

the electricity demand, and as the report underscored, that situation is being driven by anti-conventional energy policies.

The Wall Street Journal, which weighed in after the PJM report was released, noted that “most projected powerplant retirements are ‘policy driven.’” That is what the report says. In other words, powerplants aren’t closing because they have reached the end of their operating lives; they are closing because of policies designed to discourage conventional energy.

I have already mentioned the EPA’s new good neighbor rule, which could force powerplants in 22 States to close. Then there are things like utility company environmental, social, and governance—or ESG—policies. They are policies that utility companies can voluntarily adopt but that this administration wants to mandate, which the PJM report highlights as a factor in plant closures.

Not only do overreaching ESG policies force some of our most reliable energy facilities offline, these facilities are also being replaced with technologies like solar that are inherently intermittent and can’t be dispatched in times of high demand.

The Wall Street Journal notes that “Illinois and New Jersey climate policies could reduce generation by 8,900 [megawatts].” That amount of energy would be enough to power over 7 million households.

So, in other words, policies that discourage conventional energy are already having an effect and threatening our Nation’s energy supply. If the President continues to pursue these types of policies, his Presidency may be remembered not just for a historic inflation crisis but for setting off a long-term energy crisis caused by an unreliable and insufficient energy supply.

Instead of trying to bring about a clean energy future before we have the technology to get us there, the President should be pursuing an “all of the above” energy policy—an energy policy that embraces the full spectrum of available energy sources, both renewable and conventional.

I am a strong supporter of clean energy, like so many of my Republican colleagues, but unlike Democrats, Republicans recognize that our Nation is not going to be fully transitioning to 100-percent zero-emission energy anytime soon no matter how much the administration would like it to. There are a lot of hurdles to be crossed before we can rely solely on clean energy.

So Republicans are committed to supporting both alternative energy and the responsible development and deployment of the conventional energy we need to keep our Nation’s energy grid reliable and Americans’ energy costs down. For evidence, you need look no further than the energy legislation recently passed by the Republican-led House of Representatives, which would advance both responsible

conventional energy development and clean energy technologies.

Predictably, the Senate Democrat leader has declared this legislation “dead on arrival” in the U.S. Senate. Democrats are so beholden to the radical environmental wing of their party that anything that doesn’t adhere to their Green New Deal orthodoxy isn’t up for discussion. But Democrats’ opposition is unfortunate, not just because this legislation would help ensure an adequate supply of conventional energy but also—also—because it would help advance alternative energy projects.

Republicans’ legislation would tackle permitting delays, which are a leading impediment to energy development, including alternative energy development. Republicans’ legislation would also actually help support the electric car development that Democrats are so committed to by enabling the development of critical mineral resources here at home—the same critical minerals that are essential ingredients in electric car batteries.

While I am on the subject of cars, I will say that the President made one right decision on energy last Friday by approving the sale of E15 fuel for this summer. Americans saved \$57 million last year thanks to summertime E15 sales. With the war in Ukraine continuing to stress fuel markets, renewing this E15 permission will help drive down the expected summer surge in gas prices while at the same time benefiting our environment and offsetting production cuts from OPEC.

But while I am glad the President listened to calls from me and others to extend E15 sales through the summer, it is unfortunately one of just a handful of times when the President has opted for reliable and affordable energy instead of an unrealistic anti-conventional energy policy.

An “all of the above” energy policy—a policy that embraces both conventional and renewable energy sources—is essential for keeping energy prices affordable, ensuring the reliability of our Nation’s energy supply, and keeping our Nation secure. If the President doesn’t start encouraging conventional as well as renewable energy development, consumers and our country are going to pay a heavy price.

The President has already ensured that he will be remembered for a historic inflation crisis. He should make sure he isn’t remembered as the instigator of a future energy crisis as well.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that Senator PADILLA be allowed to speak for up to 5 minutes, followed by Senator KENNEDY for up to 15 minutes, prior to the scheduled rollcall votes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HICKENLOOPER). Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from California.

NOMINATION OF JULIE A. SU

Mr. PADILLA. Mr. President, I rise today to urge my colleagues to support

President Biden’s nominee to serve as Secretary of Labor, current Acting Secretary Julie Su.

