

getting a lot of public attention—to have a chance to debate this legislation and vote on it in the Senate.

The Democrats have called it a sham. They said: Why should we have debate on this piece of legislation? Why would we want to vote on this piece of legislation?

Now, it is not cosponsored by a majority of the Members of the Senate, but it is cosponsored by over 25 percent of the Democrats in the Senate, and one would think that if 25 percent of their conference is sponsoring a bill, they would be glad to come to the floor and talk about that bill and talk about what it does.

So let's talk for just a couple of minutes about what that bill actually says. One of the things that it does is that it calls for the United States to use 100 percent renewable energy by 2030. That is just a little more than 10 years from now. It says, basically, that we want to have a zero-carbon-dioxide emissions by then.

I know there was some discussion in the rolling out of this bill that that would mean that ground transportation and air transportation would either be eliminated or minimized—at least the way we travel right now would be. At some point in the future that may happen, but it is highly unlikely it is going to happen in the next 10 years, which is what the bill calls for. Maybe that is why they don't want to debate it. Even President Obama's former science adviser says that this is not feasible. Harvard University professor John Holdren was quoted in the New York Times saying: "As a technologist studying this problem for 50 years, I don't think we can do it."

So that is a pretty good source who indicates that what we are talking about here can't happen. So that big headline goal appears to be impossible, but we probably could debate it anyway. Let's hear from the other side, particularly the 12 cosponsors, to say why it is possible, why we should be able to do that, and why that is in the legislation that they filed.

The rest of the legislation goes really beyond things that don't relate to the environment. There is a laundry list of policies that appear to be popular right now in the so-called progressive discussion. One is a single-payer health system and the other is a Federal job guarantee. The talking points suggested that that would be a Federal job guarantee for people who can't work or aren't willing to work. Of course, that was so controversial that immediately people began to say: Well, maybe that is something that the Republicans snuck into our talking points. But it turned out that wasn't true.

There is a provision calling for "repairing the historic oppression of . . . youth." That is sort of what this whole Green New Deal seems to focus on—accepting responsibility in a debate for things that really don't make the kind of sense one would want them to make as you move toward legislation. They

don't really say what the "historic oppression of youth" was. Probably that is not related to the economy or the environment or the greenness of the Green New Deal.

But even if we agree that these ideas are good ideas, the other question is this: How much is it going to cost?

The American Action Forum looked at the biggest parts of the legislation, and they estimated that the total would run anywhere from \$51 trillion to \$94 trillion over 10 years. To put this in perspective, the Congress right now appropriates about \$1.5 trillion a year. We spend more than that through programs that are in place like Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid, but we appropriate \$1.5 trillion a year. If the estimates of the Green New Deal are right, that would suddenly become \$5 trillion to \$9 trillion a year. That is a pretty good multiplier of \$1.5 trillion a year—six times, in fact, of what we are spending now—at the \$9 trillion level. That works out to be about \$65,000 per family per year. That would probably be more government than we could afford, but that is how it works out.

There is nothing that talks about how families are supposed to come up with their share of the bill.

While some of the ideas in the Green New Deal—Medicare for all or a job for everybody, guaranteed by the government—sound like good ideas, I don't think they are going to stand the test of the debate. I think that is one of the reasons that maybe the other side doesn't want to have the debate.

Some talk about: Well, maybe we will all vote present or we will not vote at all.

I think it is pretty hard to defend what you are out there talking about when you are not willing to come to the floor and talk about it. That is a debate we are going to have. I suspect we are going to have it sometime this month, and I look forward to engaging in that debate.

This week, we are having another debate on nominees. Right now, the debate is on the nominee for the Administrator of the EPA. There has been some discussion of the environment in the debate on the Administrator of the EPA. Next, we are going to go to someone to serve on the TVA commission. This is somebody who has been voted out of committee two times in bipartisan voice votes and never allowed to have a vote in the Senate.

