

played such a critical role in America COM-PETES, and to Sen. Lisa Murkowski, who likely will succeed Sen. Domenici as the senior Republican on the Energy Committee.

Some say a presidential election year is no time for bipartisan action. I can't think of a better time. Voters expect presidential candidates and candidates for Congress to come up with solutions for \$4 gasoline, clean air and climate change, and the national security implications of our dependence on foreign oil. The people didn't elect us to take a vacation this year just because there is a presidential election.

So, how to proceed?

A few grand challenges—Sen. Bingaman's first reaction to the idea of a new Manhattan Project was that instead we need several mini-Manhattan Projects. He suggested as an example the "14 Grand Challenges for Engineering in the 21st Century" laid out by former MIT President Chuck Vest, the president of the National Institute of Engineering—three of which involve energy. I agree with Sen. Bingaman and Chuck Vest.

Congress doesn't do "comprehensive" well, as was demonstrated by the collapse of the comprehensive immigration bill. Step-by-step solutions or different tracks toward one goal are easier to digest and have fewer surprises. And, of course, the original Manhattan Project itself proceeded along several tracks toward one goal.

Here are my criteria for choosing several grand challenges:

Grand consequences, too—The United States uses 25 percent of all the energy in the world. Interesting solutions for small problems producing small results should be a part of some other project.

Real scientific breakthroughs—This is not about drilling offshore for oil or natural gas in an environmentally clean way or building a new generation of nuclear power plants, both of which we already know how to do—and, in my opinion, should be doing.

Five years—Grand challenges should put the United States within five years firmly on a path to clean energy independence so that goal can be achieved within a generation.

Family Budget—Solutions need to fit the family budget, and costs of different solutions need to be compared.

Consensus—The Augustine panel that drafted the "Gathering Storm" report wisely avoided some germane topics, such as excessive litigation, upon which they could not agree, figuring that Congress might not be able to agree either.

Seven grand challenges:

Here is where I invite your help. Rather than having members of Congress proclaim these challenges, or asking scientists alone to suggest them, I believe there needs to be preliminary discussion—including about whether the criteria are correct. Then, Congress can pose to scientists questions about the steps to take to achieve the grand challenges.

To begin the discussion, I suggest asking what steps Congress and the federal government should take during the next five years toward these seven grand challenges so that the United States would be firmly on the path toward clean energy independence within a generation:

1. Make plug-in electric cars and trucks commonplace. In the 1960s, H. Ross Perot noticed that when banks in Texas locked their doors at 5 p.m., they also turned off their new computers. Perot bought the idle nighttime bank computer capacity and made a deal with states to manage Medicare and Medicaid data. Banks made money, states saved money, and Perot made a billion dollars.

Idle nighttime bank computer capacity in the 1960s reminds me of idle nighttime power plant capacity in 2008. This is why:

The Tennessee Valley Authority has 7,000–8,000 megawatts—the equivalent of seven or eight nuclear power plants or 15 coal plants—of unused electric capacity most nights.

Beginning in 2010 Nissan, Toyota, General Motors and Ford will sell electric cars that can be plugged into wall sockets. FedEx is already using hybrid delivery trucks.

TVA could offer "smart meters" that would allow its 8.7 million customers to plug in their vehicles to "fill up" at night for only a few dollars, in exchange for the customer paying more for electricity between 4 p.m. and 10 p.m. when the grid is busy.

Sixty percent of Americans drive less than 30 miles each day. Those Americans could drive a plug-in electric car or truck without using a drop of gasoline. By some estimates, there is so much idle electric capacity in power plants at night that over time we could replace three-fourths of our light vehicles with plug-ins. That could reduce our overseas oil bill from \$500 billion to \$250 billion—and do it all without building one new power plant.

In other words, we have the plug. The cars are coming. All we need is the cord.

Too good to be true? Haven't U.S. presidents back to Nixon promised revolutionary vehicles? Yes, but times have changed. Batteries are better. Gas is \$4. We are angry about sending so many dollars overseas, worried about climate change and clean air. And, consumers have already bought one million hybrid vehicles and are waiting in line to buy more—even without the plug-in. Down the road is the prospect of a hydrogen fuel-cell hybrid vehicle, with two engines—neither of which uses a drop of gasoline. Oak Ridge is evaluating these opportunities.

Still, there are obstacles. Expensive batteries make the additional cost per electric car \$8,000–\$11,000. Smart metering is not widespread. There will be increased pollution from the operation of coal plants at night. We know how to get rid of those sulfur, nitrogen, and mercury pollutants (and should do it), but haven't yet found a way to get rid of the carbon produced by widespread use in coal burning power plants. Which brings us to the second grand challenge:

2. Make carbon capture and storage a reality for coal-burning power plants. This was one of the National Institute of Engineering's grand challenges. And there may be solutions other than underground storage, such as using algae to capture carbon. Interestingly, the Natural Resources Defense Council argues that, after conservation, coal with carbon capture is the best option for clean energy independence because it provides for the growing power needs of the U.S. and will be easily adopted by other countries.

