

As we have in the past, Americans can prevail in this geopolitical and ideological contest, but doing so will require a new level of strategic initiative, organization, and confidence in who we are and what we stand for. This also means that we must redouble our efforts in making this strategic case to others around the world, particularly our allies, and we must continue to work on bipartisan solutions that have enduring support in this body for decades to come as it relates to our challenges with China.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BOOZMAN). The Senator from Alaska.

CORONAVIRUS

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, this is the time of year when we all look forward to wrapping things up, as they say.

Many around the country, when they think about wrapping things up, think about presents that they are going to put under the tree for their family. We think about it as closing up business for the balance of the year, and that is really where we are.

Hopefully, in a couple hours here, the House will proceed in taking up the omnibus bill, along with the COVID relief package, along with a host of other matters that the Congress has been working to address in this past year.

I would like to speak this evening for a few moments on the significance of where we are, but I want to start with just a story that I just now received from one of my staff people back in Alaska, and she got a video from the medical staff at the Sub-Regional Clinic there at St. Mary's. St. Mary's is a small community up on the Yukon River, and probably, I would say, 500 people, maybe more, in St. Mary's. But it is just a reminder to me that, regardless of where you are, hope is coming with the vaccine.

The comment that she shared is this video, a pictorial of the health aides, the PA—the physician's assistant—and personnel getting their COVID shots.

It was 13 degrees out. And the mobile office where the vaccine was administered was inside a chartered Cessna 208 Caravan sitting on the airport tarmac there in St. Mary's. After the shot, she and her staff hung out in their heated trucks for about a half an hour to see if they had any allergic reactions. When none showed signs, the Caravan took off to the next village airport.

It is just an example that no matter where you are, how remote you may be, the logistics that may be required to provide for this hope that comes by way of the vaccine.

People around the country are hopeful. Our job now, as we wrap up, is to make sure that we deliver this relief quickly.

I mention the COVID relief. I have been fortunate to be teaming with a bipartisan, bicameral group of lawmakers for the past 5 or 6 weeks to see

if we couldn't come up with a proposal that could kick-start the COVID talks.

We have had an opportunity for many of us to come to the floor to speak to not only how that came to be but the ultimate result, which was a multihundred-page document, legislation, that totaled \$908 billion. But it addressed everything from vaccine development and distribution to what we are going to do to assist our small businesses with additional rounds of PPP, to extensions to unemployment insurance, to what we can do with food assistance, nutrition assistance, and what more might be done to help with rental assistance. It was truly responsive to the need.

Where we are today is having moved that conversation and that debate forward, I think, in a constructive, in a positive way. We are here with a proposal that looks different than what we had produced, but that is the nature of what happens in a body where you have to come together to sort out the issues.

And what we will have is legislation that, again, like the CARES Act, is likely going to be proven imperfect, but we have to respond to the situation on the ground, whether it is in Alaska or whether it is in Arkansas, and we cannot do it too soon. So this is going to be key, and it is going to be critical.

I am very pleased that legislation that I had introduced that would extend the coronavirus relief funding—the opportunity for States and localities and Tribal governments to be able to spend those funds down. Running up against the deadline here of the end of this year was a real concern for so many, and so that has been included as part of this bigger package, in addition to so much that is good.

The carrier for all of this is the Omnibus appropriations bill. I have been really pleased to be a member of the Appropriations Committee. For some years now, I have been chairing the Appropriations Interior Subcommittee. This is significant, certainly, for our State, with oversight of our public lands, and also of Native affairs, including the EPA. It is a pretty broad portfolio.

We have been working on this dutifully as a subcommittee all year—all year. I certainly wish that I had had the opportunity to be able to bring my bill—our bill—to the floor for full debate by all Members, and then we could move to the Ag bill, to the T-HUD bill, to the Defense bill—do them all separately.

But for a host of different reasons—most of them all come back to politics—unfortunately, we have not been able to do that. That is something that I regret. That is something that I would hope that we, as Members of the Senate, can say: We can do better.

We pledge to do it better every year. We put our colleagues in a heck of a spot. Not all of us are on the Appropriations Committee. Not all of us have the privilege to be a chairman or a ranking member and know the guts

and the insides of each aspect of these bills.

But we come here with a process like this at a late hour, and we say: This is one where you need to know that we have been working it hard. We have taken into account all the priorities and considerations on both sides. We worked it back and forth. We worked it with the House, and here we are. But this is not a good process. We can and we must do better with that.

Now, having said that, I am very proud of the Interior bill that we have built. I am proud of my staff. We were a little bit leaner this year in terms of our staffing, but with good leadership, led by Emy Lesofski and Nona, as well as Lucas on the team, we were able to do the work that we needed to do and in a way that I am proud of and proud of their efforts.

