

amount of carbon pollution that can be put into the air.

This is despite having landmark legislation already in the books called the Clean Air Act. The Clean Air Act requires the Federal Government to regulate airborne pollutants. It doesn't require or allow the Federal Government to select from among a menu of airborne pollutants and decide which ones will be most cost-effective or most important to regulate. It says the EPA is charged with taking airborne pollutants and regulating them, to place limits on them. It is a mistake that over the last 20 years, even though we have recognized that carbon is an airborne pollutant, that it is not regulated under the Clean Air Act.

The Clean Power Plan fixes this problem. It is an innovative and flexible solution that gives States the right to develop their individual plans. This is also an important point. The first iteration of the Clean Power Plan was a little more of a blunt instrument. It was geographically constrained. It was powerplant constrained. Therefore, a lot of States, a lot of utility companies came back and said: Look, there are going to be individual instances where it is going to be very difficult to reduce carbon pollution at a particular site because it is rural, because it has already been capitalized, because we can't get the financing to reduce the carbon pollution at a particular site, but if you allow us to work what they call outside of the fence and you allow us State by State to reduce in the aggregate the amount of carbon pollution put into the air, then we can make this work. We can still have what they call good power quality, which is to say you don't want undulations in power quality to the point where you have blackouts and brownouts. That was industry. That was regulators. That was a public utilities commission. That was energy companies coming back and saying this is not workable.

The EPA came up with a scenario where we are still regulating carbon pollution under the Clean Air Act, but we are doing it in a way that is totally workable for every State and every energy portfolio in every region in every State. It gives States the rights to develop their own individual plans to cut carbon pollution from the energy sector. The Clean Power Plan has sent a signal to the rest of the world that the United States is serious about preventing catastrophic changes to our climate.

The American public knows that climate change is a problem and large majorities want us to act. A Stanford poll found 83 percent of Americans, including 61 percent of Republicans, say that if nothing is done to reduce emissions, global warming will be a serious problem in the future. Now, 77 percent of Americans say the Federal Government should be doing a substantial amount to combat climate change, and 67 percent of Americans support EPA action to curb carbon pollution.

In other words, 67 percent of Americans support the EPA action that is being undertaken right now. They support the Clean Power Plan. They may not know the details, but they understand the basic premise which is that the Clean Air Act is the law of the land. It was passed a long time ago with large bipartisan majorities. The basic idea that the Federal Government has some simple responsibilities, and one of them is to keep us safe from air and water pollution, is a bipartisan consensus not in this Chamber, unfortunately, and not in the other Chamber, unfortunately, but across the country, everybody understands that carbon is a pollutant, and we should try to reduce it over time as much as we possibly can.

I think it is time we acknowledge that the electricity industry is already changing. We are rapidly moving away from fossil fuels as the dominant source of electricity generation. Soon even low-priced natural gas may not be able to compete with wind and solar energy. We should be celebrating these advances and devoting ourselves to finding ways to accelerate this transition, not throwing up roadblocks.

The truth is the Clean Power Plan is merely accelerating market trends that are already underway. Listen to this. Through the first 9 months of this year, over 60 percent of new U.S. capacity additions were renewable energy. More than 60 percent of the new power generation in the United States over the last 9 months has been clean energy. That is the change that is happening. That is the clean energy revolution.

In 1998, when I was in the State legislature and I was helping to work on net energy metering laws, solar tax credits, and a renewable portfolio standard, this was aspirational. This was something we hoped we would eventually achieve, but 60 percent of new generation this year in the United States is clean energy. It is already happening.

As wind and solar prices fall, they are increasingly competitive with new fossil generation in more and more places around the country. To my colleagues who warn of massive price shocks from the transition to clean energy, I point out that we are already underway with our transition, and the massive price shocks have not happened. The Clean Power Plan is the most important power tool that we have in our arsenal to fight climate change.

To my colleagues who are trying to stand in the way of making real progress toward reducing greenhouse gas emissions, I say this: When you are ready to be constructive and work on a comprehensive energy policy, to work on a comprehensive climate policy, we are open.

I have continued to come to the floor of the Senate over the last several months, over the year of 2015, and have said this is an issue that has unfortunately become incredibly partisan.

This is an issue where we have Democrats coming to the floor offering constructive solutions and an empty side of the Chamber on the other side, but this is the challenge of our generation. This is our obligation as the indispensable Nation. The United States has to lead. The Senate has to have a real debate on climate and energy policy, and we need Republicans to step up. This issue is crying for Republican leadership, and I am looking forward to the day—hopefully very soon—where we will have it, where we will have a serious negotiation.

I understand that not all of my ideas will win out, not all of the progressive perspectives will win out, but that is the legislative process. We need a dance partner. We look forward to that moment.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

(At the request of Mr. Risch, the following statement was ordered to be printed in the RECORD.)

VOTE EXPLANATION

Mr. RUBIO. Mr. President, today the Senate voted on a motion to proceed to H.R. 2685, the Department of Defense Appropriations Act. I would have voted yes.

Funding our military and keeping Americans safe used to be a point of bipartisan consensus in Washington. Unfortunately, for the third time this year, Senate Democrats have blocked a bill that provides funding for American men and women in uniform, their housing, health care, and benefits. Although we will ultimately need additional funding to confront the vast array of national security threats we face in this century, this bill includes important funding we need now for procurement, modernization, construction to maintain our military bases, and vital funds for the intelligence community who work in secret as our first line of defense. It also includes funds for ongoing operations against ISIS, Al Qaeda, and terrorist organizations globally who seek to do us harm.

As they have shown on issue after issue, President Obama, his administration, and Washington Democrats are not serious about confronting the challenges we face as a nation. We need