Justice Department are being held by Republicans even though the President has made the nominations and even though they have passed out of the Senate Judiciary Committee. If any Senator does not like a nominee, vote against them. But let's have a vote up or down.

President Obama made his first judicial nomination back in March. I remember it was snowing like mad. He nominated David Hamilton to the Seventh Circuit. That nomination has been on the Executive Calendar since early June, even though it has the support of the senior most Republican in the Senate and one of the most distinguished Senators of either party who has ever served, Senator LUGAR.

The nomination of Judge Andre Davis to the Fourth Circuit was reported by the committee on June 4 by a vote of 16 to 3. We cannot get it considered by the Senate. The nomination of Judge Beverly Baldwin Martin to the Eleventh Circuit was reported unanimously from the committee by voice vote on September 10 and is strongly supported by the two Republican Senators from her State, but still we cannot get it scheduled or considered.

Federal judicial vacancies will soon number 120 unless we start moving forward. I mention that just because we should have a history before us.

At least the one bright spot is moving Mr. Viken's nomination. At a quarter past 5, it is Mr. Viken. By a quarter past 6, it will be Judge Viken. I congratulate him and his family. I remember him coming before our committee—a wonderful person, a wonderful family. I can see why the two Senators—the senior Senator, a Democratic Senator; the junior Senator, a Republican Senator—support him. He should be a judge. But then let's start moving these nominations a little more expeditiously.

Mr. President, what is the time remaining?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator has 6 minutes 45 seconds remaining, and the minority has 5 1/2 minutes remaining.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum and ask unanimous consent that the time be run equally.

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

The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. LEVIN. 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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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. LEAHY. 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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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. LEAHY. Mr. President, I ask for the yeas and nays on the nomination.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second? There appears to be a sufficient second.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the nomination of Jeffrey L. Viken, of South Dakota, to be U.S. district judge for the District of South Dakota?

The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk called the roll.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from West Virginia (Mr. BYRD) is necessarily absent.

The result was announced—yeas 99, nays 0, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 299 Ex.]

YEAS—99

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Akaka | Enzi | McConnell |
| Alexander | Feingold | Menendez |
| Barrasso | Feinstein | Merkley |
| Baucus | Franken | Mikulski |
| Bayh | Gillibrand | Murkowski |
| Begich | Graham | Murray |
| Bennet | Grassley | Nelson (NE) |
| Bennett | Gregg | Nelson (FL) |
| Bingaman | Hagan | Pryor |
| Bond | Harkin | Reed |
| Boxer | Hatch | Reid |
| Brown | Hutchison | Risch |
| Brownback | Inhofe | Roberts |
| Bunning | Inouye | Rockefeller |
| Burr | Isakson | Sanders |
| Burris | Johanns | Schumer |
| Cantwell | Johnson | Sessions |
| Cardin | Kaufman | Shaheen |
| Carper | Kerry | Shelby |
| Casey | Kirk | Snowe |
| Chambliss | Klobuchar | Specter |
| Coburn | Kohl | Stabenow |
| Cochran | Kyl | Tester |
| Collins | Landrieu | Thune |
| Conrad | Lautenberg | Udall (CO) |
| Corker | LeMieux | Udall (NM) |
| Cornyn | Leahy | Vitter |
| Crapo | Levin | Voinovich |
| DeMint | Lieberman | Warner |
| Dodd | Lincoln | Webb |
| Dorgan | Lugar | Whitehouse |
| Durbin | McCain | Wicker |
| Ensign | McCaskill | Wyden |

NOT VOTING—1

Byrd

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. A motion to reconsider is considered made and laid upon the table. The President shall be notified of the Senate's action.

## LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate will now return to legislative session.

The Senator from North Dakota is recognized.

## MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to a period of morning business, with Senators allowed to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. TESTER). Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Iowa is recognized.

## AMERICA'S FOOD CRISIS

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I rise today to respond to Bryan Walsh's recent article, published August 31, 2009, in Time Magazine, entitled ''The Real Cost of Cheap Food.''

I ask people to read the article and, as you read it, take into consideration my view of it, which is not very positive. Unfortunately, I see this article as one of the most skewed and one-sided articles I have ever had the opportunity to read, particularly in the mainstream media.

This report was far from objective journalism. It seems to me that when people are talking about America's food crisis and how to fix it, it ought to be very intellectually accurate.