Julie is a proud Californian and a champion for workers everywhere. She was a tireless advocate for workers in California for years. I was honored to introduce her before the HELP Committee 2 years ago when she was first nominated to serve as Deputy Secretary of Labor.

I should note that, that year, I was also proud to see every single Democratic Senator vote to confirm her nomination. In the time since, I think it is perfect to ask, what has happened? I will tell you what has happened. She has gained even more experience in defending workers nationwide and in managing a Federal Department.

As a highly effective Deputy Secretary of Labor and now as Acting Secretary, she has played a critical role in helping the administration add 12.6 million jobs to the American economy, which is more job gains than any previous President has achieved in a 4-year term. It is further proof that job creation and strong labor protections are not mutually exclusive. In fact, they go hand in hand in building a strong, resilient economy.

Julie’s service and track record come as no surprise, frankly, when you understand where she came from. She is the daughter of immigrants and a native of California. She knows personally the sacrifices that many working families make to make ends meet. Her parents worked hard for decades in minimum wage jobs before establishing and growing their own small business.

So, yes, colleagues, Julie Su and her family have seen both sides of a paycheck. They instilled in Julie a strong work ethic, which has led her to take on tough fights as a labor lawyer, as labor secretary for the State of California, as Deputy Secretary of the U.S. Department of Labor, and now as Acting Secretary.

I also have to note, as the secretary of the California Labor and Workforce Development Agency—the then-fifth largest economy in the world and now the fourth largest economy in the world—she was a strong manager who led a number of major departments, boards, and panels at the State level.

Her experience and qualifications are unmatched. As former Secretary Walsh put it, Julie is a “lifelong champion of America’s workers.”

I will end with this: If confirmed, she would be the first Asian American to serve as a Secretary in President Biden’s Cabinet. Millions of Americans will see themselves represented at the highest levels of government and take pride in her story as a daughter of working-class immigrants.

I was proud to hear her impressive recent testimony in the HELP Committee when I introduced her once again and where she was successfully voted out of committee. She is exactly the type of labor champion we need at this critical time.

I urge my colleagues to join me in once again confirming her nomination. The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

TRIBUTE TO MICHAEL WONG

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, today, for me, in one particular respect, it is both a happy day but also a sad day.

With me on the floor is Mr. Michael Wong, to my right. Michael is my State director. I will come back to him in a second.

Also with us today is Michael's spouse, Jamie, in the Gallery. Jamie is not only Michael's spouse; she is in her own right a nationally known and locally renowned expert in special education.

Michael and Jamie have two children. I am going to read their full names and embarrass them: Mr. Thomas Miller Wong and Miss Julia Rose Wong. Thomas is 7. Julia is 5. They are both whip-smart. They are both future leaders of this country and, I hope, of Louisiana because I hope they will stay in my State. On top of that, Julia is quite the gymnast, and Thomas is a heck of a right fielder and a heck of a point guard and a heck of a quarterback. And they are both cool. They are both what "cool" looks like.

Now back to their dad.

I say it is a sad day for me because Michael is stepping down from government. It is a happy day because he is going to pursue some very exciting opportunities in the private sector. Michael has been working for the American people and the people of Louisiana for 16 years. Before he worked with me, he worked with Senator David Vitter, and he worked with Congressman STEVE SCALISE.

Michael has been my State director every single day that I have been a U.S. Senator. Let me tell you, it is a tough job, and it is one of the most important jobs.

As the Presiding Officer knows, we are here in Washington, and our people are back home. A State director has to make sure that their needs are being addressed back home and that their concerns are heard. The State director has to manage our local representatives and make sure that they are representing me in all of the different functions I need to do.

In Michael's case, he is also a valuable source of policy advice. I am going to miss that every day.

Michael has one of the best—maybe, the best—political minds in Louisiana. And he is a nice guy, much nicer than me. I just can't overstate how important he has been not just to me but to the people of Louisiana.

I said Michael has one of the best political minds. He has one of the best minds, period, not just in terms of policy and politics. But I want to mention the political mind in one respect.

Michael ran my reelection campaign. It was certainly the best-run campaign I have ever been involved in. I stepped back. Of course, I was the candidate, but as you know, Mr. President, the

candidate is only one small part of the campaign. Michael and his team—and I had a great team—they managed everything from the "get out the vote," their work on the analytics and data—I still don't understand how they did it—their vote targeting, and their TV commercials.

