

on the Senate Energy Committee—every Republican signed the letter, sent it to Joe Biden, offered 10 points he could do and do now to make a difference for American energy production to help the American economy, to help with jobs, to help with energy production, and to help bring down the cost of energy.

We know what we need to do. To bring down inflation, we need to stop the reckless spending here in Washington, DC. Of course, that is gone now. The Democrats, on a single party-line vote—no Republican voted for it—did that last year to spark inflation and then all the rules and regulations and limitations on Americans' use of energy has added to and contributed to, today, a 40-year high of inflation.

Above all, we need to unleash American energy. We need to use American energy. More American energy will bring down the prices. We have it. When the Secretary of the Interior makes a statement that she wants us to keep all the oil and gas in the ground, that is a statement about this administration's lack of commitment to use American energy.

We have the opportunity in America to do it right. For more than a year now, the American people have been paying and paying and paying for the Democrats' anti-American energy policies, and they are sick and tired of it. You turn on the TV, and you see what is happening out there in the world. In Ukraine, people are getting killed by Vladimir Putin—a maternity ward and a hospital bombed, people killed. And what did former Secretary of State, John Kerry, the Democrats' climate envoy say in an interview to the BBC as the Russian troops encircled Ukraine? He said: I hope it doesn't distract from our climate agenda. That is obscene, and it is absurd.

The American people realize how absolutely ridiculous the position and how untenable the position of this administration is when you have the No. 1 climate spokesman for the administration, a former Secretary of State, somebody who was a Member of this body for years, close colleague and friend of the President of the United States—it is time for Joe Biden to stand up to John Kerry and to stand up to the climate elitists who say: Oh, no, no American energy because we are so pure.

The American people know what is important to them and their lives. We all want to make energy as clean as we can, as fast as we can, without raising costs on American families. The administration seems to be happy to see the prices go up on American families at a time when their wages are not keeping up with their expenses. It is long past time that we produce American energy and do it right here. We have the resources. We have the know-how. We have the workers. We are only missing one thing, and that is competent leadership in the White House and in the Democrats in this body on Capitol Hill.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

ENERGY

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. President, I was at the State of the Union Address, as was the Chair and most of the folks in this room.

In the State of the Union Address, the President made a very strong statement. I was pleased to be able to hear him say—he made this statement: We will buy American to make sure everything—everything—from the deck of an aircraft carrier to the steel on the highway guardrails is made in America from beginning to end. All of it. All of it.

Great. What he left out is what we have marked as little asterisks here on the “everything,” “all of it,” “all of it,” it seems to be, except oil and gas.

Oil and gas is one of those things that is essential for us. It is not just transportation. It is not just electricity. The carpet I am standing on has petroleum products in it. The finish on this desk has petroleum products in it. The suit that people are wearing often will have some petroleum products in it—maybe the buttons on the jacket, paint on the walls. There are petroleum products all over this room, and it is needed for all kinds of things.

Our economy is connected to petroleum. That doesn't mean we can't do it cleaner. That doesn't mean we can't do it better. But it is interesting to me to be able to note that when we talk about “Buy American” and “Doing American,” now, when there is the conversation and now decision finally from the Biden administration that we are going to cut off Russian oil and gas coming into the United States—good—that it immediately turns to let's get it from Venezuela or from Iran or find some other source.

We are all saying: Time out. There is this country called the United States. We also produce oil and gas, and we should be focused on what does it take to be able to do it more here so that we are not dependent on any country, especially a country that is run by an autocratic dictator.

I wish this was the only statement that I would challenge him on, but I was quite shocked that President Biden's envoy for climate, John Kerry, as the Russians were invading Ukraine, made this statement:

I hope [that] President Putin will help us to stay on track with respect to what we need to do for the climate.

And then he said that a Russian war could cause “massive emission consequences.”

Wow. The focus seemed to be on emissions consequences of a war, rather than the people of Ukraine. And the focus seemed to be on, “I hope President Putin will stay on track with respect to climate change,” rather than stop.

Listen, when I just talk to normal folks on the street in Oklahoma, they are frustrated by the price of gas. No matter how small their car is or how big their truck is, they are ticked at the high price of gasoline. They have been upset for a while. It is not just based on Ukraine. The price of gasoline just in the past 13 months has gone up over \$1 a gallon. That wasn't because of Russia and Ukraine. That was directly because of policies that are of the Biden administration.

And now, it is accelerating even more. We need to find a way to be able to create greater energy security for the United States of America, and that does involve actually producing more oil and gas.

