

would become insolvent even if they were able to pay back the loans. The bill acknowledges this failing by providing for direct Federal assistance for plans that go insolvent even after they receive loans.

Most critically, the Butch Lewis Act makes no reforms to the system in order to secure its long-term solvency. That is not the way we ought to be working to help retirees.

In getting back to the work of the Committee on Finance, since last year, both under Senator Hatch's leadership and mine, the committee has been working on a bipartisan basis to address the issues facing the multiemployer system. I emphasize the necessity of bipartisanship in the U.S. Senate. When you have a division of 53 to 47 and you have to have 60 votes to get something done in this body, bipartisanship is very, very important.

The committee is nearing its completion of a comprehensive proposal that will include financial assistance to the critical and declining multiemployer pension plans and provide long-term solvency to these plans and to the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation. That proposal will include financial relief for plans like Central States' and for the coal miners.

The Butch Lewis Act is so costly and does nothing to fix the flaws in the system that has brought about this bill. In relationship to the Government Accountability Office, I spoke to some of those flaws that I initiated a few years ago. There is really nothing in the proposal on which Senator BROWN is asking for a UC that addresses the mismanagement of the trustees. Our comprehensive plan includes reforms to address trustee requirements and plan operations. In other words, the people in the private sector who are managing this ought to have some responsibility of making sure they are doing it in a fiscally sound way and are carrying out the rights of the trustees.

So I object to this request.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I thank Senator GRASSLEY, and we will be working together on this.

I just want to point out that there was, of course, some mismanagement. As does the Senator, I want to fix some of the structural issues, but time is of the essence. I understand this is not happening today, but time is of the essence with regard to these pensions, especially for the mineworkers. Those for the teamsters are next and for the others in the Central States. As Chairman GRASSLEY knows, it will get worse and worse and worse if we don't get this done this year.

I do want to emphasize, while there of course is some mismanagement of funds here, the preponderance of the problem is that a bunch of mining companies, construction companies, and transportation companies went out of business with the Bush recession in

2007, 2008, and 2009, taking away the companies paying into these funds.

The other part of it was Wall Street greed, generally what happened to the stock market.

That is the preponderance of the problem, but I concur with Senator GRASSLEY that we can work on a lot of this together. Senator PORTMAN and I especially have a responsibility to get this done, to make it happen.

I thank the chairman.

I yield the floor.

#### RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 1 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. PERDUE).

#### EXECUTIVE CALENDAR—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

#### MAIDEN SPEECH

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. Mr. President, my story begins with my mom. My mom had a very difficult life. She grew up with a verbally abusive, alcoholic father. She married a physically abusive, alcoholic husband, whom she divorced when I was born. At that time, divorce was frowned upon. My birth father never gave my mom, my older brother, or me a dime. I never met him.

My mom eventually married the man who became my adoptive father, a bus-driver who made all four combat jumps with the 82nd Airborne in World War II. This summer, I had the opportunity to go to the D-Day anniversary in Normandy and to look at the area he parachuted into, where 17 percent of his company died.

He was a loving father, but with only a sixth-grade education and five children, he struggled to support our family. We had no money and lived in public housing, but even with all of those issues, I cannot think of a better childhood.

Even with no money, my mom was optimistic and hopeful. She told us that we were blessed because God and our Founders created the greatest country ever, where anything was possible. I am not sure my mom ever really had a plan for us, but she certainly knew what she was doing. We sat through many sermons, and church was not optional. We were told we had to make straight A's. We memorized the first part of the Declaration of Independence and the 23rd Psalm. We became Eagle Scouts, cleaned the house, and had to have a job. I started working at 7 years old and haven't stopped since.

We weren't allowed to complain. Debt, Big Government, socialism, and communism were bad. College was for a better paying job.

We were constantly lectured about the dangers of drug abuse. Unfortu-

nately, drugs have destroyed the life of one of my family members.

I enlisted in the U.S. Navy at 18, where I swabbed the decks, cleaned the latrines, served the mess decks, and took college courses aboard a destroyer during the last years of Vietnam but never close to Vietnam.

I married my high school sweetheart at 19, and, today, Ann and I have two daughters, six very perfect grandsons, and a seventh very perfect grandchild on the way next year. My wonderful wife, Ann, is here today and has been by my side every step of our journey.

While I didn't always appreciate my tough-love, my-way-or-the-highway mom growing up, I now thank God every day for my mom and for this country. She gave me the opportunity to experience every lesson this country had to offer before I was 20.

Unfortunately, the left has worked hard over the last 50 years to discredit the values of the America I was raised with—the values of the America I want my grandsons to grow up with. We all acknowledge that Americans, our country, and our institutions have flaws, but the left has worked to discredit our Founders, our institutions, our churches, our law enforcement, our morals, and almost everything my mom taught me. It has been happening for a long time.

The left railed against our soldiers during the Vietnam war. They call those still believing in a supreme being or the commitment of marriage uninformed and old fashioned. They are now openly saying that churches that hold traditional values should lose their tax-exempt status.

The left doesn't care about our enormous debt, pushes for socialism, and criticizes the Boy Scouts. The left thinks it is OK that our schools don't teach about the Founding Fathers or free markets. They want you to think America was never great.

To a degree, the pressure from the left is working. Americans under 30 are less interested in joining the military. Church attendance is at an all-time low. Participation in the Boy Scouts, even after allowing girls in, has shrunk. Many are choosing not to have families. And Socialism, the single most discredited idea of the last century—an idea that has led millions into poverty and tyranny around the globe—has gained a foothold in one of our two political parties.

I spent most of my life in business. The values that my tough-love mom instilled in me helped me to achieve the success she expected—not just hoped for but expected—for me. I was able to live the American dream because I worked hard. I lived out the values my mom taught me in my business career—hard work and fiscal responsibility but with a caring spirit to support those around me.

I built a healthcare company that had lower costs and better quality of care than my competitors. We had the highest patient satisfaction surveys in

the industry. I built and bought businesses for most of my life that helped hundreds of thousands of people get good, high-paying jobs. Many of them were failing businesses that we had to turn around to save jobs.

My experience growing up in a family that struggled to get good jobs influenced everything I have done in my life. It is not easy, and it shouldn't be, but everyone—every single American—should have the opportunity to struggle, work hard, and overcome the obstacles.

I took those exact same values to the Governor's office when I was elected in 2010. Florida had been struggling, and 832,000 jobs had been lost in the 4 years before I took office. Home prices were cut in half. Debt was soaring. The State raised taxes on its poorest citizens by more than \$2 billion to fill a budget hole.

I always think about my mom. I think about how it impacted her when food prices went up, taxes went up, when my brother got sick without health insurance, and when my dad was laid off. I became a jobs Governor. It wasn't a political talking point. It was about real people.

I have traveled around the State highlighting new businesses that opened in Florida, even small businesses. I remember a local legislator asking me once why I wasted my time going to a small town in Florida to highlight a new business's opening with just 30 new jobs. My response was that my dad struggled to find any job, and that is 30 families who have the opportunity to live the American Dream, and what could be more important?

In 8 years, Florida added 1.7 million new jobs, we paid down almost one-third of State debt, and we invested record funding in education, the environment, and transportation.

I also tried to fight for the values that are being lost in this country. I fight to protect life, to support the institution of the family, to lift up our military members, veterans, and law enforcement, to promote capitalism, and to defend the rule of law and the Constitution.

These values are under attack from the left and have been for quite some time. There is no easy solution to that problem, but one thing is clear: Government is not the solution. Washington is not the solution.

In my short time in the U.S. Senate, I have promoted policies I believe support the idea of an America where anything is possible. We need lower taxes. We need less regulation. We need a secure border and a sane immigration policy. We need to get healthcare costs under control. We need to defend freedom and liberty all over the world. But none of this will matter unless we see hearts and minds change. We need a renewal in America of the values that made this country great. That will not happen on the floor of the U.S. Senate. It will happen in the living rooms, classrooms, churches, synagogues, and boardrooms.

We need to remember that hard work is a feature, not a bug, of this American experiment and that the family unit is at the center of our society, and the breakdown of the family has been hugely detrimental. We need to remember that capitalism is the greatest force for economic good in the history of the world and socialism belongs in the ash-heap of history. We need to remember these things because our freedoms and the country we love can be lost forever. The values that made America great can go away, and there are those among us who want them to go away.

This challenge is much bigger than politics, and the solution is not political. It requires us—every one of us—to stand up and fight and to say without reservation or fear that we will not give up on America or the plans of our Founders. We will not stop fighting for our future.

If we want America to be great in the future, we must reject the politically correct attempts to rewrite our history, and we must reject the leftwing attempt to slander the greatness of our ideals. America is, in fact, the greatest country in the history of the world, and we should not be embarrassed to say so. We should proclaim it proudly. America is the greatest country in the history of the world.

I fear the values that I grew up with—the ones my tough-love mom taught me—are becoming a way of the past, but I believe these values, these virtues can and should be part of our country's future.

I love it when my grandkids pray before eating, recite the Pledge of Allegiance, ask to visit military museums, join the Boy Scouts, thank police officers and soldiers for their service, and place their hand over their heart when they hear the National Anthem. I hope they memorize the Declaration of Independence and the 23rd Psalm, become Eagle Scouts, have crummy-paying teenage jobs with unreasonable bosses, and get benched in sports for not trying hard enough. Also, I pray they consider a life of military service—one already wants to be a paratrooper—and are lucky enough to marry a wonderful person and have enough kids to worry about how to pay for college.

Maybe my grandkids will complain about parents being way too strict. Maybe they will complain about demanding teachers and bosses not caring what they think. Maybe they will complain about screaming drill sergeants, difficult degrees, restrictive banks, and life not being fair. If so, I will smile and say: "That's great; America is back." Then, I will know my grandsons have the opportunity to do something worthwhile with their lives, like build a loving family, successful career, thriving community, better country, and better world.

In the meantime, I will keep fighting. I ran for public office to fight for the country I was raised in because that is the country our children and

our grandchildren deserve. They deserve what my mom gave me—a free country with unlimited potential for every citizen. I hope everyone will join me in this fight.

I yield the floor.

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

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

#### NOMINATION OF FRANK WILLIAM VOLK

Mr. MANCHIN. Mr. President, I rise today in strong support of the nomination of Frank W. Volk to be the U.S. district court judge of the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of West Virginia.

I want to thank my colleagues in the Senate for putting partisanship aside and recognizing the importance of confirming qualified judges to our Federal courts.

Frank Volk's cloture vote earlier today cleared this body by a 90-to-0 vote without a single dissenting vote. Let me repeat that—90 to 0. How many times have we seen that happen in this body? That is a testament to Judge Volk's judicial experience, stellar record, and his qualifications to become a U.S. district court judge.

I would also like to acknowledge Frank's work in West Virginia as a tireless public servant to both our State and the Nation. He has conveyed time and again his love and desire to serve our Nation and particularly our great State of West Virginia. He has served with honor throughout his career and is willing to step up to the plate one more time. He shows the country how West Virginians act and serve.