I will remind my colleagues again that under President Reagan, the average time in days from when a person was voted out of committee—and remember, as all of us on the floor would know, the committee is where questions are asked, and the background check has been completed. That may take a substantial amount of time, depending on the nominee and how complicated their information is—sometimes less time, sometimes more. That has all happened in the committee.

Under President Reagan, the average number of days from the time a person

was voted out of committee until they were voted on, on the floor was 5. The total number of times the majority had to file cloture to get that vote was less than a handful in the entire first 2 years.

For President Trump, the average number of days for a nominee to be voted on is 55, and the majority leader had to file cloture 128 times even to get a vote. We are going through some of those votes this week. The 30 hours of debate almost never includes debate about the nominee who is using up floor time that could be used for debating how we spend our money, how we defend our country, or what our foreign policy oversight responsibilities are going to be.

We are going to continue to look at the options and continue to talk to our friends on the other side about how 60 Senators can work together to change the rules in a way that they would be changed going forward to get the rules back more to the days of Ronald Reagan, George Herbert Walker Bush, Bill Clinton, and all of their predecessors, where nominees were never used as a way to use up time. Nominees were never held hostage so that other legislation or debate couldn't occur.

We are working hard to find 60 of us who want to return to a time when legislative priorities in the Senate still had the protections of the minority that have always been there, but those protections couldn't be used to the disadvantage of people who have stepped up and are willing to serve and are often voted out of committee on a bipartisan basis, only to be held up on the floor.

I look forward to the debate on the Green New Deal. I look forward to the other debates we are going to have on the floor of the Senate this year.

For the people who are willing to serve, who have been reported out of committee, who have been thoroughly questioned and investigated but can't get that vote and get to work, that is not what we want to do. That is not who we should want to be. I hope we can work together to find a way to change that rule as well.

I see my good friend, the Senator from Hawaii, is here. We are working on some things together right now that we would like to get to the floor and have those bills voted on later.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. COTTON). The Senator from Hawaii.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. SCHATZ. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from Missouri. I thank him for his leadership and levelheadedness.

As he is on his way out, I will say that I think the current way we deal with nominees is not tenable. I imagine a scenario where we have a Democratic President, and it will take even longer than it is currently taking to confirm nominees. I think there are a number of us on both sides of the aisle who are open to modifying the way we operate.

For me, the blue-slip question is a redline. I think what they are doing with the blue slips undermines the individual ability for any Senator to have their say, especially as it relates to the circuit courts, but I think there is an opportunity to have a conversation.

On climate generally, I am looking forward to a debate, but it is very difficult to debate in the Senate when only one party proffers a proposal. I don't mean this as rhetorical flourish. I don't mean this as a personal accusation or a partisan attack. It is just a fact that there are no climate proposals coming from the Senators who are Republican. There are zero. So they are trying to have a debate about a resolution which was nonbinding and which was signed by 12 Senators. I get it, but I think, given that this is the world's greatest deliberative body, we ought to have a proper debate about climate change.

We are actually in a climate emergency. This is the most important moment in the world's history as it relates to this particular crisis. We are sitting here trying to score points about an FAQ that was posted on a new Congresswoman's website and trying to make fun of each other and say: They are going to ban cows and ice cream. It is very silly, and it is not worthy of the seriousness of the moment.

I would ask my Republican colleagues—I see a number of them who take the debt, foreign policy, cyber security, personal privacy, and the rules of the Senate very seriously. They are very levelheaded human beings with a seriousness of purpose. Yet when it comes to climate change, it gets into this goofy thing where they are doing everything except debating climate change and what ought to be done about it.

We spent 5, maybe 10 years trying to get most Republicans to concede that this problem exists at all. Now a lot of them are feeling comfortable saying: Yes, this problem exists, but all of the solutions proposed by Democrats are wrong.

