

(e) EXISTING STATE AND TRIBAL LAW.—Nothing in this section affects the jurisdiction or authority of any department, agency, or officer of any State government or any Indian tribe.

(f) SAVINGS CLAUSE.—Nothing in this section affects any right of any State, Indian tribe, or other person to bring a claim against the United States for response costs or natural resources damages pursuant to section 107 of the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act of 1980 (42 U.S.C. 9607).

#### SEC. 8011. REPORTS BY THE COMPTROLLER GENERAL.

Not later than 5 years after the date of enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General of the United States shall conduct the following reviews and submit to Congress reports describing the results of the reviews:

(1) A review of the implementation and effectiveness of the Columbia River Basin restoration program authorized under part V of subtitle F of title VII.

(2) A review of the implementation and effectiveness of watercraft inspection stations established by the Secretary under section 104 of the River and Harbor Act of 1958 (33 U.S.C. 610) in preventing the spread of aquatic invasive species at reservoirs operated and maintained by the Secretary.

#### SEC. 8012. SENSE OF CONGRESS.

It is the sense of Congress that—

(1) State water quality standards that impact the disposal of dredged material should be developed collaboratively, with input from all relevant stakeholders;

(2) Open-water disposal of dredged material should be reduced to the maximum extent practicable;

(3) Where practicable, the preference is for disputes between states related to the disposal of dredged material and the protection of water quality to be resolved between the states in accordance with regional plans and involving regional bodies.

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, I know of no further debate on this amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. If there is no further debate, the question is on agreeing to amendment No. 5042, as modified.

The amendment (No. 5042), as modified, was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Amendment No. 5042, as modified, having been agreed to, amendment No. 4980 falls.

#### MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, before I make a very brief comment, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

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

#### WRDA

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, this is a very significant piece of legislation. What we just now moved forward on is the managers' amendment. Senator BOXER and I are the managers. I want to, first of all, compliment her for working very hard with us and our staff. I mean, they really did drill on this thing. So it is a major bill. We are supposed to have a WRDA bill, or the

Water Resources Development Act, every 2 years. We went through a 7-year period from 2007 to 2014. Now we are back on schedule. I am happy to say that we are on schedule now to get this passed tomorrow.

We are going to stay on a 2-year schedule. Senator BOXER did a great job. It was great teamwork. We have moved a long way.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California.

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I want to say this to Senator INHOFE. I know he has a hectic schedule ahead of him. What a pleasure it is to work with him and his staff member Alex and our Jason and Ted and others. We had a lot of disagreements on a lot of issues, but we set those aside. It is exciting to get something done for the people.

For example, in this managers' package, we have a new Chief's report in Pennsylvania, a critical restoration program in Oregon and Washington, funding for restoration of the Great Lakes, a wide variety of other policy recommendations that come from all over the country, from all of our colleagues. So I not only want to thank Senator INHOFE, who is my chairman, but also my staff and Senator INHOFE's staff—in particular, Bettina Poirier, Jason Albritton, and Ted Illston, from my staff.

This has not been easy to get all of us together and to have a unanimous consent request agreed to. I also want to thank the floor staff—Trish and Gary on our side—because I made them a little crazy during this process. They actually allowed me to do that.

But it does take a lot of push and pull to get a bill like this done. So what I would like to do for the next few minutes—I know Senator MURKOWSKI will speak following me—is that I just want to talk about why we have worked so hard and why it is critical that we pass this bill this week—S. 2848, the Water Resources Development Act, which we called WRDA 2016.

We need to repair our Nation's aging infrastructure. We need to grow our economy and create jobs. I think that is where the sweet spot is across the aisle. We have an infrastructure crisis in our country. It is not me saying it; it is the American Society of Civil Engineers. They are Democrats, they are Republicans, and they are Independents. They are north, south, east, and west. They came together and said: Our infrastructure is a D-plus—a D-plus.

So we just have to move forward. Also, we need to make sure that the Army Corps, when they write a Chief's report, has the go-ahead from Congress. We don't have anymore the ability as Members to say this is an earmark. We don't do that. What we must do is look at the Corps report and give them the authority to move ahead if we feel that the Corps report is in the best interest of our people.

We have over \$14 billion for 30 Chief's reports in 19 States. These projects—

you ask: What do they do? They increase navigation. They are flood risk management. They are coastal storm damage reduction. They are ecosystem restoration. As far as navigation is concerned, we know that we authorize important projects to maintain vital navigation routes for commerce and the movement of goods.

