

doubts as to whether the North Korean regime has any genuine interest or willingness to denuclearize, but even a freeze will be welcome.

However, I am concerned about the language used by the President today when discussing the North Korean regime. To say that Kim Jong Un has been “very open” or “very honorable,” as the President did, surpasses understanding. If this description of one of the world’s strongman dictators were a singular event, a one-off statement, it could perhaps be excused as an aberration, but, unfortunately, it is not. It is part of a larger pattern of excusing dictatorial behavior that we should not countenance.

We need not sacrifice the truth and reject objective reality in pursuit of our goals. We cannot pretend that the Kim Jong Un of today is somehow different from the authoritarian dictator who has ruled over one of the most violent and repressive regimes on Earth.

I am happy to hear that the North Korean Government is apparently engaging as an honest broker in the process of arranging these talks, but I believe that how the President of the United States describes world leaders matters. For the President to describe a leader who stands credibly accused of starving his own people, violently executing his political opponents, and murdering members of his own family as “very open” and “very honorable” is beyond comprehension. Furthermore, it undermines the moral authority we have long possessed on the world stage.

The President himself has previously declared Kim Jong Un as “obviously a madman who doesn’t mind starving or killing his own people.” The President has also repeatedly and correctly referred to the North Korean regime’s violent torture of Otto Warmbier as “horrible.” The pursuit of these negotiations does not require that we surrender the values we stand for as a nation.

We cannot pretend the atrocities of the Northern Korean regime are a thing of the past. We need to enter these negotiations with our eyes wide open. We must understand and recognize who it is we are sitting across the table from. Only then do I believe we will actually succeed in these negotiations and emerge from this planned summit with the result we all seek—a safer world.

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.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

DARK MONEY

Ms. CORTEZ MASTO. Mr. President, there is an old saying that “there is no such thing as a free lunch,” but what about other things? What about free

Spanish language driver’s education classes? What about free backpacks, notebooks, pencils, and school supplies in the month before school starts? What about free financial wellness workshops, free turkeys in the week before Thanksgiving?

These things are all given away at events hosted by the LIBRE Initiative—a self-described grassroots organization dedicated to a “free and open society.” The events were held in Latino communities throughout the country, including Las Vegas, Miami, and Orlando.

People attending these events were asked to fill out a questionnaire. Questions included:

“Are you more likely to vote for a Republican or a Democrat in the 2016 election?”

“Do you feel the government should increase or decrease Federal spending in order to improve the economy?”

“What is your name, email address, and telephone number?”

People actually had to hand over their personal data in exchange for the free stuff. So the stuff wasn’t really free after all—but close enough, right?

Well, in a career spent as a prosecutor, I have learned one thing: Always follow the money. If you follow the money just one step back, you learn that LIBRE is a shell organization funded by Charles and David Koch, two of the most powerful men in American politics. Charles and David Koch are the owners of Koch Industries, a massive energy company that manufactures, distributes, and refines petroleum. Koch Industries is one of the largest privately held companies in the Nation, with estimated annual revenues of over \$100 billion.

What does all this mean? It means the Koch brothers are two very rich men, and there is nothing wrong with that. What is wrong is the way the Koch brothers use their money to hijack our democracy for their own benefit.

The Koch brothers are self-described radicals who believe the government should play no role in Americans’ lives. The Koch brothers believe in a world with no Medicare, no Social Security, no Federal minimum wage, no public programs that support families when they fall on hard times, and no rules preventing Koch Industries from polluting our air, drinking water, or our public lands.

The Koch brothers hate environmental regulations because Koch Industries is one of the top 10 worst polluters in the United States. Fewer environmental regulations mean the Koch brothers can obtain bigger financial gains.

To keep their empire afloat, the Koch brothers are not just polluting our environment, they are polluting our political system, and they are polluting our airways with false advertising.

The Kochs want Americans to believe climate change is a conspiracy, despite the global scientific consensus that cli-

mate change is caused by burning fossil fuels. Why would they want to cast doubt on scientific fact? Because the Koch brothers sell and burn fossil fuels for a living, and they believe protecting our environment is bad for their bottom line.

To protect their bottom line, the Kochs funnel money through a network of nonprofit organizations, foundations, and shell companies. These companies lobby the government, produce fake research reports, and run ad campaigns to manipulate and deceive the American people.

Buying a democracy does not come cheap, but the Koch brothers are not stingy. In 2010, the year Citizens United opened the floodgates for big money in politics, the Kochs spent \$125 million to support Republican candidates who pledged to roll back environmental and consumer protections.

Since the 2010 elections, their influence has grown. They have spent hundreds of millions of dollars supporting candidates who spread lies that climate change is a conspiracy, that immigrants cause crime, and that more money in the Koch brothers’ pocket means more money in yours.

Now, the Koch brothers have big plans for the upcoming 2018 election. They have announced they will spend \$400 million in the upcoming election cycle—their largest midterm election investment yet. Much of that money will be spent directly targeting Latinos through advertisements, events, and workshops.

The Koch brothers think they can buy the Latino vote, just like they bought the votes of the House Freedom Caucus and so many other Republican politicians, but despite what their ads say, the Koch brothers are not advocates for the Latino community. They are advocates for more money in their own pockets, nothing more.

The Koch brothers have supported some of the most anti-immigrant politicians in America, including LOUIE GOHMERT, Mike Pompeo, STEVE KING, Russell Pearce, and Kris Kobach. These are the men responsible for policies like Trump’s Muslim ban and Arizona’s anti-immigrant law, SB 1070.

The Koch brothers support politicians who want to end government funding for Planned Parenthood. If they get their way, Latinas would be hurt the most. More than 23 percent of Planned Parenthood patients are Latinas.

