT is leading the way. The House Republicans wanted to make sure they had their views heard. I know ROY BLUNT will represent them well. When we went through the effort to get the House to pass the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act amendments that I worked hard to pass on this floor, ROY BLUNT, as the assistant minority leader, did an outstanding job helping us negotiate with both Republicans and Democrats to make sure we got the kind of bill that could pass that body and our body. As a result, it did. So I have great confidence in JUDD GREGG and ROY BLUNT.

I know also that the fine Democratic leaders from the heads of the banking committees will do a good job. I hope they do it promptly because we need to have a solution. We need to take responsible action. We need to make sure there is oversight.

I understand they have set up an oversight board that will watch what the Secretary of the Treasury is doing. We will have suggestions for the Secretary of the Treasury on how to make sure he uses the marketplace fairly to get a good value and to use the best information that is available to determine the value of these nonperforming loans, provide homeowners relief, where possible, so they can continue in their homes, and still pay back enough to make sure the taxpayers are compensated for the Federal dollars that are put up for it.

We need transparency, finally, to make sure Americans know their money is safe, know that the companies in which they have invested, have stock, or have accounts are protected.

This is a critically important mission. I don’t think anybody wants to be working on the weekend, but we are going to be working this weekend. I just hope we do it and do it well and do it in a bipartisan fashion. After it is over, if you want to throw brickbats at each other, we do that well, and there will be plenty of brickbats to throw and everybody will take part and we will have a healthy, spirited debate before November. But until we get this solved, this has to be “job 1” for every one of us who is elected to represent people in the Congress. We must do it, and we must do it right.

I urge my colleagues to give their good ideas to the negotiators for each party on each side of the body and follow what they are doing so we can adopt this measure in time to get the

credit markets functioning again, to see that our economy gets going.

So it is going to be a long, tough weekend, particularly for the negotiators. I am jealous that I don't have the opportunity to stay up all night with them and help them, but we have selected good Members to do that job. I wish them well, and I hope they have divine guidance because it is going to require a little bit of that, along with their other skills. It is important we get it done.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming is recognized.

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, I rise today to also speak about the turmoil in our financial markets and the urgent need for a legislative solution. If people around here are looking a little frazzled, it is because we have been putting in long hours trying to get a solution to this problem, and it is getting closer.

As everybody knows, on Wednesday Secretary Paulson and Chairman Bernanke wrapped up their sales pitch to Congress on how to best rescue our economy. The fact remains that there are many questions today, as many as there were before they got here—maybe even more. The U.S. Treasury continues to ask Congress for a \$700 billion check with as little accountability as possible about how to spend it. Secretary Paulson and Chairman Bernanke have opposed oversight transparency, protections for taxpayers, and everything else, except a check and an envelope to deliver it in. We owe Americans more than just a rubberstamp on this proposal. Each American is going to loan \$2,300 for this plan. For that price, they want to know why it is necessary, where their money is going, and if the investment is going to work. Unfortunately, I am completely disappointed with the answers so far.

Members and staff have worked through the week to address these questions to present a workable solution. Some have found ideas that deserve serious consideration. Others are the same old ideas wrapped in new packaging.

The best plan has to rely on three simple principles: accountability to the taxpayer, transparency to the Government function, and a clear plan of action. The worst plan would be to weigh down a bill with pet projects and special interests that Members were unable to get in the last housing bill.

Accountability to the taxpayer means protecting them against unexpected and unjustified costs. This is a serious concern of the Treasury's plan because no one knows the actual value of the assets the taxpayers are buying, except the seller. The seller dictates the purchase price. To protect taxpayers from getting bilked, Treasury should take an equity stake in the companies that participate in this plan. If these assets are worth what Treasury buys them for, the option will

never be exercised. But we must send a message to investors that American taxpayers come first. Years of big firms' unconscionable lending has sent our economy into a spiral, and recovery cannot be a free ride for the banks that put us there in the first place.

