

their own. It also builds on the Trump administration's past efforts and includes the remaining funding for Puerto Rico.

Both the House and Senate have previously supported similar proposals. They should be even more inclined to do so now that it is not tied up with the overall 2019 budget drama. This is a standalone supplemental bill that includes those things that people on both sides of this body agreed to and voted for just last year. This bipartisan package is a win for our farmers. It is a win for families and businesses that were devastated by historic hurricanes in the Southeast and wildfires in the West. It is a win for the people of Puerto Rico whom the President has previously helped. He was committed to including that in this bill.

I sincerely hope this body will move quickly and pass this disaster relief bill without further delay. I humbly ask each of my colleagues in this body for their individual support and for their vote in this disaster relief package that will save hundreds, if not thousands, of farming families in my home State from having to give up what they love, and that is farming the land that in many cases they inherited from their families. In other cases, people who graduated from HBCUs—some of our brightest young people—borrowed money to buy the land or are leasing the land, and they are in danger of losing this dream of making a living on the ground in Georgia.

Our country and our people are counting on us to get this done, and time is of the essence.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

NOMINATION OF ANDREW WHEELER

Ms. DUCKWORTH. Mr. President, I come to the floor in opposition to Andrew Wheeler's nomination to lead the Environmental Protection Agency.

Americans across this country depend on EPA to protect their public health, yet under this administration, EPA has failed again and again to reassure my constituents that their basic rights to breathe in clean air and sip clean water are being prioritized.

Listen, I am proud that EPA's Region 5 office is headquartered in Chicago. Region 5 has led the country in enforcing the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act, and other bedrock environmental policies that Congress has passed. But under Mr. Wheeler and this administration, EPA has made it harder for the scientists, engineers, and public health experts in Region 5 to do their jobs.

EPA is severely understaffed and underfunded, and in 2018, major enforcement actions dropped to their lowest

levels in more than 10 years. Last year, EPA competed fewer than 11,000 inspections and evaluations of polluters across the country—the lowest number in almost two decades.

In 2018, EPA sent just 123 civil pollution violation cases to the Justice Department for prosecution. That is about 40 percent less than the annual average during the Obama administration. So, sadly, it should come as no surprise that a report from the Environmental Integrity Project this month found that communities across the country are now being put at risk of exposure to dangerous contaminants.

To make matters worse, the EPA's enforcement workforce has been shrinking for years, and the Trump administration wants to cut it back even further.

These cutbacks are leaving communities, especially low-income communities and those of color, exposed to public health risks. Meanwhile, polluters are being let off the hook for serious violations of the law.

I have seen firsthand what happens when EPA fails to enforce our laws and protect public health. It causes fear and confusion. For months, residents in Willowbrook, IL, have lived in fear that the air they breathe in has been making their family sick.

Here is a little background. A facility in their community has been releasing cancer-causing emissions for decades. Unfortunately, even since EPA discovered just how toxic this chemical was years ago—years ago—they have refused to issue new regulations updating safety standards based on the latest science.

Making matters even worse, EPA officials refused to notify local public health or elected officials about their discovery, leaving communities in the dark even while their health is at risk, leaving more families more likely to get sick, leaving more children more likely to die.

As a mother, this is heartbreaking. As a Senator, this is outrageous.

When Willowbrook residents first started to raise concerns, EPA wasn't the least bit transparent. The Agency had to be pushed by Senator DURBIN, other Members of the Illinois congressional delegation, and me just to hold community forums.

My office also received alarming information alleging that senior political appointees instructed EPA personnel not to inspect any facility in Region 5 that emits the same carcinogen found at this facility. If true, this type of political interference is beyond unacceptable. If true, it is happening on Mr. Wheeler's watch.

I have asked EPA to take several steps to fix this crisis, and I am still waiting for their response.

In the absence of leadership from EPA, Senator DURBIN and I have authored two pieces of legislation to ensure that this kind of crisis never happens again.

Here is what Gabriela, a resident of Willowbrook, said when she saw the list of health problems associated with this facility: "It was like reading our medical history."

Since she moved to her home in 2009, Gabriela has suffered from intense headaches, dizziness, nausea, inability to concentrate, and memory loss. She has found it difficult to read through briefs and almost instantly forgets movie plots and even some conversations.

Both of her children, who have lived in the house for most of their lives, have had respiratory problems since they were little. Her 12-year-old daughter has often coughed to the point of vomiting and has developed a bone cyst.

