

THE GREEN NEW DEAL

Madam President, on another subject, this morning, I challenge Leader MCCONNELL to say that our climate change crisis is real, that it is caused by humans, and that Congress needs to act. Let me elaborate.

The Republican leader fashions himself as someone who doesn't waste time with political stunts. I am not sure I could count the number of times he has shrugged off a piece of legislation by calling it a "futile gesture" because the President will not sign it or because he thinks it would be a waste of the Senate's time.

Yet, on Tuesday, the Republican leader announced he would bring up his Green New Deal resolution for a vote because he wants to make sure everybody has the "opportunity to go on record and see how they feel" about it, knowing full well his entire party will vote against it, including himself, and that it will not pass.

Since Republicans took control of this Chamber in 2015, they have not brought a single Republican bill to meaningfully reduce carbon emissions to the floor of the Senate—not one bill. Republicans have controlled this Chamber for 4 years and have not brought a single bill to significantly reduce carbon emissions.

We are supposed to conduct the business of the Nation. We are supposed to tackle our country's greatest challenges. Well, climate change is the No. 1 threat to our planet, yet not a single Republican bill that addresses climate change in a meaningful way has reached the floor—not a one. In fact, the Republican majority has spent the Senate's time on legislation that would make climate change even worse. In one instance, the Republican leader moved to repeal a commonsense and vital program to reduce methane emissions, and it failed only because a few brave Republicans joined all of the Democrats in voting no.

Now, with amazing irony, the first measure to address climate change from the Republican leader—the first one in 4 years—will be one that he wants all of his Members to vote against. Let me say that again. The Republican leader announced he is going to bring up a resolution he intends to vote against.

That is what the American people hate about Congress, the pointless partisan games. Next time you see congressional approval level hovering around 15 percent, don't ask why. This is why: Leader MCCONNELL proposing resolutions so he can vote against them and never proposing anything on this subject, climate change, that is constructive.

I hope the American people are paying attention because they need to see what is going on here. The American people need to see that this is all there is to the Republican plan to deal with climate change. This is all they can muster—a political stunt, not designed to make progress, not designed to move

the ball forward. They are bringing a resolution forward so that they can all vote against it.

This cheap, cynical ploy evidently represents the sum total of Senate Republicans' leadership on the vital issue of climate change, an issue that cries out for serious engagement by Members of both parties. But rather than seriously engage on the issue, our Republican colleagues are taking a page from President Trump's petty playbook, trying to make this a game of political "gotcha." They are taking their lead from the President, a man who is so willfully ignorant and foolish that he thinks he is clever by ridiculing the global scientific consensus on climate change whenever it snows.

Well, the American people are not laughing. They weren't laughing when a U.S. Senator brought a snowball to the floor of this Chamber to mock climate science. They weren't laughing when President Trump called climate change a hoax perpetrated by the Chinese. The rest of the world isn't laughing either, not when basically every country in the world—including Syria, North Korea, and Iran—is working together to reduce carbon emissions while the Trump administration has forced the United States to sit on the sidelines. I would say to our Republican colleagues that this is no game, and it is no joke. Climate change is deadly serious, and the time for all of us to treat it that way is now, before it is too late.

So when the Republican leader says he wants to bring the Green New Deal resolution up for a vote, I say: Go for it. Bring it on. You think it might embarrass Democrats to vote on a non-binding resolution that some of us may support but not others. Trust me, we will be fine because the American people know that our entire party actually believes that climate change is happening and it is caused by humans. We actually believe the consensus of the worldwide scientific community that climate change is an existential threat to this planet, one that threatens not only our children and our grandchildren but all of us right now.

We actually believe that we need to do something about climate change. Do Republicans believe that? Do Republicans agree with the overwhelming consensus of the scientific community? Does Leader MCCONNELL? I seriously want to know, and so do the American people.

So today, I am issuing a challenge to the majority leader. I don't do this often, and my colleagues know I would rather work in a bipartisan way on climate change, but this stunt—his cynical stunt—demands a response.

I challenge Leader MCCONNELL to say that our climate change crisis is real, that it is caused by humans, and that Congress needs to act. That is what two-thirds of the American people agree with—two-thirds.

My strong suspicion, unfortunately, however, is that McConnell can't say

that and won't. Leader MCCONNELL has voted six times against sense-of-the-Senate resolutions that climate change is real and human activity has contributed to it. He has dodged the issue time and again, but maybe his opinion has changed. So when Leader MCCONNELL brings his Green New Deal resolution forward for a vote, we Democrats demand our own amendment votes. Let's see if anything has changed since 2015, when only five brave Republicans were able to vote yes on a resolution saying climate change is real and caused by humans. Two of them aren't even here anymore.