Our bill builds on the reforms to the harbor maintenance trust fund. So we are just going to show a few charts. This is the Port of Charleston. If you look at these containers, they look small on this boat. Each one of those is just enormous. What we know is, if we can't move goods to and from the country, our economy stalls.

So that is critical. We extend permanently prioritization for donor and energy transfer ports, emerging harbors, and Great Lakes ports. We allow additional ports to qualify for these funds, and we make clear that the Corps can maintain harbors of refuge. The bill also authorizes nine Chief's reports that I mentioned in nine States that will allow investment in central port and waterway projects, including the deepening of the Charleston Harbor in South Carolina.

It does no good to have these ships try to get in—if you need to dredge the waterway, you better have authorization to do it. We widen and deepen the navigation channels at Port Everglades in Florida, to address safety issues and congestion. We construct new locks in Pennsylvania at three of the oldest locks and dams on the Ohio River System.

These aging locks were built in the 1920s and the 1930s. We have to address the aging infrastructure. This is what you see the workers doing. Our ports and waterways, which are essential to the U.S. economy, moved 2.3 billion tons of goods in 2014.

WRDA 2016 will provide major economic benefits that will keep us competitive in the global marketplace. We also deal with storms and floods. Now, we have seen these storms and floods just expand exponentially. We are stunned when we see our beautiful citizens looking at everything they possess being lost in a flood. It is billions of dollars of damage. It is loss of life. We have seen communities wiped out. This is the scene from Louisiana.

This bill will save lives by helping to rebuild critical levee systems around the country, including levees to protect the capital of my State and surrounding communities. Sacramento is in desperate need of flood control. We have done it year after year. We are very hopeful that the work we put into it will make sure that we do not see a Katrina happening anywhere in my State or in any other place.

This bill authorizes \$8 billion for 17 flood control and storm damage projects in 13 States, including a project to build levees and flood control structures to reduce flood risk in San Antonio, TX.

I think we have the picture of the flooding there. Look at this. We just

have to rebuild our infrastructure to protect against floods.

We also have a project to rebuild aging levees in Manhattan, in Kansas, which protects public and private structures valued at \$1 billion, and projects to protect coastal communities in South Carolina, in Florida, North Carolina, New Jersey, and Louisiana.

WRDA also establishes a new program at FEMA to fund the repair of high-hazard dams that present a public safety threat. These hazardous dams are threatening numerous communities across the Nation, and WRDA 2016 will make those communities safer.

The bill authorizes more than \$3 billion for projects to restore critical ecosystems, like the Florida Everglades. WRDA 2016 updates existing programs. It creates new initiatives to advance the restoration of some of the Nation's most iconic ecosystems, such as the Great Lakes, the Long Island Sound, the Delaware River, the Chesapeake Bay, the Columbia River, and Puget Sound.

WRDA responds to the serious challenges many of our communities are facing. While we have horrific flooding, we also have horrific droughts, especially in the West. This was all predicted by scientists who said: Watch out; climate change is coming. We have seen terrible fires, terrible flooding, terrible droughts, and more extreme weather all over. That was predicted.

So we want to make sure that we can improve the operations of our dams and reservoirs to increase water supply and better conserve existing water resources.

I have a very special excitement associated with the dealing of droughts, because the bill is on my legislation, the Water in the 21st Century Act—or, as I call it, W21—to provide essential support for the development of innovative water technologies, such as desalination and water recycling.

I had the opportunity to visit a desal plant in California—the only one operating. It is pretty remarkable. It is not cheap. It is a public-private partnership. But when you need water, you need water. So, absolutely we have to look at ways to utilize energy in a smart way and move toward desal and move toward water recycling and water recharging.

The bill allows States to provide additional incentives for the use of these innovative technologies, through the State revolving fund. It establishes a new, innovative water technology grant program, and it reauthorizes successful existing programs such as the Water Desalination Act.

It also deals with Flint, MI. I am so grateful to everyone on both sides who allowed us to finally address Flint, MI. I want to show you what they dealt with in this corrosive piping. The State changed the way they got their water. They started to draw from highly polluted water. This is what it did to the pipes.

As to the lead contamination in Flint, we know all about it. But it is not only in Flint. It is in other cities across the country that are dealing with aging lead pipes, such as Jackson, MS, Sebring, OH, and Durham, NC. The American people have some rights. They have a right to clean water. When they turn on their faucet, they should not be scared of what is going to come out.

