COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

RULES OF PROCEDURE

Mr. COCHRAN. Mr. President, the Senate Committee on Appropriations has adopted rules governing its procedures for the 115th Congress. Pursuant to rule XXVI, paragraph 2, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, on behalf of myself and Vice Chairman LEAHY, I ask unanimous consent that a copy of the committee rules be printed in the RECORD.

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

SENATE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

COMMITTEE RULES—115TH CONGRESS

I. MEETINGS

The Committee will meet at the call of the Chairman.

II. QUORUMS

1. Reporting a bill. A majority of the members must be present for the reporting of a bill.

2. Other business. For the purpose of transacting business other than reporting a bill or taking testimony, one-third of the members of the Committee shall constitute a quorum.

3. Taking testimony. For the purpose of taking testimony, other than sworn testimony, by the Committee or any subcommittee, one member of the Committee or subcommittee shall constitute a quorum. For the purpose of taking sworn testimony by the Committee, three members shall constitute a quorum, and for the taking of sworn testimony by any subcommittee, one member shall constitute a quorum.

III. PROXIES

Except for the reporting of a bill, votes may be cast by proxy when any member so requests.

IV. ATTENDANCE OF STAFF MEMBERS AT CLOSED SESSIONS

Attendance of staff members at closed sessions of the Committee shall be limited to those members of the Committee staff who have a responsibility associated with the matter being considered at such meeting. This rule may be waived by unanimous consent.

V. BROADCASTING AND PHOTOGRAPHING OF COMMITTEE HEARINGS

The Committee or any of its subcommittees may permit the photographing and broadcast of open hearings by television and/or radio. However, if any member of a subcommittee objects to the photographing or broadcasting of an open hearing, the question shall be referred to the full Committee for its decision.

VI. AVAILABILITY OF SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

To the extent possible, when the bill and report of any subcommittee are available, they shall be furnished to each member of the Committee thirty-six hours prior to the Committee's consideration of said bill and report.

VII. AMENDMENTS AND REPORT LANGUAGE

To the extent possible, amendments and report language intended to be proposed by Senators at full Committee markups shall be provided in writing to the Chairman and Ranking Minority Member and the appropriate Subcommittee Chairman and Ranking Minority Member twenty-four hours prior to such markups.

VIII. POINTS OF ORDER

Any member of the Committee who is floor manager of an appropriations bill is hereby authorized to make points of order against any amendment offered in violation of the Senate Rules on the floor of the Senate to such appropriations bill.

IX. EX OFFICIO MEMBERSHIP

The Chairman and Ranking Minority Member of the full Committee are ex officio members of all subcommittees of which they are not regular members but shall have no vote in the subcommittee and shall not be counted for purposes of determining a quorum.

CONFIRMATION OF SCOTT PRUITT

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, I had very serious concerns about the nomination of Attorney General Scott Pruitt for Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, EPA, and opposed his nomination. His record on the environment is abysmal. My office received a great number of comments from people in the State of Vermont, which takes environmental protection very seriously, as well as from all over the country. They fear that Mr. Pruitt is bought and paid for by the fossil fuel industry and the protection of our environment is in serious jeopardy. Make no mistake, the nomination of Scott Pruitt was a nomination designed to protect the fossil fuel industry and not the environment.

In many ways, Scott Pruitt is the worst of the worst of all of Trump's nominees. Donald Trump was going to drain the swamp. He promised to ''break the cycle of corruption'' and ''give new voices a chance to go into government service.'' Well, guess who is running the swamp now: the same corporate cronies Trump promised to drain out of Washington.

Scott Pruitt wants to be the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, but he is no friend of the environment. He boasts on his website that he is a ''leading advocate'' against the EPA. He said, ''The agency's actions are at best incompetent, and at worst reprehensible.'' He testified to the House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology in May 2016 that ''the EPA was never intended to be our Nation's frontline environmental regulator.''

What is particularly troubling is his record as Oklahoma's attorney general—as Oklahoma's chief enforcer of clean air and water protections for his constituents—he sued the EPA 14 times and still has 8 active cases against the EPA. In all but one of these 14 cases Pruitt brought against the EPA, he was on the side of corporate interests. And in 13 of the 14, these companies or trade associations were also financial contributors to Mr. Pruitt's political causes.

