

from fossil fuels to substituting energy from clean and renewable sources—100 percent. Stop burning fossil fuels.

A few years ago, folks said: Well, that will cause great damage to our economy because renewable energy is so much more expensive than cheap fossil fuels. But we have been blessed. We have been blessed in taking on this challenge because it is no longer true that renewable energy is more expensive than fossil fuel energy.

We have had an incredible drop in the price of solar energy over a short period—from 35 cents per kilowatt hour down to 5 cents per kilowatt hour. Then Xcel Energy in Colorado put out a proposal this year. The proposal came back at 2 cents per kilowatt hour. In other words, it is cheaper to have new and clean renewable energy than to burn coal in an already depreciated fossil fuel coal electric plant. Wind has gone from 13 cents or so per kilowatt hour to 5 cents per kilowatt hour. Xcel Energy in Colorado brought in a bid at 3 cents per kilowatt hour.

As we have seen these prices drop dramatically on solar and wind, we have seen the installations of solar and wind surge. On the solar side, in 2017 we installed about 12 gigawatts of capacity—12 gigawatts, or 12,000 megawatts. That is a lot of energy. To put it differently, one-fourth of the total installed capacity of the United States of America went in just in 2017. That is a dramatic upsurge in installation. Think of a world where we can have every flat business roof and every manufacturing plant with solar rays on its surface or canopies over its parking lot because this energy is so cheap to collect, and we can collect it in places where the grid already exists. For wind, in 2016, 8 gigawatts of new capacity went in. Again, there is a tremendous upsurge in the amount of wind installed.

Now we are seeing roughly half of our utilities scale new capacity with renewable energy rather than with fossil fuel energy. The transition is underway, but we need to accelerate it. We need to move it much more quickly, and then we need to move our consumption of energy over to the electric grid. What does that mean? For example, it means heating your house with a heat pump, which uses electricity, rather than a gas furnace. It means changing the way you heat water from a gas hot water heater to an electric hot water heater. It means getting a plug-in vehicle, an electric vehicle.

Let's stop and talk a little bit about electric vehicles. While we have been seeing the production of carbon dioxide from making electricity come down in America, we are seeing the carbon dioxide from driving vehicles go up, so it is a major area we have to take on.

Five years ago, I bought a Volt, which is a plug-in hybrid. It has a range of about 35 miles of electricity, and it also has a gas backup. That car really worked exceedingly well. We drove 3 out of 4 miles on electricity,

even though we used gasoline to drive all the way to South Dakota and back. What we found was that the cost per mile on electricity was only about 3 cents a mile, and the cost of running it on gasoline—with oil, maintenance, and so forth—was closer to 10 cents a mile. So it is three times cheaper to drive it on electricity. So there is a big incentive.

Unfortunately, my son had an auto accident, and we had to replace that car. Because the range has increased over 5 years, we were able to get a fully electric car, a Nissan LEAF. The range had gone up in 2016 from roughly 80 miles to about 107. That extra 27 miles is enough that my wife could do her work in home hospice, potentially being assigned to a house way on the west side of the Monona County area and then way on the east side and back and forth several times a day and still make it completely on a single-charged battery.

With the proliferation of driving stations, now we are starting to see the ability to operate much more closely to the way we behaved, if you will, previously with gasoline vehicles—being able to drive hundreds of miles and then recharge. We have seen that with the Volt that just came out to replace the Bolt, which now goes over 200 miles on just its battery alone and more if you drive cautiously.

Buses are another big piece of this. I went down to Eugene, OR, a couple of weekends ago and rode on their first electric bus, the first one in the State of Oregon. That bus looked just like the old diesel buses that we have had serving our metro systems across America, but it cost a lot more. It cost \$200,000 more than a diesel bus.

You might say “Well, that is way too much,” but here is the interesting thing: It saves about \$40,000 to \$45,000 a year on fuel. It doesn't take a math genius to then realize that after 5 years of service, you have paid off that cost, and after that, you are saving money. We are going to see a huge transition simply on the economics.

