

Ed passed away on May 4, earlier this year. He had fought a long battle with prostate cancer, a condition directly related to his exposure to Agent Orange during his service in the Vietnam war. While he fought long and hard, I am grateful he was able to get the healthcare and the benefits he needed in the last years of his life through the Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act, which we were able to get across the finish line here in the Senate for heroes like Ed. And we did that in 2019.

Today, it is my honor to commemorate his service and life as an outstanding Montanan. His legacy will live on through his family and his daughters.

I am especially honored to have his daughter Tess working on my Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee staff, where she serves veterans in Montana and across the Nation and was awarded the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans' Unsung Hero Award for her tireless work for veterans.

Beth is also following in his footsteps at the University of Montana, where she is studying digital filming.

So on behalf of myself and a grateful Nation, I commend Mr. Ed Wrzesinski and extend our deepest appreciation to him and his family. He is a part of the fabric that makes Montana the "Last Best Place," and he will be sorely missed.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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

ONLINE SAFETY

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, earlier this week, Apple unveiled its latest innovation, the Vision Pro. It is a mixed-reality headset that the company claims will blend together our virtual and physical worlds. Now, if you have seen this device, you might think it looks like an overpriced pair of ski goggles, but the implications for this technology are remarkable.

Think about how far we have come in a few short decades. Thirty years ago, hardly anyone owned a cell phone, and even fewer were familiar with the concept of the World Wide Web; but, since then, everything has changed. We have gone from clunky desktop computers to smart phones and smart watches and now a headset that will transform your living room into a virtual playground—a virtual playground. Think about that. You can share it with just about anyone in the world—anyone—even potential sexual predators.

And therein lies the problem. In the face of an unprecedented wave of technological innovation, one thing has remained the same: Our Nation's online safety laws are stuck in the last cen-

tury. Over the past three decades, Congress has given tech and social media companies free rein to police themselves, and they have failed. Now our children are paying the price for these failures. It is time for Congress to step up and protect them.

Today, more than one out of three teenagers say they use social media "almost constantly." That is by design. Big Tech giants and online platforms, powered by advanced algorithms, are capturing the minds and eyeballs of our kids and grandkids. And the more our children scroll, the more these platforms rake in profits.

Now, of course, social media can benefit everyone, including young people. They can learn new skills and hobbies and really connect with valuable friends. But as most parents, grandparents, and public health experts will tell you, social media has a dark side.

Last month, Surgeon General Vivek Murthy issued an extraordinary warning—the first of its kind—to parents across America. Dr. Murthy said that social media can "have a profound risk of harm to the mental health and well-being of children and adolescents." From anxiety and depression to body image issues, social media is exacerbating the youth mental health crisis in America.

But there is another far more disturbing part of this story because, when it comes to online platforms like Instagram or TikTok, only a few taps and clicks stand between our children and online predators who hope to exploit them. Just yesterday, the Wall Street Journal published a report on what they described as a "vast pedophile network" that has been thriving on Instagram for years—years. According to the report, Instagram not only hosts photos and videos of children being sexually exploited; it actively promotes the despicable content to other users.

Predators even connect with one another through a set of grotesque hash tags that I will not repeat on the Senate floor, and the worst of these predators try to target new, unsuspecting victims and persuade them to share explicit images of themselves.

Let me tell you about one of the victims. His name was James Woods. Last year James, who, at 17, was getting ready to graduate from high school, died by suicide after being targeted in a scheme known as "sextortion." In James' case, he was contacted through Instagram by a user claiming to be a young woman. The conversation quickly turned sexual, and the user asked James to share explicit images of himself. Unfortunately, he complied.

Moments later, he received another message, this time with a threat: Send me \$6,000, or else those images will be sent to everyone you know.

James was terrified. He tried to reason with this predator by sending him a \$100 gift card, but the threats continued. He received 200 messages in a single day, some threatening to hurt him

or kill his family. One message read: "You might as well end it now."

