

what the President has accomplished in those first 100 days.

From what I heard talking to people at home in Wyoming this past weekend, his first 100 days has been a huge success. People tell me that they think America is finally headed in the right direction again. I had a lot of people tell me they feel as if they have actually gotten a new spring in their step as a result of the Presidential election last year and President Trump taking office.

The other day when I was home, I was in line at the gas station behind a guy. A friend of his came and said: Hey, how are you doing? The guy said: Great. We are hiring again.

That is the kind of confidence that is happening all around Wyoming. The polling company Gallup says that it is happening not just in Wyoming but all across the country. For 24 straight weeks, more Americans have been more optimistic than pessimistic about the economy. As soon as Donald Trump was elected President, economic confidence soared, and it has stayed positive ever since. Gallup said that this is the exact opposite of what they had seen in the previous 8 years; that is, during the whole Obama administration, during the entire so-called economic recovery.

In another poll released last week, Gallup said that people are also less worried that they will lose the job they have. They found that American workers are less concerned about being laid off from their job than at any time since Gallup started asking questions way back in 1975. That is more than 40 years ago.

Why are people optimistic now? I think it is because they see that President Trump and the Republicans in Congress are serious about improving the economy. They see that we are serious about giving relief to Americans who have been getting buried under an avalanche of redtape. They see that the President is off to a very fast start in the White House.

Just look at what we have already done to help relieve the burdens on Americans. Congress has rolled back 13 different midnight regulations that President Obama tried to sneak through at the last minute. We struck down a stream buffer rule that was meant to block coal mining. We got rid of a rule that puts Americans at a competitive disadvantage when they are trying to develop energy resources overseas. We got rid of a regulation that took the control of local energy issues away from the State officials; we got rid of that regulation. And we got rid of one of the regulations that gave more control to Washington and less to States. These were regulations that harmed Americans and wiped out American jobs. Now those regulations are gone.

We have more that we can do to roll back terrible regulations like these. I have introduced a resolution to block another damaging rule that has come

out by the Bureau of Land Management, which has to do with the Obama administration rules on methane that is produced at oil and gas wells. The new regulations created confusion by duplicating other rules that were already on the books.

That was the problem with so many of these regulations coming out by the Obama administration as they left office: regulation on top of regulation causing costs and confusion. They added costs that discourage energy production and kill energy jobs.

I hope that we can have a vote on this resolution very soon and get rid of this unnecessary red tape.

As active as Congress has been getting rid of these unfair, last-minute rules, President Trump has been even more active. He has already signed at least 30 Executive orders to help clear a path for the American economy to take off again. He signed a major Executive order promoting American energy independence. This has been an enormous shift away from the Obama-era approach of disruptive regulations, restrictions, and Washington overreach. All of these regulations did more to harm hard-working Americans than they did to actually help the environment. From now on, Washington will be looking for ways to protect our environment while helping our economy to grow.

Just last week, President Trump took another important step to keep his promises. He eased restrictions on drilling for oil and gas in offshore areas, like the Arctic and the Atlantic Oceans. These places have great potential for producing the energy America needs. President Trump is helping to create certainty that those resources will be available if we need them.

President Obama couldn't imagine that it was possible to have responsible energy development in America. President Trump knows differently. He knows it is possible. He knows that American workers can do the job. He knows that America will be stronger because of it. I think that is the kind of thing the American people mean when they tell me that they feel they have a spring in their step.

I can also tell you that this is just the beginning. Remember when President Obama bragged that he had a pen and a phone? Well, President Trump has proved that he has a whole drawer full of pens, and he intends to keep using them to help get the American economy growing again. He wants to hear more people saying that things are great; we are hiring again. That is what the President has been doing, and it is what Congress is doing. These are the kinds of things that will get this country back on track when it comes to our energy policy.

In Wyoming and in much of the country, energy means jobs. Our goal should be to make American energy as clean as we can, as fast as we can without raising costs on American families. All of us should be able to agree on

that. It is time to restore that balance to America's energy policy. President Trump is dedicated to getting that balance right.

Republicans in Congress are dedicated to getting the economy back in gear, and I hope that more Democrats will join us with their ideas and with their support. That is what the American people want, and it is what they voted for. It is why people are confident and why they see better days ahead for this great country.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

NATIONAL FLOOD INSURANCE PROGRAM

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I rise to discuss an issue of extraordinary importance to the people of Louisiana and to many Americans. Yet again, Americans are witnessing a dramatic, rumor-filled guessing game. I am not talking about the latest new release from Netflix, I am talking about the reauthorization of the extremely important National Flood Insurance Program—we call it the NFIP, which I can assure you has played more like an episode of “Veep” than “House of Cards” for the audience that watches it unfold every few years.