Before outlining the numerous factual errors the author presents in his article, I will mention that I support organic and sustainable agriculture. In fact, Norman Borlaug, father of the green revolution, from Iowa, is credited with creating a sustainable agricultural system decades ago. And as you may know, the Nobel Peace Prize winner of 1970, Norman Borlaug—the person I just referred to—recently passed away at the age of 95.

This article refers to the Niman Ranch. What Niman Ranch and other organic farmers across Iowa and our Nation are doing is to be commended. These producers are providing additional choices to consumers and creating highly profitable small farms which can help sustain rural communities. In fact, the National Agriculture Statistics Service reports that in 2007, 566 organic farms were located in my State of Iowa.

That being said, I am disappointed that an information source, such as I referred to by Time magazine, by the author, Mr. Walsh—previously Time magazine was known as a news magazine—has resorted to an inaccurate, incomplete, and unfair reflection of family farmers—I emphasize the word ''family'' in connection with farmers—from across the United States. So I will take a few minutes on the Senate floor to refute a few main points this author has made.

First, I wish to discuss how our Nation's farmers are stewards of our land, protecting and caring for their livestock and our environment.

Second, I wish to address population growth and the growing demands to produce safe and affordable food.

Finally, I will address how both organic agriculture and conventional agriculture serve complementary needs and can coexist in harmony.

As everybody in this body knows, I have been a family farmer all my life. Of course, I have to give credit to my son Robin for doing most of the work on the farm and a grandson in that farming operation. One thing you find out as a grandfather, when you have a grandson in a farming operation, is that grandfathers are not quite as important as they used to be.

My son Robin and I crop share our land, and we have taken great pride over the years in both caring for our livestock and conserving our natural

resources, while producing bountiful corn and soybean harvests. We are not unlike tens of thousands of other farmers across Iowa and this country whose livelihoods depend on taking care of our soil, water, and animals.

I give credit to the new occupant of the Presiding Officer's chair, Senator TESTER from Montana, for being another family farmer, as well, and being a good caretaker of the environment.

With final passage of the Food Conservation and Energy Act of 2008, also known as the farm bill, Congress made one of the largest commitments to conservation this Nation has ever seen. An additional $6 billion in new money was added for working lands programs, such as the Conservation Stewardship Program, the Wetlands Reserve Program, and the Farmland Protection Program.

Even on my own farm, we use no till for our beans, minimal tillage for our corn, and we put in wetlands, a waterway and a grass strip, even though we have mostly flat farmland. Robin and I are required to do this. We do it because we know, as stewards of our environment, our farm will benefit in the long run. In other words, it is economically good to be good stewards of the land. It puts money in your pocket. We will be able to then, in the final analysis, pass the operation down to our grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

That is one of the main points the author of the Time article, Mr. Walsh, totally misses. He basically demonizes production agriculture. Mr. Walsh implies that the only family farmers in our country are those who live on 30 acres of farmland. But nothing could be further from the truth. Family farmers can operate small farms, but they can also operate large farms. If given the opportunity, they want to be able to pass that farm on to future generations of the family.

It makes absolutely no sense to imply that these producers would purposely deplete our resources for a quick buck. There has never been a quick buck in farming, but it can provide, over a lifetime, a rewarding and sustainable lifestyle.

I am going to use three charts during my presentation. The first one is going to be used to refute some of the accusations that have been made.

Producers around the United States continue to become more and more efficient in their production practices. This chart shows that in the last 25 years, we have been able to produce more bushels of corn with less fertilizer. Now get this. Everybody thinks the commercial and family farmers are pouring on the fertilizer without any care whatsoever about the environment to produce, produce, produce. But that does not make you money, and particularly in recent years with the high increase in the price of phosphorous, potassium, and especially nitrogen, this is absolutely the wrong course to go if you are a farmer who thinks pouring more fertilizer on is going to make you more money.

What we show here is, in the last 25 years, we have been able to produce more corn with even less fertilizer. We can see it in the downward trends of nitrogen, phosphate, and potash. We use U.S. Department of Agriculture data compiled by the Fertilizer Institute that nitrogen, phosphate, and potash efficiency is growing in corn production.

