

have been the fact that the Republicans are actively sabotaging our current healthcare system.

Whether you are one of the more moderate Members on healthcare or are one of the ones who have a more broad, more sweeping proposal, it is the difference between the parties. Yet those differences almost pale compared to the differences between every Democrat on that platform and the Republicans, because the Republicans are seeking to undo healthcare, to sabotage healthcare, and to have fewer people covered. As a result of their ideas, thoughts, and lawsuits, costs are going up.

There is a huge gap between the parties on healthcare, and I am glad we are having an active debate on how to move forward to cover more people and have it cost less. While we are doing that, the Trump administration is doing the opposite. It is expanding junk insurance plans, reducing funds to help Americans locate and sign up for the right insurance, and ending cost-sharing payments that help low-income families afford care.

The congressional Republicans have tried and have, thankfully, failed to repeal the Affordable Care Act. The coup de grace, of course, is the fact that now the Trump administration—with the support of many Republican attorneys general and the complicity of just about every Member of the Senate on the Republican side—is supporting a lawsuit that would invalidate the Affordable Care Act entirely, which would kick tens of millions off of their insurance and eliminate the protections for preexisting conditions for the over 100 million Americans who have those preexisting conditions, and just about every Republican is going along with that.

The difference in the 2020 elections between the Democrats and the Republicans on healthcare will be apparent and glaring, and it will far and away subsume any differences we may have on policy.

I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session and resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Mark T. Pittman, of Texas, to be United States District Judge for the Northern District of Texas.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SASSE). The Senator from Colorado.

BLM HEADQUARTERS RELOCATION

Mr. GARDNER. Mr. President, several years back, at a committee hearing of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee, Director Neil Kornze of the Bureau of Land Management under the Obama administration was testifying before our committee on a regulation that was coming out of the BLM that most, if not all, of the county commissioners and various organizations in Colorado were opposed to. In fact, the opposition was so uniform in Colorado and throughout the West that I couldn't understand why the BLM was going forward with that regulation.

Out of frustration, at one point during the committee hearing, I said: Director Kornze, if you were just located in the West, if you were just out west, you would understand why this rule is a bad idea.

The response at the time, several years ago, was kind of a chuckle and a laugh, and, yes, well, we should talk about that.

It planted the seeds of an idea that actually was made into reality just last week with the announcement that the headquarters of the Bureau of Land Management will be moving out west and, indeed, to Grand Junction, CO.

This announcement was made on July 16, and I commend the efforts of Secretary Bernhardt and the Department of the Interior for listening to the people of the West.

This isn't a Republican issue. This isn't a partisan issue. In fact, this idea to move the BLM headquarters out to the land that it regulates and oversees has been embraced by Democrats and Republicans across Colorado and throughout the West.

They also talked about their intention in this announcement to reorganize the Bureau of Land Management and to relocate a significant number of headquarters jobs throughout the West, not just in Grand Junction but in Lakewood, CO, in Montana, in Utah, and beyond.

I think it is important to talk about the reasons why it makes so much sense to have this particular Agency located in Colorado, in the West.

Look at this map here. The red on this map is a combination of both mineral rights and surface lands. You can see the red. Forty-seven percent of all the land out west is where 93 percent of all Federal land is located. The Federal Government owns roughly 47 percent of this land out west. It is where 93 percent of the Federal land is located. Think about that. Ninety-three percent of all Federal land, here in the red, makes up 47 percent of the land ownership in the West.

Nationwide, the Bureau of Land Management is responsible for managing

approximately 700 million acres of Federal mineral estates located underground. That is the entire country, of course, but 245 million acres are surface acres, or Federal surface lands. All but 100,000 acres of those surface acres—all but 100,000 of those acres—are west of the Mississippi River, and located predominantly in the 11 westernmost States and Alaska.

One of the frustrations I hear from local and county officials and environmental activists and farmers and ranchers is that when they deal with their BLM local field office, they seem to have a very good experience that people are working together to solve problems, and they like the conversations they have and the cooperation they are getting from the local and regional offices. But something happens when that decision-making process then moves to Washington, DC. Something happens, and all of a sudden the conversation and communication can stop. It changes. All of a sudden, the outcomes aren't what they thought they would be based on those local, productive conversations.

We have seen directives and management decisions coming more from Washington, DC, lately, instead of from the local field offices, where people know their communities best and understand the land best. So what happens is that the deep pockets and special interests in Washington often carry the day, make the convincing arguments, thousands of miles removed from where the Federal and the public land actually is.

That is why it is important to have this BLM move. It changes that. Instead of having special interests in Washington, in a community that has none of these public lands located in it, you are able to make that decision right here, in Colorado, surrounded by public lands, in a community that is defined by the public lands that they oversee.

I believe government is going to work better when it is local, when local decision makers are closest to the land that the decisions they are making affect the most. That is why this decision is so important—whether it is issues of withdrawal of locatable minerals or the reduction of grazing permits; the concept of multiple use over time; the idea that we can use this land for preservation, conservation, or that we can use it for energy development, or that we can use it for grazing. That has somehow fallen out of favor.

My friend Greg Walcher, who is a former Senate staffer for Senator Armstrong, who used to head the Colorado Department of Natural Resources, wrote an op-ed about this point, pointing out that the multiple-use mandate includes managing 18,000 grazing permits, 220 wilderness areas, 27 national monuments, 600 national conservation areas, 200,000 miles of streams, 2,000 miles of wild and scenic rivers, 6,000 miles of national scenic trails, 63,000 oil and gas wells, 25,000 mines, and 50 million acres of forests.

Not a square inch of that is in Washington, DC. It is in the 12 Western States: Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming. It has never made sense for leadership to work 2,000 miles away from these States, insulated by the inevitably different perspectives of life inside the beltway. That is what is so important about this decision.