Transparency of Government function is the second necessary principle for an economic fix. Treasury's original plan prohibited agency or judicial review of any kind. This provision would have granted complete immunity to the Treasury Secretary and any future Secretary in the operation of this \$700 billion slush fund. Good governance demands transparency, including proper oversight of this asset portfolio. I support ideas that insulate the managers of these assets from political influence and create an independent entity with a chairman who is accountable to the taxpayer. Congressional oversight must also be vigorous. Congress should expect regular reviews of Treasury's actions, and Treasury should not expect mismanagement of the taxpayers' money to go unseen or unpunished.

Finally, Congress needs a clear plan of action. The Treasury's original proposal was only three pages long. It has since grown in complexity. Secretary Paulson was unable to provide detailed answers to essential questions during the hearing at the Senate Banking Committee on Tuesday. What is the process for hiring asset managers that ensures no conflicts of interest? How will the price of assets be set so that they are not too low, causing more bank failures, or too high, crowding out private market investment? Perhaps the most important question is, Will it work?

Secretary Paulson calls this proposal an experiment. I am very uncomfortable passing a bill to give Secretary Paulson \$700 billion in taxpayer money for an experiment.

I understand the urgency of this problem, but our markets and the American public need the confidence of a clear plan with measurable results.

I again caution my colleagues that this crisis is not an opportunity for Members to pass pet projects they were unable to attach to the last housing stimulus package. In fact, I think there are some problems with what was done in the last housing stimulus package. Proposals for financing housing trust funds and authorizing bankruptcy judges to renegotiate mortgages will not correct our markets or restore confidence. These are old ideas with a new coat of paint. Members trying to attach them to this legislation will only serve to politicize a bipartisan issue and slow our progress toward finding a solution.

As I work with my colleagues on a solution to this economic crisis, I will keep three principles in mind: accountability to the taxpayers, transparency of Government function, and a clear plan of action.

We are talking about a fundamental change in our Nation's free market sys-

tem. This change will come at a high price and with a considerable amount of pain to Wall Street and to Main Street. However, apprehension about the pain of recovery is no excuse to push a hastily written proposal through Congress without blinking. Now is the time these three principles are needed the most.

Our best economic experts state it is not just Wall Street facing this problem. If this economic slide continues, businesses in Wyoming and other States could shut down. People could lose their jobs. In the worst case scenario, people would have less money to buy goods and services, forcing more businesses to shut their doors and unemployment to increase. Banks could bar the gates on credit, effectively halting business growth. Even people who have established excellent credit, who have paid their bills on time and kept their financial houses in order may not be able to get the financing they need. Students might not be able to get loans for college. Renters might have to stay renters because no one will loan them the money to buy a house. If no one is buying cars because they cannot get loans, then car dealerships will not be able to sell cars and automakers will not make any. Unemployment in this country could skyrocket.

These are some of the concerns on my mind as I seek to get a clearer idea of the scope and details of what we are dealing with. I have laid out the principles that I think are essential. It is my understanding that most of those, in the discussions I have been a part of, are in the package. I appreciate the efforts of those who are working on this legislation, working toward a solution. I appreciate the thoughts and information I am getting from people in Wyoming.

I wouldn't say the majority party leadership said we are likely to postpone today's scheduled adjournment of the Senate and come back next week. I say we have to work until we have an acceptable solution.

I hope everybody will keep track of what is happening, and I hope the principles where we have taxpayers' protection and executive compensation limits wind up in the legislation so people who got us into this mess feel the pain of getting us out. That means no golden parachutes, taxpayers need equity sharing, and I believe any profits gained from this package must be used to reduce the national debt.

As the money comes flowing back in from the \$700 billion—and there will be money coming back in from it—it has to be used to reduce the national debt. Oversight and transparency—a congressional oversight board has to be in charge of administering these funds. We need Government accountability. We need office audits. We need an independent inspector general. Perhaps an additional idea that might be included would be that Congress would first provide Treasury with \$250 billion, then

\$100 billion, and then another \$350 billion as the oversight shows that it is working and it is needed.

