

relief program for fishermen. Huge progress. Hugely important. Just the way the farmers were getting this kind of relief with regard to trade and markets that have been destroyed by the pandemic, the Secretary of Agriculture undertook a new program for the farmers of the sea, for the fishermen who are being negatively impacted the same way that our farmers on the land were.

This is an issue that I raised with the Secretary on the importance of moving forward, continuing that, and to be honest, there didn't seem to be a lot of interest. I was kind of shocked, but there didn't seem to be a lot of interest, and I was concerned. I am concerned.

Similarly, this progress we made with regard to the Tongass, access to the largest national forest in the country that is under USDA management—something Alaskans have been working on in a bipartisan way for 25 years. There didn't seem to be a lot of interest from the Secretary on that either.

So these are two issues hugely important to my State, hugely important to my constituents, hugely important to try to get Alaska out of a really deep recession where a lot of families are worried. And I got the sense that the Secretary just wasn't that interested. I really hope I am wrong. I really hope I am wrong.

So I plan on trying to work with him. You know, he had a strong, very strong bipartisan vote, but every now and then, if you really think the people you represent are not going to be given a lot of attention when they need it, it becomes a harder vote. It becomes a harder vote. He obviously has got strong bipartisan support, but I sure hope that when he becomes Secretary of Agriculture, he cares as much about the farmers of the sea, where we have made progress on, as he does about farmers on the land. I didn't see that in my meeting with him and I hope I am wrong and that is why I voted the way I did.

I also voted the way I did as it relates to this issue of access to the Tongass. Again, it is a huge issue to my State, a very bipartisan issue for my State. And, again, I hope that the Secretary and his team look at it as something that can help the economy of Alaska while protecting our environment, which, of course, we care about.

But these are the reasons that I voted the way I did, and I hope that my concerns are going to be proved to be unfounded. I am going to continue to advocate for my constituents in the way that I think is going to be very important as we try and get through these challenging times, particularly the Alaska Tongass.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

NOMINATION OF XAVIER BECERRA

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. President, today, the HELP Committee considered the nomination of Xavier Becerra,

our former House colleague, to head the Department of Health and Human Services, and tomorrow the Finance Committee will take their turn at examining his record.

It is hard to think of a nominee more notorious for actively seeking out ways to undermine religious freedom and our religious liberty. His contempt for those whose beliefs differ from his own is well documented, and, in many cases, his positions on those issues are far more radical than those held by the majority in his own party.

He supports abortion up to the moment of birth, and, in 2003, actively opposed the partial-birth abortion ban. He cosponsored legislation that would have forced religious employers to provide insurance that covers the morning-after pill, in spite of their mainstream and sincerely held religious beliefs. Bear in mind I said the legislation would have forced—not an option—forced religious employers to provide insurance that covered the morning-after pill.

In fact, Mr. Becerra has been so antagonistic toward fundamental constitutional principles that you could almost forget he doesn't have the public health experience most Americans would expect the Secretary of Health and Human Services to possess. In fact, he has no meaningful experience in healthcare at all—zero, none, not in public health or large-scale logistical operations or in any other area that might be helpful as we navigate our way out of a global pandemic. That is right. He has no healthcare experience.

This lack of experience, combined with his desire to destroy those who disagree with him, places him among the most unqualified and dangerous nominees ever to come before the Senate for consideration, and I urge my colleagues to join me in opposing his confirmation.

BIDEN ADMINISTRATION

Mr. President, I wish that we could write off this nomination as an anomaly, but we can't. It is part of a pattern of behavior on the left that has destabilized our already fragile political discourse and convinced the American people that the Biden administration will prioritize their radical liberal agenda above the rights of the people they were elected to serve.

I have to tell you, I hear about this every single day as I am talking with Tennesseans. Since the earliest days of the Republic, our Union has managed to survive because of the people's willingness to return to our founding principles—those first principles upon which we stand.

However much that they disagreed, they knew that they were stronger united than they were divided. So they would come together in the public square. They would have robust, respectful debate. They would agree to disagree, but they respected the fact that they lived in a free country, and they could do this without fear of persecution, without fear of being ostracized, and without fear of losing a job.

