

change, invest in new technologies, and help marginal communities in dealing with these needs.

COVID-19 has made the challenges even more dramatic for our communities. Water utilities have incurred additional costs. I think that is quite obvious. They had to deal with the protective equipment for their workers to deal with COVID-19. They had workers who were out as a result of COVID-19. They had to deal with changing the way they operated their business. There was a demand for greater water during COVID-19, just the washing of our hands frequently. It requires us to have access to more clean water.

The ability of our customers to pay their bills was challenged during COVID-19. As we know, American families' incomes were very stressed and are still stressed as a result of COVID-19. The gap between the ability of the public support for water infrastructure and what ratepayers are asked to pay is getting larger and larger. We haven't made the money available from the public side for water infrastructure, and to put more pressure on the rate when customers are already having a difficult time paying their bills is not a viable option. That makes S. 914 even more urgent.

I want to talk about a couple provisions that are included in S. 914 that are bipartisan that I worked on that I think are extremely important parts of this legislation.

One, working with Senator WICKER, we have in this bill a pilot program that will establish 40 grants around the Nation so that we can establish programs to help low-income households. By way of comparison, this is similar to the LIHEAP program that we use to help our low-income families deal with their utility bills for heating their homes and air-conditioning their homes. This will provide similar help for low-income families in dealing with the price of their water bills.

Having been through Maryland and some of our centers, I can tell you that there are many communities where individuals literally cannot afford their water bills. It is an essential utility. We need to do something to fill the gap. So this bill will establish a program so that we can take some of the pressure off of the ratepayers and therefore allow local utilities to be able to use rates to do some of their improvements without adversely affecting low-income families. This pilot program, to me, is long overdue, but I am pleased to see it is included in this legislation.

Another provision that is included in this legislation is legislation that I have authored with Senator CAPITO, the Clean Water Infrastructure Resiliency and Sustainability Program. The two of us recognize that in the State of West Virginia and the State of Maryland, we have extreme weather events that are affecting our ability to handle drinking water and wastewater. That is true in every State in the Nation. I

could tell you about Maryland and the community of Ellicott City, where they have had two 100-year floods in a period of less than 2 years.

These frequent, extreme weather events are happening in this Nation on a regular basis, and it is putting additional stress on our water infrastructure. The President had a recent summit on climate, and this is one of the issues that were brought up.

Wastewater treatment plants and drinking water systems—we need to increase their resiliency and add that ability. That is what this provision will do by providing grants that will assist in planning, designing, construction, implementation, operation, or maintenance of the facilities.

Stormwater runoff is one of the largest sources of pollutants in our environment. We have over 600,000 miles of rivers and streams in America, 13 million acres of lakes, reservoirs, and ponds. I can speak personally about the impact that runoff has on the Chesapeake Bay, a national treasure. The fastest growing source of pollutant into the Chesapeake Bay comes from storm runoff.

This grant program on resiliency will help all of us plan for how we deal with water infrastructure in a way that can deal with our modern challenges.

Another provision in this bill comes from legislation that was authored by Senator BOOZMAN and myself, the Water Resources Research Amendments Act. This provides help for research so that we can find effective and efficient new ways to deal with water treatment facilities.

In Maryland, we are proud that we have the Maryland Water Resources Research Center at the University of Maryland, College Park, that does this type of research that will help us to the next generation of how we can use technology to help deal with our water infrastructure in America.

The bottom line is that S. 914 is a bill that will help us preserve and provide drinking water to the people of this Nation and deal with wastewater. It is a very important bill for water infrastructure. It is bipartisan. It will be on the floor. I urge my colleagues to support this bipartisan legislation, which is clearly part of building America back better. I hope we can act on this bill this week and send to it the House and get this bill to the President for his signature. I can tell you, our local water systems desperately need the help.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MURPHY). The Senator from Arizona.

PUBLIC SERVICE RECOGNITION WEEK

Ms. SINEMA. Mr. President, I rise today to introduce a bipartisan Senate resolution recognizing the thousands of Arizonans and millions more across America who go to work every day to serve their fellow citizens, protect our communities, and make our country a stronger place.

