

The result was announced—yeas 55, nays 41, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 69 Leg.]

YEAS—55

Baldwin	Harris	Portman
Bennet	Hassan	Reed
Blumenthal	Hawley	Rosen
Booker	Heinrich	Schatz
Brown	Hirono	Schumer
Cantwell	Jones	Shaheen
Capito	Kaine	Sinema
Cardin	King	Smith
Carper	Klobuchar	Stabenow
Casey	Leahy	Sullivan
Collins	Manchin	Tester
Coons	Markey	Udall
Cortez Masto	McSally	Van Hollen
Duckworth	Menendez	Warner
Durbin	Merkley	Whitehouse
Ernst	Murkowski	Wyden
Feinstein	Murphy	Murray
Gardner	Peters	Young
Gillibrand		

NAYS—41

Alexander	Fischer	Risch
Barraso	Graham	Roberts
Blackburn	Grassley	Romney
Blunt	Hoehn	Rounds
Boozman	Inhofe	Rubio
Braun	Johnson	Sasse
Burr	Kennedy	Scott (FL)
Cassidy	Lankford	Scott (SC)
Cornyn	Lee	Shelby
Cotton	Loeffler	Thune
Cramer	McConnell	Tillis
Crapo	Moran	Toomey
Daines	Paul	Wicker
Enzi	Perdue	

NOT VOTING—4

Cruz	Sanders
Hyde-Smith	Warren

The motion was agreed to.

PROVIDING FOR CONGRESSIONAL DISAPPROVAL UNDER CHAPTER 8 OF TITLE 5, UNITED STATES CODE, OF THE RULE SUBMITTED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION RELATING TO BORROWER DEFENSE INSTITUTIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the joint resolution by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

Calendar No. 439, S.J. Res. 56, a joint resolution providing for congressional disapproval under chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, of the rule submitted by the Department of Education relating to "Borrower Defense Institutional Accountability".

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Mississippi.

BROADBAND DEPLOYMENT ACCURACY AND TECHNOLOGICAL AVAILABILITY ACT

Mr. WICKER. Madam President, I rise in support of S. 1822, the Broadband DATA Act, and in a moment I will make a unanimous consent request with regard to that legislation.

This bill will ensure that the FCC has the most accurate broadband coverage maps in the world today to deploy 5G networks. As you know, we were in a race to win that race globally, and I think we can still do it.

In December, the Senate unanimously passed this measure, S. 1822, but because the House passed a slightly

amended version last week, we need to act again to get this bill across the finish line.

We have a digital divide in this country which threatens to leave rural America behind. We have done a lot to address that divide. However, an estimated 20 million Americans still lack access to broadband—Americans like those in Arizona or Mississippi or other States across our heartland. Every year, the FCC spends billions of dollars to promote deployment of broadband across the United States. S. 1822 will result in highly detailed and accurate maps so that the FCC can direct support to areas most in need.

This legislation represents extensive negotiation and work on a bipartisan and bicameral basis, for which I congratulate this Senate. My hat is off to our colleagues in the other body and thanks to all the staff who have helped on both sides of the aisle.

Madam President, I ask the Chair lay before the Senate the message to accompany S. 1822.

The PRESIDING OFFICER laid before the Senate the following message from the House of Representatives:

*Resolved*, That the bill from the Senate (S. 1822) entitled "An act to require the Federal Communications Commission to issue rules relating to the collection of data with respect to the availability of broadband services and for other purposes," do pass with an amendment.

MOTION TO CONCUR

Mr. WICKER. Madam President, I move to concur in the House amendment, and I ask unanimous consent that the motion be agreed to and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

PROVIDING FOR CONGRESSIONAL DISAPPROVAL UNDER CHAPTER 8 OF TITLE 5, UNITED STATES CODE, OF THE RULE SUBMITTED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION RELATING TO BORROWER DEFENSE INSTITUTIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. BROWN. Madam President, I want to thank my colleague, Senator DURBIN, for leading efforts this week to undo Betsy DeVos's harmful rollback protections for millions of Americans with student loans ripped off by for-profit colleges. This is an example where the Senate stood up to the President, stood up to the billionaire Secretary of Education whose mission in that job is to privatize public education and turn profits for her and her friends and her allies. This bipartisan Senate stood up to her and stood up to the President, stood up to the majority leader, and did the right thing.

We have seen these for-profit colleges in Ohio. Schools like Corinthian and

ITT, which make big promises with fake—and this time the word "fake" is accurate—they make big promises with fake or deceptive job placement rates. They spend millions on marketing, and they trick students into taking out huge loans, only to close up shop and leave them with meaningless degrees or, worse yet, just credits but always mountains of debt.