One of her 9-year-old daughter's classmates was recently diagnosed with leukemia, as was Gabriella's next-door neighbor, an otherwise healthy man in his early fifties.

Another woman I have gotten to know from Willowbrook is named Neringa. She told me that when she and her husband were moving to Chicago 5 years ago, they picked their home because it seemed like a place where their children would be safe.

She went on:

You look for sexual predators, good schools, taxes. You don't think you would have to look at air and water. You feel like it is the one thing in our country we wouldn't have to think about.

Exposure from toxic pollution is a matter of life and death for these residents. It was uncovered only when career civil servants did their job and flagged a risk they observed in a routine model that EPA publishes.

I am extremely concerned that other areas in Illinois could face similar issues and that other kids in other communities could be breathing in air full of cancer-causing chemicals when they are playing on the swings at recess or walking home from school later that afternoon.

I need EPA to respond to the requests I have made on behalf of Lake County and actually conduct the kind of monitoring that exposed the problem in Willowbrook there and in every community that may be at risk.

Not far from Willowbrook, residents in Chicago have also been facing several public health threats for decades.

Chicago, IL, is the birthplace of Hazel Johnson, the "Mother of the Environmental Justice Movement," a pioneer of environmental justice activism on the South Side of Chicago.

She founded People for Community Recovery in 1979 in an effort to get asbestos out of the buildings in her community. Soon she managed to trace air and water pollution in her community to nearby industry, which was using the predominantly lower income African-American community as a dumping ground.

Hazel Johnson knew what I know: Every American has a right to breathe in safe air, drink clean water, and live

on uncontaminated land, no matter where they live, no matter the color of their skin, no matter their tax bracket.

Yet I still hear about manganese pollution, petcoke, particulate matter, and lead exposure from these residents on a daily basis.

Chicago residents deserve—no, they need—environmental justice. But for some reason, this administration has dismantled the office that is supposed to lead this work, even trying to eliminate EPA's environmental justice funding and drive out the office's top talent.

Lead exposure is an issue that impacts low-income families and communities of color disproportionately. I had high hopes that I would be able to work with Mr. Wheeler on the administration's response to this crisis. Yet after months and months of delays, I am very disappointed by their so-called plan.

Mr. Wheeler's lead action plan falls short of what was promised and the "war on lead" his predecessor declared. This is not a plan with goals, strategies, and deadlines. Instead, it is a repackaged version of a report published under the Obama administration. Little has changed, other than the window dressing.

What disappointed me most was that the administration appears to be walking back our goal of eliminating lead exposure, settling simply for reducing it. That is unacceptable.

Even to this day, in a post-Flint crisis world, too many in power are sitting idly by as countless Americans are exposed to lead. More than 6 million homes get water from lead service lines, and 24 million homes have lead hazards in paint, dust, or soil. Nearly half a million children have elevated levels of lead in their blood.

Let's be clear. For children, there is no safe level of lead allowable in drinking water. Even low levels can cause permanent brain damage in kids, lowering IQ, and inflicting other cognitive damage. Imagine if your child were one of those who had gotten sick because the EPA refused to take action on such an obvious crisis. Imagine how infuriating, how devastating that would be.

We must make meaningful progress in tackling sources of exposure, and EPA must take up an aggressive, comprehensive, and practical strategy.

I know we can make real progress in reducing lead in our society, but the new lead action plan is a missed opportunity to advance those efforts.

I also believe that Mr. Wheeler has far too many conflicts of interest to be running the EPA. As a former lobbyist for Murray Energy, Mr. Wheeler has worked closely with the industries he would regulate as the leader of the EPA. It is well reported that Mr. Wheeler's former firm lobbied the EPA on efforts Wheeler now oversees.

Even after he took temporary reins of the EPA, he made no secret of meeting with former clients and fossil fuel industry representatives. CNN and

Reuters have both reported that Wheeler is heavily prioritizing meetings with industry over anyone else and has attended more than 50 meetings with companies or industry groups that EPA regulates.

If this news doesn't alarm you, it may be because corruption is becoming routine under this administration. After all, just earlier this week, the Washington Post reported that the Assistant Administrator for Air and Radiation, Bill Wehrum, has been routinely meeting with former clients in the fossil fuel industry from his not-so-long-ago lobbying days.