I would also like to thank his family, including his wife, Angie, and his two children, Garrett and Lauren, for their tremendous support of Frank and his continued work as a public servant. He is a proud Italian person, like myself.

He is currently the chief judge of the U.S. Bankruptcy Court for the Southern District of West Virginia, where he has worked since he was appointed in October of 2015.

As a WVU College of Law graduate and editor-in-chief of the West Virginia Law Review, Frank's resume is extremely impressive.

He continues to give back to his education. He has taught part time at WVU College of Law for almost 15 years. He has taught courses in Federal civil rights, advanced torts, bankruptcy, and advanced bankruptcy. It is great to see a fellow Mountaineer succeed in their profession, and I look forward to seeing his career continue.

He has also authored a number of bankruptcy articles and spoken at national and regional conferences on bankruptcy matters, along with being a faculty member for the Federal Judicial Center.

Judge Volk is admitted to practice in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit, the U.S. District Court of the Southern District of West Virginia, the West Virginia bar, and the Pennsylvania bar.

During his career, Frank has worked with a number of esteemed judges: Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals Judge M. Blane Michael, district judges Charles H. Haden II and previously John T. Copenhaver, Jr. Frank is also a permanent member of the Fourth Circuit Judicial Conference.

Frank has contributed volunteer service to the American Bankruptcy Institute for many years. He served most recently as the coordinating editor for the ABI Journal, focusing on the "Problems in the Code" column.

Even with all of those accolades, Frank knows and understands the value of hard work because he is a West Virginian through and through, and that is just what we do.

The Federal bench that serves West Virginia needs judges who are thoughtful, hard-working, and have good judgment. Frank fits that role. Frank brings such a great level of experience to the bench. I can safely say I am pleased that President Trump has nominated him to be a U.S. district court judge on the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of West Virginia. I think we all will be served well by Frank's service.

Thank you.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

#### TRUMP ADMINISTRATION

Mr. MURPHY. Mr. President, the most sacred, the most important, and the most profound responsibility that a President of the United States has is to keep Americans safe. Everything else that we care about—the citizens of this great Nation, the best Nation in the planet—matters very little if our physical safety and the physical safety of our families and our loved ones aren't assured. That is job No. 1 for the President of the United States.

I believe the President has likely committed offenses that are worthy of impeachment, and I think it is likely that information is going to emerge from the House's inquiry that would present Republicans with clear evidence that the President's abuse of office has been serious.

Obviously, we need to wait for the articles of impeachment to arrive in the Senate—if they do arrive—before any of us decide our vote on removal, but the publicly stipulated facts already surrounding the President's shadow foreign policy designed not to advance the national interests but his personal political interests are damning.

So far, my Republican friends have rallied to the President's side, despite public opinion moving pretty quickly against the President and in favor of an inquiry in the House. So today I want to use my time on the floor to ask just a simple question of my Re-

publican colleagues. I want to ask what the costs are to the physical safety of the Nation of continuing to protect the President from the consequences of his misdeeds because as we gather in the Senate for our fall session, we are watching American national security policy go completely and fully off the rails. Our global reputation and our credibility have been shattered to pieces, and no one knows whether they can be reassembled. Our Nation's defenses have never been weaker. Our enemies are gathering strength by the day. Fear of American power is waning. Our global system of alliances is falling apart. Our friends are turning away from America because we are a demonstrably unreliable partner, and those friends may never come back.

Right now, before our eyes, American power is in a free fall, and our Nation's safety is at risk. American citizens are looking to this place for leadership, but when they lift up the hood looking for steely-eyed patriots, all they are finding are blind partisans. What is the cost, I ask my colleagues, of letting America continue to slide into global irrelevancy? How many American lives are going to be ultimately lost because we sat on the sidelines and we let American influence fade as our President becomes a toxic commodity, the butt of jokes, and an international pariah? What must it take for this body to put aside party and come together to salvage our shrinking American security?

I want to take a few moments—a few more than I normally take when I come down to the floor—to take my colleagues on a tour of the world right now just so everybody understands how dangerous the situation has gotten, to understand just how broad the scope of our foreign policy dysfunction is right now, because just maybe—maybe—if you see the crisis all in one map, all in one summary, my colleagues might wake up to the magnitude of this emergency.

It is hard to start anywhere but in the Ukraine. The power of the American executive branch has no equal. No individual in the world has more power than Donald Trump has today. That power comes with responsibility and guardrails.

The one firm promise that a President must make to those he governs is to use the powers of the Oval Office for the national interest and not for his personal or financial interest. But it is now clear beyond a reasonable doubt after all this testimony—much of it from Republicans before the House—that President Trump has turned our support for Ukraine into a personal poker chip to be cashed in in order to get Ukraine to help him destroy his political rivals. This just isn't allowed in a democracy.

The damage done by Trump's corruption of the Ukraine relationship is far beyond this broken covenant with the American people. He pulled essential assistance to Ukraine just when their

new President needed U.S. support the most. Trump has weakened Ukraine dramatically by pulling them into this mess, and Russia is the beneficiary. Make no mistake—Putin has won for the time being, and those fighting for democracy have lost for the time being, sold out by their fair-weather American friends who are more interested in destroying the President's political opponents than supporting Ukraine.

Now, other nations on Russia's and China's periphery, wondering whether to simply acquiesce to the bullying dominance of their neighbors or put up a fight for independence, now are less likely to do the latter, knowing that the United States is there only to help if their nation fulfills our President's personal requests.

The world's eyes this week are down here in Syria, where the President has engaged in one of the worst, most abominable acts of double-cross in the history of the American Presidency. We convinced the Kurdish military to fight ISIS forces for us. We convinced them to take down their defense against a potential Turkish invasion because we promised to protect them. And then, out of nowhere, a week and a half ago, Trump stabbed the Kurds in the back. He announced the pullback of our forces and invited by press release the Turkish army to march into Syria and destroy our ally, the Kurds, whom today he has denigrated by telling the world that they are not actually as good fighters as everybody says they are.

The damage to our Nation's security done by this one single act is almost too comprehensive to list in one speech. ISIS detainees have escaped their jail cells and are now likely reconstituting and possibly readying new attacks against the United States. They can plot without fear of interruption because the Kurds have ended their fight against ISIS to try to survive this Turkish offensive.

Now, in addition to ISIS, Russia, the Syrian regime, and the Iranians all grew stronger in Syria overnight as we stood down, and they will quickly reap the benefits of Trump's abandonment of the Kurds. It is a nightmare in Syria today, and it is going to get much worse before it gets better.

Let's move down to China, where President-for-life Xi Jinping has been steadily consolidating power, building a model of totalitarian control that denies basic human rights to its population of 1.4 billion. The United States has watched from the sidelines as China not only conducts cultural genocide against its Muslim population in its own country but also grows its global clout and exports its model and technology of repression around the world.

China's military continues to gain in strength and push their unlawful territorial claims further in the Western Pacific. We do virtually nothing. China's Belt and Road Initiative is forging

linkages across the globe, building foundations for long-term technological, economic, and strategic dominance.

The United States stands on the sidelines under the Trump administration. The sum total of our bilateral interactions thus far with China has been a bungled, disastrous, job-killing trade war. It is a trade war that really only made sense in Trump's campaign speeches but never had a chance to succeed without the help of other potential partners that the President never tried to enlist.

Every single day, Trump is losing the trade war badly. Our trade deficit with China isn't going down; it is going up. The tariffs on Chinese imports could cost middle-class American consumers \$1,000 a year, and our economy has slowed down and is on its way to potentially losing 300,000 jobs because of the trade war. It is an unmitigated economic disaster for our Nation, and this nightmare, like all the others, seems to be getting worse. All the while, China forges ahead to corner the market on next-generation technologies like 5G, drones, and artificial intelligence, leaving America and American companies potentially shut out of these markets.

Nowhere has China's heavyhanded repression been more apparent than right here in Hong Kong. Yet again, we have been totally absent. In Hong Kong, brave, pro-democracy protesters should be seen as America's best friends—Chinese people who are risking everything to fight for basic freedoms in an increasingly totalitarian state. There is no better way to undermine China's unfair trade model than to promote the rights of its consumers and its citizens. But Trump promised the Chinese regime that he would offer no support to the Hong Kong protesters—an unconscionable promise that he has kept—while China runs circles around him on trade talks.

Staying in Asia, let's run right up the road to the most immediate and terrifying existential threat: a nuclear-armed homicidal dictator with the capacity and willingness to nuke us and our allies in the region—North Korea. A lot of ink has been spilled on the pomp and circumstance of Trump's summits and the ongoing love affair that he claims with Kim Jong Un, but what has actually been the result of nearly 3 years of Trump's North Korean diplomacy besides stroking his ego? The answer is nothing. Kim continues to fire missiles into the Sea of Japan. He continues to quietly build his nuclear stockpile. Even the freeze on nuclear long-range missile tests is temporary, and the North Koreans are warning they might resume that at the end of the year.

Meanwhile, we abandoned the South Koreans, we canceled our joint military exercises, and we nearly withdrew our troops entirely. Kim got international recognition and essentially a free pass to keep building his arsenal and making it more deadly while we

weakened all of our regional alliances. America and the world are dramatically less safe right now.

All over the world, in fact, dictators and would-be dictators are racking up stunning records of human rights abuses right now because they know that under President Trump, America will really raise no issue and no protests.

Go down here to the Philippines, for instance, where there have been 20,000 people who have vanished in the extrajudicial massacres by President Duterte. No protests from the United States, and 20,000 have vanished.

Thousands of political dissidents are being locked up in places like Turkey, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia—these are supposed U.S. allies—and have no one to speak for them because America now doesn't do anything about civil rights or human rights. We have vanished from the human rights playing field.

In Saudi Arabia, in fact, their leadership felt so emboldened by Trump's embrace of brutal strongmen that they kidnapped an American resident who was critical of the Saudi regime. They chopped him to pieces, and then they got rid of the body parts. The dots are piling up in the Middle East. The response from the United States to Jamal Khashoggi's murder was a visit to Riyadh by the American Secretary of State for a smiling photo op to make sure that every foreign leader in every corner of the world recognized that human rights abuses would be forgiven pretty immediately by this new American regime.

Elsewhere in the Middle East—I don't know that I can just keep on piling up more and more dots, but elsewhere in the Middle East, things are falling apart fast due mostly to the Trump administration's incompetence. It started with this nonsensical fracture of relations between Saudi Arabia and another key U.S. Gulf ally, Qatar. It was the kind of disruption that, frankly, would normally be papered over and fixed by a competent U.S. administration probably in days, but 3 years later, the two countries—Saudi Arabia and Qatar—still aren't talking, largely because we did nothing to fix it. Making matters worse, Saudi Arabia and their one remaining friend in the region, UAE, aren't getting along now either.

