

FUNDING THE GOVERNMENT

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, later today, the House is poised to send us a 2-week continuing resolution, which will give us time to hash out the remainder of the appropriations process this year. I expect it will pass this Chamber later this afternoon. President Trump and my Republican colleagues now have to decide what they want to do after those 2 weeks are up and, hopefully, even sooner.

As everybody knows, Democrats have offered to pass the bipartisan DHS appropriations bill agreed to 6 months ago, which includes \$1.6 billion for border security. There has been some confusion about that figure.

Let me be clear. The \$1.6 billion cannot be used to construct any part of President Trump's 30-foot-tall, concrete border wall. It can be used only for fencing, using technology currently deployed at the border, only where the experts say fencing is appropriate and makes sense as a security feature.

This is something Democrats have always been for: smart, effective, appropriate border security. This is so good that every Republican appropriator signed off on that bill a few months ago, including Senator MCCONNELL, Senator SHELBY, Senator RUBIO, and Senator GRAHAM. They were all for it.

This is a bipartisan compromise proposal. If they can't go for the proposal that they signed off on and negotiated because President Trump is pounding the table in an irrational way, there is a second option. Democrats have also offered to pass the six bipartisan appropriations bills and a continuing resolution for the Department of Homeland Security. This continuing resolution doesn't resolve this issue but continues to fund the Homeland Security Department. We think that continuing resolution should be for a year.

Both options would receive 60 votes in the Senate, would pass in the House, and would get us home in time for the Christmas holiday, which I know many people want to do. I have heard that from many of my Republican friends.

As I said, either option would keep the government funded over Christmas. We don't want to see the government shut down over Christmas, even though President Trump seems to brag that he wants one. The one and only way we approach a shutdown is if President Trump refuses both of our proposals and demands \$5 billion or more for a border wall.

The wall request is a nonstarter for many reasons. Here are three:

First, when President Trump proposed this as a candidate, he said: "I will have Mexico pay for that wall. Mark my words." The idea that the American taxpayer now has to foot the bill doesn't make sense.

Second, there is no plan for the wall. They haven't said where they want to build it or how high it is. Let me make clear that I don't like any wall, but how can you spend \$5 billion when there is no plan? It shows that this is

sort of political fodder for President Trump. It appeals to his base, but he doesn't even care that much that his whole government, his whole administration has not submitted any specific plans.

Third, last year we put \$1.345 billion into Homeland Security for border security. Not a nickel of that has been spent on a wall. It couldn't be. The language didn't allow it. But virtually none of it has been spent at all. They still have that \$1.34 billion they haven't even spent the vast majority of, and already they are demanding \$5 billion more.

Some would say demanding \$1.6 billion more is too much, but the idea that they haven't spent last year's money and they are demanding such a huge amount this year makes no sense at all. To ask the American taxpayer to foot the bill for an unplanned, unnecessary, ineffective border wall is just preposterous.

We know why President Trump is doing this, as he does so many things. It is a throwaway idea to fire up his base. I am ashamed that my Republican colleagues, who know better, are going along.

If President Trump wants to throw a temper tantrum and shut down the government over Christmas over the wall, that is his decision, but there are two sensible options on the table to avoid one. We do not want to let a Trump temper tantrum govern our policies or cause the shutdown of the government, which everyone on both sides of the aisle knows is the wrong idea.

One final point: By letting the President's demands get in the way, my Republican colleagues are, in effect, ceding Congress's authority over the appropriations process to the President. Leader MCCONNELL has repeatedly said that he wants regular order on appropriations in the Senate. In fact, that has been one of the few bipartisan high moments that this Senate has had.

Last year, we passed a good appropriations process and came together on an omnibus. This year, we have funded close to three-quarters of the government already—bipartisan, passed by a large majority. That is how it should work. It should work the same way for the Department of Homeland Security. Regular order would dictate that the Senate consider the bipartisan DHS appropriations bill that has been passed out of committee and been agreed to by both parties here on the floor. In the meantime, the six other bipartisan appropriations bills that have also been agreed to by both parties are being held hostage over this unnecessarily, to any objective observer.

