

Today, I want to talk about a bill in my home State of New York that I believe will do just that. A few weeks ago, I endorsed the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act, a bill that would put New York on a course for a net zero economy, meaning negligible to no carbon pollution by the year 2050. It is an ambitious target, but we need ambition because we live in unprecedented times.

We are witnessing human-caused climate change in the storms, floods, droughts, wildfires, and other extreme weather that has throttled our country in recent years. It has caused loss of life and destruction of livelihoods all over the country and all across the world. We must prioritize the urgency of climate change, and we must recognize the need to take bold steps to confront it aggressively.

It is unfortunate that here in Congress, because of our Republican colleagues, we don't do a thing, not one single thing on climate change. The bills the House has sent over and the bills that Democratic Senators have proposed end up in Leader McCONNELL's legislative graveyard. Nothing happens, and climate gets worse.

Thank God the States are doing something, and that is why I supported the climate bill in New York State. That is why I am so proud today that my State's legislative leaders have reached an agreement that will clear the way for its passage, with a vote in the Senate as soon as this evening.

I look forward to watching my State pass the most robust climate policy package passed by any State in the country. I am proud of that fact. I hope that it serves as an example for other States to follow, another catalyst for the national debate about how we can tackle climate change, and a reminder that we, in Congress, must do our part.

#### NOMINATIONS

Mr. President, Leader McCONNELL comes to the floor often to laud the quality of his party's judicial picks. But even the slightest scrutiny reveals that many of these judicial picks will disgrace the Federal bench.

Take the nominees we are considering this week. Several have terrible records on women's reproductive health, LGBTQ equality, and other issues, but Matthew Kacsmark from the Northern District of Texas takes the cake. Mr. Kacsmark has demonstrated a hostility to the LGBTQ community bordering on paranoia. He has opposed marriage equality. He has defended businesses that discriminate against people on sexual orientation, and he has opposed Equal Employment Opportunity Commission protections for people based on orientation.

Here is what he said. This is a man who is being given a lifetime appointment to the Federal bench. He said the nationwide right to marriage equality was a "road to potential tyranny." He called the inclusion of LGBTQ protections in VAWA "a grave mistake." He labeled the Equality Act a "public af-

firmation of the lie that the human person is an autonomous blob of Silly Putty, unconstrained by nature or biology, and that marriage, sexuality, gender identity, and even the unborn child must yield to the erotic desires of liberated adults."

This is a judge? Is this someone who is weighing both sides carefully and who is giving equal consideration to plaintiffs and defendants?

It is unbelievable that this man has been nominated, and he is not alone. The parade of narrowminded, often bigoted people who are being put on the bench simply because they are members of the Federalist Society is unprecedented in this country—unprecedented.

Beyond his work for the anti-LGBTQ group called the First Liberty Institute—which boasts such luminaries as Jeff Mateer, who said transgender children were "part of Satan's plan"—Mr. Kacsmark has no judicial experience. None. Why on Earth is this man a nominee for a lifetime appointment? Why would my colleagues want to drape black robes over these bigoted views? Our judicial system is designed to protect liberties, not denigrate them.

One Republican Senator rightfully voiced concerns about this man's fitness. Where are the others? Where are the others? I urge my friends on the other side to study this man's record because any fairminded look at his qualifications would demand a "no" on his nomination.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SASSE). Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### ESCAPE ACT

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, we talked a lot in recent weeks about the importance of a transatlantic political and military alliance between our country and many other nations. In celebrating NATO's 70th anniversary in Washington a few months ago and the 75th anniversary of D-day in Europe, there has been a common theme, and that common theme has been security cooperation. The common theme has been a need to strengthen our response to threats that continue to arise around the globe.

I believe energy security is a critical part of our shared defense. That is why I just introduced legislation to help our NATO allies escape Russian bullying by improving European energy security. My bill imposes sanctions on Russia's Nord Stream 2 pipeline. It also speeds up U.S. natural gas exports to our NATO allies.

