

that reflects the needs of a 21st century economy that will depend on a reliable, modernized electric grid.

As a Member of the House of Representatives, I introduced bipartisan, comprehensive energy legislation in each of the three previous Congresses and, as a member of that body's Energy and Commerce Committee, examined and investigated the energy crisis in California and the massive blackouts in the Northeast two summers ago.

Out of these two fiascos emerged a common theme: Without an aggressive rehabilitation and modernization of this Nation's transmission grid, we are bound for more brownouts, blackouts, and forced outages, and an inability to deal with the capacity needs of an economy that grows in the future.

Earlier this year, I introduced, along with Senators LANDRIEU and LOTT, S. 498, the Interstate Transmission Act, which addresses the fundamental elements necessary for a successful electricity policy. The bill sets out to achieve three goals:

No. 1, to ensure reliability;

No. 2, to modernize the transmission grid;

No. 3, to reaffirm the role of State and Federal regulators.

In this year's State of the Union Address, President Bush challenged the Congress to pass an energy bill that modernizes the electricity grid. S. 498 achieves exactly that goal. How do we do it?

No. 1, mandatory reliability standards. The Interstate Transmission Act makes a mandatory set of reliability standards for the electric grid. Currently, the North American Electric Reliability Council, or, as we call it, NERC, has standards and guidelines and criteria for assuring the transmission of electricity through the system is secure and reliable. However, compliance with the standards of NERC is voluntary. It is not subject to any Government oversight.

The standards in our bill are the product of consensus and cooperation, and the language is identical to the reliability language from the energy conference report that received 58 votes in the Senate.

In its 2004 report on the U.S.-Canadian blackout of 2003, the bilateral committee tasked with investigating the blackout made as its No. 1 recommendation that Congress enact mandatory reliability standards.

Without mandatory rules on the books for reliability standards, we will continue to leave our grid and our country vulnerable to another massive blackout like the one the Northeast experienced.

No. 2, we need to attract new investment in transmission. While investment in the generation sector of electricity has resulted in the construction of new powerplants, these gains in supply are negated by a substandard electric transmission grid. It is estimated that the transmission investment over the past 25 years has declined at a rate of \$115 million per year.

Additional research further indicates that there needs to be an investment of at least \$56 billion in the transmission sector to upgrade existing lines and add additional capacity in order to meet existing peak electricity demands over the course of the next decade. It is currently projected, however, that the industry will only spend an average of \$3 billion each year during the decade on upgrades and new transmission lines.

Wall Street is not promoting the transmission sector as a worthy investment. Why? Because it is not particularly profitable to invest in transmission today because it takes over 30 years to realize gains on transmission investments. Even with the good news we continue to hear about the economy, people can invest in other places and realize greater profits and quicker returns on their investment. Thus regulators must implement policies that ensure quicker, more attractive returns on investment in transmission.

The legislation I have introduced allows FERC to adopt transmission rules to promote capital investment in the system, improve operation of the system, and allow for returns to investors reflecting financial, operational, and other risks inherent in transmission investments.

Let me give you a great example of how innovative capital investments can spur the upgrade of the grid. It is estimated that electricity consumption in the West has grown 60 percent in the last 20 years. Yet transmission capacity has only grown 20 percent.

Last week, the Governors of California, Nevada, Utah, and Wyoming unveiled the "Frontier Line Project," a series of new transmission lines spanning 1,300 miles from Wyoming to California. Knowing of how fast southern California and Nevada are growing, it would seem that as an investor, one would naturally be drawn to providing capital to build out this project. Yet these Governors are relying on State money and matching funds from DOE to make up the \$2 billion it will cost to have the lines up and running by 2011. Granted the utility customers receiving the power will pay back the States for the project, but is the rate of return on what looks like such a needed project so low that we have to ask cash-strapped States to put money upfront to pay for these lines?

Mr. President, I sense the need to conclude. I believe my colleagues understand just how severe the challenge and the threat is to this country. We have to address these three things. We have to have a vibrant transmission grid. The Interstate Transmission Act will accomplish all these goals.

In the State of the Union Address, the President made it clear that 4 years of debate is enough; Congress needs to pass legislation that makes America more secure and less dependent upon foreign energy. I agree with the President that 4 years is enough. A fundamental, sound economy is only as

stable as a fundamental, sound energy policy. I urge my colleagues to support S. 498. Let's get back on track and be prepared for the future.

NATIONAL PARKS WEEK

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, one of the things that all of us enjoy a great deal and are very proud of are our national parks. I call attention to this week, which is National Parks week, April 18 to 24. It is the time when we can recognize all of those wonderful places that have been set aside. We will have a number of events take place this week to commemorate our national parks.

Famed western author Wallace Stegner once said:

National parks are the best idea we ever had. Absolutely American, absolutely democratic—they reflect us at our best rather than our worst.

