

like Judge Barrett. They want a guaranteed result.

Our Democratic colleagues repeatedly pushed Judge Barrett to say how she would rule on future cases. They asked her to share her personal views on controversial issues. They demanded a commitment from her to recuse herself from specific cases. But, once again, Judge Barrett proved why she is the right person for this job. She followed the precedent set by former and current Justices and respectfully refrained from answering those sorts of provocative questions.

Contrary to what our Democratic colleagues believe, Supreme Court Justices are not life-tenured superlegislators. They are obligated to apply the law as written—no favors, no biases, no predetermined outcomes. That is what Judge Ginsburg said when she was confirmed, and that is why it is so important to confirm Amy Coney Barrett.

She has artfully demonstrated her understanding of the role of the judiciary and shown she has the temperament, the intellect, and the experience to serve on the Nation's highest Court.

She won't impose her personal beliefs. She said that time and again. And to suggest that she would somehow violate her judicial oath in a future case is inconsistent with everything we have come to know about Amy Coney Barrett.

She won't impose her personal beliefs. She won't try to favor one side or the other, and she won't legislate from the bench. That is exactly the kind of nominee that Republicans and Democrats should want on the High Court.

So I look forward to supporting Judge Barrett's nomination on Monday, when we finally vote to confirm her.

PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE

Mr. President, briefly, on another matter, in Thursday's Presidential debate, former Vice President Joe Biden said he wants to transition the United States from the oil industry. Actually, Governor Abbott appropriately said: No, Joe Biden wants to transition hundreds of thousands of Texans from their paychecks.

What Joe Biden is sending is a not too subtly coded message that he wants to end our energy industry as we know it. This is an industry that, according to one study, directly or indirectly supports one out of every six jobs in my State and is a pillar of our State's economy.

Through tax revenue, high-paying jobs, and downstream economic gains, communities across Texas reap substantial benefits from our thriving oil and gas industry every day, and those benefits reach beyond our borders or the borders of any other energy-producing State.

That is because of the hard-working men and women on rigs, in fields, and in refineries. Because of their work, the American people have access to reliable and affordable energy.

In places like California and New York, folks can't turn on their lights,

fill up their gas tanks, or hop on an airplane without ever thinking about the men and women who made that seemingly simple task possible.

Now we are seeing our Democratic colleagues fighting to leave these energy sources in the dust. They are talking about switching to renewables, as if it were as simple as turning on a light switch.

In Texas, we literally believe in an "all of the above" energy policy. We produce more electricity from wind energy, from wind turbines, than any other State in the Nation. But we know what the reality of the kind of transition that Vice President Biden has talked about would mean. We got a taste of how disastrous it would be earlier this year.

When the coronavirus pandemic hit, the need for Texas's greatest natural resource plummeted. With fewer cars on the road and fewer planes in the sky, oil and gas producers were left with a lot of supply and not much demand, and that is when the layoffs began.

A new report by Deloitte found that, between March and August of this year, about 107,000 energy workers were laid off, and that doesn't include the countless workers who had their pay cut or who were temporarily furloughed.

To make matters worse, the study found that as many as 70 percent of those jobs might not even come back by the end of 2021, and that is if we continue business as usual.

If the Vice President's plan to destroy our energy industry were enacted, these workers would have no jobs to come back to, and it would be only the beginning of the cascading negative economic consequences.

Many Americans aren't old enough to remember the 1970s energy crisis, which put our energy dependence in this country in the spotlight. The situation was so bad that gas stations were serving customers by appointment only. Some States banned neon signs to cut down on energy use. A number of towns asked their citizens not to even put up Christmas lights.

It was a cold, hard dose of reality that brought America's energy dependence to light and underscored the need to increase our domestic resources and wean ourselves off of the dependency on foreign oil. And that is exactly what we did. We placed a ban on the export of crude oil at that time to grow our reserves here at home.

With the shale revolution and technological advancements in the energy sector, in recent years, though, production has skyrocketed. Then it became abundantly clear it was time to lift the export ban, which we did.

Almost 5 years ago, I voted here in the Senate to lift that 40-year-old export ban, and until COVID-19 hit, we were seeing major gains. Last November, for the first time on record, the United States exported more crude oil and fuel than we imported.