Shockingly, Scott Pruitt disbanded the Environmental Protection Unit of the Oklahoma Attorney General's Office. He claims that he continued environmental protection, but the State budget shows that funding for ''environmental law'' in the attorney general's office fell from $486,000 in 2011 to 0 in 2014. In the State's 2016 budget, there was a line item for ''environmental law''—with $0. In fact, of the more than 700 press releases he issued as Oklahoma's top law enforcement official, not one touts an environmental enforcement case in Oklahoma. It seems clear that he abandoned all meaningful environmental protection. This is concerning because reports show that the Trump administration is considering eliminating the EPA's Office of Enforcement, which would mean that the Agency would no longer be able to independently enforce our Nation's antipollution laws.

At a time when we have to strengthen environmental protection, Mr. Pruitt will be working overtime to carry out President Trump's goal to destroy the EPA. Does this sound like someone who should be running the EPA? Not to me. More than 230 different environmental, health, and public interest groups agree that Pruitt is unqualified—so do former EPA employees. More than 770 of them from across the country all signed on to a letter that asked us to reject Pruitt as the next EPA Administrator. When hundreds of environmental groups and former EPA employees tell us that this guy is not qualified, maybe we should listen.

The scariest thing about Scott Pruitt being the Administrator of the EPA is that our EPA should be working nonstop to address the most pressing environmental issue of our time—the global crisis of climate change. In 2009, the EPA Administrator found that the carbon pollution causing climate change threatens the public health and welfare of current and future generations; yet President Trump has called climate change a ''hoax.'' In November 2012, he tweeted: ''The concept of global warming was created by and for the Chinese in order to make U.S. manufacturing non-competitive.''

Perhaps it should come as no surprise that Mr. Pruitt takes the same page from President Trump. Pruitt said in March 2016, ''Reasonable minds can disagree about the science behind global warming, and disagree they do.'' He also said ''The debate about climate change is just that, a debate. There are scientists that agree, there are scientists that don't agree, to the extent of man's contribution and whether it is even harmful at this point,'' he added ''We've had ebb and flow, we've had obviously climate conditions change throughout our history and that is scientific fact. It gets cooler. It gets hotter. And we do not know the trajectory is on an unsustainable course. Nor do we know, the extent by which the burning of fossil fuels, and man's contribution to that, is making it far worse than it is.''

When I questioned Mr. Pruitt in his confirmation hearing on January 18, he said: ''I believe . . . the degree of human activity's impact on the climate is subject to more debate on whether the climate is changing or whether human activity contributes to it.'' He even told me that he thinks that his opinion on climate change is

immaterial to his role as EPA Administrator. This is ludicrous. It is not immaterial—it is in fact essential—that we have an EPA Administrator who agrees with the scientific data and is willing to lead the fight against climate change. Yet, in his answers, he stated, ''there is a diverse range of views regarding the key drivers of our changing climate among scientists. I believe that these differences should be the subject of robust and open debate free from intimidation. If confirmed, I will continue to encourage an honest debate on our changing climate, the role of human activity, our ability to measure the degree and extent of human activity, and what to do about it.''

Almost all—97 percent—of scientists have concluded that climate change is real. It is caused by human activity. And it is already causing devastating problems in our country and around the world. If we do not move aggressively to transition our energy system away from fossil fuels toward sustainable energy like solar, wind, and geothermal, the problem will become much worse.

Just this month, a report in the peer-reviewed journal The Anthropocene Review, researchers found that humans are causing the climate to change 170 times faster than natural forces. This is just another reason why it is unacceptable for Mr. Pruitt to say that he ''believe[s] the ability to measure with precision, the degree of human activity's impact on the climate is subject to more debate on whether the climate is changing or whether human activity contributes to it.''

For 200 years, we have been burning increasing amounts of fossil fuels to heat our buildings, generate electricity, and power our vehicles. When we burn fossil fuels, we release significant amounts of carbon pollution into the atmosphere. In fact, today, humans release more than 35 billion tons of CO_2 in the atmosphere every year. According to NASA, the concentration of atmospheric carbon dioxide has never exceeded 300 parts per million in the past 650,000 years. In 2013, CO_2 levels reached 400 parts per million for the first time.