There is so much that is wrapped up in this bigger, broader bill, and I think it is going to almost be gaspworthy when you see the 5,000-some-odd pages I am told that we will have.

It is not only the appropriations. It is the COVID bills. It is the water resources development bill, the WRDA bill—very, very significant. There are good bills from the Indian Affairs Committee that I have participated in, water bills that we have been working on.

But the one that I want to speak to a little more in detail this evening—and I was hoping that my ranking member, Senator MANCHIN, might be here on the floor, but not yet—but I wanted to speak about title Z in the omnibus bill.

Z, I just imagine that they put it at the end because they figured it was the best or maybe because they knew that the process that the Energy Act had gone through had probably been more rigorous and lengthy than just about anything out there. But Z we are at.

I begin my comments with regard to this Energy Act that is contained in this bill by acknowledging that I am probably speaking on the floor for the last time as the chairman of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee because I have hit my limit, if you will. I have had the honor and the privilege to be both the chairman and the ranking member on the Energy and Natural Resources Committee now for a total of 12 years, which is pretty good.

It is pretty good to be in a position to be able to advance legislative policy. I have been very, very fortunate to work with great members. Senator Bingaman was the chairman when I was his ranking and, of course, I was with Senator WYDEN as the ranking member when he was chairman. I have had the great privilege to work with Senator CANTWELL when I was the chairman and now Senator MANCHIN. I think about these past 2 years and what we have been able to accomplish and just kind of the recap of where we have been and how productive we have been as a panel.

We started this Congress with passage of the John D. Dingell, Jr., Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act. This is a bipartisan package of more than 120 different measures focused on public lands, natural resources, and water.

We had worked on a lands package throughout the last several months of 2018. I want to give former Ranking Member CANTWELL a real big shout-out here because her leadership was very key in that process. We weren't able to get it across the finish line at the end of the last Congress, but we reintroduced it in January of 2019. We passed it through the Senate in February, and the President signed it into law in March. That was a pretty good start—120 bipartisan bills.

These were bills, when you think about it, that related to national parks, to forests, to sportsmen's access. We delivered on the Federal Government's promises to Alaska Natives who served during the Vietnam war. We permanently reauthorized the Land and Water Conservation Fund, and we provided new authorities to help protect from natural hazards such as volcanic eruptions. I will note that the Kilauea just erupted on the Big Island of Hawaii. I believe it was yesterday or the day before. So it is important to be addressing our natural hazards.

We did that at the beginning of the Congress. Then Senator MANCHIN and I set our sights on something that hadn't been done in a long time, and that was modernization of our Nation's energy policies to make real reforms and bring them in line with our current challenges and our opportunities. So we started with some very broad—very broad-based—hearings and then took a very specific and deep dive into some of the issues and the technologies.

Then we started moving bills. We were negotiating and we were reporting dozens of bills as part of our regular order committee process. Knowing how things work around here, we knew we weren't going to be able to move them each individually as stand-alone bills, so we wrapped them up into a broader bill. We called it the American Energy Innovation Act.

We brought that bill to the floor in February. We were going just great. We were working through, and it was kind of nice, again, to be the first bill on the floor when we began our legislative business. And we stalled out. We were interrupted. We were taken off the track by an unrelated dispute over a measure that is jurisdictional to another committee, and this was just at the start of the global coronavirus pandemic.

But I said: We are not done. We are not stopping just because we hit a roadblock here. We are going to keep working.

We kept working. We kept working, and we kept looking for a way to pass the first major Energy bill since 2007—and 2007 is a long time that we hadn't updated and reworked our energy pol-

icy, so it was worth working on. I kept saying: Don't count us out. Don't write us off.

Over the past few months, we found that opening. We worked with really good partners over on the House side over at Energy and Commerce and the House Science, Space, and Technology Committee, and we wrote what we have called simply the Energy Act of 2020—pretty simple, pretty beautiful, in my opinion.

But our Energy Act is included now as division Z in the year-end omnibus. It provides for reforms and new authorities related to a range of emerging technologies, including advanced nuclear; carbon capture, utilization, and storage; carbon removal; renewables; and energy storage. It reauthorizes programs that many of us are supportive of and want to advance: Weatherization Assistance and ARPA-E. It features the bulk of my language related to critical minerals and materials to help us rebuild our domestic supply chains, which we know are so critical. It reflects our strong commitment to cleaner energy to help us address climate change without raising the cost of energy or imposing divisive mandates.

