landfill gas—which is only incremental—and the like. It does not include nuclear or hydro, which is so important.

The Domenici substitute would require 20 percent by 2020, but it would allow for new nuclear and incremental nuclear, new hydropower, and certain efficiency measures to qualify. Even then, I am afraid we cannot reach that number.

According to the Energy Information Administration, current nonhydroelectric renewables only account for 2.3 percent of total generation in the United States. To get to 15 percent of all electricity from this source would require us to increase that production over six times. That is a lot—over six times the current rate. So under these standards, as they are written today, according to the Tennessee Valley Authority, according to the Southern Company and other companies that are in our area of the country, they say there is only one way, one thing they can do, and that is to pay the Department of Energy the two-cents-per-kilowatt-hour penalty to meet these targets.

Let me tell you, two cents per kilowatt-hour is a big deal. Huntsville Utilities in Huntsville, AL, a progressive utility run by the city, a board appointed through the city, states that the Bingaman RPS and even the Domenici CPS would cost them $4.2 million in 2010. This is just the city of Huntsville—$4.2 million; $8.8 million in 2013; $14.1 million in 2017; and $19.8 million in just 1 year—2020. That is a lot of money on a city—$19 million a year, $4 million a year. They are trying to manage their budgets carefully.

The Tennessee Valley Authority, the governmental entity Franklin Roosevelt started back many years ago, the conservative TVA—this is a quasi-government agency—estimates that systemwide it would cost an additional $70 million to comply with the 3.75-percent RPS requirement in 2011 and $410 million to meet the full 15 percent requirement in 2020. That is $400 million for the TVA system per year. That is a lot of money.

I think Senator ALEXANDER had raised some points: Well, what if you used all that money—the $100 billion, $200 billion—how could you use it if you just applied it in some rational way to include renewables and reduce our dependence on foreign oil and keep the cost of energy at a good level and encourage research and development? Man, you could put scrubbers on every coal plant in the country. You could build nuclear plants in large numbers. We could do lots of things. So this is a cost we are imposing, but the movement it will accrue in the direction we want to go is not great. The Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners said, quote, ''There will be nothing to show for it.''

That is the problem I have. I want to move in this direction. I would like to see us use more biofuels, and I believe there is a potential for that. That is the only thing that seems to be viable in my area of the country, is expanded use of biofuels. But this is really such a huge step that I don't think there is any way it can be met except by paying penalties or a tax. Also, the way this thing works is the money may very well end up just going to the Government in the form of compliance payments or a penalty or a tax, maybe as much as $100 billion.

I really am excited about the leadership Senator BINGAMAN and Senator DOMENICI have given to the Energy Committee. We have had lots of hearings with some of the world's best experts on energy. We all share a view that if we develop a good energy policy, we can improve our environment, we can strengthen our national security, we can improve our economy, and the like. Any change that can actually reduce our consumption of energy and actually pay for itself over a period of time is a step we clearly should take. But when you are taking steps that are likely to cost far more than the benefit you receive, you have to be very cautious.

Remember, we are not spending Federal taxpayers' money and, therefore, creating a cost. We are passing a law which mandates that the citizens around the country, particularly in areas that don't have readily renewable power, will have to pay more for their electricity to meet this standard. And they are going to have to pay a lot more. The cost is going to be very significant, and the question is, Would that cost have been better spent in other areas? I suggest that it would. Some people have already made some suggestions about how we could spend that money better.

I thank my colleagues for giving me a few moments to talk about this amendment. I am sorry I could not be in agreement with it. The goal is worthy. My analysis of it is the burden will fall disproportionately on constituents in my area of the country, particularly in my State, and therefore I must oppose it. I think we can do better in how to achieve this goal.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

Mr. BINGAMAN. Mr. President, just to advise folks of what I believe the course is going to be here in the next few minutes, Senator CANTWELL from Washington is waiting to speak. She is going to speak for up to 10 minutes or something in that range; Senator CORKER is here from Tennessee, and he wishes to speak for a relatively short period also; and then, as I have indicated to Senator DOMENICI, it will be my intent at that point to move to table his amendment.

So that is my expectation of how we will proceed. I am not asking for any consent to do that, but I wanted to advise Senators.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington is recognized.

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, I rise to speak in support of what is the Bingaman amendment, to make sure we diversify our national energy supply by investing in 15 percent renewables, and against the Domenici amendment, which the chairman of the Energy Committee, the Senator from New Mexico, just mentioned he is going to make a motion to table pretty soon. I agree to tabling that amendment.

Let me say that I have listened to a lot of the debate on renewables and what we need to do, and I have heard a lot of people talk about wind out here and a lot of people talk about solar. I look at this a little differently. I really think this debate is all about natural gas.

I say it is about natural gas because I listen to the farmers in Washington State and throughout America about the high price of natural gas. I hear how much the price of natural gas is going up. The issue is that natural gas is used both for our electricity grid and it is used as a product to make a solid for fertilizer that farmers need, and the price is going up. It has gone anywhere from what historically used to be $2, to $7 or $8, and in some cases we have seen it go as high as $14 or $15.

What I am saying is that we are having competition for natural gas between our electricity grids and our farmers. The future of natural gas is only going to increase. It is only going to increase. That leaves us with one choice; that is, to diversify off of natural gas for our electricity grid. How do we diversify off natural gas for our electricity grid? We start planning for renewables.

I know there are many utilities wandering the Halls of Congress trying to lobby against this particular provision of the United States setting a goal of focusing on renewable energy. I would say to them: Go look at how the U.S. economy is being impacted because we are already dependent on coal, already dependent on nuclear power, and already dependent on this natural gas that is continuing to rise at steady levels and is going to impact our agricultural economy.

In fact, 15 years ago, only 10 percent of our U.S. nitrogen, a fertilizer product, was imported. Today about half of it is imported. We have seen many of these businesses, over 21 of them in the United States, shut down because of these high costs. What we need to do is push to give alternative fuel; that is, alternative sources of electricity generation, an opportunity to be used in America. The best way for us to do that is to set this mandate in Federal policy so we can protect consumers from the high cost of natural gas in the future.

To do nothing is to say that farmers are going to have to pay more or maybe go out of business or their products are going to be too expensive for international markets or say to consumers: You are going to pay more for your electricity because natural gas prices are going to rise or we can say to consumers instead: We took active