

S. RES. 184

At the request of Mr. RISCH, the names of the Senator from New Hampshire (Mrs. SHAHEEN), the Senator from Florida (Mr. RUBIO) and the Senator from Michigan (Mr. PETERS) were added as cosponsors of S. Res. 184, a resolution condemning the Easter Sunday terrorist attacks in Sri Lanka, offering sincere condolences to the victims, to their families and friends, and to the people and nation of Sri Lanka, and expressing solidarity and support for Sri Lanka.

S. RES. 188

At the request of Mr. CRUZ, the name of the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. BOOKER) was added as a cosponsor of S. Res. 188, a resolution encouraging a swift transfer of power by the military to a civilian-led political authority in the Republic of the Sudan, and for other purposes.

S. RES. 189

At the request of Mr. CRUZ, the names of the Senator from Alabama (Mr. JONES) and the Senator from Alaska (Ms. MURKOWSKI) were added as cosponsors of S. Res. 189, a resolution condemning all forms of antisemitism.

STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

By Ms. SMITH (for herself, Mr. HEINRICH, Mr. Kaine, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, and Mr. SCHATZ):

S. 1359. A bill to amend the Public Utility Regulatory Policies Act of 1978 to establish a market-oriented standard for clean electric energy generation, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

Ms. SMITH. Mr. President, climate change is the existential challenge of our time. I know this because this is what the science says. I know this because I have seen the impacts of climate change in my State. I know this because it is what our children who will live with the consequences of a changing climate tell us. In a recent poll, half of Americans age 18 to 29 describe climate change as a “crisis that demands urgent action.”

Today I rise to discuss how the clean energy revolution can be the way we fight climate change and the way we create jobs and opportunity. Colleagues, in this global challenge, the United States can lead or we can follow. I want us to lead.

This morning, as a Senator from an agricultural and high-tech State from the Upper Midwest, I have joined with Representative BEN RAY LUJÁN, who represents the great State of New Mexico, a State with significant oil and gas resources, to introduce the Clean Energy Standard Act of 2019. Our legislation would dramatically expand clean electricity and put the United States on a path to net zero greenhouse gas emissions from the electric sector by the middle of the century, including a nearly 80-percent reduction in emissions by 2035 compared to 2005.

Not so long ago, the United States was a global leader in tackling climate change. President Obama took strong action to remove carbon emissions from cars. He advanced the Clean Power Plan to significantly reduce emissions in the electric sector, and he provided the essential leadership that led to adoption of the international Paris climate agreement, which commits the countries of the world to collectively hold global warming to well below 2 degrees Celsius.

Unfortunately, our current President has moved unilaterally to undo these actions, as if we can bury our heads in the sand and ignore the reality that a warming climate threatens our health, it threatens our financial stability, and it threatens our very existence. I regret to say it, but for the most part, the Republican-led Congress has gone along with President Trump as he has ceded U.S. leadership on climate and clean energy to our competitors.

The result of this? Our global competitors are happy to dominate in this field. This is, I think, quite interesting. China has more than twice as much wind power as the United States, and in 2018, China beat the United States on new wind installations by more than 3 to 1. Half of all new solar installations in the world last year happened in China. Here at home, President Trump’s policies caused the solar energy industry to shed 20,000 jobs as the United States lags in fourth place on installed solar energy.

Fortunately, while Washington wavers, there is a groundswell of support for the clean energy revolution at the local level. When President Trump moved against the Paris climate agreement, Americans responded with the “We Are Still In” campaign. Churches, Tribes, mayors, county executives, and campus leaders led the way. States followed and took action. Last week, the U.S. House of Representatives pledged and passed legislation to renew our commitment to the Paris Agreement.

There are now over 100 cities around the country which have committed to clean or renewable energy. Four States and the District of Columbia have policies that will get them to net zero emissions by mid-century. Several more are moving in that direction. In my home State, Minnesota’s Governor, Tim Walz, has a plan for 100 percent carbon-free electricity by 2050. That bill passed the Minnesota House by a 74-to-59 vote. Minnesota Senate, it is now your turn. To my colleagues in the Senate, it is our turn as well.

I believe the best ideas come from people working at the local level to solve problems, and I also think the best ideas that can get done are those that bring people together across regional differences, political ideology, and their own life experiences. That is how our bill, the Clean Energy Standard Act of 2019, came to be. It builds on what is already working at the local level.

