

Within weeks of taking office, Trump's swampy Cabinet rolled out the red carpet for coal baron Bob Murray, who had an action plan for the administration. Here is Murray with Energy Secretary Perry, and look who is accompanying Murray at the meeting, our EPA Administrator, Andrew Wheeler, then Murray's lobbyist. It looks like a friendly meeting, and why wouldn't it be? Look at that, such a nice big hug. Isn't that sweet?

Murray was the major financial backer of the Trump administration, and this was his payback time. Individuals associated with Murray Energy were the largest source of donations to Donald Trump's Presidential campaign, and Murray himself chipped in a cool 300 grand for Trump's inaugural festivities. Murray was also one of the largest donors to election spending groups associated with disgraced EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt, under whose tenure this botched ACE rule began.

So what was the first item on Bob Murray's action plan? To get rid of the Clean Power Plan. Bob Murray wasn't the only one who wanted to scrap the Clean Power Plan. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the National Association of Manufacturers, two of the largest and most powerful trade associations in Washington, also asked the EPA to scrap the Clean Power Plan. That is no surprise. The independent watchdog group InfluenceMap found the chamber and NAM the two worst obstructers of climate action. They will not reveal their donors, but I believe they took lots of money from the fossil fuel industry and became its mouthpiece. They got paid, and this was the play.

The chamber and NAM were also aligned with shadowy fossil fuel industry front groups like the so-called Utility Air Regulatory Group and the American Council for Clean Coal Electricity—more Orwellian names. These groups also asked the EPA to scrap the Clean Power Plan and replace it with this toothless rule.

Is that unsavory enough? It gets worse. Guess who represented UARG, that Utility Air Regulatory Group. It was none other than fossil fuel industry stooge Bill Wehrum, who helped orchestrate a web of front groups, like UARG, which obscured and multiplied the influence of Wehrum's polluter clients—clients responsible for massive carbon pollution.

Naturally, Trump put this guy in as head of EPA's Air Office. Before Wehrum headed for the exits this summer, Murray's man Wheeler praised Wehrum for "tremendous progress" in repealing climate regulations. Pruitt to Wheeler to Wehrum—this is rank fossil fuel crookedness in plain view.

Several of us submitted comments laying out the financial and professional connections between the Trump officials who developed this bogus rule and the fossil fuel industry that asked for it. Those comments are posted on

line and in the Federal Register. I urge you to have a look. Also available online is a report I did with Senator CARPER detailing Wehrum's industry ties and conflicts of interest. Median.com/@senwhitehouse will link you to all of this.

The crony capture of EPA is not the only problem with the rule. The industry is so greedy and its hacks are so clumsy that they don't bother to align the rule with the scientific and economic evidence.

In court, Agency actions will be found to be arbitrary and capricious—and therefore invalid—if they are not the product of reasoned decision making.

In this case, it is clear that the EPA ignored the science, ignored the economics, and produced exactly what the fossil fuel industry told it to do: a do-nothing rule that took good care of the coal and natural gas industries.

What does the science tell us? According to the world's best scientific report, if we reduce carbon pollution by roughly half by around 2030 and reach net zero emissions sometime around the middle of the century, we stand a chance to hold the global average temperature increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius.

Our own best scientists warn that if we don't limit carbon pollution, we will be hit with economic losses in the hundreds of billions of dollars per year by the end of the century. Legions of economists, investment banks, asset managers, central banks, credit rating agencies, and other experts warn of serious economic risks from climate upheaval. Here is a summary of just some of these warnings, which I have delivered to every colleague in the Senate. That, too, can be found on that Medium page.

Pruitt, Wehrum, and Wheeler ignored all of this for their do-nothing rule. The only voice that mattered was the polluter industry that they came from and will go back to in an oil-greased revolving door. This ACE rule is the exact opposite of reasoned decision making. But that was never the point. The fix was in. Even a bogus rule that courts throw out buys this crooked and corrupting industry time—time to keep polluting, time to burn through reserves, and time to use its political muscle to fend off action here in the Senate. If you are in the fiddling business and fiddle for money, fiddling while Rome burns is a fine economic proposition for you.

The Supreme Court has ruled that greenhouse gases are pollutants under the Clean Air Act. The EPA has found that greenhouse gases from powerplants endanger human health and welfare. Those determinations mean the EPA must limit carbon pollution, consistent with the law. This masquerade of a rule fails to do this, so it must be replaced with something effective, as a matter of law.