America's public servants work across our uniformed services, as well

as in Federal, State, and local governments, to advance our country's health and safety. If we ever needed a reminder of the importance of our public servants, the past year has provided one. Throughout the coronavirus pandemic and resulting economic downturn, public servants kept us safe, provided care for our heroes, coordinated urgent medical supplies for our communities, and helped keep our small businesses open.

Along our borders with Mexico and Canada, Border Patrol agents tackled challenging conditions to provide security, limit the spread of COVID-19, and protect our communities from criminal activity. At ports of entry, Customs officers worked to maintain cross-border trade and commerce to keep fueling American jobs.

VA employees cared for our veterans and are playing a critical role in delivering vaccines to veterans, veterans' spouses, and caregivers and dependents.

Postal employees continued to deliver the mail, keeping everyday families connected and helping employers remain open.

To all of our firefighters, police officers, public health officials, and teachers, you deserve our thanks every day, but moments of crisis often help to remind us how much we rely on all of you.

When Kingman, AZ, recently experienced a cyber attack, it was local officials, alongside members of the National Guard, who mobilized to contain the damage and get the city back online.

Through these moments of sacrifice and service, these men and women show that public service is not about winning partisan political battles or getting your fame out on cable news. It is about serving a cause greater than ourselves.

In Arizona we are no strangers to dedicated public servants who left their marks on our State and country—from Sandra Day O'Connor, the first woman to lead the Arizona State Senate and to be appointed to the U.S. Supreme Court, to my personal hero, Senator John McCain, who dedicated his life to public service, both in uniform and here in the U.S. Senate.

Beginning this Sunday, America will mark Public Service Recognition Week, and I am honored to again introduce this year's bipartisan Public Service Recognition Week resolution with my friend Senator LANKFORD of Oklahoma.

On the Subcommittee on Government Operations and Border Management, Senator LANKFORD and I work closely together to strengthen Americans' confidence in our government by making the government work better for everyday Americans. That is a goal we share with all of America's public servants, and I am proud that last year the Senate came together across party lines to approve our resolution and honor public service.

Our bipartisan resolution recognizes the crucial work of Federal, State, and local employees and public servants across the country, and it particularly recognizes the work of the millions of public servants who have overcome the challenges of the coronavirus pandemic.

As Senator LANKFORD has often said to our country's public servants, "America could not succeed without you."

Public service is a noble calling, and millions answer that call every day, often underpaid and underappreciated. I am honored to thank these employees for keeping our communities and our Nation safe and secure, and for serving as examples to the next generation of public servants who will continue their legacy.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Colorado.

METHANE

Mr. BENNET. Mr. President, in Colorado we have come out of one of the worst wildfire seasons that we have ever seen. In fact, you can't really call it a season, I think, when the fires are still going on when the snow falls, but that is what happened this year, incredibly.

Three of the largest fires in our history all happened in the same year, and these fires displaced thousands of people in my State. They obscured the views of the mountains for weeks at a time. They forced families to pack their entire lives into duffle bags while their homes went up in flames. They shut down major highways for weeks and paralyzed local economies and blanketed our communities with smoke.

If you ask anyone in Colorado why this is happening, they will tell you it is because our State is becoming hotter and drier each year. If you ask farmers and ranchers in Colorado—and a lot of them are Republican—they will tell you they are facing drought that is longer and more intense than their parents or grandparents ever had to deal with.

Our mountain towns will tell you that they are struggling with ski seasons that are growing shorter each year. Our water officials will tell you that they are planning for a future with a lot less water to go around, and there wasn't enough water to begin with. And the reason for all of this is climate change.

That is why in Colorado, a purple State, a swing State in the middle of the country, there is absolutely a consensus that we have a moral responsibility to deal with climate change as a threat to our economy, to our environment, and to our way of life.

That responsibility extends to the U.S. Senate, but for most of the time I have been here, we have treated climate change like it was going to somehow solve itself or, in some cases, that it didn't even really exist. And nothing could be further from the truth. This is

a problem for all 50 States and every American. It is a problem for humanity, and we can't deal with it in an enduring way unless the hundred people in this body take action, until a hundred people here are willing to lead on a challenge that is existential, yes, and also global, yes, and is crying out for the leadership of the Senate.