These are people trying to get an education to improve their job prospects to build a better life for themselves and their families. Too often these predatory schools target Black students, Latino students, immigrants, low-income students, and first-generation college students. Many of them are veterans returning from serving our country and looking to start a new career.

These for-profit colleges are willing to exploit people who have taken out loans to go there who are veterans. Sometimes they go to school. They served their country and then they go to school, and these for-profit colleges are willing to take advantage of them. These for-profit schools are all about lining the pockets of their CEOs.

We need to stand with the defrauded student borrowers and hold these for-profit schools accountable. Of course, we have learned not to hold our breath when it comes to the Trump administration holding anyone accountable—at least anyone rich accountable. Instead of figuring out how to provide relief for students, Secretary Betsy DeVos went to work figuring out how to let the schools that scammed them off the hook.

Three hundred thousand people had submitted borrower defense claims as of last December. More than 200,000 of those requests are still pending. More than 7,700 Ohioans—7,700 people in my State—are waiting for relief.

In 2016, the Obama administration announced a rule to help these students get their loans canceled, but the DeVos Department of Education—the Trump Department of Education—dragged its feet on processing borrower defense claims. They rewrote the rule to make it damn near impossible for defrauded students to get the relief they were promised. They are throwing up hurdle after hurdle: narrow time limits, making students gather all kinds of unnecessary paperwork, and banning students from appealing a decision.

DeVos's rule opens up the doors for schools to once again use mandatory arbitration. I am not a lawyer, but I know from seeing this done to far too many of my constituents. Its legal fine print that for-profit schools sneak into their enrollment agreements deny students their day in court. Students don't know they are part of these agreements. They are, and they lose their day in court.

I hear from Ohioans all the time who have been scammed by these schools.

Tasha Berkhalter came to Washington last month to bring attention to

this important issue. She is an Army veteran. She served our country with honor. She is a mother of four. She returned home. She wanted to do forensics with the FBI, so she enrolled in ITT's criminal justice program. She didn't think of it as a for-profit school. She didn't know she was about to get scammed.

She had served our country. She wanted to serve our country. She went to this for-profit school. ITT told her that her GI benefits would cover the full tuition and that they would help her get a job after graduation. But when she began to suspect the program wasn't the high-quality education that it claimed and tried to transfer, she found out that no other schools—no other legitimate schools—would accept her ITT credits. The supposedly high-tech school was using outdated books.

Faced with a choice of continuing at ITT or starting completely over, she finished her degree. She ended up \$100,000 in debt. Remember, ITT told her the GI bill would cover everything—well, except for \$100,000. She ended up \$100,000 in debt with a degree that, unfortunately, employers didn't take seriously.

Those are the people whom Secretary DeVos and those are the people whom President Trump, with his own Trump University, want to take over our higher education system.

Now she has lost her shot at using the GI benefit she earned, and she is drowning in debt.

Ms. Berkhalter and other student veterans defrauded by shady schools deserve better than the treatment they are getting under Betsy DeVos. Not only is Betsy DeVos refusing to help, her new borrower defense rule will let other for-profit colleges continue to run the same scams on other students and student veterans.

The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau is supposed to crack down on these schools and on loan-servicing companies that handle people's student loans. That is why we created the CFPB—to look out for people like Ms. Berkhalter. But under President Trump, under Betsy DeVos, they refuse to let the CFPB look into loan services that are scamming students.

I asked the CFPB Director today about this. We have been asking her for a year to take this over and make it work. She continues to yield to her billionaire friend in the Cabinet, Secretary DeVos, who is a billionaire friend of the billionaire President and has no interest in making him accountable. President Trump's CFPB Director is rolling over, refusing to do her job protecting the tens of millions of Americans with student loans.

It comes back always to whose side you are on. Are you going to stand with student veterans, or are you going to stand with these for-profit CEOs, these CEOs of for-profit schools who are making literally millions of dollars a year? Are you going to fight for defrauded Americans saddled with stu-

dent loans or the shady schools ripping them off? It is pretty clear with whom President Trump and Betsy DeVos are standing. Over and over and over, President Trump and his administration betray the people he promised to fight for.

I am glad my colleagues stood up today. It was a bipartisan victory. It said to President Trump and Betsy DeVos and Majority Leader McConnell that that kind of fraud, that kind of exploitation of our veterans and our students who are defrauded by these for-profit colleges is something we will no longer accept.

#### REMEMBERING NATHANIEL JONES

Mr. BROWN. Madam President, I rise to honor a leader in the fight for justice, a great Ohioan whom we lost last month, Judge Nathaniel Jones.

At a ceremony dedicating the Federal courthouse in honor of Judge Jones in 2003, former Congressman Louis Stokes said that the courthouse served as a testament to the outstanding public service by "a local who made good." Judge Jones certainly was that.

