

So before I close, I thank owner Jerry Richardson, Coach Ron Rivera, and the Carolina Panthers. Mr. Richardson is a pillar of our community, and Coach Rivera has developed a Super Bowl-caliber team: Cam Newton, the league MVP; Luke Kuechly, our defensive standout; a total of 10 Pro Bowlers this year; and a 17-to-2 season. It was fun to watch. The Super Bowl was fun to watch.

You know, I did grow a playoff beard. After we ended the playoff season, I proudly displayed it for weeks on the Senate floor, back in North Carolina, and at Levi Stadium on Super Bowl night.

But on Monday morning I got misty-eyed as I shaved it off in San Francisco. So with all apologies to Tony Bennett, I penned a poem based on one of his songs about that same city. I called it "I left my hair in San Francisco."

I left my hair in San Francisco
After the game, it haunted me
I'm cleanly shaven, quite sad and bare
While Broncos fans dance like Fred Astaire
The loveliness of Santa Clara seems somehow sad today
The glory of my Panthers' season is of another day
But I'm looking forward to next year's season
Because I expect a Super Bowl repeat for many good reasons

To Senator BENNET and to the Presiding Officer, congratulations on a great Super Bowl win for the Denver Broncos, and I look forward to many more games that our two teams may play in the future.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Colorado.

Mr. BENNET. Mr. President, I will be very brief. I have a longer set of remarks that I want to give next week celebrating the Broncos' victory, and I know our colleague from Wyoming is here.

But since the Presiding Officer is shackled to the desk and can't make remarks, I would say on his behalf how grateful the two of us are to the Senator from North Carolina for the graciousness of his remarks. I know how hard it must have been.

But to have the Senator not only make the remarks but provide original poetry at the end, is more than anybody could have expected. So through the Chair I thank the Senator for that.

I also want to say how proud we are of the Broncos and the Broncos organization, the Bowlen family, and the entire team for what they were able to pull off. I was able to watch it in my living room with my wife and daughters.

I congratulate, in particular, Von Miller, who is the MVP, and our defense, who played a game like no other defense I have ever seen.

Finally, I would simply say thank you to Peyton Manning for the example he has set for my children and for children all over our State—that what matters is not how good you are or how

skilled you are or how you act in the minute, but what matters is the patient decades of hard work a person is willing to put in to perfect their craft. That is what Peyton Manning has demonstrated. That is what he has shown. That is the value he has lived. I think he has made a huge difference, as I say, to the next generation of Coloradans.

We learned last week, as well, that this game, just like any game, is not about any one individual; it is about a team. We saw a team—the weaknesses and strengths—come together and win a game over a very, very tough organization in the Carolina Panthers.

(Mr. BARRASSO assumed the Chair.)

With that, I see my colleague from Colorado is now on the floor.

I yield the floor by saying: Go Broncos.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Colorado.

Mr. GARDNER. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from Wyoming for providing relief and the Presiding Officer for allowing me to make remarks.

I thank my freshman colleague from the great State of North Carolina for those kind words. I can only imagine if the Senator from Colorado, Mr. BENNET, and I had to give the same remarks had the outcome been different, that we could only be so gracious. So thank you very much for the congratulations to the Denver Broncos and, obviously, the Carolina Panthers. It was an exciting game that they were able to be a part of, and there will be many more years of success to both franchises, undoubtedly.

For those of you in Colorado who were able to watch the game, what an exciting time it was. We can remember the great teams led by John Elway—whether they played the Packers or the Falcons for the two Super Bowl victories—and now this exciting victory at Santa Clara as well. Also, a million people showed up in downtown Denver, CO, just a few short days ago to express their outpouring of support for the Denver Broncos. This has truly been an exciting time for the people of Colorado.

I am very pleased that Senator BENNET and I didn't have to grow a beard. Thank you, Senator TILLIS, from the great State of North Carolina.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SASSE). The Senator from Wyoming.