Under Trump, the war in Yemen began to rage out of control. Tens of thousands of innocent Yemenis, many of them little children, died needlessly as Trump piled more weapons and more bombs into the war and did really nothing to try to find a peace agreement between the parties who for a year had been begging the United States to step in and play a traditional role as mediator. The conflict has raged on for so long due to Trump's unwillingness to use America's diplomatic muscle that events on the ground have become so chaotic that the Saudis and the Emiratis have now parted ways. Now, with the Qataris,

the Saudis, and the Emiratis all on different wavelengths, the potential for proxy wars between these wealthy nations could get much worse all over the Middle East.

In Iran, right next door, the campaign of blind escalation and provocation has been disastrous. Every one of the President's national security advisors told him to stay in the Iran nuclear agreement and focus his energies on addressing Iran's other malevolent behavior in the region, like their ballistic missile program or their support for terrorist organizations. Trump ignored all his advisors, like he has ignored all the rest of the counsel he has received on major foreign policy matters, and he canceled the agreement and implemented a series of unilateral sanctions against Iran. He coordinated with absolutely no one.

Now, Iran, feeling cornered but also not feeling particularly vulnerable, given the fact that America couldn't recruit any of our friends to our new anti-Iran campaign, hit back against oil tankers, American drones, and Saudi pipelines. We now seem perpetually on the precipice of war with Iran. Meanwhile, they have restarted parts of their shuttered nuclear program. We haven't convinced a single nation to help us build new sanctions, and there is absolutely no chance that Trump is going to secure a better deal than the JCPOA before he leaves office in just over a year.

Iran is a bigger menace than before he took office. They just scored another major victory with Trump's abandonment of the Kurds, and an anti-Iran coalition that the United States methodically built under Barack Obama has vanished, perhaps never again to be resurrected.

In this very red region of the world right now, the only leader who has been happy with Trump's dangerous, bizarre, nonstrategy on Iran has been Benjamin Netanyahu, but he may not be in power much longer, and his alliance with Trump has left his successor a frightening legacy. Under Trump's watch, the two-state solution in Israel—a longtime bipartisan lynchpin of American policy in the Middle East—has effectively fallen apart.

Trump has allowed Israel to take steps that make a future Palestinian state almost impossible. For 3 years, he has put his son-in-law—whose only experience was using his father's money to buy real estate—in charge of brokering peace between Israel and the Palestinians. It was a joke. Everybody knew it, but since Trump was President, everybody had to play along. Now there is no peace plan. There was never going to be a peace plan, and the chances for one are almost nonexistent after 3 years of the Trump administration.

Down in Libya, Trump admittedly inherited a pretty miserable situation, but somehow, like everything else, he managed to make it worse. The country has been fractured for years, as

rival militias with a host of foreign patrons have been fighting a civil war that has created a vacuum that has been filled in by extremists and a migrant crisis that continues to expand. But instead of doing the hard work of diplomacy to try to get the warring parties back to the table, instead, Trump threw his support—his personal support—behind General Haftar, upending years of American diplomacy and endorsing Haftar's plan to try to take Tripoli by force. As a result, the fighting there continues, peace talks are failing, and the humanitarian crisis grows by the day.

One of the consequences of this Trump death spiral in Libya and the Middle East is that the economic and political refugees continue to flow into Europe, which simply isn't politically ready to accept this rate of inflow, and by slashing the number of refugees allowed in the United States from over 100,000 to 18,000, we have communicated to the Europeans that we have no interest in helping. Just like everything else, Trump has made the assimilation of the Muslim immigrants into Europe even harder by serving as a model for racist, xenophobic demagogues, and rightwing nationalist political parties who want to bring Trump's form of political nativism into Europe.

Nationalist political parties are on the rise all across the West, and Trump is absolutely central to their development. He gravitates not toward Angela Merkel, whose courageous leadership has held the EU together through all these crises, but he hews to Viktor Orban, who has stoked the embers of nationalism to take Hungary down a dark path. Trump and his nationalist compatriots weaponize these fears of immigration and cultural change to justify really bad policies—from labeling journalists as enemies of the state to putting kids in cages. And when rightwing groups try to copy Trump's success and deploy his playbook in countries all throughout Europe, he doesn't stand up and object, as the leader of the free world should; he offers a wink and a nod or sometimes a warm embrace.

Trump doesn't stop there in his deliberate attempts to undermine European democracy. He has carried out a systematic, purposeful campaign to weaken the European Union and NATO. By now, we have all grown used to Trump's attacks on globalism, but it is still pretty extraordinary that we have a President who just doesn't attack the specific institutions he loathes, such as the U.N., the EU, or NATO; he levies regular broadsides against the entire concept of global cooperation. He sees multilateralism as a weakness, and his cheerleading of Britain out the door of the EU and his constant attacks on NATO, even to the point of wondering out loud if the United States would defend allies if attacked risks taking down the entire post-World War II order. That would be a disaster for us and a gift to countries like China, Rus-

sia, India, and nonstate actors such as al-Qaida and ISIS.

When it comes to our relations with Europe, Trump reserves his greatest multilateral animus for global attempts to address climate change. The Paris Agreement wasn't even a binding commitment on the United States, but Trump felt so strongly that climate change was a Chinese-perpetrated hoax—unwind that riddle for me—that he pulled us out of the agreement in a big, grand, festive ceremony at the White House.

Global climate catastrophe is coming if we don't do anything. In fact, it is already here. The story of Syria's descent into madness can partially be told through the tale of successive global warming-connected droughts that forced farmers into overcrowded cities that weren't ready for those population surges. Trump's hostility to climate action is one of his most unforgivable global legacies, and the next President may not have enough time or political capital to make up the ground we have lost on climate change, especially with European partners.

Speaking of failure to capitalize on opportunities, let's spin the globe back to our own hemisphere, where, according to the script, things couldn't be going much worse. Here in the Americas everything that Trump has touched thus far has fallen apart, and the United States is weaker regionally than ever before.

Trump's nativism is his political calling card, but his own policies seem to encourage more migration to the United States, not less of it. President Trump's decision to cut off foreign assistance to Central American countries because they weren't doing enough to stop migration is lunacy. President Obama's program of investing in Central American security so that less of their citizens felt the need to flee to America was beginning to work, and Trump gave it all away simply to provide fuel to his domestic political agenda.

Further south, U.S.-Venezuela policy is one of the few times Trump's Presidency stood up to a dictator. Unfortunately, because Trump doesn't know how to do foreign policy, he botched that intervention too. It has been really embarrassing to watch this administration repeatedly and wrongly claim that the Maduro regime is on the verge of collapse. They did it in January, when Juan Guaido swore himself in as interim President. They did it again in February, when they said deploying American aid along the border would trigger the regime's fall, and they did it again in April in a lead-up to a military uprising that went nowhere. The White House has engaged in tough talk only to see Maduro's hold on power endure.

Trump played all his cards on this crisis right in the first few days, like a nervous teenager. Now we are left sanctioning the Venezuelan people and rec-

ognizing a leader of the country who isn't really the leader of that country and probably isn't going to be the leader of that country. It is yet another failure that makes us look weak and foolish. We make a play and can't back it up. It is hard to be scared of the United States when everything we try to do goes wrong.

Let's move back over to the African Continent for a moment. Now, as a candidate, Trump repeatedly stoked fears of the Ebola epidemic in West Africa, tweeting that the United States "must immediately stop all flights from EBOLA infected countries or the plague will start to spread inside our borders!" Of course, this didn't make any sense, and it doesn't make any sense now. We have known for ages that travel bans aren't actually the best way to deal with an outbreak of disease, but since he has become President, the Trump administration has asked Congress to rescind \$252 million that had been put aside to deal with the virus. He ousted the NSC's top bio-defense expert and repeatedly sought to slash funding for global health programs. Sadly, Trump's default response to epidemics and barriers of exclusion, defunding preventive measures, and opting to feed panic rather than deploy an orderly response that is driven by science and led by scientists only hurts our ability to control outbreaks that are present today and in the future.

Finally, Denmark. Trump managed to even screw up our relationship with Denmark, which many of us would have thought was impossible. Out of an episode of "The Simpsons," Trump canceled a diplomatic meeting with Denmark's leader because they wouldn't agree to sell us Greenland. It sounds funny, but it is an example of the relatively small things compared to the big world screw-ups that happen every day that only get a few days of media attention.

Denmark is one of our strongest NATO allies. At the height of the war in Afghanistan, they had one of the highest numbers of troops per capita fighting alongside us. They hold the key to blocking a Russian gas pipeline that could avoid Ukraine, damaging their economy, and come into Europe, but now we have managed to even make Denmark an adversary. I know it sounds implausible, but this is just the tip of the iceberg. It is a policy massacre everywhere. The world is on fire, and in most places Trump is one of the arsonists. Meanwhile, who is benefiting? Across the board, America's enemies and our competitors are rubbing their hands with delight as we score own goal after own goal. Putin, Xi, Erdogan, Kim, the hard-liners in Iran, could not have scripted a better opportunity to gain power for themselves at our expense.

I say that Trump's foreign policy is a global joke, but calling what he does policy is probably unfair. He doesn't really care to take the time to learn about the world. He doesn't read his

briefings. He makes it up day by day, with his personal political priorities, his jealousies, and his headline addiction guiding his decisions rather than anything connected to our actual national security interests. Our foreign policy is in complete, utter, total meltdown, and it is time for all of us to face facts.

You can't impeach a President because you disagree with their policies, but this is beyond a policy disagreement. This is a President who has compromised our Nation's integrity and our credibility, who has put in jeopardy the safety of our citizens, especially as ISIS breaks out of detainment and looks to regroup to threaten America again in Syria.

These kinds of things—the perversion of the powers of the Presidency—are not allowed in a democracy. Our refusal to accept this kind of behavior is what separates us from all the tin-pot dictatorships around the world.

I hope, eventually, my Republican colleagues see this, but I also want my Republican colleagues who spend their time thinking of themselves as bulwarks of national security to see the damage, much of it irreparable, that Trump is doing to our position in the world. Why continue to offer him this unconditional protection from an impeachment inquiry if the cost of his staying in office is the shattering of our reputation around the world?

Why continue to defend him if his actions everywhere are causing the world to fall apart—and it is falling apart in every part of the globe. Everything this administration has touched has gotten worse. The scariest part is that this President and this administration still have 14 more months to do even more damage.

I yield the floor.

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

#### TURKEY AND SYRIA

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. President, let me take you back to December 2016. We are all getting ready for Christmas. It is a month after President Trump is elected. He will not take his office for another month after that, but in Turkey they are reeling from a coup attempt that happened in October. Hundreds of people were killed—chaos. Turkish President Erdogan overreacted, locking up hundreds of thousands of people, including one of our pastors, Pastor Andrew Brunson, and implementing martial law, which was kept in place for years after that. Rapidly changing the Constitution, he has transitioned himself from a President duly elected and operating a free democracy that has been Turkey to radically changing the direction of the country in the future. A long-term NATO ally is going through real turmoil.