Today, Americans are looking for that same commitment to unity. Oh, they heard about it during the inaugural address. Unity—we are going to work for unity. But what has happened is a cord of panic and fear has been struck in their hearts as they see Executive order after Executive order and as they see Executive orders that are preferencing other countries and not the U.S.A. And as they hear from the left words that are, We are not looking for unity; what we are looking for is you to submit to our agenda, conform to our way of doing things. What they are doing is leaving no room for discussion, even on issues of international importance.

For decades, the various schools of thought represented in this Chamber have advocated for different approaches to foreign relations. Some revere international bodies and sweeping multilateral agreements, and others approach these constructs with caution, prioritizing national sovereignty over surface-level diplomacy.

When former President Trump formally withdrew from the Paris climate accords in 2019, economists, business owners, and budget watchdogs all breathed a sigh of relief because they knew that adherence to the Paris climate accords would put the United States at a competitive disadvantage. This wasn't a partisan debate, mind you; this was U.S.-based companies—U.S.-based companies that were saying thank you for withdrawing because adhering to this, when other countries that are our competitors will not adhere, puts us at a disadvantage.

Now, with the climate accords, by 2035, we would have seen hundreds of thousands of people lose their jobs, household electric bills go up as much as 20 percent, and an aggregate GDP free fall of \$2½ trillion. That is the cost. That is the cost of my way or the highway. That is the cost of putting other countries and their agenda ahead of us, the cost of their noncompliance.

Fast-forward to a little over a year later, and the Biden administration has thrown us back into the accords and back into that predicted economic free fall.

This week, I worked with my colleague Senator DAINES to introduce two pieces of legislation that will hopefully do a little bit of damage control on that issue.

The first is a bill that would prohibit taxpayer dollars from being used to rejoin the Paris Agreement. It makes sense. The reason it does is you are taking jobs away from U.S. employers. You are causing employees to become former employees or the unemployed. So it makes sense. If you want to do this, don't use taxpayer dollars. Don't make people pay for things that are going to take away their jobs.

The second is a resolution that would call on President Biden to submit the Paris Agreement to the Senate for approval. It makes sense. Where are treaties to come? Here. If you want unity,

send things to the Senate. If you are proud of the step you are taking, send it to the Senate. Let there be a vote of the people's representatives. Let there be discussion. Do we fear discussion? Do we fear debate? Are we so given to the cancel culture that we just say it is our way or the highway?

I would note that submitting these types of agreements for consideration is a bare minimum standard set out in the Constitution, and there is no legitimate reason anyone in this Chamber should object to that. They should welcome respectful, robust debate.

I think we can all agree that this oversight duty is an important one, and I would ask my colleagues to join me in letting the administration know we are not going to abandon it simply because it would make things more convenient for them.

Freedom and preserving freedom are not always convenient. It takes a lot of hard work. It takes this body doing its job. It doesn't take "my way or the highway" Executive orders coming out of the White House.

On Inauguration Day, President Biden promised unity: all for it, wanted to see it, going to work for it—nice words. But so far he has done nothing but hide behind those Executive orders and force through policies that even members of his own party object to.

In Tennessee, I have talked to many who have, for most of their lives, been Democrats, and they are stunned—indeed, they are very concerned—about this authoritarian approach to running the country. Sign an Executive order and be done with it, hearing that the Speaker of the House has a few people who can vote proxy for people, seeing all this fencing around the Capitol causes Tennesseans to say: What in the world is going on up there? This is not how we are supposed to act.

And I will tell you, to my friends across the aisle, one day this tactic is going to backfire on the millions of Americans who are standing up. They are contacting us. They are speaking out. They are having buyer's remorse. It will be something that will backfire because this is not the way we should be running our country.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MARKEY). The Senator from Iowa.

(The remarks of Mr. GRASSLEY pertaining to the introduction of S. 391 are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

Mr. GRASSLEY. I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

The Senator from Texas.

TEXAS

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, my State is no stranger to severe weather.

In the past few years, we have experienced the devastation of major hurricanes, tropical storms, and tornadoes. But last week brought something entirely new in the form of extreme weather—winter storms, prolonged subfreezing temperatures, and treacherous roadways across the entire State. And unlike, for example, the State of Massachusetts, where that may not be entirely uncommon, we are not used to that subzero freezing weather.