To put it another way, we are growing more bushels of corn per pound of nutrient applied. This is in direct contradiction to the impression that Time magazine author Mr. Walsh makes with his statements.

We know the hypoxia is partly a natural phenomenon, but scientists generally agree that nitrates from agriculture and other manmade factors contribute to it. When the hypoxia zone forms—and most of the time we talk about this in the Gulf of Mexico—it does, in fact, displace fish. But it is particularly unfair to try to quantify impacts on the fishing industry because there is not sufficient data to back up that claim. Technology has allowed farmers to apply the exact amount of fertilizer in the right way so there is not excess.

However, even in organic farming, which the author seems to hold in the highest esteem, it uses manure from animals for fertilizer which also contains nitrogen. Soil naturally contains nitrogen that under certain circumstances of too much rain or too much moisture in the ground can eventually get into our streams. That is true whether it is from natural fertilizer or whether it is from commercial fertilizer.

Farmers for years have been employing conservation practices such as no till, buffer strips, and wetlands, just like I have on my farm, to prevent soil erosion and to keep runoff from going directly into the waterway. I anticipate, especially under this new farm bill, that these practices will grow.

In addition, research is starting to shift on hypoxia issues in regard to the Gulf of Mexico. There is increasing recognition that causes of hypoxia relate strongly to manmade alteration of the entire system, including channelization of the Mississippi, reversal of the Atchafalaya River in Alabama, and extreme loss of wetlands and barrier islands that filter nutrients and protect against storm surges, not solely nutrient issues, as this author would imply.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the EPA, Science Advisory Board has a hypoxia report out indicating that 22 percent of the nitrogen and 34 percent of the phosphorous loads can be attributed to point source rather than agriculture, as far as the hypoxia problem in the Gulf of Mexico is concerned.

In addition, the Environmental Protection Agency estimates that over 2 trillion gallons of untreated combined sewer overflow run into our Nation's waterways each year, and the Army Corps of Engineers' projects dump millions of yards of nutrient-rich soil into the Missouri and other rivers for habitat restoration purposes that also contribute.

These types of dredging projects in the Missouri River floodplain alone may represent as much as 8 percent of the spring's total phosphorous discharge, leading to problems in the Gulf of Mexico.

Technology in corn production in the United States over the last 100 years has been remarkable. From about 1860 to 1930, corn averaged just about 25 bushels per acre. Not until the 1950s through 1980s, when corn breeders began using double-cross and single-cross technology, did we see these great advances in yields of corn.

Just in the last 10 years, we have seen increased use of biotechnology which has provided yields over 150 bushels per acre. This author, Mr. Walsh, clearly views biotechnology as a bad thing when, in fact, traits such as drought resistance and nutrient-use efficiency are actually improving corn's performance with less inputs, as demonstrated by this chart.

Many of our technology companies are expecting their yield trends to exceed 300 bushels per acre in coming years. For someone such as me who has been farming for 50 years, it is almost unimaginable, but exciting at the same time, to have these projected yields we are hearing.

I wish to turn to another chart now. It deals with another issue that is very important for us to understand when we are talking about efficiency of agriculture and reducing pollution. In fact, in 1915, we used 90 million acres—in comparison to about 90 million acres, I think it is more like 87 million acres this year of corn being produced, or 2 years ago, 93 million acres of corn being produced. I am referring to 90 million acres in this picture. In 1915, 90 million acres of cropland in America were simply used to fuel our agricultural production.

So let's get it straight. It took 90 million acres of crops just to feed all the horses and all the mules that provided the work and the energy on our agricultural land before tractors were invented.

If you add up all the land in the United States being used to produce corn, wheat, and soybeans, it is about 224 million acres today. So less than 100 years ago, we would have been using nearly half the acres in the United States just to feed the draft animals that produced the power to till the soil and to produce those 25 bushels of corn per acre compared to the 150-some bushels per acre now that we will have in the United States this year of corn production.

By 2050, it is estimated that the world's population will exceed 9.3 billion people, compared to 6 billion people now. As the world demand for nutrient-rich food and protein continues to grow as both income levels and populations grow in developing nations,

America's farmers are ready to answer that call to help feed the increasing number of people around the world, and, most people would tell you today, not by putting more land into production but by getting more from each acre of land as that productivity and yield increase very dramatically, as it has in the past and will continue to into the future.