In October that coup happened, and all the transition was occurring, but by December, as I mentioned before, they were rocked again. On December 17, 2016, a bus was stopped at a red light

near a campus in Turkey when a car bomb exploded, killing members of the Turkish military. Thirteen people were killed and 55 were wounded in that blast. Forty-eight of those killed and wounded were off-duty military personnel, most of them privates and corporals.

The same day, at another location in a different part of that community, still in Turkey, there was a soccer stadium attack that happened. In that attack, 44 people died and more than 150 people were wounded. Three days later—actually two days after that, December 19, 2016, the Russian Ambassador to Turkey was assassinated in Ankara while he was giving a public speech.

Most Americans don't know this because we were getting ready for Christmas, and we were watching the transition of President Obama to President Trump. There was a lot of chaos that was happening in that region at that time. I happened to be in Turkey when all of that was going on, meeting with Turkish officials, trying to negotiate for the release of Andrew Brunson, working toward our ongoing relationship and trying to figure out what direction Turkey was going to go because they have been a longstanding ally to the United States and a NATO partner, but they certainly were not acting like it in 2016, and now, in 2019, they are certainly not acting like it.

The car bombs I mentioned and the terrorist actions that happened might surprise some Americans to know weren't led by ISIS fighters fighting in Turkey. The innocents who were killed that day were killed by Kurdish terrorists—Kurdish folks who had been listed in the U.S. listing of official terrorist organizations, a group called the Kurdistan Workers Party, or the PKK—the abbreviation in that language. The PKK has been listed as a terror organization by the United States for decades.

Let me give some context. In the course of the dialogue I have heard in the last couple of weeks about the Kurds and about the Turks, everyone wants to seem to oversimplify this issue. Everyone wants to say who are the good guys and the bad guys, and they are missing the point in the history of what is happening in this region.

The Kurds have 25 million people. It is the fourth largest ethnic group in the Middle East. They live mostly in Turkey, Iraq, Syria, Iran, and Armenia. They have all different political parties, and they have all different backgrounds. For over a century, they have worked to have their own nation.

Interestingly enough, after World War I and all of the changes on the map after World War I, the Kurds were promised their own country, the country of Kurdistan, because they were a minority population for a long time in that region. So they worked for and pressed for their own country during that time period. Yet, when the bound-

aries were drawn at the end of World War I, after they had been promised that they would have their homeland, instead, a larger Turkey was drawn, and the Kurds were just listed as a minority group inside of Turkey.

They face incredible persecution within Turkey. They are not allowed to call themselves Kurds. Instead, they are called mountain Turks in that area. They are not allowed to wear certain garb, and they are not allowed to practice their customs. They are oppressed in every area. They have worked for a long time and have asked: How can we have a free people's area?

For the Kurds who live in northern Iraq, it is one of the freest areas in all of the Middle East. They have the freedom of religion and a free capitalist economy. It is a thriving economy in northern Iraq. They have democratically led elections, and they worked with us to overthrow Saddam Hussein after Saddam Hussein gassed thousands of Kurds to death in that Kurdish region of Iraq. They were gassed by Saddam Hussein. They have been forced out of their homes and have been isolated, and for decades, they have worked to have a free country.

In 2017, the Kurds who were in northern Iraq had their own referendum to be able to establish their own place. They made a bold move and said: The world will not acknowledge us; so we will acknowledge ourselves. So, in a bold referendum in September of 2017, 90 percent of the Kurds voted to form their own country out of northern Iraq. Quickly, the Iraqi Government moved into that zone and squashed them.

In the middle of the conflict that we have talked about before with ISIS, ISIS moved into areas in Syria and in Iraq and pressed in against the Kurds in order to attack them. When the Kurds were not able to establish their homeland, ISIS was determined to establish its own caliphate and its own land by beheading people and by murdering thousands of people. As they moved into the Kurdish area, the Turks on the other side of the border simply watched the refugees flee across the border, for ISIS was not killing Turks. It was killing Kurds, and they didn't care. The Turks would handle the refugees as long as ISIS was doing their bidding in Syria.

You see, this is a complicated issue for us because there are sections of the Kurds that have fought for democracy for decades. Many of them have been doing it in exactly the right way—in having referendums, in organizing and working with U.N. officials, and in working with the countries around them to demographically establish an area in which they would be free to live and to worship and to function in a capitalist economy. That has been the Kurds' desire. There has also been an offshoot of the Kurds, called the PKK, that has for decades carried out car bombs and attacks, many of them in Turkey, where hundreds of civilians have been killed.



President Erdogan, of Turkey, has determined that all Kurds are the same and has ruthlessly lashed out at them. Now, I think about how we operated in Afghanistan and how differently the United States really thought about military warfare. As the Taliban and al-Qaida rose up in Afghanistan, we engaged in the most Surgical way we possibly could with violent Taliban members and with members of al-Qaida and took the battle specifically to them while we established a friendship and a longstanding partnership with the Afghan people.

We don't look at all Afghans in the same way, in some blanket declaration. We understand that there is a violent faction that has to be addressed for world peace and that there are others who just want their children to grow up and go to school.

We have engaged them in a way that is very different than how Turkey is currently engaging them in the Turkish population. As the battle raged in Syria and finished out with the civil war in Syria and the fight with ISIS off the Kurdish areas, everyone knew, when this calmed down, that at some future date, the Turks would start going after the Kurds. It has been known for years. In fact, in 2016, when I was in Ankara, Turkey, at that point in December, and watched all of this chaos occur, that was the ongoing dialogue among Turkish leaders at that time—that they were going to go after the Kurds. Over and over, this has been the repetitive statement to the administration and, quite frankly, to the previous administration.

In a series of phone calls in which President Erdogan talked to President Trump and said, "We are crossing the border and going in," it left President Trump in a very difficult situation. Does he leave our American men and women—a very small number—in a forward operating base to sit there while tanks roll by and the battle rages between the Kurds and the Turks? Do we use them as some kind of tool to try to stop this? Do we get out of harm's way?

Secretary Esper just made a statement last weekend that was very clear: The Turks didn't ask permission to cross the border. They said, "We are coming," and notified us in advance so that if we wanted to move out of the way, we could, but either way, they were coming.

We have moved our forces into other areas and combined them into bases. Just recently, within the last couple of days, when the Turks started getting closer to our combined forces in northern Syria, we responded by putting up Apache helicopters and F-16s in order to fly by the Turks and say: Don't you dare come near American forces. At the same time, we are trying to do everything that we can and should in order to stop the bloodshed between two allies.

I have been amazed at the number of people who have stepped up and said that President Trump is to blame for

all that is happening with the Kurdish people and the Turks. They have ignored the basic history of what has happened in that region for a very long time—for over a century—with regard to the ongoing battle between the Kurds and the Turks. We should do everything we can to push back on this, because, for a large group of the Kurdish population, especially those in northern Iraq, they have been very close allies and friends and tenacious fighters against Saddam Hussein. They left their own place of safety in northern Iraq to help us fight the fight in Syria—to protect other Kurdish people, yes, but also to help protect the entire world from the ruthless nature of ISIS.

We should engage and do what we can to help stop the bloodshed. As I mentioned before, when we moved into Afghanistan, we did it as surgically as we could. When Turkey moved into the Kurdish regions, it unleashed artillery fire against civilians and pummeled homes and businesses in the Kurdish towns of people who meant them no harm as they crossed the border into Syria.

So what do we do? How do we respond in the days ahead? There are a few things I would bring up. One is the "what I wish."

I wish the administration had been more clear with Turkey and her leaders and would have said: If you do this, it is not that we will impose sanctions, but here is exactly what the sanctions will be. We need you to know it, and it is going to happen as rapidly as possible.

I wish that we would have moved all of the ISIS fighters out of the region. There are ISIS fighters who are currently imprisoned in northern Syria who are waiting to return back to their home countries, for many of them are foreign fighters from other places. Yet their home countries are not willing to take them back. So they are currently imprisoned in Syria. I wish, before the Turks crossed the border, that we would have done more to help to protect those prisoners and make sure they didn't get freed. Many of them did get freed, and the entire region will suffer the consequences of some very bad actors who will get back to the battlefield again because of that.

I wish there had actually been coordination. Clearly, the administration did not coordinate with the State Department, the Department of Defense, and with other Kurdish leaders with regard to what was happening in the region and did not make sure we were securing those fighters and preparing for that moment. Instead, it was a rapid transition and a hurried process to move Americans out of harm's way in between two allies who were fighting each other and to try to shift them to other places and be able to stabilize them in those locations. There have been a lot of hurried responses that could have been done differently but were not.

The "now whats" are pretty clear, though.

President Trump has launched out and stated very clearly that there will be strong sanctions against military leaders within the Turkish Army and the key leaders in the government. He will try to put sanctions down as rapidly as possible on those individuals.

He has also announced a 50-percent steel tariff on Turkey. You may say that it is no big deal, except for the fact that steel is a major export for Turkey, and it is a punishing tariff on it as a country.

He has also started laying down additional sanctions on Turkey and has said all of the trade agreements and conversations are currently at a standstill. Turkey's economy is on the razor's edge because Erdogan has so mismanaged its economy for so many years.

We have no beef with the Turkish people, but, currently, Turkey is being led by a leader who is leading their country into economic ruin and leading their military across foreign borders to haphazardly kill civilians. We should not tolerate that, and we should engage. We should make it very clear that there will be consequences.

We should work with the U.N., as we already have started, and be more aggressive, by which, if there is someone to stand between two warring parties, it will be the U.N. peacekeepers who will do that, not American men and women who are sitting out there in a forward operating base.

We should continue to sanction Turkish banks—those banks that did business with Iran. When Iran was sanctioned, Turkey continued to do business with some of those banks. We should increase our sanctions there.

We should be extremely clear that Turkey will not get access to the F-35s. I cannot imagine how much stronger the response of the American people would be right now if it were American F-35s that were flying across the Syria-Turkey border to bomb our own allies the Kurds. We should make it very clear that there is no foreign military sales to Turkey, and we should continue to cut them off.

We have to be clear in the consequences. We have to be rapid in the response because, right now, people are dying in northern Syria. Those same families and those same individuals put their own lives on the line to stand up against ISIS, and they stood with us in multiple areas. They have a great propensity toward freedom and toward democracy, which desperately need to grow in the Middle East.

The chaos that is ensuing is the chaos of war. It is the pain of over a century of the mismanagement of this entire region. We need to stop the bloodshed first and continue to negotiate with every possible lever that we can to make sure we can bring a sense of calm to the chaos that is starting and do so with the greatest pressure on the Turks and on President Erdogan, who clearly hasn't gotten the message yet as to what the will of the American

people and this Congress really involves.

This is a changing situation. It is not simple, but it is one about which I will come back and try to inform in every way that I can. In order to bring justice to the process, I will encourage this body to smartly and quickly engage, to help impress upon the Turks to back off the bloodshed, and to bring war crimes against any Turk or any individual we can identify who is killing prisoners and attacking civilians.