That is fine, but I ask this question in all sincerity: What do Republican Senators propose to do about the climate crisis? What is your plan? If you don't like cap and trade; if you don't like a fee on carbon; if you don't like massive investment in green technology and clean technology; if you don't like the extension of the investment tax credit and the production tax credit; if you don't like our solution; if you don't like being part of the Paris climate accord—which, by the way, is nonbinding, which means we get to decide what our pathway is to clean energy. It is not as though the U.N. gets to tell us what to do. It gives us leverage to make sure that as we move forward toward clean energy, the other countries don't cheat. It actually gives us leverage in this situation.

If you don't like our solutions, that is fine. This is the world's greatest de-

liberative body. This is where the greatest debates in U.S. history have happened. Yet, maybe 19 times out of 20, I have come down to the floor to talk about climate change, and there were Members on this side of the aisle and zero Members on the other side of the aisle. Again, I don't mean this as an attack; I just want a real debate.

I am looking at the Senator from Georgia. We have had robust discussions about debt and deficits and the way we try to avoid shutdowns and sequester and all the rest of it. When it comes to climate change, everybody gets really goofy. Everybody puts on their partisan uniform and refuses to engage. If this debate about the Green New Deal offers us an opportunity to talk about the planetary crisis, then I am happy for it.

We are in debate time on the nomination of Andrew Wheeler to lead the EPA, so it might be helpful to know the origins of the Agency.

In the 1960s, the state of the environment was catastrophic. Millions of freshwater fish and rivers around the country were being poisoned by insecticides, hurting consumer trust and the countless fishermen and families who made a living that way. Pollution was so bad that debris floating in the Cuyahoga River actually caught on fire, causing thousands of dollars in property damage. The water in Lake Superior became so toxic from companies' dumping asbestos-laden waste that local communities had to start filtering their own water. Think about that. People could drink the water from their local reservoirs unfiltered until industrial pollution came along.

This was the path our country was on. Pollution was destroying many of the most beautiful places in the country and, maybe more importantly, putting the health of the public at risk.

A scientist named Rachel Carson came along and changed everything when she wrote a book that helped the United States see that we couldn't go on like this. Her book was a call for change, and millions of Americans, on a bipartisan basis, demanded change.

There was a predictable backlash. Here is what one industry spokesman said as public opinion began to coalesce around addressing pollution:

The major claims of Miss Rachel Carson's book "Silent Spring" are gross distortions of the actual facts, completely unsupported by scientific, experimental evidence, and general practical experience in the field. Her suggestion that pesticides are in fact biocides destroying all life is obviously absurd in the light of the fact that without selective biologicals, these compounds would be completely useless.

This controversy went on for the next few years. The public, the science, and the reality pointed toward the truth, but a few loud voices tried to stop the country from making progress. They said that Rachel Carson distorted the facts, that the science wasn't there, and that there was no need to rush judgment.

The U.S. Government moved forward anyway and began to lay the founda-

tion for a new America—one that would preserve and protect our country and its resources for the next generation.

In 1970, President Nixon united several offices and bureaus already in the Federal Government into one single agency, the EPA. The EPA was charged with protecting the Nation's health and being the steward of the environment. It has a legacy of fulfilling that mission. The Agency ended the use of a dangerous pesticide called DDT. It found a solution to acid rain, which was once a major issue for fish, forests, and farming. It took on secondhand smoke, banning smoking in indoor public places.

Thanks to the EPA, Rachel Carson's "fable for tomorrow" did not become a reality, but here we are decades later facing another environmental crisis, one that affects the United States and every other Nation on this planet, and I am worried that we are not going to do the right thing this time.

Instead of facing head-on and in a bipartisan way the biggest crisis in the planet's history, the party in power is not just ignoring the problem; they are making it worse. And they are doing it by nominating and confirming people like Andrew Wheeler. This is someone who said: "Manmade global warming is the greatest hoax ever perpetrated on the American people." This is the guy to head the EPA. He says manmade global warming is a hoax. This is someone who was formally the vice president of the Washington Coal Club, who lobbied for coal companies.

