

For his many decades of service, Senator Stevens has received and accepted numerous honors—including having the Anchorage International Airport named after him.

Back in 1993, when I first arrived in the U.S. Senate, I was one of only seven female Senators, and if the Senate was a men's club, then the Appropriations Committee was its inner sanctum.

There was not a single woman on the Defense Appropriations Subcommittee, but that is where I wanted to serve.

I explained to Senator Stevens—who was then the ranking member of the committee—that Texas has more Army soldiers than any other State, more Air Force airmen and women stationed in Texas than any other State, and our defense industry builds everything from fighter aircraft to Army trucks to artillery systems to sophisticated electronics equipment for the Pentagon.

Therefore, I hoped to be able to serve on that committee.

After some careful thought, Senator Stevens agreed, and welcomed me to the Committee.

Senator Stevens has been known to show dramatic performances on the Senate floor, keeping wandering eyes focused on the urgent issues that need to be addressed.

One day, during a mark-up in the Senate Appropriations Committee, Senator Stevens, who chaired the committee at the time, grew very animated and laid down the law.

When a frustrated senior Senator told Senator Stevens that “there was no reason to lose your temper,” Senator Stevens glared back and responded, “I never lose my temper. I always know exactly where I left it.”

Senator Stevens acknowledges his quick temper; but those who know him see the other side—a compassionate heart.

I will never forget when a group of protestors gathered outside of the Appropriations Committee conference to demand increased funding for breast cancer research.

One particularly agitated advocate got in Senator Stevens' face and said, “If men were dying of breast cancer, you wouldn't think twice about increasing the funding.”

Needless to say, those words made quite an impact on Senator Stevens, but probably not what this advocate anticipated.

When Senator Stevens walked back into the conference, he repeated the charge and then looked around at his mostly male colleagues.

He knew that at least 6 of them suffered from prostate cancer.

He also noticed that the bill they were considering didn't fund prostate cancer research.

But thanks to the excellent suggestion of the woman in the hallway, he became an advocate for breast cancer research and prostate cancer research. Senator Stevens became a leader on these issues.

He has been a champion of a strong national defense and of the men and women who serve in the military.

I wish him and his family the best.

CRISIS IN GAZA

Mr. COBURN. Mr. President, when President Obama is sworn into office next week, he will inherit an extremely complex and challenging crisis in the Middle East. Since Israel commenced military operations in Gaza to defend its citizens against rocket attacks more than 1,000 have died in Gaza, many of them civilians, while 13 Israelis have died. In spite of this carnage, Hamas refuses to surrender and continues to fire rockets into Israel. No clear resolution is in sight.

As a practicing physician, I find this conflict heartbreaking. Israelis live in constant fear that a rocket attack will snuff out an innocent life. Families in Israel go to bed at night wondering if a rocket will slam into their home. At the same time, Palestinians have nowhere to run from a terrorist organization that uses its own civilians as human shields.

While we all mourn the loss of innocent life, the world must recognize that Hamas deliberately created a situation in which Israel was forced to respond as any sovereign nation would while under attack. Israel, and every nation, has the right to self-defense.

What makes Hamas's actions particularly abhorrent and barbaric is the fact that they are making decisions, I believe, based on a perverse political calculation. While publically condemning Israel, Hamas's leaders and sympathizers in Iran and elsewhere privately welcome the suffering of the Palestinian people as a political opportunity. Hamas knows better than anyone that virtually every area of the densely populated Gaza strip is a civilian area. In Gaza, refugees have no place to seek refuge. The terrible unintended consequences and loss of civilian life we've seen in Gaza is part of Hamas's design and goal.

The United States and the next administration can play an important role in preventing Hamas from achieving its goals. What many on both sides long for is not just the cessation of violence but a real, lasting and durable peace. Some believe this is impossible, but it is in the interest of all sides to work toward this goal.

I trust President-elect Obama will avoid the false choice between unapologetically defending Israel's security and creating hope and opportunity for people on both sides of the conflict who want the same degree of freedom, peace and opportunity for themselves and their children. As Israel's most important ally, the United States should never waver in our commitment to Israel's security. The strength of that assurance is itself one of our most important contributions in the region because it creates the security and stability that are a

prerequisite for meaningful negotiations.

At the same time, we enhance security in the region by assuring Palestinians in Gaza with our words and actions that they are not forgotten and that we hear their calls for peace and an end to violence. I've delivered 4,000 babies and I grieve with the pregnant women in Gaza who are being turned away at hospitals because their own leaders have held their lives and the lives of their children in contempt. The next administration can legitimize and support those mothers' pleas for peace while condemning and marginalizing Hamas's tactics of terror.

I believe President-elect Obama has the judgment and temperament to not only maintain our vital support of Israel, but to also create hope in the region and help Palestinians embrace alternatives to Hamas's brand of violence and despair. He will have my prayers and support and I hope he can have the prayers and support of the American people as he confronts this difficult challenge.

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:

Well, gas prices have a direct impact on my driving habits. I have been trying to use the public bus at least twice a week to get to work. It takes me about 35 minutes more each way, but if I plan my after work errands needing a car for one day, then I can bank that extra time for the bus ride. I'm lucky to live in Boise where there is some type of public transportation. My husband works the night shift in Meridian, so he is forced to use the car. The cost of food is a shocker, but again, fuel costs have contributed to that also. There are more of the basic and less of the goodies at the checkout. I do not think our family will be flying anytime soon, and if we vacation somewhere besides home, it will still be within a short day's drive. All in all, I worry more about those families who were barely surviving before, what will become of them now?