If Leader MCCONNELL blocks amendments, we will know where he and his party stand: against science, against fact—ostriches with their heads buried in the sand as the tide comes in.

If Leader MCCONNELL allows amendments, allows an actual, real debate on climate change, we will see which of our Republican friends are finally ready to admit that climate change is real—is happening right now—and are ready to act on it. Unlike what Leader MCCONNELL is proposing, that would be actual progress.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Madam President, let me start by thanking Leader SCHUMER for his incredible remarks this morning. There is a surge of energy around this issue. He has represented that surge of energy very well. He challenged the other side of the aisle to bring it on. Let me sign up right now as the proud member of the "bring it on" caucus. Bring it on. We are looking forward to this conversation on our side.

It is clear that the people of America want action. The polling is immensely strong on this issue. It is clear that the people of America see this issue in their daily lives. This is not academic theory any longer. They see the wildfires. They see the droughts. They see the floods. They see the sea level rise. They see the fish moving about. This is in their lives now, and the polling shows that.

A vast majority of Americans say they are—and this is the word in the poll—"worried" about climate change. The world has reported they see this as the No. 1 issue facing the world's security.

Against that backdrop of an active, engaged, and knowledgeable American population and a world that is looking for the United States to lead, the city on the hill, what—what—do we get from the Republican majority in the Senate? We get a bill, a measure brought to the floor—the first time, as Leader SCHUMER pointed out, that the Republican-controlled majority has brought any meaningful legislation related to climate change to the floor—that they intend to vote against.

Who brings a bill to the floor that you intend to vote against? How is that possibly sincere or serious, and what is

your alternative? If you don't like the Green New Deal, what is your plan? Where is there one?

The fact is, since the Citizens United decision and since the fossil fuel industry powered up its political efforts, there is now no Republican Senator in the Senate who has cosponsored any serious bill to significantly reduce carbon dioxide emissions. They stay away from this issue like the plague.

The world has changed around us. The 2020 election has already begun, in many respects. Voters are alert to this. A Democratic House is ready to produce real legislation, meaningful legislation. With any luck—actually on the House side, somewhat bipartisan legislation, and here in the Senate, the blockade continues, and the only measure brought to the floor is a trick vote that its sponsors will actually vote against. That is a pathetic statement of where our friends on the other side are on this.

I hope this actually turns into a breakthrough moment in which there are some serious conversations on the other side to say this is not tenable; this is ridiculous; we are going to be embarrassed by this; but on our side, we say bring it on.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SCOTT of Florida). The Senator from Hawaii.

Mr. SCHATZ. Mr. President, our friends on the other side of the aisle—the Republicans—are misreading the moment. The planet is in an emergency situation, and instead of coming to the table with ideas on how to fix it, they are running the same play they always run; that is, that they take a popular idea—investing in clean energy, maybe making college more affordable, making the Tax Code more fair—and they try to characterize it as a liberal project so people put on their partisan uniforms.

Our ideas are popular, and what they have done recently is, they have taken a batch of our ideas and have said: Socialism. You are going to turn into Venezuela if you do all of these things. I know you think you want affordable college. I know you think you want climate action. I know you think you want to not get ripped off by the Tax Code, but that will cause you to be Venezuela.

This is the play they run every time, and they run it with cover from the Wall Street Journal's editorial board and FOX News to try to trick the American people into opposing ideas they actually like.

That is what is happening with this nonbinding resolution that 12 Senators have cosponsored. Republicans are trying to take frequently asked questions—a document that was posted on the website of a new Member of Congress, and then subsequently taken down and disavowed, and make you believe this is what Democrats want to do when it comes to climate action. They want you to believe we want to

take away ice cream and aviation and everything that is good in the world because they know their position on climate change is absolutely untenable.

Over the last couple of days, I read some what we call very serious people in Washington, DC, sort of marveling at Leader MCCONNELL's trolling exercise. This is supposed to be the world's greatest deliberative body. It is not Twitter. This is supposed to be where we solve the greatest problems facing the United States. This is not where we troll each other. This is where we are supposed to have the great debates.

Senate Democrats have done all sorts of work on climate: the ITC and the PTC for solar and wind, conservation and efficiency, carbon pricing, fighting deforestation. So Republicans do not have the high ground here. They are trying to make this a partisan exercise, where you have several news organizations churning because they don't want to deal with climate change.

If the Senate Republican leadership wants to bring up anything about climate, I echo the words of Senator SCHUMER and Senator WHITEHOUSE: We have never been more fired up. We are going to take this opportunity to have a real debate about climate because Republicans do not have a plan to address climate change. That is not a rhetorical flourish. That is not an accusation. That is just an observation. They don't have a plan to stop climate pollution. They do not agree with 99 percent of the scientific community saying not just that this problem exists but that Congress must act.