As a clean energy standard, it has a bipartisan history. Back when Repub-

licans and Democrats were working together on bills to reduce carbon pollution—all the way back in 2009 through 2012—clean energy standard bills like this one had both Democratic and Republican cosponsors. This bill today is supported by labor groups, by environmental groups, and by utilities—an unlikely but strong coalition in these days of divisive politics.

The basics of this plan are simple. First, let’s start where electric utilities are and then improve from there. We know many electric utilities are shifting to renewables and clean energy because it is the most cost-competitive thing for them to do and because it is what their customers want, but we also know that each utility is going to start from a different place in terms of the amount of clean energy it already sells.

Let’s start there. Our bill recognizes these regional differences and then asks each utility to improve from where they are. One size does not fit all. On the one hand, States like Idaho and Washington are blessed with abundant hydropower and already produce over 80 percent of their electricity from carbon-free sources. On the other hand, four of our United States get less than 10 percent of their electricity from carbon-free generation. Our bill asks each utility to start from where they are and improve from there.

Utilities that start with a low amount of clean energy are asked to grow quickly, but they slow down as they reach very high levels of net zero emission electricity. The plan recognizes also that rural co-ops and municipal utilities face unique challenges, and we accommodate that.

The second thing about this plan is this: Let’s be ambitious. Science tells us that we need to achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions by the second half of this century if we are to avoid the worst consequences of climate change. We desperately need some can-do American spirit and ingenuity here, not nay-saying.

This bill is ambitious. It would result in expected electric sector emission reductions of nearly 80 percent by 2035 compared to 2005 benchmarks. If the cost curve bends faster and the clean energy transition turns out to be even cheaper, reductions will happen even faster.

Third, let’s be open to all solutions for a clean energy future. Addressing the challenges of climate change isn’t easy, and there is no one solution. We need to be open to all ideas and all approaches so long as they actually reduce carbon emissions. If we want an electric system that is not only zero emissions but also reliable, resilient, and affordable, we can’t afford to rule out any technologies in advance.

None of us knows in 2019 what is going to be the best way to run a reliable, affordable net zero emissions electric system in 2050. What we do know is that we need to create strong

clean energy incentives that the electricity market will understand and respond to and then allow all technologies to compete. That is what this bill does.

Here is what that might look like. Here is what it could look like. Most scientific models say that in a net zero emission electric grid, renewable sources like wind and solar will deliver the bulk of the electricity we need, but we also know that a reliable grid needs energy sources that can be turned up or down when we need them. This means resilient, reliable electric grids that will be built on a combination of hydropower, nuclear power, long-term energy storage, and fossil fuels, if they are deployed with carbon capture.

What will be the proportion of these energy sources in 2050? We can't know that today, but what we do know, based on one leading model, is an approach like the one in our bill that is open to all clean sources of electricity will be up to trillions of dollars cheaper than an approach that relies on handpicking technological winners and losers. Colleagues, clean, reliable, and affordable energy is important to my constituents in Minnesota, and I bet it is important to your constituents as well.

Fighting climate change is a big challenge that requires a lot of good ideas. The Clean Energy Standard Act of 2019, which I introduced today, will get the electric power sector to net zero carbon emissions, but it doesn't do everything we need to do to fight climate change.

This bill is only one of the steps that we need to take to move our country and our world to net zero greenhouse gas emissions in a way that is fair and just and economical, but it is an important piece.

In the electric sector, we already know a lot about how to make progress to lower carbon emissions. Thanks to innovation and good policies at the State level, emissions from electricity production have declined substantially just in the last decade.

Now we need to keep that progress going and going faster. We need to continue and accelerate progress and expand the use of clean electricity into other sectors.

Think about this. A clean electric grid can provide the energy to reduce carbon emissions in transportation, in buildings, and in other parts of our economy. Electric vehicles can contribute to reduce carbon emissions when we have a clean energy electric sector. Office buildings and homes can contribute to reduce carbon emissions when we have a clean electric sector. That is what progress can look like.

I am grateful that a few of my fellow Republicans in Congress are moving beyond the President's head-in-the-sand denial of climate change. These colleagues—and I hope more of them—are looking for ways to spur innovation in clean energy by providing new funding for clean energy research.

This is all well and good, but Federal funding for clean energy research will not work all on its own. What drives adoption and dispersion of innovation is a strong market signal that low carbon sources of electricity will be valued by the market, and that will be happening predictably as big utilities make important capital investments. Research money provides a really important push to get innovation started in the lab, but for innovation to move from technology to be adopted at a scale and pace that we need, we must be sending a strong, clear signal from the market that low-carbon sources of electricity are going to be valued.