Now that we have reached, really, what you could call energy self-sufficiency, our Democratic colleagues are eager to impose policies that would send us right back to the 1970s and that Orwellian energy crisis and wreak economic havoc in the process.

Really, I think Vice President Biden has succeeded in alienating all sides on this topic because he has been flipping and flopping back and forth about fracking bans, whether it would apply across the board or just to Federal lands. But KAMALA HARRIS, his running mate, has been abundantly clear and completely consistent. She said last year: "There's no question I am in favor of banning fracking."

But whether Democrats are talking about a transition, a fracking ban, or the Green New Deal, these proposals will kill the goose that laid the golden egg—our oil and gas industry—and send the economy into a tailspin. They would bankrupt my State, with the best economy in the country.

A study by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce estimates that a fracking ban would cost our State nearly 3.2 million jobs by 2025. The annual cost of living would go up more than \$7,000. Unemployment would skyrocket, tax revenue would plummet, and the prepandemic economy that made us the envy of the world might never recover.

The only thing this so-called transition would lead to is a dire economic picture for Texas—and I believe the rest of the country as well—and unaffordable or unreliable energy resources.

I want to be clear; I support efforts to drive down emissions. That is why this shale gas revolution has been so good for the environment, by reducing emissions dramatically.

The U.S. energy-related emissions dropped by almost 3 percent last year, largely due to the increased use of natural gas for power generation.

I also support renewable energy. As I said, Texas is the No. 1 producer of electricity from wind. But even the strongest supporters of renewable sources of energy can tell you right now renewables are not capable of providing the energy that our Nation needs. As we all know, the Sun does not always shine, and the wind does not always blow. So wind turbines and solar panels can't fill the need, particularly with about 270-plus million cars on the road and an airline industry—not to mention our national defense—that depends on fossil fuels to run their engines.

Last year, renewables accounted for only 17.5 percent of our total electricity generation. For comparison, natural gas alone accounts for more than double that. While the development and expansion of renewable sources is important and something that I support, we simply can't cut our nose off to spite our face by denying ourselves access to, really, what is a gift, which is our natural resources and fossil fuels.

Right now, we have hope that, once daily commutes and nonessential travel resume, more Texas energy workers will be back on the job and our economy will rebound. But if our country were to implement the policies advocated by leading Democrats, particularly their Presidential and Vice Presidential nominee, that hope would altogether disappear.

This is not the time, if ever there was a time, to implement heavy-handed, short-sighted government policies like that. Our energy industry is still reeling from the impact of the coronavirus, and our Democratic colleagues' disastrous policies would not make that better; it would make it worse.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I am glad I was here to hear the wise words of the Senator from Texas. I look at our region, in the Tennessee Valley, compared to California. California is moving ahead with a policy a lot like Vice President Biden's. They have got a high goal for powering that whole State on wind and solar and closing their nuclear plants.

What is happening in California? Rates are going through the roof, and they are having rolling blackouts. What is happening in Tennessee and the Tennessee Valley? The TVA has very wisely expanded nuclear power so that it is more than 40 percent of our electricity.

Of course, nuclear power is totally emission-free—no carbon, zero carbon—it is reliable, and it is, by far, most of the carbon-free electricity we produce in this country. The combination of that nuclear power, hydropower, and natural gas in Tennessee has given us one of the cleanest areas. In the East Tennessee area where I live, I can see the mountains clearly now because pollution control is on all the coal plants.

So we need a realistic energy policy, not a fanciful one. We don't want rolling blackouts throughout the country like California has because they have adopted exactly the policy that Vice President Biden is advocating.

VACCINE SAFETY

Mr. President, I come to the floor to speak on another subject. I want to talk about science and vaccines.

The Governors of New York and California have announced they are creating their own State review panels to review COVID-19 vaccine data as it becomes available. New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo said: "Frankly, I'm not going to trust the Federal Government's opinion."

In California, Gov. Gavin Newsom has stated the vaccine won't be distributed in California until it is reviewed by a State panel of experts. The Governor of California said on October 20: "Of course, we won't take anyone's word for it."

Every day, Americans take the word of Food and Drug Administration's career scientists on the safety and effec-

tiveness of the prescriptions they approve when we purchase 3.8 billion prescriptions a year. Let me say that again. We take the word of the FDA career scientists every day when we purchase 3.8 billion prescriptions each year.