Latinas are more likely to be diagnosed with cervical cancer than women in any other racial or ethnic group. Planned Parenthood gives them access to annual screenings so they can stay healthy and cancer-free.

The Koch brothers support school choice, which they say gives Latino families more freedom in how they educate their kids, but school choice vouchers take money out of the public school system, causing many Latino kids whose parents can’t afford private schools to fall behind.

The Koch brothers are close allies of Betsy DeVos, our current Education Secretary. Her claim to fame is her role in dragging Michigan's public education system to the bottom of national rankings and leaving thousands of students without access to a quality education.

To make matters worse, the Kochs are working to undermine access to health insurance for working people. Latinos are less likely to have health insurance than any other racial or ethnic group. Without health insurance, a trip to the ER can result in a bill so expensive that a family can't pay their rent for months.

Organizations like LIBRE will tell you their agenda is designed to promote freedom and self-sufficiency. They put out propaganda implying that Democrats don't believe in freedom because we believe government has a role in protecting access to affordable healthcare, clean water, air, and quality schools. The Koch brothers love freedom, but their freedom is to pollute our rivers, streams, and our air.

Democrats believe in a different kind of freedom—the freedom to breathe clean air and drink clean water, the freedom to walk away from a trip to the ER without a medical bill that costs more than what you make in a year, and the freedom to walk into Planned Parenthood and walk out with information you need to make your own reproductive choices.

We don't believe in the kind of freedom that allows Charles and David Koch to pull the strings of our democracy. How can anyone call that freedom at all?

What the Koch brothers and their web of dark money organizations like LIBRE are really doing is deceiving Latinos and supporting the very same politicians who are working against Latino families.

So, this year, as the Koch brothers are pulling out their checkbooks to fund their disinformation campaign, follow the money. Follow the money to find out who is paying for that glossy ad you see on TV. Follow the money that flows through LIBRE and other Koch-backed organizations to politicians who vote against immigrants, Dreamers, and refugees.

The Koch brothers have spent millions of dollars funding Tea Party candidates in Congress—the main obstacles to immigration reform. What good are school supplies and driver's education classes and free health checkups if parents of American citizens are getting deported, if schools in our communities are being gutted, and if community health clinics are closing their doors?

The Latino community in Nevada, and in communities of color across America, are strong, resilient, and diverse. We will not be fooled by false advertising.

So many of our family members came to this country because they knew what it was like to live under the

rule of oligarchs and elites. They came here because they wanted to have the freedom to pursue their dreams.

Charles and David Koch want to buy Latino votes, buy our voices, and buy our democracy, which folks like my dad Manny Cortez worked all of their lives to protect.

But I believe in the wisdom of the American people. I believe in the wisdom of our voters who will fight the lies, just as they did in Nevada 2 years ago. I have seen the Kochs' power and influence firsthand. They spent \$10 million trying to defeat me in 2016. They threw millions into LIBRE to buy off Latino voters in Nevada. But they failed because Democrats in Congress continued to beat the drum and make voters aware of the lies, and I will keep fighting to do the same in the Senate.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Ms. WARREN. Mr. President, I wish to take a moment to thank Senator WHITEHOUSE for his bold leadership and continuing the fight to rid our political system of dark money.

All across our country, teachers are taking to the streets to demand what no teacher should ever have to ask for: fair pay and decent benefits. In State after State, education has been cut to the bone. They have even cut the bone. Kids are crammed into overcrowded classrooms. They are handed tattered textbooks. Their teachers are paid so little that some qualify for food stamps. In fact, salaries are so low in some States that teachers are working two, three, and sometimes four jobs just to make ends meet.

Many people don't know this, but teachers have always had a very special place in my heart. As a little girl growing up in Oklahoma, there was one person I admired more than anyone else in the world—my second grade teacher, Mrs. Lee. I will never forget the day that Mrs. Lee took me aside and explained that if I worked hard, I could become a teacher too. Those words changed my life. Today, I am the daughter of a maintenance man, who became a teacher, a professor, and a U.S. Senator because America invested in teachers like Mrs. Lee, and that meant investing in the thousands of students she reached through the years. I am grateful to that America. I believe in that America. But I will be honest—I am scared to death that our children and grandchildren may never know that America.

Right now, in one of the richest nations on the planet, American teachers are getting crushed. I want to tell you about one of those teachers—Jonathan Moy, or Mr. Moy, as his students call

him. He is a teacher in Oklahoma. Every week, Mr. Moy juggles six jobs in addition to teaching. Mr. Moy coaches two sports teams, drives for Uber and Lyft, drives a schoolbus, and umpires a Little League team so that he can provide for his two daughters.

Sadly, Mr. Moy's story is becoming all too common. According to one estimate, teachers are five times more likely than other workers to have a second job. No wonder teachers are taking to the streets in West Virginia, Oklahoma, Kentucky, and Arizona. They have had enough.

I am standing shoulder to shoulder with teachers across the country because they deserve better, because our children deserve better, and because investment in teachers is an investment in our kids and ultimately an investment in our future. Like many of my colleagues in this Chamber and fellow Democrats across the country, I am in this fight for the long haul, but if we are to be successful, if we ever hope we can prevail, we should be clear-eyed about what it is that we are up against.

The perilous state of affairs for education funding in our States is not the simple result of a bunch of legislatures who, after listening to their constituents, decided against supporting public education. No, the movement of teacher protests sweeping the country has revealed corruption—corruption that Republican-controlled States have been sweeping under the rug for decades.