I placed a hold on Mr. Wehrum's nomination because I did not think he could be trusted with our Nation's air. I feel the same way about Mr. Wheeler's leading the EPA.

According to the Sierra Club, every third day during his first 100 days as Acting Administrator, Mr. Wheeler either, one, rolled back a new climate policy; two, ignored or contradicted science; three, met with big polluters; four, limited the EPA's ability to protect us from pollution; or, five, gave in to corporate polluter demands—all of that in just his first 3 months and change. Imagine what would happen if we gave him the reins for good.

Mr. Wheeler's position on climate change policy alone is disqualifying. Consider, for example, his attack on the Clean Power Plan. Climate change is a major threat to our environment, our economy, and our national security—something that even Donald Trump's own intelligence officials admit.

My home State of Illinois is already experiencing the consequences of inaction. Growing seasons are changing, heat waves are increasing, and extreme floods are becoming more frequent and more severe. Just this December we had a hurricane. Mitigating these effects will require sensible policies that reduce greenhouse gas emissions and invest in clean energy.

Under the Clean Water Act, EPA is legally required to limit carbon pollution from powerplants, pollution that we know is the primary driver of climate change.

That is why the Obama administration established a Clean Power Plan—to provide States the flexibility they need to meet a national goal of 32 percent reductions in carbon pollution by 2030. This plan was the culmination of robust and rigorous public participation, and EPA received millions of comments supporting the program from States, through its utilities, communities of color, Tribes, environmental groups, labor unions, and the public at large.

The Clean Power Plan was not only good for the environment; it was good for the economy, too. In Illinois, residents are expected to save an average of up to 4 percent on electricity bills by 2030. Illinois energy efficiency investments alone are estimated to grow our economy by \$2 billion in that same

year, and we lead the Midwest in clean energy jobs.

But no matter the obvious global, national, and economic benefits, Mr. Wheeler has led the administration's efforts to roll back the Clean Power Plan. His replacement proposal would adversely impact public health and lead to as many as 1,400 premature deaths from increased soot, up to 15,000 new cases of upper respiratory problems, and 100,000 missed school and work days annually by 2030.

Internationally, this proposal would leave the United States further behind our allies that have taken aggressive action on climate change. The proposal also fails low-income communities and communities of color, which bear the brunt of our environmental and public health burdens. Unlike the Clean Power Plan, this platform doesn't even require States to engage environmental justice and community groups in their plan development processes. It also fails to encourage States to conduct environmental justice analysis of their own as they develop implementation plans.

EPA should be working to strengthen policies like the Clean Power Plan. It is more than troubling that Mr. Wheeler and the Trump administration are instead seeking to repeal them entirely. Now is not the time to move backward.

Here is what Evan, who grew up in Libertyville, IL, shared with me:

I write because I am concerned about the future. The future of the world, the future for the United States and my own future. At this time, I feel that perhaps the greatest threat to that future is climate change. The current Administration's stance towards the issue has discouraged me to no end, and I can't help but despair as the President makes light of this existential threat to the wellbeing of the planet.

I know, of course, that not all lawmakers share the President's stance towards this issue. Please, make some noise.

Evan, I hear you. I hear your fear, and I want you to know that I believe the Nation should be focused on building a clean energy economy and a climate-safe future for your generation. I hear you, and I am going to make that noise for you.

I am also angry at EPA's abuse of the small refinery waiver program under the renewable fuel standard. The RFS includes a policy to help small refineries that cannot afford to comply with the RFS. Before Donald Trump took power, this policy was rarely used. Under the Trump administration, however, nearly every exemption application has been secretly granted. This includes applications from large, multi-billion dollar companies like Exxon and Chevron that are earning record profits. These companies' CEOs have even pointed to hardship waivers on earnings clauses as contributing to their profitability.

The administration's stance reduces incentives for blending—slashing demands for biofuels and feedstocks—actively hurting farmers and biofuels

companies. These waivers could hurt the markets for years to come, holding back homegrown biofuels while creating windfall profits for large oil refiners—the exact opposite of this administration's promise to voters.

Let's be blunt. EPA is taking money out of farmers' hands and giving it to billionaire oil companies. These actions come at a time when biofuel producers and farmers across our country are already hurting. Farm income is at its lowest since 2006, and retaliatory trade measures from China threaten to deepen the crisis.