3. Make solar power cost competitive with power from fossil fuels. This is a second of the National Institute's grand challenges. Solar power, despite 50 years of trying, produces one one-hundredth of one percent of America's electricity. The cost of putting solar panels on homes averages \$25,000–\$30,000 and the electricity produced, for the most part, can't be stored. Now, there is new photovoltaic research as well as promising solar thermal power plants, which capture the sunlight using mirrors, turn heat into steam, and store it underground until the customer needs it.

4. Safely reprocess and store nuclear waste. Nuclear plants produce 20 percent of America's electricity, but 70 percent of America's clean electricity—that is, electricity that does not pollute the air with mercury, nitrogen, sulfur, or carbon. The most important

breakthrough needed during the next five years to build more nuclear power plants is solving the problem of what to do with nuclear waste. A political stalemate has stopped nuclear waste from going to Yucca Mountain in Nevada, and \$15 billion collected from ratepayers for that purpose is sitting in a bank. Recycling waste could reduce its mass by 90 percent, creating less stuff to store temporarily while long-term storage is resolved.

5. Make advanced biofuels cost-competitive with gasoline. The backlash toward ethanol made from corn because of its effect on food prices is a reminder to beware of the great law of unintended consequences when issuing grand challenges. Ethanol from cellulosic materials shows great promise, but there are a limited number of cars capable of using alternative fuels and of places for drivers to buy it. Turning coal into liquid fuel is an established technology, but expensive and a producer of much carbon.

6. Make new buildings green buildings. Japan believes it may miss its 2012 Kyoto goals for greenhouse gas reductions primarily because of energy wasted by inefficient buildings. Many of the technologies needed to do this are known. Figuring out how to accelerate their use in a decentralized society is most of this grand challenge.

7. Provide energy from fusion. The idea of recreating on Earth the way the sun creates energy and using it for commercial power is the third grand challenge suggested by the National Institute of Engineering. The promise of sustaining a controlled fusion reaction for commercial power generation is so fantastic that the five-year goal should be to do everything possible to reach the long-term goal. The failure of Congress to approve the President's budget request for U.S. participation in the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor—the ITER Project—is embarrassing.

Anything is possible

This country of ours is a remarkable place. Even during an economic slowdown, we will produce this year about 30 percent of all the wealth in the world for the 5 percent of us who live in the United States.

Despite "the gathering storm" of concern about American competitiveness, no other country approaches our brainpower advantage—the collection of research universities, national laboratories and private-sector companies we have.

And this is still the only country where people say with a straight face that anything is possible—and really believe it.

These are precisely the ingredients that America needs during the next five years to place ourselves firmly on a path to clean energy independence within a generation—and in doing so, to make our jobs more secure, to help balance the family budget, to make our air cleaner and our planet safer and healthier—and to lead the world to do the same.

Mr. ALEXANDER. 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.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. ERNST). Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican leader is recognized.

MUELLER REPORT

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, yesterday, Attorney General Barr

transmitted to Congress his summary of the special counsel's principal conclusions from his investigation into Russia's efforts to interfere in the 2016 election.

The result of that investigation is being hailed as good news for the President, and it certainly is that. But, really, it is good news for our entire country. It is good news that our law enforcement professionals know much more about Russia's malevolent attempts to interfere in American elections, and it is good news that we can conclusively set aside the notion that the President and his team had somehow participated in those attacks on our democracy.

According to the Attorney General, the special counsel's indepth investigation "did not find that the Trump campaign or anyone associated with it conspired or coordinated with Russia in its efforts to influence the 2016 U.S. presidential election." That really says it all.

Further, Attorney General Barr and Deputy Attorney General Rosenstein concluded the investigation did not—did not—establish that the President engaged in obstruction of justice.

So after 2 years, thousands of subpoenas, hundreds of search warrants, hundreds of witnesses, millions of taxpayer dollars, these are the findings: no collusion, no conspiracy, no obstruction.

What the investigation did produce, it seems, is a deep examination of Russia's efforts to interfere in the 2016 election. The Attorney General reports that Russia carried out online disinformation campaigns and computer hacking efforts designed to sow discord in our Nation and interfere in American politics.

It is deeply disturbing that the Obama administration was apparently insufficiently prepared to anticipate and counter these Russian threats. It was hardly a secret prior to November 2016 that Putin's Russia was not, and is not, our friend. Yet, for years, the previous administration ignored, excused, and failed to confront Putin's malign activities both at home and abroad.