The steep cuts to education are the product of an all-out assault on our teachers and our schools that has been launched by a handful of billionaires. One of the principal tools rich and powerful people use is dark money. They have created an invasive enemy that slithers out of sight, with only a glimpse here or there, but make no mistake—this dark money has helped shape the anti-teacher, anti-worker agenda that undermines our democracy.

For decades, billionaires have been pouring unlimited, secret money into the hands of carefully picked candidates who will do their bidding. We often talk about the influence dark money has right here in Washington, but the truth is, the real battle is being fought at the State and local level.

Consider the State Policy Network, SPN. It is an umbrella alliance of over 60 member organizations covering nearly every State in the United States. Their member organizations hide behind deceptively apolitical names, such as the Platte Institute for Economic Research or the Thomas Jefferson Institute for Public Policy. These organizations are anything but apolitical; these groups are the propaganda arm of rightwing billionaires. The State Policy Network, for example, is bankrolled by the Koch brothers through organizations like DonorsTrust, one of the Kochs' favorite investment arms. In 2016 alone, DonorsTrust made \$20.3 million in

grants to State Policy Network members.

In addition to affiliates, the State Policy Network has over 80 associate members. It is a who's who of right-wing Koch-funded groups, such as the Americans for Prosperity Foundation, the Americans for Tax Reform Foundation, the Cato Institute, and the Heritage Foundation. Their funders also include an array of the biggest and most powerful corporations, including tobacco giant Philip Morris, food giant Kraft, and pharma giant GlaxoSmithKline.

The goal of the State Policy Network and its myriad affiliates is to trick the public into thinking they are genuine, unbiased think tanks researching public policy issues—think that, instead of rightwing, billionaire-funded groups dedicated to hijacking every legislature in America and passing laws that work for their corporations while they leave everyone else behind.

With friends like the aggressively anti-union Koch brothers, it should come as no surprise that one of the State Policy Network's top priorities is dismantling public sector unions. In a 2016 fundraising letter, the State Policy Network stated that its goal was to "defund and defang" government unions, and it bragged about the work of its affiliates to supply "intellectual ammunition" to weaken unions in States across the country. It touted its work in West Virginia, Indiana, Michigan, and Wisconsin, in shepherding passage of laws that make it harder for unions to collect union dues that cover the costs of collective bargaining.

Although it focuses on State policy, the State Policy Network's agenda can have nationwide effects. Just look at the Supreme Court case *Janus v. AFSCME*, which will determine whether public sector unions that represent teachers, nurses, firefighters, and police officers in States and cities around this country will actually be able to collect fees from workplaces they represent—fees that allow them to negotiate for better pay, better wages, and better working conditions. The Illinois Policy Institute, a State Policy Network affiliate, works closely with the groups pushing the Court to cut off unions' funding and force them to represent workers who do not pay dues.

The State Policy Network's attack on the workers is just one prong of a much larger campaign to hand government over to the rich and powerful. As one of the many tentacles of the Koch network, the State Policy Network also works to gut environmental protections that prevent big corporations from poisoning our water, our food, and our air. It works to dismantle Medicaid and other healthcare protections that provide vulnerable, low-income individuals with basic healthcare. It works to slash income and other State taxes that provide critical funds for basic government services. It works to weaken public pensions that provide government workers with financial security and retirement.

Billionaires and special interests are conspiring to buy our political system. We cannot allow this to happen. That is why I am proud to join my colleagues in support of bills like the DISCLOSE Act to shine a light on the dark web of billionaires who have their hands tightly gripped around the neck of our democracy. Our government should belong to the people, not to wealthy special interests.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MARKEY. 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. MARKEY. Mr. President, borrowing from a phrase from Senator WHITEHOUSE of Rhode Island, "It is time to wake up to the threat of climate change." We must open our eyes to the insidious web of deceit that the Koch brothers, in alliance with the Trump Administration, are weaving to promote an anti-science, anti-consumer, and anti-renewable energy agenda. This web of deceit is something that the Koch brothers are proud of.

Just last week, they bragged to donors in a report that they were responsible for President Trump's policies: repealing the Clean Power Plan, check; attacking public lands, check; attempting to gut bedrock environmental laws for infrastructure projects, check; leaving the Paris climate accord, check; tax giveaways to Big Oil and other fossil fuel corporations, check-plus.

The first year of the Trump Administration has been a Koch brothers wish list, and they are popping their champagne bottles all the way to the bank. In fact, the various front groups and trade organizations that pushed President Trump to exit the Paris climate accord accepted almost \$7 million from the Koch brothers directly. Those groups took millions more from other anti-climate groups, which were also funded by the Koch brothers. It is a tangled web they weave with their money. That is what the Koch brothers have bought—a network of individuals, shady front groups, and partisan organizations whose sole purpose is to undermine the policies that protect Americans and the planet from climate change.

Like a real spider web, it is hard to see this web of deceit unless the light catches it in just the right way. I am going to shine a light on a few threads of this web tonight, the threads that make up the effort to undermine the scientific consensus on climate change: the Koch brothers and their CO₂ Coalition. One of these threads is the CO₂ Coalition. This group, founded in 2015 with the remains of the defunct George C. Marshall Institute, pushed a single mantra: "Carbon dioxide, a nutrient vital for life."

The CO₂ Coalition started where the George C. Marshall Institute, another Koch-backed front group, left off—disseminating disinformation, particularly around global warming.

Total funding from the Koch-related foundations for the CO₂ Coalition is more than \$650,000 since 2004. In addition to the Kochs, the billionaire conservative Mercer family also gave the CO₂ Coalition \$150,000 in 2016. And that is just what we know of.

For those not familiar, the board of the CO₂ Coalition includes the controversial physicist William Happer, who has testified in front of Congress multiple times to push climate denialism and the self-serving interest of the fossil fuel industry and the Koch brothers.

