

closes the environmental loophole for petcoke.

My amendment would require we make these changes before construction is allowed to begin on this pipeline. It is important because tar sands transported by the Keystone XL Pipeline—this Canadian company—will dramatically increase the amount of petcoke produced in this country.

In the year 2013 the United States produced a record amount of 57.5 million metric tons of petcoke.

According to the environmental impact statement for the Keystone XL Pipeline, the No. 1 priority of the Senate Republican majority, this pipeline will produce over 15,400 metric tons of petcoke every day.

Under current law all of this new petcoke would continue to be shipped to local communities for storage and disposal in the same large open piles we see in this photograph in Chicago. That isn't right. We in Congress should deal with the acres of petcoke piles that are already out there before we build a pipeline that will create 15,400 metric tons of it a day. Incidentally, the BP refinery that has created this mess is generating 6,000 tons a day. More than twice as much will come out of the Keystone XL Pipeline, the No. 1 Republican Senate majority issue, S. 1, Keystone XL Pipeline, Canadian company, 35 permanent jobs but 15,400 metric tons of petcoke every single day somewhere in America.

I hope my colleagues will support this amendment to treat petcoke for what it is. It is a dangerous byproduct that shouldn't be stored in open-air piles near neighborhoods, ballparks, children, and elderly people.

End the regulatory loophole for petcoke and establish reasonable guidelines for handling this dangerous material. This would help ensure that clean air and clean water is something everyone can enjoy—even if you happen to have the bad luck of living in a neighborhood near a petcoke dump site such as this one near the city of Chicago.

I see the Senator from Minnesota is seeking recognition. I ask unanimous consent for the Senator from North Dakota and myself to enter into a 3-minute dialogue so we don't hold up my friend from Minnesota.

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

Mr. DURBIN. I know the Senator is a reasonable man and has been Governor of a State and understands responsibility.

Is it too much to ask that we regulate petcoke so it is not a public health hazard to the people who happen to live next door to these dumps?

Mr. HOEVEN. Mr. President, I appreciate the opportunity to respond to my esteemed colleague from the State of Illinois.

Of course the answer to the question is that in fact it is a regulated substance, and it is primarily regulated at the State and local level.

In the State of Illinois, for example, petcoke would be regulated by the State of Illinois. What I understand the Senator from Illinois to be saying is that he is dissatisfied with the way the State of Illinois has chosen to regulate petcoke.

But in fact the EPA has found that petcoke has a low hazard potential. According to the Congressional Research Service, most toxicity analysis of petcoke, as referenced by EPA, finds it has low health hazard potential in humans, has no observed carcinogenic, reproductive or developmental effects. In fact, it is a byproduct of not just oil from the oil sands but also some of the oils from California, Venezuela, and other places.

So it is a byproduct that in fact is recycled. It is used in products such as aluminum, steel, paint. It is used to produce electricity.

Here is a case of a product that actually can be and is in fact recycled. I would argue that what we want to do as we produce energy is continue to invest in these new technologies that will help us produce more energy but also do it with better environmental stewardship, which means we not only work on CCS, carbon capture and storage—which is a major undertaking in the oil sands right now; and I would be willing to engage in that discussion as well—but then also work to find uses for these byproducts in things such as steel and aluminum.

For example, the President last night talked about how the auto industry is making a resurgence, and he talked about the CAFE standards. One of the things they are doing in Detroit with new automobiles is they are using more aluminum in the construction of the cars to reduce the weight to try to meet those CAFE standards.

So here is a product from the oil sands oil that is actually used in aluminum to make those vehicles lighter to achieve one of the things the President talked about in the State of the Union Address last night as a byproduct from the oil sands oil.

So I appreciate the question and look forward to further dialogue.

Mr. DURBIN. Reclaiming for a brief followup. I want to make sure I understand the Senator's position.

The Senator's position is we should not establish any Federal standards on the safety of petcoke and leave it up to the States.

He also argues it is not a danger, it is not carcinogenic, and it is low hazard, in his words. I don't know if the Senator has seen petcoke neighborhoods that have this blowing into them.

