

ENERGY POLICY MODERNIZATION BILL

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, this week we have seen what can be accomplished on behalf of the American people with a Senate that is back to work under the Republican majority.

We just passed two broad bipartisan bills aimed at protecting consumers and modernizing our energy policies, respectively, and both bills take important steps to bolster national security as well.

The passage of the Energy Policy Modernization Act yesterday marks the first broad energy legislation to move through the Senate since the Bush administration. In the years since that time, our country “has gone from fearing oil and gas shortages to becoming the leading producer of both fuels” as one paper put it.

It is clear this energy legislation is much needed when it comes to bringing our aging infrastructure and policies in line with current and future demands.

I thank the Energy Committee chair, Senator MURKOWSKI, and the ranking member, Senator CANTWELL, for working to advance this legislation. It is important for our country. It will help Americans save more energy, produce more energy, and pay less for energy. To paraphrase Senator MURKOWSKI, it is another example of how the Senate is back to work.

ENERGY AND WATER DEVELOPMENT APPROPRIATIONS BILL

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, let us continue that work today. The Republican-led Senate has made important strides to get the legislative process functioning again. We know the impact that can have on restoring the appropriations process. We also know cooperation is going to be important as we move forward.

It was good to see our Democratic colleagues yesterday, recently pledging cooperation in the appropriations process, writing that this “is a win-win opportunity, and we should seize it together.”

I have been pleased to see the headway that has already been made by the Appropriations Committee. The committee has held dozens of hearings so far and, later this morning, members will mark up 2 more of the 12 funding bills, adding to the two the committee has already reported out unanimously. We will continue floor consideration of one of those unanimously endorsed measures today: the energy security and water infrastructure funding bill.

The legislation before us includes provisions that impact each of our States. It will support our waterway infrastructure, boost energy innovation, and promote American competitiveness. It will strengthen national security and support our nuclear security program. It will also reduce wasteful spending.

I appreciate the leadership of Senators ALEXANDER and FEINSTEIN on this

bill and recognize the hard work and research that have gone into it. I also appreciate the Appropriations chairman, Senator COCHRAN, for working with Senator MIKULSKI to move these appropriations bills through committee and to the floor. This is a responsible bipartisan bill. It invests in the future of American energy and waterways. It will keep our country safe. So let's continue working today to advance it.

APPALACHIAN REGIONAL COMMISSION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, on one final matter, I want to take a minute to say something about an amendment yesterday that would have defunded regional commissions such as the Appalachian Regional Commission, or ARC.

While I did not support that effort, it did raise some important questions about the direction of ARC. I have been a long supporter of the Appalachian Regional Commission, the only government agency whose main purpose is to help poor and disadvantaged communities in the Appalachian region. However, I am deeply concerned that after 50 years, ARC's focus has become clouded.

For instance, ARC's internal guidelines cap at 30 percent the amount of area development funds that can be used in the most impoverished areas of Appalachia. It seems utterly illogical to me that at a government agency, whose mission should be to alleviate poverty, 70 percent of the funds go to counties that are not among the poorest.

What does ARC stand for if not to help the poorest areas of Appalachia? Is ARC a specialized agency with a coherent mission or is it just another Federal bureaucracy that simply allocates funds among 13 selected States regardless of the need?

I hope the vote last night will serve as a wake-up call for management at the ARC—a wake-up call that it is time for the agency to reform itself and focus on the counties that most need assistance.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

NOMINATION OF JESSICA ROSENWORCEL

Mr. REID. Mr. President, it is difficult for me to be here to talk about what I am going to talk about because I believe that the Senate operates only when there is trust among the Members of this body.

A man whom I served with whom I have such great respect for, and that is former Republican Majority Leader Bob Dole, said:

I knew that nothing else I did would matter very much if I ever forfeited the trust of my colleagues. As we all learn around here, if you don't keep your word, it doesn't make much difference what agenda you try to advance.

The trust which Senator Dole spoke of has been broken. The Republican leader MCCONNELL broke his word to me.