When I was chairman of the House Select Committee for Energy Independence and Global Warming, Dr. Happer advocated in testimony for the government to support an "alternative hypothesis," which amounted to denial of climate change. This "alternative hypothesis" was the grandfather of another familiar term, the Trump Administration's so-called alternative facts—"alternative hypothesis."

During those years that I was the chairman of the Select Committee for Energy Independence and Global Warming and the Subcommittee on Energy and the Environment of the Energy and Commerce Committee, I conducted nearly 100 hearings. They went on for hours and hours. We are talking of 200, 300 hours of hearings where we were able to hear these crackpot theories that were enunciated and debunked at that time. Despite his views on climate science being routinely debunked, including what happened in my hearing back then, Dr. Happer continues to be called as an "expert witness" by Republicans in Congress. From this platform, he spreads doubt and misinformation about climate change. He has called carbon dioxide "a benefit to the Earth," an absurd assertion that is in complete contrast to the findings of the EPA and the vast majority of climate scientists. That is because in its materials, the CO₂ Coalition states that it has the express purpose of "educating thought leaders, policy makers, and the public about the important contribution made by carbon dioxide to our lives and the economy."

In reality, the CO₂ Coalition writes articles, produces videos, and uses this content to spread lies about climate change through social media. They seek not to inform but to deform consensus scientific views at the bidding of their fossil fuel funders, the Koch brothers.

Here is some information about carbon dioxide that the CO₂ Coalition fails to mention in its love letter to fossil fuels. Every ton of carbon we emit costs us \$36—that is the social cost of carbon—the cost to all of us of emitting an extra ton of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere.

That carbon pollution is endangering human health, and it costs us money as a society to treat the damage it does to the health of our planet and the people who live on the planet. Carbon pollution is not a vital nutrient for life, as the CO₂ Coalition asserts. It is a dangerous pollutant for our society when it is inside of our atmosphere at dangerous levels—at dangerous levels. The CO₂ Coalition is certainly not the only fossil fuel supported group that is weaving this web of deceit. Especially when it comes to talking about the importance of the “free market,” fossil fuel-funded climate deniers often have selective memory loss.

The Lexington Institute, which has received funding from fossil fuel companies like ExxonMobil, insists that renewables can't compete in the free market with fossil fuels without Federal subsidies. That assumes that the fossil fuel industry has succeeded in the free market all on its own. It has not. Adam Smith is spinning in his grave, wondering how the fossil fuel industry gets such subsidies. As a matter of fact, he is spinning so fast that he would qualify for a subsidy under the tax policies, which Republicans put in place.

Federal subsidies for the fossil fuel industry are more than 100 years old and account for nearly \$15 billion each year. Subsidizing an oil company to drill oil or a coal company to mine is like paying a fish to swim or a bird to fly. You don't have to do it. The tax breaks for the oil and gas industries are permanent pieces of the Tax Code. These payouts automatically continue year after year—forever, into infinity. They never decrease. They never go away. That is certainly not the case for renewable energy industries, like solar and wind. These industries have had to endure the uncertainty of not knowing if their tax breaks will expire. Now tax breaks for wind are scheduled to end completely next year. That will never happen to a fossil fuel break. The tax breaks for solar will end in 2021, but for the fossil fuel industry, those tax breaks will never come off the books because they fight against special tax breaks for wind and solar. Oh, my goodness. Who would want to help them? In fact, in its taking \$15 billion a year every year for 100 years and 100 more years into infinity—completely distorting the free market with the support of fossil fuel companies like ExxonMobil—the Lexington Institute is spinning its strand of the web of deceit by trying to stop a renewables revolution.

The Koch brothers and their fossil fuel allies aren't doing this alone. They have found their most ardent ally in their campaign to attack climate science in President Donald Trump. Throughout the Trump administration, there has been a concerted effort to deny, to delay, and to defund the science of climate change in an unprecedented way. Just look at the President's Big Oil all-star Cabinet. At one

point, we had former Exxon CEO Rex Tillerson as Secretary of State. We still have former Governor of oil-rich Texas Rick Perry at the Department of Energy. Oklahoma's oil oligarch Scott Pruitt is heading the Environmental Protection Agency. All of these oil allies have voiced doubts about the existence of climate change and the role of humans in causing it, but no one is doing more to help anchor the various strands of the web of deceit on climate science in the Trump administration than the EPA's Scott Pruitt.

Mr. Pruitt announced today a new proposed rule purporting to “strengthen transparency and validity in regulatory science.” What exactly does this new secret science rule really mean? The proposal would actually do the opposite of what its name suggests. This proposal would actually restrict the use of scientific research that EPA officials can use in crafting new regulations under the guise of so-called transparency. The Trump administration would allow the EPA to consider research studies for which the underlying data are publicly available. What this proposed change would really do is effectively block the Agency from relying on longstanding, important studies like those that link lead exposure to devastating neurological damage.

Scott Pruitt, at the behest of Big Oil and interests like the Koch brothers, wants to deny EPA scientists access to critical information in order to shield polluters, such as coal and chemical companies. Today, as Pruitt ceremoniously announced his new rule, he was accompanied by—wait for it—William Happer of the CO₂ Coalition. The web of deceit is very real. No matter what Scott Pruitt tries to undo at the EPA, no matter what science President Trump tries to deny through the Federal Government, no matter what groups the Koch brothers try to fund, the truth is all too clear. Climate change is happening now.