I yield the floor.

**THE PRESIDING OFFICER.** The Senator from the Nebraska.

#### UNITED STATES-MEXICO-CANADA AGREEMENT

Mrs. FISCHER. Mr. President, I rise to voice my strong support for the passage of the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement, or the USMCA.

When I travel the State of Nebraska, I always hear directly from our farmers and our ag producers. Nebraska's farmers have endured some of the most challenging setbacks in recent memory. The severe flooding from last spring devastated thousands of acres of our farm and our ranch land, brought hundreds of livestock deaths, and destroyed barns, countless grain bins, hay, and critical farm equipment. This list of daunting obstacles continues to grow.

Last July, the Gering-Fort Laramie-Goshen irrigation tunnel collapsed and cut off a crucial source of surface irrigation water to the western region of our State for several weeks.

Only a few days earlier, a devastating fire broke out in a Tyson beef processing plant in Holcomb, KS. The plant processed about 6,000 head of cattle every single day. That is roughly 6 percent of the total fed cattle processing capacity in the United States.

The effects of the plant's closure rippled throughout the entire cattle industry and the beef processing chain. This is all in addition to 5 years of low commodity prices, the unfair small refinery exemptions for oil refiners, and the cloud of uncertainty over trade.

While all of these factors have caused anxiety and unpredictability, there is one solution that Nebraska's farmers, ranchers, ag producers, manufacturers, and hard-working men and women have made clear, and that is the passage of the USMCA.

Nebraska's farmers and ranchers have a different lifestyle than most people. Their patience is steadfast. They plan for the long term. They can envision how they want their land to look, not only next year but 100 years into the future. It is in their DNA, and families are fed around the world because of it.

They are optimists, but they are realists. As Secretary Perdue recently said, "they know you can't plant in August and harvest in September."

That is exactly right. Our producers have remained patient during these tough and turbulent times because they know that there is an opportunity for a better, long-term trade solution on the horizon.

The USMCA would replace the 25-year-old North American Free Trade Agreement, or NAFTA, and bring the deal into the 21st century, while fortifying our strong trading relationships with Canada and Mexico and growing critical market access for Nebraska.

The heart of Nebraska beats in the same rhythm as agriculture. It is who we are, and as the world knows that it is what we do better than anyone. So it is not hard to understand why our State needs this deal.

America's neighbors to the north and south are the destination of 44 percent of Nebraska's total exports. In 2017, Nebraska shipped \$447 million of agricultural products to Canada and a staggering \$898 million to Mexico. These exports include hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of Nebraska's high-quality corn, soybeans, ethanol, and beef.

Specifically, the USMCA maintains and strengthens those markets for corn and soybeans. It also allows U.S. beef producers to continue to grow their exports to Mexico, which have risen 800 percent since NAFTA was first ratified.

In 2018 alone, Nebraska exported over \$250 million dollars of beef to both countries.

It is important to note that the benefits of the USMCA extend far beyond our farmland. Agricultural trade between Canada and Mexico supports nearly 54,000 jobs in the State of Nebraska. According to the Nebraska Department of Agriculture, Nebraska's \$6.4 billion in agricultural exports in 2017 translated into \$8.19 billion in additional economic activity. For the good of our State and our Nation, these markets need to be protected.

The USMCA goes even further than NAFTA. It adopts labor and environmental standards that Democrats have long advocated for. It requires that 40 to 45 percent of auto content be made by workers who earn at least \$16 an hour by 2023. This will undoubtedly help close the gap in labor standards between our Nation and Mexico.

According to the U.S. Trade Representative, the deal includes new provisions to prohibit the importation of goods produced by forced labor.

The USMCA addresses violence against workers exercising their labor rights, and it ensures that migrant workers are protected under labor laws.

The deal brings labor obligations into the core of the agreement, and most importantly, it makes them fully enforceable.

On top of that, the USMCA deploys the most advanced, comprehensive set of environmental protections of any trade agreement in our Nation's history. The list of environmental protections includes first-ever articles to improve air quality, support forest management, and ensure procedures for studies on its environmental impact.

New provisions protect a variety of marine species, such as whales and sea turtles, and there are prohibitions on shark finning.

Unlike NAFTA, the USMCA provides enforcement mechanisms that will ensure that all countries not only meet but strengthen their environmental responsibilities.

Lastly, I want to point out to my Democrat colleagues the support the USMCA is receiving on both sides of the aisle.

I recently heard Tom Vilsack say this:

I think under any evaluation, from the U.S. agriculture perspective it clearly is a better deal. So, with that our hope is that it gets done, and gets done soon.

These are not the words of some Trump administration official. These are the words of President Obama's former Secretary of Agriculture.

Here is another quote from Dan Glickman:

We have a good agreement. We cannot let the perfect be the enemy of the good. This is a good deal for America and particularly a good deal for farmers at this vulnerable time.

Again, this isn't support from some Republican Member of Congress. This is support that is voiced by President Clinton's former Secretary of Agriculture.

What is more, all former Agriculture Secretaries since the Reagan administration have voiced their full support for the USMCA.

We have seen the headlines of endorsements, and one especially caught my attention. The title of a recent op-ed read: "Democrats Should Give Trump a Win on His Trade Deal with Mexico and Canada." Well, this piece wasn't composed by a conservative publication. It was penned by the editorial board of the Washington Post.

Finally, a group of 14 House Democrats sent a letter to Speaker PELOSI last July urging her to take up the USMCA for a vote.

The letter reads: "Canada and Mexico are by far our most important trading partners, and we need to restore certainty in these critical relationships that support millions of American jobs."

Both sides of the aisle agree that the USMCA is a significant win for farmers, ranchers, ag producers, and America's economy as a whole.

Nebraska's farmers and ranchers have maintained patience in these tough times. They deserve to know without a doubt that they will continue to have access to their two largest markets and closest trading partners.

As I said earlier, farmers aren't just thinking about themselves. They are planning for the future generations that will proudly carry on their life's work and continue feeding our world.

Right now, we have an opportunity to come together around a common-sense, bipartisan agreement that will benefit the American people both now and for years to come. Now it is up to Congress to deliver.

I urge Speaker PELOSI to stop needlessly delaying this vote, and I encourage all of my Democrat colleagues not



to allow politics to stand in the way of sound policy. It is time to push the USMCA over the finish line.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nebraska.

Mr. SASSE. Mr. President, first I would like to associate myself with the comments of my senior Senator about the necessity of the passage of the USMCA. The House of Representatives and the Speaker should schedule that vote immediately. There is clearly overwhelming support in both bodies for its passage.

I would also like to underscore my senior Senator's comments about the tragedy of the irrigation tunnel collapse in Nebraska and about the character of Nebraska's farmers and ranchers. They have dealt with yet another catastrophe after 81 of our 93 counties went through a state of emergency earlier this year in a flood.

I would like to just commend my senior Senator for a fine speech on a really important topic.

(The remarks of Mr. SASSE pertaining to the submission of S.J. Res. 58 are printed in today's RECORD under "Submitted Resolutions.")

Mr. SASSE. I yield back.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The measure will be received and appropriately referred.

The Senator from Maryland.

S.J. RES. 53

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I come to the floor to talk about S.J. Res. 53. We will have a chance to vote on that tomorrow. I am joined by my colleague from Maryland, Senator VAN HOLLEN, and my colleague on the Environment and Public Works Committee, Senator WHITEHOUSE from Rhode Island. I also want to thank Senator CARPER for his leadership as the senior Democrat on the Environment and Public Works Committee in regard to this resolution.

This resolution will be voted on tomorrow. It deals with the CRA—Congressional Review Act—vote in regard to the Trump administration's affordable clean energy rule. That is probably a misnomer. It is what I call the dirty powerplant rule. The CRA would repeal that so that we can go back to the Clean Power Plan that was promulgated under the Obama administration in 2015.

Let me explain what the Trump-era rule would do. First, it would repeal the Clean Power Plan that was issued in 2015. That plan had real results in it. It set limits on a powerplant's production of dangerous carbon. It made meaningful progress. The rule promulgated by President Trump's administration would repeal that and substitute it with a plan that would be a powerplant judgment in each powerplant—coal-burning only—and would not take into consideration the powerplant mix of individual States.

The previous rule allowed the States to figure out how to reach those goals. So a State could do a mix. They could start using natural gas. They could

start using renewable energy. They could meet their goals that are set with a reduction of about one-third of these dangerous carbon emissions but with local discretion on how to reach those goals.

The rule that was promulgated that I am seeking to reverse allows only efficiency per coal powerplants, does not allow the mixing of the different technologies, and prohibits the States from pursuing market-based plans.

I am going to tell you, in my region of the country, we have what is known as REGI, which is a compact to reduce carbon emissions. We do it by energizing market forces so that we can get to friendlier sources of energy, which, by the way, has helped our region not only reduce carbon emissions but create green energy jobs, which is in our interest.

Let me point out from the beginning that the powerplants are the largest stationary source of harmful carbon emissions. Why should everybody be concerned about it? We know its impact on climate change. We have seen the harmful impacts of climate change in America, from the wildfires out West to the flooding here in the East. We have seen the problems not only in our own community but throughout the world. In my own State of Maryland, we have had two 100-year floods within 20 months in Ellicott City, MD. The list goes on and on about the impact of climate change. We see the coastal line changing in our lifetime. We are seeing regular flooding. We are seeing habitable land become inhabitable. All of that is affected by our carbon emissions, and the Obama-era Clean Power Plan did something about it. The rule that we will have a chance to vote on tomorrow would do nothing about it.

We see this as a public health risk. I can't tell you how frequently I have heard from my constituents who have someone in their family who has a respiratory illness: What can we do for cleaner air? Children are staying home from school because of bad air days. Parents are missing time from work. Premature deaths. All that is impacted by clean air.

I talk frequently about the Chesapeake Bay. I am honored to represent the Chesapeake Bay region in the U.S. Senate, along with Senator VAN HOLLEN, and we treasure the work that has been done. It has been an international model of all the stakeholders coming together in order to clean up the Chesapeake Bay, and we are making tremendous progress on dealing with the sorts of pollution coming from runoff or from farming activities or development. But, quite frankly, we have not been successful in dealing with airborne pollutants that are going into the Chesapeake Bay.

In Maryland, we are a downwind State. We need a national effort here. Maryland could be doing everything right, but if the surrounding States are not, we suffer the consequences. That

is why the Clean Power Plan was so attractive in dealing with this issue, because it dealt with it with national goals. Establish how to attain them by the local governments. That is the way it should be.

Let me give the numbers. The Clean Power Plan that is repealed by the rule under the Trump administration would have reduced dangerous carbon emission by about one-third. We believe the rule that was promulgated by the Trump administration could actually increase dangerous emissions.

