

to determine whether there is sufficient evidence of a violation of a criminal law that would warrant presentation to a grand jury, charging, and then a trial. Congress's role is demonstrably and decidedly different.

I would like to thank Mr. Mueller for conducting his investigation with the utmost professionalism. For those of us who have seen him in action over many years, we expected nothing different. I would also like to thank Attorney General Barr for promptly communicating his conclusions with both Congress and the American people. Throughout Attorney General Barr's confirmation hearings, he stressed his intent to release as much information as possible, and he is now in the process of delivering on his word.

I agree with those on both sides of the aisle, as well as the President, who want the Mueller report to be released publicly. As much of the report as can be released, and consistent with existing law, should be made public so the American people can read it for themselves, but I also agree with the chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, Senator GRAHAM, that we also need to understand better how we got to this place.

We need to look at the decisions made by the leadership in the Department of Justice, the FBI, the intelligence community, and the Obama White House during the time in which this counterintelligence investigation was initiated against President Trump while he was still a candidate, and why, contrary to the practice as testified to by Attorney General Loretta Lynch, a defensive briefing was not given to the Trump campaign so they could know that the Russians were trying the doors and the windows and trying to get into the organization.

We know now, from Mr. Mueller's report, they were unsuccessful in establishing a connection and collusion, as the word has been used, but we know the investigation that initially was started, ultimately, came up empty-handed and resulted in this narrative, which prompted the appointment of a special counsel and this long investigation that Mr. Mueller has now completed. So we need to understand that better as part of our oversight responsibilities, particularly those of us, such as the Presiding Officer and I, who are on the Judiciary Committee who have explicit oversight responsibility for the Department of Justice as well as the FBI.

THE GREEN NEW DEAL

Mr. President, on another matter, we will soon have an opportunity to vote on the Green New Deal. Since this resolution was introduced last month, there has been a lot of confusion about exactly what is in it and how much it would cost. Generally, those aren't great questions to leave unanswered when you are trying to pass something in the Senate. We need more information, to be sure.

When the resolution was released, it made some lofty promises: achieving

net zero greenhouse gas emissions, renovating or replacing all buildings to achieve maximum energy efficiency, and providing higher education, healthcare, and housing for everybody. Missing, of course, were some of the details about how these goals would be either feasible or affordable: no plans on how to incentivize the research and development of new, cleaner energy technologies; no specifics on how much it would cost to retrofit every existing building in the country; no estimates about how the long list of new entitlement programs would be funded. The confusion only grew stronger when one of the authors of the resolution released a background summary that made even more promises, again, with no assurance of any plan that would actually be feasible or could be implemented. The Congresswoman from New York claimed that the Green New Deal would even include a government-subsidized life for those who are unwilling to work. She said we will build high-speed rail that will make airline travel unnecessary, which came as a surprise to our colleagues from Hawaii, and she said we will replace every internal combustion engine in every vehicle. As you might imagine, there was a long list of unanswered questions.

The one thing we know about the Green New Deal is, it would be a bad deal for Texas. Our State has always embraced an "all of the above" attitude when it comes to energy. Our people don't expect handouts, but they do expect opportunities that only come with economic and individual freedom. They don't want to be told what the government will permit them to do or force them to do, and they certainly don't want to be taxed to death to support people who aren't willing to work. We believe the government that governs least governs best in a nation of laws, especially when it comes to our economy.

Texas keeps its taxes, government spending, and regulations at a rational minimum to give people and small businesses that create jobs the freedom to dream big and let the free market provide. We know it works. Lower taxes and less burdensome regulation draw businesses to our State. We are one of the fastest growing States in the Nation because people are literally voting with their feet. It is because we have seen jobs created and opportunities for everyone willing to work.

Our unemployment rate is at or below the national average. I believe, in Midland, TX, in the Permian Basin, it is 2.1 percent. They can't find enough able-bodied people to perform the good, well-paying jobs that exist. We know we lead the Nation in exports, fueling both the State's economy as well as that for the entire country.