Mr. Walsh of Time magazine attacks animal agriculture throughout this article. His theme is that if an animal doesn't roam free on the western prairie and eat grass, it simply couldn't be healthy or safe to eat. Mr. Walsh cites the Pew Commission on Industrial Farm Animal Production in his analysis of why animals treated with antibiotics produce meat unsafe to eat. However, the American Veterinary Medical Association responded to the Pew report with a lengthy report of its own, which Mr. Walsh conveniently fails to mention, perhaps because the American Veterinary Medicine Association study said:

> A scientific human/animal nexus, connecting antimicrobial treatments in animals with food-borne or environmentally contracted human disease, has not been proven.

Livestock producers take very seriously their responsibility to provide safe and abundant food to the general public. Dairy, poultry, and livestock farmers have made a voluntary commitment to using antibiotics responsibly. By developing responsible-use guidelines, these industries have proactively taken steps to safeguard both human and animal health, and Mr. Walsh makes no mention of that.

On issue after issue, I have worked on my main priority: that the policy decisions we make must be based on sound science and not on political ideology. We have seen studies that indicate that the risk of foodborne bacteria on meat increases when antibiotics that help suppress animal disease are removed, actually making our food less safe to eat. Does Mr. Walsh take that into consideration?

We only have to turn to our neighbor across the Atlantic to see how a ban on antibiotics has played out. The European Union made a decision to phase out the use of antibiotics as growth promoters over 15 years ago, and in 1998 Denmark instituted a full voluntary ban, which in 2000 became mandatory. After the ban was implemented in 1999, pork producers saw an immediate increase in piglet mortality and post-weaning diarrhea.

Dr. Scott Hurd, a former U.S. Department of Agriculture Deputy Under Secretary for Food and Safety and professor at Iowa State University College of Veterinary Medicine, released a study which shows that when pigs have been sick during growth, they have a greater presence of food-safety pathogens on their carcasses when slaughtered.

I want to refer to what went on in Denmark with my third and last chart—the effects of banning antibiotics—and we have a Danish model here. It doesn't project very good healthy animal agriculture or safety for the consuming public. If this ban had resulted in improvements to public health—in other words, the ban the European Union put on antibiotics, and particularly in Denmark—suffering consequences such as piglet mortality would make sense. But the science does not back up that positive improvement in public health has occurred as a result of the Denmark ban. In fact, in 2002 the World Health Organization released a study on antimicrobial resistance and could find no public health benefit from the Denmark ban. It is true that overall use of antibiotics in Denmark has declined, but there has been a significant increase in the use of therapeutic antibiotics which are used to treat and control diseases. I think an interesting statistic is that in 2009 the use of therapeutic antibiotics in Danish pigs is greater than what was used to prevent the disease and to promote growth prior to the ban in 1999. So I think it is very easy to see that if you look at the science—and Mr. Walsh conveniently ignores it—the practice in the United States is superior to the practice of the ban in Denmark.

We had a 2009 Iowa State University study estimating that production costs would rise by $6 per pig in the first year of a prohibition if a similar ban were imposed in the United States as it is in Denmark. Over 10 years, the cumulative cost to the U.S. pork industry would exceed $1 billion. This would all be on top of the estimated $4.6 billion U.S. pork producers have lost since September 2007 due to a perfect storm of events within that industry.

The author, Mr. Walsh, also points to recent recalls in nuts, fruits, and vegetables as evidence that conventional agriculture is harmful and unsafe. What Mr. Walsh chooses to ignore is that salmonella and e. coli are naturally occurring organisms that, with proper handling, processing, and cooking, can be minimized or even eliminated. Organic agriculture is not somehow exempt from being affected by these bacteria, as Mr. Walsh might want us to believe.

In fact, one of the main challenges within our food safety system has been the perpetual underfunding of the Food and Drug Administration. I hope the Senate will be able to undertake comprehensive food safety reform yet this year and give very serious consideration and attention to the funding deficiencies of that agency.

American consumers demand not only a safe and abundant food supply but also an affordable selection to feed their families nutritious and healthy food. The author fails to recognize that personal choice is part of that equation. Ask any American consumer. While less than 1 percent of agriculture is farmed organically, as he points out, a simple economics lesson would tell us that supply and demand are in direct relationship to one another.