This is the challenge before us, that we have been given the gift of affordable solar that is cheaper than fossil fuel energy, affordable wind that is cheaper than fossil fuel energy, a greatly declining cost of battery power to help supply meet demand, but at the Federal level, we are paralyzed.

Unfortunately, the Koch brothers are really the puppet masters of this body, this Chamber I am in. This wonderful Senate is supposed to be the place where we deliberate to have government of, by, and for the people, but right now we have deliberations here that are of, by, and for the Koch brothers; of, by, and for the wealthy and the well-connected. That is not the vision of America. We have to reclaim the vision of America. The people of America understand that we have this enormous challenge that we must undertake to save our beautiful, blue and green planet.

Since the Federal Government isn't operating, we see companies and cities and places of worship jumping in to fill the gap, adopting 100 percent resolutions—resolutions to transition to 100 percent cleaner renewable energy, to stop burning the fossil fuels that are damaging our planet.

Burlington, VT, is now using a mixture of biomass and hydro wind and solar so that 100 percent of electricity comes from renewable generation. Fifty-eight other cities across America have committed to making that 100 percent transition, and they are handing out an action plan—this year we can do this, and this year we can do that. Families can do the same, places of worship can do the same, and companies are doing the same all across our Nation. We see many of our Fortune 500 companies stepping forward to be real leaders in this. They want to attract employees who know that they care about our planet. They care about stopping this pollution that Edward Teller, an eminent scientist, pointed out in 1959.

When Henry David Thoreau said “What is the use of a house if you haven't got a tolerable planet to put it on?” he asked a question we should always ask ourselves in terms of the different threats to this beautiful orb that we call home. So let's fight to save this beautiful planet. It is the only one we have. We have no other. It is under serious threat, and we in this Chamber need to tell the Koch brothers to go and sit on their fossil fuel fortune, invest it as they want somewhere else, but to join us in the most important work they could possibly be part of in the years that they have remaining to live here in America, and that is this fight to take on climate chaos and win.

Thank you, Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Dakota.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. ROUNDS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to executive session for the consideration of the following nomination: Executive Calendar No. 298.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The clerk will report the nomination.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Gilbert B. Kaplan, of the District of Columbia, to be Under Secretary of Commerce for International Trade.

Thereupon, the Senate proceeded to consider the nomination.

Mr. ROUNDS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate vote on the nomination with no intervening action or debate; that if confirmed, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the

table; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action; that no further motions be in order; and that any statements relating to the nomination be printed in the RECORD.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Kaplan nomination?

The nomination was confirmed.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. ROUNDS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate resume legislative session for a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

PUBLIC SCHOOLS WEEK

Mr. TESTER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the following statement be printed in the RECORD on behalf of AASA; the School Superintendents Association; Afterschool Alliance; Alliance for Excellent Education; American Association of School Librarians; American Association of School Libraries; American Federation of Teachers; American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations; American Library Association; American School Counselor Association; Americans for Democratic Action; Americans United for Separation of Church and State; Association of Educational Service Agencies; Association of Latino Administrators and Superintendents; Association of School Business Officials International, ASBO; Center for American Progress; Clearinghouse on Women's Issues; Council for Exceptional Children; Council of Administrators of Special Education; CUE; EDGE; Education Networks of America; Every Child Matters; GLSEN; Higher Education Consortium for Special Education; Learning Disabilities Association of America; Learning Forward; MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership; National Association of Secondary School Principals; National Association for Bilingual Education; National Association of Black School Educators; National Association of Elementary School Principals; National Association of School Psychologists; National Association of State Directors of Special Education; National Black Justice Coalition; National Center for Learning Disabilities; National Council of Jewish Women; National Council of Teachers of English; National Council of Teachers of Mathematics; National Education Association Retirees Organization, NEARO; National Education Association; National PTA; National Rural Education

Advocacy Consortium; National Rural Education Association; National School Boards Association; National School Public Relations Association; National Science Teachers Association; Network for Public Education; New Teacher Center; People for the American Way; Project Tomorrow; School Social Work Association of America; Stop Sexual Assault in Schools; Teacher Education Division of the Council for Exceptional Children; and University Council for Educational Administration.