I would say that the Biden administration and I disagree on this, but the little-known fact is we don't disagree on this. I do agree with the Biden administration because if you look at the Biden administration's official numbers that they actually put out from the energy information, when they put out their official numbers and they have to estimate how much oil and gas we will use globally, the official estimate from the Biden administration is, between now and 2050, we will continue to need progressively more and more natural gas and petroleum products—by the way, also more coal in their estimates as well. Where we are different from the Biden administration is they do acknowledge, privately, the facts and lay the data out and say we are going to need more oil and gas and more coal, not less, to provide the basic energy needs of the world.

Where I disagree with them is how they are trying to be able to push the world into other energy solutions by raising the price of oil and gas, which directly punishes consumers, and to be able to meet American climate goals, saying, if we are going to meet our American climate goals, we need to push production out to other countries and have them produce the oil and gas and send it to us so that we can show a good score for our climate while we still actually need to be able to purchase that oil from someone else.

Let's admit the obvious. We need all kinds of energy, and in the next 30 years, according to even the Biden administration, we are going to need more gas, natural gas, more petroleum, more oil, and more coal worldwide.

We are also going to need all kinds of other forms of energy. Unlike others, I am not opposed to every type of energy. Let's also make it as clean as we possibly can. We need to have all forms of energy out there, but we also need to admit the basic facts. We need oil and gas production.

And that doesn't mean we go get it from Venezuela. Venezuela is a ruthless human rights violator. The leadership of Venezuela tortures his own people. We need to not go run to Venezuela to be able to get additional oil.

We certainly don't need to go run to Iran. No, I don't know that this administration is running to Iran, but there

are great rumors that are flying around currently about the final negotiations of an Iran nuclear deal, and we are waiting to see what the actual details are, whether that is going to include putting Iranian oil on the world market. I hope it does not. I hope also that they deal with, in an Iran nuclear deal—they actually deal with the weapons that Iran is producing to actually deliver a nuclear warhead, as they continue to be able to test more and more missiles, with more and more range, with a larger and larger warhead size that is specifically designed for a nuclear warhead.

We shouldn't pay attention to nuclear material and ignore the delivery system that they are actually experimenting with.

I hope we pay attention to what is happening in Yemen. Iran is the largest state sponsor of terrorism, and they are actually delivering the products of war to Yemen that is actually trying to destabilize all their neighbors around them.

I hope we don't lift sanctions on Hezbollah, on Hamas, on those individuals who were part of actually murdering our marines in 1983 in Beirut.

Those individuals who took away the property of Jewish citizens in Iran in 1979, I hope all of those sanctions remain and that those aren't up for bid and that we are also not talking about buying Iranian oil. Solving our need for energy should not be running to dictators around the world to go get it from them.

So what is happening now? The administration has done a release of 30 million barrels from the United States Strategic Petroleum Reserve, which, by the way, is a day-and-a-half of our oil usage. It does have some effect, but it is a day-and-a-half of our oil usage.

It is not the long-term solution. Long term, that is not even a bump in prices. Long term, we have to have stable supply to meet the demands that we have in the country.

This administration is saying that there is more oil production now in the United States than there was 2 years ago. That is factually true. During the time of COVID, production of oil plummeted in the United States, so there is definitely more oil being produced now than there was during the peak of the time during COVID.

But they have also taken on multiple different items, from the very beginning of the administration, to do what they could to be able to attack the production of American oil and gas. From day 1, with cutting off the Keystone Pipeline, which, by the way, I have folks who catch me and say what difference would the Keystone Pipeline make? Well, let me give you an example. The Keystone Pipeline would deliver more oil to Houston, TX, a day than what Russia does a day to the United States.

We could literally replace Russian oil with what would have come through the Keystone Pipeline, but they killed

it because they had environmental goals. And why should we worry about where we buy our oil from? Why should we buy it from the Canadians when we can buy it from the Russians—was the theory.

Well, I think we know why I would much rather be buying from the Canadians today than buying from Putin's Russia. That was done right off the bat.

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, just 2 weeks ago—not ancient history, just 2 weeks ago—announced a new restriction on natural gas pipelines and said they will make decisions on export facilities of natural gas and natural gas pipelines on a case-by-case basis based on their mitigation plans that they will present—no definition of what that would mean.

It is basically, if you are going to sink billions of dollars into doing a pipeline, we will make our decision when you are in process. What does that do? That discourages any company from actually doing a natural gas pipeline or certainly an export facility. When right now Europe is screaming at us to export more natural gas, FERC, literally, during the war, announced they are going to make it harder to do natural gas exports.

The Obama-era rule on waters of the United States destabilized a lot of investment because no one knew what was going to be the issue and what was not going to be the issue. The Biden administration is now saying they want to be able to reopen all of that and to create less certainty on investment.