Yet early reports indicate that the small refinery waivers EPA has granted under President Trump and Mr. Wheeler will reduce demand for biofuels by billions. Over the past 6 months, we have seen more ethanol plants sold, idled, or closed than ever before. When I asked Mr. Wheeler during the confirmation hearing about EPA's apparent change in policy to now seemingly granting every exemption application, he made excuses justifying them. We need a leader at the EPA who is going to stand up for our farmers, not capitulate to the demands of Big Oil.

We also need a leader at the EPA who is going to protect the Great Lakes. The 1,000 employees in Region 5 work tirelessly to protect the environment, health, and safety of Americans living in Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin. They live, work, and raise their families in the communities they protect, and they are leaders in the fields of water quality, Superfund cleanup, and Great Lakes restoration.

Region 5 is also home to the Great Lakes Program Office, which ensures that we keep the promises we made to Canada under the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement. It also leads the Nation's Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, which has funded more than 2,000 projects that improve water quality, protect wildlife, and clean up toxic pollutants that threaten our water supply.

To date, the program has invested more than \$2.2 billion in Great Lakes restoration projects. Coordinated in both the United States and Canada, GLRI sets the standards for interagency and international cooperation. Every \$1 invested in Great Lakes restoration results in a \$2 return in the form of increased fishing, tourism, and home values. But in addition to enduring a shutdown, the employees in Region 5 who lead these programs have been bought out, undermined, and reorganized into positions they are not suited for, and that is unacceptable.

What is also unacceptable is Mr. Wheeler's attacks on science and science integrity. Science does not have a political affiliation. Science is about learning, and it never stands still. It gives us the building blocks to help us increase our knowledge over time and to find ever-better solutions to the challenges we face. Unfortu-

nately, this EPA has led the administration's attacks on science when it doesn't fit with their pro-polluter agenda.

What is at stake is not just our health and future but also America's standing and influence in the world. Just this month, EPA released the names of eight new members of its science advisory board. I am concerned that several of the new members represent interests who seek to undermine the independence and quality of the scientific advice given to the EPA. University researchers are now in the minority on the board, while the number of industry-affiliated members and members listed as consultants has increased.

Here is how the Union of Concerned Scientists summarized the new appointments made by Wheeler to the Science Advisory Board. Take Dr. John Christy. He has a reputation for controversial climate research and denying the evidence of global warming.

Then, there is Dr. Brant Ulsh, a consultant who argues that radiation at low doses isn't a big deal, contrary to the conclusions of the National Academy of Science.

New member Dr. Richard Williams has received compensation from the American Chemistry Council's formaldehyde panel, which was set up to obfuscate the health impacts of this carcinogen. He is also on the board of trustees of the International Life Sciences Institute, an industry-funded organization that is notorious for pushing out shoddy nutrition science.

Dr. Barbara Beck is a consultant with Gradient, which has itself earned a reputation for helping industry defend their products with favorable scientific studies. Beck herself helped to write a paper arguing that exposure to lead at low doses is not necessarily harmful to children, which is in stark contrast to the CDC's assessment that there is no safe level of exposure to lead.

The common thread among these individuals is that they are practitioners of the widely used disinformation playbook. They frequently work to inject uncertainty into science by criticizing risk assessments and underlying models. They argue that exposure to pollutants at low doses is not worth worrying about. That is not true. Pollution is pollution, and it is bad for communities, and it is bad for public health.

I also want to spend some time discussing the administration's new clean water rule. For more than 45 years, the Clean Water Act has preserved, protected, and restored our Nation's most important natural resource and radically transformed how our Nation uses water. That is why admirers of CWA appropriately labeled this law as one of the most successful public health initiatives ever enacted. Continued success of the CWA requires developing a clear, concise rule for determining which bodies of water are protected by

the Clean Water Act. However, Mr. Wheeler and the Trump administration have proposed a rule that fails to provide the clear-cut certainty requested by my constituents. It would cancel protections for drinking water sources of tens of millions of people. It would also cancel protections for streams and wetlands that provide habitat for wildlife and protect communities from flooding.

Communities across the country, particularly low-income communities and communities of color, already struggle to access clean water. Mr. Wheeler's proposed rule will make it even harder for these communities. Mr. Wheeler's water rule puts the profits of corporate polluters before our health and clean water for our families.

Alan, from Wheeling, IL, wrote to me and said:

This is insanity. There is nothing more important than protecting the sources of water that many people in this country drink from.

No source of drinking water should be open for pollution or destruction, but that is exactly what this proposal does by stripping protections from critical streams and wetlands across the country.