THE PRESIDENT'S BUDGET

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, on Tuesday, President Obama released his budget for the next fiscal year. As usual, there was a lot of new spending the American people don't want and a lot of new taxes the American people can't afford.

It is interesting. Politico had a headline about the budget in Tuesday's paper. It says "Obama launches liberal offensive in his final budget." A liberal offensive in his final budget. It called the budget "aggressively liberal."

Well, one of the big, "aggressively liberal" things the President put in his budget is an enormous tax increase on gasoline. This tax would add over \$10 to the price of a barrel of oil. That equates to about 24 cents to a gallon of gasoline at the pump. This increase in tax would raise about \$319 billion over 10 years.

President Obama knows his budget has zero chance of becoming law, not just because Republicans won't vote for it; Democrats won't vote for it. Last year his budget was defeated by a vote of 98 to 1. Only one Member of his own party voted for his budget last year, and now Democrats in Congress are running away from this gas tax as fast as they can.

The problem is, this tax is about more than just the budget; this is a sign that the Obama administration is still committed to continuing its assault on energy production in this country—red, white, and blue energy.

The American people understand there are enormous national security implications to what the President is proposing in his budget. Right now there is fierce competition in the global energy markets. The OPEC cartel has a strategy to win that competition in the oil market. It has been pumping out oil at a pace that is intended to drive U.S. shale oil producers out of business. Then once the competition is gone, they will raise prices.

The best way for us to protect American interests is to make it easier and cheaper for energy producers to operate here in America. The worst thing we could do is to add to the cost of American oil by imposing this new tax of \$10 per barrel, 24 cents per gallon, but that is exactly what President Obama wants to do. He wants to raise taxes, and he wants to make it harder to produce American energy. President Obama's plan would actually help OPEC get what it wants. It would also put American energy producers at a competitive disadvantage with our adversaries in Iran and in Russia.

Just a few weeks ago, the Obama administration lifted economic sanctions on Iran's energy exports. This means that Iran can now export oil again. So how much oil are they going to export? According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration, Iran right now has between 30 and 50 million barrels of oil sitting offshore in tankers today. Iran is planning to boost its oil exports to Europe and Asia by half a million barrels a day in the next few months. And it is not just oil; Iran is also the world's second largest producer of natural gas in terms of its resources. Right now, they are building a new export plant for liquefied natural gas that is about 40 percent complete, and they are ready to start shipping natural gas to Europe within 2 years.

Russia is also a huge exporter of natural gas. That is one of the reasons Vladimir Putin invaded Ukraine. It was to get control of the gas pipelines there. Now it appears that Gazprom is

prepared to start a natural gas price war with the United States. Gazprom is, of course, the Russian gas company that is mostly owned by the government and controlled by Vladimir Putin. A price war would help them maintain their grip as being the biggest gas supplier in Europe, and it would discourage U.S. liquefied natural gas projects from ever being built.

What has the Obama administration done? The Obama administration has a documented history of delaying permits to American businesses that want to export our liquefied natural gas. Needless bureaucratic delays just deter energy production and producers from wanting to start these projects in the United States because it is so hard to get them approved, and that just drives up the cost. The administration's approach plays right into Vladimir Putin's hands.

This is not the time to add cost to American energy production. That will only help our adversaries more, and it will make our allies more dependent on energy—not from us but from places such as Russia and Iran and, of course, from other OPEC countries. This is not the time to shut down the production of American energy.

There are a lot of far-left, extreme environmentalists out there who want to make sure American energy resources are never used but stay in the ground. There are also a lot of Washington Democrats who are eager to give these environmental extremists everything they want—everything.

Last week in New Hampshire, Hillary Clinton was caught on tape promising one of these extremist supporters that the end of fossil fuel development on public land, she said, is “a done deal.” The end of exploration of fossil fuels on public land is “a done deal.” Well, it may be a done deal in her mind. It is also unrealistic, unwise, and unworkable. Take a look at it. Forty-one percent of America's coal production right now comes from public land; 22 percent of our crude oil comes from public land; 16 percent of our natural gas comes from public land; and Hillary Clinton, in her speech and her comments last Thursday in New Hampshire, said, in terms of any of that production, it is “a done deal.”