I am sorry to say, Congress has repeatedly and consistently mangled the reauthorization of this essential Federal program. In 2010, the NFIP expired four times—not once, not twice but four times, for a total of 53 days, which injected uncertainty throughout a fragile housing market that had just been devastated 2 years previously.

That was inexcusable. Local economies felt the sting of 1,400 home closing delays or cancellations per day that the program was expired. Now, along with many of the program's stakeholders and participants, I believe it is crucial that we avoid this type of congressionally imposed delay.

Congress should extend the program. Let me say that again. Congress should extend the National Flood Insurance Program for a multiyear reauthorization before the September 30 deadline of this year. Our economy demands it. Many Americans may remember when the Biggert-Waters Flood Insurance Reform Act was signed into law in 2012. I was not in the Senate then. I was State Treasurer in Louisiana, but I certainly remember it.

In an effort to bring the program closer to solvency after Superstorm Sandy, policyholders, as a result of Biggert-Waters, saw their premiums quickly rise to “actuarial levels.” For policyholders in my home State of Louisiana, this meant unaffordable levels. It doesn't do any good to offer

Americans insurance they cannot afford. That is what Biggert-Waters did, just like the Affordable Care Act.

FEMA's mishandling of Biggert-Waters implementation resulted in truly inaccurate rate hikes that placed the viability of the entire National Flood Insurance Program at risk. I even remember the local news stations in Louisiana, like WWL and WBRZ, broadcasting horror stories of exponential rate hikes as a result of Biggert-Waters, hitting hardest in South Louisiana's middle-class neighborhoods.

Residents of St. Charles Parish and Lafourche Parish—in my State we call our counties parishes. We are the only one in America, only State in America, Louisiana, that does it. We do it right. Everybody else does it wrong. I remember residents of St. Charles Parish and Lafourche Parish sending in copies of their house keys to congressional representatives to give to FEMA because they could not afford the flood insurance.

They were required to carry it. Therefore, they were just going to turn their home over. This was a sign that the government might as well take their homes because the insurance rates were so unaffordable.

In this way, Biggert-Waters also made their homes unsalable. Going forward with the extension of the National Flood Insurance Program, we have to find a way to deal with the solvency of the NFIP that is responsible. At the same time, we cannot move the program from red to black entirely on the backs of policyholders. It just will not work.

What do we need to do? We need to examine how FEMA spends every single dollar of premiums paid by policyholders into the system—every single dollar. We need to find solutions to improve the functionality and efficiency of the National Flood Insurance Program and to ensure that those who are mandated to carry flood insurance actually purchase flood insurance.

It is clear to the policyholders in Louisiana that the NFIP has to do a better job also in one other respect. That is by giving our local officials a seat at the table. It is not written in the Constitution that flood policy and flood mapping has to originate and end with the Federal bureaucracy in Washington, DC.

In fact, flood mapping and flood policy will benefit from having our local officials participate with a seat at the table. Our local levee boards and levee districts in Louisiana, along with the families who have lived on the land being insured for generations, know every single ditch, every single drainage canal from St. Tammany Parish to Terrebonne Parish. The NFIP bureaucrats ought to be asking them for guidance when rewriting flood maps and flood policy, not the other way around.

Instead, our folks only get invited to the dance after all the decisions have been made in Washington, when the

cow is already out of the barn. I believe this is a commonsense principle that ought to be included in legislation to ultimately extend and reform the program: give our local officials who know the land best a seat at the table, not perfunctory, a real seat at the table, to contribute to flood mapping and flood policy. The NFIP will be better for it.

FEMA's mission, as we all know, is to lead America, to prepare for, prevent, respond to, and recover from disaster. That is why FEMA exists. The flood program is an extension of that mission. That is why, when consultants who work for FEMA—I am talking about contractors, I am talking about engineers, I am talking about lawyers, consultants who spend taxpayer money and are paid with taxpayer money working for FEMA, both contractors and subcontractors, if you wish to call them that, with the National Flood Insurance Program's Write Your Own Program, lose focus sometimes in helping flood victims.

Let me say that again. We spend millions of taxpayer dollars through the National Flood Insurance Program paying consultants, contractors, lawyers, engineers to help administer the program and adjust claims. When it works, it is a beautiful thing. When it doesn't work, it is an unmitigated disaster and is unfair to every taxpayer who put up his or her hard-earned money and every policyholder of the National Flood Insurance Program. On occasions it has not worked.