This is a critical time in the life of our country. We need to come together and find a solution, and we need to make sure we are watching out for the people who are paying the bills—the American taxpayers.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, we are all wrestling with what is a real economic challenge and crisis for America. We have a situation where credit, even in good companies and with good individuals in States such as Alabama, is becoming more difficult to come by and it has the potential to slow down development and economic growth. So I do not deny that there is a real problem out there.

The President of the United States and the Secretary of the Treasury at some point made a decision that strong action was needed, and since that point their rhetoric has changed from concern and separate and distinct actions to make the situation better, to basically a bold threat to Congress that this economy is in grave danger and that if we don't pass the bill they propose, things could get even worse. That is a powerful thing. When the President of the United States and the Secretary of the Treasury, who are very responsible individuals, make such a charge, all of us should take it seriously. And as I said, I am aware of the definite slowdown, particularly in housing, in my State, and I don't dismiss that.

I will say that in recent days some of the comments made on television and other places, to me, are a bit alarmist. It seems once a decision has been made by the Wall Street crowd that this is the right thing to do, they use whatever excuse they can find or whatever argument they can make and propound that dramatically to "force a recalcitrant Congress" to do what they would like to have us do.

Well, I have been around. I didn't just fall off the turnip truck. You can turn on the TV and see all of this and get a feel for it. So I think it is a matter of great seriousness, and I respect my colleagues who are working on it, some of whom have been selected, in some way or another, to represent us all; to go and meet with House Members, and I guess the administration officials and gurus, and they are going to tell us what all we need to do. And on the eve of the election, a big fat bill is going to be finally put together and we are going to be asked if we are for it or against it. I suspect it may well pass, because I think people would rather vote for something and go home.

Maybe our Secretary can save us. Maybe the master of the universe that he is, he can figure out a way to take \$700 billion, with very little control—he has always said what he wanted was "maximum flexibility." What does that mean? It means freedom to do whatever he wants to do. Well, I understand now that at least somebody came up with the idea to have an independent group to have oversight over this, or at least have the ability to say no at some point. So that is better than where we were, I think. But I am troubled about this for a lot of reasons. I wish the administration had been more constrained, more targeted in their relief, seeking to provide relief in a way that has the minimal precedential value for some major incursion into the economy the next time we have problems in our economy. I am worried about that, and others are too.

I also wish to take a moment to express my admiration for the senior Senator from Alabama, who in 2005 chaired the Banking Committee, and he pushed through, I think on a straight party-line vote—all the Republicans, I believe, voted for it—a bill that would have put strict controls and oversight over Fannie and Freddie. At that time, Alan Greenspan, who was the chairman of the Federal Reserve Board, made a powerful statement saying that our financial markets were at risk if we didn't do something in 2005 about fixing the Freddie and Fannie problem. It was a strong statement. Going back and looking at it today, it was a cause for concern. So they were able to pass it out of committee, but there wasn't enough support on the floor to pass it.

I was told recently that Freddie and Fannie, in one quarter, had more paid lobbyists than any other group in town, and they are supposed to be a quasi-government operation. But at any rate, they were able to block the reform. So we didn't do it, and now we are in a crisis.

I know Senator SHELBY has expressed his concern, as one who has been on top of this issue for some time, that this legislation is not a good way to handle it. He has made some suggestions. I wish they had given serious consideration to those. I think it would be a position better for our country.

But the momentum is going forward, and I am not here to try to delay any votes. It is time for us to put up and shut up and cast our vote. I point out a letter written to the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the President pro tempore of the Senate. Two hundred or so economists question this plan. They make three points: First, they question its fairness. They consider it a "subsidy to investors at taxpayers' expense. Investors who took risks to earn profits must also bear the losses. Not every business failure carries a systemic risk."

No. 2, they question its ambiguity, noting:

Neither the mission of the new agency nor its oversight are clear.

I think that is still true. We made some progress but it is still true.

They say purchases of opaque assets from troubled sellers must be on such terms that are "crystal clear ahead of time and monitored carefully afterwards."

