

White House yesterday. One was the Zika virus. We know there is an increasing amount of concern about the spread of this virus and what it could mean for the United States as we head toward warmer summer months.

Given the public concern that followed the first Ebola case in our country, I think we could all benefit from having a better understanding of what preparations are being made to protect Americans. To that end, I have asked Secretary Burwell and her team to come to the Senate to brief relevant committees and leaders in both parties. This briefing will happen next week. I appreciate the Secretary's willingness to meet this request in such a timely manner, and I know the information will be useful to Members and their constituents.

Another public health issue we discussed is the opioid epidemic that continues to have such a profound impact on families and communities across the State I represent and, of course, across the Nation as well.

Despite all of the important steps Kentucky has taken at the State level to address this epidemic, the Commonwealth still suffers from some of the highest drug overdose rates in the country, driven by prescription drug pain killers, heroin, and more recently fentanyl, a synthetic opioid that is more powerful than heroin. Republicans and Democrats are working together to identify bipartisan solutions to this challenge, and I look forward to seeing that collaborative work continue.

ENERGY POLICY MODERNIZATION BILL

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, we have seen bipartisanship work many times over the past year in this Senate. We have the latest example of it before us right now. The Energy Policy Modernization Act is the result of months of hard work across the aisle. It passed the committee with overwhelming bipartisan support. It is broad bipartisan energy legislation that can help bring our energy policies in line with today's demands, while preparing us for tomorrow's opportunities. It will help Americans produce more energy. It will help Americans pay less for energy. It will help Americans save energy. It will also give us the opportunity to strengthen America's long-term national security.

I thank the chair and ranking member of the Energy Committee for their hard work to develop this bill. I thank them for their hard work managing it on the floor. Thirty-eight amendments have been brought to the floor so far and 32 amendments have been adopted already. Democrats offered some, Republicans offered some, and both parties have seen amendments from their side adopted.

This is a robust, bipartisan energy debate, and it is providing the latest example of a Senate that is back to

work for the American people. We are not finished yet, though, not at all. There will be more opportunities for debate and consideration as we move toward the finish line on this important bipartisan legislation. Let's keep working together as we have been. Let's pass another important policy the American people deserve.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The minority leader is recognized.

FLINT, MICHIGAN, WATER CRISIS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I join in commending the managers of this bill that is on the floor, but before we wash off to a congratulatory phase of this legislation, there has to be an opportunity to work something out on Flint, MI, and the tremendous problems they have.

There are 100,000 people today who are afraid to drink the water. Yesterday I had a picture showing the water, the yellow-green color of the water. The water is so impure, so dirty, so nasty that General Motors, which manufactures automobile parts, had to suspend using the water because it was corroding their instruments in their manufacturing facilities. But during that period of time, people were still looking to drink the only water they could.

We have 9,000 children who have been badly affected by lead poisoning. These little boys and girls will never be what they could be because lead poisoning for children is irreversible.

I hope we can work something out on the Stabenow-Peters amendment because it is very important for the people of Michigan and an example of what we need to do to help the country with these problems we have when the Federal Government must step in.

The Governor of Michigan, who preaches about how bad government is, of course looked to us when the problems got so dire in Michigan.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that at the conclusion of my leader remarks the junior Senator from Maine be recognized for 10 minutes, and if he feels it appropriate, I will remain on the floor for him following my remarks so that he could have a colloquy with me.

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

CLEAN ENERGY

Mr. REID. Mr. President, in 1882 Thomas Edison invented the first electricity grid. He, of course, had done electricity before that, but he is virtually responsible for the modern-day electric grid. It was only 4 years later that George Westinghouse improved upon Edison's invention, and he gave us an electric grid that is almost iden-

tical to what we have today. That was 1882, and in 2016 we are doing it the same way we did back then. So the grid technology the utility companies rely on today is 130 years old.

America's grid system makes money for utilities by generating electricity at central powerplants and delivering power to customers through power lines. That is because of George Westinghouse and Thomas Edison's programs. Costs for the infrastructure are paid by all customers based on how much power they consume, and the more electricity we use, the more we pay. This utility business model made sense for 130 years. It makes no sense anymore.

Utilities never imagined that families and businesses would be able to generate their own electricity for a price cheaper than the utility powerplants. Utilities never considered that consumers would rather pay to make their homes more efficient than pay for power they don't need and don't want. Utilities didn't expect Americans would grow to believe that reducing climate-changing carbon pollution is a priority—and it is.

The big power companies were wrong. Americans have embraced renewable energy and are investing in it more and more. I see it every time I go home. The roofs of homes and businesses throughout Nevada are dotted with solar panels. One can see them shining on the roofs. These houses, office buildings, and hotels are generating much of their own clean energy. It wasn't that way a decade ago. In 2005, only 7,000 American homes and businesses had their own renewable energy systems. That same year, after we passed the Energy Policy Act—one of its provisions encouraged States to adopt net metering provisions so that Americans would and could install renewable energy systems on their homes and businesses. That means a family with solar panels receives a credit from the utility for the clean power they generate. As a result, 43 States now have net metering. These net metering policies have been an incredible success. Today more than 500,000 American families and businesses have their own renewable energy system.

Less than 11 years ago, there were 7,000 solar installations in homes and businesses, today more than half a million. That is a 7,000-percent increase over 11 years ago. Producing cleaner energy at home is mainstream today. Yet, in spite of all of this progress, there are those who want to turn back time and take away Americans opportunity to generate their own clean, affordable energy.

Why are they doing this? Because they don't want competition from families and businesses. They want to work the way they have for 130 years. The Koch brothers and the fossil fuel pals have attacked our blossoming energy industry, the clean energy industry, at every turn. Any time we try to do something, they move in. They have