In December of 2014, the Republican leader and the Senator from South Dakota, Mr. THUNE, came to me on the floor, asking if I would agree to confirming a Republican Commissioner to the Federal Communications Commission. That man's name is Michael O'Rielly, and he had worked for Jon Kyl and JOHN CORNYN. Of course, CORNYN is still here and Kyl left. I have great respect for Jon Kyl, being from my neighboring State of Arizona.

So I said that this is kind of an unusual request, since everyone knows that two leaders, when we have a Commission we are going to staff with our selections, he and I have a right to do that, and we always pair them—a Democrat, a Republican, and a Democrat and a Republican. We pair them together.

So I said to my friend from South Dakota and my friend from Kentucky that doesn't sound like the right thing to do for me, but they talked a while longer, and my heart said do it, my head said don't. My heart won, and I relented, after having made an arrangement, an agreement with them that we would go ahead and do O'Rielly right then; that I would agree to do that provided that when the new Congress convened in less than a month, we would take care of the Democrat. Her name is Jessica Rosenworcel. That was our agreement. That is how we would pair one Republican with a Democrat, as is our custom.

But—and I repeat—I said: I agree, we will go ahead and do him now. He didn't have a job, so I was told, and so he could do that. They promised me they would confirm Rosenworcel the next Congress. I wasn't there alone. I had my staff with me. So it is not me saying one thing. I don't think anyone denies the conversation. I didn't have to agree to this. I did it because the Republican leader said he would do his part and get her confirmed.

I am sorry to report to the world, to the Senate, I was wrong. Over the last 16 months, the Republican leader has refused to fulfill his commitment. He hasn't kept his word. Republicans assumed control of the Senate in January 2015. I waited patiently for the Republican leader and Senator THUNE to keep their word regarding Rosenworcel's nomination.

To his credit—JOHN THUNE and I have served here a long time. I know him well. I worked against him once and was successful. I worked against him a second time and wasn't successful. He beat my dear friend Tom Daschle, but he is a fine man. He and I used the gym together in the House. To his credit,

Senator THUNE did everything he could to fulfill the commitment. He was having pressure not to do anything, I am sure, but he called his committee together. He is the chairman of the Commerce Committee. He reported Rosenworcel out to the Senate floor. There his authority stops. He doesn't have any power to do any more. He did what he felt he was obligated to do, and I felt he was obligated to do. It is now Senator MCCONNELL's problem, I guess. But a year went by. She still wasn't sent to the floor. That is when I talked to Senator THUNE—the first of many times. He did what he said he would do and reported her out.

A few months ago, in December of 2015, a year after we had made our agreement, I reminded Senator MCCONNELL of his commitment to do what he said he would do to quickly advance the nomination. He told me that the Senate would confirm her when we returned in 2016. January 2016 passed with no action. Before we left for the President's Day recess, I spoke again with Senators MCCONNELL and THUNE about Rosenworcel's nomination. February passed with no movement. March passed. Here we are, 21 days into April, with no confirmation.

I have waited. I have waited patiently for my friend to do the right thing. I have held off for months coming to the floor. What else would I do? What else could I do? I held off, hoping the Republican leader would deliver on the pledge that he gave to me.

I spoke again with him yesterday on the telephone, urging him to move her forward. He said to me: We'll do it next year. Next year she is out of a job. Her term expires at the end of this year. Her career will basically be over because of my accepting my counterpart's word. I told the Republican leader and I told Senator THUNE that I would not remain silent forever on this. I told both of them yesterday I was going to come to the floor.

The Republican leader, I hope, was aware of the words of Bob Dole, which I talked about earlier in my remarks. Dole said:

I knew that nothing else I did would matter very much if I ever forfeited the trust of my colleagues. As we all learn around here, if you don't keep your word, it doesn't make much difference what agenda you try to advance.

That was Robert Dole.