Born in Youngstown in 1926, he served a country that did not yet recognize his full legal equality. He served his country in World War II. He went on to become a respected lawyer. He went on first to be a journalist who worked for the Youngstown and Pittsburgh News. He worked for the Youngstown newspaper. He covered Jackie Robinson when Jackie Robinson played in AAA and became a friend of his. He went on to become a respected lawyer, a Federal judge, and an international civil and human rights advocate. He was a local who made good, but more importantly, he was a man who did good. He committed his life to the pursuit of justice and equality. We are all the better for it.

He led efforts to end employment discrimination as the Executive Director of the Fair Employment Practices Commission. He was the first African-American U.S. attorney for the Northern District of Ohio. He served as Assistant General Counsel for President Johnson's Kerner Commission. That Commission issued a landmark report warning that racism and poverty were the root causes of violence in our Nation's cities during the 1960s.

As general counsel for the NAACP, Judge Jones directed efforts to fight discrimination faced by African-American soldiers and worked to desegregate public schools in the North, stepping in personally to argue several cases.

Nominated by President Carter, he was confirmed in 1979 to the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals—one of only 39 African Americans to ever serve on the Federal Circuit. As a judge, he felt it was his duty to be an instrument of change in a system that too often denied justice to people of color. In many of the cases that came before the court, he so often sided with those taking on powerful interests and fighting for

their rights—something we see far too little of in this body and in this government.

As South Africa began to move beyond the dark days of apartheid and chart a new future of inclusion and equality, Judge Jones was called to help draft the country's new Constitution.

In Cincinnati, which he called home for some 45 years, the footprints of his good work can be seen across the city. Some of my favorite times were sitting in Judge Jones's office and listening to him tell about his days as a reporter knowing Jackie Robinson, talking about his days at the NAACP, and talking about his belief in justice and his passion for fair play.

He was one of the early supporters of the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center. He mentored numerous young lawyers who served as his law clerks. He offered his assistance to local leaders seeking to address the lingering stigma of racism still far too present in our society. Judge Jones was a brilliant legal thinker. He was a dogged advocate for civil rights.

Judge Jones was a wonderful husband and father. I am privileged to know well Stephanie, his daughter, who worked in the House of Representatives some years ago. He was a good friend, and he was a mentor to so many. He was also a relentless optimist who never—never—ceased to believe in the promise of our great country.

The legacy of Judge Nathaniel Jones will live on through his far-reaching work for justice and through the many, many lives he touched.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. PORTMAN. Madam President, my colleague from Ohio just spoke about Nathaniel R. Jones, who was a circuit judge with the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals in Cincinnati and had a distinguished career as a judge but a long, distinguished career as a true champion of civil rights going back to the 1960s and was also general counsel of the NAACP when landmark cases were decided. I also happened to have had the privilege of getting to know him over the years and considered him a dear friend.

We have a resolution that passed the Senate last month with regard to Judge Jones, and I am pleased to join my colleague SHERROD BROWN today in paying tribute again to Nathaniel R. Jones. That resolution is now in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD and therefore the agent for all of us to be able to understand the importance of the work he did and for future generations to understand the importance of the march to freedom that he represented.

## GREAT AMERICAN OUTDOORS ACT

Madam President, I am also here on the floor today to highlight the introduction of landmark new legislation called the Great American Outdoors Act. It is to ensure that some of our country's greatest resources and our greatest treasures, including our national parks, are taken care of for generations to come.

I am proud to help lead the introduction of this bill along with my colleagues Senator GARDNER, Senator MANCHIN, Senator DAINES, Senator WARNER, Senator ALEXANDER, and Senator KING. I also want to thank President Trump and his administration, first for President Trump's support of the Restore Our Parks Act, which is part of this legislation, over the past few years but also for their support of this broader legislation, the Great American Outdoors Act.

In the spirit of President Teddy Roosevelt over 100 years ago, Federal land management agencies like the National Park Service, the U.S. Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, and others have worked to designate and preserve some of the most beautiful and historic parks of our country. Those lands, of course, include those we all know of as our national parks—Yosemite, Yellowstone, some of the great ones, Glacier—but also more modest sites like the boyhood home of President Taft in my home State of Ohio.

In all, the National Park Service and its system include more than 84 million acres of parks and historical sites that now attract 330 million visitors annually. Actually, that is a record. More people are going to the parks than ever. That is great. The concern is, when they get to the parks, sometimes the parks aren't working for them because of the huge infrastructure needs and the deferred maintenance problems.

We have eight of these national parks in Ohio, including Cuyahoga Valley National Park, which is our largest single park and actually is the 13th most visited national park in the country. It is a great park. Whether it is for biking, hiking, fishing, or kayaking, I am one of those 2.7 million visitors to Cuyahoga Valley National Park and Ohio's national parks every year. I want to be sure these public lands are preserved so more Americans can visit these incredible sites into the future.

