

careful because that snow is very hard to shovel. It is very heavy, and it can create problems.

My condolences go out to the family of Officer Alston. He was a police officer, and we look out for our own. I am very sorry he passed away.

ENERGY POLICY MODERNIZATION BILL

Mr. REID. Mr. President, making America's clean energy future sustainable for our children and grandchildren has long been a priority for Senate Democrats.

Today the Senate will begin consideration of a bipartisan bill that makes progress doable on this important goal. We have long sought to pass a number of priorities included in this bill. Through the stimulus package, we made one of the largest investments in clean energy in the entire history of the country. In fact, let me just say it this way: It is the largest investment in the history of the country in clean air energy.

When Democrats were in the majority, we fought valiantly to pass a bipartisan piece of legislation called Shaheen-Portman. It was an innovative efficiency bill that would have reduced carbon emissions, would have saved families and businesses huge amounts of money, and supported 200,000 jobs in America.

We tried to get this done. The Senator from Ohio came to me and said: We need to get this done. I said: I agree with you; so what do you need? He told me what he needed, and we agreed to that. But I am sorry to report that on at least two separate occasions, my Republican friends chose obstruction that prevented the Senate from passing this bipartisan piece of legislation. Then, even the Republican sponsor of the bill wouldn't vote for it—his own bill. He voted against it.

Today we have another opportunity. This is the third or fourth time that we are moving to this. I hope we can get this done. I think there is no reason we shouldn't be able to, because we are a responsible minority. We want to get things done. We want to pass legislation. We don't want to obstruct everything.

Senators MURKOWSKI and CANTWELL have worked very hard to pass this bill called the Energy Policy Modernization Act. They did it through the committee they are responsible for leading. I commend both Senators for their sound leadership.

I am also happy—and I will just mention a few other things that this legislation addresses. Part of it includes permanent authorization of the Land and Water Conservation Fund. We did some very good things in the omnibus that we passed to take care of the Land and Water Conservation Fund. We funded it for 3 years, and that is more than we have done in a long time. But my Republican colleagues allowed the authorization legislation to expire last

year for 3 months before we were able to finally renew it. So I hope we can pass this part of the bill untouched.

Most of the key provisions included in the Shaheen-Portman energy efficiency bill are in this bill. That is really important. There is \$40 billion in energy authorizations, including for basic research, home energy efficiency, and clean vehicles. Those are just a few of the items. Through these provisions, this legislation will save consumers as much as \$60 billion. And not only that, it reduces a significant amount of carbon pollution generated by dirty fossil energy sources.

It is estimated that passing the Energy Policy Modernization Act would reduce carbon emissions equal to taking every car and truck in the United States off the road for a year. That is a pretty big deal. Over the next 15 years, the energy sector will need to replace 2 million workers and hire an additional 1.5 million for new jobs. That is what this legislation will allow. This bill makes progress toward training a skilled workforce fully equipped to take advantage of high-paying job opportunities in the energy sector.

The Senate works best when Democrats and Republicans, the majority and the minority, work together on behalf of the American people. As written, the Murkowski-Cantwell energy bill could win bipartisan approval on the Senate floor, and we can do it right now.

As with all legislation, there is no question that the energy bill could be improved, and there will be efforts made to do that. I certainly solicit amendments, as did the Republican leader, but get them over here. It is my understanding the majority leader is now promising to allow amendments. That is what the Republican leader said a few minutes ago, and I am sure that is appropriate. Members of my caucus welcome opportunities to help strengthen the bill. However, we can't allow extreme Republican ideological amendments to poison this opportunity. The Murkowski-Cantwell energy bill must remain a bipartisan piece of legislation.

Clean energy, infrastructure, and conservation are priorities of the middle class and all Americans. So I urge my Republican colleagues to recognize the good work of Senators MURKOWSKI and CANTWELL and work with Democrats to pass this bipartisan legislation.

PUERTO RICO

Mr. REID. Mr. President, on another matter, the island of Puerto Rico continues to face billions of dollars of debt. I don't know the number—\$17 billion. We hear all kinds of numbers. Puerto Rico is part of America. We must work together to address the severe economic and fiscal crisis that has gripped our fellow citizens.