Senator Duckworth, please do anything that is possible to protect our environment and industries that depend upon clean water.

Alan, thank you for writing to me. I agree with you. This rule makes no scientific, legal, public health, or fiscal sense.

Another constituent, Dave from Rockford, shared with me similar concerns. He wrote:

Clean water is not a political issue. Protecting our watersheds and ensuring that clean, fresh water is available for fish, farms and communities is not an option—it's a responsibility.

I cannot think of a more enjoyable satisfaction [than] just standing in a clean river, seeing all the life teaming in it, and knowing that our hard work is paying off.

Dave is right. Streams and wetlands work as natural filters and sponges, keeping our drinking water supplies safe, while reducing the impact of floods.

Like our water, I am concerned by this administration's attacks on clean air. One group that comes to mind that has been fighting for our clean air is Mom's Clean Air Task Force. They are a group of moms who know how painful it is when their child can't play outside because they have asthma or there is smog outside. They are fighting for cleaner air and stronger kids.

They list ten reasons they oppose Mr. Wheeler, and among those reasons are his attacks on rules to control mercury pollution, to make our cars more fuel efficient, and to reduce smog.

Mr. Wheeler's attacks on these priorities hits close to home for me. Currently, the rate of asthma in Illinois is 13 percent higher than the national average. The Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America ranks Chicago in the top 10 percent of the most challenging places to live with asthma. Asthma is hitting the frontline neighborhoods in Chicago harder than in many other

places in the Nation, with asthma rates in some neighborhoods soaring as high as 33 percent. As the climate gets hotter, air pollution, allergies, and temperatures will trigger more asthma attacks in children.

I want to end on a high note. I commend Mr. Wheeler for following through on his promise to make himself accessible and to conduct proactive outreach. Compared to Mr. Pruitt, he is an upgrade in terms of professionalism, but that is an incredibly low bar.

At the end of the day, my constituents are depending on me to protect them from pollution, even if it upsets some in industry. I believe we need an Administrator who is ready to fight for our kids, to fight for the Great Lakes, to fight for the civil servants that work at EPA, and to fight for every American's right to clean air, clean water, and a healthy environment. I believe EPA will achieve its mission when it requires rigorous enforcement when human health is at stake.

Mr. Wheeler believes that public health must be balanced against the health of corporations and industry interests who always want less rules, less oversight, and certainly less enforcement. That is why I must vote no.

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. WYDEN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

The Senator from Oregon is recognized.

Mr. WYDEN. Madam President, this week the Senate is debating the nomination of Andrew Wheeler to serve as Administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

I am going to make this short because this is bad news for anybody who wants the Environmental Protection Agency to live up to its fundamental mission; that is, to protect the public health so our citizens, from sea to shining sea, can breathe clean air and drink clean water.

In my view, Andrew Wheeler is Scott Pruitt without an appetite for luxury travel on the taxpayers' dime—yet another Trump appointee doing the bidding of the dirtiest, most powerful industry in America, no matter what physical harm it might do to the people of our country.

To me, the fundamental obligation of an EPA Administrator should be to make sure we don't compromise our health and the environment. Regrettably, Mr. Wheeler has spent his career doing essentially the opposite.

Given what he has done during his time as acting head of the Agency, he has already proven what sort of backward-thinking Administrator he will be. In fact, I think it would be fair to

say Andrew Wheeler is sure to be "Administrator Rollback."

During his time as Acting Administrator, he's rolled back fuel economy standards that reduce pollution and help drivers save money at the pump. Not even the car companies support him on that. He is rolling back the rules designed to stop dirty powerplants from belching toxic gases into the air. He is rolling back rules designed to protect workers from exposure on the job to dangerous chemicals that can cause heart attacks, for example. He is rolling back EPA enforcement—basic enforcement—of a host of safeguards that are already on the books.

Civil penalties against polluters are now at their lowest since 1994. Inspections of potentially toxic industrial sites amount to half of what they were just in 2010. Civil fines have plummeted on his watch. Judicial enforcement cases that have begun and are concluded have been cut in half. The Wheeler EPA is already letting environmental criminals off the hook. It is my view that these criminals are not creating victimless crimes—what they are doing is poisoning our communities, our workplaces, our air, and our water.

Perhaps what is most alarming about his appointment is that he essentially waves a hand of dismissal to the existential threat of climate change.

