

make policy. Lifetime appointments are a serious matter, and voting on a Supreme Court Justice is one of the most important decisions a Senator will ever make. Republicans approach this nomination with a clear set of guiding principles, and we will make every effort to determine whether Judge Sotomayor shares them.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, we're all interested in reforming health care. And while this debate has yet to fully play out, we already know one thing for sure: any action we take on this issue will affect every single American.

There is no doubt Americans are frustrated with the increasing cost of health care and that many are worried about losing the health care they have. Many Americans can't afford health care or have to choose between basic necessities and medical care they need. This is what is wrong with the current system, and we need to fix it.

Yet it is also true that many Americans are satisfied with the care they have. They like being able to see their doctor and being able to get the care they need, when they need it. These are the things that are right about patient-focused American-style healthcare, and that we wouldn't want to sacrifice.

So while both parties recognize that serious reform of our health care system is needed, we must also recognize the importance of getting it right. Americans want reform. The question is what kind of reform. Reform is necessary, but not all so-called reforms are necessarily good.

Based on some of the things we have been hearing out of Democrats in Washington in recent weeks, Americans have good reason to be concerned about what the future holds for health care.

The biggest concern is the talk of a Government takeover of health care. Americans suspect that what's being sold as a Government "option" would soon become the only option.

Those who like the care they have don't particularly like the idea of the people who brought us the Department of Motor Vehicles handling life or death health care decisions, like whether or not they are eligible for surgery or whether they qualify for a certain medicine according to some impersonal Government board in Washington. They don't want to rely on bureaucrats in Washington to get their phone calls returned or their office visits covered. But the prospect of a Government takeover of health care is becoming more and more real.

Democrats in the Senate want Government to play a dominant role in health care delivery. Both the chairmen of the Senate Finance and HELP Committees have said they want to produce legislation that relies on a Government-run plan. And nearly half of Senate Democrats have endorsed a

resolution stating that any health care reform must include a Government-run plan.

Democrats in the House of Representatives are circulating an outline of how they would like to change American health care. Their plan would create a Government-run insurance model that could limit patient choices. Americans who want to keep their health insurance plan should be allowed to do so. Yet one respected study showed that 118 million Americans could lose their current private insurance and end up in a Government plan if this proposal was enacted. The House Democrats' plan could also lead to the creation of a Government board that would determine what benefits and drugs are available to patients and what prices would be charged.

The administration also wants the Government to take a leading role in health care. During the campaign, the President said that if he were designing a system from scratch, he would probably "go ahead" with a single-payer system. The Secretary of Health and Human Services shares the President's belief that any reform must guarantee the inclusion of a Government plan.

The American people want health care decisions left up to families and doctors, not bureaucrats in Washington. They don't want a Government takeover that denies or delays the care they need, and they don't want politicians telling them how much or what kind they can have.

That is why many of us who recognize the need for reform will insist on making health care more affordable and accessible, while protecting the doctor-patient relationship and ensuring every American can get the care they need, when they need it. This is the kind of health care reform that Americans want, and this is the reform we will support.

I yield the floor.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will now be a period of morning business until 3 p.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, leadership time is reserved.

The Senator from Alaska is recognized.

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I recognize that the order is for Senators to speak for up to 10 minutes. I ask unanimous consent at this time to speak for 15 minutes.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

NUCLEAR ENERGY

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, several years back—actually, it was

further than several years, it was in the early 1990s—there was a popular culture sensation in kids' books. The books were entitled, "Where's Waldo." Those with kids probably remember the books. It was a great way to test your kids' eyes and areas of identification. This was crafted by a gentleman by the name of Martin Hansford. You try to find Waldo with his glasses and his red-and-white striped hat. He would be tucked in on the page somewhere, filled with lots of other colors, and you would have to hunt through the page. More often than not, Waldo was tucked in behind similar looking characters who would attract your attention. They played a central role in the overall picture but ultimately were not Waldo. I see the young pages nodding. They have all seen the "Where's Waldo?" books.

I do not want to take time this afternoon talking about the "Where's Waldo." books, but I will tell you I am concerned and the point of my comments today is the concern I have that the Obama administration has engaged in a new game of "Where's Waldo" and doing so with our energy policies, only this time instead of "Where's Waldo" it is "Where's Nuclear." We will need to search carefully to find where the administration has hidden the resurgence of nuclear energy.

The confluence of high oil prices this past summer and the desire to reduce harmful greenhouse gas emissions has certainly and justifiably promoted the interest in and development of renewable and alternative forms of energy, from more mature technologies, such as wind and solar, to greater awareness of the potential for geothermal, biomass, ocean tidal energy, along with greater energy efficiency and conservation measures.