In 2008, Americans spent 9.6 percent of their disposable personal income on food expenditures. This has steadily decreased since the late 1920s, when nearly 24 percent of our income was spent for food intake. Our consumers have demanded an affordable food supply, and our agricultural industry has answered that call. Other nations with less developed agricultural industries than the United States spend anywhere from 12 percent to 45 percent of their income on food.

At the same time producers have become more efficient and are providing U.S. consumers with lower food costs, the farm share being retained by the producer—in other words, the family farmer—has been decreasing. For example, in the years 2000 to 2006, the farm value share ranged from 5 to 6 percent for cereals and bakery products compared to what is being paid at the retail level. Costs in packaging, processing, and transportation account for most of the cost at the grocery level. Conventional agricultural producers are not getting rich. Instead, they are producing the safest, most abundant, most reasonably priced food in the world for our consumers at a time when their share of the food value is not increasing.

Perhaps Mr. Walsh, the Time author, believes we should be spending a higher percentage of our income on food. However, because of the financial situation our Nation is facing, including families out of work and with lower disposable income, citizens would be outraged if suddenly their food expenditure skyrocketed. The Economic Research Service at the U.S. Department of Agriculture reported that total food expenditures for all food consumed in the United States was $1.165 trillion in 2008, a 3.3-percent increase from the $1.128 trillion in 2007. Prices are naturally rising because of the higher cost to do business, including transportation costs. But do we really think it is feasible to see these prices go even higher so that the author, Mr. Walsh, can further promote what I consider a political agenda? Growing all of our food organically will take more land, cost more money to produce, drive prices up, and ultimately make food even less affordable to those in need.

I appreciate the opportunities organic agriculture has made possible for farmers in my State of Iowa, and I am sure other Senators would say the same for their own States. It has truly allowed our smallest farmers to flourish and receive a premium for their crops and livestock. It has also promoted gardens and has helped us teach our children where their food comes from.

I agree with the author that the gardens of First Lady Michelle Obama and the U.S. Department of Agriculture are bringing more visibility to educating our consumers about where their food comes from. I commend them for highlighting the important issues relating to our health by eating fresh fruits and vegetables.

Organic agriculture and conventional agriculture can coexist. Both will be driven by demand, and both provide important choices for the U.S. consumer. Some consumers will shop for locally grown foods, others will shop for the cost effectiveness due to their tight household budgets.

It is time—it is time—for Time magazine and Mr. Walsh to start being honest with their readers. The next time the magazine wants to run a story that clearly reflects the author's personal views, it should identify that article as such. I expect the next article Time publishes on agriculture to be better researched and to present a more balanced view.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

## TRIBUTE TO DAVID C. PARRISH, JR.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President. I would like to recognize a courageous Kentuckian, David C. Parrish, Jr., for his induction into the Kentucky Aviation Hall of Fame on October 17, 2009. Sixty-five years ago this past August, Mr. Parrish undertook brave actions during his service as a fighter pilot during World War II. A native of Paris, KY, Mr. Parrish represented the very best in courage, gallantry, and self-sacrifice in defense of this Nation in the skies west of Paris, France. Like many of America's ''greatest generation,'' Mr. Parrish was willing to disregard his own safety for the safety of his fellow airmen and the protection of his country.

Valor and sacrifice are words that describe the nature of Mr. Parrish, and patience would also describe his character. Although he was recommended for the Silver Star in August 1944, lost records and bureaucratic delays meant it would take 60 years for Mr. Parrish's heroism to be officially recognized. It was my deep privilege to work with Mr. Parrish in this effort and to personally present him with his Silver Star in his hometown in 2004. I believe Mr. Parrish's story is a timely reminder of the sacrifices that so many American men and women have made in the name of freedom.

Mr. President, I would like to share with you a retelling of Mr. Parrish's actions in defense of this Nation that earned him the Silver Star and his induction into the Kentucky Aviation Hall of Fame. On August 8, 1944, 1LT David C. Parrish, Jr., was flying in the area of Mortain, France. His flight was part of an eight-plane squadron that became separated from the lead flight while on patrol. Lieutenant Parrish and three others were on their way home when the controller reported 100 enemy fighters flying above him and toward American bombers. His wingman had to fly home because he was low on fuel. Lieutenant Parrish and the remaining two fighters climbed toward the enemy planes.