Going back to my days as the Director of the Office of Management and Budget in the George W. Bush administration—going back about a dozen years—I have taken the lead on figuring out ways to help protect our national park sites throughout the country. At that time, we proposed—in the Bush administration—a centennial bill. We were coming up on the 100th anniversary of our national parks, and the notion was to get more public-private partnerships involved in the parks. President Bush and his Secretary of the Interior at the time were very sup-

portive of this effort, as was the Office of Management and Budget.

After my time in the Bush administration, I was a member of the Centennial Commission on the National Parks, and here in the Senate, I am the author of what is called the National Park Service Centennial Act, which was signed into law in 2016, on the 100th anniversary, to establish the Centennial Challenge Fund for the national parks.

By the way, that Centennial Challenge Fund has done pretty well—\$113 million has been appropriated, but it has been leveraged by an additional \$147 million from the private sector. So it has worked exactly as we intended it to—in fact, even better; it has been even more than a one-to-one match—the notion being, you put a challenge fund out there and say, if you care about the parks, the Federal taxpayer will put in some money, and you hope the private sector will also match it, and it has been more than matched.

We also established the centennial endowment at what is called the National Parks Foundation. This endowment is intended to fund projects to address things like deferred maintenance at our parks. Separately, that centennial endowment has now \$31.5 million in it.

We know there is more work to do, though, to protect our national lands to ensure they are going to be there to enjoy for the future. The Great American Outdoors Act will help us in moving forward with this mission through two main initiatives.

First, it will permanently fund what is known as the Land and Water Conservation Fund through a provision offered by Senators GARDNER and MANCHIN—a \$900 million initiative. The Land and Water Conservation Fund provides resources to State and local governments, as well as the Federal Government, to acquire land and water so that they can be protected. Often this is your city park back home, so sometimes it is neighborhood land. Sometimes it is land that connects to a national park or a national forest. Sometimes there is a checkerboard pattern of private ownership and public ownership, and it helps to connect those together to preserve some of our existing public lands.

In any case, the Land and Water Conservation Fund has been successful over the years. Since its creation in 1965, over \$330 million in LCF funding has gone to protecting land in Ohio, as an example, and ensuring recreational access to those lands.

The second part of this legislation is that, along with the LWCF, the Great American Outdoors Act includes our bipartisan Parks Act. It is called the Restore Our Parks Act. I authored this along with Senator WARNER, Senator KING, and Senator ALEXANDER.

As I said, the parks and public lands are some of our greatest treasures in this country. The problem is that, over time, we have allowed this mainte-

nance backlog to build up, meaning that a lot of the buildings and infrastructure, the roads, the bridges, and the water systems are deteriorating to the point that a lot of them are completely unusable.

Again, it is great that a lot of folks are going to the parks now, but when they get there, sometimes the trail is closed, the bathroom is not working, and the visitor center has a leak in the roof and can't be used. So it is time for us to put some funding into these deferred maintenance expenses. Some would call them, perhaps, capital expenses.

Why has this happened? Well, because although every year we appropriate funding for the parks, the funding is for the operations of the park—for the nature programs, for the rangers, for just the day-to-day activities—not for these infrastructure or capital expenses or what we call deferred maintenance.

I have seen this firsthand in Ohio, where there is more than a \$100 million backlog in long-delayed maintenance projects at our eight national park sites. Last fall I was at the Cuyahoga Valley National Park. I go there frequently. It is a great park, but it badly needs more than \$15 million in repairs—renovations for shelters, for parking lots, for a bridge that is dangerous to cross, for railroad tracks. There is a scenic railroad that runs through the Cuyahoga Valley National Park, but the railroad track is in such bad repair that it is dangerous—or will be soon—to go on that scenic railway. Trails have been falling apart because of erosion, and they don't have enough money to do it.

Let me give an example. The Cuyahoga Valley National Park has about an \$11 million budget every year. So the taxpayers of America come to us here in Congress and say: Let's fund our parks. We fund the parks for daily operations, and \$11 million goes to Cuyahoga Valley National Park—again, the 13th most visited national park. It is a great park. There are a lot of visitors. It is sort of a suburban and in some places almost an urban park as well as a rural park. It is exactly what we need more of. A lot of kids access it—a lot of schoolkids. Well, the deferred maintenance is over \$50 million, so at \$11 million a year, how do you pay for that deferred maintenance? That has been the challenge.

Elsewhere in the State, I have toured Perry's Victory and International Peace Memorial, which is on the shores of Lake Erie. This is at Put-in-Bay, so if you know Put-in-Bay—a famous spot for recreation, but the historic part of it is Perry's Victory Monument. It was established under those who fought in the Battle of Lake Erie in the War of 1812, as well as to celebrate the long-lasting peace between Britain, Canada, and the United States. So it is an important historical marker.