Congress in both the Bush administration and now the Obama administration was active in promoting these fields, in extending the tax breaks, mandating levels of ethanol to be used, updating our energy efficiency standards, and providing for incentives for energy conservation measures.

We are expecting to tackle a climate change bill at some point this Congress. In what shape or form certainly remains to be seen at this point in time, but we know that we must work to slow and reduce our carbon emissions. There is certainly a role for all of these technologies and increased energy efficiency to play in our energy future. But ultimately, as the new administration lays out its energy policy priorities, I have to ask the question: Where is nuclear?

In an interview with "U.S. News & World Report," Secretary of Energy Steven Chu says:

[t]he biggest gains, in terms of decreasing the country's energy bill, the amount of carbon dioxide we put into the atmosphere, and our dependency on foreign oil, will come from energy efficiency and conservation in the next 20 years.

Our Energy Secretary, Secretary Chu, has basically said that when it

comes to making reductions in emissions, it is going to come from energy efficiency and conservation.

I am absolutely all for conservation, but, once again, nuclear power, the one energy source that currently provides emissions-free, stable, baseload power, along with large-scale, high-paying job creation across the United States, seems to be missing from the Obama administration's energy plans.

What is the current state of play when it comes to nuclear? The map behind me indicates where we have nuclear facilities throughout the Nation. The different colors are based on years of operation. The blue triangles are nuclear facilities that have been in operation from between 30 and 39 years. That is the majority of the reactors. We have 52 that have been in operation for about a 40-year period, 42 for a 20 to 29-year period.

What this map demonstrates quite clearly is not only where in the country our nuclear facilities lie, but the fact that we simply do not have any new nuclear plants that have been ordered in this country since 1978. We have 104 operating nuclear powerplants across the country that are providing right around 20 percent of our electric power and approximately 75 percent of our carbon-free power.

Again, no new nuclear plants have been ordered in this country since 1978. But we have seen a resurgence of interest that has led to license applications for 26 new reactors at 17 sites. These applications have all been docketed by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission with construction on the first plant expected to begin in the year 2012. This is a very welcome revival. This comes at a time when we know our economy is suffering.

At a recent Senate Energy and Natural Resources hearing, the president and CEO of the Nuclear Energy Institute, Mr. Marvin Fertel, noted that to date, investment in new nuclear energy plants over the past 2 to 3 years has created 15,000 jobs. If all 26 new reactors currently in the licensing process are built, that would result in an annual average of over 100,000 new jobs, according to a recent study by Oxford Economics. Over 20,000 long-term jobs would be generated to operate those plants. Those new jobs would allow nuclear energy to continue to make the contribution that it does today as our energy needs grow.

We know that nuclear plants also play a key role in reducing our carbon emissions and meeting our climate change goals, while also helping to mitigate economic harm. In 2007 alone, nuclear power resulted in the avoidance of almost 700 million metric tons of carbon emissions.

How much is 700 million metric tons of carbon emissions? It is more carbon than Canada collectively emits each year. It is roughly twice the amount of carbon emitted by all privately owned vehicles in the United States on an annual basis. It is safe to say that nu-

clear power avoids a significant amount of carbon emissions, and it brings our expenses down as well.

An EIA analysis of last year's Lieberman-Warner climate change legislation showed that a new nuclear plant construction would reduce carbon prices in 2030 by 33 percent, residential electricity prices by 20 percent, and residential natural gas prices by 19 percent compared to a scenario where new nuclear construction is limited.

Not only is nuclear emission free, nuclear also provides a constant reliable source of baseload power. This is an issue we hear time and again in the Energy Committee, an issue that renewable and alternative energy sources, as much as we like them, struggle with this reality of reliable baseload. After all, we certainly know, regardless what part of the country you are from, the Sun does not always shine, and the wind does not always blow. On the other hand, in 2008, the average operating capacity for the 104 nuclear plants in the United States was over 90 percent—well above that of coal-fired power generation.

If we look at the chart, in terms of the capacity factor and what nuclear can provide on a sustainable, reliable basis, we have nuclear and then coal coming in a good second. But as we look to wind, hydro, solar, even oil and gas, if what we are looking for is a level of reliability, the answer is nuclear. It is the type of dependable power that our utilities need to operate efficiently and effectively.

This year's Gallup Environmental poll shows 59 percent of Americans support the use of nuclear power, which is a new high, but support for nuclear is nothing new in the international community. Since 1978, when the last nuclear reactor was ordered in the United States, over 250 new reactors were constructed overseas. Japan intends to increase the amount of electricity it gets from nuclear from where they are today at 30 percent to over 40 percent by the year 2020. France already gets 75 percent of its electricity from nuclear.

