

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—

high-paying jobs—mostly in rural areas, where people are reasonably concerned about what this energy transition is going to mean for them. Let's pay people to capture methane, to make the industry viable, to make the product less harmful, and to create high-paying jobs in rural areas in America that need them.

I know I don't have all the answers for how to build a durable climate policy in America, but I know that a sensible approach to methane has to be part of the solution, and that approach has to address not only new oil and gas facilities but existing ones like we have done in Colorado, and that is what this resolution will do. It will restore EPA's obligation to regulate all sources of methane emissions, including existing oil and gas operations, where there are hundreds of thousands of older wells that are responsible for 75 percent of methane emissions from the industry.

It will help us protect the environment and create jobs, and it will show the world that America can come together and that this Senate can come together in a bipartisan way to deal with climate change because, when I think about it, I don't want any of us to come back to this floor 10 years from now or 20 years from now and describe how we have just gone through the worst wildfire season ever or the worst hurricane season ever—more likely in the Presiding Officer's State than in my State—or the worst drought in our history.

I want them to come back and celebrate how America led the world to overcome the climate threat. I want them to praise the era of innovation and job creation unleashed across the country, and I want them to point out what we did in this Congress with this vote to put America on a path to protect our planet, grow our economy, and fulfill our responsibility to our kids and our grandkids.

So I urge my colleagues, every single one of them, to cast a vote for this important methane policy and to set us on the bipartisan course we need to create if we are going to have durable climate change policy in this country and if America is going to lead the world.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

BORDER SECURITY

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, tomorrow evening, across the Capitol, President Biden will deliver his first State of the Union Address. As we continue to make headway in our fight against COVID-19, I expect the President to reflect on the tremendous progress we have made and encourage Americans to get vaccinated. So far so good.

But I also believe he will try to frame the nearly \$2 trillion partisan bill that was rammed through Congress earlier this year as the driving force behind that progress, even though less than 10 percent of the bill was related to COVID-19.

I expect the President will call on Congress to pass his so-called infrastructure bill, which is similar to the COVID-19 relief bill in that it is a partisan bill having very little to do with the title of the bill itself. Only about 5 percent, in fact, goes toward roads and bridges, something we would all define as infrastructure.

I am hopeful that the President will finally announce a plan to address the crisis at our southern border because, so far, the administration has been largely silent. The crisis at the southern border is real; it is big; and it is growing. We are breaking all the wrong kinds of records, including the numbers of unaccompanied children, total monthly border crossings, and the capacity levels at our care facilities.

In March, we saw the highest number of border crossings on record, more than 172,000 individuals. That was a dramatic increase from the already eye-popping 100,000 in February—February, 100,000; March, 172,000; and, trust me, it is going to get nothing but worse.

Nearly 19,000 of these individuals were unaccompanied children, the highest numbers we have ever seen in a single month. Sometimes people will say: That child came to America all by himself or herself. I want to disabuse my colleagues of any notion that a child—small child—would make that trip to the United States “by themselves.” These children are being turned over to criminal organizations that are paid by the head to transport them from their country of origin into the United States and, unfortunately, these human smugglers, known in my part of the country as “coyotes,” care nothing for the welfare of those children. It is only the money that they could produce by transporting them to the United States that they care about.

It is true we know that a spike in migration is not an entirely new phenomena and, sadly, neither is the dramatic increase in the number of children, but the current surge is unlike any we have experienced in at least the last 20 years, according to Director Mayorkas.

These eye-popping numbers are compounded by a deadly pandemic. We have never seen that before. The pandemic, of course, has made once routine tasks like transporting and caring for migrants incredibly dangerous to the men and women who are performing those duties.

In an effort to downplay the seriousness of the border crisis or to defer attention from it altogether, the administration has spent literally no time talking about it, especially when compared to the time and energy that it has dedicated to things like climate change.

In fact, the Biden administration has spent the first several weeks of the surge denying that there is anything wrong at the border. Then they came up with some creative euphemisms to describe what has happened. They

called it a challenge. They called it a situation. They called it a mess. Well, as long as you didn't call it a crisis, they didn't seem too bothered by it.

A month ago, the President tapped the Vice President to lead efforts to address this crisis, which I thought was a positive sign, until I realized Vice President HARRIS acted as though the President had handed her a hand grenade and had pulled the pin because she couldn't get away from it fast enough, saying the next day that, well, her job is purely diplomatic in nature. She hasn't made a single trip to the border and, apparently, does not plan to do so at all.

The President has given lip service to encouraging migrants not to come, but those statements mean absolutely nothing when all of the other signals being sent by this administration are: There is a green light and a welcome mat out for migrants to come to the United States.

The situation is such that we are reaching a breaking point, and the Vice President and President could recognize that if they took the time to look and to learn from the very same people I have learned from, the experts who do these terribly difficult jobs along the border.

As you can imagine, I have spent a lot of time listening to those folks because I represent them. They are my constituents. I visited border communities and heard from the Border Patrol officers, mayors, county judges, and NGOs, nongovernmental organizations, that are doing the best they can dealing with overwhelming numbers.

I had the opportunity to actually talk to some of the migrants themselves about their journeys to our border and what brought them here. In the Rio Grande Valley, I spoke with three young mothers holding their crying infants less than a mile from the river they crossed into the United States. They had just undergone preliminary health screenings and were waiting for a bus to take them to a processing center.

And, please, our colleagues should understand these migrants are not trying to get away from the Border Patrol. They are literally walking up to the Border Patrol and turning themselves in because they realize that is the next step to their being placed into the interior of the United States and completing their journey.

Of course, as you can imagine, each of these mothers was hopeful. They made it to the United States and knew that as a family unit with young children they would be cared for by our government and then released into the interior of the United States. One of the mothers paid \$3,600, she said, to get here. Another paid \$6,000. This is big business for the smugglers and the criminal organizations that charge thousands of dollars to bring migrants to the U.S. border.

I think it is important to note that this is not just a Mexico-Central American phenomena. A couple of months