I ask colleagues to think carefully about their vote on this resolution. Do you want to endorse this record of ob-

vious industry capture? Do you want to side with this corrupting industry over your own constituents' health and safety? Do you want to go on record ignoring all the warnings from the Bank of England, from Freddie Mac, from Nobel Prize-winning economists, and from hundreds of our own government's most knowledgeable experts?

The fossil fuel industry—its voice full of money, as F. Scott Fitzgerald might say—has drowned out the voices of everyone else for too long here. But you can't shout down the laws of physics. You can't shout down the laws of biology, chemistry, and economics. Those laws will have their way, and we have been well warned. So, please, let's turn the corner to a brighter day where decency rules, not industry political thuggery; a brighter day where facts and science matter more than dark money and paid-for denial; and a brighter day where we don't give our grandchildren daily cause for shame. It is time to wake up, and this vote is a chance to do so.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arkansas.

HONG KONG

MR. COTTON. Madam President, as we speak, the brave people of Hong Kong are demonstrating to protect their freedoms from the Chinese Communist Party in Beijing. Chinese state TV has portrayed these millions of demonstrators as violent anarchists and separatists, but these Hongkongers are merely insisting that China live up to the promises it made to Hong Kong and the United Kingdom—promises China made as binding conditions of the transfer of sovereignty from London to Beijing.

The Chinese Government promised that Hong Kong would enjoy a high degree of autonomy, including many of the freedoms that Beijing denies to its more than 1 billion subjects on the mainland, but, as the world has learned through bitter experience, the Chinese Communist Party's promises aren't worth the paper they are written on. Slowly but surely, Beijing has chipped away at the independence it promised Hong Kong—disappearing citizens guilty of wrongthink, undermining Hong Kong's longstanding political and judicial systems, and issuing menacing threats of military intervention to crush the demonstrations.

Most Americans are rightly outraged by China's brutal crackdown in Hong Kong. Daryl Morey is one of them. He is the general manager of the Houston Rockets. Just a few days ago, he tweeted a simple and justified phrase: "Fight for freedom. Stand with Hong Kong."

Morey probably knew his words would offend the Chinese Communist Party, but he was also violating a different party line—that of his own league, the NBA. For daring to speak up about Hong Kong, Morey was disavowed by his team, his fellow executives, and some of the most famous

athletes in the NBA. That is because he was threatening not only the powers that be in China but the cash cow that China represents for American business, including professional basketball. China's government may be red, but its money is green, and plenty of people are willing to cash its checks, no matter the cost.

The league's biggest star, LeBron James, said that Morey's support for Hong Kong was "misinformed" and "not educated." He reportedly called for Morey to be punished. Perhaps it is no coincidence that LeBron James stands to make billions of dollars from the Chinese market—not only from a higher NBA salary cap, shoe sales, and Nike ads, but also from his own movie company. Often known as King James, perhaps "Chairman LeBron" would be a better honorific today.

Joe Tsai, owner of the Brooklyn Nets, called the protest in Hong Kong a separatist movement that was trying to carve up Chinese territories like colonial powers or Imperial Japan. Perhaps it is no coincidence that Mr. Tsai is an executive at Alibaba, a Chinese company that developed a Communist propaganda app that hijacked cell phones of anyone who downloaded it.

At a Wizards game last week, security confiscated a protest sign that said simply "Google Uighurs," referring to the native people of western China whose culture and religion are being exterminated by the Chinese Communist Party. That sign was not confiscated in China by the secret police but right here in America's national capital.

Steve Kerr, the head coach of the Golden State Warriors, drew a moral equivalence between Communist China and the United States. "None of us are perfect," he said, "and we all have different issues we need to get to."

Nobody is perfect. That is what he says of an authoritarian regime that starved, shot, or beat to death 50 million of its own people on a forced march to modernity and a regime that runs a network of concentration camps in its western provinces and harvests the organs of political prisoners for its own pampered elite. Nobody is perfect, indeed.

This is craven and greedy behavior, and it stands in stark contrast to how America has historically used sports to promote our interests and our aspirations, from the triumph of Black Olympians in Hitler's Germany to the Miracle on Ice against the Soviet Union. Even our diplomatic opening to China happened in part through sports with ping-pong diplomacy.