I was in a meeting yesterday where I was told that on the island of Puerto

Rico there is a shortage of suitcases—luggage—because people are leaving and most of them are coming to Florida. They are desperate. Many have said that the dire state of Puerto Rico's economy could become a humanitarian crisis, and that is really true.

The time to act is now. I joined Senator CANTWELL and all of my Democratic colleagues in calling on the Republican leader to advance legislation that gives Puerto Rico the protection it so desperately needs. We did send a letter to the Republican leader.

Any solution that doesn't provide Puerto Rico the ability to restructure debt would be an abject failure. Legislation that empowers Puerto Rico to adjust a significant portion of its debt would not cost the Federal Government a single penny. This is far from a bailout. It would save U.S. taxpayers from the growing cost of inaction.

Over 3 million Americans live on the island of Puerto Rico, and they are looking to Congress for help in their time of need.

I spoke to the Speaker myself, and he has made a commitment to address the economic emergency in Puerto Rico before the end of March. This has to be more than a hearing. We need to have something done substantively to help that territory.

Today Democrats call on the Republican leader to make the same commitment PAUL RYAN has made to address the economic emergency in Puerto Rico soon. There is really no time to spare. Republicans should join us in our commitment to assist our fellow Americans.

Earlier this month, I sent a letter separate and apart from the one all Democrats sent, outlining the steps the Senate can take to help Puerto Rico. If the Republican leader is unsure where to begin, he could heed what I have suggested and appoint a task force to find a bipartisan solution to this economic crisis. But as far as I am concerned, that is way down the list. I am not someone who favors task forces. I think the work should be done by committees and by our committee chairs and ranking members. I believe anything that one would try to do—that is, having another hearing, appointing a task force—is only an effort to stall the inevitable.

Puerto Rico needs help. They need to be treated as other American citizens and be able to file bankruptcy. It would not apply to any State. It would apply only to this territory. We must act now to relieve the hardships facing these people and avoid additional costs to taxpayers because there will be additional costs if we don't resolve this now.

Mr. President, I ask the Chair to announce the business of the day.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

ENERGY POLICY MODERNIZATION ACT OF 2015

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to the consideration of S. 2012, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 2012) to provide for the modernization of the energy policy of the United States, and for other purposes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the time until 2:15 p.m. will be for debate only.

The Senator from the great State of Alaska.

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, it is good to welcome the Presiding Officer back to Washington, DC. This Senator knows that the Presiding Officer was back home in Alaska, and while they may not have had snow, they got everybody else's attention with a 7.1 earthquake. I know it was an interesting weekend for the Presiding Officer as well.

Mr. President, I am on the Senate floor this morning with a fair amount of excitement and enthusiasm. We are beginning the debate on energy reform legislation, S. 2012, the Energy Policy Modernization Act. This is the first time the Senate has debated energy policy reform in more than 8 years. It has been more than 8 years since we have had this kind of debate.

I was here yesterday morning and had an opportunity to open the session. I opened the session and Senator COLLINS was the Presiding Officer in the chair. It was one of those interesting mornings where everybody else seemed to be female on the floor, and the press has taken note of that. But that is not my point.

I left the floor and went out in the hallway where there was a group of eight or nine young kids with a fellow who works on the House side. I think he was giving them a little bit of a field trip, but I think he had kid duty because so many schools were still closed on account of the incredible amount of snow we got in Washington. I had a fabulous conversation with the kids who at that age are excited about being in the Capitol and understanding the difference between a House Member and a Senate Member.

They asked: Well, what are you working on?

I said: It is really exciting because we are going to be taking up energy reform legislation that we have not done in a long time.

I asked the kids when they were born, and one little girl said 2007. I said that 2007 was the last time we had energy legislation on the floor.

And since it sometimes helps to understand the passage of time in relation to our kids I said: Look what has happened to you in the 8 years since you were born. You have grown, gotten smarter, and been exposed to a lot of things.