Our State was not prepared, I think it is clear to say, correct to say, for these low temperatures or the devastating impact they would have on our critical infrastructure.

Frozen natural gas wells and wind turbines, among other issues, led to widespread power outages, and millions of Texans were left without a way to keep their family warm throughout the historic low temperatures.

Compounding matters even further, some 12 million Texans faced water disruptions due to the lasting power outages and frozen or broken water lines. Cities across the State issued boil notices, and folks whose taps are still dry resorted to boiling snow as their only option for drinking water or perhaps even to flush the toilets.

The weather created incredibly dangerous conditions for many across the State, especially our most vulnerable citizens. We know of nearly 80 Texans who have died due to this extreme weather, and that number is likely to climb in the days ahead.

These widespread outages will prompt a necessary investigation into the high level of generation failures, as well as the overall security and reliability of our energy grid. We have a lot of work to do to ensure that these deadly mass outages never occur again—no matter what Mother Nature sends our way. There is no reason for millions of people in one of the most energy-rich places in the world to be left without reliable power.

Senator CRUZ and I sent a letter to President Biden urging him to grant Governor Abbott's request for an emergency disaster declaration, and I appreciate the President's quick action to ensure our State could receive the full range of Federal resources to respond to this crisis.

I also worked with the Governor and the Department of Energy to secure an emergency order allowing Texas power generators to increase production, and I appreciate the fact that that, too, was quickly approved.

In times of crisis there is no red team and no blue team, and I want to thank every person who has supported the response to this crisis so far, whether they are Texans or not. I know more will be needed in the days and weeks ahead, and I want to assure the folks back home that I am listening, I am working, and I am here to help any way that I can. And I know that I speak for the entire Texas delegation.

I know there are still many without water and electricity, and I want to as-

sure them that you are the Nation's priority. But in the face of hardship—and, as I started my remarks, we have been through a lot over the last few years—I am always in awe of the way Texans show up and help one another—neighbors helping neighbors. We have seen countless inspiring stories in the past, and this disaster is no exception.

There are stories like that of Ken Everly, an 82-year-old Air Force veteran from Grande Prairie. Mr. Everly is on hospice care. He relies on a breathing machine to keep him alive and a special air mattress that prevents bedsores to keep him comfortable. When his home lost power, Mr. Everly was in serious danger of losing his life. The breathing machine cut off, and the air mattress deflated, leaving him struggling to breathe on an iron bed frame.

His son-in-law Nate pleaded for help on Facebook, and within hours help arrived. Nate said: "I don't know where it came from, but a generator showed up." Thanks to the generosity of a stranger, Mr. Everly once again had his breathing machine operating, a comfortable mattress, and heat in his home.

The best part of that story, though, is that it is not unique. In ways big and small, we have seen other examples of neighbors going out of their way to help one another.

Jeep drivers in North Texas teamed up to offer free rides to and from work for healthcare workers and first responders. Restaurants across the State offered free food to folks without power. And countless Texans shared offers on social media to deliver warm meals, bottles of water, and a range of other supplies to those in need.

One of the big issues that folks back home have faced is a lack of safe drinking water, a need Houston-area breweries stepped up to fill. The breweries already had a supply of clean water on hand for their brewing process, and they spread the word to their communities: Come by with a container, and we will give you some clean water. These breweries collectively donated thousands of gallons of clean drinking water completely free of charge.

Across Texas, churches, schools, nonprofits, community centers, and local organizations opened their doors as warming centers. One of those warming centers is operated by Houston's most beloved furniture store owner, known as "Mattress Mack." Dating back to Hurricane Katrina in 2005, Mack has opened the doors of his stores to provide food and shelter to those impacted by extreme weather. Over the last several days, Gallery Furniture, his furniture business, has been open around the clock for Texans to stay as long as they need, whether it is an hour for a hot meal or for several nights.

These stories warm my heart, and they are a reminder of the strength and generosity of Texans and an encouraging reminder of the endless amount of goodwill that still exists in the world. The outpouring of love exemplifies a quote that I heard some time ago