

KEYSTONE XL PIPELINE

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, under the direction of our new majority leader, the Senator from Kentucky, we have been entrusted with a great opportunity to lead this new Congress—the 114th Congress—and it is a great honor. Maybe people assume that to be the case, but it is always a good idea to express it out loud and to say how grateful we are for the opportunity to be able to lead the 114th Congress and serve in the majority in the Senate.

It is also important to say we approach this opportunity with great humility—not just with humility but with also a determination and a commitment to address the top priorities of the American people. If there is one issue I heard about from my constituents in Texas during my reelection campaign, which concluded on November 4, it is: Why can't you guys and gals get things done? How come you can't address the problems that confront the American people? By and large, at the top of that list were jobs and stagnant wages, part-time work when people want to work full-time. They were kitchen table, bread-and-butter sorts of issues.

Now we have an opportunity starting this week to address one of those priorities, which is creating jobs with the approval of the Keystone XL Pipeline. The Keystone XL Pipeline is important for a lot of reasons, one of which is job creation. It obviously transports oil from Canada through the United States, bypassing the delivery of this oil in railcars, which has been the subject of some news reports when some of them have gone off-rail and created some accidents. The oil ends up in Southeast Texas, where we have a lot of refineries which create a lot of jobs but where that crude oil will then be refined into gasoline and jet fuel and other refined products.

This is also important because this is a supply of oil from a friendly neighbor, Canada—one of our closest allies—and reduces our dependence on oil from parts of the world that aren't quite as stable certainly as Canada is. So it is important from a jobs perspective. It is important from a geopolitical perspective and a national security perspective as well.

I went back and looked and noted that the President actually formed a Jobs Council during his first term in office. The job of the members of the council was to put their heads together and provide strategic advice on ways to boost the economy. This is the President's Jobs Council that he created during the first term of his Presidency. The group's main homework assignment was to produce this framework for job creation and enhance national competitiveness. In fact, they produced something entitled "Road Map to Renewal." I haven't Googled that or Binged it or put it in a search engine, but I bet if anybody who happens to be listening is interested, they could type that into a search engine on the Inter-

net—the "Road Map to Renewal"—and find out all they want to know about it. It includes a number of specific and practical recommendations for action.

One of those recommendations to the President was to "optimize all of the nation's natural resources and construct pathways (pipelines, transmission and distribution) to deliver electricity and fuel."

That would seem to be right in the wheelhouse of the Keystone XL Pipeline.

The report added that regulatory and "permitting obstacles that could threaten the development of some energy projects, negatively impact jobs and weaken our energy infrastructure need to be addressed." So the President's own Jobs Council recognized that the key to America's energy security is to focus on America's energy development, including the transmission lines and pipelines by which this natural resource is transported.

I know perhaps coming from an energy State such as Texas we are perhaps a lot more familiar with the pipelines and the oil and gas industry because it creates so many jobs and so much prosperity in my State, but some people are a little apprehensive about the idea of a pipeline going under the ground. I invite them to again type into their favorite search engine on the Internet "oil and gas pipelines" and look at the map that pops up. It is astonishing how many existing pipelines exist in the United States today. I bet 98 percent of Americans don't even know they exist. Maybe that is too high; maybe it is 95 percent. So this is a safe and efficient and effective way of transporting these natural resources all around the United States. Obviously, if they are transported by pipeline, they don't have to be transported by railcar, including through some populated parts of our country, and subjected to some of the accidents we have read and heard so much about. These underground pipelines are a fairly common reality in our country, which leads me to be absolutely mystified at the resistance from some on the other side of the aisle and in the White House to doing what should be in our self-interests, which should be something that addresses one of the most important things the American people care about, which is jobs, and the other thing they care an awful lot about, which is security and reducing our dependence on imported energy from the Middle East.

That was 3 years ago last month that the President's Jobs Council made this recommendation. Then there is last month, when the President said this: "I'm being absolutely sincere when I say I want to work with this new Congress to get things done."

Hearing that was like music to my ears and I think to a lot of people, to have the President say he wants to work with the Congress, even though Republicans won the majority in the House and in the Senate. So imagine

my confusion and the confusion on the part of so many Americans when yesterday the White House Press Secretary said the President would veto any legislative approval of the Keystone XL Pipeline.