Let me use EPA's regulatory impact analysis. Looking at CO<sub>2</sub>—carbon dioxide—the Agency says that the Trump rule will reduce it by 0.7 percent. That is less than 1 percent. The Clean Power Plan issued by President Obama—19 percent. SO<sub>2</sub>s under Trump are 5.7 percent; under the Obama rule, 24 percent. NO<sub>x</sub> emissions under the plan that was promulgated under the Trump administration are 0.9 percent—less than 1 percent. Under the Clean Power Plan, it is 22 percent.

We really are talking about whether we are serious about dealing with dangerous carbon emissions or whether we are going to at best maintain the status quo; at worst, make things even worse.

It saddens me that my colleagues on the other side of the aisle are embracing the ACE rule, since it threatens to reverse much of the progress we have made in reducing air pollution—progress their conservationist Republican predecessors helped to spur. The Clean Air Act amendments, which established the sulfur dioxide—SO<sub>2</sub>—cap-and-trade program, were adopted in 1990. This was never a partisan issue; cap-and-trade was originally a Republican idea. George Herbert Walker Bush was President. It passed the House of Representatives by a 401-to-21 vote. It passed this body, the U.S. Senate, by an 89-to-11 vote. It has been highly successful. During George W. Bush's Presidency, the EPA determined that the SO<sub>2</sub> cap-and-trade program had a 40-1 benefit-to-cost ratio.

The Supreme Court held in *Massachusetts v. EPA* that the EPA has a responsibility to regulate these carbon emissions. So that is exactly what was done in 2015, which is now being jeopardized because of the regulation that was issued under the Trump administration.

I had a chance to serve in the State legislature. This is an affront to federalism. Innovation for green energy and jobs is prohibited under the rule that I am seeking to repeal. It is prohibited. That is why 22 States and 7 local governments have filed suit against this regulation. But we can act.

The Congressional Review Act allows us to take action in this body, and that is why I filed that so we can take action. If we allow this rule to go forward, it will delay the implementation of carbon emission reductions—delay it. If we vote for the CRA, we will be back on track.

We have already seen the U.S. leadership challenged in this area with President Trump's decision to withdraw from the Paris accord—the only nation in the world that has done so. Who has filled that void? Quite frankly, it has been China.

Do we want to cede our leadership globally to a country with a controlled government economy like China or do we want to reassert U.S. leadership? We are going to have a chance to do that tomorrow with a vote in the U.S. Senate. I urge my colleagues to support the Congressional Review Act resolution I have filed, S.J. Res. 53.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, I would like to start by thanking my friend and colleague from the State of Maryland, Senator CARDIN, for bringing this resolution to the floor of the Senate—as he said, we will be voting on it tomorrow—but also for his long-standing support and efforts in trying to protect our environment, to protect the Chesapeake Bay, and to address the urgent issue of climate change, which anybody with eyes can see is already having a devastating impact on communities throughout our country and, indeed, throughout the world.

I am also very pleased to be here with our colleague, the Senator from Rhode Island, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, who has made this such an important cause and has kept the Senate focused on this pressing issue.

As Senator CARDIN indicated, under the previous administration, under the leadership of President Obama, as a country we adopted something known as the Clean Power Plan rule. This was a historic step forward. It was a blueprint to create more good-paying jobs in the clean energy sector. In fact, we have seen a tremendous growth of those jobs in the area of solar and wind power and other jobs.

That Clean Power Plan rule, under the Obama administration, also really addressed the issue of carbon pollution in the atmosphere, beginning to reduce it significantly, to offset the damage and real costs we are already experiencing in communities from that climate change.

As Senator CARDIN said, this is an area where there are huge communities, if our country moves forward, in the area of clean energy jobs. Right now, with this new Trump administration action, we are ceding the playing field to China, which is happily seizing the initiative and moving forward and creating more and more jobs in the clean energy sector. If we don't wake up, we are going to lose that important global competition in the vital sector to China, which has established a goal of dominating the area of clean energy technologies by 2025.

Instead of building on the progress of the Obama administration, on June 19, the Trump administration decided to repeal and roll back these important

rules that have been put in place and substitute them with something that, in the worst case, actually makes the situation much worse than even before these Trump rules and, at the very least, is a huge retreat from the progress we were headed toward under the rules of the previous administration.

Let me just point out the analysis that was done by a very good organization called Resources for the Future. They looked at their analysis of this Trump proposal, which I agree with Senator CARDIN is better termed the "Trump dirty power plan," and they concluded it would do very little, if anything, to address climate change and would have an adverse air quality impact in many of our States.

Some people may recall when the Trump version of this power plan, the "dirty power plan," was released last year, people looked at the EPA's own analysis of that rule, and it showed that 1,630 of our fellow Americans would die prematurely under the Trump provisions compared to the Obama-era provisions.

So when the Trump administration released this most recent version of their amended plan back in June, they made it really difficult to put together all the data so people would not be able to connect the dots in many of these areas, but Senator CARDIN has presented some of the results of this. I want to emphasize those and put them in somewhat different terms, which is, what does the Trump rule accomplish compared to the Obama rule on some of these issues?

So with respect to carbon dioxide emissions, the Trump rule would reduce carbon dioxide emissions, carbon pollution emissions, by 2.7 percent of what the Obama administration would have done—2.7 percent of what the rule they are replacing would have done.

With respect to sulfur dioxide, the Trump plan reduces sulfur dioxide emissions by only 1.9 percent of what the Obama administration's rule would have done.

When it comes to nitrous oxide, the Trump proposal, the Trump plan, reduces nitrous oxide by only 2.5 percent compared to what the Obama provisions would have done.

If you take all of these together, you can see it is a really anemic proposal that takes us way backward compared to where we were. That is why I support Senator CARDIN's efforts on the floor, with the vote tomorrow, to say no, to say no to the Trump administration's efforts to roll back the progress on clean air, to roll back the progress on clean water because a lot of that pollution settles in places like the Chesapeake Bay, and to roll back progress on climate change, which we know is hitting our communities as we speak.

I want to give some additional Maryland examples here. The Baltimore Sun ran a story a little while back about the staggering costs that Maryland and

Marylanders would have to pay to build seawalls to protect communities from sea level rise. A study from the Institute for Governance & Sustainable Development found that in the coming decades, seawalls to protect thousands of homes, businesses, and farmlands from Ocean City to Baltimore City will cost more than \$27 billion—\$27 billion.

We have also seen dramatic flooding in the city of Annapolis that is already hurting the Naval Academy. This past week, we just had a famous national boat show, and in the middle of this boat show, there was huge flooding in the city of Annapolis. The costs to the city and that community are rising rapidly and have been well-documented.

I ask my colleagues to support Senator CARDIN's motion. Let's not go backward. Let's not go backward in terms of protecting our air. Let's not go backward in terms of the battle against climate change because going backward means less good jobs in America, it means more dirty air and more asthma, and it means ceding this important area to China and others in the global economy.

I urge my colleagues to support the motion of Senator CARDIN.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. BLACKBURN). The Senator from Rhode Island.

#### UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the vote be extended until 4:30 p.m.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Seeing none, without objection, it is so ordered.

#### S.J. RES. 53

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Madam President, I am delighted to join my colleagues from Maryland and Delaware to support this resolution expressing disapproval of the Trump administration rescinding the Clean Power Plan and replacing it with its so-called affordable clean energy rule, which is a name fanciful enough to make George Orwell blush.

The first thing to understand about the so-called affordable clean energy rule is that it is a do-nothing rule, exactly as the polluters wish. EPA admits its own rule would do virtually zero to reduce carbon pollution. It requires zero emissions reductions at natural gas-fired powerplants, and it would allow coal-fired powerplants to make minor efficiency improvements and then run for longer hours. That could actually lead to an increase in carbon pollution.

This rule is designed to fool people into thinking that the Trump administration is obeying the Clean Air Act, but no one should be fooled.

From the get-go, the Trump administration made clear it didn't care about cutting carbon pollution, fighting climate change, or protecting the environment or public health. It cared about obeying the fossil fuel industry, not the law.

Within weeks of taking office, Trump's swampy Cabinet rolled out the red carpet for coal baron Bob Murray, who had an action plan for the administration. Here is Murray with Energy Secretary Perry, and look who is accompanying Murray at the meeting, our EPA Administrator, Andrew Wheeler, then Murray's lobbyist. It looks like a friendly meeting, and why wouldn't it be? Look at that, such a nice big hug. Isn't that sweet?

Murray was the major financial backer of the Trump administration, and this was his payback time. Individuals associated with Murray Energy were the largest source of donations to Donald Trump's Presidential campaign, and Murray himself chipped in a cool 300 grand for Trump's inaugural festivities. Murray was also one of the largest donors to election spending groups associated with disgraced EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt, under whose tenure this botched ACE rule began.

So what was the first item on Bob Murray's action plan? To get rid of the Clean Power Plan. Bob Murray wasn't the only one who wanted to scrap the Clean Power Plan. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the National Association of Manufacturers, two of the largest and most powerful trade associations in Washington, also asked the EPA to scrap the Clean Power Plan. That is no surprise. The independent watchdog group InfluenceMap found the chamber and NAM the two worst obstructers of climate action. They will not reveal their donors, but I believe they took lots of money from the fossil fuel industry and became its mouthpiece. They got paid, and this was the play.

The chamber and NAM were also aligned with shadowy fossil fuel industry front groups like the so-called Utility Air Regulatory Group and the American Council for Clean Coal Electricity—more Orwellian names. These groups also asked the EPA to scrap the Clean Power Plan and replace it with this toothless rule.

Is that unsavory enough? It gets worse. Guess who represented UARG, that Utility Air Regulatory Group. It was none other than fossil fuel industry stooge Bill Wehrum, who helped orchestrate a web of front groups, like UARG, which obscured and multiplied the influence of Wehrum's polluter clients—clients responsible for massive carbon pollution.

Naturally, Trump put this guy in as head of EPA's Air Office. Before Wehrum headed for the exits this summer, Murray's man Wheeler praised Wehrum for "tremendous progress" in repealing climate regulations. Pruitt to Wheeler to Wehrum—this is rank fossil fuel crookedness in plain view.

Several of us submitted comments laying out the financial and professional connections between the Trump officials who developed this bogus rule and the fossil fuel industry that asked for it. Those comments are posted on-

line and in the Federal Register. I urge you to have a look. Also available online is a report I did with Senator CARPER detailing Wehrum's industry ties and conflicts of interest. Median.com/@senwhitehouse will link you to all of this.

The crony capture of EPA is not the only problem with the rule. The industry is so greedy and its hacks are so clumsy that they don't bother to align the rule with the scientific and economic evidence.

In court, Agency actions will be found to be arbitrary and capricious—and therefore invalid—if they are not the product of reasoned decision making.

In this case, it is clear that the EPA ignored the science, ignored the economics, and produced exactly what the fossil fuel industry told it to do: a do-nothing rule that took good care of the coal and natural gas industries.

What does the science tell us? According to the world's best scientific report, if we reduce carbon pollution by roughly half by around 2030 and reach net zero emissions sometime around the middle of the century, we stand a chance to hold the global average temperature increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius.