There was a pause on oil and gas lease sales. They said they were going to do a temporary moratorium. They started that on January 20, 2021. It hasn't reopened yet, their temporary moratorium.

Every 5 years there is a plan that has to be presented for offshore leases and how they are actually going to do offshore work. That plan is due in June of this year. As far as we can tell, the administration has taken up nothing on it, meaning offshore will have no ability to be able to continue permitting because they are just apparently not going to do the plan, which means you don't get access to those leases.

So whether it is offshore, whether it is onshore, they are cutting off future supplies.

If that is not hard enough, the administration nominated Sarah Raskin to be Vice Chair of Supervision for the Federal Reserve, who has made public statements that she wants to be able to use the Federal Reserve to be able to help cut off capital to anyone who handles fossil fuels.

So, basically, if you can't get loans and you can't transport from here to there through a pipeline and you can't get additional leases offshore or onshore on Federal lands, you have severely limited the locations that you can actually get energy long term, while Biden's own energy information group says we are going to continue to need more oil and gas, more coal in the

days ahead—the facts versus the reality of what they are actually putting into place.

Now, again, electric vehicles don't offend me. For those folks who can afford an expensive electric vehicle, that is great. It is 2 percent of the vehicles on the road, and they are fine. I don't have a problem with them. But even when they talk about, let's do what we can to double the number of electric vehicles that are on the road, great, we will be at 4 percent of the vehicles on the road will be electric.

The other 96 percent of the people in the country want to go to school, want to go to work, want to go to the grocery store, want to travel on vacation, and right now to do that, they are paying the price for it.

Let's have all forms of energy. Let's have some realism in our conversation. Let's do what we can to be able to open up energy production.

What am I doing? I have a specific piece of legislation that deals with the permitting processes. It deals with some of the Executive actions that President Biden has put into place to be able to slow down the production of American energy. It opens up the process so we can actually get back to producing more American energy.

I am also promoting some very key things that the administration can do right now. For instance, when energy companies are looking to do investment for additional drilling, they are asking the question how long is the war going to happen? When is all this going to fall apart? And no one knows that.

The administration today could announce we are doing a moratorium on buying Russian oil for the next 12 months, lay out a firm date on it, and then say 12 months from now we will review it. What difference does that make? That tells energy companies, if you are going to invest and you are planning to come online in the next year, we are not going to cut your legs out from under you by the United States buying Russian oil again in a few months; that we actually do American investments to be able to actually replace the Russian oil that is coming in.

This administration could also today say we are not going to make any changes to any of the rules that are out there that will affect any of the process for developing American oil and gas for the next 12 months, just a pause on making any changes on that.

And this administration could actually open up Federal leasing, which, by the way, is not a radical idea. It is the law. The law says that the administration has to do it every quarter, and so far four quarters in a row the Biden administration has ignored the law of the United States and just not done the leases, saying: They have plenty. I don't want to do more.

Four quarters in a row they violated the law.

So what could the Biden administration do to be able to help American

production? Follow the law; put a pause on new restrictions; declare how long they are going to actually hold off on Russian oil and how long that will be to give certainty for people in their investment; and pause all these new restrictions on capital.

If the Biden administration did that today, we would see an even greater increase in oil. Listen, there is no incentive that needs to be put in place. I have had folks say: What incentives do we need to put in place to be able to increase American production? Can I just say oil is at \$120 a barrel.

There is no incentive that needs to be put in place. The problem is not the incentive; the problems are the restrictions on the other side. With that certainty in a constantly changing environment, very few people want to be able to take the risk for it.

So if Secretary Granholm is serious when she is calling out oil companies to ramp up production, do the work behind the scenes to open the path for them so that they have that kind of certainty.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

UKRAINE

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. President, conditions are bad in Ukraine, and they are getting worse. Vladimir Putin's war is escalating in severity and scale.

This past Sunday, we received the first public reports that Russia is now deploying proxy fighters to Ukraine. Putin put out the call to action in Syria, Southeast Asia, and Chechnya, and now the mercenaries are pouring in. On Tuesday, we heard further allegations that as many as 1,000 proxy fighters from the Kremlin-backed Wagner Group will deploy to Ukraine and attack Kyiv.

This latest news about proxy developments makes it even more obvious how willfully blind the President has been to the disaster unfolding in Ukraine. If you look back at footage from the past few months, it is clear that the Biden administration thought they would be able to talk Putin out of this. They thought they could send in the diplomats, offer a few concessions, pat everyone on the back, and head home. But while they were lining up their talking points, Vladimir Putin was lining up bodies to throw at Ukrainian defenses.