I think the American people get it and the international community certainly gets it. Nuclear power is a broadly accepted form of safe energy, and it is time that we in Washington understood this as well.

It is clear that nuclear provides good-paying jobs at home, reduces our carbon emissions, provides reliable baseload power, and it is supported by the American people. So what is not clear is where the new administration is on nuclear. While there has been some mention of nuclear energy being part of the overall energy strategy, the actions of the administration do not support the claim.

So far, the administration has sought to kill Yucca Mountain as a long-term repository for spent fuel. They have shown an unwillingness to increase the loan guarantee program and the funding levels to support construction of new nuclear plants, and they have fo-

cused on renewable and alternative fuel developments to reduce our carbon emissions without any mention of nuclear energy. So where nuclear energy truly stands with the current administration is a bit of a mystery to me. Let's talk about Yucca Mountain.

The administration seems to view Yucca Mountain in the same vein as the Guantanamo Bay prison. Both are politically uncomfortable solutions to a toxic problem, and they are going to be shut down, never mind that we do not have an alternative plan for either one of them. So what are we going to do with the thousands of tons of spent nuclear fuel and defense-related, high-level waste that is spread out all across the country?

That map we saw earlier with all of those dots all across the country is where we are keeping the nuclear waste. It is sitting right there spread out across this country.

How many tens of billions of dollars in liability will the American taxpayers be on the hook for when the administration finally abandons all hope of fulfilling the Nuclear Waste Policy Act's already well past 1998 deadline for a permanent repository?

Billions of dollars have been spent over the last 25 years in characterization and engineering development for the Yucca Mountain license. It is hard to imagine a better understood piece of real estate on the planet. Onsite dry cask storage is a safe but a temporary solution, and it does not remove the need for a permanent repository.

In the meantime, the nuclear industry faces uncertainty regarding spent fuel liabilities, States have no permanent disposition path for defense-related waste, and the Federal Government cannot address tens of billions of dollars in taxpayer liabilities.

So far the alternative plan seems to be to leave the waste at its current location, and we will talk about it.

I mentioned the Loan Guarantee Program. The administration seems to be just as confused about its support for the new reactor construction needed to maintain nuclear energy's current contribution. As part of the 2005 Energy Policy Act, Congress created the Loan Guarantee Program to help us develop the 21st century energy system our country needs.

The Loan Guarantee Program provides support for a broad portfolio of clean energy technologies, from energy efficiency and renewable energy systems to pollution control and vehicle technology used to advance nuclear and carbon capture projects. It is a widely popular program. Despite the current limitation of \$42 billion for the program, the Department of Energy has received applications for over \$120 billion in new projects.

Of the \$42 billion for the overall program, \$18.5 billion was made available for the new nuclear technology. Over \$93 billion in support has been requested. Mr. President, \$18.5 billion has been made available for the new nuclear technology, but \$93 billion has

been requested. It is oversubscribed by a factor of five.

We can see on this chart that \$93 billion has been requested; \$18.5 billion available. The others—the renewable, nuclear, fossil, mix—when you look at what we had intended with the Loan Guarantee Program and how we envisioned that would move forward, I think we can clearly underestimate where that support would be for the nuclear programs.

It is important to note that the Loan Guarantee Program is also entirely self-funded and does not represent a handout to the industry and does not expose the taxpayer to default risks. The total loan volume for the program is established by the Appropriations Committee, but any potential defaults are covered by fees paid by the applicants, not by the taxpayer. So the industry does get the help, the assistance—that backstop, if you will—of the loan guarantee from the Federal Government, but they pay for it. That seems reasonable.

During debate on the stimulus bill, there was a \$50 billion increase in the size of the Loan Guarantee Program that was sought. Again, this is a \$42 billion program with \$120 billion in application requests. But increasing the size of the program authority was shot down several months back because of fears that construction of new nuclear plants would take up the bulk of the loan guarantee authority. So where was the administration's support for the Loan Guarantee Program during this debate? This program helps all forms of clean energy technologies, but this increase was denied because nuclear was in the mix.

For 10 years now, we have consistently heard about the urgency of global climate change and the need to address it. I agree. There is clearly evidence of climate change. I see the real-life impacts in my State of Alaska. But I do find it more than a little bit inconsistent that the same entities that would press for immediate action would deny nuclear a role in the solution.