I have a lot of open-to-everybody townhall meetings in my State. We have now had more than 920. Just last week, I held five in different parts of our State. In counties where Donald Trump won and in counties where Hillary Clinton won, the issue of climate change comes up everywhere.

At the root of the questions I get in communities that span the philosophical spectrum is that people are terrified—terrified—of what climate change is going to bring. They see the news coming out of Washington. They see that the Trump administration isn't just waving the white flag of surrender on climate change. In effect, it almost feels as if the Trump people want to bring on those climate changes even faster. Anybody who is walking around in our communities and sees temperature shifts of more than 30 or 40 degrees on a dime is completely aware of what I am talking about, even if the Trump administration is not.

In my home State, when you talk about climate change, the first thing Oregonians think about are wildfires. These fires are not your grandfather's fires. They are bigger. They are hotter. They are more powerful.

Not too long ago, we actually had a fire leap the Columbia River—our magnificent Columbia River. This is noteworthy for a variety of reasons but especially because our rivers historically have acted as fire bricks. Now we have these bigger and more powerful fires almost all year round, not just a few months in the summer, the way it used to be. These new megafires are extraordinary.

It is almost as if we are trying to get acclimated to the idea of clean air refugees—people who live near areas where fires break out, with ash built up on their cars like snow in the winter-time.

California has seen its own huge infernos causing horrible fatalities in the last few years. Nevada has seen it, Colorado and Washington as well. People are literally homeless, out and about in their communities, trying to just find a safe place for shelter.

Climate change is also not just about fires. Across the West, there is the threat of crippling drought. The hurricanes that battered the East Coast and the Gulf of Mexico are intensifying and drowning our cities with rain. It seems like every day there is another report about how sea levels are rising faster than previously estimated.

Climate change is affecting wildlife in catastrophic ways. Entire ecosystems could be lost. This week, there were reports that an ice sheet larger than the island of Manhattan broke off from Antarctica. So the effects of climate change aren't some threat way off in the future. It is already a massive problem today. Americans feel it, and they see it in their communities again and again.

My wife and I are older parents. We have 11-year-old twins and a 6-year-old daughter. I—and I am sure there are plenty of other Senators—think about what their generation is going to be dealing with down the road. This is why there is so much grassroots energy out there about the Green New Deal, which I am proud to cosponsor.

I can tell you from the conversations I had in Oregon, people know what a grave threat climate change poses. They want action. My hope is that there are a variety of ways, like we saw with the original New Deal, in which we can find some common ground.

I am the ranking Democrat on the Senate Finance Committee, which writes the tax laws. We have more than 40 separate tax breaks for energy that are on the books today, and most of them are dirty energy tax relics of yesteryear.

What I have proposed is that we basically throw those 40 energy tax breaks—relics of dirty energy—in the trash can and substitute three; one for clean energy, one for clean transportation fuel, and one for energy efficiency.

The Presiding Officer is new here. She is getting out and talking to Senators about a variety of issues. I can tell her that what I will be saying to colleagues on the other side of the aisle is something like, my idea responds to what Republicans have been talking about, the need for fewer subsidies. We ought to have fewer subsidies for energy.

Why don't we try to work together, find common ground, and do it particularly on an issue that helps us to promote clean energy at a time of dramatic climate change?

That is why I believe Andrew Wheeler is the wrong person to lead the EPA. Just when we need Democrats and Republicans to come together to find fresh ideas to combat climate change, he basically says that it really isn't a threat at all.

It really isn't a threat to Mr. Wheeler, and he is making the climate change challenge worse by basically suppressing the authority and the ability of the Agency to take this existential challenge head-on.

The mission of the EPA is all about protecting human health, fighting for clean air, fighting for clean water, and fighting on behalf of Americans from sea to shining sea.

Andrew Wheeler fights for those who endanger our health and pollute our air and water. This isn't a tough call. I am a no on a nomination that represents danger and going backward. I urge my colleagues to stay with me.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nebraska.

RECOGNIZING THE 150TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA-LINCOLN

Mrs. FISCHER. Madam President, I rise today because in 1869, 150 years ago, the Nebraska Legislature unanimously passed and our Governor signed legislation that established the University of Nebraska.

The Morrill-Land Grant Colleges Act, signed into law by President Abraham Lincoln in 1862, provided Nebraska with land to establish colleges focused on agriculture and the mechanic arts. The university opened its doors in our State capital, Lincoln, where we honor President Lincoln's namesake.