Last year, we experienced a record \$16 billion in storms—extreme weather events—and climate-related disasters. It was more than in any year in recorded history. Hurricanes ravaged Texas, Florida, Puerto Rico. The recovery from Hurricane Harvey alone is projected to cost \$180 billion. That is the damage even as the Republicans fight to take the wind and solar tax breaks off the books. This year, in Massachusetts, we already experienced four Northeasters before the end of March. Three of those storms cost more than \$1 billion. That is the earliest in any year ever recorded that we have experienced three storms with this magnitude of devastation. The cost of these storms speaks for itself. We simply can't afford to deny the impacts and reality of climate change anymore.

Our greatest weapon in fighting deceit and tearing down this web is sunlight—the sunlight of truth and the sunlight that is fueling the solar revolution. It is a clean energy revolution that is fueling blue-collar job creation

and our economy, and it is happening all across this country and around the globe. Renewable energy is the greatest force for blue-collar job creation in the history of the United States.

Right now, wind and solar are generating 7 to 8 percent of the electricity we consume every day in the United States. Right now, we have more than 90,000 megawatts of wind. We have more than 50,000 megawatts of solar installed in the United States. By 2020, we are projected to have 120,000 megawatts of wind. We will have more than 90,000 megawatts of solar. Solar is projected to add an additional 35,000 combined megawatts in 2021 and 2022. That means, by the end of 2022, we could have over 250,000 megawatts of wind and solar installed in the United States.

You can see what is happening now with wind and solar after it had been, essentially, stopped by the fossil fuel industry for 100 years. This could have happened 50 years ago. This could have happened 100 years ago. Yet now, finally, because of Democratic policies, we have been able to finally unleash this revolution.

What is accompanying that wind and solar revolution? It is jobs, blue-collar jobs. We now have 350,000 Americans who are working in wind and solar. By 2020, we are going to have 500,000 workers in wind and solar. The majority of our solar jobs—137,000—is of electricians. There are roofers doing the installation. There are 38,000 jobs in manufacturing. These are good blue-collar jobs. There are 25,000 of our wind jobs in manufacturing while 35,000 are in construction, development, and transportation. These are good-paying, blue-collar jobs.

Why is this renewable revolution unstoppable? Why is this job creation that is good for all of creation unstoppable? It is because the cost of renewables is plummeting. The cost of solar has fallen 50 to 60 percent over the last 5 to 6 years. The cost of wind has fallen 66 percent since 2009. In fact, wind and solar are generally cheaper than coal and nuclear energy are right now. Coal is losing the war against wind and solar in the free market. It is not a conspiracy against coal. It is competition for coal that has finally emerged. That is what is happening. Coal is losing in the marketplace.

This is not just happening in the United States. It is happening around the entire world. Mexico had a power auction at the end of November at which the average price for solar was 1.9 cents per kilowatt hour. In 2017, solar in Saudi Arabia came in at 1.8 cents per kilowatt hour. In Dubai, it was 2.4 cents per kilowatt hour. Half of all electricity installed around the world last year was renewable. Renewable energy deployment around the world has increased by 8 percent a year for 7 years in a row.

This is a global clean energy race, and it is a global job creation race. The Koch brothers and their fossil fuel allies want to take the United States of

America out of this revolution. Global temperatures are rising, but the cost of renewables is plummeting. There is no denying the science of climate change or the mathematics behind the renewable revolution.

For decades, the Koch brothers have perpetrated a fraud on the American people about climate change. They have worked to discredit science in order to sow doubt. They are funding a web of deceit that spreads misinformation and undermines the urgency needed to address the generational challenge of climate change. We must fight back with education, with urgency, with facts, and, ultimately, with action.

That is why, this week, I am introducing, with my colleagues here in the Senate and in the House, the Climate Change Education Act. This legislation would promote climate literacy by broadening students' understanding of climate change, the consequences of climate change, and the potential solutions. This bill would give students, teachers, and families the tools they need to protect our planet for future generations. We must take the climate deniers and their fossil fuel funders to task for their opposition to the clean energy opportunities that could win the battle against climate change.

We have a chance to unleash a clean energy revolution that creates jobs as it cuts dangerous carbon pollution. We are on the floor today to cut down this tangled web of deceit—to shine a light on the lies that emanate from this Koch brothers-funded web of deceit that has tried its best to stop this clean energy revolution.

As you can see, this revolution has taken off in the United States as it has taken off around the rest of the planet, and it will not be denied. The green generation, the young generation in our country, will not be denied. They want to see a wind and solar and all-electric vehicle revolution take place that will change the course of history. That is why we are out here today—to let the rest of the world know we are in this fight, and we are going to win it.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. RUBIO). The Senator from New Mexico.

Mr. UDALL. Mr. President, I will focus, as Senator MARKEY has and several of my colleagues before me, on this web of deceit we have been talking about here today—the Koch brothers' web of dark money, lobbyists, and infiltration into the Trump administration that truly threatens our democracy. The influence of their hundreds of millions of dollars is pervasive, pernicious, and hidden.

I applaud Senator WHITEHOUSE's work that focuses the public's attention on this threat. Thank you to my colleagues for shining a spotlight on the murky tentacles of the Koch influence empire here in Washington, especially its influence on the swamp that is the Trump administration. We must keep fighting for comprehensive cam-

paign finance and electoral reform to get dark money like the Koch brothers' out of our politics.

The Koch family business started in oil, and Koch Industries is still heavily invested in petroleum and petroleum products. Its subsidiary, Flint Hills Resources, owns three oil refineries. The Koch Pipeline Company owns and operates 4,000 miles of pipeline that transports oil, refined petroleum, and natural gas throughout six States. Koch Industries is the largest foreign and American leaseholder in Canada's oil sands, possibly leasing up to 2 million acres.