I would just say to the Senator, this notion that somehow petcoke is going to be some fabulous discovery for new inventions—maybe it will, but at this point it is being sold to China and they are burning it to generate electricity. I would just try to imagine for a moment what is coming out of those smokestacks in China, where sadly the air pollution is awful at the moment.

I yield the floor, but I don't think it is adequate to say that the city of Chicago should be regulating this substance. We have a nation which will be affected by a national pipeline from this Canadian company. We ought to have a national standard to protect Americans from the dangers of petcoke. Whether we are talking about Fargo, Little Rock or Juneau, I wouldn't want to live this close to these petcoke piles.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. HOEVEN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent for 30 seconds for a simple point of clarification.

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

Mr. HOEVEN. Mr. President, the characterizations of petcoke are from the EPA and from the Congressional Research Service.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for up to 10 minutes.

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

STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESS

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I am here today to talk about the President's speech from last night. I think it was very important. It was a major event. All Members of Congress were there. To me, it was a call to action. It wasn't just ideas, it was about how to turn ideas into action. It was a strong speech focused on the middle-class economy and how we can strengthen our economy. I thought there was a lot of energy.

I know some of my colleagues in the last few months have predicted that the President was somehow going to slide down because of the actions he took on immigration or the actions he took on Cuba, and I think what we are seeing around the country is quite the opposite. I think people are excited that there is an energy, and they are certainly pleased we have seen some major improvements in the economy.

I would say to my colleagues across the aisle, whom I take at their word when they say they want to work with us to govern this country, that I think we know—if we didn't know it before, after last night—that the President is not going to be spending his next year-and-a-half slouched in an armchair planning his Presidential library. I think what we saw last night is a President who wants to get things done in his remaining time in office, and I think we see an energized country that also wants to get through the gridlock and move forward.

First of all, I think the President did a very good job of laying out the status of the economy, and I think it is very important, when there are so many numbers out there and information and people throwing things out, that we

step back and look at that. Because when we look at where we are going to move forward, we need to understand from where we came and how we ended up where we were a few years back in the midst of a recession.

So as I look at these young pages—thinking about how difficult it was for so many years for young people to find employment and that we are now finally seeing hope for young people out in the job market and how we can build what we have got.

So what do we know? We have had 58 straight months of private sector job growth. Our national unemployment is below 6 percent. In fact, in my State it is down to 3.7 percent. Our unemployment rate last year went down faster than in any other year we have seen since 1984. We are now No. 1 in oil. This fall we surpassed Saudi Arabia as the No. 1 oil and gas producer in the world. That is what our country has done because of the work in North Dakota—I see my friend Senator HOEVEN over there—because of the work going on all over this country.

As the President also pointed out last night, we also are increasing our renewable energy in wind. I would add, from the State of Minnesota, that the renewable fuel standard and the fact that we have better gas mileage standards—all of these things have helped to bring down our consumption and to raise our production, bringing these prices down in our country.

I thought one of the most interesting statistics last night was a fact I had never heard before. Since 2010, America has put more people back to work than the combined countries of all of Europe, Japan, and all advanced economies across the world. That shows that our workers are so good—something we know. It shows that our businesses are so good. I think this is an opportunity we now have to finally in this Chamber govern from opportunity, not just be governing from a state of crisis. That is what we need to do.

One of my favorite parts, of course, was Rebekah and Ben Erler from Minnesota, who were mentioned right near the beginning of his speech, sitting right up in the First Lady's gallery in the House, a woman who had gone through some hard times. Her husband had lost his job in the construction industry, but because of the strength of our State and the strength of her family, her personal strength to want to go back to work and go to a community college, her family is now stabilized. As the President pointed out, maybe their big treat is getting together for a pizza on Friday, but the point is that they have gotten through some very hard times, as have so many resilient people in this country.

So the question we now have is this: How do we get ahead? How do we keep going? I am going to go through a few of the ideas that the President discussed last night that are near and dear to my heart.