When you don't live in the communities that are among and surrounded by these lands, it is easy to make decisions that close off energy development or close cattle ranches and grazing opportunities, because the consequences are felt out west instead of in Washington, DC.

But this strong push by westerners—SCOTT TIPTON, myself, Secretary Zinke, and others—began the conversation about modernization and the organizational structure for the next 100 years of the Bureau of Land Management, and I appreciate Secretary Bernhardt's decision to make this happen.

Grand Junction, where the new BLM will be located, is an incredibly beautiful place, with people who are so supportive of this decision—a community that knows that when these decision makers are in their community, they are not going to have to drive hours or take a flight for 4 hours out of Washington to see BLM lands. Just to look out the window and to see the lands they manage will result in better decision making.

Mesa County, where Grand Junction is located, is the county seat. It is 73 percent Federal land, 46 percent of which is managed by the BLM. In total, the BLM manages 8.3 million acres of surface in Colorado and 27 million acres of Federal mineral estates in Colorado.

But we are not the only State that will benefit, obviously. There are a lot of other positions that will be moving across the country to the State and to the location where those jobs are a best fit. It makes sense.

I know sometimes people think that Washington is the only place where people can do government's work or where people can find the kind of skilled workforce. That is one of the arguments that has actually been made against the BLM move—that only Washington has the skilled workforce able to do these jobs.

Look, I am sorry, if you don't want to live in the counties and communities surrounded by public lands. Then, why are you working for a public land management agency?

So I am excited about this. I thank the good people with the Secretary of the Interior who made this decision happen and the community of Grand Junction, which supported this from day one.

In the same op-ed that Mr. Walcher wrote, he opened with a quote and said this: "There is something more powerful than the brute force of bayonets: It is the idea whose time has come."

That is where we have finally arrived today, an idea whose time has come, locating the decision makers who affect our western communities the most out in the western United States.

I thank the Presiding Officer for the opportunity to talk about this decision. I commend the Secretary of the Interior for doing what is right by our public lands, and I will continue to stand up for public lands throughout this process.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE
REAUTHORIZATION ACT

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, an unusual event occurred yesterday in the Environment and Public Works Committee—a major bill reauthorizing America's transportation infrastructure for 5 years passed the committee by a 21-to-0 vote. That is the way we should be able to operate on a subject that I think enjoys universal support in the Senate; that is, making sure the Federal partnership for infrastructure is not only reauthorized but also increased because we know the infrastructure needs of this country have only gotten more challenging.

I want to start by complimenting the leadership of the Environment and Public Works Committee. Chairman BARRASSO and Ranking Member CARPER worked very closely together on this bill, including the input of all members of the committee as well as Members of the Senate.

The Subcommittee on Transportation and Infrastructure, chaired by Senator CAPITO, and I am the ranking Democrat on the committee, also worked very well in developing this Transportation Infrastructure Reauthorization Act.

As I pointed out originally, the needs are urgent, and the leadership of the committee recognized that. In every one of our States, we know the unmet needs of infrastructure, maintaining our existing infrastructure, and replacing our bridges that are falling down, dealing with our transit systems, dealing with the needs to deal with congestion.

We know there are so many issues out there, and it is important for us to give a clear signal that we intend to have a long-term reauthorization, 5 years, so there is predictability, so our States and local governments know that these projects that require longer term planning will have a Federal partner that is available and reliable.

It also increases the funding, the first year by 10 percent and increases it by certain percentages thereafter, recognizing we need to do more. There are several new initiatives building on existing programs that I think are worthy of mentioning.

Let me just go over a few of the real highlights of this infrastructure bill. First, it has a climate change title. This is the first time we have done this—a separate title to deal with the realities of climate change.

I need only remind my colleagues of what happened this month in Maryland when we had 4 inches of rain that flooded Maryland roads. We have to deal with the realities. We have to deal with resiliency and adaptation in regard to what is happening with climate change. This title deals with that.

Transportation is the leading source of greenhouse gas emissions. We need infrastructure that deals with the realities of reducing carbon emissions. This title provides for financial help for building an infrastructure for electric and alternative fuel vehicles. That is a reality of consumer desire as well as dealing with the realities of climate change.

We give local discretion for funds to initiate emission reduction strategies. That could include simple things like providing alternatives for the use of our cars for people who want to walk and bike rather than having to get into their cars. It is a major commitment for which we are going to provide resources, in partnership with local governments, to deal with the realities of our responsibility in the transportation sector to reduce carbon emissions.

We also deal with the realities of congestion. I can tell the Presiding Officer, as I told my colleagues on the Environment and Public Works Committee, that I face it every day twice a day. I commute from Baltimore here to work and have to deal with the realities of congestion.

It has been estimated that the delays caused by congestion and the excessive fuels that are used by congestion cost our economy over \$300 billion every year. So there is not only a quality-of-life issue involved in our taking on congestion, there is also an economic reason to take on the issues of congestion.

Of course, it is also linked to our commitment to deal with the climate change issues by reducing unnecessary fuel consumption, which adds to carbon emissions.

The legislation provides funding for new initiatives so that we can get solutions to deal with the problems of congestion, the multimobile solutions that are available in many communities. We work and allow the locals to give us ideas and help fund those to reduce congestion.

As I mentioned earlier, we have a real challenge on dealing with our bridges. Many of our bridges are in need of replacement. Many are in need of desperate repair. I can mention many in Maryland. In the southern part of our State, we have the Nice Bridge and the Johnson Bridge, both in need of replacement or repair. This legislation provides additional resources to deal with bridges in our country.

There are certain highways that have been built that no longer really serve the function—or may never serve the function—of moving people from one area to another but instead are dividing communities. So the legislation