So it should not come as a surprise to hear that the planet is warming at an alarming rate: 2016 was the hottest year on record, and 16 of the 17 hottest years have occurred since 2000. Nor should it come as a surprise that we are already seeing devastating effects of climate change all across the United States and around the globe: more intense wildfires, heatwaves, drought, extreme storms, flooding, rising sea levels, and more. Americans are worried. A study released last month shows that more than 6 in 10 Americans say that they worried about global warming.

But climate change is not the only area that makes Americans worried about Pruitt being the EPA Administrator. They are worried about Pruitt's inaction in the face of a growing number of earthquakes in Oklahoma. In the past few years, Oklahoma has been plagued by thousands of earthquakes, which the U.S. Geological Survey said are tied to fracking wastewater injection. Oklahoma's current earthquake rate is now 600 times higher than its prefracking rate. Oklahoma now has more earthquakes on a regular basis than California.

In 2011 in Prague, OK, The Oklahoman newspaper reported a 5.6 earthquake, stating that scientists ''believe the earthquake was caused by injection wells in the area.'' To put that in perspective, an earthquake in the magnitude 5 range, like the one reported, releases as much energy as the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima in 1945. But, before 2009, there were, on average, two earthquakes a year in Oklahoma that were magnitude 3 or greater. By 2013, there were 109 magnitude 3 or greater earthquakes; by 2014, that had grown to 585 magnitude 3 or greater earthquakes; and by 2015, there were 907 magnitude 3 or greater earthquakes.

The damage was extensive; 40 to 50 buildings in Cushing, OK, were substantially damaged in a November 2016 earthquake. In reaction to the then-largest earthquake in September 2015, the Pawnee Nation passed a resolution against fracking activities after suffering damage to seven historic tribal buildings. The Ponca Nation also passed has a moratorium on fracking because the earthquakes have caused damage to their crumbling water infrastructure and buildings. Scientists say that Oklahoma is ''almost certain'' to have more earthquakes, with heightened risks of a large quake probable to endure for a decade.

The Attorneys General in my State of Vermont, California, and New York have all frequently acted quickly to address environmental problems; yet, during Mr. Pruitt's hearing, he told me he did nothing to help folks in Oklahoma who had been hurt by earthquakes caused by fracking in Oklahoma. Pruitt's sole response to my questions during his hearing about what he had done to address the earthquake problem in his State was to say he has ''acknowledged that he is concerned.'' That is it. ''He's concerned.'' He did not stand up and say he will do everything he can to stop future earthquakes as a result of fracking. He did not sue the corporations who were causing the earthquakes on behalf of the people of Oklahoma. He did not hold a press conference. He did nothing.

These earthquakes are so concerning because the EPA ''regulates the construction, operation, permitting, and closure of injection wells used to place fluids underground for storage or disposal'' as part of its role in preventing contamination of drinking water. So, if we let Pruitt will nor lead the EPA, there is nothing to say he will not abandon efforts to regulate waste fracking water injection to protect the American people from earthquakes. If his past record is any indication, it is very questionable that he will take action to protect communities from harmful effects like these.

Maybe the reason so many are concerned he will abandon efforts to enforce environmental laws and why he was willing to abandon Oklahomans when they needed him is because he is in the pocket of corporate industry. Pruitt received more than $350,000 in contributions from the fossil fuel industry. Pruitt raised huge amounts for his two Federal PAC—known as Liberty 2.0 and Oklahoma Strong. According to Politico, Liberty 2.0 has raised more than $168,000 from energy interests, and Oklahoma Strong leadership has raised $72,000.

In 2014, in a Pulitzer Prize winning investigation, the New York Times exposed that Pruitt and numerous other Republican attorneys general had formed secret alliances with energy corporations. The New York Times also exposed the Defense Fund, which is a dark money offshoot of the Republican Attorneys General Association. The Defense Fund received $175,000 in 2014 from Freedom Partners, which coordinates the Koch brothers' political activities. The New York Times also detailed how, in 2011, Pruitt wrote a letter to the EPA Administrator claiming that Federal regulators were grossly overestimating the amount of air pollution caused by energy companies drilling new natural gas wells in his State. Pruitt did not write the letter on behalf of Oklahoma residents; he did it on behalf of one of Oklahoma's biggest oil and gas companies, Devon Energy. As he fought for corporate donors, the American Lung Association named three urban regions in Oklahoma as having the 25 most heavily polluted air regions in the United States.