The first is community college. I would not be standing in the Senate

right now if it wasn't for community college. My grandpa worked 1,500 feet underground in the mines in Ely, MN. He never even graduated from high school. At age 15 he had to quit school. Even though he was getting A's in math, he had to quit school to go and help support his family. Within a few years he was down in those mines. That is where he worked his whole life. He had dreamed of a life at sea. He had dreamed of a life in the Navy. He had dreamed of a life where he could use his education, but he worked in that mine because he believed, more than anything, in the American dream—in his two young boys, in his wife, in his family, in the nine brothers and sisters he raised because both of his parents died. That is why, at ages 15 and 16, he and his brother went to work. They went to work to help their family. When the youngest kid, Hannah, had to go to an orphanage for a year and a half, my grandpa borrowed a car a year and a half after that and went and got her back, as he promised.

So what did he do for my dad? He saved money in a coffee can in the basement so he could send my dad to college, and my dad is a proud graduate of Ely Junior College, a 2-year community college. From there he was able to go to the University of Minnesota, get a journalism degree and interview everyone from Ronald Reagan to Mike Ditka, to Ginger Rogers. That is our family's story.

My sister never graduated from high school. She had some trouble in high school. So what did she do? She was able to get her GED, go to a community college, and move on from there to finalize her 4-year degree and get an accounting degree.

Those stories are all over America. The President's devotion to talking about these 2-year community colleges and using them as a launching pad for kids' careers is the right one.

I am hoping, given the support I have seen from businesses across my State—where we don't have enough welders, we don't have enough people to work the technology in a lot of the factories. I am hoping my colleagues will join us because of the strong business support, because of the need we have in our country to get more people into these jobs.

We have 5 million job openings. We have 8 million people who are unemployed. We need to match those two numbers. And the way we do it, I think, is by doing more with these 1- and 2-year degrees and doing more with kids in high school.

The second topic I appreciated that the President talked about was the middle-class tax cut. We all know the numbers. We all know the facts that due to the widening gap we have seen in income distribution, about 80 percent of families have \$1 trillion less in income than they did during the Reagan time—\$1 trillion less than during the Reagan time. The top 400 people in the country have more wealth

than the bottom half of the country combined. So as we look at where we should be giving tax cuts and who we should be helping, it is clearly the middle class of this country.

That includes help with childcare and childcare credits that the President talked about. We are the only advanced country, as he pointed out last night, in the world that doesn't have some kind of sick leave or paid maternity leave. When I go and talk to women all over my State and I ask them what they most want, so many of them say time. They want time to be able to be with their kids when they are sick. They want time to be able to be with their baby when their baby is born. That is the best thing for our country. So I don't believe the naysayers that say we cannot work across the aisle to start talking about these important middle-class issues.

As the President pointed out, he is not running again, and he has nothing to do but to try to move forward with this country.

I appreciated the words of so many of my Republican colleagues who talked about governance, who said they wanted to get back to the real business of government, which is governing. I also appreciated those who have put out innovative ideas on things such as infrastructure. The simple idea that perhaps we can get some of these foreign earnings that are stuck there overseas that are just sitting there, billions of dollars—why don't we do something to bring that money back and make sure a portion of it goes into infrastructure? No one knows that better than our State. Our State is a State where a bridge fell down in the middle of a summer day—not just a little bridge, an eight-lane highway eight blocks from my house; a highway my family would drive over every single day—down into the middle of the Mississippi River on a summer day. That is infrastructure and that is a problem.

There are 75,000 bridges in this country that have been found to be structurally not efficient, not able to function. That is what is happening in this country right now.

So I truly appreciated the fact that the President talked about, yes, we are going to be defending something, we are going to be arguing about things in this Chamber. That is what this is set up to do. That is democracy. That is government. But there are also some very clear areas of agreement, and one of them is helping the middle class. Let's move. Let's go forward.

Thank you, Mr. President.

I yield the floor.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SULLIVAN). Morning business is closed.