There I saw some of the \$48 million in long-delayed maintenance needs at the

site, which includes millions in needed repairs to fix a concrete seawall that is literally crumbling. The high-water level of Lake Erie has been part of the problem. Part of the problem is that it is just old, and it is crumbling. There are sinkholes around it. You are not allowed to go near the seawall or therefore near the lake. The visitor center needs significant updates and needs to be made ADA accessible. The Americans with Disabilities Act requires that they make it accessible, and they don't have the funds to do that.

In that case, there is a \$48 million price tag to do the maintenance repairs, and their annual budget is minuscule because it is a small park. It is a monument with a small visitor center. Yet they have this huge expense.

I have also been to the Hopewell Culture National Historical Park in Chillicothe to see millennia-old burial mounds from the original Native Americans who were there and earthworks from the area's pre-Columbian inhabitants. Again, I also saw there about \$3.5 million in unmet maintenance needs, including needed repairs to the exterior of the visitor center and its trail system.

Parks have a lot of issues that over time have built up, and that is a huge problem for us. In a way, it is kind of like being a homeowner: If you allow the deferred maintenance to build up, if you don't take care of the roof, what happens? Your drywall gets wet, and you have mold in the drywall, and then the floor starts to buckle. But for being able to fix that roof, you have all kinds of other problems. That is what has been happening in our parks. The costs just keep mounting. The total backlog at the national parks is now believed to be over \$12 billion.

By the way, we require the parks to keep these lists: What are your most urgent needs, and what are the broad needs you have in terms of deferred maintenance? So we have good data on this one, and we know it is over \$12 billion.

It is a compounding problem. If you don't fix it, it gets worse and worse and worse, which only increases the cost to taxpayers. The longer we wait to address these maintenance needs—not fixing the hole in the roof creates a lot of other costs for taxpayers.

I like this legislation because essentially it is saying: These are debts unpaid. This is work that should have been done previously. So let's find a funding source that is appropriate to that. I think the funding source we found is the right one, which is the on- and offshore oil and gas revenues. Instead of going into the U.S. Government, some of these are going to be diverted to our national parks to pay for expenses that have been there for years that we should have paid for earlier but just don't have the method and the ability to pay for those kinds of capital expenses or those kinds of deferred maintenance projects in the annual budget.

So that is why we need to address this problem, and it is a problem that is growing. We don't want it to get worse. Again, it comes at a time when visitation is pretty good. From 2006 to 2017, annual visitation increased by more than 58 million people. Again, over 330 million people visited the parks last year. That has also put, I believe, more pressure on the parks and on this deferred maintenance we talked about.

The challenges of keeping up with it have stretched our land management agencies thin—not just the parks but the Forest Service, our fish and wildlife refuges, our other Department of Interior land. We have more issues now because so many of these lands have been using bandaids to kind of get through it, and that doesn't deal with the underlying issues, so the costs are mounting.

We initially introduced this common-sense solution to just deal with the parks, which, again, have reached over \$12 billion. Since then, I am pleased to say we have worked with our colleagues on the other side of the Capitol, who included these other lands, and also with the administration to include funding for other land management agencies that also have deferred maintenance issues—again, the Forest Service, the BLM over at the Department of Interior, the fish and wildlife refuges, and some of the Bureau of Indian Affairs lands.

To address this, the legislation before us creates what is called the Legacy Restoration Fund, which will provide \$1.9 billion per year for 5 years—it is a 5-year program—from unobligated on- and offshore energy revenue. So these are royalties from that energy, which is actually increasing as we do more exploration. So it is a total over 5 years—\$1.9 billion a year—of \$9.5 billion to be divided across the National Park Service, which gets the bulk of it, but also the Forest Service, wildlife refuge, Bureau of Land Management, and Bureau of Indian Affairs.

It addresses only the priority needs because that is not enough to take care of all the needs. But the way the parks have analyzed this, they have priority needs of about \$6.5 billion, as an example, out of the \$12 billion, and all of those needs can be met with this funding. It is not all that is needed. We know we will have to go back at this again. But it is a very important bill—to do this for these 5 years to ensure that we can indeed have these treasures continue to be places where visitors can come from around the world, from around the country, from the Cleveland city schools right next to the Cuyahoga Valley National Park, and enjoy the majesty of our public lands.

I want to thank my colleagues again—Senators GARDNER, MANCHIN, and DAINES—for their support in helping to put this final package together. I want to thank our Restore Our Parks Act colleagues who have been at this a long time—4 or 5 years—Senator WAR-

NER, myself, and also Senator ALEXANDER and Senator KING.