But the most important point, at least to me as a Member of the Senate, which is supposed to be the thoughtful body, the institution that gives consideration of the long-term implications of what we do, the third part is particularly impactful to me and struck a nerve with me. The third paragraph expresses concern for its long-term effects.

If the plan is enacted, its effects will be with us for a generation. For all their recent troubles, America's dynamic and innovative private capital markets have brought the nation unparalleled prosperity. Fundamentally weakening those markets in order to calm short-term disruptions is desperately shortsighted.

They close their letter by saying:

For these reasons we ask Congress not to rush, to hold appropriate hearings, to carefully consider the right course of action, and to wisely determine the future of the financial industry and the United States economy for the years to come.

I just would say about those things, there are a lot of matters we can discuss. I argued in committee and on the floor in opposition to a plan that some of my Democratic colleagues offered some time ago, and then again recently, that would give a bankruptcy judge the right to rewrite the terms of a mortgage and, in fact, would allow a person who goes into bankruptcy to cram down what they owed on a mortgage, to rewrite it and reduce it, for example, from \$150,000 to \$100,000 based on the judge's evaluations, and just let them pay that amount.

I remember arguing that when you do not honor contracts, very pernicious things tend to happen. So if a bank is going to loan you money and they think somebody might rewrite the contract and you would not have to pay it back, then they may decide they have to raise interest rates on everybody they loan to, to guard against that potential, or require an even bigger downpayment than they otherwise would require.

I believe removing that provision was the right thing to do. But from a moral position, I think it is a good deal harder for a Senator or Member of this body who deals with that issue to say it is a dangerous precedent to allow a mortgage to be rewritten, but it is OK for a big business with a CEO, paid \$100 million a year—they can have their contracts rewritten, they can get bailouts from the Government, they don't have to pay the consequences of adverse economic fortune that we say the individual has to pay.

I would say no one should doubt that the American commitment to an allocation of wealth in a market economy will be eroded dramatically if this bill passes—I ask unanimous consent for 1 additional minute.

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

Mr. SESSIONS. We should make no mistake that this is a weakening of it. I would note the article in the Wall Street Journal quoted people around the world for seeing the irony in the United States bailing out companies while we have been advocating to them that when their companies get in trouble, their governments should not bail them out as a matter of principle.

For those reasons, with due, great respect for my colleagues who see it differently, with full acknowledgment that this is an extremely tough decision and we do not know how the economy is going—and many do believe this step will help it—I will not be able to vote for it because I think it goes too far. I think it could have been more narrowly drawn and should have been. It is a precedent that will come back to haunt us in the future.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Hawaii.

NATIONAL BIBLE WEEK 2008

Mr. AKAKA. Mr. President, I rise today to celebrate one of the most significant books in human history, the Bible. As Senate cochair of National Bible Week 2008, it is my honor to join the National Bible Association in promoting the nationwide recognition of the Bible's importance in our daily lives.

One of the many important verses in the Bible that applies to us as leaders is found in Proverbs 21, verse 1:

The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord. Like the rivers of water, He turns it wherever He wishes.

Our Nation has always recognized the power of an unseen hand guiding our fortunes and destiny, and during this important and critical crossroads, our Nation will do well to turn once again to the Bible for strength.

This year, from November 23 to November 30, communities, churches, and leaders across America will celebrate National Bible Week by reading and reflecting on the Bible's teachings and how it can help us lead better lives.

It is our responsibility as leaders to remind all Americans of the importance of the Bible to individuals and to our history, life, and the culture of our Nation. We gain much inspiration from the Scriptures, and the light of God will shine through us if we hold fast to the Bible's principles and apply them to our daily lives.

I join my voice with my fellow National Bible Week cochair, TODD AKIN, and the National Bible Week chairman, J. Willard Marriott, Jr., in urging all Americans to celebrate National Bible Week 2008.

I yield the floor.

Mr. CHAMBLISS. Mr. President, I join with my colleague from Hawaii in celebrating National Bible Week. I get together every Wednesday morning with a group of our colleagues for our

weekly prayer breakfast, and he is always such an inspiration. He is our song leader while we do, except for he and the Chaplain, some of the worst singing that can be done. He is a great inspiration for all of us, and I commend him for bringing this resolution forward.