Yet the American Water Works Association estimates that as many as 22 million people live in homes that receive water from lead service lines. Now, this bill begins the much needed work to ensure safe, reliable drinking water for every American. It provides \$100 million in State revolving fund loans and grants for communities that have a declared drinking water emergency. It provides more than \$700 million in loans under the Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act, which we call WIFIA.

We have a program in transportation that my friend in the chair, the Presiding Officer, is very familiar with, called TIFIA, and he and I worked on together to save it. WIFIA works the same way. If a local government has revenues, they can use those to pay back the Federal Government for practically interest-free loans and complete a project far faster.

So this WIFIA is very exciting for me because I am leaving here. I would like to leave behind a way for communities to access help this way. It is not a giveaway. It just says to a community: If you are willing to help yourself, the Federal Government can front the money. You can rebuild your infrastructure much quicker.

When it comes to crumbling infrastructure, we don't have a minute to waste. So the WRDA bill helps those communities dealing with the horrible effects of lead poisoning by investing in public health programs to help families deal with the impacts. The bill changes the law to require that communities are quickly notified if high lead levels are found in the drinking water.

The worst thing is to ignore that and then have some child, all of a sudden, have learning disabilities, and you don't know why. You have done everything right, and your child is suffering. We want to say: The minute there is too much lead in the water, parents, you are going to know about it, and you can protect your child. The one way to protect a child is to get rid of their exposure to lead, whether it is in the air, whether it is in the water, or whether it is in a product. We know that for sure.

Now, in closing, I am going to talk about a few things for my great State, because we have 40 million people there. We have so much congestion, and we have so many problems. We also have so many assets—mostly our people—and we have so much beauty in that State, but I am going to talk about a few things we did.

First, we authorized a critical project to revitalize the Los Angeles River. Yes, there is a river in Los Angeles. Everyone kind of looks at me and says: You have to be kidding. No, there is.

The whole area has been neglected. Finally, after working with the community—and, boy, this took effort on everyone's part—the city, the county, Senator FEINSTEIN, me, and Members of Congress. Everybody worked together—the Chamber of Commerce, the unions, everybody. We got together a great plan for how we are going to revitalize the river, make it a beautiful place to go, and stimulate economic development.

Our bill also authorizes a project to restore wetlands and improve flood protection in San Francisco Bay. This is one of the most iconic photos I could show you, the Golden Gate Bridge, but we need to improve flood protection. We are going to have the rising sea levels. I will tell you one of the great ways to get hold of that issue is to restore wetlands because then when the floods come, it slows up, it slows up the flow, and takes the nutrients that would otherwise go into the bay. Whether we are dealing with Lake Tahoe, which I will talk about in a minute, or San Francisco Bay, you want to make sure you have your flood protection work so these wetlands will hold back the water and hold back the nutrients.

We will rebuild levees that protect Sacramento, which is a critical area, and we have an amazing and important program to provide critical habitat and improve air quality near the Salton Sea.

I don't have time to go into explaining what the Salton Sea is, but it is one of the largest manmade lakes known. It is drying up because of the drought. What happened is, the farmers would take their extra water and dump it into the Salton Sea. There are a lot of harmful toxins from the pesticides in there. As the sea dries up, the sand holds all this toxin. When the wind blows, it carries these toxins and these chemicals into the lungs of the people who live around this gorgeous area. It was once a thriving area, but it has changed. It also is the landing place for about 400 different species of beautiful waterfowl that rest on the Pacific Flyway. It has been neglected. We need to make sure that where the sea is drying out we can have pockets where there are wetlands, where there is restoration. We are working together with the State.

I am excited about the fact that this bill will authorize the use of local people, nonprofit people. City councils, supervisors, State and Federal Government and water districts will now be able to work together on common projects to save the Salton Sea. This is a tough one. I am going to be leaving the Senate knowing this isn't fixed, and I don't like that; that I will not be here to fix it. I am leaving it to everybody—that includes the Presiding Officer, you will be here a while. You have

to keep your eye on the Salton Sea because it is disappearing and we have to fix it.

Finally, this bill invests in the restoration of the “Jewel of the Sierra,” Lake Tahoe. Oh, this is something. I was just out there with Senator FEINSTEIN, Senator REID, and Governor Brown. It is quite a special place. Actually, it is a treasure. California shares it with Nevada. It is home to more than 290 species of wildlife, and it lures 3 million visitors every year, but it has real problems, the same types of problems I talked about with the bay—nutrients flowing into the sea. The warmer temperatures of Lake Tahoe mean we have algae growing. We have problems with clarity, and it needs our attention.