Our uniquely American idea began with the creation of Yellowstone Park, the world's first national park, in 1872. I am very proud to say that this park is in Wyoming, my home State. As a matter of fact, I grew up 25 miles out of the gates of Yellowstone Park, and I certainly believe it is one of the great parks we have.

Since that time, of course, we have adopted more. We have exported and adopted worldwide this idea of parks, something of which we can be very proud. America's gift to the world is the theme of our National Parks Week this year, a very fitting theme.

Each year, more than 260 million people from all over the world visit our 388 national park units in our national park system. Collectively, of course, these sites reflect our heritage. We have an amazing array of resources, whether it is Teton Park, the Everglades of Florida, or Alaska, and the Service includes natural resources, cultural resources, historic sites commemorating events, significant people and places in our history, and memorials to fallen defenders of our Nation. Visitors to the parks enjoy these through the services provided by employees and, increasingly, the park volunteers and partners. I am amazed at the number of people who volunteer to not only show people around the parks but to do much of the work there.

I recognize and thank these employees, these volunteers, the partners who work in organizations that support the foundations of our parks. I certainly suggest to all of you that you give some thought this week to our national parks.

As the chairman of the subcommittee, I will work to continue to assure the national parks meet the standard of our world today.

SENATOR JIM JEFFORDS

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, it is with sadness and appreciation I come to the floor today to speak about the announcement my colleague from

Vermont, Senator JEFFORDS, just made this afternoon in Burlington. He announced he will retire from the Senate at the end of his current term.

Not surprisingly, Senator JEFFORDS went back to his native State, our native State, of Vermont to make the announcement. When I called him this morning to talk with him, I said, "JIM, how are you doing?" He said, "The air is so clear and so nice here in Vermont." He was speaking about the fact, of course, that he felt so much at peace. I know that is the case because JIM and I have known each other and we have worked with each other since the days, long ago, when he was the attorney general of Vermont and I was prosecuting criminals as State's Attorney of Chittenden County.

Our wives, Liz Jeffords and Marcelle Leahy, knew each other even before that from their high school days in Burlington. When JIM and I speak of our wives, we have to admit, we both married way above ourselves. We both chose extremely well. Our thoughts and thanks today are also with Liz and their children, Leonard and Laura.

JIM JEFFORDS is beloved by the people of Vermont, as well as by millions of Americans nationwide who have come to know him through the courage and independence he showed in making the difficult decision to become an Independent. Since then, JIM has had a national following. He has never had more public support and popularity in Vermont than he does today.

Though many Americans outside of Vermont only came to know of his independence in recent years, the truth is that, throughout his public service, JIM Jeffords has shown that same streak of Vermont independence. It is deep, it is wide, and it is genuine—from his days as a State senator from Rutland County, to being Attorney General, to being a Member of the House of Representatives, to being a Senator.

JIM has ably continued the Vermont legacy of national leadership on the environment in the tradition of Senator Bob Stafford of Vermont, from JIM's early days in the other body, to his chairmanship and now being ranking member in the Environment and Public Works Committee in this body.

Vermonters, no matter what their political affiliation, are good stewards of the gorgeous land that surrounds us. With our pristine mountains and lush valleys, we have sometimes said we have air so clean it has never been breathed. That is the air JIM JEFFORDS was enjoying this morning in Vermont.

So we consider the pollution that creeps across our borders from dirty powerplants upwind of our State to be an offense not only against our health but against the natural environment we want to enjoy and pass on to our children and grandchildren. JIM JEFFORDS has been a stalwart national leader in that fight.

JIM JEFFORDS also feels passionately about improving education in America and his imprint can be found on innumerable laws and initiatives over the years in pursuit of that goal.

Children with disabilities, they especially have had a champion in Senator JEFFORDS.

Senator JEFFORDS of Vermont and I have also been partners in defending the hard-working dairy farmers of our States and—I might say—of a lot of other States. Vermonters and I will miss the seniority that he has gained in this body, which has been put to so many good purposes not only for our States but for our Nation.

When the time comes for him to carve his initials in his desk and retire from the Senate, JIM JEFFORDS will leave with a legacy of principled public service of which he and Vermonters can be proud.

I know that, for the Senator from Vermont, nothing compares to the scarce and precious days he has been able to spend on his farm in Shrewsbury. We are both native Vermonters and we feel that tug of the land. Our colleagues may remember the time years ago when he broke his leg doing farm chores.

He was doing them instead of hiring somebody else because it felt good. He believed it brought him closer to his native State. Down the road I am sure that my good friend looks forward to a time when those precious days at home will be a little less scarce.

