

news is that this morning, it was announced that Northwestern University—which I am proud to represent in the city of Chicago—has made some breakthroughs. If you will bear with me for a moment, I want to make sure I state this properly:

For the first time, previously unusable chemotherapy drugs reached brain tumors in humans after a cutting-edge procedure at Northwestern University team [in Chicago].

Doctors achieved the breakthrough with an innovative mix of ultrasound and microbubbles that opened the blood-brain barrier to allow the drugs to pass through.

Dr. Adam Sonabend, one of the co-lead investigators, said:

This is a starting point to open the doors for . . . 95% of drugs that are usually not [even] considered for treating brain diseases.

The Northwestern team released a report on the use of the procedure to treat 17 patients with glioblastoma, the most common and malignant form of brain cancer that has been viewed as incurable. The treatment led to a four- to sixfold increase in drug concentrations in the patients' brains, the researchers [said].

Dr. Sonabend goes on to explain the situation: The blood-brain barrier that blocks many drugs used to treat cancer also blocks the dye that they were using to see if they could finally go through with this procedure. Dr. Sonabend said when he injected the dye while using the new ultrasound procedure, the dye appeared first in the patient's blood vessels, but then it passed the blood-brain barrier and spread into the brain. The patient's brain lit up on the x ray that was taken during this procedure to show the effectiveness of this approach.

Dr. Roger Stupp, chief of neurooncology at Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine also helped to lead the project. He said that "This is the first trial that has taken it to the next level with chemotherapy drugs" that you ordinarily could not use for brain tumors.

Dr. Sonabend said:

"In glioblastoma patients, cancer cells scattered through the brain surrounding the tumor inevitably linger after surgery. They have been impossible to get to . . ."

Now we have an avenue that might be promising to start dealing in more effective ways, not only with brain cancer but also with Parkinson's and Alzheimer's.

It is amazing to me. It literally made my day to read that story, that these researchers funded by the National Institutes of Health here in Washington may have finally come through with the ultimate breakthrough that will allow us to treat brain cancer more effectively. Can you imagine the hope this creates in the hearts and minds of so many families who have a victim of brain cancer in their family?

Now why do I raise this on the floor other than to tell you, I think, a fascinating and important story? I do it because it is a political issue. We just heard the Republican leader of the Senate come forward and tell us that he supports the proposal by the House Republicans on budget cuts.

Do you know what the House Republican budget does to medical research at the NIH?

Let me read it to you. They propose ending the bipartisan commitment to the National Institutes of Health by cutting more than \$10 billion in 2024. That is 25 percent of the budget for medical research and more than \$100 billion over the next 10 years. That will shutter hundreds of labs across the country, lead to fewer drugs being developed for cancer, diabetes, serious mental illness, and other devastating conditions. It will decimate American biotechnology innovation and economic growth. Sadly, it will allow China to become the global leader in biomedical R&D.

So when we talk about the budget here and budget cuts and they say: We are just going to cut \$10 billion, we have got to step back and say: Well, what does that do for medical research in America? Take a step backwards. The hard bipartisan work that brought us to \$40 billion is wiped away overnight. Researchers like those at Northwestern may lose heart and worry whether or not there is enough money to continue their research projects and innovation.

What will we lose in terms of quality of life? We will lose the opportunity to come up with the cures that people count on.

That is why this means so much to me. It is a small part of the cuts that have been proposed by the Republicans in the House, but it is the part that troubles me the most. We have got to keep our commitment to medical research for the good of this Nation and for the families that count on us to make certain we come up with new cures.

We are blessed in America to have the best researchers on Earth. I would take them over any other country, and most Americans would. But are we going to stand by them, or are we going to make the deep cuts in areas like medical research as part of this political debate?

JUDICIARY COMMITTEE HEARINGS

Mr. President, you were there yesterday when the Senate Judiciary Committee met. I chair that committee, and we had a strong turnout of Democrats and Republicans to consider an issue which everyone has read about and heard about over the last several weeks, and that is, the ethical standards applied at the Highest Court in the land, the United States Supreme Court, across the street.

