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Senate

The Senate met at 3 p.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. HATCH).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Eternal Spirit, may our lawmakers delight today in Your guidance, finding joy in their daily fellowship with You. Strengthened by this fellowship, enable them to be as productive as trees planted by streams of water. Lord, give our Senators the wisdom to live for Your glory in each of life's seasons.

Protect our Nation from the forces that seek to destroy it both foreign and domestic. Lord, don't permit the weapons formed against America to prosper, for You remain our refuge and fortress. Continue to be the strength of our lives as we refuse to forget the many times You have protected and preserved us in the past.

We pray in Your Holy Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. ERNST). Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business for 1 hour, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

BASIN AND RANGE NATIONAL MONUMENT

Mr. REID. Madam President, cowboy poet Georgie Connell Sicking conveyed my feelings for the Nevada desert in her poem "Nevada's Subtle Beauty."

This picture I have in the Chamber has appeared all over the country. It appeared, for example, in the Washington Post a week or so ago, and there are other pictures that show this at more of a distance. The man there is so small compared to the vastness of the Nevada terrain. But here is what Georgie Sicking said in her poem:

Have you gone outdoors one morning after a summer rain,

With a gentle breeze blowing across a black sage valley

And smelled the earthy sagey freshness, none like it on this earth.

It sure makes life worth living, and you know when God was giving, He didn't short-change Nevada.

Have you ever in the afternoon watched the mountains changing colors,

From the shadows as they grow from brown and black to tan and violet,

Or sometimes the deepest blue.

Ever changing, ever different, they seem to smile, then frown,

Waiting for sky colors to be added as the sun goes down.

If these things I mention you have seen and felt and known,

Beware, for Nevada has a hold on you and will claim you for her own.

This is not Iowa terrain. It is very typical Nevada terrain, the deserts of Nevada. It is perfect. It is peaceful. It is the Nevada desert. It feels right. To me, it feels like home.

Last Friday, President Obama permanently protected over 700,000 acres of land in Eastern Nevada as the Basin and Range National Monument, which photographer Tyler Roemer has captured beautifully in these pictures.

The land President Obama designated as a monument—two basins and one range—is a perfect example of the stark beauty of the Nevada desert. This monument is an area where the Mojave Desert meets the Great Basin and Joshua trees and cactus give way to sagebrush. This monument is an area that is home to desert bighorn sheep, mule deer, elk, and pronghorn antelope.

This monument is an area that provided food and shelter for Native Americans and is where one can see their history today in incredible rock art panels we call petroglyphs. This monument is an area that reflects the pioneering western history from early explorers to the ranching that still exists.

Four or five years ago, I visited this area. I had been in the area but not here. I went there for a number of reasons. I had been informed of a five-decade-old art project in the middle of the vastness of this desert. While going to see this work of art, I also saw the unique beauty of the Nevada desert, and it is unique. After I completed my trip, in giving this a lot of thought and contemplation, I became passionate about doing something to protect and preserve this incredible work of art and the stark beauty of the desert, both of which are priceless.

This picture is part of the City. This work of art has taken 48 years to construct. It is the size of the National Mall here. It is a couple miles long and very wide—almost a mile wide. It is something that is in the center of the Basin and Range National Monument. It is called the City. It is a grand modern art sculpture the size of, I repeat, the National Mall, part of which you can see in this photo from a group called the Triple Aught Foundation.

The creator is internationally renowned artist Michael Heizer, who is known all over the world. He has been working on this project, as I indicated, since 1972.

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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The New York Times has called City “the most ambitious sculpture anyone has ever built, one of those audacious improbable American dreams at the scale of the West, conceived for the ages.” The canvas which makes up the background of his art is the untouched desert land of the Basin Range, which makes it all the more monumental. Hundreds and hundreds of people worked on this under the guidance of Michael Heizer. He has done remarkable stuff all over the world. The latest thing he did is in Los Angeles—in the middle of the city of Los Angeles at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. That is a big project, but it pales in comparison to this. What he did there, he moved a rock weighing 400 tons 102 miles through the cities of California. It is called Levitated Mass. The thing in L.A.—this 400-ton boulder—looks like it is suspended in space. It is not. But people walk under it.

I talked very recently to the Los Angeles County Museum director, and he said this thing needs no advertising. People come to see this. And that is the same way this will be. This is a wonderful piece of art.

One of the art critics for the Washington Post said it was the most—and I am paraphrasing—significant piece of art in the last 50 years in America.

When I first brought this up to President Obama, he said: Tell me what it is. Explain it to me. I said: I can't. How, Madam President, as you are presiding over this body, would you describe this? It is really hard to describe, and we are only seeing a tiny bit of this. It is 2 miles long and 1 mile wide, approximately.