As I just alluded, the major part of our State's success is our thriving energy industry. Something that will not come as a surprise to most people is the fact that Texas leads the country in both oil and natural gas production,

but what may surprise you is the fact that we are the No. 1 producer of electricity from wind energy. One-fourth of all U.S. wind energy comes from Texas. There is no doubt that Texas's position as the largest energy-producing State has secured our position as an economic powerhouse, but if the authors of the Green New Deal get their way, oil, gas, and all hydrocarbons will all be off-limits, and the results will be disastrous without anywhere else to turn for an alternative because renewables simply aren't prepared to fill that gap. Hundreds of thousands of people will lose their jobs, exports will decline, and without a reliable alternative power source, you can expect to spend most of your day in the dark. Instead of talking about plans that would hurt my constituents in Texas and bankrupt the entire country, let's have a serious conversation about real solutions.

A few weeks ago, our friend and colleague from Maine, Senator COLLINS, joined me on a tour of the NET Power demonstration plant in La Porte, TX. NET Power has developed a first-of-its-kind system that generates affordable energy from natural gas while producing zero emissions. These innovative carbon capture technologies are what our future should look like. If American companies don't produce them first, well, we know somebody else will. So in America we need to invest in new technologies that can take our most reliable and affordable energy sources and make them cleaner.

When Senator MCCONNELL announced his intent to bring this bill to the floor, things got a little strange in the Senate. In my experience, if the majority leader says he will bring something you authored to the floor, you are thrilled—but not with the Green New Deal. The junior Senator from Massachusetts who introduced the resolution in the first place referred to this announcement as "sabotage."

Well, clearly something is wrong. I believe it is important for us to have a discussion about smart ways to reduce emissions and lessen our environmental footprint, but the way to do that is not through heavyhanded regulations or unrealistic goals to eliminate the fuel sources we need, nor is it about throwing in socialist government power grabs that only appeal to a radical wing of the other party, which is basically a distraction from the real issues we should be discussing.

The Green New Deal is bad for America, bad for Texas, and I urge my Democratic colleagues to stop this ideological race to the left and start working with us on practical solutions that actually have a chance to become law. I will vote no on the Green New Deal resolution, and I encourage all of my colleagues to do the same.

FIX NICS ACT

Mr. President, this last Saturday marked 1 year since the Fix NICS Act was signed into law. This legislation meant a lot to me personally because it

fulfilled a promise I made to the members of the Sutherland Springs community after the deadliest shooting in Texas history.

On November 5, 2017, a deranged gunman opened fire in the First Baptist Church in Sutherland Springs, killing 26 people and rocking our entire State to its core.

The gunman had a criminal record, a record of violence and mental illness. He had been convicted of domestic violence while serving in the military and by law should not have been able to purchase or possess a firearm, but the National Instant Criminal Background Check System, known as NICS, did not have a record of his crimes because they had not been transmitted by the U.S. Air Force to the FBI. In the wake of that tragedy, it is hard to rid your mind of the what-ifs. What if his criminal record had been uploaded to the NICS database? What if he had not been able to purchase a gun? For the friends and family of those lost that day, those questions are almost too tough to ask because they know the answer: Their loved ones might still be alive today.

Sadly, there is nothing we can do to bring back the loved ones they lost that day, but I knew there was something we could do to prevent other families and communities from experiencing that sort of pain, grief, and loss. Less than 2 weeks after the tragedy, Senator MURPHY from Connecticut and I introduced the Fix NICS Act to prevent these systemic failures from happening again. This legislation penalizes Federal Agencies that fail to properly report relevant crimes and incentivizes States to improve their reporting.

These sorts of commonsense reforms gained broad bipartisan support. In fact, there were 77 cosponsors here in the Senate alone, including both the majority and minority leaders, something of a rarity in my experience. It also gained the support of a diverse group of national organizations, from the National Rifle Association to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, the Fraternal Order of Police, and the National Shooting Sports Foundation. When President Trump signed this bill 1 year ago, it marked the strongest update to the background check system in a decade.

I appreciate the support of my colleagues for this legislation. What we were able to demonstrate is that Congress can work in a bipartisan way to address a problem if we just put our minds to it. I appreciate the support of the Sutherland Springs community in the wake of the tragedy, something they are still feeling even today. I am confident that this legislation will help to save lives and make our communities safer.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

NEW MANHATTAN PROJECT FOR CLEAN ENERGY

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I believe climate change is real. I believe

that human emissions of greenhouse gases are a major cause of climate change, and I believe the Democratic plan for climate change, which the Senator from Texas just spoke about—the Green New Deal—is so far out in left field that not many are going to take it seriously.