As well, each year, Koch Industries markets, trades, and manages logistics for tons of coal and petroleum coke. Koch Industries makes billions from oil, gas, and coal, and it is no secret it is willing to spend millions to keep it that way. Two organizations formed through the Koch brothers' vast wealth are the Institute for Energy Research and its lobbying arm, the American Energy Alliance. Both Koch-funded groups are anti-renewable, pro-fossil fuel, and climate change deniers.

The Institute is a 501(c)(3) organization that was formed in 1989 from a predecessor directed by Charles Koch and Robert Bradley, Jr. Mr. Bradley led public policy for Enron before its scandal and bankruptcy. He founded the Institute and remains its CEO. He is also affiliated with the Koch-funded Cato Institute and Competitive Enterprise Institute.

The Alliance is the Institute's political arm, a 501(c)(4) organization, founded in 2008. The 501(c)(4)s are political organizations. They don't have to disclose their donors. They can engage in all sorts of politicking and lobbying, and they can spend unlimited amounts of money. The Alliance shares office space and staff—including a president—with the Institute. Their joint president is Thomas Pyle, who had previously lobbied for Koch Industries. They receive funding directly and not so directly from the Koch brothers. Since 2008, one or the other has received funding from the Charles Koch Institute, an anti-government group formed from the Charles G. Koch Charitable Foundation; Freedom Partners, called the Koch brothers' "secret" bank—a 501(c)(6) organization that gives tens of millions of dollars to extreme causes; the Wellspring Committee, Inc., funded with the Koch brothers' help; DonorsTrust, a pass-through organization for the Koch brothers and other ultrawealthy donors trying to hide contributions; and many other like-minded anti-renewable, pro-fossil fuel groups that the Koch brothers fund or are tied to.

Between 2010 and 2014, the Institute and Alliance received more than \$5 million in Koch-related funding. The Institute and Alliance are in the business of discrediting renewable energy, promoting fossil fuels, and denying climate science under the guise of providing independent analysis. Their

staffs have appeared before State regulatory commissions giving "expert" testimony, claiming that renewable energy is too expensive and unreliable and that States should not increase their renewable portfolio requirements and that fossil fuels—even coal—are more economical.

In 2013, for example, their director of regulatory and State affairs, Daniel Simmons, claimed in a Michigan regulatory hearing that the electricity rates of States with renewable requirements are 27 percent higher than States without a renewable standard. That same year, Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory found that the incremental rate of renewable portfolio standards was 2 percent, and a report by the Michigan Public Service Commission found that the cost of renewable sources is declining and is cheaper than the new coal-fired generation.

Also in 2013, Mr. Simmons attacked a Federal clean energy standard bill introduced by my fellow New Mexican, Senator Jeff Bingaman, which I cosponsored. Mr. Simmons had the audacity to claim that carbon dioxide emissions from powerplants should not be counted as pollutants, arguing "that carbon dioxide itself is not dirty." Mr. Simmons' cynical attack on climate science is frightening.

In 2015, the Alliance called on Congress to eliminate the Department of Energy's Office of Energy Efficiency & Renewable Energy. The office's mission is to support transitioning to "a global clean energy economy," something that we know is supported by many, many people. That year, both Koch brothers' organizations received \$3 million from the web of Koch donors.

Although the Institute and Alliance were fringe, the Trump administration placed their staff in key energy positions, beginning with appointing their president to lead the energy transition team. Before that appointment, Mr. Pyle had sent a fundraising letter touting the new administration's positions. He predicted the Trump administration would withdraw from the Paris Agreement, repeal the Clean Power Plan, move forward with the Keystone XL Pipeline, increase oil and gas leasing on Federal lands, lift the moratorium on coal leasing on Federal lands, and turn back protection of our rivers and streams—among other initiatives. Mr. Pyle's policy predictions have sadly come to pass.

My home State of New Mexico is right in the bull's-eye of climate change. Snowpack was at a low point this year. Parts of the Rio Grande are dry. We have a methane cloud in the Four Corners area the size of Delaware. Pressing "stop" on tackling climate change hurts New Mexicans.

Meanwhile, Institute/Alliance staff landed three plum positions within the Department of Energy. Last May, Mr. Simmons, whom we have already heard about, was actually placed to lead the DOE's Office of Energy Efficiency & Renewable Energy—the same office the

Alliance advocated to eliminate. Talk about the fox guarding the chicken coop.

An Institute/Alliance policy analyst, Alex Fitzsimmons, was also placed in the same office as a senior adviser. He has steadily beat the Koch brothers' drum against wind and solar energy, writing numerous articles about their alleged unreliability and high costs. How can he possibly contribute to the office's mission of transitioning to a clean energy economy?

Predictably, the President proposed slashing the office's budget for 2018 by 69 percent. Congress did not do his bidding. He now seeks to cut over 70 percent of its budget in 2019, including fully eliminating the Weatherization Assistance Program and the State Energy Program. According to DOE, since 2010, New Mexico has received \$10.4 million from these two programs. These investments resulted in weatherizing 1,300 homes, creating or retaining 340 jobs, training 19,500 New Mexicans in energy efficiency, and retrofitting 240,000 square feet of building space. These two programs aid my State in the global battle against climate change and should not be on the chopping block.

Another Institute/Alliance policy analyst, Travis Fisher, was tapped by DOE to oversee an evaluation on whether renewables are hurting coal and nuclear power and increasing grid unreliability. Mr. Fisher had also authored many pieces on the evils of renewables—even calling clean energy policies “the single greatest emerging threat” to the power grid. There was wide concern the report would be politically skewed.