Our own best scientists warn that if we don't limit carbon pollution, we will be hit with economic losses in the hundreds of billions of dollars per year by the end of the century. Legions of economists, investment banks, asset managers, central banks, credit rating agencies, and other experts warn of serious economic risks from climate upheaval. Here is a summary of just some of these warnings, which I have delivered to every colleague in the Senate. That, too, can be found on that Medium page.

Pruitt, Wehrum, and Wheeler ignored all of this for their do-nothing rule. The only voice that mattered was the polluter industry that they came from and will go back to in an oil-greased revolving door. This ACE rule is the exact opposite of reasoned decision making. But that was never the point. The fix was in. Even a bogus rule that courts throw out buys this crooked and corrupting industry time—time to keep polluting, time to burn through reserves, and time to use its political muscle to fend off action here in the Senate. If you are in the fiddling business and fiddle for money, fiddling while Rome burns is a fine economic proposition for you.

The Supreme Court has ruled that greenhouse gases are pollutants under the Clean Air Act. The EPA has found that greenhouse gases from powerplants endanger human health and welfare. Those determinations mean the EPA must limit carbon pollution, consistent with the law. This masquerade of a rule fails to do this, so it must be replaced with something effective, as a matter of law.

I ask colleagues to think carefully about their vote on this resolution. Do you want to endorse this record of ob-

vious industry capture? Do you want to side with this corrupting industry over your own constituents' health and safety? Do you want to go on record ignoring all the warnings from the Bank of England, from Freddie Mac, from Nobel Prize-winning economists, and from hundreds of our own government's most knowledgeable experts?

The fossil fuel industry—its voice full of money, as F. Scott Fitzgerald might say—has drowned out the voices of everyone else for too long here. But you can't shout down the laws of physics. You can't shout down the laws of biology, chemistry, and economics. Those laws will have their way, and we have been well warned. So, please, let's turn the corner to a brighter day where decency rules, not industry political thuggery; a brighter day where facts and science matter more than dark money and paid-for denial; and a brighter day where we don't give our grandchildren daily cause for shame. It is time to wake up, and this vote is a chance to do so.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arkansas.

HONG KONG

Mr. COTTON. Madam President, as we speak, the brave people of Hong Kong are demonstrating to protect their freedoms from the Chinese Communist Party in Beijing. Chinese state TV has portrayed these millions of demonstrators as violent anarchists and separatists, but these Hongkongers are merely insisting that China live up to the promises it made to Hong Kong and the United Kingdom—promises China made as binding conditions of the transfer of sovereignty from London to Beijing.

The Chinese Government promised that Hong Kong would enjoy a high degree of autonomy, including many of the freedoms that Beijing denies to its more than 1 billion subjects on the mainland, but, as the world has learned through bitter experience, the Chinese Communist Party's promises aren't worth the paper they are written on. Slowly but surely, Beijing has chipped away at the independence it promised Hong Kong—disappearing citizens guilty of wrongthink, undermining Hong Kong's longstanding political and judicial systems, and issuing menacing threats of military intervention to crush the demonstrations.

Most Americans are rightly outraged by China's brutal crackdown in Hong Kong. Daryl Morey is one of them. He is the general manager of the Houston Rockets. Just a few days ago, he tweeted a simple and justified phrase: "Fight for freedom. Stand with Hong Kong."

Morey probably knew his words would offend the Chinese Communist Party, but he was also violating a different party line—that of his own league, the NBA. For daring to speak up about Hong Kong, Morey was disavowed by his team, his fellow executives, and some of the most famous

athletes in the NBA. That is because he was threatening not only the powers that be in China but the cash cow that China represents for American business, including professional basketball. China's government may be red, but its money is green, and plenty of people are willing to cash its checks, no matter the cost.

The league's biggest star, LeBron James, said that Morey's support for Hong Kong was "misinformed" and "not educated." He reportedly called for Morey to be punished. Perhaps it is no coincidence that LeBron James stands to make billions of dollars from the Chinese market—not only from a higher NBA salary cap, shoe sales, and Nike ads, but also from his own movie company. Often known as King James, perhaps "Chairman LeBron" would be a better honorific today.

Joe Tsai, owner of the Brooklyn Nets, called the protest in Hong Kong a separatist movement that was trying to carve up Chinese territories like colonial powers or Imperial Japan. Perhaps it is no coincidence that Mr. Tsai is an executive at Alibaba, a Chinese company that developed a Communist propaganda app that hijacked cell phones of anyone who downloaded it.

At a Wizards game last week, security confiscated a protest sign that said simply "Google Uighurs," referring to the native people of western China whose culture and religion are being exterminated by the Chinese Communist Party. That sign was not confiscated in China by the secret police but right here in America's national capital.

Steve Kerr, the head coach of the Golden State Warriors, drew a moral equivalence between Communist China and the United States. "None of us are perfect," he said, "and we all have different issues we need to get to."

Nobody is perfect. That is what he says of an authoritarian regime that starved, shot, or beat to death 50 million of its own people on a forced march to modernity and a regime that runs a network of concentration camps in its western provinces and harvests the organs of political prisoners for its own pampered elite. Nobody is perfect, indeed.

This is craven and greedy behavior, and it stands in stark contrast to how America has historically used sports to promote our interests and our aspirations, from the triumph of Black Olympians in Hitler's Germany to the Miracle on Ice against the Soviet Union. Even our diplomatic opening to China happened in part through sports with ping-pong diplomacy.

Today, the tables have turned. China has used sports to export its authoritarian model to our soil. So far, it has found too many willing enforcers in the NBA. But it doesn't have to be this way. Commissioner Adam Silver, after a slow start, defended Daryl Morey's right to speak his mind about Hong Kong. He said: Free expression is "what you guys stand for."

Too many American companies kowtow to China not because they love its government but because of the tremendous pressure that government can exert on their operations. But the NBA is in a unique position. Beijing can ban an airline, or it can ban a hotel that lists Taiwan as a country in its online drop-down menu, and the Chinese people can use a different airline, or they can use a different hotel, but there is only one NBA. Beijing can't create another one.

And here is the rub: There are more than 500 million basketball fans in China. More people in China follow the NBA than there are people in the United States. No doubt Beijing has some leverage over the NBA, as it does over all businesses, but the NBA has a lot of leverage over Beijing. Is Beijing really going to ban the entire league, as they have done with the Houston Rockets, at the risk of alienating more than 500 million people who follow the league and the resultant public backlash that could create? So instead of acting as a bullhorn for Communist propaganda in America, the NBA could be a beacon of freedom in China. They could dare China to shut them out.

Let me urge all of these NBA executives and players who say they care about social justice, don't just speak out when the stakes are low for you personally or when the cause is popular among your friends; speak out now when the stakes are deadly high for millions of Hongkongers and more than a billion Chinese, including so many of your fans.

LeBron James tweeted not long ago: "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." Live out that principle consistently. There are a million Uighurs in concentration camps yearning to hear a champion who speaks out on their behalf, particularly since the NBA runs an elite training academy in proximity to those camps.

Steve Kerr never held back on expressing his opinion about our President. That is fine. That is his right as an American. But how about some outrage for the authoritarian regime in Beijing?

Joe Tsai was born in Taiwan. His fellow Taiwanese live in constant fear of meddling, attack, and subjugation by the Chinese Communist party. Are they separatists for wanting to maintain their way of life? Speak out proudly on behalf of your homeland about the true nature of the government in Beijing.

I realize it is a hard thing to ask any person. No doubt this is a harder path than the path many in the NBA are traveling at present. It would require sacrifice, and it would certainly invite the wrath of the Chinese Communist Party. But if the league used its unique leverage for freedom, millions of ordinary Chinese would surely notice, despite an army of Chinese Communist censors arrayed against them.

The NBA didn't pick this fight. It probably prefers to avoid this fight.

The Chinese Communist Party wants this fight. So the choice isn't to fight or not; it is to win or lose. And perhaps alone among American businesses, the NBA has a shot to win against Beijing. And in any fight against Communists, there can only be one strategy and one policy: victory.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Delaware.

Mr. CARPER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for 5 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

S.J. RES. 53

Mr. CARPER. Madam President, I rise in support of the Congressional Review Act resolution of disapproval of the Trump administration's so-called affordable clean energy rule, which really should be called President Trump's dirty power plan or unclean energy rule.

To be clear, I believe that the Environmental Protection Agency has an urgent moral responsibility and economic imperative to reduce the global warming pollution from powerplants, which are by far the largest stationary source of carbon pollution on our planet. I also believe that those of us in Congress must act now to protect the American people from the dangers posed by poor environmental quality and the worsening impact of climate change. That is why we are holding this vote tomorrow—to send a clear message to this administration and to take a strong stand for the American people.

Truth be told, I am not typically a staunch supporter of the Congressional Review Act. It is a blunt procedural tool, and I prefer to embrace a better way to express our disapproval of the administration's failure to address one of our Nation's major sources of carbon pollution.

For Senate Democrats, this vote is about holding supporters of this shortsighted, irresponsible policy accountable for surrendering America's global leadership and for jeopardizing the health of our planet and the promise of our children's future.

Nearly 4 years ago, the Clean Power Plan set the first Federal targets to reduce carbon emissions from our Nation's powerplants. The Clean Power Plan set meaningful but achievable carbon limits for fossil fuel powerplants and gave flexibility and time for States to meet those standards. It was not a one-size-fits-all deal. It provided quite a bit of time and flexibility for States to try to figure out how they would go about meeting those standards in their own way. This administration's alternative to the Clean Power Plan—President Trump's unclean power plan—allows States to decide whether to regulate harmful emissions. At the same time, this rule will, at best, have essentially no impact on powerplant carbon emissions—no impact.

Let me say that again. At best, this rule will have essentially no impact on powerplant carbon emissions. At worst, it will increase emissions by extending these plants' lifespans and allow them to burn more coal each year.

Today our Nation's utilities are already on track to meet and surpass the emission reduction goals set by the Clean Power Plan way ahead of schedule. All the while, the vast majority of Americans are now enjoying lower utility bills, not higher utility bills, and more than 3 million Americans went to work today in the clean energy sector, which includes jobs in renewable energy generation and energy efficiency. Yes, you heard that right. There are more than 3 million jobs in the clean energy sector today.

The President's dirty power plan does not build on this progress. It does not promote affordable or clean energy. What it actually does is attempt to scam or fool the American people into believing that the EPA is doing something to stem the tide of climate change while taking us backward—backward, not forward.

By repealing and replacing the Clean Power Plan, the Trump administration is ensuring that our country forgoes a vast number of economic opportunities of the clean energy future. Instead of building on the Obama-Biden administration's forward-looking environmental standards, the Trump administration, with its dirty power plan, is refusing to see or accept that the global economy's transition to clean energy sources is already underway. Instead of mustering the political courage to lead on the issue of climate change, yet again, the Trump administration is walking away from the bold action we need to address this climate crisis.