Finally, I would like to once again thank President Trump for his strong support of the Restore Our Parks Act over the past few years and now of this new product that has come together. He understands the need to protect the natural beauty of our public lands. I spoke to him about it today.

To me, the Great American Outdoors Act is the next step in carrying out Teddy Roosevelt's legacy, Teddy Roosevelt's mission of protecting the environment for future generations.

I look forward to the ability to debate this on the floor of the U.S. Senate week after next and to then pass it with a strong bipartisan vote and send it to the President for his signature to ensure that this landmark legislation, this historic legislation, can be enacted into law.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Delaware.

#### NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT

Mr. CARPER. Madam President, I rise this evening to discuss the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, which is oftentimes referred to as the “Magna Carta” of environmental laws. When I think about our Nation's most illustrious documents, I am reminded of the true expression of America and its aspirations. I am reminded of our Declaration of Independence and its embrace of “Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”

I am also reminded of our Constitution. Delaware is known as the First State because we were the first State to ratify the Constitution, December 7, 1787—one week before anybody else. Our Constitution is the most replicated and enduring Constitution in the history of the world. It is not entirely unlike our more recent expressions of America's values and guiding principles, like the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, or NEPA. NEPA has served as one of our bedrock environmental laws for a half century now.

According to its six pages of statute, NEPA's purpose includes “efforts which will prevent or eliminate damage to the environment and biosphere and stimulate the health and welfare of man.”

NEPA enshrines democracy by giving the American people a voice to help decide the fate of Federal decisions. For 50 years, NEPA has sought to ensure environmental protection, public health, and the notion that the American people have a say in Federal decision making.

Like our Constitution, NEPA is one of our Nation's most replicated laws. The same principles of democracy and citizen participation that are enshrined in our Constitution are also enshrined in NEPA. We have made changes to our Constitution over the years, but those changes were made rarely and with great forethought.

However, just 60 days ago, the Trump administration proposed a rule that

would fundamentally change the NEPA regulation for the first time in its 50-year history.

Earlier this month, I testified at the Council on Environmental Quality's public hearing in Washington, DC. There, I stated that unlike the Ten Commandments, the NEPA regulations are not written in stone. I understand that.

In 1978, there was broad consensus to finalize the NEPA regulations. If we had that same kind of broad consensus today to update certain NEPA provisions, this would be another story. After all, I have said oftentimes that if something isn't perfect, let's make it better. But there is a reason that NEPA is one of the most imitated environmental laws on this planet—it has had a lot of success.

Any changes to the implementing regulations of this bedrock law—let alone such substantial changes proposed by the Council on Environment Quality to NEPA regulations—require careful thought, meticulous deliberations, and bipartisanship. Consequential changes should be made rarely and with great forethought.

Speaking of bipartisanship, one of our nominees before the Environment and Public Works last year, nominated for a senior position in the Department of Interior, said, in these words: Bipartisan solutions are lasting solutions. That is what he said. He is a Republican, from Wyoming. He said: Bipartisan solutions are lasting solutions.

NEPA was signed into law 50 years ago by a Republican President, Richard Nixon. NEPA was passed in this body by a bipartisan majority. NEPA was passed in the House by a bipartisan majority. The reason why it is still alive and well and functioning, protecting our environment, is because it is a bipartisan solution, and it has helped make it a lasting solution.

Any changes—any changes to the implementing regulations of this bedrock law, let alone the kind of changes sought by CEQ, require a lot more careful thought, deliberation, and bipartisanship.

CEQ simply has not aimed to address the needs of all the stakeholders. Witness the universal opposition of the environmental community, NEPA's most consistent constituency. Council on Environmental Quality has touted this proposal—their proposal now—as a way to “modernize” NEPA. However, the proposal is instead an anachronism, taking us back to a time when construction bulldozed and disconnected communities, before NEPA was enacted in 1970.

This proposal casts aside any consideration of frontline communities, as well as the severe environmental consequences that come with eliminating the requirement to consider cumulative environmental impacts and indirect effects.

Taking away that requirement is akin to creating a new NEPA mandate that would exclude the impact to air

quality—or water quality—from a proposed action. Simply put, it makes no sense.

Not only is removing these requirements a bad idea for public health and for our environment, but doing so will end up costing taxpayers more when projects aren't built to be resilient and, as a result, taxpayer investments are quite literally washed away by the next big storm or flood.

What is more, this proposal gives the fox the keys to the henhouse by allowing companies to write their own environmental impact statements. Think about that—by allowing companies to write their own environmental impact statements. That is a little bit like offering students self-graded, take-home exams. This proposal also creates loopholes to avoid environmental review and public input, which is especially harmful to environmental justice communities that are often the targets of industrial investments and projects.

