

me and who offered their advice this past year. Their wisdom is what guides my decisions here in Washington. I only wish that my Democratic colleagues would take their words to heart as well.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I will proceed with my trusty, battered "Time to Wake Up" chart and my—I don't know—280-something speech.

For once, I can start with some good news, which is that the Democrats, at last, passed a climate-focused reconciliation bill this year. This is a huge step and essential, given the cascade of harms climate change is already inflicting: wildfire in Yosemite National Park, billions of dollars in flood damage; Europe broils in heat wave; extreme heat led to "brutal" rise in sea temperatures; dangerous heat hits United States; emissions rising of methane, glacier tragedies; Houston slogs through brutal heat; climate change is forcing massive wildlife migration. Wherever you look, you see the news of what is happening—heat waves, droughts, wildfires, collapsing glaciers, rising seas, record carbon dioxide and methane concentrations in the atmosphere.

It is a bombardment of hard evidence that the Earth is fast becoming less hospitable for human life. The costs of our political negligence are high and rising.

My friends across the aisle like to fixate on the price of gasoline, which undeniably affects family budgets. But climate change imposes costs on American families much worse than gasoline prices. Climate change causes effects that raise insurance premiums, snarl supply chains, reduce crop yields, sicken people, and damage cars, homes, and businesses.

A lot of thoughtful groups have quantified this damage. The International Monetary Fund estimates this "climate tax" on American families at over \$5,000 per year based on their calculation that we subsidize fossil fuel by allowing them to get away with doing all this pollution and harm for free to the tune of \$660 billion every year. That is the International Monetary Fund—5,000 bucks per family from climate change harms.

They are not alone, of course. Resources for the Future, which is a well-regarded, well-trusted calculation shop, has just looked at what the social cost of carbon should be, and they pegged it at \$185 per ton of carbon emissions. Right now, the nominal social cost of carbon left over from the Obama administration is \$51 per ton. Resources for the Future has done a more rigorous calculation and puts it at \$185 in harm per ton of carbon emitted.

What does this all add up to? Well, you can go to corporate consulting firm Deloitte, which is a corporate con-

sulting firm. We are not talking about, you know, Green New Deal folks here. This is a corporate consultancy. They say that inaction on climate change could cost the world's economy \$178 trillion over the next 50 years.

Now, the bad news is climate change harms could cost \$178 trillion. The good news is if we got after this and behaved responsibly, you could gain \$43 trillion in economic development in that same time period. So if you put the two together, that is a \$220 trillion swing depending on decisions that we make today. So it kind of matters to getting this right, and we are not yet getting this right.

The reconciliation bill, good as it is, won't decarbonize our economy in time without a lot more action. The bill likely takes expected emissions reduction from around 25 percent, which we are assuming right there—that is our baked-in number—and it raises it to about 40 percent. So it is a 15-percent increase in emissions reduction, from 25 percent to 40 percent. So that is good. That is good, but it still leaves much to do, because, remember, net zero is the target, and if you have reduced by 40 percent, that still leaves 60 percent that is work to be done.

So soon we are going to need another bill, and the contours of such a bill, if it is going to be effective, are pretty clear.

There is bipartisan interest in a carbon border adjustment, which would make American manufacturing more competitive and reduce carbon pollution worldwide. We export pressure against carbon pollution with a carbon border tariff.

There is also bipartisan interest in commonsense permitting reform to safely and quickly build out the clean energy infrastructure of the future. My coastal State needs it for offshore wind. The Presiding Officer's Mountain State needs it for transmission lines to connect to the grid the capacity we have for solar and wind.

And the fossil fuel industry at least pretends to be interested in a price on carbon emissions. Now, that is just pretense. They put their whole political operation into effect to make sure none of that happens, but it is a good sign. It is a step on the path when they have to pretend to support a price on emissions. That is a step on the way to actually supporting a price on carbon emissions.

I will do everything in my power to do all of those things. But let's be clear. It would be much easier if corporate America were not a wall of opposition to serious climate bills.

And it is not just the fossil fuel industry. Banking, insurance, retail, tech—pick your industrial sector. You name it—in this building, useless on climate. Or worse, there is a huge spread between what they tell their shareholders and their customers and the public and what they send their emissaries into Congress to tell us.