Debate on energy legislation is long overdue on the floor of this Senate. This is a good bill, it is a timely bill,

and it is a bipartisan bill. It deserves overwhelming support from this Chamber. I was encouraged by the minority leader's comments and his encouragement that through the process that we have built on the energy committee to move out a bipartisan bill, it should enjoy the respect of good debate as we move forward to again attempt to modernize our energy policies.

At the beginning, I acknowledge the good and strong and very cooperative work I have received from my ranking member Senator CANTWELL from the State of Washington and thank her for helping me craft this bill because it was truly a joint effort. It was a very collaborative effort. I also thank the other members of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee for all the ideas they brought to bear and the support we have received from them bringing the bill to this point.

To give folks a little bit of a background on how we came to have this Energy bill—the first real substantive legislation we have had here in 2016—it is worthwhile to talk about the process of how we got it because that in and of itself is a little bit unusual nowadays.

To segue just a moment, because it was last year at this time that Senator CANTWELL and I were managing the floor when we had the Keystone XL debate. It was the first time in a long time we had seen regular order with a full-on amendment process. A lot of people did not even know how to process these amendments. We worked through some 40-odd amendments, and got everybody's attention that we can actually move a bill. It had some level of controversy. We did not obviously agree with many aspects of it, but we moved through a process.

Well, it is January again, and the women are back at work. I am hopeful the collaborative effort that got this bipartisan bill to the floor today will be reflected in the debate that goes forward. Senator CANTWELL and I sat down last January, when I became the chairman of the committee, and we talked about goals and priorities—what we were looking for. We both said it was well past time to update our energy policies, to do a scrub, to do an overhaul. We had a conversation about how we might go about it because there were a couple of ways we could proceed. I could have drafted my own bill with my own priorities and tried to get the votes that I needed to move it out of committee, but if you do not have the support beyond your side of the aisle, it is going to be tough to be able to advance it to the floor and get it enacted into law. Senator CANTWELL could have done the same. She could have moved her own bill. We could have done messaging bills, but we both agreed we are well past the time for messaging. We need to be legislating and governing in the energy space, and in order to do it, it is going to take some cooperation, collaboration, and conversation. That is where we started.

I went around to colleagues on the committee and began conversations

with them about their energy-related priorities. These conversations continued between our staffs. Our staffs also held dozens of bipartisan listening sessions with stakeholders. We held them in Washington, DC. We held them in other parts of the country. We held one hearing in Kwigillingok, AK. The Presiding Officer knows where that is. Most others know it as only some far-away village in Alaska, but I mention this as it speaks to the level of outreach for which we strived.

After our listening sessions, we came back and really rolled up our sleeves. We held four oversight hearings and began with a 30,000-foot-look about where we are in different energy spaces. We had our oversight hearings.

Then we moved down to six legislative hearings on a total of 114 different bills. These were 114 different bills that were not necessarily introduced by just Members of the energy committee. These were bills that were introduced by Republicans and Democrats throughout the Senate and some House Members' bills that we had seen as well. We took the testimony that we received from experts, advocates, private citizens, administration officials, and from our home States and just about every other State. We gathered all the perspectives that we could about what Congress should do and what Congress needs to do to ensure that our Federal policies keep up with the years of change in energy markets and energy technologies.

One simple case in point that reminds us of this 8-year passage of time is this. Eight years ago when we talked about LNG, what we were talking about was seeing if we could structure our LNG terminals so they could be import terminals. Think about where we are now. We are talking about how we export our LNG, how we can move it to share our energy wealth with others. That is a prime example of making sure that what is happening within our energy markets, what is happening within our energy technologies is consistent with what our policies, our laws, and our regulations allow.

After we did all this gathering of information, we entered weeks of bipartisan negotiations to determine which bills should be incorporated into our draft text. From the 114 measures, we took 50 different bills. As one flips through the 400-some-odd pages of this Energy Policy Modernization Act, you will see bits and pieces of 50 different measures offered by colleagues—Republicans and Democrats—offered throughout the Senate.

Senator PORTMAN and Senator SHAHEEN have been leaders on energy efficiency and we were able to incorporate a number of ideas in the energy efficiency title of our bill. You will also see incorporated in it the critical minerals bill that I have been working on for years now. Again, we are not just taking the ideas from this Senator