The vast majority of consultants do a fine job, but some don't. Those who have abused the program should be fired. That is why I am introducing a bill. It is called the National Flood Insurance Program Consultant Accountability Act. It is real simple. It will give the FEMA Administrator the authority to fire any consultant, contractor, lawyer, engineer, whomever, who engage in conduct detrimental to the mission of the National Flood Insurance Program.

The bill will be fair. It will have an appeals process to ensure that good consultants are not penalized for being falsely accused, but this is a simple, commonsense reform that frankly should have been put in place years ago. If a consultant commits activity that in the opinion of the FEMA Administrator is detrimental to a program—for example, if he falsifies an engineering report that shows flooding caused the insured's damage, if he falsifies a report to say it didn't cause damage—then that consultant should be fired. This bill is going to give the FEMA Administrator the authority to do it.

I believe the proper tools are not in place to hold government accountants accountable and to throw out bad actors. They are just not. During the Sandy recovery, major media reports claimed several firms actually altered engineering reports tied to flood insurance claims. The altered reports—engineering reports that originally said a

flood caused the insured's damage and therefore the insured should be paid, those engineering reports were altered to say flooding did not contribute to the damage.

These altered reports—intentionally altered—cost families the insurance payments they deserved and delayed their recovery. These were Americans who did the right thing. They bought flood insurance, and because of some consultants working for the NFIP, they were not allowed, at least initially, to recover. Only one engineering company was actually convicted of wrongdoing, but a number participated. Many of those who participated in this tomfoolery are still participating in the program and are still receiving taxpayer funding to contract with FEMA.

On March 14, the head of FEMA's National Flood Insurance Program, Mr. Roy Wright, testified before the Banking Committee, on which I sit. He has testified that he can only fire contractors from participating in the National Flood Insurance Program if they are debarred, disbarred, or criminally convicted. He can't just pick up the phone and correct the situation.

If he sees a consultant misbehaving, not acting in the best interest of the National Flood Insurance Program or the insured or the American taxpayer, he can't do a doggone thing about it, according to Mr. Wright's testimony, unless they are actually criminally convicted or disbarred, if they happen to be a lawyer.

This bill is going to let the FEMA Administrator do something about it. There is nothing like a good firing every now and then to shake up an organization.

The NFIP is responsible for administering insurance payouts for the 29,600 flood insurance claims—30,000 flood insurance claims—in my State submitted for the historic, “once in a thousand years” flood that occurred in Louisiana last August and last March.

FEMA and its consultants and its contractors will be aiding in paying out, I hope, more than \$2.4 billion in taxpayer money. Louisiana's insured and the American taxpayers need to know that these consultants can be trusted and are highly regarded by their peers.

As a member of the Senate Banking Committee, I plan to include this bill and other types of commonsense reforms during the reauthorization process of the National Flood Insurance Program, and I hope to do so on a bipartisan basis.

I encourage my colleagues not to play politics with this legislation. I encourage my colleagues not to play politics with the National Flood Insurance Program. It is central to the success of the American economy.

Let's try to work to avoid partisan battles and develop a National Flood Insurance Program that makes sense for the policyholders and for the American taxpayer.

I am not naive. I know that different coalitions and special interest groups, armed with their lobbyists, descend on the Hill. I hope we won't forget the people back home—in my hometown and in the Presiding Officer's hometown—who will feel the repercussions of our legislative actions with respect to this important program.

I am very much looking forward to working with my colleagues on the Banking Committee to make this a successful reauthorization of the National Flood Insurance Program for the 5.5 million Americans who rely on it.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. FLAKE). The Senator from Arkansas.

CONGRESSIONAL REVIEW ACT

Mr. COTTON. Mr. President, I want to take this opportunity to highlight what I consider an unsung achievement of this administration and this Congress—the slow but steady rollback of the last administration's midnight regulations.

The numbers are impressive. Using the Congressional Review Act, we have repealed 13 regulations so far, which adds up to a \$3.6 billion reduction in regulatory costs. To put it in more human terms, we have saved the American people 4.2 million hours of paperwork, which I can tell you is more than welcome news in Arkansas.

The other thing about these resolutions we have passed is that they are permanent. We haven't simply put these regulations on pause for a future President to revive them with a pen and phone. No, we have outlawed them forever. Any President who wants to reimpose them and their huge costs will have to pass a new law to do so, making the rules we live under and the people who make them accountable to the voters. That is a bit of a foreign concept to the people in Washington these days. But the way I see it, that is all the more reason to celebrate what we have achieved.

I know the other side will say: This is a dark day for America. To hear them tell it, blotting out all these regulations will leave a dark stain on our law books. To them, this rollback is a throwback to a dangerous, rough-and-tumble era—one filled with dirty air, dirty water, and a frighteningly low quality of life. But it just ain't so.