If my friend Leader MCCONNELL is so concerned about regular order, he would bring up the remaining appropriations bills, as agreed to, for a vote. He would tell President Trump that the bipartisan conference bill, the bipartisan compromise—or a CR—is the way to go to avoid a shutdown.

NOMINATION OF BERNARD L. MCNAMEE

Madam President, on another matter, yesterday, all 49 Democrats voted against considering the nomination of Bernard McNamee to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, and that was for good reason. McNamee has spent the bulk of his career boosting fossil fuels and slandering renewable energy. His views are so anachronistic, regressive, and counterfactual that I am sure most of my Republican colleagues would not agree with him. He has lied about how renewable energies impact the electric grid. He has called support for clean energy "organized propaganda" and has pitched the debate between fossil fuels and renewables, in his words, as a "clash between liberty and tyranny." My Republican friends, these words sound absurd. You would think I was making them up because it would so vilify Mr. McNamee, but my Republican friends can see on video every one of these statements that he made.

At a time when our country is plagued by wildfires and flooding, at a time when more powerful storms and hurricanes buffet our coasts, at a time when average Americans are feeling the devastating effects of climate change right now, we should not elevate someone so biased in favor of the fossil fuels that caused these problems in the first place.

We have a final vote today. Every Democrat has voted no. We need one Republican to switch to defeat this awful nomination. I hope my colleagues will think about it.

Please, look up the record. Don't just listen to my speech. Just look at what this man has said, and I think a good number of you might want to vote no.

On the front page of the New York Times this morning, there was a report about how the emission of greenhouse gases has actually accelerated in the past few years. Climate change is going to be a defining issue of our generation and a defining issue in future elections.

The vote on McNamee clearly shows the difference between the two parties on the issue of climate change right now. The Democrats believe we need to address climate change with bold and substantial action. We cannot wait until a later day. We cannot keep approving folks like McNamee to influence energy policy. We need to act. Meanwhile, too many of our Republican colleagues pretend the issue doesn't even exist, and that is sad.

I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session and resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Bernard L. McNamee, of Virginia, to be a Member of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission for the remainder of the term expiring June 30, 2020.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the time until 12 noon will be equally divided between the two leaders or their designees.

The Senator from Minnesota.

NOMINATION OF BERNARD L. MCNAMEE

Ms. SMITH. Madam President, I rise to discuss the urgency of addressing climate change. I will also address the nomination of Mr. Bernard McNamee to be a member of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, which we are debating on the Senate floor today.

Recently, the Trump administration released the latest installment of the National Climate Assessment. This report is the work of over 300 expert scientists and 13 different government agencies, including the Environmental Protection Agency, the Department of Energy, NASA, and others. The report makes an urgent case for action by detailing the extreme threat that is posed to our Nation and to our world by climate change.

The need for forward-looking environmental and energy policies is obvious to anyone who reads this report, and it is telling that this report was mandated by a law signed by the late George H. W. Bush in 1990—a President whose life we came together to celebrate yesterday.

The Trump administration doesn't want to talk about the report's findings, but the problems of a changing climate are already well known to us in Minnesota. Our winters are milder than they used to be. Rain patterns are changing. We are now prone to long, hot dry spells in the summer, but when the rains do come, they are more intense. Big storms used to be rare in Minnesota, but now we suffer more than almost anywhere else in the country from these climate-driven increases in so-called mega-rain events. When it rains 6 or 8 or even 10 inches all at once, houses flood and fields flood. The water can't run off or soak into the soil fast enough. As Minnesota's Lieutenant Governor and now as a Senator, I have seen the consequences of these storms.

Without action on climate change, these problems are only going to get worse. Even to those who have long accepted the scientific consensus on climate change, the new report makes for a sobering read. The assessment tells us that if greenhouse gas emissions continue unabated, "the Midwest is projected to have the largest increase

in extreme temperature-related premature deaths." By 2090, the Midwest can expect 2,000 additional deaths a year alone due to heat. That will be more than in any other region in the country.