Since then, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln has grown to an enrollment of over 25,000 students, providing over 5,000 new graduates to the workforce each year and over \$2 billion in annual economic impact for Nebraska across our 93 counties.

The university holds a special place in my heart. I am a graduate of the university. Staying true to its roots, UNL remains a national leader in water, agriculture, and rural development research, helping to transform our State, which was once called the Great American Desert, into one of the greatest agricultural exporting regions in the world.

On top of equipping Nebraskans with the skills to feed the world, the university has emerged as a leading institution for early childhood education and national security and defense research.

The university's sports teams unite our Nebraska communities, and they fuel our pride in our great State. Whether it is to cheer on our five-time national championship winning football team at Memorial Stadium or at the Devaney Center to support one of our State's treasures, the five-time national champion women's volleyball team, Lincoln is filled with a sea of Husker red on game days.

What is more, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln leads the Nation with 333 Academic All-Americans across our Cornhusker sports teams.

The university is also important to the culture of our State, showcasing some of the best of the good life—attractions such as the State Museum, which is the largest natural history museum in Nebraska or the Larsen Tractor Test and Power Museum or the East Campus Dairy Store known across our State for its wonderful cheese and, of course, ice cream.

The university, like our State, has grown and accomplished much over the last century and a half, and that is why my colleague from Nebraska and I have introduced a Senate resolution recognizing UNL's 150th anniversary on February 15 of 2019.

This is a formal way for this body to extend our congratulations to the University of Nebraska-Lincoln on this special milestone in its history. I urge my colleagues to support the passage of the resolution because, as my colleague and I know so well, there is no place like Nebraska.

Here is to the next 150 years and beyond for the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

Madam President, I yield some time to my colleague from Nebraska so that he may make remarks on this resolution as well.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nebraska.

Mr. SASSE. Madam President, I thank my senior Senator, DEB FISCHER, for her leadership and drawing attention to the 150th anniversary of the University of Nebraska. Senator FISCHER is a tireless champion of our State and of this special university, her alma mater.

I am sad to admit in public that I am not a graduate of the University of Nebraska, but I had lied about my age for many, many years to be able to vend and sell concessions at Huskers sporting events before I was old enough to do it so that I could be deeply affiliated with this institution, even though I didn't graduate from there.

I salute my senior Senator and her leadership in drawing attention to this. I want to tell stories about Coach Osborne, who was my boyhood hero, about crying as a 12-year-old after the January 2, 1984, national championship game in Miami, about Scott Frost and how he is going to soon lead us back to the promised land, but I have already been warned by the Presiding Officer that the Senate has some informal unwritten rules that actually prohibit football evangelism on the floor.

I will move along to celebrate, with my senior Senator, our volleyball national championships, our bowling national championships, and the fact that Nebraska is or was once known as the Great American Desert, and we are now the most trade-dependent, export-dependent State per capita in the Union precisely because we live on the

great Ogallala Aquifer, the most productive land anywhere on Earth and at any point in the history of the Earth.

We grow so much more food than we can ever conceivably consume that we feed the world from Nebraska, and a huge part of that is because of the ag extension programs of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. There are a lot of great Americans and great patriots who serve at the University of Nebraska on the faculty, in the administration, and donors and alumni and our current students, and the 150th anniversary is a great moment for our State. All 50 States have colleges and universities they are proud of, but there is no State that is more identified with its university than Nebraska. I would like to join my senior Senator and applaud her for her leadership in bringing this resolution today.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nebraska.

Mrs. FISCHER. Madam President, I thank my colleague from Nebraska for his words and recognizing the importance of the University of Nebraska to our State as an economic engine of the State, as an institution that draws on the strengths of the State of Nebraska, and especially looking at Innovation Campus at the University in Lincoln, where there is a focus on water and on food. We are blessed in Nebraska with that water resource, and we do feed the world.

Madam President, as in legislative session, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of S. Res. 82, submitted earlier today.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the resolution.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 82) recognizing the 150th anniversary of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Mrs. FISCHER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, and the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The resolution (S. Res. 82) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

(The resolution, with its preamble, is printed in today's RECORD under "Submitted Resolutions.")

I yield the floor.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Pennsylvania.

Mr. CASEY. I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

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

NOMINATION OF ANDREW WHEELER

Mr. CASEY. Madam President, I rise today to talk about the debate that we