We have done a great job over the last 20 years when President Clinton came out. We had bipartisan support then, and we now have bipartisan support from Senators REID, HELLER, FEINSTEIN, and myself to continue making sure Lake Tahoe thrives.

The words everybody waits for when a Senator makes a speech, “in conclusion,” WRDA 2016 is truly a bipartisan bill which benefits every region of this great country. It will invest in our Nation’s water infrastructure, create jobs in the construction industry, protect people from flooding, and enable commerce to move through our ports. It will encourage innovative financing through WIFIA, and it will begin the hard work of preparing for and responding to extreme weather.

The bill is supported by 90 organizations—we will just give you a sample—representing business, labor, local government, ports, environmental conservation groups, and faith communities. As an example, the California State Coastal Conservancy, the Coalition for the Delaware River Watershed, the Congregation of Saint Joseph, association of water agencies, the Lake Carriers’ Association, the Michigan Environmental Council of the States, GreenFaith, Friends Committee on National Legislation, and Franciscan Action Network.

There is one more chart. Nature Abounds, Orange County Sanitation District, U.S. Chamber of Commerce, U.S. Conference of Mayors, U.S. Great Lakes Shipping Association, and Upper Mississippi River Basin Association.

Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD the organizations listed on the charts.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

LETTERS OF SUPPORT—S. 2848

UPDATED 9-12-16

Advocates for a Clean Lake Erie; African American Health Alliance; Alliance for the Great Lakes; American Association of Port Authorities; American Council of Engineering Companies; American Great Lakes Ports Association; American Public Health Association; American Rivers; American Shore and Beach Preservation Association (ASBPA); American Society of Civil Engineers; Associated General Contractors of

America; Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies; Bad River Watershed Association; Bay Area Council; Bay Conservation and Development Commission; Bay Planning Coalition; BaySail; Big River Coalition; Black Heritage Society Inc.; Black Millennials for Flint; BlueGreen Alliance; California Association of Sanitation Agencies; California Marine Affairs and Navigation Conference; California State Coastal Conservancy; Casa de Esperanza; City of Sacramento; Clean Water Action; Coalition for the Delaware River Watershed; Community Based Organization Partners; Congregation of St. Joseph. Delta Institute; Ducks Unlimited; Earthjustice; Environment America; Environment Michigan; Environmental Defense Fund; Environmental Law & Policy Center; Franciscan Action Network; Freshwater for Life Action Coalition; Freshwater Future; Friends Committee on National Legislation; Genesee County Hispanic Latino Collaborative; Genesee County NOW; GreenFaith; GreenLatinos; Gulf Intracoastal Canal Association; Gulf Ports Association of the Americas; Headwaters Chapter, Izaak Walton League; Heart of the Lakes; Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities; Hispanic Federation; Hoosier Environmental Council; Huron River Watershed Council; International Union of Operating Engineers; Lake Carriers Association; Land Trust Alliance; League of Conservation Voters; League of United Latin American Citizens; League of Women Voters of the United States.

MANA, A National Latina Organization; Michigan Environmental Council; Midwest Environmental Advocates; Milwaukee Riverkeeper; National Association of Clean Water Agencies; National Association of Flood & Stormwater Management Agencies; National Association of Hispanic Federal Executives; National Coalition Of Blacks for Reparations in America; National Conference of Puerto Rican Women, Inc.; National Ground Water Association; National Rural Water Association; National Wildlife Federation; Natural Resources Defense Council; Nature Abounds; North Atlantic Ports Association; Ohio Environmental Council; Orange County Sanitation District; Orange County Water District; Pacific Northwest Waterways Association; Physicians for Social Responsibility; Prairie Rivers Network; Realize America’s Maritime Promise; Rural Community Assistance Partnership; San Francisco Public Utilities Commission; Save the Bay; The Bay Institute; The Nature Conservancy; U.S. Chamber of Commerce; U.S. Conference of Mayors; U.S. Great Lakes Shipping Association; Upper Mississippi River Basin Association; and Waterways Council, Inc.

Mrs. BOXER. You can tell from just the few I read what an amazing coalition we have. We can do this.

I have a fabulous committee that I am the ranking member of—fabulous on my side, wonderful on the Republican side. We really care about getting things done. I hope we will have a fabulous vote on this final passage and that the House will take up our bill, pass it, and not go back to square one and start arguing.