So with fondness and with appreciation, I will conclude with a phrase that was often heard from Vermonters, even seen on bumper stickers during his last reelection campaign: Thanks, JIM.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, if the distinguished chairman of the committee would allow me to say a few words prior to getting back on the important legislation before us, JIM JEFFORDS, above all else, is a gentleman. I am so sorry he is not going to be running for reelection. The people of Vermont would have elected him again, as they have on so many occasions.

The reason I mentioned what a gentleman he is, as everyone knows, he made a very important decision a few years ago that changed the balance of power in the Senate. I can remember his telling me of the difficulty of the decision he made, not because of what he wanted to do—he knew it was the right thing—but how it affected his friends with whom he had served for so long. He mentioned specifically Senator WARNER.

I know the decision he has made today was a difficult one for him, as it was when he switched the balance of power in the Senate and in the country. I am sure he believes, as he indicated to me last night in a private meeting I had with him, he is making the right decision, but he hates to let down his friends. I want everyone to know within the sound of my voice that JIM JEFFORDS has not let us down. He is going to finish this term with dignity.

JIM JEFFORDS is an interesting man. I don't know of a recent Senator or House Member who could walk into a restaurant in Washington and other places in the country and people would stand and clap for him, give him a cheer. He is a man who is revered and loved around the country.

He was so kind to me in my last reelection. I asked him if he could send a fundraising letter for me. He did. It was the most successful fundraising event I did during my whole reelection campaign. He is somebody who is so well thought of around the country.

He has done a wonderful job as chairman of the Environment and Public Works Committee. The record now is pretty clear. This is his love. But to show the dignity and class of this man, that wasn't part of the deal in making the arrangements to become part of our caucus. That was done after he had made the decision.

He is a fighter. I realized that when, as the chairman of the Energy and Water Subcommittee of Appropriations, we didn't put enough money, Senator DOMENICI and I, in that bill for alternative energy. And, frankly, I didn't have a lot of seniority at the time, but it was enough to be chairman of that subcommittee. But Senator DOMENICI had a lot of seniority. He was a member of Senator DOMENICI's party, and he took us both on and won. He offered an amendment on the floor of the Senate and opposed REID and DOMENICI and JEFFORDS won.

I have great respect and admiration for him as being a person who believes a certain way, and he won't let anyone get in the way of his beliefs.

Those people he met with before he decided to make that decision a number of years ago, to a man and to a woman because there was at least one woman there, would acknowledge that he is their friend.

I will have more to say about JIM JEFFORDS at a later time. But I want everyone to know within the sound of my voice that America is a better place because of JIM JEFFORDS.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, the Senator from Montana is recognized.

Mr. BAUCUS. Mr. President, not too many years ago, Senator Mike Mansfield, a great former Senator from Montana, would have breakfast every morning with Senator George Aiken of Vermont. That helped develop a strong relationship between the two of them. It helped bridge party differences. In addition to the goodwill of Senator George Aiken of Vermont, those daily breakfasts contributed to the collegiality in the Senate.

I like to think that there is something about Vermont, about the people of Vermont, that is basic. They are down to earth. They know their roots. Their rudder is well set. They are good people, commonsense people. That is why they elected George Aiken to come to the Senate.

It must also be why they elected JIM JEFFORDS because JIM JEFFORDS is a

real person. What he says is true. He doesn't speak in long paragraphs or long treatises because he doesn't have to. He gets straight to the point. He is a man of few words because he doesn't have to equivocate, doesn't have to qualify, doesn't have to dissemble. He just gets straight to the point.

I have found that in my relationship with that wonderful man, JIM JEFFORDS. We work together on the Environment and Public Works Committee. Time and time again he turns to me, defers to me, and says: Max, whatever you want to do, that is fine with me.

I know that he is also saying: Just keep me informed of what you are doing. And I do. It is a wonderful personal relationship. We know each other. We trust each other eminently, immediately. We don't have to ask questions such as: What do you really mean? We don't question assumptions. We just know.

That is JIM JEFFORDS.

It has been said that he believes strongly in a few issues, and he does. The environment certainly is one. There are other issues in which my friend from Vermont believes. If you will pardon the overworked phrase, one might possibly disagree with JIM, but he does so in such an agreeable manner that you don't know that there is really a disagreement.

It has been said on the floor of the Senate not too long ago that it is hard to name a Senator who could walk into a restaurant and get the same applause, stand-up applause, as JIM JEFFORDS has so many times around this country.

It is true, he does and he did. It is because people recognize his intestinal fortitude. It took a lot of courage for him to decide he was, after all, an Independent and not a Republican. It was a very difficult decision. But he did it. He did it on the basis of principle. People know that. They see that. They sense that, and they understand that. That is why they stand and applaud JIM JEFFORDS. It is not just the United States, it is in other cities around the world, where people would stand up and applaud when the U.S. Senator from Vermont would walk into the room. In his usual way, JIM would be very humble about it, and it would not go to his head. He would not take it seriously. Obviously, it was not something he disagreed with, but it didn't go to his head.