Today, the tables have turned. China has used sports to export its authoritarian model to our soil. So far, it has found too many willing enforcers in the NBA. But it doesn't have to be this way. Commissioner Adam Silver, after a slow start, defended Daryl Morey's right to speak his mind about Hong Kong. He said: Free expression is "what you guys stand for."

Too many American companies kowtow to China not because they love its government but because of the tremendous pressure that government can exert on their operations. But the NBA is in a unique position. Beijing can ban an airline, or it can ban a hotel that lists Taiwan as a country in its online drop-down menu, and the Chinese people can use a different airline, or they can use a different hotel, but there is only one NBA. Beijing can't create another one.

And here is the rub: There are more than 500 million basketball fans in China. More people in China follow the NBA than there are people in the United States. No doubt Beijing has some leverage over the NBA, as it does over all businesses, but the NBA has a lot of leverage over Beijing. Is Beijing really going to ban the entire league, as they have done with the Houston Rockets, at the risk of alienating more than 500 million people who follow the league and the resultant public backlash that could create? So instead of acting as a bullhorn for Communist propaganda in America, the NBA could be a beacon of freedom in China. They could dare China to shut them out.

Let me urge all of these NBA executives and players who say they care about social justice, don't just speak out when the stakes are low for you personally or when the cause is popular among your friends; speak out now when the stakes are deadly high for millions of Hongkongers and more than a billion Chinese, including so many of your fans.

LeBron James tweeted not long ago: "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." Live out that principle consistently. There are a million Uighurs in concentration camps yearning to hear a champion who speaks out on their behalf, particularly since the NBA runs an elite training academy in proximity to those camps.

Steve Kerr never held back on expressing his opinion about our President. That is fine. That is his right as an American. But how about some outrage for the authoritarian regime in Beijing?

Joe Tsai was born in Taiwan. His fellow Taiwanese live in constant fear of meddling, attack, and subjugation by the Chinese Communist party. Are they separatists for wanting to maintain their way of life? Speak out proudly on behalf of your homeland about the true nature of the government in Beijing.

I realize it is a hard thing to ask any person. No doubt this is a harder path than the path many in the NBA are traveling at present. It would require sacrifice, and it would certainly invite the wrath of the Chinese Communist Party. But if the league used its unique leverage for freedom, millions of ordinary Chinese would surely notice, despite an army of Chinese Communist censors arrayed against them.

The NBA didn't pick this fight. It probably prefers to avoid this fight.

The Chinese Communist Party wants this fight. So the choice isn't to fight or not; it is to win or lose. And perhaps alone among American businesses, the NBA has a shot to win against Beijing. And in any fight against Communists, there can only be one strategy and one policy: victory.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Delaware.

Mr. CARPER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for 5 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

S.J. RES. 53

Mr. CARPER. Madam President, I rise in support of the Congressional Review Act resolution of disapproval of the Trump administration's so-called affordable clean energy rule, which really should be called President Trump's dirty power plan or unclean energy rule.

To be clear, I believe that the Environmental Protection Agency has an urgent moral responsibility and economic imperative to reduce the global warming pollution from powerplants, which are by far the largest stationary source of carbon pollution on our planet. I also believe that those of us in Congress must act now to protect the American people from the dangers posed by poor environmental quality and the worsening impact of climate change. That is why we are holding this vote tomorrow—to send a clear message to this administration and to take a strong stand for the American people.

Truth be told, I am not typically a staunch supporter of the Congressional Review Act. It is a blunt procedural tool, and I prefer to embrace a better way to express our disapproval of the administration's failure to address one of our Nation's major sources of carbon pollution.

For Senate Democrats, this vote is about holding supporters of this shortsighted, irresponsible policy accountable for surrendering America's global leadership and for jeopardizing the health of our planet and the promise of our children's future.

Nearly 4 years ago, the Clean Power Plan set the first Federal targets to reduce carbon emissions from our Nation's powerplants. The Clean Power Plan set meaningful but achievable carbon limits for fossil fuel powerplants and gave flexibility and time for States to meet those standards. It was not a one-size-fits-all deal. It provided quite a bit of time and flexibility for States to try to figure out how they would go about meeting those standards in their own way. This administration's alternative to the Clean Power Plan—President Trump's unclean power plan—allows States to decide whether to regulate harmful emissions. At the same time, this rule will, at best, have essentially no impact on powerplant carbon emissions—no impact.