I am glad the special counsel's report will contribute new insight and new understanding to our awareness of Russian activities. I look forward to the release of more information in the coming days, as the Attorney General has said he intends to do, in consultation with Special Counsel Mueller.

I look forward, as well, to the continuing parallel work of our Senate colleagues on the Select Committee on Intelligence to study the threats that foreign interference pose to our institutions.

As I said, in any sane political moment, all of this would be very welcome news to all Americans—in a normal time. But we know that, amazingly, the reaction in some corners of the far left has seemed not to be celebration but, rather, disappointment.

Huge components of the Democratic Party and their media allies have spent

literally years spinning intricate theories about this Presidency and trying to sell the American people on their wild claims. It is as if many of our Democratic colleagues are still just unable to process the simple fact that, yes, the American people elected this Republican President over his Democratic opponent.

We are faced with new evidence every day that our Republican policies are delivering exactly the change that middle-class families voted for back in 2016. Yet, even still, many on the left remain convinced that only conspiracy and corruption could possibly explain why they might actually lose an election.

Well, here in the real world, the American people hired this President to clean up the mess of the preceding 8 years. That is exactly what we set about doing, and the results are clear. The Nation is clearly better off than it was 2 years ago.

I sincerely hope that now, at last, our friends on the left will be able to put aside their fixation on permanently relitigating their loss in 2016 and actually join in the productive work that the rest of us have been proudly engaged in for the past 2 years and counting.

Unfortunately, the events over the last few months have not exactly indicated that productive, practical cooperation is what our Democratic colleagues have in mind. To the contrary, the Nation has watched as the Democratic Party has engaged in a collective headlong sprint—a headlong sprint—toward the left, as far to the left as possible, as fast as possible.

They have proposed a massive rewriting of the rules of American politics. They have proposed scrapping Medicare, slapping its name on a brandnew, one-size-fits-all government insurance plan, and then making American families' existing private insurance policies illegal. And, of course, they have proposed what the Senate will be voting on later this week—the famous Green New Deal.

My colleagues and I will have plenty more to say on this subject in the coming days. Today, I just want to say that I could not be more glad that the American people will have the opportunity to learn precisely where each one of their Senators stands on this radical, top-down, and socialist makeover of the entire U.S. economy.

Middle-class families will get to see if their Senators have been wooed by the disjointed contents of leftist daydreams.

Hard-working Americans in Kentucky and around the country who are employed in the energy and manufacturing industries will get to see if their Senators support eliminating all fossil fuels and suffocating their livelihoods.

Homeowners who take pride in their hard-earned investment will get to see if their Senators are in favor of forcible, DC-directed remodeling of every building in America.

Working-class Americans who have benefited from our growing economy and historic job market will learn whether their Senators support turning away from free enterprise and implementing a new government-driven employment system.

Families who have to budget for household expenses will see which Senators vote to increase their electricity bills by what one analysis pegs at—listen to this—\$300 a month.

Of course, every American taxpayer will get to learn whether their Senator supports saddling our Nation with the astronomical cost of this socialist fantasy—tens and tens of trillions of dollars—a tax burden that would be certain to hurt not just wealthy Americans but the middle class as well.

On all of these questions, on this whole Democratic effort to rebrand all the failed ideas of 20th-century socialism with a little green paint, every Member of this body will have the opportunity to cast a clear vote this very week. The American people deserve to know which Senators can reject this crippling proposal right away and which Senators find themselves unable to do that. That is exactly what they will learn later this week.

NOMINATION OF BRIDGET S. BADE

Madam President, later today, the Senate will vote to advance the nomination of yet another of President Trump's qualified choices to the Federal bench.

Bridget Bade of Arizona has been tapped to serve on the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals. She brings with her well-rounded experience as a legal professional. She is a two-time graduate of Arizona State University and has served with distinction at the Department of Justice, the Office of the U.S. Attorney for the District of Arizona, as a special counsel in private practice, and most recently as a magistrate judge.

Our colleagues on the Judiciary Committee saw fit to forward Ms. Bade's nomination with bipartisan support, and I hope all Senators will join me in voting to advance it later today.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

TRIBUTE TO TOM UDALL

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, first, all of us heard the sad news today—nice for him but sad for us—that TOM UDALL will not seek reelection.

He is one of the most principled, hardest working Senators we have. He is bright, he is dedicated, and he has such integrity, which runs in the Udall family. When he gets up to speak, every Senator, Democratic and Republican, always knows how well thought out his remarks will be and how sincere they are. He is not doing this for some angle or political purpose. He is just the kind of person the Founding Fathers wanted to serve in the U.S. Senate.