For years I have raised concerns about Russia's energy export pipeline project. Nord Stream 2 would carry

added Russian natural gas supplies to Germany via the Baltic Sea. It would do it along the existing Nord Stream 1 route. This pipeline will fuel Russian aggression as well as regional instability. For our sake and the sake of our allies, we must stop it.

Nord Stream 2 makes Europe and our NATO allies more dependent on Russia and so more prone to Russian influence. It also means a massive money transfer from our allies straight into the Kremlin's pockets. That is new money that Russia can use to fund their military.

As we know, Russian President Vladimir Putin is no friend. He is a dangerous foe, and he has plans to divide Europe and destroy NATO. Putin uses Russia's military and economy as tools of intimidation. One of Russia's biggest economic levers, of course, is its gas monopoly in Europe. In fact, Putin has a history of using his Russian energy resources as a geopolitical weapon.

Russia literally threatens to turn off the gas if its demands are not met. Putin did cut off natural gas supplies to Ukraine in 2006, again in 2009, and most recently in 2014. Of course, 2014 was the year that Russia invaded Ukraine and Crimea. Currently, most Russian gas exports to Europe must cross Ukraine, but by using Nord Stream 2 to bypass this route, Russia can freely undermine Ukraine's economy.

Putin threatens not just Ukraine but also our NATO ally Poland. Just last week Poland's President was here in Washington meeting with President Trump to discuss security issues. Unlike Germany, Poland is working to free itself from Russian energy reliance. Poland has signed a deal to buy an additional \$8 billion of abundant reliable American natural gas, and this is on top of the \$25 billion already under contract.

At the meeting last week, President Trump said he is considering Nord Stream 2 sanctions. He also warned Germany to end its dependence on Moscow. President Trump rightly noted: "We're protecting Germany from Russia and Russia is getting billions and billions of dollars from Germany."

The President is right. He went on to add: "Reliance on a single foreign supplier of energy leaves nations totally vulnerable to coercion and extortion."

The Economist magazine calls Nord Stream 2 "a Russian trap"—one that Germany has fallen into. I agree with the President and I agree with the Economist. Nord Stream 2 will completely undermine the European Union's efforts to diversify energy sources, suppliers, and routes.

Already, Russia supplies nearly 40 percent of European Union gas imports, and European demand for natural gas is expected to continue to grow rapidly. Many of our NATO allies, especially Germany, are becoming addicted to Russian gas. It is time for American intervention.

The bill I just introduced will help our allies to escape Putin's trap. The bill is actually called the ESCAPE Act. It stands for the Energy Security Cooperation with Allied Partners in Europe Act. It mandates sanctions on Nord Stream 2, as well as other Russian pipeline projects. At the same time, it speeds up U.S. gas exports to NATO allies. The bill also creates a transatlantic energy security strategy, and it directs our NATO representative to help our allies and our partners improve their own energy security.

The ESCAPE Act builds on previous action in Congress. The Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act, which Congress passed in 2017, authorizes but does not require sanctions on Russian energy pipelines.

In March of 2018, I led a bipartisan group of 39 Senators in sending a letter to key administration officials opposing Nord Stream 2. President Trump has made clear time after time that he believes Europe's reliance on Russian gas undermines regional security. The United States, especially Wyoming, has been blessed with abundant natural gas resources and supplies. We have more than enough gas to meet America's needs, as well as exporting gas to other countries. So why shouldn't we use some of these energy resources to help our friends in Europe, as well as our own energy workers here at home.

Last summer I published an op-ed in the Washington Post saying:

We made clear that we want to roll back Russia's energy invasion of Europe. Now Congress should take the next step and mandate sanctions.

Freeing Europe from Russian energy dependence will strengthen both our allies and our NATO alliance. It is time to shut off Putin's pipeline valve and open Europe's escape valve. It is time to pass the ESCAPE Act.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

#### HONG KONG

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, this past week we saw the largest protest in Hong Kong since 2014. Millions turned out in order to protest the erosion of civil rights, human rights, and good governance in Hong Kong, violating the commitment that was made during the July 1, 1997, transfer of Hong Kong from the United Kingdom to China.

We saw China backtracking in 2014 on its electoral changes, when the candidate for the Chief Executive had to be screened by the Chinese Government, contrary to the commitments that were made when Hong Kong's relationship with the United Kingdom ended.