He has done amazing things. He has developed his own dirt. We have plenty of dirt in the desert, but he was afraid it would be washed away. This will never be washed away—the same up here.

As I indicated, he has art projects all over the world, but he is from Nevada. He has spent a lot of his time in Nevada for the last 48 years, in addition to his other projects. So I am very happy this has happened in Nevada.

By using his authority under the Antiquities Act, President Obama has helped preserve the life, history, and culture of Nevada—the land I love.

Look at this. This has been preserved for my children, my grandchildren, their children, and their grandchildren. This is exquisite.

Nevada is growing very rapidly. In the southern part of the State—Las Vegas—there are about 3 million people now. People are traveling all over Nevada, and we don't have—even though it is a very large State—much unspoiled land, but this is something that has not been spoiled. There are no roads through it, no railroads, no power lines. This is beautiful, and I am so glad the President did this.

As renowned journalist Steve Sebelius wrote in his Sunday column in the Las Vegas Review-Journal, “Preserving the land from development was

the right thing to do. History will bear that out, long after the wails of the disaffected have ceased to echo through the desert canyons of Nevada's newest monument.”

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to speak in morning business.

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

SALUTING CVS HEALTH

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, the No. 1 preventable cause of death in America today: tobacco. People who use tobacco—smoking or chewing—develop a myriad of health problems, and many die prematurely.

Tobacco companies are a big business in America. They have been for a long time. And they really try their best to recruit new customers when they go into junior high and high schools. Now they are in the e-cigarette business too, but I want to stick with tobacco for a moment. The notion, of course, is, if you can addict a child to nicotine, they will continue to smoke and eventually become a lifelong user of tobacco products.

It has been a long time since I have engaged this industry in political contest. It was a little over 25 years ago when I was a Member of the House of Representatives that I boarded an airplane in Phoenix, AZ, at the last minute—a United airplane. I went to the ticket counter and said to the woman at the counter: Can I get on this plane?

She said: If you hurry, you can get on there. Here is where you are going to be seated.

And I said: Wait a minute. This is in the smoking section of the airplane and you have me in a center seat in the smoking section. Isn't there something you can do?

She looked at my ticket and said: No, Congressman, there is something you can do.

So I got on that plane and flew from Phoenix to Chicago in the smoking section of the airplane—there used to be such things—and thought to myself: This is madness. Here I sit, a non-smoker, breathing in all this second-hand smoke, and there is an elderly person in the so-called nonsmoking section two rows away, and there is a lady with a baby, and why in the world do we have to be subjected to this?

So I came back to Washington and introduced a bill in the House of Representatives to ban smoking on airplanes. After a lot of work and a lot of

good luck, I found out that the largest frequent flyer club in America—the House of Representatives—did not much like smoking on airplanes either, and I won—it surprised a lot of people—beat the tobacco lobby.

I called my friend Frank Lautenberg, the Senator from New Jersey, and asked him if he would take up the cause in the Senate. He did it masterfully. The two of us passed the law and changed the way America looked at smoking on airplanes.

Neither Senator Lautenberg nor I knew this was a tipping point in history. I did not know it. But people started thinking: If secondhand smoke is dangerous on an airplane, why isn't it dangerous on a train, in a bus, in an office building, in a hospital, in a restaurant? Today, 25-plus years later, if you walked into someone's office on Capitol Hill and they had an ashtray in the middle of the table, you would think: What are they thinking? People do not do that anymore.

It used to be standard and no one thought twice about lighting up. That was just your personal preference. Things have changed in America, and the number of people using tobacco products has declined because they have come to understand it is dangerous, it can kill you.

But we are not the only country on Earth that has figured this out. Many other countries are ahead of us in terms of regulating tobacco. If you travel overseas, take a look at cigarette packages. Ours still look pretty fancy. They have a little label on them. But in other countries, the cigarette packages are very stark and very limited in what they can say about the product. Most of what they contain are health care warnings: Tobacco can kill you. Tobacco can harm a fetus in a pregnant woman. These stark reminders are to discourage people from using tobacco products because countries overseas, just like the United States, understand how dangerous they are.

So it was in that context that I was amazed to read something a few weeks ago. The New York Times published a devastating series of articles on how the U.S. Chamber of Commerce has been playing a global strategy to fight against effective tobacco control laws in other countries—the U.S. Chamber of Commerce fighting tobacco control laws in other countries.

Why would the U.S. Chamber of Commerce—once considered a pillar of the American business community—be a champion promoting the sale and consumption of a deadly tobacco product in another country? It does not compute. One reason? The power, the money, and the influence of Big Tobacco is still very strong. The stories and letters published by the New York Times made it clear that the U.S. Chamber of Commerce has effectively rented out its letterhead to the tobacco industry, jeopardizing not only the reputation of the Chamber but all the member companies that belong to it.