However, a draft of the report, prepared by an independent contractor and DOE career staff, got out. That draft concluded renewable energy had not decreased grid reliability. The final report then concluded the same. Mr. Fisher has since left DOE.

The good news is that the American people continue to support renewable energy. A Pew Research Center poll found 83 percent of Americans think expanding renewables is a “top” or “important” national priority.

Wind and solar are expanding exponentially and their costs have decreased dramatically. Twenty-nine States, Washington, DC, and three territories have renewable portfolio standards, and eight States and one territory have renewable goals.

A clean energy economy is the future, but the Trump administration is fighting against the tide. Before the Trump administration, the Institute and Alliance were small fringe organizations promoted by the Koch brothers' web of secret organizations and veiled allies. They now sit at the center of our government.

At the bottom of the Koch labyrinth of 501(c)(3)s, 501(c)(4)s, 501(c)(6)s, and their wealth of accomplices is their ability to hide their contributions and actions from public view. The Supreme

Court's Citizens United decision cloaks these networks under the guise of the First Amendment. Citizens United has damaged our democracy by allowing unlimited campaign contributions, PACs, and nonprofit organizations to secretly influence government decisions at the highest levels.

I have been fighting to overturn Citizens United and for Congress to enact campaign finance reform for years now. My constitutional amendment would not only overturn Citizens United but all the previous bad decisions going back to *Buckley v. Valeo*. It would end the misguided belief that spending money to elect politicians is the same thing as free speech—a belief that gives the Koch brothers a lot more speech than the average American.

Last fall, I reintroduced the We the People Democracy Reform Act, which would enact comprehensive electoral reform. The dark influence of the Koch brothers in this administration only underscores the pressing need for this legislation to right our democracy and restore integrity, accountability, and transparency to our political system.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, I come to the Senate this evening to talk about the nominees who will be up for a confirmation vote.

The first of those is Ric Grenell. Ric is being nominated to serve as our Ambassador to Germany during an important time, not just with the danger and volatility around the world but with our relationship with Germany. Ric is well qualified, and I think it is urgent that we get him confirmed.

Ric Grenell was actually nominated last fall. He was reported out of the Foreign Relations Committee with a positive vote on October 26, 2017. So for 6 months, he has been in limbo, even after getting reported out of committee. He has been blocked by just a couple of Democrats—I think maybe just one—and this body has not had a chance to vote on him.

That is why I was pleased to see today that the majority leader filed cloture, and that is why we will get a vote this week on Mr. Grenell. I assume that he will get supported by a majority of this body, but I hope it is not just a bare majority because I think he is very qualified for the position.

He is someone who has a lot of experience in diplomacy and international issues. In 2001, he was appointed by President George W. Bush to serve as Director of Communications and Public Diplomacy for the U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations. In this role, he advised four of our Ambassadors—John Negroponte, John Danforth, John Bolton, and Ambassador Khalilzad—on the formulation and articulation of U.S. policy at the United Nations. He was also appointed by John Danforth to be the Alternative Representative of the United States to

the U.N. Security Council with full voting rights and privileges. He served as spokesman there during a turbulent time, an important time. But he also did more than that. He was appointed to be a U.S. delegate to a variety of United Nations conferences over the years, including the Financing for Development Conference, the World Food Summit, the World Summit on Sustainable Development, the Iraq Donor Conference, the Preparatory Committee for the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review, the High-Level Meeting on Ending HIV/AIDS, and the Commission on Population and Development, among many others.

He has moderated a lot of United Nations panel discussions over the years on subjects ranging from Children and Armed Conflict to post-war construction issues, clean energy solutions that my colleague was talking about a moment ago. He is up to speed on the world's pressing issues, so he is very well qualified to be an Ambassador representing the United States.

He has also been an active speaker, speaking on topics around the country that relate to crisis communications, the United Nations, and international issues ranging from Sudan to North Korea and Middle Eastern issues.

He has been on a lot of TV programs. This is one reason he has generated some controversy on the other side. Yes, he has spoken his mind on occasion, but he is also someone, again, if you look at his qualifications and experience and his abilities—as he did for President George W. Bush—to be a team player and work with the team to communicate clearly, he is an excellent candidate to be a U.S. Ambassador to just about anywhere but particularly to a country as important as Germany.

He received his master's degree in public administration from Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government.

Finally, I would say the timing is really important. One reason it is key that we vote this week is that we need an Ambassador to Germany.

Over the Easter break I was in Germany. I was meeting with our troops over there on a factfinding mission. We have a lot of American troops in Germany still. We were looking at some of the weapons systems that have been developed in my home State of Ohio and how they are working. The people I talked to—our U.S. military officers but also German officials and others—were saying that it is important to have American leadership in Germany right now with all that is going on, with what is happening in Ukraine—Germany is a key player in keeping the European Union together—what is happening in the Middle East, where they play an important role, and what is happening in terms of our economy and trade issues. I heard from everyone: Why don't you send an ambassador over here? So it is time we do it.

Finally, there is a particular urgency this week, because Chancellor Merkel

is actually coming for a visit to Washington later this week. I think she will be here on Friday at the White House in meetings, and wouldn't it be great if we were to confirm this qualified Ambassador to represent our interests in Germany and to begin the process of improving our relationship with Germany and deepening that relationship.

I hope we have the opportunity to have this vote in the next couple of days, and I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to take a look at Ric Grenell's background. I don't think you will find one of the Ambassadors who is a noncareer Foreign Service person to be a better person on some of these tough foreign policy issues, and I think he will do an excellent job for us in Germany.