There is nobody else to ride to the rescue. We have to do this, and we can start tomorrow by voting to reverse—and I hope it will be a big bipartisan vote tomorrow on voting to reverse—the last administration's terrible, counterproductive, self-destructive policy on methane pollution.

Methane is not something people ever think about, and it is one of the most powerful greenhouse gases behind climate change. It can be over 80 times more potent than carbon dioxide, and it is responsible for a quarter of all the warming that the planet has seen since the Industrial Revolution.

Today, one of the biggest sources of methane pollution is the oil and gas industry in my State and in the great State of Texas, where the senior Senator is from, and all across the country, where methane leaks into the atmosphere from old pipes, broken vents, and outdated practices like burning excess gas.

Methane pollution is terrible for the environment because it accelerates climate change. It is terrible for our health because it puts toxins in the air we breathe, especially for the nearly 10 million Americans who live near oil and gas wells or go to school near oil and gas wells. It is also terrible for industry because it makes their fuel much dirtier and it cuts into their bottom line.

That is why, years ago—I think it was 2014—in Colorado, under the leadership of then-Governor Hickenlooper, now Senator HICKENLOOPER, we adopted as a State the country's first-ever rules to limit methane pollution for oil and gas facilities. Governor Hickenlooper worked by bringing environmentalists and industry leaders together to craft a policy that reflected the consensus in my State around climate change and our economy. Our approach worked so well that the EPA and the Bureau of Land Management drew on it for methane rules at the Federal level.

When the last administration went after the rules at BLM, our late friend Senator John McCain led a bipartisan majority in this body to keep them in place. At the time, the Trump administration claimed that the Federal methane rules destroyed energy production and killed jobs. That was never true, to be polite about it.

In Colorado, our natural gas production has grown. Our oil production has nearly doubled. Our innovation and jobs have increased. Today, there are 52 different businesses in my State hiring people to repair pipes, to track pollution, and to develop new technologies to reduce pollution. This has strengthened our economy.

Colorado's approach worked so well that we have gone back and strengthened—strengthened—our methane rules another three times in 2017, in 2019, and 2020, each time with support from both environmental groups and industry.

But instead of learning from our example, the Trump administration went ahead with its plans to dismantle methane rules at the Federal level, and it did that over the objection of leading oil and gas operators in my State and across the country. And the result was a self-inflicted wound on our economy and our environment, and it compromised our leadership in the world.

Now I hope we will pick up the pieces in a bipartisan way, because here is what I think: We are not going to solve climate change until we have an American climate policy, just like we once had something we called U.S. foreign policy, where every President who was elected, whether they were Republican or Democrat, they roughly knew what their job was with respect to the Soviet Union, with respect to the transatlantic alliance. There were differences, of course, and we made lots of mistakes with that organizing principle, but it was an important organizing principle—that thing we called American foreign policy.

And we are going to need something called American climate policy. We didn't win the Cold War 2 years at a time, and we can't accept the politics in here, where I put in my ideas for healthcare and 2 years later they get ripped out, and we put in somebody's ideas for infrastructure and 2 years later they get ripped out. We can't tolerate it for those things—for education, for taxes. People want predictability. They don't want us to succumb to the political antics of Washington, DC, and this floor.

But when it comes to climate change, that is really true, because we can't fix it 2 years at a time. I often hear people say that we have to act urgently on climate change. We do. It is true. But we also need a solution that is durable—one that will last through changes in the majorities in the Congress and changes with who is in the White House, so that we can actually pass off that durable solution to our kids and grandkids, who can then pick up the baton.

So let me say this. You cannot accept, if you want to fix climate change, the broken politics that we have here. We can't accept the rubble that we sometimes have here. We have to do better, and I think we can. I think by starting with this methane rule—and hopefully doing it in a bipartisan way—it will be a great beginning.

Coming together on methane pollution is the perfect place to start. In Colorado, 91 percent of the people support limits on methane pollution. It has the support of environmental groups and industry, as I said earlier, including America's largest natural gas producers. It has a record of bipartisan support in this body, and it has the potential to create thousands of jobs—