We all read the news stories that led to this hearing and the questions raised about one particular Justice—but not him alone—in terms of gifts that they received and whether it influences their decisionmaking on the Court. That is basic and fundamental. If you think the fix is in on the Court, you don't have much respect for their operation.

So the question is, what is going on in the Supreme Court? And as it turns

out, as you well know, we have ethical standards and codes of conduct all across the Federal Government that apply to the Members of the Senate and the House and executive branch and to all of the courts below the Supreme Court in terms of financial disclosure and basic rules on what you can do and what you can't do.

For example, there is a basic standard that is used for gifts—gifts for Members of the Senate and House—that puts a limit of \$50 on the value of any gift. I have returned gifts given to me that I think exceeded that value, and I am sure the Presiding Officer has as well. That is our standard. But there is no ethics code of conduct, as best we can understand, when it comes to the Supreme Court, the Highest Court in the land. So, it turns out the Highest Court in the land has some of the lowest ethical standards.

Why? Well, when this came to light in the news articles relating to Justice Thomas, I wrote to the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, John Roberts, and invited him to come to the hearing yesterday to tell his side of the story. What is the Supreme Court doing when it comes to ethical standards? They don't play by the same rules as all the other courts in the America. What are their standards?

Well, the Chief Justice declined my invitation and sent along some documents to indicate what he thinks are the rules of the road for ethics in the Supreme Court now. They were interesting; but, unfortunately, they reveal that the standards of the Highest Court in the land are not equal to the standards of all the other Federal courts.

So we had a hearing yesterday on the subject. We invited witnesses from the Republican side and the Democratic side to comment on the current state of affairs. If the Chief Justice could not appear or would not appear, we went forward with the investigation, which is our responsibility under the law.

Now asking a Justice of the Supreme Court to come and testify before a congressional committee is not unusual. Ninety-two appearances have been made by Justices of the Supreme Court since 1960 before the committees of Congress. But yesterday, neither the Chief Justice nor any other Justice on the Supreme Court appeared before us.

So what we found was a surprise to me. I thought there would be some bipartisanship in this, because in the not-too-distant past, two Senators on the committee had crafted an ethics bill on the disclosure of stock holdings, sent not only to the President to sign, but it was embraced as well by the Supreme Court—a bipartisan, thoughtful measure, for sure.

But yesterday, I am afraid things were very partisan. First, there was a question as to whether or not this was an attempt to attack the conservative members of the Supreme Court by raising ethical questions. I tried to make a point, several times, that the first letter that I sent to the Chief Justice—

this Chief Justice—on the issue of a code of ethics in the Supreme Court, I delivered on February 13, 2012, during the Obama administration. So this is not some newfound interest. I have been working on it for years. My colleague Senator SHELDON WHITEHOUSE also has dedicated a major part of his Senate career on this issue of ethical standards before the Supreme Court. So the notion that we just invented this because of unhappiness with recent court decisions just doesn't hold up. Many of us have been working on this issue for years—years before any of these decisions were handed down.

There was also an argument that the Congress has no authority to establish standards for the Supreme Court. As I mentioned earlier when we had this stock disclosure law passed last year, it was embraced by the Court. The Court goes through some form of financial disclosure based on the law passed in 1978. By and large, there are many ways that the Congress interfaces with the Supreme Court, not the least of which is its budget. So we are in constant communication with the Court and its operation.

I believe that we clearly have the authority to establish ethical standards in law for the Supreme Court. The Republicans on our committee, to a person, disagree with it.

We also had an argument made that somehow we had singled out Clarence Thomas, a Justice on the Supreme Court, and decided that he was going to be persecuted by this type of inquiry. Well, let me say, the facts that were disclosed about his gift-taking from a Texas billionaire were extraordinary. I think they were a surprise to most people.

Justice Thomas is not denying the fact that he took hundreds of thousands of dollars' worth of vacations—yacht trips to Indonesia, private aircraft—from this Texas billionaire. He dismissed it and said it was personal hospitality. Personal hospitality does not include transportation, and, of course, this included a lot of the most luxurious transportation imaginable that the Justice received. So to say that this was acceptable conduct, it clearly was to Republicans yesterday, but I think most Americans want to know more about the relationship that would lead a Justice to take hundreds of thousands of dollars' worth of trips. Not to mention that this same billionaire bought his mother's home and allowed her to live there afterwards. So that was worth at least \$140,000 to the benefit of the Justice's family again.