If you look at the last session of Congress, it is actually worse than that. I want to put this in context. The last session of Congress spanned two of the worst years of weather in U.S. history.

In 2017, there were about 10 million acres that were burned by wildfires. There were Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria. In 2018, we had the costliest and deadliest wildfires California had ever seen. In these two record-setting years, climate change cost the economy and the taxpayers billions of dollars. Communities all across the country struggled to rebuild and recover. People lost their lives, their homes, and their livelihoods.

In these 2 years, the number of pieces of legislation that Republicans put forward to address climate change—even if I thought they were inadequate, even if I thought they were the wrong approach, even if I thought they were half measures or too private sector-oriented, whatever the criticism might have been, I can't even make criticisms of their climate policy. They have no climate policy other than to make things worse.

They have allowed coal companies to leak dirty water and waste into streams without having to clean it up. They voted to make it easier for oil and mining companies to pay foreign governments. They allowed the President to start the process of pulling out

of the Paris accords. They allowed him to begin the process of rolling back your fuel efficiency standards, to repeal the Clean Power Plan, to prop up coal—even though it makes no economic sense in a lot of instances anymore—and they put climate deniers in top science positions in the government.

They put Secretary Zinke in charge of the Department of the Interior, and the first thing he did was to open up lands for oil and gas leases. They put Scott Pruitt in charge of the EPA, and when he finally proved to be a political liability—not for his climate policy but because of his personal habits—they replaced him with someone with the same policies, Andrew Wheeler, who is literally a coal lobbyist.

If you wrote all of this into a screenplay, people would say: That is a little too on the nose. That is a little too obvious. This is ridiculous. This is not actually how Washington works. They wouldn't put a coal lobbyist in charge of the Environmental Protection Agency, would they? They did. They did.

It is not just that Republicans don't have a plan to make things better, it is that the Democratic approach is to treat this like the emergency it is and invest in clean air, clean water, and smarter infrastructure, and the Republican approach is to put polluters in charge to actively, aggressively, and proudly make climate change worse.

I have seen the right approach work in Hawaii. For decades, since the demise of the sugar plantation, we relied on imports of fossil fuels for our energy needs. As recently as 2010, we got more than 90 percent of our electricity from burning oil, which is the dumbest way to do things. It is very expensive and very dirty. Less than a decade later, we are well on our way to 100 percent clean energy.

We have addressed the legitimate concerns, we ignored trolls, and we moved forward together. We have quintupled clean energy, lowered electricity rates, and created tons of jobs. Clean energy is the future for Hawaii, and it is the future for the United States. This can be done. Do not be afraid.

If Republicans think the Democratic ideas are no good, fine; then offer a different plan. They are the only major political party in the developed world that doesn't even believe climate change is a problem. There is no other issue where the majority party denies that the problem exists at all, not cyber security, not healthcare, not even income inequality. This is not tenable.

Whenever a Senate Democrat or a group of Senate Democrats come to the floor to talk about climate change, we usually have a good little group over here, and always—always—in my 7 years in the U.S. Senate, there is always an empty Chamber on the Republican side—empty. The only Republican I am ever talking to is someone who is maybe waiting to give a speech about

something else or the Presiding Officer. That is because Republicans in the Senate have no plan at all as it relates to climate change.

We have trillions of dollars in infrastructure that needs to be addressed over the next couple of decades. We could make those investments in ways that also address climate. We could offer tax breaks for clean energy. We should reenter the Paris accord, but they are pulling the same play they always do, to make this so partisan, to mock the issue itself so they can continue to do nothing. They are whistling past the graveyard.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, how do we make our communities, our States, our Nation, and our planet better for our children? How do we make it better for our children's children and their children? Isn't that the task we have in the U.S. Senate, to make things work better, not worse?

We have this question before us: Do we have a carbon pollution problem? What is the answer, yes or no? I ask each of my colleagues, yes or no?

Presiding today is a new Member of the Senate from Florida. I have been down to Florida. I will tell you that I heard about the rising seawater polluting the aquifers and creating freshwater supply problems for communities in Florida. I heard about coastal erosion. I heard about coral reefs being damaged and the fish offshore. I heard about the toxic red algae on the gulf side—so toxic it is killing fish and dolphins and turtles and manatees, and they are washing up on the shore of Florida on the gulf side.

The people have two problems. The toxic algae is creating breathing problems, and then there is a stench arising from the dying sea life. People on the gulf side of Florida say: We have to take inland vacations.