I take no joy in saying this, but the proposal before us is one that is, sadly, myopic and ideologically driven. I have repeatedly called on CEQ to withdraw this proposal, and I do so again today.

Along with the policy, I must also mention CEQ's refusal to open this notice to proposed rulemaking to greater public involvement that is commensurate with its gravity and scope.

In rebuttal to repeated concerns from more than 160 Members of Congress, and literally hundreds—hundreds—of stakeholder organizations, CEQ stated that it is “engaging in extensive public outreach, including through requests for public comments, two hearings and other outreach”—two hearings in the whole country.

Just last week, with only three full business days prior to the close of the comment period, CEQ finally told 166 other Members of Congress and me that it would refuse to extend the public comment period, thus providing the public as little opportunity as possible to have their voices heard.

Both CEQ's reply and its public statements make clear that CEQ believes it somehow deserves extra credit for allowing the public to participate in this rulemaking. Public involvement means not only an opportunity to comment, it means taking those comments seriously by CEQ.

Let me be clear. Neither this CEQ nor any Council on Environmental Quality gets extra credit for the mere act of requesting public comments on America's bedrock environmental law.

CEQ certainly does not deserve extra credit for allowing only 60 days to review and comment on this massive environmental protection rollback. CEQ also does not get extra credit for only two hearings in the entire country—two hearings—to receive public comment.

At these hearings, the public needed a ticket and only got 3 minutes to speak. Think about that: 3 minutes for a law that has been around for a half century that is a basic bedrock envi-

ronmental law, 3 minutes; constraining comments to a couple of minutes; the idea of requiring tickets, as if it is some kind of prize to participate in something that should be a democratic norm; and the idea of CEQ failing to engage a single speaker in Denver or Washington, DC. Think about that: not engaging even one speaker in the two places where the public actually had the opportunity to comment. Not one. That doesn't constitute an open process, not where I come from. I think it probably doesn't for most other folks as well. It doesn't come close. What we have here is a clear sign that CEQ is limiting the involvement of the public and wants the clock to expire before the public can find out what is actually in the massive rewrite. That is what it is.

To say I am disappointed with CEQ's response is an understatement. NEPA is a 50-year-old law, but Americans have only been given 60 days to defend it.

I will go back to what I said before. No law is written in stone. The Declaration of Independence, the Constitution of our country are not written in stone. Everything we do, I know we can do better. But the way CEQ has approached this task, this undertaking, is not just disappointing, I think it is shameful.

NEPA reminds us that our government is one that is of the people, for the people, and by the people. But this proposal and this process bear—what I just described—little resemblance to those words of Abraham Lincoln. Sadly, they make a mockery of them.

Let me be clear. I will continue to fight to defend NEPA and the democratic tools it avails to the American people.

I yield the floor to my friend from Oklahoma.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

EMBRACE HOPE

Mr. LANKFORD. Madam President, I come to the floor today to unashamedly brag to the people of Southwest Oklahoma. It is a pretty remarkable group of folks. In the community around Lawton, OK, and surrounding communities, there are people who serve their neighbors every day. There is a remarkable group of churches and nonprofits, ministries, Federal workers, State, city, and county staff who are there and do a pretty amazing job of taking care of their neighbors.

This weekend is above and beyond. This weekend, Southwest Oklahomans organized what they call Southwest Oklahoma Embrace Hope—so 1 day, on Saturday, where the whole community will be having neighbors serving neighbors to see what they can do to help each other.

Serving your neighbor is not about how much money you have or a title you hold or a certain house you live in. Taking care of your neighbor is just basic honoring each other and finding a way to love your neighbor. The vision

behind the Embrace Hope event is about stepping up and saying as individuals that we can do more if we do it together.

The Embrace Hope community event in Lawton will offer Oklahomans an opportunity to access a lot of free services and some basic help. There are partners from all over the State of Oklahoma who have donated their time, their services, their finances to help those in need all over Southwest Oklahoma—all in one place, all at one time. If someone needs housing—shelter, information, or a referral, food—there will be folks there who can help them.

There will be agencies there to talk about long-term needs and people needing short-term needs. If someone needs a job, there will be folks there who will show them opportunities for hiring. If someone needs to get their resume together so they can get a job, there will be folks there who can take a picture so they can use it with their resume. In fact, if folks need a suit to wear to an interview, there will be folks there to help them get a suit so they are able to prepare themselves for a job.

There will be health services there. You can schedule an appointment with a local health center, and there will also be ways to get dental services, optometry, pregnancy resources, or even a breast exam, if that is needed.

There will be folks there who can give them a haircut if they need a haircut and haven't been able to get access to that.