And until that is solved, until corporate America aligns what it is telling

the public with what it is doing in Congress, legislation is going to be tough to do.

So that leaves the executive branch, and that is what brings me to the floor today, because there is a lot that the executive branch can do under existing executive authorities. And in this recent article, the White House said they were going to get started:

Biden Prepares More Actions to Cut Emissions.

Regulations from the E.P.A. and elsewhere will help the president meet his aggressive climate goals.

"The president has not chosen to just look at Congress, he's chosen to recognize that he has presidential authorities and responsibilities under the law to keep moving this forward."

Well, he sure does, and there is plenty of room to do different things and new things.

So what can be done by executive action?

Let's go through the largest sources of greenhouse gas emissions since that is our target. The No. 1 source—by the way, these 11 sources of carbon pollution amount to almost 70 percent of our carbon emissions. So if we can tackle these, we are making a big dent in that remaining 60 percent left undone.

So cars and light trucks is the largest category. It generates almost a fifth of total U.S. carbon pollution.

The EPA and DOT restored Obama-era greenhouse gas emission standards. So now go further, as California has. Start with model year 2027 and begin a ramp-up to 100 percent zero-emission vehicles by 2035.

There is authority for this under the Clean Air Act and the 2007 Energy Independence and Security Act. And, by the way, when you double your car's energy efficiency, doubling your fuel economy is exactly the same thing as cutting oil prices and gasoline prices in half. So push in that direction.

And, by the way, getting off of fossil fuel for cars and light trucks will help us get off the Big Oil treadmill of cartel prices that are set with the help of foreign despots in Russia, in Saudi Arabia, in Venezuela, outside the rule of American law. But Americans have to pay because our oil industry goes along with the international cartel instead of charging market-based prices. We just saw them do that and reap record profits. So there is a lot to be done on cars and light trucks.

Coal-fired powerplants is the next biggest one. Coal-fired powerplants belch carbon pollution, but also a lot of other pollutants. So if you regulate for health against those other pollutants, you get a lot of cobenefits with carbon pollution.

Among the worst is fine particulate matter, which is also known as soot or, more technically, PM 2.5. It is the leading cause of the estimated 100,000 to 200,000 air pollution-related premature deaths each year. So it is causing real harm.

And then you add in coal ash, which is the toxic sludge left after you burn

coal, loaded with arsenic, mercury, lead, and uranium, and often stored in lagoons which sometimes burst, just as you see in this picture, not only swamping this farmhouse but also poisoning rivers and ground water.

This should be a “never event.” This should be a “never event,” but it is not. It is all too frequent, and poor communities often take the hit. EPA regulations can eliminate these threats and produce carbon reduction cobenefits.

Nothing in the recent West Virginia v. EPA decision prevents EPA from requiring that coal-fired powerplants install carbon capture technology. And carbon capture technology can eliminate up to 95 percent of the carbon pollution. Add EPA’s authority under the Clean Air Act and the Clean Water Act to regulate fine particulate matter and coal ash, and you can make real progress.

That brings us, then, to gas-fired powerplants, the next category. They are big carbon polluters, and they are still being built. EPA regulations for new and existing gas-fired plants can limit their carbon pollution the same way. Carbon capture can be one option. Co-firing with zero carbon hydrogen could be another option.

Next on the list is heavy-duty vehicles, trucks, and buses. Now EPA has a proposed rule, and that proposed rule on trucks and buses does nothing to reduce carbon pollution. EPA and DOT have ample authority here, and they should use it. California has its own “advanced clean trucks rule” requiring increased zero emission heavy-duty vehicles. If EPA can’t do any better, then follow California’s lead.

Next comes methane, spewing from oil and gas facilities as leaks, vents, or flares. EPA has a proposed rule—no actual rule yet—but even the proposed rule has flaws. First, it doesn’t cover low-producing wells. A low-producing well can be a very high-leaking well.

So whether it is high or low producing should matter less than whether it is a big leaker.

Second, the rule does little for venting and flaring, which are major pollution sources. Now one development is that satellites can now very precisely locate methane leaks. So we can aggressively pursue and punish big methane polluters, and we should do that. Set up a task force. Have people go hunting for the big methane leaks. Find who is responsible and get after them.