When we first started to debate the threat that the Chinese Communist Party poses to the free world, it took a lot of time to convince the skeptics of China's tight hold on the global order. Through the Belt and Road Initiative, cheap telecom build-outs, and control over important supply chains, Beijing has created spheres of economic influence all across the globe.

The Kremlin has done the same thing with its proxies. But it is important to remember that this is not new informa-

tion. The existence of Wagner and other Russian proxy groups is not a secret, and neither is their brutal history.

This won't be Wagner's first time in Ukraine. In fact, that is where these mercenaries actually got started. But for the past decade, they have been wreaking havoc all across Africa. Again, this is no secret. We know for a fact that they have caused chaos and bloodshed in Syria, Libya, Yemen, Sudan, Madagascar, Mozambique, and the Central African Republic and that they have helped turn Mali into yet another "hermit kingdom." And what have the Russians received in return? They have gotten access to oilfields, diamond mines, silver, gold, and other extremely valuable natural resources.

By using his proxies, Putin gets the best of all worlds. He is able to force open doors into strategically important areas. He will then suck them dry of their natural resources and make his own name synonymous with violence in the face of resistance.

Furthermore, mercenaries exist outside the bounds of laws and norms, which means groups like Wagner operate with impunity and give cover and plausible deniability to Moscow. In their opinion, it is the perfect legal fiction.

Meanwhile, these proxy fighters have been accused of abductions, torture, and rape. They murder journalists and conduct summary executions on behalf of their Kremlin overlords. They target civilian populations with the specific purpose of terrorizing innocents and eliminating dissent, and when they are done, they simply disappear. That is what Vladimir Putin is preparing to unleash on the brave Ukrainian people.

I sent, and other Members joined me—we have insisted since February 24 that this is not a special military operation; this is a war. But by bringing proxies into the mix, Putin has signaled that he is prepared to do more than inflict violence on key strategic targets; he is preparing for a massacre.

This isn't a head fake. He knows exactly what he is doing because he has done it before. He is following the Syria playbook to the letter, from the booby-trapped humanitarian corridors to his use of cluster bombs, to the presence of proxies to carry out his dirty deeds.

It is no wonder that Moscow has ordered their fighters to travel with mobile crematoriums. It is the only way they will be able to even attempt to cover up the brutality inflicted by Putin's private army.

Over the past few months, Putin has shown us exactly what he intends to do to the brave Ukrainian people. He has made no attempt to hide behind diplomacy. His military commits war crimes in broad daylight for the benefit of the cameras. The introduction of proxies is the natural progression of this increasingly savage attack.

It is time for President Biden to pull the blinders off and decide what Amer-

ica's response ought to be, and he has to do that right now.

We have deprioritized the African theater for far too long, and now it is a breeding ground for glorified terror squads. That absolutely has to change. Russia is using proxies this very moment to destabilize and exploit Mali. We know what they did to the people of Syria. The pictures were too graphic for the nightly news. It is time to remind the world what happened there and make it clear that unless we do something, Ukraine is next.

We must also send a strong signal to Putin, Wagner, and other thugs around the world that there will be no more hiding. Collect the evidence now. Document the war crimes now. Prepare for prosecutions now. We must let Vladimir Putin know that no amount of propaganda can cover up the atrocities that he and his private army plan to commit against the people of Ukraine. But we have to do it before it is too late to free the world from Moscow's grip.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

POSTAL SERVICE REFORM ACT

Mr. PETERS. Mr. President, on Tuesday night, the Senate took a significant and historic vote to strengthen one of our Nation's oldest and most trusted institutions—the U.S. Postal Service.

For the past 15 years, this vital service that delivers to every single community in our country, no matter how remote, has faced unfair, burdensome requirements that have jeopardized its financial stability and its ability to provide reliable and timely delivery to Americans all across our country.

With 79 votes for the Postal Service Reform Act—one of the strongest bipartisan votes the Senate has delivered during this Congress—we passed significant reforms that will set the Postal Service on a more stable financial footing, preserve mail delivery for 6 days a week, and ensure greater transparency of delivery performance for the people who are counting on the Postal Service to bring them critical mail.

When our Nation's Founders enshrined the Postal Service in our Constitution, they could have never envisioned what a vital role this institution would play in the daily lives of Americans. Whether it is families who are receiving critical medications or connecting with loved ones, veterans and seniors who are relying on the mail for benefits and Social Security checks, or small businesses that are sending important financial documents and their products to customers, Americans are counting on the Postal Service to deliver. Over the past few years—especially during COVID-19—we have seen just how essential the Postal Service is to keeping our country connected.