There will be folks there who are mental health professionals and counselors so they can interact with folks who may struggle with substance abuse or dealing with the stress of life. There will be folks there who can help them with legal assistance. These are communities coming together; ministries, churches, organizations, and government agencies are all coming to one place at one time to help.

There are a lot of needs in the area. In fact, in Oklahoma, according to DHS statistics just from this last year, we had 78,000-plus households that needed winter heating assistance in our State. More than 378,000 Oklahomans receive food benefits, like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. These are Federal resources and Federal programs.

As Members of Congress, we work together to help in whatever way we can to help those in greatest need to be lifted out of poverty and to be able to walk through some of their low points in life. But a government check or a check-in with a Federal entity is no substitute for a neighbor helping a neighbor. When you are at your low point of life, a check is helpful to get you through a hard time, but you need a person; you need a mentor; you need a friend; you need a neighbor.

The Embrace Hope event is all about that. It is neighbors helping each other to be able to walk through this process, but it is also about opportunities for

people who live in Southwest Oklahoma. It is not just to help someone one day, but also to understand that we could do this throughout the course of the year because there are lots of folks who say: I want to be able to help.

They just don't know where to go to be able to help their neighbors. They might help the folks who are around them; they might help people in a small group at their church; they might have family members they help, but they say that they want to be able to do more.

The Embrace Hope event allows volunteers by the hundreds who have signed up to serve their neighbor one day, but it also allows them to take a test drive with a bunch of other ministries and nonprofits in the area and say: What do you do that I can volunteer one day to help people, but maybe I can plug in and help you at other times?

It allows those nonprofits and ministries to reach out to a whole pool of people, who maybe are not involved all the time, to say: If you enjoyed helping your neighbor that day, why don't you come work with us the rest of the year?

It is a way for them to meet each other. Quite frankly, it is a way for us to build a stronger State, a stronger community, and stronger connections with our neighbors so that we don't default by saying "They get help from the government, so that is probably all they need," when we know in our heart it is not. They need help from somebody local. They need a friend, and they need somebody who can look them in the face and say: How can we help? That is Embrace Hope.

There have been hundreds of people who have volunteered already, and as they are preparing for this Saturday, it will probably be a cold and wet day, which is a perfect day to help people in need.

As we get together on this Saturday with all the volunteers and all the folks, there will be one person who will be in the background whom the whole event will circle around, but a lot of folks will not know it. Her name is Brenda Spencer-Ragland. She is the lead event coordinator for Embrace Hope. I can't even imagine how many hundreds of hours she has put in behind the scenes to be able to bring this to reality. Her title is event coordinator, but that title doesn't remotely do justice for the work she has done to bring Embrace Hope to reality.

She is one of those incredible individuals who everyone wishes lived around them, but Southwest Oklahoma actually has her. She has a servant's heart and a servant's attitude. It is who she is, quite frankly, more than just what she does.

Brenda served our Nation as a civilian with the U.S. Army for 32 years before assuming her current role. She was Director of the Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation Program at Fort Sill in Lawton. Her title was a

fancy way of saying that she took care of military families in whatever way she possibly could, and she did it well. She loved serving those who serve us. On her retirement, she grieved because she loved serving those folks at the post.

Now, after dealing with morale at Fort Sill and after serving also as the Housing Director at Fort Sill, she has found a new way to serve—Embrace Hope. She has built around that same mission. She came to Oklahoma City, and she saw an event called Love OKC, which was similar to this. She brought a whole group of volunteers to come take a look at what was happening in Oklahoma City and the remarkable Love OKC event that has happened for 7 years in a row. She took that vision back to Southwest Oklahoma and created Embrace Hope. Meeting after meeting, donor after donor, long night after long night of organizing—it is about to happen.

Brenda, for all of the folks in Lawton who don't know you, they should because, if they did, they would give you a warm hug and a very grateful thank-you for blessing so many people. Thank you for answering the call to serve your friends and neighbors and stepping up when you saw a need and tirelessly giving back to Southwest Oklahoma and the community that you love. It is an honor to call you a friend and a neighbor. I look forward to serving alongside you this weekend in Embrace Hope, doing whatever you need me to do to help you as we love our neighbors together.

God bless you. I look forward to seeing you there, Brenda. I love getting a chance to be able to brag about what is happening in the great Southwest Oklahoma.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

#### MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. LANKFORD. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

#### RECOGNIZING THE ST. MICHAEL'S COLLEGE FIRE AND RESCUE SQUAD

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, I want to take a moment to recognize the brave and selfless individuals from the St. Michael's College Fire and Rescue Squad, based in Colchester, VT. These young men and women respond to emergencies on a moment's notice to help those in need—all while balancing the demands of their full college course load. St. Michael's College Fire and Rescue helps bring a greater degree of safety to residents in Chittenden County, and we are thankful for their efforts. Today, I would like