If you do all that, it would cover more than half of gross carbon emissions in the United States. So let’s do it. No more complaining about not enough staff. EPA has more employees than all of Congress combined. If you don’t have enough staff, then detail folks in from the regional offices, borrow from your State counterparts. Do what it takes to get after this like you mean it, because we need to.

There is a list that I tweeted out of things that the administration could

be doing within its existing executive authorities. Within the White House, OMB, or the Office of Management and Budget, 18 months in, needs to finalize its social cost of carbon, the costs and the harms from each ton of carbon pollution emitted. That is the number that I mentioned earlier that Resources for the Future just calculated at \$185 per ton.

OMB needs to finalize the social cost of carbon, set the number, and require its use throughout government decision making. All the regulatory agencies should use it, even the quasi-independents.

And you can add in procurement decisions. The Federal Government contracts for over \$600 billion in goods and services every year. We buy buildings, vehicles, planes, cement, steel, appliances. You name it, the government buys it. Plug the social cost of carbon into procurement, as many private companies do, and you engage the power of government contracting against the climate threat.

And when you do that, that then drives economies of scale that make those low-carbon projects and products cheaper for everyone else, not just the government buyer.

The social cost of carbon should drive Department of Interior fossil fuel royalty rates for oil, gas, and coal produced on Federal lands and waters. Those rates right now are so low that we lose money on royalties compared to the costs that those fossil fuels impose on all of us. That is just dumb and also unfair. So let’s fix that flagrant imbalance by putting the social cost of carbon into the fees and royalties.

I would add that the Department of Justice has a role to play here. Years ago, under the Clinton administration, the Department of Justice sued Big Tobacco for decades of misrepresentations about the harms of its product. Well, DOJ won that lawsuit, and they won big, and they got a court order requiring Big Tobacco to quit lying.

Well, like Big Tobacco, Big Oil has spent decades misrepresenting the dangers associated with its product. The Department of Justice is way overdue to take a serious look at fossil fuel lies.

As they look around the country, they see States and municipalities and counties bringing lawsuits against the fossil fuel industry. It is happening out there. It is incumbent on the Department of Justice to advise the President on what the Department of Justice should be doing. To turn a blind eye to all that litigation, to ignore its own victory in the tobacco case, to refuse to recommend to the President any course of action or to take any course of action is just not an acceptable way of going forward. If the DOJ took an honest look, I bet they would find the case against Big Oil every bit as solid as the case they won against Big Tobacco.

And while we are at it, there is the bully pulpit. The administration should use the bully pulpit to call out

the dark money, the lies, the fake science, the phony front groups, the spin doctors, the co-opted lobby groups, the dirty political spending, the whole apparatus, the whole machinery that the fossil fuel industry has used to corrupt Congress and obstruct progress.

Calling out crooks is the right thing to do, and the public deserves to know that there is a villain here who has blocked progress on purpose and what that villain is up to.

There is a lot that the Biden administration can and should be doing. Yes, it is good to declare a climate emergency. It is better to act like it is a climate emergency and deploy your Executive authorities accordingly. That means the sort of regulatory surge I have just outlined—no waffling, no excuses.

A winning strategy ultimately includes regulation, litigation, legislation, acquisition, and communication. Across those five fronts, the Biden administration should have a plan to move forward in each and every one. It needs the kind of leadership that Eisenhower gave to the Normandy landing and the invasion that followed.

By the way, while you are organizing it that way, do it with gusto. This is a fight that is worth having. It is not just that the planet depends on it; it is not just that our international credibility depends on it; it is not just cleaning out this place from rotten fossil fuel industry depends on it; it is the right thing to do. The American public will stand behind a President who stands up against lies and dark money and the schemes to blockade climate safety.

So I will close by saying that whether there was ever a time for half-hearted, half-baked, and halfway measures, it is done. We need to build on the success of the Inflation Reduction Act. We need to take that as a launchpad, a first chapter, not a last chapter. And on this fight, it is all in or lose because our adversaries are determined. They are just wrong, but they are determined. So it is all in or lose.

By the way, if we lose this race, the laws of chemistry and physics are going to be unforgiving.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. SMITH). The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BROWN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

LABOR DAY

Mr. BROWN. Madam President, earlier this week, we celebrated Labor Day, a day when Americans come together to honor the people who make this country work.

Whether you punch a clock, whether you swipe a badge, whether you earn a salary, whether you make tips, whether you are caring for children or an