Think about the timing of that statement. We had an election on November 4, we had the new Congress sworn in yesterday, the President said a month ago he wanted to work with the Congress, and then the first day of the Congress, before the legislation was even filed much less voted out of committee and brought to the floor, the President said: If you pass that, I am going to veto it. I am probably not the only one who is confused by the contradiction.

We know this pipeline would produce thousands of well-paying jobs and would enhance the supply of energy from a close ally and neighbor, as I said earlier.

So the President issued a veto threat on the day the new Congress was sworn in, and it is clear to me that notwithstanding the President's previous statements, he is either confused or he has changed his mind about cooperating with the Congress. I hope he meant what he said when he said he would work with us to try to address the concerns of middle-class families when it comes to jobs and help grow the economy and help America prosper. But I am here to say that Republicans who now have the honor and responsibility of serving as the majority in the Senate and in the House did listen. We heard the message delivered to us by the voters on November 4. We know they don't want more bickering. They don't want more dysfunction. The American people, including my constituents in Texas, want results. They want jobs. They want full-time, not just part-time work, and they want the security that would come with legislation such as this that we are considering today.

That is why this week our new majority leader, the senior Senator from Kentucky, Mr. McCONNELL, has decided we will take up this energy project as job No. 1. This is bipartisan legislation. I was watching TV this morning, I think with the Presiding Officer, and we were together and saw that Senator MANCHIN from West Virginia and Senator HOEVEN from North Dakota were appearing on a morning TV show talking about the importance of this legislation, and they estimate they have as many as 63 votes in the Senate, which by definition is a bipartisan majority, to pass this legislation.

This place can be pretty confusing at different times, and I am perplexed why the same President who said he wants to work with us is issuing premature veto threats, even though there is a bipartisan majority for this legislation.

Again, the President said he is for an "all of the above" approach to take care of our energy future. If that is true, then this should be a part of that approach. He has acknowledged the important connection between job growth

and energy development. If there is a poster child for the role that the energy sector can play in growing the economy, it is my State. Texas is a State where we are quite familiar with the oil and gas industry. We are not just sold on oil and gas because we do produce the most electricity from wind turbine of anywhere in the country. We are truly an “all of the above” State. But after years of anemic economic growth and the lowest workforce participation in four decades, does the President of the United States think this is an inconsequential piece of legislation? Why does he not work with us as opposed to remaining an obstruction to real progress the American people are crying out for?

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, this is my first “Time to Wake Up” speech in the Senate as a Member of the minority. Being in the minority will give me the opportunity, for the first time, to use the tools uniquely available to Members of the Senate minority. On the issue of climate change, which is affecting all of our States but particularly Rhode Island, I intend to use those tools politely and persistently.

We have just left a period of partisanship and obstruction by the minority unique in the Senate’s history. I do not intend to return us to those days. My intent is to enliven the Senate and see to it that it does its duty, that we as Senators do our duty to our fellow Americans. My intent is not to blockade and degrade this great institution with obstruction for the sake of obstruction. My goal, in short, is Senate action, not Senate inaction.

Pope Francis recently spoke to the world about mankind’s care of God’s creation. He warned us against what he called negligence and inaction. I hope to be a constant spur in the Senate against negligence and inaction, specifically the negligence and inaction that is our present Senate standard of care for God’s Earth.

I know that powerful forces of negligence and inaction are arrayed against us. I know the Supreme Court’s reckless and shameful decision in the Citizens United case has empowered those forces as never before. I know there has resulted an unprecedented campaign by polluting interests of political spending and threats. It is plain to see that the polluters’ campaign has, for now at least, silenced meaningful bipartisan debate about carbon pollution. We can line up the Citizens United decision and the silence almost exactly. Coal and oil interests are enjoying massive economic subsidies—massive subsidies—and similar to any special interest, they will fight to protect those special benefits. But it can’t last. It can’t last. My confidence is

strong because our American democracy is ultimately founded in the will of the American people, and the American people understand the need to end our days of negligence and inaction. They want us to run the blockade that polluters have built around Congress.

