

election day were foreseeable and could have been prevented.

Last year I started raising concerns about these new State voting laws and what they were going to do. As chairman of the Judiciary Subcommittee on Constitution, Civil Rights, and Human Rights, I chaired the first hearing to examine the potential impact of these laws in both Florida and Ohio. In both States we heard from experts and election administrators who warned that these new State laws would result in fewer registered voters, long delays on election day, confusion about ID requirements, and an increase in provisional ballots. This is just plain wrong.

In a country where we want every eligible American to get out and vote and we want higher percentages of participation, we have State legislatures inspired by ALEC dreaming up obstacles and ways to discourage voters. It is sickening to think of how many lives have been lost by patriotic Americans to protect our right to vote, and then to have these lobbyists, for their own political purposes, denying that right over and over to thousands of eligible American voters.

One of the strongest tools we have to ensure the right to vote and to make sure it is not denied on account of a voter's race, sex, or any other discriminatory basis is the Voting Rights Act. As we work to continue to perfect our Union, the importance of this law cannot be overstated. That is why the Voting Rights Act enjoys a broad spectrum of support.

In 2006 the Senate voted unanimously, 98 to 0, to reauthorize it. Just this year the Department of Justice used its authority under section 5 of the Voting Rights Act to object to new voter identification laws that threaten to disenfranchise hundreds of thousands of voters.

In Texas, according to the State's own data, more than 795,000 registered voters did not have the ID required under their brand-new law. In South Carolina the State's data indicated 240,000 registered voters were without the required ID and would not be able to vote under the State's law. In those two States alone, over 1 million people were going to be denied the right to vote, even though they were registered voters, because they didn't possess the newly defined voter ID in each of those States. That is more than 1 million registered voters, I repeat, who would have been turned away. Well, thanks to the Justice Department and court decisions, that didn't happen, but it would have. That was the plan.

Since the civil rights movement, women's suffrage movement, and other historic fights to expand the right to vote are now in the history books, some people think our generation's responsibility to protect the right to vote is over. They are just plain wrong. When groups such as the ALEC, with businesses, corporations, and conservative groups behind them, have an all-out effort to deny and discourage the

right to vote, we have a job ahead of us. We shouldn't be surprised that people all across America are angry about what happened in this election. These State legislatures, instead of encouraging people to exercise their civic duty, were doing their best to discourage them. It is time for us to get serious about this. So next Congress, after the first of the year, I am going to hold additional hearings on voting rights in my Judiciary subcommittee.

I am committed to thoroughly examining this issue. There is no excuse in America for standing in line 7 hours to vote, for goodness sake. Other countries that do this by paper ballot don't make people stand in lines that long and they calculate the results the same night. We should be embarrassed by what is going on, and the States should grow up and pay attention to what they are doing to this great democracy in America. They are undermining the right to vote just as surely as if they attacked it openly, by using these new obstacles they are creating—these IDs, limiting the early voting.

Listen, States such as Oregon and others have figured out people can vote by mail without fraud, people can have opportunities to vote extended through early voting and absentee voting and give people their voice in this democracy. If we want to restore the confidence of the American people in our government, we have to give them their voice on election day. Standing in line 7 hours is an embarrassment in every State where it happened, and we have to make sure it doesn't occur when it applies to Federal elections.

I know the tradition. State laws determine election standards. That is the way it goes. But when it comes to Federal elections, we have a voice in the process and we have to make sure we come together on a bipartisan basis to deal with it. I am pleased Chairman LEAHY and I are going to be able to work together to hold a hearing of the full Judiciary Committee next Wednesday, December 19, to continue to explore this issue, and then into the new Congress we will be proposing specific legislation to deal with this issue. Although another election season may have ended, our work to protect our Union and preserve our democracy has not.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Colorado.

RECOGNIZING THE LIFE OF RANDY ATKINSON

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Madam President, I rise today to first recognize the life of a very unique and remarkable Coloradan, and then I will speak to a cause that is near and dear to me, as it is I think to the Presiding Officer as well, and that is our wind energy industry and the threat it faces.