THE ECONOMY

Mr. CHAMBLISS. Mr. President, we all know that our country has seen better economic times. Across the United States and around the world, businesses and individuals are feeling the effects of this financial turmoil—not only on Wall Street, but at home on Main Street as well. I don't need to remind this body of the volatility of our financial markets. Evidence of this market precariousness has been splashed across the front pages of newspapers and television screens everywhere, causing panic and further instability.

As the conversations in Washington continue over how to address our Nation's financial crisis, and as the details of the problems in our financial sector are revealed daily, I am convinced that something must be done and done soon.

But I want to be clear about congressional action: we must act because inaction could well cause serious harm to American families, farms, and small businesses as well as community banks and other lenders, and we must do our dead level best to make the right decisions, because action for the sake of expediency could put our Nation at further risk. Nevertheless, I oppose to the old saying of just do something, even if wrong. We should not follow that logic.

Since last Thursday, I have talked to numerous bankers, economists, academicians, as well as business leaders and owners who have told me that doing nothing would lead to irreparable harm to our economy. And I have heard from and talked to hundreds of Georgia taxpayers, virtually all of whom are opposed to the plan as originally presented. Everyone is concerned about doing the right thing. Georgians are furious at the current situation and for good reason.

I am angry and upset that the oversight supposed to be afforded by the regulatory bodies was not provided the way it should have been. The American taxpayers should never find themselves in this situation again, and that is why there must be confidence that what Congress passes will work—not for Wall Street but for Main Street, Georgia.

Before I give my support and work to pass legislation, it will have to have strong safeguards with accountable oversight. The plan must provide that any revenue earned by the treasury on this effort will be used 100 percent to retire the debt and not one penny used to expand Government. I will fight any legislation that proposes to use one cent of these funds for pork barrel

projects. Furthermore, I want to make sure that if fraud or other illegal acts took place that the people responsible are tried and punished. And while much of the focus has been on assisting larger banks and lenders, I am working to make sure that neighborhood banks and lenders are protected too. I intend to see that every single American has access to his or her money at all times, and that Americans who need credit have it available to them.

As the Senate debate unfolds, any proposed legislation must protect the citizens and taxpayers of Main Street, their savings, their retirement funds, their small businesses, their careers, their homes, and economic well being. This financial debacle on Wall Street must not be allowed to infect Main Street anymore than it already has.

We have to clean up this mess and keep America on track. We must be certain that those responsible do not profit from this legislation and, where appropriate, necessary compensation control policies be instituted. Golden parachutes for any plan participants must not be allowed. And civil and criminal penalties should be levied and pursued when and where appropriate.

During these next critical hours and days, I will carefully review the details of whatever package emerges, and I will fight for Georgians in this process. I will have my say. I am prepared to work through the weekend and into October and beyond—I will not vote for just any proposal—I will work for and vote for the proposal that I truly believe is in the best interest of Georgians and Americans, and I pledge to work on this as long as it takes to get the job done right and to make sure we do this in a bipartisan way.

The fundamental necessity of a strong financial market is transparency, liquidity and confidence. The tools to provide further clarity and integrity in our financial system are already available to our regulators. We need to ensure that these instruments are properly applied, so that we protect investors from deceptive practices.

Faith in the market is vital to its success. Security and soundness must, and will, return to our financial system through more effective oversight and guarantees of legitimate transactions. In turn, this security will restore certainty and faith in performance of the market.

It is important to recognize the connection and significance of a strong financial system in a capitalist society. We are still targets of terrorism because our freedoms enable us to be among the most prosperous, most powerful nations in the world. Recent economic shakeups will not alter these freedoms. Through the renewed faith and trust of the American investor, we will return to the height of prosperity, and as a beacon of fundamental fiscal strength throughout the world.

I look forward to the package that we hope will be forthcoming from our bipartisan, bicameral group that is