These examples of Pruitt's corrupt relationship with corporate polluters are so shocking and dangerous because he wants to lead the EPA, an Agency which is most responsible for protecting our kids and grandkids from the very polluters he has protected for so long. For the sake of our children and grandchildren and the future of this planet, were there none of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle who would speak out to say that Mr. Pruitt should not be confirmed as head of the EPA?

The last time I checked, no one voted to pollute the environment in the last election. The majority of Americans do not agree that we should be dismantling protections that ensure clean air and clean water. In fact, according to Gallup, more than 7 in 10 Americans worry about drinking water pollution and air pollution. That is why we cannot allow Scott Pruitt to drive the EPA into the ground. He has shown that he wants to dismantle basic air, water, and climate protections.

We cannot rollback decades of progress. In fact, we are in desperate need of strong laws and regulations to

protect the environment and fight climate change. Do not be fooled. Scott Pruitt is not for protecting American citizens and the environment, but for protecting giant polluting corporations. With a record like his, we cannot expect Pruitt to safeguard our drinking water and air from pollution. With Pruitt, the environment will be auctioned off to the highest corporate bidder no matter the cost to the American public. It was for all these reasons that I strongly opposed Mr. Pruitt's nomination, and I urged my colleagues to join me in voting no.

Ms. CORTEZ MASTO. Mr. President, I speak in unity with my colleagues and highlight the irreparable harm that will be done to our environment and communities now that Scott Pruitt has been confirmed to be the head of the Environmental Protection Agency.

Mr. Pruitt has focused his career on working against the EPA's fundamental mission of protecting our Nation's environment, instead pushing an antienvironment agenda dictated by big corporations that have funded his campaigns and political career.

Mr. Pruitt has been serving as Oklahoma's attorney general since 2010, during which he has spent countless hours working to undermine and repudiate the very Agency he is nominated to run.

Throughout his tenure, Mr. Pruitt sued the EPA 14 times over orders that seek to protect our environment and the health and safety of our communities.

Included in Mr. Pruitt's lawsuits were efforts to undercut basic, commonsense measures that are essential to Americans' health and safety: EPA safeguards for clean air and clean water. Yes, Mr. Pruitt supports undoing measures that ensure the air we breathe is not polluted and the water we drink is free of contaminants.

And during his confirmation hearing, Mr. Pruitt contradicted his own record and biography, calling into question his knowledge of basic principles. Pruitt claimed he believes that the EPA has ''a very valuable role.'' And yet his own LinkedIn profile brags that he is ''a leading advocate against the EPA's activist agenda.''

Almost 4,000 Nevadans reached out to my office urging me to vote against Mr. Pruitt.

I want to read some stories from Nevadans who voiced their concerns about Mr. Pruitt and what is at stake for them—as well as countless other families across the country.

From Jean Pierre LeBarry of Las Vegas, NV:

I am of Basque descent, as is my whole family. I grew up in Northern Nevada, as many other Basque folks did, on a ranch. We did not have running water or even electricity. We did have our sheep though. We were sheep ranchers, across the great state of Nevada the industry flourished, but before I had heard Al Gore say anything about climate change, I saw its effects in our state [Nevada]. We stopped getting as much snowfall; we would scour the desert for water to keep our herd alive on the range. Year after year it got worse, slowly killing our industry, thinning our herd, and giving me first hand example of how severe climate change is. This was more than 30 years ago I saw these changes taking place. After I left the ranch, I worked as a government employee for the Bureau of Land Management, until I retired. To see how much disregard Scott Pruitt would have for my family and their struggles with the deterioration of our climate; it is appalling that anyone would dare to confirm his nomination to head the Environmental Protection Agency, the very agency he has tried so hard to dismantle already.