There were questions raised throughout as to why we would pick on one conservative Justice. I will tell you, the disclosures that have come out since the Thomas article about the gifts he received from the Texas billionaire have included many members of the Court, certainly those who wouldn't be put in the conservative category, and questions have been raised.

Questions are raised about Members of Congress all the time, and they should be. I know each year when I disclose my taxes and my net worth in detail, somebody is going to call it into question: Explain this item to me. Explain that item to me. That is part of the responsibility of public service. It is no fun, but it is part of the job. If you want to be a public figure, I think you owe it to the people to be assuring them in every step of the way that you are being honest in the way you discharge your duties.

So we haven't given up. When it comes to the Senate Judiciary Committee and the issue of ethics, we are far from finished. We had good testimony yesterday from witnesses who I think give us a basis for moving forward in this area.

At the end of the day, we want to make sure that people, as skeptical as they are of politicians, as they have every right to be, believe the institutions—whether it is Congress or the Supreme Court or the President's office—are at least credible and trustworthy. Establishing a fundamental ethical standard that assures that fact is absolutely essential, and the Senate Judiciary Committee will continue in that pursuit.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

ENERGY

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, last week, I came to the floor to talk about how the President's economic policies are failing to serve the lower and middle-income Americans he claims are his priority.

The President talks about wanting to give American families "a little more breathing room," but his Big Government, big spending policies are taking away Americans' breathing room, as cash-strapped families struggling with the effects of the President's historic inflation crisis can attest.

Today, I want to talk about another set of the President's policies that aren't serving Americans, and that is the President's energy policy. Since the day he took office, President Biden has pursued an agenda that is hostile to conventional sources of energy; namely, oil and natural gas. He set the tone on his very first day in office when he canceled the Keystone XL Pipeline—an environmentally responsible pipeline project that was already underway, and was to be paired with \$1.7 billion in private investment in renewable energy to fully offset—fully offset—its operating emissions.

He also almost immediately froze new oil and gas leases on Federal land,

sending a clear signal to oil and gas producers that his administration would be reluctant to work with them to increase American energy production. And he has continued along the same lines ever since, from raising taxes on conventional energy to proposing a rule that would effectively mandate that automakers only make electric vehicles beginning in the near future. The President's policies have targeted conventional energy.

In March, the President announced that he would close off a substantial part of the Arctic to oil and gas development. In the same week, his Environmental Protection Agency finalized a rule—a so-called good neighbor rule that threatens to close a number of fossil fuel-powered power plants.

So why is all this a problem? After all, Members of both parties support alternative energy technologies. Why are the President's efforts to shut down conventional energy production a problem?

Well, the President's attacks on conventional energy are a problem because conventional energy still plays an essential role in providing a steady, reliable energy supply to American consumers.

No matter how much the White House might wish it weren't the case, the technology to fully transition the United States to clean energy simply doesn't exist yet, and all of the Green New Deal, anti-conventional energy policies in the world can't change that basic fact.

What the President's Green New Deal, anti-conventional energy policies can do, however, is jeopardize our Nation's energy supply and drive up prices for American consumers. Americans know the energy price hikes of the Biden administration all too well. From restricting oil and gas production to imposing tax hikes on conventional energy, President Biden's energy policies have driven up Americans' energy costs, but that will be nothing compared to what will happen if the President succeeds in choking off and drastically reducing conventional energy production. Prices will soar; blackouts, brownouts, and calls for energy rationing will become commonplace; and our economic and national security will be in jeopardy.

We are not at the point yet where we are experiencing blackouts and brownouts on a regular basis—unless, I guess, you are a resident of California, whose energy grid is known for being unreliable because of the State's overreliance on renewables—but the President's policies could push us over the edge.

In February, the PJM Interconnection, which manages a substantial part of Eastern America's electric grid, released a report warning that fossil fuel plants are being forced to retire at a faster rate than new renewables can be brought online, at a rate of roughly 2 to 1. In other words, we are rapidly approaching a situation where we simply don't have the ability to keep up with