I say to my friends in this House, through this opportunity I have on the floor, this is an example of bipartisanship. This is an example of good governance. This is an example you should follow because we avoided the fights, we worked together, and we worked it out. Let’s get it done. Let’s get it to the President’s desk. Let’s not wait for a lameduck. There is no reason. People

should be able to know we did something good for them. We did something great for them.

This bill, while I am sure it isn’t 100-percent perfect from anybody’s eyes, is very solid, very strong, very good. I hope we will pass it with the biggest vote we can and the House will take it up.

Thank you so much for your patience.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I thank and acknowledge the work of the Senator from California, as well as the chairman of the Environment and Public Works Committee, not only on this WRDA bill but on previous matters relating to our water, resources, and our infrastructure—

Mrs. BOXER. And highways.

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Our highway bill. This has been a collaboration that has been recognized in the Senate. I think sometimes we joke that sometimes we have some polar opposites in the Senate on certain issues, but when there is a desire and a will to create something, to create legislation and make good things happen, that good will rises to the surface. I think we have seen that play out with our colleagues from California and Oklahoma.

Mrs. BOXER. May I make a comment through the Chair to my friend?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California.

Mrs. BOXER. I just wish to thank you because you and Senator CANTWELL are also an example of a team that is working through the toughest of issues. If somebody from the press asked you how do you do it—and I am sure they ask Senator INHOFE all the time, how do you do it with something who is a polar opposite in so many other areas—well, you have to find that sweet spot. You never know if you are going to be able to do it, but if there is good will and there is also respect, you can find it. You have found it in your committee. We have found it in ours.

I also thank you because in all of my work, you have always been there, being very helpful and supportive, so I thank you very much.

Ms. MURKOWSKI. I thank the Senator from California and do recognize that tough issues come to us. If they were easy, they wouldn’t be here, and so it is our job to kind of thread that needle and do that.

I know the Senator mentioned the people of Flint being happy with a resolution here. It is not just the people of Flint and the communities you have named in California. I can tell you that when we successfully pass this, the people in the small communities of Craig, the Pribilof Islands, Seward, and Little Diomed are looking for this infrastructure that will allow them, as very small communities, to have an economy because they now have a port, a harbor, and some infrastructure they can rely on.

When we think we are not making a difference, all we need to do is look to measures such as this WRDA bill.

I commend my colleague for working with me, working with Senator SULIVAN, including many of the priorities we had tried to advance on behalf of the good people of Alaska.

#### KING COVE, ALASKA

Ms. MURKOWSKI. As we consider their bill—and I am pleased we have moved forward with this managers' amendment—I wish to speak to an amendment that is not part of a managers' package, and it is not an amendment I will call up and ask for consideration, but it is an issue I have presented to Members on the floor in the past. I wanted to take just a few minutes this evening to bring about, again, discussion about another community, a community in Alaska, a community that is in crisis.

We have heard a lot about communities in crisis—whether it is Flint, MI, whether it is those communities that have suffered the flooding in Louisiana, but I have a community in Alaska—a little, small community of less than 1,000 people—by the name of King Cove.

King Cove remains at risk, not because of flooding, not because of a failed water system but because of a decision that was made by our own government, a heartless decision made by the Federal Government. King Cove's problem is not contamination in its drinking water supply, it is something far more fundamental, and it is something that virtually all of our communities—whether you are in Colorado or California—take for granted. What the people in King Cove are asking for is a very simple road, a reliable access to medical emergency transportation. They simply want to be able to reach proper care in time in the event of an injury or an illness.

So for those who aren't familiar with the small community of King Cove, it is a remote fishing community. It is about 625 air miles southwest of Anchorage. It is near the Alaska Peninsula. Eighty-five percent of the residents there are Alaska Natives. Many are Aleut and members of the federally recognized Agdaagux Tribe. As we have so many communities in the State of Alaska—in fact, 80 percent of our communities are not connected by road, but King Cove can only be reached by boat or by airplane. Often that is a challenge. The community is kind of nestled in this spit of land and is surrounded on one side by ocean and on the other by high volcanic oceans.

This is an area that isn't known for its weather. It is very high winds, huge storms, and dense fog all the way down to the ground. King Cove does have a gravel airstrip it can access, and the small planes that fly in and out regularly grapple with low visibility and very strong turbulence that comes down off the mountains, forces the

planes down. You have gale-force crosswinds. It is not a place for beginner pilots. I shouldn't even say that because it makes it sound too light. These are very serious flying conditions, but that is how you get in and out.