I asked Dr. Stephen Hahn, the FDA Commissioner, on September 23, about the safety of a potential COVID-19 vaccine. He was testifying on COVID-19 in front of the Health Committee, which I chair and of which the Senator from Indiana is a valued member. I asked him:

Dr. Hahn, who makes decisions about safety and efficacy at the FDA? Do you do it? Do career scientists do it? Or does the White House do it?

Dr. Hahn replied:

Career scientists at the FDA do it. That's very clear. I'm briefed on all major medical product decisions. Overruling a center's decision is a very rare event. I have expressed on multiple occasions my intention, and have done so during this COVID-19 pandemic, to make sure that those decisions are made by career scientists in the centers.

I followed up by asking Dr. Hahn's confidence in taking a COVID-19 vaccine himself. I said:

You referred to this, but once FDA approves a vaccine, and as we've said today, we're going to have tens of millions of doses ready, none can be distributed until FDA approves it. Will you be willing to take that vaccine for you and for your family?

He replied:

Absolutely. Yes. Mr. Chairman, I have complete and absolute faith in the expertise of the scientists who are terrific at FDA. If they were to make a determination that a vaccine would be safe and effective, I would do that. And I would encourage my family to take the vaccine.

Those are the words of the man whose job it is to finally approve any COVID-19 vaccine.

But then, at the beginning of this month, as FDA was preparing to issue additional guidance on the data needed from vaccine developers to demonstrate safety and efficacy for an emergency use authorization, there were serious questions about whether the White House was politicizing the FDA's approval of vaccines for COVID-19.

The FDA had submitted its guidance. That guidance was written by career scientists. Those scientists had decades of experience, and what they wrote were the standards that were going to be used for the approval of vaccines against COVID-19.

Then news reports of White House interference came out which suggested the White House was going to change the FDA guidance or that the White House was not going to allow the FDA to release its own guidance. Many were concerned about that, including me.

The New York Times, on October 5, had a big headline: "White House Blocks New Coronavirus Vaccine Guidelines." And it went on to say, "The F.D.A. proposed stricter guidelines for emergency approval of a coronavirus vaccine, but the White

House chief of staff objected to provisions that would push approval past Election Day." That was the New York Times.

And FOX News said: "Trump administration to block FDA guidelines that could delay coronavirus vaccine." That is FOX News. "The FDA proposed stricter guidance last month that could prolong the timeline for a vaccine," FOX News said.

There were many stories to this effect. I could barely leave my office without some reporter asking me if I was concerned about this, about the politicization of the vaccine review process.

So I telephoned White House Chief of Staff Mark Meadows, and I asked him about it. I said to him: "Please do not interfere with the standards set by the career scientists at FDA for the approval of a COVID-19 vaccine." The White House did exactly what I urged the White House to do. The White House respected the decisions of the career scientists. They did not change one word of the standards set by the career scientists for the approval of COVID-19 vaccines.

So I would suggest that the Governors of New York and California do the same. They should show the same respect to the FDA career scientists that the White House did. Undermining the FDA's gold standard of safety and efficacy by setting up State review panels could delay approval, discourage Americans from taking the vaccine, and cost lives.

There is a reason why we Americans rely on the Federal Government's Food and Drug Administration for the safety and efficacy of vaccines. In 1902, Congress decided, when it passed the Biologics Control Act, that the Federal Government should regulate vaccines after tragic incidents of children dying from contaminated diphtheria antitoxin and smallpox vaccines.

This law charged the Federal laboratory that would later become the National Institutes of Health in 1930 with ensuring the "safety, purity, and potency" of biologic products such as vaccines.

Then, in 1972, the regulation of vaccines moved to the Food and Drug Administration, to what is now called the Center for Biologics Evaluation and Research.

FDA, therefore, has had almost 50 years of experience to refine the process for reviewing safety and efficacy for vaccines, including what data to look at and how to design clinical trials to prove that the vaccines work and that the vaccines are safe.

Earlier this week, the FDA convened independent scientific and medical experts to discuss this. They talked about the development, authorization, and approval of vaccines for COVID-19. This is not a new process for assessing vaccines. The FDA routinely convenes these type of independent panels to help inform its review. Dr. Peter Marks, head of the Center for Biologics