

Today, I want to talk about a bill in my home State of New York that I believe will do just that. A few weeks ago, I endorsed the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act, a bill that would put New York on a course for a net zero economy, meaning negligible to no carbon pollution by the year 2050. It is an ambitious target, but we need ambition because we live in unprecedented times.

We are witnessing human-caused climate change in the storms, floods, droughts, wildfires, and other extreme weather that has throttled our country in recent years. It has caused loss of life and destruction of livelihoods all over the country and all across the world. We must prioritize the urgency of climate change, and we must recognize the need to take bold steps to confront it aggressively.

It is unfortunate that here in Congress, because of our Republican colleagues, we don't do a thing, not one single thing on climate change. The bills the House has sent over and the bills that Democratic Senators have proposed end up in Leader McCONNELL's legislative graveyard. Nothing happens, and climate gets worse.

Thank God the States are doing something, and that is why I supported the climate bill in New York State. That is why I am so proud today that my State's legislative leaders have reached an agreement that will clear the way for its passage, with a vote in the Senate as soon as this evening.

I look forward to watching my State pass the most robust climate policy package passed by any State in the country. I am proud of that fact. I hope that it serves as an example for other States to follow, another catalyst for the national debate about how we can tackle climate change, and a reminder that we, in Congress, must do our part.

#### NOMINATIONS

Mr. President, Leader McCONNELL comes to the floor often to laud the quality of his party's judicial picks. But even the slightest scrutiny reveals that many of these judicial picks will disgrace the Federal bench.

Take the nominees we are considering this week. Several have terrible records on women's reproductive health, LGBTQ equality, and other issues, but Matthew Kacsmark from the Northern District of Texas takes the cake. Mr. Kacsmark has demonstrated a hostility to the LGBTQ community bordering on paranoia. He has opposed marriage equality. He has defended businesses that discriminate against people on sexual orientation, and he has opposed Equal Employment Opportunity Commission protections for people based on orientation.

Here is what he said. This is a man who is being given a lifetime appointment to the Federal bench. He said the nationwide right to marriage equality was a "road to potential tyranny." He called the inclusion of LGBTQ protections in VAWA "a grave mistake." He labeled the Equality Act a "public af-

firmation of the lie that the human person is an autonomous blob of Silly Putty, unconstrained by nature or biology, and that marriage, sexuality, gender identity, and even the unborn child must yield to the erotic desires of liberated adults."

This is a judge? Is this someone who is weighing both sides carefully and who is giving equal consideration to plaintiffs and defendants?

It is unbelievable that this man has been nominated, and he is not alone. The parade of narrowminded, often bigoted people who are being put on the bench simply because they are members of the Federalist Society is unprecedented in this country—unprecedented.

Beyond his work for the anti-LGBTQ group called the First Liberty Institute—which boasts such luminaries as Jeff Mateer, who said transgender children were "part of Satan's plan"—Mr. Kacsmark has no judicial experience. None. Why on Earth is this man a nominee for a lifetime appointment? Why would my colleagues want to drape black robes over these bigoted views? Our judicial system is designed to protect liberties, not denigrate them.

One Republican Senator rightfully voiced concerns about this man's fitness. Where are the others? Where are the others? I urge my friends on the other side to study this man's record because any fairminded look at his qualifications would demand a "no" on his nomination.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SASSE). Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### ESCAPE ACT

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, we talked a lot in recent weeks about the importance of a transatlantic political and military alliance between our country and many other nations. In celebrating NATO's 70th anniversary in Washington a few months ago and the 75th anniversary of D-day in Europe, there has been a common theme, and that common theme has been security cooperation. The common theme has been a need to strengthen our response to threats that continue to arise around the globe.

I believe energy security is a critical part of our shared defense. That is why I just introduced legislation to help our NATO allies escape Russian bullying by improving European energy security. My bill imposes sanctions on Russia's Nord Stream 2 pipeline. It also speeds up U.S. natural gas exports to our NATO allies.

For years I have raised concerns about Russia's energy export pipeline project. Nord Stream 2 would carry

added Russian natural gas supplies to Germany via the Baltic Sea. It would do it along the existing Nord Stream 1 route. This pipeline will fuel Russian aggression as well as regional instability. For our sake and the sake of our allies, we must stop it.

Nord Stream 2 makes Europe and our NATO allies more dependent on Russia and so more prone to Russian influence. It also means a massive money transfer from our allies straight into the Kremlin's pockets. That is new money that Russia can use to fund their military.

As we know, Russian President Vladimir Putin is no friend. He is a dangerous foe, and he has plans to divide Europe and destroy NATO. Putin uses Russia's military and economy as tools of intimidation. One of Russia's biggest economic levers, of course, is its gas monopoly in Europe. In fact, Putin has a history of using his Russian energy resources as a geopolitical weapon.

Russia literally threatens to turn off the gas if its demands are not met. Putin did cut off natural gas supplies to Ukraine in 2006, again in 2009, and most recently in 2014. Of course, 2014 was the year that Russia invaded Ukraine and Crimea. Currently, most Russian gas exports to Europe must cross Ukraine, but by using Nord Stream 2 to bypass this route, Russia can freely undermine Ukraine's economy.

Putin threatens not just Ukraine but also our NATO ally Poland. Just last week Poland's President was here in Washington meeting with President Trump to discuss security issues. Unlike Germany, Poland is working to free itself from Russian energy reliance. Poland has signed a deal to buy an additional \$8 billion of abundant reliable American natural gas, and this is on top of the \$25 billion already under contract.

At the meeting last week, President Trump said he is considering Nord Stream 2 sanctions. He also warned Germany to end its dependence on Moscow. President Trump rightly noted: "We're protecting Germany from Russia and Russia is getting billions and billions of dollars from Germany."

The President is right. He went on to add: "Reliance on a single foreign supplier of energy leaves nations totally vulnerable to coercion and extortion."

The Economist magazine calls Nord Stream 2 "a Russian trap"—one that Germany has fallen into. I agree with the President and I agree with the Economist. Nord Stream 2 will completely undermine the European Union's efforts to diversify energy sources, suppliers, and routes.

Already, Russia supplies nearly 40 percent of European Union gas imports, and European demand for natural gas is expected to continue to grow rapidly. Many of our NATO allies, especially Germany, are becoming addicted to Russian gas. It is time for American intervention.