We know that there are health consequences to a warming climate and also important impacts on our food supply. Minnesota is a vital contributor to our world's food supply. We rank fourth in the country in corn production, and corn is our No. 1 agricultural commodity. In 2017, Minnesota farmers produced \$4.5 billion of corn on 8 million acres. This agricultural productivity is threatened by climate change. The problem going forward is that corn doesn't tolerate extreme warm temperatures. Corn plants grow best at approximately 80 degrees, and above 95 degrees, reproductive failure is a risk. U.S. corn yields per acre grew 60 percent from the 1980s to today. Because of warming temperatures, the climate assessment warns that we risk losing all of these productivity gains by 2050.

A world with nearly 10 billion people at midcentury is going to need American farmers to produce even more than ever. Climate change threatens our farmers' ability to rise to that challenge. This is why I agree with the National Farmers Union, which says:

We can't wait for technology to solve climate change. We must take action now.

We grow more than just corn in Minnesota. For example, the Anishinaabe people in my State harvest the world's finest wild rice. The climate assessment states: "Declines in production are expected, related to increases in climate extremes and climate-related disease and pest outbreaks as well as northward shifts of favorable growing regions." The loss of wild rice in Minnesota would be a cultural, ecological, and economic tragedy.

The climate assessment also highlights the economic stakes. Climate change threatens to reduce the size of the U.S. economy by up to 10 percent by the end of this century—a loss of hundreds of billions of dollars per year.

In response to the extreme challenges that we face from climate change, I see two potential ways to respond.

First, the path offered by Mr. McNamee would be that we do nothing to acknowledge this problem.

As the Department of Energy's deputy general counsel, Mr. McNamee pushed a dirty coal plant bailout that would have cost American consumers billions of dollars a year with there being no discernible benefit to our energy system and a huge loss in our fight against climate change. That is why the proposal was rejected unanimously by the five FERC Commissioners. Now Mr. McNamee is nominated to be one of those Commissioners.

To avoid dealing with the climate change problem, Mr. McNamee has—like many in the Trump administration—decided that the first, best tactic

is to deny there is even a problem. In February of this year, Mr. McNamee spoke at a policy orientation for legislators in Texas. When he was asked about how his son and other students should react to being taught climate science in schools, Mr. McNamee said:

Just deny it. I don't care if you get an F. I don't care.

I reject Mr. McNamee's head-in-the-sand approach, which is a fundamentally pessimistic approach to America's ability to lead the fight against climate change by leading the clean energy revolution. I, by contrast, am an optimist.

The thing about the clean energy transition is that it is going to happen with or without American leadership. Between now and 2050, the world will invest \$11.5 trillion in building new electric generators. Almost 9 in 10 of those dollars will be spent on renewables and other technologies with zero carbon emissions.

The United States should lead the way in developing, making, and deploying clean energy technology; however, right now, China is leading the way. China leads the way in renewable energy investments, and it spent \$127 billion in 2017, which outspent the United States by more than 3 to 1.

We know that Americans want to step up. California and Hawaii have put themselves on a path to 100-percent clean energy by 2050. Just this week, Xcel Energy, which is the largest utility in my State, pledged to deliver 80 percent in carbon dioxide emission reductions by 2030, with a goal of having 100-percent emissions-free electricity by 2050.

States, companies, and individuals can help lead the way, but that doesn't take the Federal Government off the hook. We must pull together as a country. The scale of the challenge requires national and international coordination and cooperation. The United States can lead, or we can be left behind. We led the way during the fossil fuel revolution, and we were rewarded with world-leading prosperity. There is a new revolution happening.

Mr. McNamee and President Trump both believe that we can prosper by doubling down on outdated thinking regarding energy and climate, but they are wrong.

I urge my colleagues to vote no on this nominee. It is the duty of those of us in Congress to push for a clear-eyed but optimistic path forward and not to let misguided ideology leave us stuck in the past.

I suggest the absence of a quorum. The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

REMEMBERING GEORGE H. W. BUSH

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, over the last few days, since the death of