Soon after, James' father arrived home and discovered his son's lifeless body. James had his entire life ahead of him. He was a star on the school track team. He hoped to pursue a career in law enforcement. But now he is gone.

You would think that Instagram, the platform through which James was exploited, would bear some responsibility—some responsibility—for this horrifying tragedy. After all, this predator used Instagram to contact James, solicit explicit images, and then threaten his life. But you would be wrong. Under our existing laws of the United States—namely, section 230 of the Communications Decency Act, written nearly 30 years ago—platforms like Instagram have near total immunity from being held legally accountable for this type of atrocity. That has to change.

Earlier this year, as chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, I pledged that we would take vigorous action to hold Big Tech accountable and stop the online exploitation of children. As part of this effort, I introduced a bill, the Stop CSAM Act. CSAM stands for "child sexual abuse material."

This legislation would create a civil remedy against any online platform that facilitates the exchange of child sexual abuse materials. In other words, if the Stop CSAM Act were law today, James' parents would be able to take legal action against Instagram for failing to fulfill their basic responsibility to protect their customers.

Importantly, my Stop CSAM Act is one of five pieces of legislation that has been reported out of the Judiciary Committee during this Congress to stop the exploitation of children online. Every single one of these pieces of legislation was reported from the Senate Judiciary Committee by a unanimous vote—all five.

Mr. President, you personally, and my colleagues, take a look at the members of the Senate Judiciary Committee. That is the most amazing display of political extremes—right and left and center, for that matter—that you will find in Congress. All members of the committee voted in favor of these five pieces of legislation to protect our kids from what is going on on the cell phones across America.

We had testimony from parents—one sad story after another of children who, because of sextortion, bullying, harassment, goading, took their own lives. The mothers sat in the front row, each holding a color photo, a school photo, of their kids. With tears in their eyes, they begged us to do something to protect these kids and to protect America from this exploitation.

When I read about tragedies like the death of James Woods, it is clear: We shouldn't waste another minute. I believe that we should call this measure to the floor of the Senate immediately. There is no reason to wait. In fact, there is a danger if we do.

Let's see if the unanimous opinion of the Senate Judiciary Committee—Republicans and Democrats, conservatives and liberals—can bring us to a bipartisan conclusion now. Wouldn't the American people be happy to hear that, that finally the Senate came together on a bipartisan basis to protect innocent children from sexploitation, from these child sexual abuse materials, and from the sort of situation that James Woods faced, the harassment, with no accountability for the social media platform?

We need to move quickly to do this. There is no excuse. Let's not wait on some other measure. These are five good, strong bills that will say to the social media industry once and for all: You bear responsibility for what goes on. And when you are responsible for it, you can be held accountable in a court of law.

Parents and victims can't do this on their own. They have learned that over and over. They need someone to help, and that would be the U.S. Senate and the U.S. House of Representatives and the President. I hope every Member of the Senate will join us in protecting our kids from this new world of threats.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. LUJÁN). The Republican whip.

ENERGY

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, summer is almost here and with it, summer driving season. With gas prices up 48 percent since President Biden took office and inflation still a major problem, the cost of those family road trip miles is likely to be on the American people's minds.

It is not just the cost of gas that can be challenging in the summer; hot temperatures can bring a corresponding increase in electricity bills as families rely more on their air-conditioners. With electricity prices up 22 percent since President Biden took office and, as I said, with inflation still a major problem, those bills can be a stress.

It is not just energy prices that are of concern this summer. A recent article in the Washington Post entitled "Fresh blackout threats emerge as power grid faces a stressful summer" noted:

The nation's power grid is in precarious shape heading into what could be an especially hot summer . . . with much of the country at risk for outages if it experiences scorching weather scientists say looks increasingly likely.

Much of the country is at risk for outages.

The reliability of our Nation's electric grid is becoming a serious concern, and it is being driven in part by attempts to move our country off conventional energy before we have the necessary technology to rely mostly on renewables.