Polling shows this. More than 80 percent of Americans say they see climate change happening right around them. Two-thirds say they would pay more for electricity if it would help solve this problem. Among Independents, that is 64 percent.

Even among young Republicans, voters get it—young voters, anyway. Under the age of 35, most Republican voters, according to polls, think that climate denial is ignorant, out of touch or crazy. Those are the words from the poll. Under 50 years of age, a majority of Republicans and Republican-leaning Independents support action against climate change. Among all Republicans of all ages, fully half support restrictions on carbon dioxide, and nearly half think the United States should lead the fight.

Trusted American institutions get it, too—from the Joint Chiefs of Staff of our military services to the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, from all of America’s major scientific societies to the experts we trust day in and day out at NOAA and at NASA, and from the leaders of America’s corporate community—Walmart and Target, Apple and Google, Ford and GM, Mars and Nestle USA, Alcoa and Starbucks, Coke and Pepsi. From all of them and from many other respected voices comes the message that climate change is a serious threat. I have confidence that Congress will soon have to heed their voices.

We might mention the recent agreement in Lima where 194 countries all agreed to carbon reductions. Does the Republican Party in the United States of America really want to be aligned with Vladimir Putin, the great international climate denier?

My confidence also comes from necessity. This simply must be done. Our human species developed on this earth in a climate window that has always been between 170 and 300 parts per million of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere—always. For as long as human kind has been here on Earth, carbon concentration has wobbled up and down but always within that range—through our entire history, going back a million and probably more years. We have now rocketed outside that range and broken 400 parts per million, a condition on Earth that is a first, again, in millions of years.

Our oceans, as a result, are acidifying measurably at a rate unprecedented in the life of our species. One has to go back into distant geologic time to find anything similar. If you go back that far and look at what the geologic record tells us about what life was like on the planet in those primal eras, it presents a daunting prospect.

The scientific warnings about what this means are now starting to be

matched in our experience with unprecedented rain bursts and droughts, wildfires and heat seasons, sea levels and ocean temperatures. In the tropic seas, coral reefs are dying off at startling rates; in the Arctic seas, sea ice is vanishing at levels never recorded until now. Everywhere the oceans shout a warning to those who will listen. Rhode Island, as a coastal State, as the Ocean State, is particularly hard hit. We get the land problems such as the rain bursts heavily associated with climate change, which in 2010 brought unprecedented flooding along our historic rivers. We have the sea level rise. It is expected now to be several feet by the end of the century—by a warming sea that has also disturbed our fisheries and distressed our fishing economy. “It is not my grandfather’s ocean out there,” as one commercial fisherman told me.

This only goes one way. There is no theory of how this magically gets better on its own. Every theory—and now most observations—all point to all this getting worse and perhaps very badly worse. The time for negligence and inaction has passed.

In the Senate we need to begin a conversation about this. We have to begin at the beginning. We have to agree on a baseline of facts, principles, and laws of nature that can then inform our judgments about what to do. I do not think it is asking too much of the new majority in the Senate to begin an honest conversation about carbon dioxide and climate change. I don’t think that it is too much to ask the new majority in the Senate that we undertake this conversation in a serious and responsible manner. I do not think that is extreme or unreasonable. We need to begin at the beginning in this conversation, and I will make every effort to see to it that we begin. But even as we begin, we can keep the end in sight. That end is a world where polluters pay the costs of their pollution. That in turn creates a world where market forces work properly in our energy markets. The end is a world where it is America that seizes the economic promise of these new energy technologies, where we are builders—not buyers—of the energy devices of the future. The end is a world that turns back from the brink of a plainly foreseeable risk where the consequences of negligence and inaction could well be dire for us and for the generations that follow us.

In sum, we in this Senate have a duty before us, and negligence and inaction will not meet what that duty demands. For those of you with a coal economy or an oil economy in your States, I understand and I want to work with you. There are answers to be found. But please, do not pretend that this problem doesn’t exist. That is false and unacceptable.

I must, on behalf of my State and on behalf of our future, insist that we in the Senate meet our duty, even under this new Senate majority—and I will.