I know my colleague presiding today knows about these issues in his State because we see the impacts of carbon pollution and climate chaos in every single State. We certainly see it in my State. We see it through the more powerful forest fires—hotter, more acreage, and more destruction. We see it in the smoke affecting the communities and the economies throughout Oregon. Of course, we saw the devastating forest fires in California, wiping out the town of Paradise and afflicting so many other communities.

It is not just the impact on the natural world; it is the impact on the people. When you affect the fisheries, you affect the fishermen. When you affect the forests, you affect the timber industry. When you proceed to produce conditions of more floods and more droughts, you affect the farmers and ranchers of America. It is the people of America.

How about the Panhandle of Florida. It was wiped out by a more powerful hurricane, driven by those warmer

ocean temperatures. What does one say to them—that there is not an issue; that we don't have a problem?

The entire scientific community of the world has said you can see the facts on the ground, but we don't need them to see the facts on the ground. We see it through the everyday impacts on Americans, on our farmers, our ranchers, and on our communities plagued by smoke or wiped out by hurricanes.

So we do have a problem. The answer is, yes, we do have a problem. If you say there is no problem, then your head is stuck in the tar sands, and you are failing your responsibility not just as a U.S. Senator, you are failing your responsibility as a human being. You are failing your constituents if you think there is no problem, while their lives and their economy are being so dramatically impacted by this issue.

I ask my colleagues, did you come here to fail your constituents, to fail as a Senator, to fail as a human being to address this issue? Did you come to fail, or did you come to take on the issues that face us and build a better world for your children?

If you believe there is a significant challenge, what are you doing about it? What actions are you planning? Because if you believe there is a problem and you are not putting forward a plan to address it, then your leadership is a failure.

So we have a choice on the Republican side of the aisle. Is it that you are too obsessed with the power of the Koch Brothers to address the needs of the citizens of the United States of America, that you have your heads stuck in the tar sands? Is that the issue, or is it that you want to sit on the sidelines? You know there is a problem, but you want to sit on the sidelines and do nothing, in which case you are a failed leader.

So how about reject ignorance, and how about reject failed leadership and come together to make a better world for our children. That is what we need to do, all of us, together, because the impacts we see from carbon pollution and climate chaos—those are not impacts affecting blue America or red America; they touch the lives of every citizen, no matter which political party they belong to. It is going to affect every child we have now and every child born in the future, whether they register as a Democrat or a Republican. We have already wasted decades in getting at this issue. Let's waste no more time.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT

Mr. MCCONNELL. Pursuant to the order of February 13 with respect to the Barr nomination, I ask the Chair to put the question on the nomination of William Barr to be Attorney General at 12:30 p.m. today.

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

The Senator from West Virginia.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mrs. CAPITO. Mr. President, before I begin with my remarks, I would like to take a moment, as I think everybody here in the country should, to remember and honor all the lives lost 1 year ago today during the shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, FL. It was a horrible act, as the Presiding Officer of the Senate is well aware, and its reverberations are still felt deeply today, especially among those who lost friends and loved ones, many of whom work day in and day out to keep their memory alive.

We have before us on the floor today a bipartisan government funding measure, and as the chairman of the Homeland Security Appropriations Subcommittee, I rise in support of the conference agreement to secure our border and fund our government and end any possibility of a shutdown at the same time. This agreement is a compromise between Republicans and Democrats, between the House and the Senate, and because it is a compromise, none of us really got everything we wanted.

When you are working to reach an agreement, whether you are in government or in a family, it is important to understand the difference between compromising on details and compromising on your principles. While this agreement may compromise on some of the specifics, it does not compromise on our commitment to our Nation and to secure our Nation. That commitment is also shared by our President, who has been unwavering in his promise to strengthen our border. It is a goal we must achieve in a smart and informed way to address the real and ever-changing challenges we face as a nation.

On the border itself, I have been very clear that our agreement had to include three critical elements, three legs of the stool: physical barriers, technology, and personnel.

There were a few sticking points with our Democratic colleagues. We did hear from the Speaker of the House that there would be no wall or there would not be \$1 for the wall. Instead, this agreement provides almost triple the money for new wall construction that we appropriated last year. In fact, we will pay for 55 new miles of wall in the Rio Grande Valley where Customs and Border Protection has told us it is desperately needed. This agreement will build twice as many miles of new wall as last year's appropriations, despite the fact that we were negotiating with those who didn't want to have any wall.

Would I have preferred more money for the wall? Of course. But this bill provides the most money ever in a single appropriations bill for a barrier. I drafted legislation—passed by the Senate Appropriations Committee last June—that would have fully funded the President's budget request for the wall. I would have voted for higher amounts—and did, actually, in committee—of funding for the wall. That is