NOMINATION OF MIKE POMPEO

Mr. President, the second nominee I would like to talk about briefly is one who has also faced some opposition from the other side of the aisle, to the point that he was reported out of committee last night on a pure party-line vote—an 11-to-10 vote. I wish that weren't the case. I want to thank Senator COONS for actually voting "present" so that Senator ISAKSON's vote could count.

I think Mike Pompeo, who is the current Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, is extremely well qualified.

When you look at what has happened historically with regard to the job of Secretary of State, this body has been able to support people who they may not agree with on every policy issue or may not agree with the President who appointed that person, but they realize that a President should be able to have his or her own person—particularly in that job—be the Secretary of State, be the diplomat to the United States around the world. As a result, with regard to Senator Kerry, who was a colleague of ours here, when he was up for his confirmation vote, the vote was 94 Senators out of 100 supporting him. With regard to Secretary Clinton, when she was nominated, she was confirmed by a vote of 94 Senators—94 out of 100 voted for her. That has been more or less typical. Colin Powell actually was confirmed by a unanimous vote of this body after he became the nominee for Secretary of State. Condoleezza Rice got an overwhelming majority; I think it was in the mideighties.

I would hope that my colleagues on both sides of the aisle would look at Mr. Pompeo's background and his qualifications. I don't think they can dispute the fact that he is qualified for this job.

This is a man who has been successful in everything he has done. From humble beginnings, he went to West Point. He graduated at the top of his class. Then, as an Army officer, he was in Germany before the wall came down. He was an officer in Germany patrolling the Iron Curtain. He then went to law school after having served in the military. He went to Harvard Law

School and ended up being an editor of the Harvard Law Review and graduated magna cum laude from Harvard Law School. That is pretty impressive. It is hard to do.

He then went into business. He was successful there, including businesses that had to do with national security issues.

He then ran for the House of Representatives and was elected. He was on the Intelligence Committee in the House, and so he has the ability to get well-versed on a lot of the classified information needed to be able to understand the danger and volatility we face in this world today. He is well-regarded in the House on both sides of the aisle.

He was then nominated by the President to serve as CIA Director. By the way, he was confirmed by this same body as CIA Director by a vote of 66 Senators, so it was a nice bipartisan majority. I hope that happens again.

Again, I think it is very important that we get a Secretary of State in place at this critical time but also that we get one in place who is shown to have some of the momentum, trust, and confidence of this body. Certainly the President has a lot of confidence in him, or he wouldn't have nominated him for this additional responsibility.

As CIA Director, he has become well-versed on all the issues. One issue I will mention that you have heard about recently is that he recently went on a secret mission to meet with the dictator of North Korea, Kim Jong Un, and he did that at the behest of the President to help prepare for a successful meeting between the President and the North Koreans. We all hope that meeting is indeed constructive and ends up making progress on the denuclearization—which all of us hope for—of the Korean Peninsula. You need somebody like Mike Pompeo there to help direct that. So I think it is the right time for him to move forward on a number of issues, and that certainly is one.

Another issue I will say I am very interested in working with him on is what is happening in Eastern Europe and Central Europe—the destabilizing effect that Russia is having with regard to what is called the hybrid war—in other words, disinformation and propaganda—and also the military part of this, which is happening on the eastern border of Ukraine.

Russia, as you recall, took Crimea away from Ukraine. In my discussions with Mike Pompeo, he understands that issue and he gets that issue. He has supported providing weapons to Ukrainians so they can defend themselves, lethal but defensive weapons. That was a big change from the last administration and, frankly, from the first year of this administration. It happened recently. Those materials are now being delivered, and the Ukrainians—having been there over the Easter break—are feeling a renewed sense of support from their Western allies, particularly from the United

States. I think Mike Pompeo is the right guy to be there with regard to that issue also.

I have taken the leadership role on this issue of pushing back against the disinformation, including the meddling in our own election here, which I believe happened and I believe will happen again unless we are smarter about pushing back. That is why I have joined with my colleagues—Senator MURPHY on the other side of the aisle and others—to promote this idea of a center at the State Department that coordinates all the U.S. Government efforts here, which are needed, and particularly focuses on the online effort and the need for us to be more aggressive and robust in our response. It is called the Global Engagement Center. Again, I have had the opportunity to speak with Mr. Pompeo privately but also in public testimony about this issue, and he has expressed his strong support for that Global Engagement Center and for having a more effective and robust response.

I think Mike Pompeo is the right person at the right time. I think he is qualified for this job as well as anyone out there I can imagine. Again, in talking to my colleagues, some of them have said that they disagree with President Trump's positions and that is why they are opposing Mr. Pompeo. Their favorite person—who would probably be in the other party and have different views—is not going to be nominated by President Trump. President Trump is going to nominate somebody who supports him on most of his basic approach to foreign policy and someone he trusts. That is just how it works.

Again, when we supported John Kerry with 94 votes in the Senate—I think it was 94, 95, or something like that—it is not that we agreed with all the policies from President Obama; it is that we believed President Obama should have the right to have a Secretary of State who he thought was going to best represent him, and we thought that Senator Kerry was qualified. I think the same was true with regard to Hillary Clinton, who got 94 votes. The same was true with Condoleezza Rice. The same was true with GEN Colin Powell. And the same should be true here because certainly Mike Pompeo is extremely well qualified.

The other thing I have heard from my colleagues—and I have talked to a number of them on the committee and off the committee about seeing if they could possibly join us in supporting Mr. Pompeo so he can have a little more of a bipartisan momentum here as he goes into this job—the other thing I have heard is that they are concerned, given his background in the military and given some of the things he said as a Member of Congress, that maybe he will focus more on military power rather than soft power—in other words, less on diplomacy and more on kinetic or military activity.

I don't think that is consistent with anything I have heard from him either