I am hard-pressed to think of any man I know who is as wonderful as my good friend and colleague from Vermont. I am sad to see him retire. The Senate needs more people like Senator JEFFORDS. I hope whoever replaces him as Senator from Vermont is in the mold of JIM JEFFORDS.

I yield the floor.

OBSERVANCE OF THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I rise today to honor the victims and commemorate

the 90th anniversary of the tragic Armenian Genocide, where over 1.5 million Armenian men, women and children were systematically killed, and over 500,000 Armenians were displaced. This was the first genocide of the 20th century, and one where the international community failed to intervene to stop the killing.

We have learned a great deal since those dark days. We learned that the world cannot sit on the sidelines as systematic massacres of innocents take place. We learned that the rule of law must be upheld, and that violations of law must have consequences. And, we learned that the Armenian people are a strong, proud and persevering people who could not be defeated. Today, hundreds of thousands of Armenian Americans live in the United States, and I am proud to represent a thriving Armenian-American population—3,000 strong—in Nevada.

But we must never forget the painful lessons learned from the Armenian Genocide. This week, events around my State and the Nation will recognize this important anniversary. I am grateful for the strong and active work of the Armenian-American community in Las Vegas, who will hold their annual commemoration on April 24. To the Armenian American Cultural Society of Las Vegas and to the work of Mr. John Dadaian, I say thank you for all that you have done for the people of Nevada, and Armenia.

I am also proud of the fine work done by the University of Nevada's Center of Holocaust, Genocide and Peace Studies to inform the public about the horrors of the Armenian Genocide. Raising awareness and educating today's generations about the horrors of genocide is crucial for a safer, more peaceful future. That is why I was so proud to join my friend and colleague, Senator ENSIGN, in cosponsoring a resolution commemorating the signing of the Genocide Convention.

The people of Armenia suffered greatly during the 20th century. We cannot allow genocide to occur ever again. So today I come to the Senate floor to honor the victims of the Armenian Genocide and pledge to uphold their sacrifice by standing against genocide and the systematic killing of innocents wherever it may occur again.

NATIVE AMERICAN APOLOGY RESOLUTION

Mr. BROWNBACK. Mr. President, I rise today to speak about a joint resolution that seeks to address an issue that has lain unresolved for far too long. That issue is our Nation's relationship with the Native peoples of this land.

Long before 1776 and the establishment of the United States of America, this land was inhabited by numerous nations. Like our Nation, many of these peoples held a strong belief in the Creator and maintained a powerful spiritual connection to this land. Since

the formation of the American Republic, there have been numerous conflicts between our Government and many of these tribes conflicts in which warriors on all sides fought courageously and in which all sides suffered. However, even from the earliest days of the Republic, there existed a sentiment that honorable dealings and peaceful coexistence were preferable to bloodshed. Indeed, our predecessors in Congress in 1787 stated in the Northwest Ordinance, "The utmost good faith shall always be observed toward the Indians."

Many treaties were made between this Republic and the American Indian tribes. Treaties, as my colleagues in this Chamber know, are far more than words on a page. Treaties are our word, our bond. Treaties with other governments are not to be treated lightly. Unfortunately, too often the United States of America did not uphold its responsibilities as stated in its covenants with the Native American tribes. Too often our Government broke its oaths to the Native peoples.

I want my fellow Senators to know that the resolution I have introduced this week does not dismiss the valiance of our American soldiers who bravely fought for their families in wars between the United States and a number of the Indian tribes. Nor does this resolution cast all the blame for the various battles on one side or another. What this resolution does do is recognize and honor the importance of Native Americans to this land and to our Nation in the past and today—and offers an official apology to the Native peoples for the poor and painful choices our Government sometimes made to disregard its solemn word.

This is a resolution of apology and a resolution of reconciliation. It is a first step toward healing the wounds that have divided us for so long—a potential foundation for a new era of positive relations between tribal governments and the Federal Government. It is time—it is past time—for us to heal our land of division, all divisions, and bring us together as one people.

Before reconciliation, there must be recognition and repentance. Before there is a durable relationship, there must be understanding. This resolution will not authorize or serve as a settlement of any claim against the United States, nor will it resolve the many challenges still facing Native peoples. But it does recognize the negative impact of numerous deleterious Federal acts and policies on Native Americans and their cultures. Moreover, it begins the effort of reconciliation by recognizing past wrongs and repenting for them.

Martin Luther King, a true reconciler, once said, "The end is reconciliation, the end is redemption, the end is the creation of the beloved community." This resolution is not the end. But, perhaps it signals the beginning of the end of division and the faint first light and first fruits of the creation of beloved community.