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 two to one. 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 power-plant retirements are 'policy-driven,' the report says." In other words, powerplants aren't closing because they have reached the end of their operating life; they are closing because the policy is designed to discourage conventional energy.

I am a longtime supporter of renewable energy. In fact, I come from a State where 80-plus percent of the energy that is actually produced in my State is renewable. But the fact is, technology has simply not advanced to the point where our Nation can rely solely or even mostly on renewables, and attempting to move to zero-emission energy before we have the technology and resources to get us there is going to result not only in price increases but in serious deficiencies in our Nation's energy supply.

I say "going to result in," but, as I have mentioned, premature attempts to move us to a Green New Deal future are already compromising the reliability of our electric grid, and the Biden administration has been driving the problem with its anti-conventional energy policies.

While the President has made isolated positive energy decisions—and I would note approving the sale of E15 fuel for this summer as an example—in general, his Presidency has been characterized by environmental extremism and hostility to conventional energy. This year alone, he closed off a substantial part of the Arctic to oil and gas development, and his Environmental Protection Agency has finalized a rule that threatens to close a number of fossil fuel-powered powerplants and undermine the stability of our electric grid even further.

These are policies with far-reaching negative effects. An unstable electric grid, for one, can be a very serious problem. It is not just a matter of inconvenience. Electricity blackouts threaten key systems. Soaring temperatures without the relief of air-conditioning can leave elderly Americans vulnerable. The President's anti-conventional energy policies are not victimless. They have consequences, and we are well on our way to seeing those consequences in action.

The solution here is simple. The President needs to stop undermining our Nation's energy supply with policies that attempt to prematurely push us onto renewables, and he needs to unleash American energy production, conventional as well as renewable.

We did receive some good news on the energy production front last week with the passage of the debt ceiling agreement that the President reached with Speaker MCCARTHY. Thanks to the ef-

forts of Speaker MCCARTHY, the Fiscal Responsibility Act makes a downpayment on permitting reform by placing a 2-year time limit on environmental impact statements and a 1-year time limit on environmental assessments. It also implements a "one Federal decision" framework that establishes a lead Agency and single document stream for permitting decisions. Currently, it takes an average of 4½ years—4½ years—for an environmental impact statement. These reforms will shrink that timeline and help both conventional and renewable energy projects get off the ground more quickly.

However, there is more work to be done to streamline the permitting process, and I hope we will be able to find bipartisan agreement on further reforms. Boggling projects down in environmental review for half a decade provides no meaningful environmental advantages, delays valuable energy projects, and can discourage domestic energy production.

Additional permitting reform should be a priority. Senators CAPITO and BARRASSO have put forward comprehensive contributions to the discussion, the RESTART Act and the SPUR Act respectively. The House has passed H.R. 1, the Lower Energy Costs Act. Collectively, these bills would resume Federal lease sales for oil and gas developments, set timelines against endless legal challenges, and advance an American—American—"all of the above" energy comeback.

After 2½ years of demonstrated hostility to conventional energy production, the President seems unlikely to change his ways, but he still has time to embrace a more realistic approach to American energy. I hope that the increasing fragility of our electric grid—to say nothing of higher energy prices—will encourage him to take a more "all of the above" approach to energy production. Otherwise, he may be remembered for presiding over not just an inflation crisis but an energy crisis as well.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. President, go outside. It is hard to breathe. The Sun is darkened. The air smells of ash and cinder. Children cannot go to school or even go outside. An unmasked deep breath outside is a risk. On the east coast, it is an ungodly dystopian landscape, the stuff of science fiction, movies set in Martian landscapes, except it is right now, and it is right here.

This week, other than 9/11, New York City registered the worst air quality in the world. Climate change means more heat in the atmosphere, with record high temperatures in Ottawa, Montreal, Toronto, and even Burlington, VT. These high temperatures get locked into place by record-setting high-pressure zones—making "heat domes" of sunny, hot weather that sits