I did mention it is accessible by boat, but if it is stormy in the air, it is also stormy on the water. Local mariners are facing the same conditions, plus you add in 12-foot to 14-foot seas to contend with.

Most of the time you are saying: I am not going to travel when the weather is that foul, but there are times when you have to travel, when a medical emergency occurs that is beyond the capacity or the capability of the local clinic there. Keep in mind, this is a very small clinic. You don't have a doctor that can just get in a car and provide services. We don't have a doctor there. We have a physician's assistant. We may have doctors come occasionally, but you don't have the medical care you need. If you have severe trauma or if you are a woman in labor, if you have any kind of a serious illness, King Cove Clinic just simply cannot provide the level of service and care you need.

So what do you do? The first step is to transport those who are sick and injured to the nearby community of Cold Bay. Cold Bay is host to a 10,000-foot-long all-weather runway. It is one of the longest runways we have in the State. It was built after World War II. It is almost always open because they don't get the same weather conditions. Here is the beauty of it. It is only 30 miles from where you are in King Cove. So really, the challenge here, for people who need to get out quickly, is not getting from Cold Bay to Anchorage—the 625 air miles—but from King Cove to Cold Bay, 30 miles. That is the toughest part of the journey there.

Having seen this firsthand, I know that for the people who live in King Cove—the Natives who live there—the best answer, really the only answer, is to do what virtually every other community would do, which is build this short connector road.

Keep in mind, we are talking about a distance of 30 miles between the two communities. But it is not even 30 miles I am talking about. What we are seeking is a short—about 10 to 11 miles—gravel, one-lane, noncommercial-use road. That is what we are talking about. That is all that is needed to connect two existing roads. There is one that runs out of King Cove and another that runs out of Cold Bay. We need to link these two communities to finally and fully protect the health and safety of nearly 1,000 Alaskans. What we need is a 10-mile, one-lane, gravel, noncommercial-use road.

One might say: Well, do it. Why haven't you built the road? The reason is we cannot secure permission from our own Federal Government because—and here is the catch—it would cross a small sliver of the Izembek National Wildlife Refuge that was designated back in the 1980s as Federal wilderness.

They failed to consult with the Native people who were in King Cove at the time, but that designation was put in place. So we have been working through this for a period of years—actually, a period of decades.

We thought we had this resolved back in 2009. We overwhelmingly passed a lands bill through this Chamber that was signed into law by this President, and it gave the Department of the Interior the ability to approve a road for King Cove. It was a land exchange. And, quite honestly, it was an unbelievable deal. Alaskans offered a roughly 300-to-1 land exchange—a 300-to-1 land exchange—in the Federal Government's favor.

The people of King Cove said: We need 206 acres for a road corridor, and we, along with the State of Alaska, are willing to exchange 61,000 acres of our State lands and of our Native lands. Let me repeat that. They were willing to give back to the Federal Government the lands that were conveyed to the Natives upon settlement of their Native land claims so they could get a small 206-acre corridor. So between the Native lands and the State lands, a 300-to-1 land exchange was offered up—a pretty sweet deal.

Against all odds, the Secretary of the Interior rejected that offer. She did this on the day before Christmas Eve back in 2013. I think she was hoping that no one was going to pay attention. She decided against cherry-stemming these 206 acres—which, keep in mind, is about 0.07 percent of the refuge—because she said that somebody needs to speak up for the birds. Someone needs to speak up and represent the waterfowl. And she decided that protecting the people of King Cove while expanding the Izembek Refuge by tens of thousands of acres was somehow just not worth it.

To this day, years later, I still struggle with how she could come to that decision. It was a horrible decision. It was cruel. It was coldhearted against the Alaskan Native people of King Cove who care deeply about these lands and have stewarded them for thousands of years.

It was baffling. It is not as if there are no roads in this area. Since World War II, we have had roads in this area. The birds have flown. They have used it as their feeding site. It is not as if this is this protected, pristine area. The Fish and Wildlife Service brags on its Web site that local waterfowl hunting is world famous and spectacular. Come on out. If you want to be a sportsman, come out and go hunt on the refuge here. But you can't have this 10-mile, one-lane, gravel, noncommercial-use road there because someone has to watch out for the birds.

The decision reflects a double standard when you think about refuges in other parts of the country. We have roads through our refuges throughout the country, whether in Florida, Maryland, Texas, Louisiana, North Carolina, Arizona, Montana, Missouri, Illinois,