The Clean Energy Standard Act of 2019 does this. It is a crucial complement to Manhattan Project efforts to spur technology innovation. These two are complements but not alternatives. Research without market incentives will not get us where we need to go.

Colleagues, climate change is real, and we need bold action to fight it. If we do—when we do—the United States can be the clean energy leader. This will be good for jobs. It will be good for our health, and it will be necessary for the survival of our planet.

We can lead or we can follow. I believe we need to lead. This is what our bill seeks to do by putting the United States in the forefront for reaching net zero carbon emissions in the electric sector. This is an environmental imperative. It is an economic imperative, and it is a jobs imperative. I don't care whether you come from a State that gets 80 percent of its power from clean energy or whether you get 10 percent.

This is why our plan has the endorsement of the Union of Concerned Scientists, the Clean Air Task Force, and Fresh Energy in Minnesota. Our plan is supported by the Utility Workers of America and United Steelworkers. Bills that are acceptable to labor, the environmental movement, and forward-thinking utilities are rare. Yet this is what we really need if we are going to build a winning coalition to address climate change.

We Democrats understand that the climate crisis requires bold action, and we understand that we need many ideas and many solutions. I offer one today.

I challenge—I urge—my Republican colleagues to do the same and to join us. Join with us and help us find solutions to a crisis that will shape irrevocably the world our children and our grandchildren will be living in.

Science tells us that the challenge is great, but it also shows us solutions that can cut net carbon emissions to zero, lower energy costs, and expand jobs and opportunity. That is the future I want for my children and my grandchildren yet to be born. Let's get to work. We don't have any time to waste.

I thank Representative LUJÁN for partnering with me on this bill. I thank my colleagues Senators HEIN-

RICH, Kaine, WHITEHOUSE, and SCHATZ for cosponsoring this legislation. I also thank Senator Jeff Bingaman of New Mexico, longtime chair of the Senate Energy Committee, who first worked in a bipartisan way on a clean energy standard bill that was a template for our effort today.

I thank also the scientists and economists who have provided thoughtful analysis as we developed this bill—most prominently, Resources for the Future and President Obama's Secretary of Energy, Ernie Moniz. I am grateful for their support and eager to begin the push to get our policies moved forward.

I yield the floor.

SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS

SENATE RESOLUTION 194—DESIGNATING JULY 30, 2019, AS ‘NATIONAL WHISTLEBLOWER APPRECIATION DAY’

Mr. GRASSLEY (for himself, Mr. WYDEN, Mr. MARKEY, Mr. TILLIS, Ms. BALDWIN, Mrs. FISCHER, Mr. PETERS, Mr. BOOZMAN, Mr. CARPER, Ms. ERNST, and Mr. JOHNSON) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary:

S. RES. 194

Whereas, in 1777, before the passage of the Bill of Rights, 10 sailors and Marines blew the whistle on fraud and misconduct that was harmful to the United States;

Whereas the Founding Fathers unanimously supported the whistleblowers in words and deeds, including by releasing government records and providing monetary assistance for the reasonable legal expenses necessary to prevent retaliation against the whistleblowers;

Whereas, on July 30, 1778, in demonstration of their full support for whistleblowers, the members of the Continental Congress unanimously passed the first whistleblower legislation in the United States that read: “Resolved, That it is the duty of all persons in the service of the United States, as well as all other the inhabitants thereof, to give the earliest information to Congress or other proper authority of any misconduct, frauds or misdemeanors committed by any officers or persons in the service of these states, which may come to their knowledge” (legislation of July 30, 1778, reprinted in Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774–1789, ed. Worthington C. Ford et al. (Washington, DC, 1904–37), 11:732);

Whereas whistleblowers risk their careers, jobs, and reputations by reporting waste, fraud, and abuse to the proper authorities;

Whereas, in providing the proper authorities with lawful disclosures, whistleblowers save the taxpayers of the United States billions of dollars each year and serve the public interest by ensuring that the United States remains an ethical and safe place; and

Whereas it is the public policy of the United States to encourage, in accordance with Federal law (including the Constitution of the United States, rules, and regulations) and consistent with the protection of classified information (including sources and methods of detection of classified information), honest and good faith reporting of misconduct, fraud, misdemeanors, and other crimes to the appropriate authority at the earliest time possible: Now, therefore, be it