The protests in 2014 were called the Umbrella Movement because a large

amount of protesters, who were being attacked by the police with tear gas, were using umbrellas to protect themselves from the tear gas itself. The "one country, two systems" that was developed after the United Kingdom relinquished its control in 1997 was a commitment that Hong Kong would be a capitalistic system and the way of life that existed before the transfer to the Chinese would be upheld and unchanged. That was the commitment that was given, and that commitment has not been lived up to by China.

There is the Chinese interference we saw in 2014, and then this time we saw the government of Hong Kong try to implement an extradition law that provided real concern about people who disagreed with what is happening in China and who wanted to protest about their universal rights of being subjected to extradition to China.

This is not hypothetical; this is a real concern. Two million people went to the streets this month in Hong Kong to protest that erosion of rights in Hong Kong, basically at the insistence of the Chinese Government.

This is not theoretical. Lam Wing-kee is one example. I can give many examples. In 2015, he mysteriously disappeared. He was selling literature in Hong Kong that was banned by the Chinese Communist Party in China, not Hong Kong, supposedly. He disappeared from the streets and ended up in China, in solitary confinement in one of their prisons. He was ultimately allowed to leave with certain commitments. He decided to flee to Taiwan and stay safe there.

There are so many other examples of individuals who are in jeopardy. The extradition law that was being proposed really put the fear into those people who live in Hong Kong and visit Hong Kong that if they did anything that would upset the Chinese Government, they could be charged with a crime in China and extradited to China, never to be seen again.

Millions turned out in protest. As a result of the protests and, quite frankly, the international spotlight on what was happening in Hong Kong, the government decided to withdraw the extradition—the proposed law, but they didn't say they would withdraw it permanently and made no commitments about any future. And, of course, the current chief executive remains there, which is very much against the reforms that were supposed to take place.

The United States has spoken on this issue. The United States-Hong Kong Policy Act of 1992 allows the United States to treat the territory as separate from the rest of China politically, economically, and otherwise under certain conditions. Those conditions are that Hong Kong remain sufficiently autonomous from China and that the rights of its citizens be protected. That is specific in our law.

I question, as I think many of us do, whether Hong Kong and China are complying with the conditions under which

the United States passed the United States-Hong Kong Policy Act of 1992 that allows for preferential treatment in Hong Kong that is not enjoyed by China.

Last week, Senator RUBIO and I, with the support of the chairman and ranking member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, introduced the Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act. It reaffirms the act that we passed in 1992 to make it clear that Hong Kong's recognition by the United States and its trading relationship with the United States and its special relationship with the United States—much different from China—only exist if the conditions on autonomy are maintained.

Under this legislation, we require the administration to periodically certify to us that Hong Kong is, in fact, in compliance with the conditions of the 1992 law. If not, special exceptions would no longer be valid. We also put into this statute sanctions against those who are responsible for abridging the human rights of people in Hong Kong. This is similar to what we did in regard to the Magnitsky statutes.

I am very proud of the work this Chamber did, particularly the work I was able to do with our late colleague Senator McCain on passing the Magnitsky laws. We first applied it to Russia. We then applied it globally. Now we have seen other countries also apply these sanctions where if a person violates basic, internationally recognized human rights, that individual is denied the opportunity to visit America by not allowing any visa or the use of our banking system. We extend those types of sanctions in regard to those who are violating the rights of the people of Hong Kong.

Let me point out that our foreign policy—our strength is American values. It is the values we stand for as a nation—democracy, support for human rights, the basic freedom of people, religious freedom. Those are the values America brings to our engagement globally. It is important that we be on the right side of history in regard to Hong Kong and that the Congress and the American people stand in solidarity with the people of Hong Kong; that we stand with them and the commitment that was given in 1997 that Hong Kong would be different and autonomous from China and the rights of their people would be protected, as they were under British control.

It is important today that the Senate, the Congress, the American people, and our government stand by those commitments and stand with the people of Hong Kong. We saw millions show up this week to show their support for these principles. We must stand with those people.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.