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

We issue this joint statement in support of public education and our continued commitment to the highest quality public education for all students in honor of the students, teachers, and communities who work together to support our public schools during Public Schools Week.

Public education is the foundation of our 21st Century democracy. Our public schools are where our students come to be educated in the fullest sense of the word as citizens of this great country. We strive every day to make every public school a place where we prepare the nation's young people to contribute to our society, economy and citizenry.

Ninety percent of American children attend public schools. We must call on local, state, and federal lawmakers to prioritize support for strengthening our nation's public schools and empower local education leaders to implement, manage and lead school districts in partnership with educators, parents, and other local education stakeholders and learning communities. This support would also provide for such necessities as counseling, extra/co-curricular activities, and mental health supports that are critical to help students engage in learning.

We must support and value inclusive and safe high-quality public schools where children learn to think critically, problem solve and build relationships. We must support an environment where all students can succeed beginning in the earliest years, regardless of their zip code, the color of their skin, native language, disability, gender/gender identity, immigration status, religion, or social standing.

As advocates for public education, we believe we must promote advancing equity and excellence in public education, and implementing continuous improvement and evidence-based practices. Every child has the right to an education that helps them reach their full potential and to attend schools that offer a high quality educational experience.

We support stable, equitable, predictable and adequate funding for great public schools for every student in America so that students have inviting classrooms and school libraries with up-to-date resources as well as well-prepared and supported educators. These educators include teachers, paraprofessionals and principals who provide a well-rounded and complete curriculum and create joy in learning. Our school buildings should have class sizes small enough to allow one-on-one attention and have access to support services such as health care, nutrition, and after-school programs for students who need them.

We believe that public tax dollars should only support public schools that are publicly governed and accountable to parents, educators and communities. In no way should local, state or federal funding be taken away

from public schools and given to private schools that are unaccountable to the public.

We reiterate our love for public education and pride in our public schools. We will continue to promote the promise and purpose of public education, to elevate the great things happening every day in our public schools, and to engage communities about strategies that help students succeed. We affirm our commitment to fight for resources and supports for public schools, and will be steadfast in our efforts to protect students and their families, public schools, and our communities from any policies that would undermine these values.

PLACEMENT OF STATUE OF MARY MCLEOD BETHUNE IN NATIONAL STATUARY HALL

Mr. NELSON. Mr. President, Florida recently approved the placement of a statue of a truly inspirational woman, Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune, in the National Statuary Hall here in Washington, DC.

Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune was an American educator, stateswoman, philanthropist, humanitarian, and civil rights activist. In 1904, Dr. Bethune founded Literature and Industrial Training School for African-American students in Daytona Beach, FL, now Bethune-Cookman University. She founded and was the president of the State Federation of Colored Women's Club, where she led the fight against school segregation and healthcare inequality. Dr. Bethune also served as president of the National Association of Colored Women's Club and founded the National Council of Negro Women.

Dr. Bethune became the first African-American woman to head a Federal agency when President Franklin D. Roosevelt appointed her administrative assistant for Negro Affairs of the National Youth Administration. She advised the President on concerns of African Americans and helped deliver his message and achievements with the African American community. Dr. Bethune became known as the First Lady of the Struggle because of her commitment to improve the lives of African Americans.

Dr. Bethune maintained high standards and attracted tourists and donors to Bethune-Cookman College. She was president of the college from 1923 to 1942 and 1946 to 1947, one of the few women in the world to serve as a college president at that time.

MESSAGE FROM THE HOUSE

ENROLLED BILLS SIGNED

The Acting President pro tempore (Mr. CORNYN) announced that on today, March 13, 2018, he had signed the following enrolled bills, which were previously signed by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. UPTON) of the House:

H.R. 294. An act to designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 2700 Cullen Boulevard in Pearland, Texas, as the "Endy Nddiobong Ekpanya Post Office Building".

H.R. 452. An act to designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at