We are in a planetary emergency, and Republicans want someone who is advancing the interests of top polluters to be the Nation's chief environmental steward so that he can continue to advance the interest of the top polluters. Again, it is not just that they are ignoring climate change, which would be bad enough; it is that they are aggressively, proudly, gleefully sometimes, making it worse.

Researchers at Harvard found that the EPA's recent plans to gut the Clean Power Plan will lead to more greenhouse gas emissions. Their plan will be worse for climate than if they did nothing at all. Think about that. If the EPA did nothing at all, it would be better than what they are doing now. This is the result of Mr. Wheeler's leadership, which has until now been in an Acting Director capacity.

During the Presidency of Ronald Reagan, the EPA was led by Anne Gorsuch Burford, who ended up resigning in scandal. President Reagan nominated as her replacement William Ruckelshaus, whom people trusted to do the job and stabilize the EPA. He was a moderate. He was a steady hand. The EPA could use a steady hand after Scott Pruitt, who promoted the interests of polluters over the health of the American people and who crossed many ethical lines. Yet Andrew Wheeler is no Ruckelshaus. That much is clear from his time at the EPA. Under his leadership, EPA inspections are at a 10-year

low. EPA fines are at a 25-year low. Restrictions on new coal plants have been eliminated. Limits on methane pollution are in the process of being rolled back. In other words, polluters are getting their way. That is great news for people who own oil and gas companies, but it is horrible news for people with asthma, for farmers who are trying to get through the worst drought season seen in a century, and for small businesses that are losing customers because of fires.

Listen, climate change is here. It is hurting everything from local economies, to public health, to national security, and the Republicans have decided that the best person to lead the Agency to do something about it is a coal lobbyist. It would be funny if it were not so outrageous.

The Democrats have a plan for climate change. We have ideas to invest in clean air, clean water, and smarter infrastructure. We have bills on investment and production tax credits, solar energy, wind energy, conservation and efficiency, carbon pricing, and planting trees, and we have stood together against nominations like this one. It is time for the Republicans, if not to stand with us, to at least then stand on the other side against us and engage in this great debate. What are we going to do with climate change? We have proposals, and they have none.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Georgia.

DISASTER RELIEF

Mr. PERDUE. Mr. President, I rise to talk about a crisis in my home State and indeed five other States across the Southeast. I rise to talk about disasters in California and to talk about our friends in Puerto Rico.

On October 10, 2018, Hurricane Michael made landfall on the Florida Panhandle as a category 4 hurricane. It was one of the strongest storms to ever hit the United States. Over the next few hours, Hurricane Michael barreled through Florida and tore through southwest Georgia. In a matter of minutes, homes were flattened, tracks of timber were destroyed, and farmers' crops lay down in the field. People's lives were radically affected forever.

This hurricane hit at exactly the time of year when most crops were ready for harvest. It doesn't matter if they were peanuts, cotton, or pecans—they were all just beautiful this year. As a matter of fact, in the State of Georgia, I grew up working on our family's farm there, and I have to say the cotton crop last year was probably the best I had ever seen. It was almost cruel. Today, agriculture is Georgia's top industry and our No. 1 economic driver. Before the hurricane, farmers in my State were expecting a record harvest. Instead, their crops were completely destroyed.

Shortly after the hurricane hit, President Trump, Vice President PENCE, and Secretary of Agriculture Perdue all came down to Georgia. To-

gether, we toured the devastation and heard from farmers and local officials about the tough road of recovery ahead. Some farmers said they could clean up, replant, and have a crop next year as long as they had adequate resources. Other farmers were not so lucky.

Georgia is the top pecan-producing State in the country. One of our largest pecan farms is owned by two brothers in Bainbridge, which the Vice President and I personally visited. We personally saw the damage in their fields. Some 800 acres of pecan trees were gone. I cannot describe to you what that looks like. On the ground was a solid carpet—if you can imagine this—of mature, beautiful, inch-long pecans that were ready to be harvested but were on the ground, ruined.