So as one Republican, I am here today to propose this response to climate change, which is that the United States should launch a New Manhattan Project for Clean Energy, a 5-year project with 10 grand challenges that will use American research and technology to put our country and our world firmly on the path for cleaner, cheaper energy.

Meeting these grand challenges would create breakthroughs in advanced nuclear reactors, natural gas, carbon recapture, better batteries, greener buildings, electric vehicles, cheaper solar power, and fusion. To provide the tools to create these breakthroughs, the Federal Government should double its funding for energy research and keep the United States No. 1 in advanced computing. This strategy takes advantage of the United States' secret weapon—our extraordinary capacity for basic research and especially in our 17 National Laboratories. It will strengthen our economy. It will raise family incomes.

This strategy also recognizes that when it comes to climate change, China, India, and other developing countries are the problem. American innovation is the answer. According to the Global Carbon Project, over the last 13 years the United States has reduced production of greenhouse gases more than any other major country. Let me say that again. According to the Global Carbon Project, over the last 13 years the United States has reduced production of greenhouse gases more than any other major country. But over the last 5 years, China and its carbon emissions have risen. The U.S. reduction is largely thanks to conservation and switching from coal to natural gas in the production of electricity.

This is the way a California physicist explains it: Our mothers told us as children to clean our plates because children in India were starving. Now, cleaning our plates was a good thing for us to do, but it didn't do much for starving children in India. In the same way, reducing carbon emissions in the United States is a good thing to do, but it doesn't do much to address climate change because most of the increase in greenhouse gases is in developing countries. If we want to do something about climate change, we should use American research and technology to provide the rest of the world with tools to create low-cost energy that emits fewer greenhouse gases.

The purpose of the original Manhattan Project during World War II was to find a way to split the atom and build a bomb before Germany could. The New York Times described this as the

“most concentrated intellectual effort in history.” Instead of ending a war, the goal of the New Manhattan Project will be to minimize the disruption on our lives and our economies caused by climate change, to clean the air, and to raise family incomes, both in our country and in the rest of the world, by creating large amounts of reliable, clean, inexpensive energy.

Can a New Manhattan Project accomplish such bold breakthroughs in just 5 years? Well, take a look at the last 5 years. Carbon emissions from energy consumption are down by 230 million metric tons. The number of electric vehicles has doubled and so has the median driving range per charge. The utility scale cost of solar power has been nearly cut in half. The number of homes has risen by 4 percent, but household energy usage has decreased by 10 percent. We lost and then we reclaimed the No. 1 spot in supercomputing. The cost of natural gas has been cut in half, and the percent of electricity provided by natural gas has increased from 27 percent to 35 percent. And that is all in the last 5 years.

I will not spend time in these remarks debunking the Green New Deal because so many others have so effectively already done that. Basically, the Green New Deal is an assault on cars, cows, and combustion. With nuclear power available, its strategy for fighting climate change with windmills makes as much sense as going to war in sailboats. As a bonus, and as the Senator from Texas outlined, it throws in free college, a guaranteed job with a government-set wage, and it would take away private health insurance on the job from 170 million Americans, and no one has any earthly idea what it will cost taxpayers.

You don't have to believe that humans cause climate change to believe in the New Manhattan Project for Clean Energy, and you don't have to be a Republican. Hopefully, the New Manhattan Project for Clean Energy can become a bipartisan proposal. Many of its 10 grand challenges have been proposed by the National Institute of Engineering and the National Academy of Sciences. At different times, Barack Obama, John McCain, Newt Gingrich, and Howard Dean have all called for a Manhattan Project for new energy sources.

These are the 10 grand challenges:

First is advanced nuclear. Ninety-eight nuclear reactors produce 60 percent of all carbon-free electricity in the United States. There has never been a death as a result of an accident at one of these reactors. The problem is that in competition with natural gas and coal, these reactors cost too much to build and some of them cost too much to operate. According to the Energy Information Administration, 11 reactors may shut down over the next 5 years. Building the Vogtle nuclear plant in Georgia—the only two new reactors being built in the United States—could cost as much as \$27.5 billion. Building two natural gas plants to