

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

on top of the landscape, drying it out like an oven. More heat, less water—that is fuel for fire.

And we have seen it coming. Climate change has made this pattern more frequent and more intense. And if you don't believe me, if you don't think that this is a new phenomenon prompted by climate change, then ask yourself, when was the last time that New York or Philadelphia experienced something of this magnitude?

It would be disturbing enough to call this the new normal, but it is not the new normal because every year, it is going to get worse until we tackle this problem head-on.

This isn't just a forest fire. This is a climate fire because our entire climate is on fire. These wildfires are not just an occurrence. They are a condition, and the condition is only getting worse. Over the past 20 years, the area of land consumed annually by wildfires has doubled. In some parts of the West, that area is expected to grow sixfold—six times the fires, six times the smoke—which means harmful and dangerous air quality days for our youngest and our oldest, for those with asthma and respiratory disease and other health conditions.

When trees die in a wildfire, they release the carbon that is stored within them into the atmosphere. In that sense, you could look at each burning tree as being a kind of a massive exhaust pipe, spewing carbon up into the atmosphere and contributing to global warming. These fires aren't just the product of climate change; these fires are producing climate change. Additionally, once a tree fully burns, that particular tree is gone for good and can no longer reclaim atmospheric carbon and sequester it safely.

Those of us who have been fighting the climate crisis for decades take no joy in being right. None of us can take a deep breath outside on the east coast right now and not be at risk. But if we ignore this moment, if we don't take advantage of the searing example right in front of us, then we ignore a duty to act. Our public health is at risk. Our very lungs are at risk. There might be a veil of smoke outside, but let's not veil our sight to the need for climate solutions.

There is no mystery here. When you superheat the planet and create searing heat over densely wooded forests, fires are not a surprise. They are the logical outcome of your actions. The future is here right now. Today, we talk about fires. In September, we will talk about hurricanes. In the winter, we will talk about a polar vortex. And in the spring, we will talk about flood and drought before next summer, when we will talk about fires all over again, until we finally talk about the thing we should be talking about, which is how we reduce the emissions, end of this cycle of self-destruction, and secure a safe and stable planet once and for all for everyone.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I move to proceed to legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 157.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Elizabeth Allen, of New York, to be Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 157, Elizabeth Allen, of New York, to be Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy.

Charles E. Schumer, Robert Menendez, Benjamin L. Cardin, Mazie K. Hirono, Kirsten E. Gillibrand, Margaret Wood Hassan, