

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I move to proceed to legislative session. The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 123.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The bill clerk read the nomination of Orelia Eleta Merchant, of New York, to be United States District Judge for the Eastern District of New York.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The bill clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 123, Orelia Eleta Merchant, of New York, to be United States District Judge for the Eastern District of New York.

Charles E. Schumer, Richard J. Durbin, Brian Schatz, John W. Hickenlooper, Margaret Wood Hassan, Gary C. Peters, Mark Kelly, Jack Reed, Tammy Duckworth, Christopher Murphy, Sheldon Whitehouse, Catherine Cortez Masto, Mazie Hirono, Benjamin L. Cardin, Jeanne Shaheen, Tammy Baldwin, Angus S. King, Jr., Alex Padilla, Robert Menendez, Michael F. Bennet.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I move to proceed to legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

Mr. SCHUMER. Finally, I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum calls for cloture motions filed today, April 26, be waived.

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

RECOGNIZING THE IMPORTANCE OF THE 70TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE SIGNING OF THE MUTUAL DEFENSE TREATY BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA ON OCTOBER 1, 1953

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the Senate proceed to S. Res. 175, submitted earlier today.

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

The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The bill clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 175) recognizing the importance of the 70th anniversary of the signing of the mutual defense treaty between the United States and the Republic of Korea on October 1, 1953.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Mr. SCHUMER. I ask unanimous consent the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, and that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

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

The resolution (S. Res. 175) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

(The resolution, with its preamble, is printed in today's RECORD under "Submitted Resolutions.")

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, tomorrow, it will be a great honor of the House and Senate to welcome President Yoon of the Republic of Korea to the U.S. Capitol.

Ahead of President Yoon's visit, Leader MCCONNELL, Chair MENENDEZ, Ranking Member RISCH, and I wish to welcome him through a bipartisan resolution reaffirming the strong support that exists for the U.S.-Korean relationship. Seventy years of this partnership have made both our nations safer, more prosperous, and more intertwined than ever. Today, millions of Americans know and love Korean music, Korean cinema, Korean food, and Korean goods and products. K-pop now goes viral in our country, and for many Americans their favorite movies are not in English but in Korean.

The Korean-American community embodies what the American dream has always been about: coming to our country and building something of yourself, building strong families who enrich our communities and make our Nation more prosperous. New York is proud to have one of the largest and most dynamic Korean communities anywhere in the country, and I have been proud to fight for them here in the Senate. They are a wonderful addition to New York, and the more Koreans there are in New York the better we are going to be.

And make no mistake, the United States and the Republic of Korea need each other more than ever. As we continue to compete with China, the Republic of Korea is one of our closest partners. And as we confront a belligerent North Korea, we must work with the Republic of Korea for our mutual safety.

I also want to applaud President Yoon for beginning the process to revitalize his nation's relationship with Japan. When we work together, we can make real strides to ensure security and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific. Again, I thank my colleagues for working with me on this resolution. We thank President Yoon for coming to the Capitol.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nevada.

EQUAL RIGHTS AMENDMENT

Ms. CORTEZ MASTO. Mr. President, first of all, I have to thank my colleagues, Senator CARDIN along with Senator MURKOWSKI, for bringing S.J. Res. 4 that we will be voting on tomorrow. We need the Equal Rights Amendment today more than ever.

What we have been seeing across the country, the far-right using every opportunity they can to roll back women's rights. We are seeing this happen in real time with access to abortion care, and we know it won't stop there.

So it is shameful that in 2023 there are so many extremists who want to make women second-class citizens, but that is why we need a constitutional amendment to protect women from discrimination and guarantee their equality under the law.

Few States understand this better than my home State of Nevada. Nevada put the Equal Rights Amendment back on the table when it became the first State in the modern era to ratify the ERA in 2017.

Nevadans stood up and made it clear that our State believes men and women should have equal legal rights. And they didn't stop there. In 2022, Nevada adopted the most comprehensive ERA in the country in its State constitution, putting protections in place to ensure equal rights for all.

Over and over again, Nevadans have led the charge for equality and women's rights at both the State and the Federal level. Now, since Nevada kicked off the push in recent years to ratify the ERA federally, we now have the 38 States we need to codify the Equal Rights Amendment in the U.S. Constitution. The only thing that is stopping us is a deadline Congress made up in 1972 that was already extended once. That is why we must vote to remove this deadline and adopt the Equal Rights Amendment into our Constitution because, quite honestly, there is too much at stake and to let an arbitrary time limit hold women's rights hostage is just wrong.

So with that, along with my colleagues here this afternoon, I, too, urge the adoption tomorrow of bipartisan S.J. Res. 4.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I am so proud to be here with my colleagues today—Senator CORTEZ MASTO and all of our colleagues and with our leaders Senator CARDIN and Senator MURKOWSKI—on this bipartisan resolution that is, frankly, long overdue.

You know, there is a sign you often see at rallies for reproductive rights. A woman my age or older will often be holding it, and it reads something like this: "I can't believe we are still fighting for this crap." Now, it usually has a different word on it than "crap."

As I stand here on the Senate floor in the Year of Our Lord 2023, I can't believe we are still fighting for equal

rights for women under our American Constitution. We are 100 years out from when the Equal Rights Amendment was first introduced in 1923—a full century, 100 years—since it was first introduced. And a lot of things have changed since 1923, for sure. Women are CEOs and astronauts, professional athletes and chemistry professors, Governors and a Vice President of the United States. A quarter of the Members of this Chamber are women—not nearly enough, but we are getting there. Yet, still, 100 years later, women are not guaranteed equal legal protections, equal legal rights under our Constitution. That needed to change in 1923, and it certainly needs to change 100 years later in 2023.

Michigan was ready for change back in 1972. That is when my State ratified the ERA. A Congresswoman from Michigan helped lead the way. Congresswoman Martha Griffiths of Detroit was the first woman in history to serve on the House Ways and Means Committee.

In 1970, she filed a discharge petition to send the legislation to the full House of Representatives for consideration. It passed, only to die in the Senate. We have heard that story before. But Representative Griffiths was undaunted. She introduced an amended version. The House and Senate both passed it, and it was sent to the States for ratification in 1972.

Congresswoman Griffiths later served as Michigan's first elected Lieutenant Governor and became known as the Mother of the ERA. Congresswoman Griffiths, sadly, didn't live to see her amendment written into the Constitution.

But there is no doubt we need it today, even more than we did in 1972. Women in this country are watching our reproductive freedoms be dismantled. The Dobbs decision attempts to ban the abortion pill, and harsh abortion restrictions in States have left women in this country with fewer freedoms than our mothers and even our grandmothers enjoyed.

The ERA is really simple. It simply says:

Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex.

Equal rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex. That is it.

And this resolution is equally simple, the one before us. All it would do is remove an arbitrary deadline that was included when this was passed in Congress, preventing the ERA from being ratified.

The ERA is simple, but its protections would be profound. It would protect all people, regardless of sex, from discrimination. It would defend against the rollback of our fundamental rights and freedoms.

Congresswoman Martha Griffiths, from Michigan, passed it. The States ratified it. Now we just need to add it

to our Constitution. Our daughters and our granddaughters can't wait another 100 years. They deserve equality now.

So I hope colleagues would join with us to pass this resolution and finally ensure all people are equal under our laws.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Mr. CARDIN. I want to thank Senator STABENOW for her leadership in the Senate and in our community on these issues. I serve with her and Senator CORTEZ MASTO on the Finance Committee, and I see the duo there fighting for removing a lot of the discrimination we have in our healthcare system—again, that women are discriminated against. Both of these Senators do a great job being here, protecting the rights.

But it is so important that we have in our toolbox the constitutional amendment to help us in fighting discrimination so that we have a fairer playing field in the courts to protect the rights of women. So I thank her.

We are also joined by Senator KLOBUCHAR. We were elected at the same time to the U.S. Senate. She has been an advocate on behalf of equality for all communities, but particularly her efforts on behalf of women is known throughout the Nation, and I am glad she could join us today.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I rise to join Senator CARDIN, thanking him for his leadership for so many years, as well as Senator MURKOWSKI and my colleague Senator STABENOW in support of this bipartisan resolution to remove the deadline for the ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment so we can finally enshrine equal rights for women into our Constitution.

What are people afraid of?

Minnesota ratified the ERA 50 years ago. Since then, women and men who stand with them have never rested in the fight to guarantee equality in the Constitution of the United States of America.

After a half century of overcoming seemingly insurmountable obstacles, that long-fought battle for equality has come down to an arbitrary deadline.

Passing the resolution will bring us one step closer to ratifying the ERA and finally enshrining permanent protections for women and girls in our Constitution.

The Equal Rights Amendment would make clear, once and for all, that women are guaranteed equal rights under the U.S. Constitution.

The core of the amendment is only 24 words long, guaranteeing that "[e]quality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex."

In 1972, the amendment passed both Houses of Congress with bipartisan support. The Senate voted to send the amendment to the States by a vote of

84 to 8, with 7 not voting, and the House passed it 354 to 24. Congress initially set a 7-year deadline for the required three-fourths of States to ratify the amendment, and it later extended the deadline by 3 more years.

By the time that deadline expired, only 35 States had ratified, leaving the amendment three States short of the 38 needed. But the deadline did not stop the growing support for the ERA and women's equality. Since then, three additional States have voted to ratify the ERA, including Nevada, Illinois, and Virginia.

It is long past time that equality of women be enshrined in the Constitution.

I have been proud to join a bipartisan group of Senators in cosponsoring this resolution. This resolution is part of a long tradition of bipartisan support for the ERA. The past year has made it painfully clear that protecting equality remains fundamental to the lives of each and every American. As my colleagues have noted, the women of this country still face a gender pay gap that leaves them economically behind. Women still earn around 82 cents of every dollar a man makes, and for women of color, it is even less.

Ten months ago, we saw the Supreme Court issue a rule shredding nearly five decades of precedent protecting a woman's right to make her own healthcare decisions. Now women are at the mercy of a patchwork of State laws governing their ability to access reproductive care, leaving them with fewer rights than their moms and grandmas.

Every branch of government has a responsibility to protect people's rights, and if one branch fails to do so, the Constitution gives Congress and the people the power to step in by proposing and ratifying a new amendment.

Ratifying the ERA would affirm that sex discrimination is inconsistent with the Nation's core values of equal protection under the law.

We know that the majority of Americans are on our side—78 percent of Americans, according to the Pew Research Center—support the ERA being added to the Constitution—78 percent of Americans. We know this proposal is common sense.

This year marks the 101st anniversary of the ratification of the 19th Amendment, which granted women the right to vote, a critical milestone in our democracy. At this moment in our country's history, I am as committed as ever to fighting to ensure that all Americans are guaranteed equality under the law. Let's show the world that the United States of America is a place where equality is the law of the land.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority whip.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I thank my colleague from Minnesota, and I especially thank my colleague from Maryland. The Senator from Maryland has been working on this issue for a long time.

BEN, thank you for your leadership. I thank LISA MURKOWSKI for making it a bipartisan effort.

I have a good speech here, but I want to tell you a story. The story goes back to my graduation from law school and the first job I ever had.

I was working for the Lieutenant Governor of the State of Illinois—a man named Paul Simon, who went on to be elected to Congress and to the U.S. Senate. Simon, as the Lieutenant Governor of Illinois, presided over the Illinois State Senate. We had met one another. He said he was going to offer me a job when I graduated from law school, and lo and behold, I became parliamentarian of the Illinois State Senate. I was fresh out of law school. I skipped my graduation ceremony because I desperately needed some money to pay off some bills. I started working in Springfield, IL, as the parliamentarian of the State senate.

Simon mistakenly believed that there was a course in law school called parliamentary law. There wasn't. I had to learn it by just reading the rule book over and over again until it became familiar, but eventually I was pretty good at it. I needed to be because we had a big debate going on in Springfield, IL, in the early 1970s about something called the Equal Rights Amendment. It was different than the debate in many State capitols because there was a real confrontation. There was no party identity behind or for the Equal Rights Amendment. Some Republicans supported it, and many Democrats supported it, but there was opposition in both parties too.

What fired up the troops in that particular debate was the presence of a woman from Alton, IL, named Phyllis Schlafly, who was leading the national effort to stop the Equal Rights Amendment. I reflect on that this evening because I remember what she used to say: If you pass the Equal Rights Amendment, men and women are going to use the same bathrooms. Not only that, women are going to be forced to fight in combat in the military. They will be drafted, and they will all be fighting in the military.

I look back on those arguments now and say: Was that it? Was it really that the debate on the equality of women in America came down to those two issues?

I thought of it the other day when I went to a school that I was visiting that had a same-gender restroom. It was a single restroom, but either gender could use it. I thought, Phyllis Schlafly's dream came true in that we are sharing the same restrooms in some places. When it comes to combat in the military, many women across the United States fought for that right to do so and have served our country honorably.

But those were the arguments and the differences of the day which led to the debate and led to Illinois's not ratifying the Equal Rights Amendment in the 1970s. That didn't happen until very recently.

We had a hearing on this, as the Presiding Officer knows, in the Senate's Judiciary Committee, and I listened to the critics of the Equal Rights Amendment today. I didn't hear anything about same-sex restrooms and nothing about combat in the military, but one lady raised the prospect that if we pass the Equal Rights Amendment, it would ruin her daughter's field hockey team in high school because there may be some transgender individuals wanting to play on her daughter's team.

I thought to myself, so now it has come to that. It is no longer restrooms or combat pay; it is a question of field hockey for young ladies.

Well, I know that is an important part of their lives, and she told us as much, but when I reflect on what the reality of this amendment does, it seems that those things pale in comparison. The language of it is so expressed and so clear that most people in the United States really would be surprised to know it is not already in the Constitution: no discrimination against people on the basis of sex. Most people assume that is a fact, but it is not. We have to do something about it.

Tonight, we are seeing the Senate at its best—a bipartisan effort on the floor of the U.S. Senate to finally make this right by America. The Equal Rights Amendment is literally a century in the making, and over the years, generations of Americans have done their part to push it forward. They have marched on Washington, and they have met with Congressmen and Senators. As of 2020, they crossed a crucial threshold: the ratification of the ERA in 38 States. That is the exact number of States needed to certify it as the 28th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

So now it is time for lawmakers in Congress to do our part in supporting the ERA. We need to clear a path for equality, and this proposal—this bipartisan proposal from Senator BEN CARDIN of Maryland and Senator LISA MURKOWSKI of Alaska—is our chance to do it. It will remove the arbitrary deadline Congress imposed on the ERA ratification more than 50 years ago, and removing that deadline has never been more important.

As we learned over the past year, there is no room for uncertainty when it comes to protecting equal rights. Right now, women all across America are living with the reality that their fundamental freedoms are under attack. In the months since the disastrous Dobbs decision, millions of Americans have been robbed of their reproductive rights. Activist judges and far-right politicians have replaced the will of the people and the expertise of medical professionals with their own radical beliefs. Women living in States like Texas, Oklahoma, and most recently Florida and North Dakota have fewer rights today than their parents and grandparents did decades ago.

All of this chaos and confusion is jeopardizing the lives of women and up-

ending our healthcare system. We had another hearing today. There was testimony in that hearing by a young lady from Texas who went through an awful ordeal at the end of a pregnancy—a pregnancy which she wanted desperately. It was her first child. It would have been her first daughter, and Willow was the name she had given her. Then, late in the pregnancy, complications arose. Willow, unfortunately, couldn't be born, and the mother almost died while waiting to comply with the new Texas law on abortion.

I am going to remember that testimony for a long time.

Without ERA protections, even basic rights like reproduction are on the chopping block. We need protection against discrimination in the workplace, in the classroom, even in the courtroom. Unless women's rights are explicitly protected under the Constitution, there is nothing stopping the rightwing majority on the Court from ripping them away. That is why Congress must restore and protect women's rights in all facets of life. We can do it this week by clearing the way and finally enshrining gender equality in the Constitution.

I had the honor of presiding over a hearing on this very proposal in the Senate Judiciary Committee several weeks ago. During that hearing, we heard from a young woman whose name was Thursday Williams—a first-generation American, a board member of the ERA Coalition, and a senior at Trinity College in Hartford, CT. Ms. WILLIAMS is planning on attending law school after she graduates from college. She says she developed a passion for the law when she "fell in love with the U.S. Constitution in high school."

In her words:

What I love the most about the Constitution is how brilliantly it was designed to adapt to the changing needs of its people, and, today, we deserve a Constitution that guarantees equality regardless of sex, a Constitution that we can use as a tool to fight discrimination.

That was her testimony.

Ms. WILLIAMS concluded by asking members of the committee a question. It is a question I would like to now ask every Member of the Senate: How can we be the beacon of freedom and democracy we claim to be if we do not declare that sex discrimination contradicts the American dream?

That was Thursday Williams' question to the Senate Judiciary Committee. It is my question to the Senate on her behalf.

If we want to live up to the promise of America, we need to protect the rights of every American. Let's start with the ERA.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, first, I want to thank Senator DURBIN, the chairman of the Judiciary Committee, for his leadership on this issue but, just as importantly, for his leadership on so

many human rights and civil rights issues.

Thank you for the hearing that you conducted in the Judiciary Committee. It shed light on a lot of the ridiculous arguments that some have made against the ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment. More importantly, it showed why it is important for us to remove any ambiguity on the ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment. I also want to just acknowledge your extraordinary leadership around the world.

When there is a human rights struggle, Senator DURBIN is going to be the spokesperson for those who would otherwise not be heard. I have joined him many times in those efforts, and I am proud to be on his team. I thank him for really giving us the leadership here in the U.S. Senate and the best values of America here at home and abroad. I thank him for his leadership on this issue and on so many other issues.

I am joined by a couple of my other colleagues—first, Senator BLUMENTHAL from Connecticut. I also want to acknowledge Senator VAN HOLLEN from Maryland. Both have been real leaders in regard to the equal rights of women but also in regard to civil liberties and civil rights. Both are good friends. One I have the honor of representing the State of Maryland with, so I have seen him in action for equal rights in our State. As for the other, we have been together on the Helsinki Commission, fighting globally for human rights. So I thank them for being here.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I am so honored by that introduction and to be here on the floor with a great colleague—a champion in the House as well as now in the Senate—CHRIS VAN HOLLEN of Maryland.

I thank the senior Senator from Maryland—we are both senior Senators from our respective States—for yielding first to me. More importantly, I want to thank him for his leadership on human rights and civil rights here in the United States. He has been such a powerful advocate. But also, around the world, through the Helsinki Commission, I have had the great privilege of working with him and serving with him on that Commission, where he has put front and center the crimes against humanity committed in Ukraine as well as in other parts of the world where the rule of law, unfortunately, is lacking. So I am very, very proud to be with him on the floor today.

Like my colleague Senator DURBIN, who has been rightly lauded by Senator CARDIN for his work on rights, I rise to ask this body and all who are hearing this message to commit to making the Equal Rights Amendment the law of our land—part of the Constitution.

Outside of the right to vote, the Constitution has no mention of gender equality. It was enshrined—the right to vote—just over a century ago with the 19th Amendment, but the U.S. Con-

stitution does not include an explicit provision on equal rights for women, and that is a sad omission that cannot be allowed to stand. We must fix it.

The ERA, as you know, was introduced to Congress in 1923 by suffragist leader Alice Paul, who believed that after securing the right to vote, women needed legal protection against discrimination. That fact is no less true today than it was then. In 1972, the ERA was passed by Congress. In 2020, Virginia became the 38th and final State required by the Constitution to ratify it. In January 2022, we passed the 2-year waiting period. President Biden has supported making it the law of the land. We should heed President Biden and this body in doing so—in recognizing the importance of a resolution ratifying the ERA.

Now, the hard, blunt truth here is that significant progress in sex equality has been made thanks to a generation of advocates—actually, several generations—but women and girls still face horrendous, life-changing barriers and challenges derived from structural sex discrimination every day. I became more aware of it as a dad to a young woman, listening to her, seeing the world through her eyes, as well as my wife, Cynthia—both of them strong advocates and, thankfully, my three sons as well, who are ardent champions of gender equality.

In the workplace, the gender gap has hardly budged. You are, I am sure, aware that women now earn about 84 cents for every dollar a man earns. That is a statistic from the Department of Labor. The disparity is even larger for women of color. For every dollar a man earns, Native American women and Latinas earn 57 cents and Black women earn 67 cents. That is in the greatest country in the history of the world. We should be ashamed and embarrassed—ashamed and embarrassed.

The ERA is a critical step toward ensuring equality and protecting women's fundamental rights, including the right to abortion and contraception.

The Supreme Court overturned five decades of precedent and eliminated the constitutional right to abortion in Dobbs saying Roe was wrong—a decision that will go down in infamy as one of the most destructive to the Court's credibility, as I mentioned today, and a tribute to the disingenuousness of three nominees before this body—the three most recent nominees—who said they would respect precedent and then voted to completely overturn Dobbs within a couple of years.

About one in three girls and women in the United States of reproductive age are living in States where abortion is either unavailable or severely restricted, and the adverse consequences of poor women's health are already clearly visible.

Amanda Zurawski today testified before the Judiciary Committee about how she nearly died, nearly perished from sepsis because of Texas's cruel,

barbarous prohibitions against women's healthcare through abortion.

Without the freedom to control their own lives, bodies, and futures, the true meaning of equality will remain elusive and out of reach. As Justice Ginsburg put it, full and equal citizenship “is intimately connected to a person's ability to control their reproductive lives.”

The ERA would also provide additional tools against violence committed all too often against women. Gender-based bias is a form of sex discrimination as well as a violation of human rights. Thirty-five percent of all women who are killed by men are a result of violence from intimate partners with guns. One in three women has experienced some form of physical violence by an intimate partner. One in five women in the United States has been raped.

You can dispute the specific numbers, but the overwhelming truth of sex discrimination in violence, in denial of healthcare, in job inequality, in pay discrimination is there for all to see. We all know it exists. We must act against it.

That is why I am proud to stand here with my colleagues and argue that ratification is an idea long overdue. It is not an idea whose time has come; it came long ago. We have an obligation to act as a matter of conscience and conviction. If we care about women in the United States of America in the 21st century, we need to bring the law into the 21st century and do what should have been done long ago to protect women's health and security, as well as fundamental equality.

Let me just close with a favorite quote of mine from Susan Anthony. She stated:

The true republic—men, their rights and nothing more; women, their rights and nothing less.

Sex equality deserves a permanent home in the Constitution. The time to make it happen is now.

I yield the floor to my colleague from Maryland, Senator VAN HOLLEN.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, let me thank my colleague from Connecticut for his words in support of the Equal Rights Amendment and for his fight for justice.

Let me also thank my colleague, my Maryland partner and friend Senator CARDIN, for teaming up with Senator MURKOWSKI to push for passage of this legislation year after year. It is long overdue that we take this up and that we pass it in the U.S. Senate.

If you look at our history during the darkest of times and against the longest of odds, Americans from all backgrounds have stood together to insist that America live up to its promise—the promise of equality, the promise of equal rights for all.

In fact, if you think about the story of America, it really is the story of the struggle to make good on that fundamental promise to ensure that every individual receives equal dignity.

We talk about how we are endowed by our Creator with certain unalienable rights, and that is true. There are not more rights for men and not supposed to be more rights for any particular group. It is supposed to be about equal dignity, and equal dignity should include equal treatment under the law.

In their fight for voting rights, our Nation's suffragettes faced unjust arrest. They faced persecution. They faced resistance from a nation that was not yet willing to fulfill that full promise when it came to voting rights. Despite it all, through protests, through demands, through arrests, the suffragettes prevailed and made sure that we passed the 19th Amendment, at least fulfilling the right to vote for women.

But we have a lot of unfinished business. It is not just all men who are created equal; it is all people who are created equal. We have accomplished that when it comes to the ballot box. Although, as we in this body know, we also have a long way to go to make sure that that is made real in practice on the ground. That is why we have been fighting to pass voting rights legislation. But we also need to make sure that, when it comes to women's rights, we enshrine it in the highest law of the land in order to give the rhetoric legal teeth and legal backing.

Alice Paul, who really is the founder of the movement for the Equal Rights Amendment, knew that a century ago when she said:

I never doubted that equal rights was the right direction. Most reforms, most problems are complicated. But to me, there is nothing complicated about ordinary equality.

There is great truth in the simplicity of that statement, and that is what equal rights is all about. It is not a lot of words, but they are the rightly chosen words:

Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex.

That is it; a simple statement but a powerful statement because it is a true statement if we really want to live up to our full promise.

That is why the overwhelming majority of the American people support it. Seventy-five percent of our fellow Americans support the ERA. Thirty-eight States have ratified it, enough to make the ERA our 28th Amendment. Yet 100 years after the proposed amendment was first introduced to Congress, despite this broad support and the ratification of a necessary number of States, we have not yet made that part of our Constitution.

The results are painfully clear every day. My colleagues have talked about some of them: the persistent pay gap, which disadvantages not only women but also the families that they support. Recent rulings by the Supreme Court on reproductive rights have shown that the lack of an explicit protection against gender discrimination puts women's fundamental rights at risk and on the chopping block. So this is the moment to finally get this done.

I, again, want to thank Senator CARDIN and Senator MURKOWSKI for their efforts to move forward on this. I want to thank the chairman of the Judiciary Committee.

As I close, I do want to say a few words about my friend and colleague from Maryland's long-term fight for this and applaud him for over a decade of working to make sure that we get the ERA across the finish line.

It has been one very important aspect—in fact, the cornerstone of many of his efforts here in the United States—but it is a reflection of his fights for civil rights, for women's rights, for racial rights, and for human rights around the world. I want to thank him for his persistence on this and so many issues that call upon us to be what we say we are as Americans—people who believe in the equal dignity of every individual and the rights of every individual. I want to thank my colleague. I want to thank him for teaming up with Senator MURKOWSKI from Alaska and thank her for her efforts.

I said at the beginning that we have been defined as an American story by our struggle to make good on that original promise, the idea of equal rights. Many people have tried to interpret it in different ways, but I think we all understand, at the end of the day, the North Star is equal rights. It means equal rights for everybody, not just equal rights for some people over here, because that is not equal rights.

That is as simple as what brings us here to the floor. I want to thank my colleague, again, from Maryland for keeping this fight going.

I really hope my Republican colleagues will take this moment, despite what we expect, to enshrine that simple proposition into the Constitution of the United States.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I am glad today to stand with my colleague to support S.J. Res. 4, affirming the validity of the Equal Rights Amendment.

We have heard from Senator CARDIN and Senator MURKOWSKI why it is so important for Congress to pass this resolution and enshrine protections against sex-based discrimination in our Constitution.

The ERA would bolster efforts to ensure equality in the fields of workforce and pay, pregnancy discrimination, sexual harassment and violence, reproductive autonomy, and protections for LGBTQ individuals.

Although we have indeed made strides in each of these areas, we know how fragile these gains can be without the durability of a constitutional amendment.

Take, for example, the current Supreme Court's approach to the Constitution. As the Dobbs decision makes clear, a majority of the current Court believes that the meaning of equality

under the equal protection clause was frozen in 1868 when the 14th Amendment was ratified.

Well, in the hundred years after 1868, the Supreme Court has adopted and permitted all sorts of State laws that excluded women from jury service, that excluded women from admission to the bar as lawyers, that excluded women even from employment as bartenders, and allowed all of those laws under the 14th Amendment. This business now of the Supreme Court, looking back at history and tradition, is a backward look to bad history and regrettable tradition.

So with the Supreme Court, it is particularly important that we not rely on its interpretation of the 14th Amendment alone to guarantee equal rights. Congress needs to stand up and act, and we have the power to do so.

Congress has broad authority over the amendment process. If Congress has the power to impose a time limit, Congress has the power to extend or remove that time limit.

I join my colleagues to urge swift passage of this resolution. As one witness at the Senate Judiciary Committee on the ERA eloquently put it, gender equality is not a zero-sum game, and "we are all uplifted when everyone's rights are protected."

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I want to thank Senator WHITEHOUSE for his leadership on the Equal Rights Amendment. He is our leader on protecting our democratic institutions, which include equality for all. Senator WHITEHOUSE's leadership in protecting the election process and protecting us against dark money and an independent judiciary will go down in history as one of the great contributions made.

I thank him for his help in regard to the Equal Rights Amendment, and I thank him for his leadership on so many issues here in the U.S. Senate.

Let me just conclude this part of our discussion. We will have a chance tomorrow to vote on this.

What we are asking is very simple: to put the Equal Rights Amendment in the Constitution without any ambiguity and remove the time limit. We have already done everything necessary for its ratification.

This document is a precious document: the Constitution of the United States. Most Americans believe the Equal Rights Amendment is in this document. It is not. The consequences are that we are not protecting women's rights and discrimination against sex in the manner we should be protecting them.

Now, the vote tomorrow is going to be on a cloture motion. You see, the majority of the Members of the Senate support the resolution that Senator MURKOWSKI and I are bringing forward. And the way the minority can stop it is by denying us an opportunity to vote up or down on the resolution.

This is a matter of rights. I would hope that my colleagues would support the resolution or they will at least allow the majority of this body to make the decision on this resolution.

I hope my colleagues will vote for the cloture motion so that we can have a vote on the floor of the U.S. Senate on this resolution, which will, once and for all, make it clear equal rights are part of the American Constitution, part of our commitment to future generations.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. HASSAN). The Senator from Rhode Island.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Madam President, I am back now for the 288th time with my trusty, battered "Time to Wake Up" poster to call attention to the climate crisis.

Over the 10-plus years that I have been doing these speeches, I have shown how climate change affects our ecosystems, industries, economy, public health, kids, workers, our elderly. I have even conducted a science experiment right here on the Senate floor, to the dismay of the Senate staff.

One near constant in these speeches has been the oily, often covert hand of the fossil fuel industry lurking behind the opposition to climate action through its campaign of climate denial, delay, and obstruction.

From the late 1980s, when Congress first became aware of climate change, through the period after the 2010 Citizens United decision when special interests could anonymously pour unlimited money into elections, the fossil fuel industry has blocked every serious climate bill in Congress until the Inflation Reduction Act.

Key to this obstruction was the strategic insight that they only needed to capture one political party to strangle legislative action. So the fossil fuel industry captured the Republican Party and has prevented climate action for over three decades, except when we were able to use the extraordinary process of reconciliation. That was just last year.

Democrats had control of the House and Senate and passed the Inflation Reduction Act via budget reconciliation. Congress finally acted on climate.

There is lots more that Congress still needs to do on climate, but the IRA was a big, meaningful bill that powered up tax incentives for clean energy and put a price on oil and gas methane emissions.

In the 10-plus years I have been documenting the fossil fuel industry's hold over the Republican Party, I have provided lots of concrete examples, from election spending to phony front groups by the flotilla, to polluter lackeys installed at the Trump EPA. But nothing tops the debt limit proposal Speaker MCCARTHY released last week, the "Default on America Act," which the House just passed.

MAGA House Republicans like to claim to care about debt and deficits—

except, of course, in 2017, when they passed massive tax cuts for the wealthy and large corporations that added trillions to the debt and except when the debt increased by more than \$7 trillion under President Trump.

They are a fountain of fiscal hypocrisy. So no surprise that the MCCARTHY package has little to do with reducing debt and deficits and everything to do with providing goodies to big Republican donors, in particular the fossil fuel industry.

Before I get into all the oily, corrupt deals for big polluters, a few words about the rest of the proposal. MCCARTHY calling this monstrosity the Limit, Save, Grow Act would make George Orwell blush. In reality, MCCARTHY's plan would result in unlimited carbon pollution, massive losses to the Federal Government and American families and businesses, and very likely crashes in whole sectors of the economy—some limit, save, and growth.

First, it would rescind the extra funding we provided to the IRS to go after wealthy tax cheats. This would add \$120 billion to the deficit. For them, "limit, save, and grow" means limit IRS enforcement, save their big donors money paying their taxes, and grow their own campaign contributions.

Federal programs would face indiscriminate cuts of up to 33 percent across research, science, housing, addiction treatment, national parks, transportation, law enforcement, border security, drug enforcement, and criminal prosecutions. If you want to defund the police, Speaker MCCARTHY is your new poster boy.

The public hates all that stuff, so why pursue stuff that the public hates? Why threaten to set off the U.S. default handgrenade to get this done? Who wins? Creepy billionaires who hate the Federal Government and fund KEVIN MCCARTHY—chief among them, the fossil fuel industry.

For his big fossil fuel industry donors, MCCARTHY delivers four huge giveaways. First, they take away the clean energy tax credits we passed in the IRA. Second, they let fossil fuel interests leak polluting methane emissions with no pollution fee. Third, they prop up dying fossil fuel infrastructure with so-called permitting reform targeted to help only fossil fuel. And fourth, they make it harder to protect against water and air pollution.

This oily wish list is not about debt or deficits, and it is not about growing the economy as it risks serious economic downturns. It is about taking care of the industry whose dark money funds their party.

Look at the clean energy tax credits which MCCARTHY claims are wasteful spending. It now appears that those tax credits will incentivize more investment than expected. So what is MCCARTHY's argument? There will be too much investment? Seriously?

Already, in less than a year, the IRA's clean energy tax credits have encouraged over 100 projects that will create north of 100,000 jobs. With time,

the IRA could easily create over a million jobs—high-paying manufacturing jobs, the kind we should want. Many projects are in districts in the South and Midwest represented by Republicans.

Indeed, many House Republicans have cheered the very IRA-catalyzed projects they are now trying to torpedo. Seriously. Back home, they celebrate the jobs for their constituents. Here in DC, they vote to eliminate the very tax credits that created them—all to serve fossil fuel polluters.

Here are some of my favorite House Republican quotes celebrating IRA-catalyzed investments in Republican home districts.

This is the largest investment in the State of Georgia's history—

One said—

one that will diversify and expand our economy while providing strong job opportunities for Georgians today and for generations to come.

And then a "no" vote against the IRA.

I'm thrilled that Honda has once again committed to Ohio and our workers with today's announcement of a \$3.5 billion investment in EV production and a new battery plant within Ohio's 15th Congressional District. I look forward to working Honda and LG Energy Solution to bring 2,200 new jobs to the Buckeye State.

And then voted to wipe out the program.

I am thrilled to welcome ENTEK to Terre Haute and to the Hoosier state. As the only American company to own and produce "wet-process" lithium-ion battery separator materials, ENTEK is going to help to pave the way for electric vehicle production in Indiana and reduce American manufacturers' reliance on imported products. Their operation in Terre Haute will create hundreds of new jobs.

And then voted to strip out the tax credits behind them.

I am honored to stand with other state and federal leaders during this groundbreaking event as the first solar energy microgrid-powered industrial site project was unveiled in Jackson County. I know this important project will . . . stimulate economic growth that will create new jobs in West Virginia.

And then voted against the tax credits.

Where are the common themes here? Well, clean energy investments grow the economy and create jobs. These investments will help America compete against imports from overseas.

Usually, Republicans can't stop talking about how we need to reduce our dependence on Chinese imports and build up our own manufacturing industry—until their fossil fuel overlords tell them otherwise. Then they vote against the credits that encourage domestic manufacturing of the clean energy technologies that will dominate the economy of tomorrow.

What a terrible bet. Republicans can't beat China with the energy and technologies of the last century. No amount of fossil fuel-funded obstruction here at home is going to stop the clean energy revolution happening in the rest of the world.

In Europe last year, more than 12 percent of cars sold were fully electric, up from less than 2 percent just back in 2019. Europe is investing massively in wind and solar and green hydrogen, particularly after the Russian invasion of Ukraine demonstrated just how dangerous dependence on fossil fuels can be.

In China last year, 22 percent of cars sold were fully electric, towards the goal of 40 percent of all cars sold fully electric in 2030. China is, by far, the largest installer of wind and solar power, with ambitions to dominate the clean energy technologies of tomorrow.

In most places, renewable energy is now the cheapest form of energy—far cheaper than fossil fuel. So the rest of the world is going all-in on wind, solar, batteries, green hydrogen, and other clean technologies for their low-cost energy. And that savings doesn't even count the trillions of dollars of value from avoiding the costs and harms of fossil fuel pollution.

The future is clean tech. And there are fortunes to be made. Many of these clean energy technologies were developed right here by our scientists and engineers at our companies and national labs. But the fossil fuel industry wants America to lose our technological leadership and all the business opportunities that flow from it.

Remember limit, save, grow? If you want that for real: limit pollution, save clean energy jobs, and grow the economy. The fossil fuel industry behind this is the most subsidized industry on the planet. It lives off public money and political influence. It gets to pollute for free.

Just today in the Budget Committee, we heard testimony that fossil fuel combustion, by warming the planet and polluting the air, costs America over \$800 billion per year in health costs. The International Monetary Fund puts the effective subsidy in the U.S. for fossil fuels at almost \$700 billion per year.

If fossil fuel-funded Republicans want to talk about picking winners and losers, bring it on. Their fossil fuel donors enjoy the biggest subsidy in world history.

If fossil-fuel-funded Republicans want to talk about free markets, bring it on. Market economics 101 teaches that the cost of your pollution should be in the price of your product. But fossil-fuel-funded Republicans protect free polluting for fossil fuel.

It is not just costs that fossil fuels impose on the rest of us. It is risks—economic risks associated with climate change. Central bankers, economists, insurance CEOs, financial experts, and other witnesses—serious grownups whose judgments are fiduciary—have come to the Budget Committee to warn of systemic risks to the economy, including a collapse in coastal property values and a carbon bubble resulting from stranded fossil fuel assets.

Now, “systemic risks” sounds pretty mild. It is not. It is when catastrophe

spreads from one troubled sector across the entire economy, much as the 2008 meltdown in the mortgage market spread across the country to become the financial crisis and Great Recession, which, by the way, resulted in an additional \$5 trillion in government debt. Disaster avoidance is debt reduction.

The stakes are huge. The consulting firm Deloitte estimates that the global cost of doing nothing on climate is around \$180 trillion in economic damage—\$180 trillion. But they go on to say that if we act responsibly and limit warming to 1.7 degrees Celsius, we can save ourselves from that and actually grow the global economy by \$40 trillion. So you want limit, save, and grow? In this case, if you do it right by limiting pollution and saving clean energy jobs and growing the economy, the swing is \$220 trillion between a bad climate outcome and a responsible climate outcome.

But the corrupt fossil fuel industry says “jump,” and KEVIN MCCARTHY and MAGA Republicans say “how high?”

Here is a “how high”: They eliminate the fee on wasteful methane emissions that I worked to include in the IRA. The methane pollution fee will raise \$6 billion against the deficit and save even more from avoided climate and air pollution damage. But the rotten House plan was never about cutting debt and deficits, always about delivering for the fossil fuel overlords. So out goes the methane program.

Methane traps 80 times as much heat as carbon dioxide, at least in the short run, and it creates air pollution that sickens people across the country. This is a satellite image of a methane plume. You can actually detect methane plumes from space now, which is why charging a fee for polluting makes so much sense, because you can find the polluter quite easily. This one is being released from an oil well. Now, the operator of this oil well could capture this methane and sell it. It is natural gas. But, instead, oil companies like this just release it. Pure waste. Pure pollution.

Putting a price on methane emissions will dramatically reduce this pollution and raise budget balancing revenues. But MCCARTHY doesn't care; the industry funds his caucus. So out goes the budget-balancing, pollution-preventing methane fee.

Next in the fossil fuel-funded parade of horrors is a permitting reform stuffed with giveaways to—you guessed it—the fossil fuel industry. What the hell does permitting reform have to do with the debt limit, you might ask? Well, good question. Does building in more fossil fuel even make sense? The world is moving off fossil fuels. Peak oil will occur, and demand will begin to decline. Once demand begins to decline, the oil cartel will collapse in a rush for the exits, causing serious economic turbulence as fossil fuel assets are stranded, particularly in high production cost countries like the United States of America.

This is the global production cost curve for oil. As you can see, Persian Gulf oil is far cheaper to produce than U.S. oil. Here we are.

So when there is a rush for the exits, and instead of cheating the world with cartel pricing, they go to cost-plus pricing, and we are out of business in the U.S. fossil fuel industry, and American fossil fuel infrastructure becomes hundreds of billions of dollars' worth of useless, stranded assets. But fossil fuel says “jump,” and House Republicans say “how high?”

Last in this fossil fuel wish list is a provision to make it next to impossible for EPA to promulgate regulations limiting air and water pollution. Again, deregulating polluters has nothing to do with the debt limit, but the fossil fuel industry wants it. So it is in.

In just the last few months, we have seen what Republican deregulation means for American families and businesses. We saw it in East Palestine, OH, when a train derailment resulted in a major spill of toxic chemicals. We saw it in Northern California when Silicon Valley Bank went belly-up. Both of these events could have been prevented with better regulations. Both harmed American families and businesses.

Protecting Americans from air and water pollution with good regulations always pays because the costs associated with air and water pollution are enormous. But fossil fuel does a lot of air and water pollution. So here is another fact giveaway to the fossil fuel industry.

If you ever needed proof that the Republican Party is the wholly owned subsidiary of the fossil fuel industry, MCCARTHY's debt limit package is that proof. Amazingly, almost 280 pages out of a 320-page bill are devoted to fossil fuel industry giveaways.

Here are 320 pages; 280 of these pages are blue. The remaining 40 are white. So this is a visual image of how much of the “Default on America” bill is devoted to making nice for the fossil fuel industry versus everything else.

It is like a bunch of delivery boys for the fossil fuel industry over there. This bill isn't about debt and deficits. It is not about limiting or saving or growing. It is about serving fossil fuel—the source of the money that keeps them in power. Period.