To say I am disappointed is an understatement. This is a commitment that was made to me about a year and a half ago. We have to keep our trust. This isn't an issue of my being offended. I have been offended. The Presiding Officer has been offended. We have all been offended. This isn't only personal with me, in taking the Republican leader's promise as a personal affront. It is not a personal affront to me. If it is, I will have to bear that. I think it is, but I can handle that. What I am concerned about is what it means for the Senate and what it means for a human being, a woman who works very hard every

day, trying to do the right thing for a very important part of our country.

I understand the Republican leader has a tough job. I know that. I had that job a lot longer than he has. Because of the dysfunction in his caucus, it is difficult, I am told and as we see, for him to get things done. But that is no excuse for someone not keeping their word. He could go into executive session. We would agree to that. He could file cloture. He could do this in many different ways.

I still expect him to live up to his commitment and get Commissioner Rosenworcel confirmed. I don't want this to be a bad time for the Senate if it continues. It is a bad day for the Senate now because you have to keep your word. That is all we have around here.

I see no one on the floor, and I will ask the Chair to announce what the Senate is going to do the rest of the day.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business until 11 a.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The Senator from Missouri.

ENERGY AND WATER APPROPRIATIONS BILL AND WATERS OF THE UNITED STATES

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, I rise today to discuss the bill that is on the floor. The very fact that we have this bill on the floor deserves some attention. We have an appropriations bill on the energy and water responsibilities of the Federal Government. I think this is the first time this bill has been on the Senate floor in 7 years.

With the current majority, the Appropriations Committee is 1 month ahead of any time in recent history that bills have been marked up and brought to the floor. The majority leader set aside 12 weeks to do the work that for decades—in fact, for a couple of centuries—was the core work of what the Congress did. The Congress set the priorities of the country by having an open and free debate on how the Congress and the country would spend the money that was entrusted to the Congress—the long-ranging discussion of the power of the purse. You know, you don't have to be a great student of American history to say: Well, don't you men and women in the Congress have the power of the purse? Well, we do have it, according to the Constitution, but we have not had it in the practice of the last 6 or 7 years when the work of the Congress simply

was not done in a way that people could see what was going on or that Members could freely weigh in.

One of the things about the debate we are having on this Energy and Water bill is that any Member of the Senate can come to the floor and they can say: Don't spend this money at all. In this bill, spend the money here rather than there. They can say some combination of those two things, and then the Senate votes on that before we approve the final bill.

I am pleased that we are debating this bill. That may actually be more important than the bill itself. But the bill itself is important as well.

This bill provides the critical resources to support the safety and long-term viability of our waterway systems. One of the reasons we are so competitive internationally and so competitive in our own domestic economy is that we have had the ability to use the waterways of the country—particularly the internal as well as the external waterways—in a way that makes us more competitive than we would be otherwise.

Our inland waterways in particular are critical to economic growth. We are right on the edge of a time when world food demand doubles from the Presiding Officer's State, from my State. Agriculture, which is the biggest economic sector of the economy, is in a great position not only to meet those food needs in our country but to meet food needs worldwide. That position is dramatically enhanced if we have a transportation system that doesn't just include highways and doesn't just include railroads but also includes the waterways of the country.

Another thing our two States have had in common—the Upper Missouri and the Lower Missouri—is the devastating challenges that flooding can present. This bill makes it possible for us to deal with flood control and navigation. Once again, this emphasizes that the Corps of Engineers can't just say these are the top two priorities of managing the Mississippi River Valley system, particularly the Missouri and Mississippi, but those really need to be apparent in their commitment to both flood control and navigation as things we want to do.

I am pleased this bill prioritizes things like the bank stabilization and navigation project on the Mississippi River, the tributaries project that is central to our flood control efforts in our State. I am also glad the bill increases funding for small ports and harbors to serve as vital places for us to compete.

You know, the inland ports are basically export ports. There is nothing wrong with buying things from other people, but it is better to sell things to other people. The inland ports serve a geographic area that is roughly twice as big as the coastal ports. That doesn't mean there is anything wrong with the coastal ports; it just means, let's get realistic about where we are