Stop and take a look at the regulations we have repealed, and then ask yourself: Why should Washington decide how we evaluate our teachers? Shouldn't parents, States, and cities do that? Why shouldn't States be able to test for drugs before handing out unemployment insurance? Is that such an unreasonable request? Why are bureaucrats who are sitting in an office thousands of miles away managing our land and wildlife? Shouldn't it be the people who live right there?

Why should Federal bureaucrats be able to override a law duly passed by Congress and signed by the President? Do any of these regulations add much to our quality of life?

Is this really about protecting the public interest? Or is it more about rewarding special interests? In fact, I can understand why liberals are bewildered at the idea that all these rules are hurting jobs, because these rules certainly are creating jobs—for lawyers and lobbyists. If there had been a bill, it would have been called "The American Bar Association Full Employment Act."

That, perhaps, is the real issue here. It is not a question of whether we are going to live under rules. We have rules—plenty of them. The question is this: What kinds of rules are we going to live under? Are we going to pass laws that impose costs on rural America, only to add more wealth to urban America? Are we going to kill blue-collar jobs so we can create more white-collar jobs? Or are we going to pass laws that help all Americans in all walks of life, as we should?

When you look at things this way, I would say we have scored a pretty impressive victory, indeed, over these last 3 months.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican whip.

TRAGEDY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, first, I would like to offer a brief word on some tragic events that occurred in my State over the last few days.

Yesterday, at the University of Texas in Austin, a man wielding a knife began attacking students on campus. He injured three and tragically killed another. My prayers are with the entire UT community, particularly the friends and families of those injured and the student who lost his life.

This was a senseless act of violence, and it is abhorrent. We don't yet know the details for why this deranged individual acted the way he did. Local officials are still gathering details about the case.

I am grateful to the University of Texas police for quickly apprehending the suspect and stopping further loss of life and injury. I offer them and the rest of the law enforcement community in Austin, around the State, and around the Nation my support as they seek justice and continue to protect, in this instance, one of the State's flagship institutions of higher learning.

DEADLY STORMS IN EAST TEXAS

Mr. President, many are aware that major storms ripped through parts of East Texas, including Van Zandt, Henderson, Rains, and Hopkins Counties, last weekend. On Saturday afternoon and evening, four tornadoes tore through the area, leaving a lot of damage in its wake, particularly in the town of Canton, in Van Zandt County. Dozens of people were injured and taken to the hospital, and, tragically, four people died.

I plan to speak to the mayor of Canton and to Judge Kirkpatrick, the Van Zandt County judge, later today to offer them my condolences but more importantly, perhaps, to offer our help in addition to our prayers.

I know they are working as hard as they can to continue to assess the damage done and to find a way forward to help bring assistance to those most in need.

I am particularly grateful and impressed by the work of local leaders across my great State and around the country who step up at a time of crisis like this and organizations like the American Red Cross, which always seem to show up to offer a helping hand, as well as local schools and churches that have come together to lend a hand in this area during such a difficult time. Some have lost their own homes, vehicles, and, of course, loved ones.

As I said, my thoughts and prayers are with all of them, and I stand ready to work alongside them in this resilient part of my great State as they recover from these deadly storms.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING LEGISLATION

Mr. President, as we all know by now, over the weekend an agreement was finally reached on the funding bill to keep the U.S. Government open and to provide much needed, long-term funding to our Federal agencies.

I am particularly glad we found a way forward. Now, that is not synonymous with saying I like everything in the bill, but a piece of legislation like this is inherently a compromise. Compromise means that usually people on both ends of the negotiation are not entirely happy because they have had to give up something in order to get something. This is the process, and we have to build consensus, even on controversial topics like this funding bill.

The agreed to bill consists of the 11 remaining appropriations bills, with additional funding set aside for our military, disaster relief, and border security. I, for one, have been encouraged to hear folks from both sides of the aisle—Republicans and Democrats alike—make clear that we actually agree more than we disagree when it comes to securing our border.

President Trump has made no secret of his position. He said from the beginning that border security would be a top priority for him. Coming from a border State, as does the Presiding Officer, we all understand particularly well how important this is to our communities along the border but also to our States and to the entire country.

I have been glad to read press reports and hear the minority leader, Senator SCHUMER, among others, talk about how providing more resources to secure our borders is necessary to keep us safe and to stem the tide of illegal drugs, illegal immigration, and contraband entering our country.

In fact, last week, the Senator from New York, the minority leader, said: "Democrats have always been for border security." Well, I was glad to hear him say that.

Last month during the State work period, I had the chance to speak to hundreds of my constituents from all across the State—10 cities in all. Part