THE GREEN NEW DEAL

Mrs. Feinstein, Madam President, I rise to join my colleagues in calling for legislation to resolve the climate crisis. The need for action could not be more urgent. Every day of inaction in the U.S. Senate brings new risks of irreversible harm to our communities, our environment and future generations.

Unfortunately, this week’s vote is not really about climate change. The Senate has been asked to invoke cloture on a nonbinding resolution that raises only directly and indirectly answer a broad range of questions about climate change and our economy.

The Senate is not ready to end debate on these issues. We have hardly begun.

The Democratic Caucus is united in recognizing the realities of climate change and calling for effective solutions.

However, this constitutes a minority view in the U.S. Senate. For too many years, our calls for comprehensive climate change legislation have fallen on deaf ears.

The Green New Deal in all of its ambition and breadth should be recognized as a sign of the frustration that is mounting in this country as a result of Republican obstruction.

I do not agree with every aspect of this particular resolution. It addresses not only climate policy but also long-standing partisan disputes over healthcare, housing, jobs, and other economic policies.

These are important policy debates, but it is my view that the legislative effort to address climate change does not need to wait for agreement in these other areas. The need for action is too urgent.

But whatever our disagreements about policy approaches and non-binding resolutions, it is long past time for us to set aside disagreements about the validity of climate science.

The scientific community has warned us about climate change for decades with increasing certainty and specificity, including in a report of the President’s Science Advisory Committee in 1965, five assessment reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change since 1990, and four national climate assessment reports of the U.S. Global Change Research Program since 2000.

Most recently, a special report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change identified the disastrous consequences if we allow the world to warm by more than 2.7 degrees Fahrenheit above pre-industrial temperatures.

We are already at more than 1.8 degrees of warming. Sea levels have risen more than 8 inches. Ocean acidity has increased by 30 percent. Ice sheets in Antarctica and Greenland are melting into the sea at an accelerating pace of more than 400 gigatons per year.

Allowing the world to warm another degree, as we are on a course to do between 2030 and 2052, may well surpass our ability to adapt.

Continued warming will threaten rapid, widespread, and long-lasting increases in heatwaves, wildfires, drought, crop failure, sea level rise, ocean acidification, mass extinction, storms, food crops, mass population migrations, and human conflict.

To avoid warming in excess of 2.7 degrees Fahrenheit, the special report identified that we will need to cut emissions 45 percent below 2010 levels by 2030 and 100 percent by 2050.

That will require rapid transitions in all sectors at an unprecedented scale.

Unless the U.S. Senate can undertake the hard work of serious legislation soon, it is clear the world will be unable to meet that goal.

The good news is that there are a large number of good policy ideas the Senate can consider if my Republican colleagues agree to join us in earnest.

There are bipartisan proposals for legislation to place a price on greenhouse gas emissions by placing a fee on fossil fuels.

We can even rebate the revenues to cover the costs for households and industries.

These are good ideas that we should explore.

There are numerous examples of clean energy standards and other policy commitments at the state, local, and international level. These are also good ideas that we should explore.

My own State of California has demonstrated bold, creative new ideas for cutting emissions at the same time as it has grown to be the fifth largest economy in the world.

The State has mandated that 50 percent of its electricity must be from renewable sources by 2030.

We are actually ahead of schedule and are on track to reach that deadline by 2020, 10 years ahead of schedule.

Where we are committed to be completely carbon neutral by 2045.

My State’s policies work. From the low-carbon fuel standard to the zero-emission vehicle mandates to the economy-wide cap-and-trade system, each innovative policy approach makes it easier to meet our goals.

By harnessing the strength of the American economy to address climate change, we have an opportunity to create millions of new jobs while strengthening the infrastructure and industries that are critical to our future.

It is long past time for the Senate to move beyond show votes on nonbinding resolutions and move on to the hard work of actual legislation.

I urge my Republican colleagues to join us in this effort.

ENHANCING HUMAN RIGHTS PROTECTION IN ARMS SALES ACT OF 2019

Mr. Cardin. Madam President, today I rise to speak about the Enhancing Human Rights in Arms Sales Act of 2019, which I was proud to introduce on