Lieutenant Parrish was also low on gas and would have normally returned to base, being so outnumbered by enemy fighters. However, recognizing the danger to the friendly bombers, Lieutenant Parrish dove his three fighters into the heart of the enemy formation. The enemy fighters dispersed and Lieutenant Parrish and his fellow airmen gave chase. Lieutenant Parrish pursued one enemy fighter at 4,000 feet and destroyed it. He then turned toward another enemy fighter flying at tree top level and eventually was able to force the enemy pilot to bail out. These pursuits were extremely hazardous, and even more so because Lieutenant Parrish was perilously low on fuel.

It is my great pleasure to recognize Mr. Parrish for the sacrifices and risks he has made for this country, and I would like to congratulate him on his well-deserved induction in the Kentucky Aviation Hall of Fame. He has made Kentucky very proud.

## REMEMBERING SENATOR EDWARD M. KENNEDY

Mr. BUNNING. Mr. President, today I am saddened by the death of my colleague from Massachusetts, Senator Edward Kennedy.

Born and raised in Massachusetts, Senator Kennedy dedicated his life to serving his country and the Commonwealth. He enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1951, beginning his long career of public service. Elected in 1962, Senator Kennedy is the third longest serving Senator in the history of the Senate. He served the people of Massachusetts well for 46 years, and I know his family and the people of Massachusetts are proud to call him one of their own.

Senator Kennedy had a long list of accomplishments to show for the people of Massachusetts and the Nation. He was a political icon who served with great distinction and passion for nearly a half century in the U.S. Senate, and whether I agreed with him or not, I always admired the way he fought for the issues he believed in. His leadership in the Senate will be missed and it has truly been an honor serving with him.

Mr. President, Senator Kennedy will be greatly missed. Mary and I give our heartfelt condolences to his wife, Vicki, and the entire Kennedy family.

## COMMENDING SENATOR MELQUIADES RAFAEL ''MEL'' MARTINEZ

Mr. BUNNING. Mr. President, today I pay tribute to my distinguished colleague from Florida, Mel Martinez, who retired from the Senate earlier this month.

I have worked with Senator Martinez since he was elected to serve the people of Florida in 2004. He has served his country proudly in several different roles. Senator Martinez also had the distinct honor to serve as the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development in President George W. Bush's Cabinet and as the chairman of the Republican National Committee. In both roles, it was not personal ambition that drove Mel. Rather, it was his passion to make his country a better place to live for his family and for all Americans.

I have also had the privilege of serving on the Senate Banking Committee with Senator Martinez. As a member of this committee, Mel brought a greater understanding and perspective on housing issues facing the Nation than many Senators that have served on this committee. Floridians and all Americans have benefited from his vast experience in this area as well as his dedication to serve for the greater good. A person of this caliber will truly be missed in the United States.

I am honored to know him and to have worked with him. I would like to thank Senator Martinez for his contributions to the Senate and to the country we both love. I wish him and his family the best in all of their future endeavors.

## DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. COBURN. Mr. President, Senator CARPER successfully offered an amendment to this act that would authorize the EPA to conduct a study on black carbon emissions to ''improve global and domestic public health'' and ''to mitigate the climate impacts of black carbon.''

A similar bill, S. 849, was also introduced by Senator CARPER and approved recently by the Senate Committee on the Environment and Public Works.

While I did not object to the purpose of the bill, I did object to the bill because the cost of the study—$2 million according to the Congressional Budget Office—was not offset.

As I wrote in a letter to Minority Leader MCCONNELL and Senator CARPER outlining my objections to this bill, ''At a time when our national debt is greater than $11.6 trillion, we cannot afford to add to this debt that will be inherited by our children and grandchildren. Even our best intentions need to be paid for with offsets from lower priorities or wasteful spending.''

I also requested the opportunity to modify this legislation if no offsets were made.

I intended to offer a second-degree amendment to offset the expected cost increase in spending as a result of the Carper amendment by capping the amount of funds EPA can spend on conference travel. According to EPA, $17.296 million was spent on conference travel in 2006—the last year for which we have records. This amendment would have capped conference travel spending at $15 million, thus assuring that the full cost of the study will be offset.

In the past couple of years, as Americans were tightening their belts and travelling less, EPA was growing its conference budget and travelling more. This is reflected in its annual costs for