One brother said:

The farmer in me wants to farm this land, but there's no way I can make it. Next year is the year I'll lose it, because we're not like the cotton guy. Nothing against them, but they get to replant a seed next year and have a crop. I don't.

The problem is that the pecan crop can be annually insured, but there is no insurance product for insuring pecan trees. If these two brothers replant, it could take 7 to 10 years for the trees to mature enough to even generate a minimum revenue. Most likely, full production would take over 12 years. For them, this is truly a generational loss.

The other brother said:

My brother and I built this business from nothing. We will make it. We may not be in the pecan business anymore, but we will be doing something else. We are fighters. [Our families are committed to this land.] You just have to go on.

When they saw the devastation, President Trump and Vice President PENCE stepped up to the plate and made a commitment to our agriculture community.

President Trump said: "Farmers really got hurt here, especially in Georgia, but we're going to get it taken care of."

Vice President PENCE said:

We will rebuild these crops and these communities. We will restore southwest Georgia. We will restore the Sunbelt region bigger and better than ever before.

This afternoon, I am here to say that the Vice President and the President are living up to their word. After this disaster relief was caught up in the political nightmare of funding the last 25 percent of this year's budget, we now have the opportunity to put this stand-alone supplemental appropriations bill on the floor of the Senate. The President and Vice President have been absolutely resolute in their support of getting aid to the victims of these disasters. They are now asking Congress to pass this all-inclusive disaster relief bill right now.

The State of Georgia has already stepped up and offered tax credits, short-term financing, and other forms of direct assistance to those who have

been impacted, but they have only scratched the surface. The people of Georgia have come together and helped their neighbors, served meals to each other, and assisted first responders in their recovery efforts.

In Florida alone, then-Governor RICK SCOTT, who is now our colleague here on the Senate floor, was in the race for this Senate seat, and he actually suspended his campaign to devote all of his time, in his responsibility as the Governor, to lead the effort of analyzing the damage in Florida and determining what needed to be done. He can speak directly to the need. He is a co-sponsor of this bill, I might add.

However, despite efforts by Senator ISAKSON and others and me in our State, this Senate body has yet to take action on disaster relief for the agriculture community in the Southeast. Our farmers simply cannot wait any longer. The situation in my State is dire. I would say it is the same across the South. Because revenue from the 2018 harvest was destroyed, bankers can't lend money to farmers who right now are asking to borrow money to put seed in the ground, to fertilize the ground, and to prepare the ground for next year's crop. It is as simple as that. Growers cannot replant because they can't get their financial houses in order because we haven't adopted a resolution for last year's harvest that they were not able to achieve. Rural communities are suffering, and in many places, economic activity is at an absolute standstill as it waits for the Federal Government—this body and the House of Representatives—to do its job.

For some in my State, the timing of assistance is not just a matter of putting a crop in the ground this year; it is a matter of potentially never putting a crop in the ground again. If we do not help these people right now, they may lose their businesses and livelihoods through no fault of their own. That is the reality we are facing here. The people in my State have asked me to utilize every sphere of influence, turn over every stone, and exhaust all options to get disaster relief right now.

We are past the time when this should have gotten done. I have spoken with the President many times about this. His commitment to our farmers is unwavering. Just last Monday night, he said: DAVID, get it done. He called me again on Saturday night before he left for Vietnam. He said: DAVID, what do we have to do to get this bill across the Senate floor? Talk to our friends in the House, and make sure that everything that is needed is in.

Senator ISAKSON, I, and several other Senators have introduced a supplemental disaster relief bill on the floor of the Senate, and President Trump has agreed to sign it. Our bill includes disaster relief for agriculture. It also provides additional funds for Georgia and other States like Florida, Alabama, the Carolinas, Alaska, Hawaii, and California that have battled natural disasters over the last year on