This failure of leadership will make it all the more likely that the worsening storms and flooding, record-setting rainfall, and volatile temperatures we are already seeing all over the world will continue to be our reality.

So where do our Republican colleagues stand? Tomorrow we will find out.

Sadly, for too many of them, President Trump's dirty power plan is a sufficient plan to address carbon pollution. In truth, it is not. It is a failure of vision and a retreat from global leadership, and it is time for Congress—Democrats, Republicans, and maybe an Independent or two—to hold this administration accountable.

That is why Senate Democrats are calling for a vote on this issue. Our government needs to provide the right market signals today if we are going to create a clean energy tomorrow, and we need to take a stand for a stronger economy. We need to lead the world to act on climate change, and we need to take a stand for clean air and environmental quality.

We can do that tomorrow by standing together against President Trump's dirty power plan, and I hope a number

of colleagues will join us by doing just that.

It is a false statement to say we can't have cleaner air, less threat to our planet, and create jobs. We can do both, and we need to.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

Mr. SULLIVAN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to complete my remarks prior to the vote for Ambassador Barrett.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. HYDE-SMITH). Without objection, it is so ordered.

NOMINATION OF BARBARA MCCONNELL BARRETT

Mr. SULLIVAN. Madam President, a few weeks ago, I had an opportunity to come to the floor and talk about the outstanding public service of some senior U.S. marines: Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis, Secretary of Homeland Security General Kelly, and the outgoing Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, Gen. Joseph Dunford. The service these gentlemen have given to their Nation includes almost 140 years of combined Active-Duty military service in the Marine Corps but also at the highest levels of government at a critical time in our Nation's history.

Men and women who are committed to the service of our Nation are continuing to follow in the footsteps of these three very impressive U.S. Marine generals who brought the Marine Corps ethos of honor, courage, and commitment to our Nation's military and to their work in government. We should all be thankful for that.

At the end of September, I had the privilege of attending the swearing-in of a member of the new team that President Trump is putting together in terms of national security, GEN Mark Milley, as the next Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, now in the position succeeding General Dunford. At the Department of Defense, we have Secretary Esper, Secretary McCarthy, the Secretary of the Army, and General Milley who have all served their country with honor and will continue to do so.

Now we are considering the nomination of Ambassador Barbara Barrett to be the next Secretary of the Air Force. In fact, we are going to be voting on her nomination in a few moments.

I want to talk about her experience and her qualifications, which are diverse and very impressive. I think she is extremely well qualified to be the next Secretary of the U.S. Air Force.

Let me provide just a bit about her background and exceptional experience. She is a private pilot, astronaut, Deputy Federal Aviation Administrator, past CEO of the Aerospace Corporation, past member of the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services and Defense Business Board. Importantly, she is a former U.S. Ambassador to Finland. That is a very impressive resume, a very impressive background.

I first met Ambassador Barrett in 2015 when I had the opportunity to

share dinner with her and the late Senator John McCain. Prior to that dinner, I was talking to Senator John McCain, and he told me how highly he thought of Ambassador Barrett. I can state—and I think many of my Senate colleagues will agree—that there can be no better an endorsement than that from Senator McCain.

Ambassador Barrett will be taking over from Dr. Heather Wilson, who did an outstanding job as Secretary of the Air Force. Secretary Wilson's leadership was critical in rebuilding the U.S. Air Force, which had shrunk to its smallest level ever just a few years ago since the Air Force was created in the late 1940s. We had to start bringing it back. She did a great job on that, and I know Ambassador Barrett is committed to continuing that rebuilding of this critically important branch of our military.

Another important element of Ambassador Barrett's experience is that as a former U.S. Ambassador to Finland, she understands the strategic importance of the Arctic and what is happening in terms of great power competition in the Arctic.

I want to spend a few minutes talking about that critically important part of the world and the role of my State, the great State of Alaska. Dating back to Gen. Billy Mitchell, who is the father of the U.S. Air Force, Alaska has been recognized as what General Mitchell said in an Armed Services Committee hearing; that it is "the most strategic place in the world." Former Secretary Wilson and our current Chief of the Staff of the Air Force, General Goldfein, have been leaders at the Department of Defense, raising awareness of the critical importance of the Arctic in defending America's national security interests. Additionally, Congress has been playing a role in highlighting this in our national security priorities in the National Defense Authorization Act over the last 3 years and so, too, has the Trump administration.

Secretary Pompeo, our Secretary of State, was recently in Finland for the Arctic Council, all the nations of the Arctic, and he had this to say:

We are entering a new age of strategic engagement in the Arctic, complete with new threats to the Arctic and its real estate. . . . This is America's moment to stand up as an Arctic nation and for the Arctic's future.

That was our Secretary of State a few months ago in Finland.

America is an Arctic nation because of Alaska. I like to say that my State constitutes three pillars of America's military might. We are the cornerstone of missile defense for the entire Nation—the missile fields and the radar sites that protect Washington, DC, New York, Miami, Rhode Island, L.A. They are all based in the great State of Alaska. We are the hub of air combat power for the Arctic in the Asia-Pacific.

In the next 2 years, we are going to have over 100 fifth-generation fighters, F-35s and F-22s, stationed in Alaska.

No place on Earth will have that kind of combat power with those critical fifth-generation supersonic stealth fighters. We have a platform for expeditionary forces—some of our best trained military units—to be able to deploy on a moment's notice because we are so strategically located to other countries.

Because of Alaska's strategic role in defending America's interests in the Arctic and the Indo-Pacific, the Congress and this administration, together in a bipartisan way, have been building up each of these three critical pillars of our Nation's military might and defenses.

Let me give just one example. The Senate has been pushing lately to ensure that the air combat capability we have in Alaska is matched by air refueling capacity. The last three National Defense Authorization Acts passed by this body and signed by the President have established criteria that the Air Force needs to use when deciding where to base the next modern aerial refueling tanker platform, the KC-46.

Ambassador Barrett and I have discussed this issue and what the Air Force is going to do with regard to stationing of the KC-46 outside of the continental United States, and I look forward to working with her on the advice already provided to the administration from the Congress on where those military assets need to be based.

As the current Secretary of Defense, Mark Esper, said in his confirmation hearing, having KC-46s colocated with 100 fifth-generation fighters would give America "extreme strategic reach" anywhere in the world. I believe Ambassador Barrett also understands this, and she clearly understands the importance of the Arctic as a former ambassador to Finland.

So, as I mentioned at the outset, we need good people and highly qualified people to serve at the highest levels of our military, civilian and uniformed, and I believe Ambassador Barrett is certainly one of those individuals.

I was heartened to see that my colleagues in the Senate gave a very strong bipartisan cloture vote, 84 to 7, which shows very strong support for her nomination. I know we are going to vote in a couple of minutes. I encourage my colleagues to vote yes for her nomination to be the next U.S. Secretary of the Air Force.

I yield the floor.

#### VOTE ON BARRETT NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. BLACKBURN). Under the previous order, all postcloture time has expired.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Barrett nomination?

Mr. SULLIVAN. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. ALEXANDER) and the Senator from Georgia (Mr. ISAKSON).

Further, if present and voting, the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. ALEXANDER) would have voted "yea."

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Colorado (Mr. BENNET), the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. BOOKER), the Senator from California (Ms. HARRIS), the Senator from Minnesota (Ms. KLOBUCHAR), the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS), and the Senator from Massachusetts (Ms. WARREN) are necessarily absent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 85, nays 7, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 319 Ex.]

#### YEAS—85

Baldwin	Graham	Reed
Barrasso	Grassley	Risch
Blackburn	Hassan	Roberts
Blunt	Hawley	Romney
Boozman	Heinrich	Rosen
Braun	Hirono	Rounds
Brown	Hoeven	Rubio
Burr	Hyde-Smith	Sasse
Cantwell	Inhofe	Schatz
Capito	Johnson	Schumer
Cardin	Jones	Scott (FL)
Carper	Kaine	Scott (SC)
Casey	Kennedy	Shaheen
Cassidy	King	Shelby
Collins	Lankford	Sinema
Coons	Leahy	Stabenow
Cornyn	Lee	Sullivan
Cortez Masto	Manchin	Tester
Cotton	McConnell	Thune
Cramer	McSally	Tillis
Crapo	Menendez	Toomey
Cruz	Moran	Udall
Daines	Murkowski	Van Hollen
Durbin	Murphy	Warner
Enzi	Murray	Whitehouse
Ernst	Paul	Wicker
Feinstein	Perdue	Young
Fischer	Peters	
Gardner	Portman	

#### NAYS—7

Blumenthal	Markey	Wyden
Duckworth	Merkley	
Gillibrand	Smith	

#### NOT VOTING—8

Alexander	Harris	Sanders
Bennet	Isakson	Warren
Booker	Klobuchar	

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kentucky.

Mr. PAUL. I ask unanimous consent that the subsequent votes be 10 minutes.

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

#### EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the next nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Frank William Volk, of West Virginia, to be United States District Judge for the Southern District of West Virginia.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Volk nomination?

Mr. ROUNDS. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. ALEXANDER) and the Senator from Georgia (Mr. ISAKSON).

Further, if present and voting, the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. ALEXANDER) would have voted "yea."

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Colorado (Mr. BENNET), the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. BOOKER), the Senator from California (Ms. HARRIS), the Senator from Minnesota (Ms. KLOBUCHAR), the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS), and the Senator from Massachusetts (Ms. WARREN) are necessarily absent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 92, nays 0, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 320 Ex.]

#### YEAS—92

Baldwin	Gillibrand	Portman
Barrasso	Graham	Reed
Blackburn	Grassley	Risch
Blumenthal	Hassan	Roberts
Blunt	Hawley	Romney
Boozman	Heinrich	Rosen
Braun	Hirono	Rounds
Brown	Hoeven	Rubio
Burr	Hyde-Smith	Sasse
Cantwell	Inhofe	Schatz
Capito	Johnson	Schumer
Cardin	Jones	Scott (FL)
Carper	Kaine	Scott (SC)
Casey	Kennedy	Shaheen
Cassidy	King	Shelby
Collins	Lankford	Sinema
Coons	Leahy	Smith
Cornyn	Lee	Stabenow
Cortez Masto	Manchin	Sullivan
Cotton	Markey	Tester
Cramer	McConnell	Thune
Crapo	McSally	Tillis
Cruz	Menendez	Toomey
Daines	Merkley	Udall
Duckworth	Moran	Van Hollen
Durbin	Murkowski	Warner
Enzi	Murphy	Whitehouse
Ernst	Murray	Wicker
Feinstein	Paul	Wyden
Fischer	Perdue	Young
Gardner	Peters	

#### NOT VOTING—8

Alexander	Harris	Sanders
Bennet	Isakson	Warren
Booker	Klobuchar	

The nomination was confirmed.

#### EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the next nomination.

The legislative clerk read nomination of Charles R. Eskridge III, of Texas, to be United States District Judge for the Southern District of Texas.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Eskridge nomination?

Mr. JOHNSON. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?