I had 13 different opponents, and I was expected to win in the first primary. Those weren't my expectations, necessarily. The media back home would repeat that repeatedly, and that put pressure on us. It is hard to do when you have got 13 opponents. That was Michael's responsibility.

I was just hoping to win, period. In the first primary, I was hoping just to get 50 percent plus 1. Michael managed the campaign that returned 62 percent. It was just breathtaking.

I have talked about Michael's policy chops. I have talked about his policy expertise. I have talked about his political acumen. I have talked about the fact that he cares about people. As an aside, a wise person once told me: People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care. Michael understands that.

I mentioned Michael's beautiful family. He has also always made time for his kids and for Jamie, and I know there are times when it has been difficult. But let me tell you one particular attribute, among many, with respect to which I most respect Michael.

He will do the right thing, and he will tell his colleagues in a very tactful way, but a firm way, what they need to hear. He will tell me what I need to hear, not what I just want to hear.

I am not going to go into detail, but early in my first term, we, in our office, had what I will call a capital "T" tough, capital "I" issue. I will call it a tough issue. It involved our whole office. I thought I knew how to solve this capital "T" tough, capital "I" issue.

We basically had option A and option B, and I chose option A. Michael didn't agree with me. Some others in my office didn't agree with me, but they tried to implement option A, my option.

Michael told me from the beginning: Option A is not going to work. We need to go to option B, but I will try to implement option A.

But what I respect most about Michael is that he tried to implement my option A, but he never was frightened to look me in the eye and never was scared to look me in the eye—and I hope our pages are listening to this—and tell me, in a respectful but firm way: Kennedy, you are wrong. It is going to hurt you. It is going to hurt the people of Louisiana. We need to go to option B.

He kept coming back, and back, and back. Sometimes, I would get kind of angry and say: Michael, I have made a decision. Implement option A.

He would say: I am trying to, but I think we are wrong on this one.

Do you know what? He was right, and I was wrong. If Michael hadn't had less

courage and just said, "OK, the path of least resistance is just to agree with Kennedy; I know he is wrong, but, you know, let him find out for himself." I would have been hurt and the people of Louisiana would have been hurt.

That is not easy because all of us in this room have worked for somebody before. My first job in government was for a "reform" Governor. I was his legal counsel. Like Michael, he was very, very, very smart. God rest his soul. We used to say about Buddy: Often wrong, but never in doubt.

Buddy was a tough boss. Part of my job was to go to him and say: Governor, you are wrong on this.

Then I would cover up and take my whipping. Sometimes the Governor would change his mind, and sometimes he wouldn't. But he was very opinionated. That is one of the things I loved about Buddy.

That is a hard thing to do. It is hard to go to your boss in a firm, respectful way and say: Sir, I know I have told you before, but I am going to tell you again: This is a mistake. This is a mistake.

Michael did that. He avoided a lot of heartbreak—I don't want to overstate the case, but a lot of heartbreak—for me, for our office, and for the people of Louisiana. That is the kind of guy he is—a guy who doesn't think he has all the answers, but when he thinks he is right, by God, he will stick.

I am going to miss Michael. I am going to miss him every single day. I mean, he is not dying or anything. He is going to be around, OK. I know that. I am still going to call him and say: What do you think about this? What is going on?

But I wanted to rise today and thank Michael Wong, and thank, Jamie, and thank Thomas, and thank Julia for their years of service to the people of Louisiana. I wish them Godspeed. I wish them health. I wish them happiness. I can't wait to watch how Thomas's arm develops as a quarterback.

Thank you, Michael.

NOMINATION OF ORELIA ELETA MERCHANT

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, today the Senate will vote to confirm Orelia Merchant to the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of New York.

Ms. Merchant received her B.S. from Dillard University, an M.A. from the College of William and Mary, and her J.D. from Tulane University Law School. She began her legal career as assistant regional counsel for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Ms. Merchant then served as a Special Assistant U.S. Attorney in the Eastern District of Louisiana before transferring to the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of New York. She spent 17 years in the civil division of the U.S. Attorney's Office, handling matters involving asset forfeiture and various forms of fraud including environmental, healthcare, and mortgage fraud.

Since 2019, Ms. Merchant has worked in the New York Attorney General's