I wish to speak about a man by the name of Randy Atkinson whom we lost this year on October 9, 2012, at the way-

too-young age of 60. He was a firefighter. He dedicated himself to serving his community and, as he put it, brothers and sisters in Colorado's fire departments.

Randy was an example to all of us because he dedicated his entire adult life to helping others. He started at the age of 19, in 1972, by joining the Denver Fire Department and Denver Firefighters Local 858. Not long after that, he took a more active role in representing his fellow firefighters as an advocate and a legislative consultant for the Colorado Professional Firefighters and Denver Local 858. He was held in high esteem not just by his fellow firefighters but by Colorado legislators on both sides of the aisle. Why was that? He was intelligent. He was caring. He had a great sense of humor. We all appreciated that when we came into contact with him, whether we were Democrats or Republicans.

He was a leader and because of that he kept rising through the ranks. In 1995, he was elected president of the Colorado Professional Firefighters. In 2007, he was elected as vice president for the International Association of Firefighters in the 9th District. When he died, he was serving in both of those positions.

I know the Presiding Officer has a phenomenal crew of firefighters in her home State. We know what they did on 9/11 and what they do every day. Randy was a man who served in that spirit. While he represented firefighters, he always was fighting for fair pay and making sure those who stand up for us in times of hazard and emergency have the best possible safety equipment to carry out their dangerous and often unsung responsibilities. While at times Randy had to be pretty hard-nosed when it came to negotiating and standing up for firefighters, he always had a positive relationship with policymakers, even when he was tangling with them. I have to say I am glad we agreed more often than we disagreed.

Randy Atkinson was truly an admired figure. As I think about him, I wish we had more people such as Randy right here in Washington, DC. We would certainly get more done and we would have stronger relationships with one another.

Late this fall more than 500 of us gathered to celebrate his life, including family members, friends, and work associates. We laughed and we cried and showed our appreciation for his life and service. I was honored that day to be a part of that celebration.

I want to extend my sincerest condolences to his family, including his son Randy, Jr., and his two daughters, Brenda and Denisa. We all loved him, as I have said. I hope the viewers all understand how much I admired him, how hard he worked, and how grateful we are to have known him. I am honored to be able to stand here on the floor of the Senate, remembering Randy smiling, to recognize his life and his accomplishments and, above all, his

enduring spirit and his strong character. I think we have to keep his spirit alive in our attitudes and in our actions.

I thank the Chair for her interest in another firefighter.

WIND ENERGY TAX CREDIT

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Madam President, I now wish to turn to the wind production tax credit. The Presiding Officer has been in the chair listening on a number of occasions and she has been gracious in her interest and support of what we are trying to do.

This is my 26th speech urging all of us to extend the wind production tax credit. It is known simply as the PTC in the abbreviated form. It is going to expire in 4 weeks—less than 4 weeks, actually—if we don't extend it. I am so worried about what is going to happen to this important industry.

The PTC has created good-paying middle-class jobs in the wind energy industry not only in my own State—I have a bias about my own State—but all across the Nation. Almost every State has a stake in the wind energy industry. When we think about what the PTC has done, we realize it has also stimulated the growth of our clean energy economy as well as promoted clean energy security. The Presiding Officer serves on the Armed Services Committee so she knows the importance of energy to national security.

We have 75,000 jobs in the wind industry right now in Colorado. We are on track to produce 20 percent of our electricity through the wind, by harvesting the wind, by 2030. But if we let the PTC expire, estimates suggest we will lose half of those jobs. We would be down to 37,000 jobs. We also undermine our Nation's pursuit of true energy security.

Our inaction, although the tax credit hasn't expired, has halted further development in the wind energy industry because that set of leaders can't in good faith bring that capital to bear and make those investments if they think the wind energy credit will truly expire. We have had hundreds of layoffs in Colorado. The business has nearly ground to a halt, and we see that all over the country. Then we get a ripple effect in those communities because tax receipts go down, people aren't as upbeat about the future, and it is a downward spiral we have to end. We should be doing everything we can coming out of this tough economic recession—the great recession—to make strategic investments in our economy and in our energy portfolio.

So with that general outline of what we face, I wish to turn to the State of Maine today. The Presiding Officer and I have great respect for both of our Maine Senators. We are going to miss Senator SNOWE, and Senator COLLINS has been a strong supporter as well.