Perhaps the current administration thinks global climate change isn't as important as developing a centrally planned electrical system based on renewable energy that the administration believes is in the best interest of the public. Renewable energy sources will be important and deserve solid support, but, as you can see from this chart—and I apologize because it is very busy—we could double the amount of electricity produced by renewable resources and it still wouldn't equal what we currently receive from nuclear power.

So if you look at our nuclear electric power, 100 percent of nuclear power goes to generation of electricity; 21 percent of the sector creates our electric power here. Looking up to renewable energy and how it feeds into consumption, whether it is transportation, industrial, residential and commercial,

or electric, if we were to increase—double—our renewable energy, again we still don't come close to what we are able to provide currently with nuclear.

So going back to the issue of climate change, I believe it is important to ask the question as to whether this issue of climate change can really wait for renewables to develop to such a scale that they will become the primary source of energy. The point I wish to leave folks with is that we need to be advancing all technologies equitably.

Nuclear energy is the most robust form of nonemitting base load power we have available to us, bar none. Over the last 20 years, the industry has demonstrated its ability to operate these reactors efficiently and safely to the great benefit of our country.

Mr. President, I mentioned it earlier. The rest of the world gets it, the American public gets it, but where is the administration on nuclear? The time to demonstrate our resolve for new nuclear energy development is now. We as a nation cannot afford additional delay if we are truly serious about how we reduce our carbon emissions while maintaining access to affordable energy.

It is time for the administration to come forward with its plan for the inclusion of nuclear power in its overall energy policy and what it intends to do with existing and future spent nuclear fuel. We shouldn't be left standing here asking: Where is nuclear?

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Delaware.

EXTENSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, do I understand that the time for morning business expires at 3 o'clock?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. That is correct.

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to extend that for an extra 10 minutes.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, while my colleague from Alaska is still in the Chamber, let me bring her some good news, as one on our side who is a strong advocate for nuclear power and who believes it is incredibly important that we do it safely. I chair the Senate Subcommittee on Clean Air and Nuclear Safety, and, as she mentioned, we have now, I think, 17 applications to build 26 new nuclear powerplants. I think we have \$18 billion in loan guarantees.

One of the things we have done this year is we have taken off the time restriction on the loan guarantees so they can go beyond the next couple of years, if needed. Hopefully, they won't be needed, but at least the amount of money will be there and available for a number of years.

Another piece we had put in the stimulus package was a provision that

says that not only can renewables—solar, wind, geothermal, and all the rest—be able to participate in the manufacturing tax credits to create—if you will, manufacture—the components of solar, wind, geothermal, but also nuclear. If we are going to build 26, 27 new nuclear powerplants in the next decade or two, I sure don't want to be getting the components from China, South Korea, Japan, or someplace in Europe. We should get the components from manufacturers that are here, and part of the stimulus package has been designed to do that.

The other thing I would mention regarding cap and trade on climate change, if we actually take that approach—and my hope is we will—just by its very nature, being a producer of electricity but not one that creates carbon dioxide, money will flow in the cap-and-trade approach to utilities which use nuclear energy, which will develop more nuclear energy.

So I appreciate the concerns the Senator from Alaska raises.

I might add that just 3 weeks ago, I hosted a roundtable at MIT, near Boston, and we brought to the table some of the smartest people around—from MIT and from Harvard—who focused a lot on spent nuclear fuel and what to do with it. As you know, a lot of the fuel rods, I am told, still have 80 or 90 percent of the energy in the spent fuel rods. One of the questions I asked was, What should we do about it? Yucca Mountain is on hold for now. And I was pleasantly surprised to hear a unanimous opinion from everybody there who said, for now, maybe for the next 30, 40, 50, 60 years, even longer, the spent fuel rods, which are stored on site with our nuclear powerplants in dry cask storage, are perfectly adequate in terms of providing security and safekeeping for the spent fuel.

In the meantime—and I would hope the Senator would join those of us who are advocates of nuclear power, would also understand we need to address the spent fuel issue, and would work with us to help fund technology for reprocessing and recycling to make sure we don't wait 50 or 60 years to do that but we get started a lot sooner.

So it is not all gloom and doom, but I appreciate the concerns the Senator from Alaska has raised and very much look forward to working with her on these issues, as we do on so many others, hopefully to good effect, and I thank her.

AFGHANISTAN/PAKISTAN CODEL

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, I missed you in Afghanistan/Pakistan. I understand you and another CODEL were there at the same time we were, and I think we missed you by a day or so in both countries. I don't presume to speak for you or for those in your CODEL. We had five in ours. Senator MARK UDALL, Senator JEANNE SHAHEEN, Senator KAY HAGAN, Senator MARK BEGICH of Alaska, and I was privileged to be a part of that delegation.