So I would suggest to the Presiding Officer that this Energy bill is just the perfect bookend for this Congress. What started as a major lands package is now going to end with a major energy package. Again, as I mentioned, it has been since 2007. It is the first Energy bill—the energy side of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee—the first Energy bill in almost 13 years. It was President George W. Bush who signed the last one on December 19, 2007.

So I want to thank Ranking Member MANCHIN for his leadership on the energy package, as well as all of the committee members who contributed to it. We had great help within our committee. We had great help within this body. At last count we were looking at input and contributions from some 70 different Members.

I also want to acknowledge the extraordinary work of the staffs. I had the opportunity to give a tribute to my staff director, Brian Hughes, who is leaving after many years on the committee. He did a fabulous job of advancing this, as did Spencer Nelson, Pat McCormick, Annie Hoefler, Lucy Murfitt. There were so many others. That team was extraordinary.

But they were joined by an extraordinary team that Senator MANCHIN had, led by his staff director, Renae Black, and other individuals there who really helped us advance this—Sam Fowler and so many. We can't thank them enough.

I also want to really give sincere thanks to our House partners because they were this "six corner" working group here: FRANK PALLONE, the chairman at Energy and Commerce and the ranking member, GREG WALDEN; the Science chairwoman, BERNICE JOHNSON,

and the ranking member, FRANK LUCAS. We could not have reached an agreement without their leadership and their willingness to work together.

I also want to acknowledge and thank Leader MCCONNELL and Senator SCHUMER for agreeing to work with us and help us secure this opening and this commitment.

I can't remember how many times Leader MCCONNELL had said: You know, LISA, you are probably going to figure out a way to pull a rabbit out of the hat here. And I don't know if this is a rabbit out of the hat, but I think persistence certainly has paid off. So I want to thank the teams who really helped to make this happen.

In addition to a good energy bill, the year-end omnibus also includes the bipartisan water package featuring nine provisions that are important to Western States, such as Colorado, Montana, and Arizona. Lane Dickson on my Energy Committee staff was fabulous there. We added a few more lands bills into the final package. Lucy and Annie helped us on that. We really have worked to advance so much out of the committee.

All of these accomplishments—our lands package, our energy package, our water package, the lands bills that we tried to add to everything that moved and occasionally passed by UC, and measures I haven't spoken to, including the Great American Outdoors Act—these are all the hallmarks of a highly productive Congress and the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee. I am pleased to have been able to shepherd these measures into law.

But what I am proud of—more than any piece of legislation, more than anything out there in the time that I have been able to lead this committee, what I am most proud of is the bipartisan way in which this committee has operated. Our commitment to bipartisanship has produced continually good results for our country.

What I found as ranking member and now as chairman is that there is simply no substitute for working together and across party lines to find agreement wherever it is possible.

So I thank Senator MANCHIN for following that same approach, to our committee colleagues for their own bipartisanship and collegiality, to our House colleagues who have helped us with that.

I see that my friend from the great State of Washington and Pacific Northwest is here, and I want Senator CANTWELL to know that as I have spoken of the accomplishments of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee, I am very thankful and appreciative of her leadership and what she has provided over the years. Working together with her team, we have accomplished good things for the right reasons.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington is recognized.

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, if I can just congratulate my colleague

from Alaska and the ranking member, Senator MANCHIN, for their great work of getting these energy provisions that have been—I don't know how many Members, but I am sure just about every Member in our body has had something to do with it and a lot of actual individual legislation. So this was a long effort by our colleague, the chair of the committee, and I thank her for her diligence on this. She has had many of us up to Alaska to look at hydropower and alternative resources and how their grid needs better connectivity and products that can withstand and provide energy in sub-zero weather and all sorts of challenges that they face.

But, clearly, these tools that will be in this legislation will move us forward. So thank you and thanks to Senator MANCHIN for working so diligently to get this finally over the goal line. It is a big moment. Thank you.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR—MOTION TO PROCEED

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to proceed to the motion to reconsider the vote by which cloture was not invoked on the nomination of Eric J. Soskin.

I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Wyoming (Mr. ENZI), the Senator from Georgia (Mrs. LOEFFLER), the Senator from Georgia (Mr. PERDUE), and the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. ROUNDS).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from California (Ms. HARRIS) and the Senator from West Virginia (Mr. MANCHIN) are necessarily absent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 48, nays 46, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 285 Leg.]