Maine is well positioned to become a major player in the wind energy industry going forward. Maine has the po-

tential for significant economic development and environmental benefits. In 2011, wind energy provided 2.9 percent of the Pine Tree State's power and Maine's wind farms power the equivalent of about 100,000 homes. The outlook for their wind energy industry is bright. The State has another 34 megawatts of wind power under construction and enough untapped potential to power three times the State's current electricity needs. Three times their needs will be powered by harvesting all the wind resources there. So I will say the PTC is crucial to their continued growth and the capacity they have to tap into their available wind resources.

Maine, of course, has a vast interior, but it also is on the coast. Right now Maine is New England's leading land-based wind producer, and experts predict it could become the leading offshore wind producer in the coming years. The University of Maine has a center called the Advanced Structures and Composites Center, and their research and development is paving the way for this additional offshore development.

There is also an expiring tax credit called the investment tax credit—the ITC—and that provides additional incentives. The ITC will be vital to the growth of offshore and distributed wind power development as well. It is also at risk. We need to include a discussion of the ITC as we consider the extenders package.

I have mentioned that what the wind projects do is to lift local economies. The Presiding Officer has a lot of rural economies in the north and the west of New York, a lot of agricultural-based economic activity. Wind power, when it is properly developed, is a cash crop that always comes in. As we face the consequences of this economic slowdown, wind power has helped a lot of local economies have additional revenue, economic activity, and jobs.

In that context, I wanted to talk about the Bull Hill Wind Project in Maine. It is in Hancock County, down here on the coast. I think it is called down east if one is from Maine. That project was just completed. It will generate \$100,000 annually in tax revenue, and it has supported about 100 jobs during the peak of the construction. That is a significant number of jobs in a rural county in a State such as Maine.

I have to put a pitch in for Colorado. This project uses wind turbines which are made by Vestas which manufactures blades, nacelles, and towers in Colorado.

Much like in Colorado, the production tax credit creates and sustains manufacturing jobs, and it is creating growth in Maine. I know we have some job numbers in the manufacturing sector that I will share with my colleagues. There are four facilities in Maine that produce components for the wind energy industry and the installed wind projects across the State to which I have alluded. Those jobs number

about 500—500 being actual jobs. Speaking of tax payments, property tax payments, about \$6 million comes in from those wind projects to local governments. That money helps infrastructure improvements and other vital services for local Maine communities.

So it is obvious that the growth of our domestic wind energy industry, aided by the wind production tax credit, has helped create jobs, encouraged energy security, and grown a clean energy economy in Maine and all across our country. It is really that simple. The wind energy PTC powers good-paying middle-class jobs. However, if we do not extend it—it is a bipartisan policy, by the way, and the father of the wind PTC is our own Senator GRASSLEY from Iowa—if we do not extend this, we are going to lose thousands of jobs. At a time when our economy is still in imbalance, that is not acceptable. It cannot happen in Maine, it cannot happen in Colorado, and it should not be happening to thousands of families across our country. So it is simple.

The PTC equals jobs. We need to pass it ASAP. Let's work together. Our inaction is stunting the growth of a 21st-century clean energy economic opportunity for us. Those jobs are not necessarily going to be lost if we do not do what we should do, but they are going to go to places such as China, Europe. The world is investing in big numbers in wind energy because of all the possibilities for economic development.

So let's, in sum, remember that the production tax credit equals jobs. The PTC equals jobs. Let's pass it as soon as possible. Time is running out. The clock is ticking.

I thank the Acting President pro tempore for her interest and for her support. New York has great wind energy potential.

With that, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

THE FISCAL CLIFF

Mr. CORKER. Madam President, I notice the Chamber is empty today, and I guess most of us are waiting to see if there is going to be an arrangement made between the President and Speaker BOEHNER on our fiscal cliff that is coming up in just a few weeks. I know all of us want to see that happen. I think each of us knows the very best thing that can happen for the economy in New York or Tennessee or any other place is for us to get this behind us and for businesses to begin this next year knowing that Congress and the White House have worked out an arrangement to put this fiscal issue in