I remind my colleagues that energy is the master resource. America needs energy for our economy to grow. We need those jobs. Where are we supposed to get our energy if we don't get it from public lands? We can't power America's manufacturing on wind alone.

Instead of building new barriers to American energy production, we should be tearing down those barriers. The energy legislation we have been debating in this body actually includes ideas to help do that. One bipartisan idea in this legislation would help speed up the permitting process to export liquefied natural gas. It is bipartisan, with six Democratic cosponsors.

After all the environmental studies have been done, after everything has

been approved, it then takes an average of another 7 months for this administration to say yes or no on the permits. That is after everything has already been approved. Why would it take 7 additional months to get a decision by the administration? The Energy Department should be able to say yes or no, and this legislation says they should be able to do it within 45 days. This is going to force Washington to do its job in an accountable and timely way. That will help make sure other countries have options for where to get their energy, other than the concerns we have about a dominance of Russia, a dominance of Iran, and a change of the balance of power internationally.

It is time for America's energy policies to help American energy producers compete and to help those jobs in our energy security at home. That is how we are going to build our economy, how we are going to create American jobs, and how we are going to strengthen our national security.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. NELSON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for up to 7 minutes.

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

THE EL FARO

Mr. NELSON. Mr. President, late last year a cargo container ship carrying 33 men and women left Florida from the Port of Jacksonville en route to Puerto Rico. It typically sailed back and forth, carrying cargo to and from San Juan, Puerto Rico, but this time it sailed directly into the path of a hurricane.

Two days later the crew sent what would be its final communication, reporting that the ship's engines were disabled and the vessel was left drifting and tilting, with no power, straight into the path of the storm.

Subsequent to that, despite an exhaustive search and rescue attempt by the Coast Guard in the days that followed, the El Faro and her crew were never heard from again. Only in one case, in desperately trying to do a search and rescue mission, did they find one decomposed body in a body-suit, but they could not find anybody else.

Since then, the National Transportation Safety Board—the agency charged with investigating the incident—has been working tirelessly to understand what happened. Why would the ship leave port when they knew there was a storm brewing and it was going to cross the path of where the ship was supposed to go?

Working with the U.S. Navy and the Coast Guard, investigators eventually found the ship's wreckage scattered at the bottom of the ocean east of the Bahamas Islands in waters 15,000 feet deep. But what they didn't find that day was the ship's voyage data recorder, or what we typically refer to as the ship's black box, not unlike the black box we look for in the case of an aircraft incident that records all of the data.

Since we have no survivors, this data recorder is a key piece to getting the information to understand this puzzle of why that ship would sail right into the hurricane. It records and it stores all of the ship's communications. Finding it could shed light on what really happened onboard in those final hours. Despite the search team's exhaustive efforts to locate the data recorder amongst the scattered wreckage, they couldn't find it, and eventually they had to call off the search.

Earlier this year, this Senator wrote to the Chairman of the NTSB and urged him to go back and search again because finding the ship's data recorder is important for us to understand how these 33 human beings who have families back at home were lost. I am here to report that at this very minute, the NTSB is announcing that they are going back to do the search again. At this moment, the NTSB is saying it will resume the search for the ship's black box. This time it will do it with the help of even more sophisticated equipment to help investigators pinpoint the approximate location of the recorder and hopefully, if it is not among the wreckage of the ship, point to its location and pick it up off the ocean floor.

The NTSB's decision today—which I commend; and I thank the Chairman for continuing to keep after this—to search again for the data recorder is a critical step in our understanding of what went so tragically wrong that day. We owe it not only to the families of the lost mariners aboard the El Faro but to the future safety of all those who travel on the high seas. It is up to us to not only understand what happened but to do what we can to ensure that it doesn't happen in the future.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to consider the following nomination, which the clerk will report.