From Sharon Ingram-Bevans of Reno, NV:

My Husband was a Vietnam Vet and he died last March after a 10 year illness directly related to environmental pollution. He was stationed at Camp Le Juhen North Carolina, exposed to drinking water full of jet fuel, and some great general's idea to have young Marines scrape and repaint Agent Orange boxes while serving in the Refugee camps at Okinawa Japan. Our Daughter has Thyroid disease due to this exposure also. If we only paid attention to how we use and dispose of substances we might have a better world to give to our children. There is no Planet ''B'' and even rich people need clean air and water.

From Brittany Lamborn of Las Vegas, NV:

I was born and raised in Nevada. My sister, brother, and I grew up in the Las Vegas valley, surrounded by majestic mountain ranges, fragrant pines, and breathtaking sunsets. Away from the glitz and glamour of the Strip, I could lose myself in the beauty of Red Rock or walk the trails on Mt. Charleston. My mom would take us to Gilcrease Orchard to pick fresh produce. My dad would take us on stargazing trips to Cathedral Gorge in Panaca. I have never wished for another home. Home means Nevada.

Now I have two young children of my own. I put on a brave face every morning so that they do not see my fear that increases with each day. I fear that these God given wonders will not be protected for them. I fear that the overwhelming need to consume will eat up our natural resources. And I fear that, unchecked, we will do irreparable harm to the only planet we have. When the dust has cleared, I fear: What will be left for our children?

Climate change is a fact, not a feeling or an opinion. We need someone at the helm of the Environmental Protection Agency that will protect every Gilcrease Orchard, every Red Rock, and every Cathedral Gorge in the United States. Scott Pruitt is not that man.

I know I am not the only Senator whose office was contacted by countless constituents, urging us to put the health and safety of our children and our environment first and oppose Mr. Pruitt's nomination.

I promised Nevadans I would come to Washington and fight for them and their priorities, and that is why I could not support Mr. Pruitt to lead the EPA. I urged my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to do the same.

TRIBUTE TO MAJOR GENERAL CAMILLE M. NICHOLS

Mr. REED. Mr. President, today I want to pay special tribute to an exceptional officer of the U.S. Army, MG Camille M. Nichols. Currently serving as the director of the Department of Defense Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office, General Nichols will retire after more than 41 years of Active military service on April 1, 2017. From enlisted private, to academy graduate, to two-star general, MG Camille Nichols has demonstrated the Army values of duty, integrity, selfless service, and dedication to country. Many of my colleagues and I have had the pleasure of working with Major General Nichols on a number of issues and programs, and it is my distinct privilege to recognize her accomplishments.

MG Camille Nichols began her military career in 1975, as an enlisted soldier in the U.S. Army. While serving in Germany and at the insistence of her leadership, she applied for acceptance as a cadet candidate to the U.S. Military Academy Preparatory School, thus enabling her to join the U.S. Military Academy Class, USMA, class of 1981. Upon her graduation from USMA, Major General Nichols was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the Corps of Engineers. Throughout her years of service, Major General Nichols attended numerous advanced military and civilian schools, receiving three masters degrees, and while working full time, earned a Ph.D. in engineering management from George Washington University.

After serving in several command and high-level staff positions, General Nichols developed expertise in contracting and acquisition procedures and systems. These demonstrated abilities were recognized by her selection as one of the general officers named to stand up the U.S. Army's Contracting Command. It cannot be overstated that, in all her leadership and staff roles, Camille Nichols positively influenced the lives of thousands of military personnel while she did the Nation's bidding around the world and at home. From Korea to Saudi Arabia; from Operation Iraqi Freedom/New Dawn to commanding general of U.S. Army Contracting Command, Major General Nichols has been out front, pressing hard to ensure the Army is well-equipped with a 21st century fighting force capable of defeating the enemy.

As the director of the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office, Major General Nichols' undeterred leadership, soldier-scholar depth and breadth of knowledge, commitment to eliminating sexual assault, and commonsense approach to problem solving have contributed immeasurably to the improvement and execution of Sexual Assault Prevention and Response program and the DOD-wide strategy. She also spearheaded specialized policies and strategies focusing on prevention efforts, combating retaliation, and addressing the needs of male victims. Major General Nichols' efforts have been instrumental in shaping and articulating program initiatives, plans,