YEAS—48

Alexander	Ernst	Paul
Barrasso	Fischer	Portman
Blackburn	Gardner	Risch
Blunt	Graham	Roberts
Boozman	Grassley	Romney
Braun	Hawley	Rubio
Burr	Hoeven	Sasse
Capito	Hyde-Smith	Scott (FL)
Cassidy	Inhofe	Scott (SC)
Collins	Johnson	Shelby
Cornyn	Kennedy	Sullivan
Cotton	Lankford	Thune
Cramer	Lee	Tillis
Crapo	McConnell	Toomey
Cruz	Moran	Wicker
Daines	Murkowski	Young

NAYS—46

Baldwin	Heinrich	Sanders
Bennet	Hirono	Schatz
Blumenthal	Jones	Schumer
Booker	Kaine	Shaheen
Brown	Kelly	Sinema
Cantwell	King	Smith
Cardin	Klobuchar	Stabenow
Carper	Leahy	Tester
Casey	Markey	Udall
Coons	Menendez	Van Hollen
Cortez Masto	Merkeley	Warner
Duckworth	Murphy	Warren
Durbin	Murray	Whitehouse
Feinstein	Peters	Wyden
Gillibrand	Reed	
Hassan	Rosen	

NOT VOTING—6

Enzi	Loeffler	Perdue
Harris	Manchin	Rounds

The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

MOTION TO RECONSIDER

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to reconsider the vote for which cloture was not invoked on the nomination of Eric J. Soskin, and I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Wyoming (Mr. ENZI), the Senator from Georgia (Mrs. LOEFFLER), the Senator from Georgia (Mr. PERDUE), and the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. ROUNDS).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from California (Ms. HARRIS) and the Senator from West Virginia (Mr. MANCHIN) are necessarily absent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 48, nays 46, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 286 Ex.]

YEAS—48

Alexander	Ernst	Paul
Barrasso	Fischer	Portman
Blackburn	Gardner	Risch
Blunt	Graham	Roberts
Boozman	Grassley	Romney
Braun	Hawley	Rubio
Burr	Hoeven	Sasse
Capito	Hyde-Smith	Scott (FL)
Cassidy	Inhofe	Scott (SC)
Collins	Johnson	Shelby
Cornyn	Kennedy	Sullivan
Cotton	Lankford	Thune
Cramer	Lee	Tillis
Crapo	McConnell	Toomey
Cruz	Moran	Wicker
Daines	Murkowski	Young

NAYS—46

Baldwin	Heinrich	Sanders
Bennet	Hirono	Schatz
Blumenthal	Jones	Schumer
Booker	Kaine	Shaheen
Brown	Kelly	Sinema
Cantwell	King	Smith
Cardin	Klobuchar	Stabenow
Carper	Leahy	Tester
Casey	Markey	Udall
Coons	Menendez	Van Hollen
Cortez Masto	Merkeley	Warner
Duckworth	Murphy	Warren
Durbin	Murray	Whitehouse
Feinstein	Peters	Wyden
Gillibrand	Reed	
Hassan	Rosen	

NOT VOTING—6

Enzi	Loeffler	Perdue
Harris	Manchin	Rounds

The motion was agreed to.

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Eric J. Soskin, of Virginia, to be Inspector General, Department of Transportation.

Mitch McConnell, Lamar Alexander, Rick Scott, Tom Cotton, Mike Crapo, Cory Gardner, Ron Johnson, James Lankford, Roger F. Wicker, Marco Rubio, Cindy Hyde-Smith, Thom Tillis, Shelley Moore Capito, John Boozman, Joni Ernst, Mike Braun, Pat Roberts.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of Eric J. Soskin, of Virginia, to be Inspector General, Department of Transportation, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Wyoming (Mr. ENZI), the Senator from Georgia (Mrs. LOEFFLER), the Senator from Georgia (Mr. PERDUE), and the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. ROUNDS).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from California (Ms. HARRIS), the Senator from Virginia (Mr. Kaine), the Senator from West Virginia (Mr. MANCHIN), and the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS) are necessarily absent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 48, nays 44, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 287 Ex.]

YEAS—48

Alexander	Ernst	Paul
Barrasso	Fischer	Portman
Blackburn	Gardner	Risch
Blunt	Graham	Roberts
Boozman	Grassley	Romney
Braun	Hawley	Rubio
Burr	Hoeven	Sasse
Capito	Hyde-Smith	Scott (FL)
Cassidy	Inhofe	Scott (SC)
Collins	Johnson	Shelby
Cornyn	Kennedy	Sullivan
Cotton	Lankford	Thune
Cramer	Lee	Tillis
Crapo	McConnell	Toomey
Cruz	Moran	Wicker
Daines	Murkowski	Young

NAYS—44

Baldwin	Brown	Casey
Bennet	Cantwell	Coons
Blumenthal	Cardin	Cortez Masto
Booker	Carper	Duckworth