Oil and gas extraction represents only about 5 percent of our GDP. Farming, manufacturing, food and beverage, insurance, finance, restaurants, retail, housing, healthcare—all representing a larger share of GDP. Clean energy actually now accounts for more employment than the fossil fuel industry. But for subsidies, nothing compares to fossil fuel. So for political influence, to protect those massive subsidies, nothing compares to fossil fuel.

There is actually a bug—an insect—that infiltrates another bug and takes over the other bug's nervous system. And from inside the other bug, it drives

it around. It is kind of a creepy, natural development. It happens in the insect world. And it looks like it happened on the other side of the building, because what the fossil fuel industry has done is to take over the Republican Party and now just drive it around.

So fossil fuel money makes the MCCARTHY package serve its Big Oil master. It is a deeply sad and dangerous state of affairs when one of America's two main political parties abandons all pretense of responsible governance just to service its prime political benefactor. That is what Speaker MCCARTHY and House Republicans are doing. That is this bill.

They threaten default, propose terrible cuts, deny climate warnings, and are willing to kneecap the American economy, all in service to the fossil fuel industry and its dark money.

It is time to fix our democracy so that it functions honestly and this nonsense stops. It is time to wake up.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

AUTHORIZING APPOINTMENT OF ESCORT COMMITTEE

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the President of the Senate be authorized to appoint a committee on the part of the Senate to join with a like committee on the part of the House of Representatives to escort His Excellency Yoon Suk Yeol, President of the Republic of Korea, into the House Chamber for the joint meeting on Thursday, April 27, 2023.

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

RESOLUTIONS SUBMITTED TODAY

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the en bloc consideration of the following resolutions, introduced earlier today: S. Res. 176, S. Res. 177, and S. Res. 178.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolutions.

S. RES. 177 AND S. RES. 178

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, in two criminal cases pending in Federal district court in the District of Columbia and arising out of the events of January 6, 2021, the prosecution has requested testimony from a Senate witness.

In these cases, brought against Leo Christopher Kelly and Rachel Powell, respectively, trials are expected to commence in early May, and the prosecution has requested testimony from Daniel Schwager, formerly counsel to the Secretary of the Senate, concerning his knowledge and observations of the process and constitutional and legal bases for Congress' counting of the Electoral College votes. The prosecution in the Kelly case has additionally requested Mr. Schwager's testimony regarding certain property de-

struction that occurred on January 6, 2021. Senate Secretary Berry would like to cooperate with these requests by providing relevant testimony in these trials from Mr. Schwager.

In keeping with the rules and practices of the Senate, these resolutions would authorize the production of relevant testimony from Mr. Schwager, with representation by the Senate legal counsel.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. I ask unanimous consent that the resolutions be agreed to, the preambles be agreed to, and the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

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

The resolutions were agreed to.

The preambles were agreed to.

(The resolutions, with their preambles, are printed in today's RECORD under "Submitted Resolutions.")

MORNING BUSINESS

EARTH DAY 2023

Mr. CARDIN. Madam President, on Saturday, Earth Day turned 53. For the past half-plus century, we have paused each spring to celebrate and reflect on our relationship with the natural world and to demonstrate support for environmental protection.

This year's theme, Invest in Our Planet, served as a reminder of our responsibility to deliver Federal resources and spur innovation to ensure peace and prosperity for future generations.

The environmental challenges facing our planet, fueled increasingly by climate change, are urgent and require immediate action. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency—EPA—nearly half of our rivers and streams are polluted by excess nutrients. During extreme rain events, river flow increases, pouring more fresh water into estuaries like the Chesapeake Bay.

Stormwater runoff pushes nutrients, sediment, and other pollutants off the land and into rivers and streams. Excess nutrients then lead to the growth of harmful algal blooms that harm plants and animals. Pollution not only affects our aquatic life but can contaminate drinking water sources and impart costly impacts to recreation, tourism, and fisheries.

Low-income and communities of color often face disproportionately high pollutant exposures. The communities who are most affected by nitrates are also less likely to be able to afford the necessary water treatment. That is why I applaud the Biden administration's focused attention on delivering the benefits of historic Federal investments to disadvantaged communities that are marginalized, underserved, and overburdened by pollution. For too long, the Nation has under-

invested in water infrastructure threatens the environment, and it risks people's health, safety, and livelihoods.

Congress responded with the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, which delivers more than \$50 billion to EPA to improve our Nation's drinking water, wastewater, and stormwater infrastructure. This is the single largest investment in water that the Federal Government has ever made. EPA recently announced \$775 million in funding Congress appropriated for the Clean Water State Revolving Fund, CWSRF. This funding, along with the investments from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, is critical for communities across the country to upgrade their wastewater and stormwater systems, protect public health and preserve our precious water bodies. In its allotment, my home State of Maryland received \$18.3 million towards improving water quality, toward a total of over \$167 million this fiscal year to upgrade drinking water and wastewater infrastructure.

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act also invested in EPA's geographic programs, including the Chesapeake Bay Program. These programs are long-standing, location-specific programs that help protect local ecosystems and communities from climate change, habitat loss, and pollution.

I am also pleased to report that due in part to concerted efforts to control nutrient pollution, the Chesapeake Bay had the tenth smallest area impacted by low-oxygen water this past summer. Long-term trends indicate this "dead zone" where fish, crab, and other species cannot live because there is not enough oxygen in the water has been getting smaller. Low-oxygen or hypoxic water is caused by excess nutrients like nitrogen or phosphorus from agricultural runoff and urban and suburban stormwater entering the bay. It is encouraging to see that efforts to reduce nutrient pollution are making a difference. The Chesapeake Bay Program is a model for a regional partnership that unites an array of stakeholders—from producers to nonprofits to local governments—behind a common goal: Restore and protect the Bay.

Globally, cooperation offers similar benefits. The recovery of the Earth's protective ozone layer announced in January is a hopeful example. The ozone layer plays a critical role in shielding us from harmful ultraviolet radiation from the sun. Human activities, such as the use of ozone-depleting substances like chlorofluorocarbons—CFCs—have caused significant damage to the ozone layer. Fortunately, collective action to limit these substances, such as the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, an international agreement to protect the ozone layer, is allowing it to recover. According to the United Nations, if commitments like these stay in place, the ozone layer could fully recover to 1980 levels by 2040. However,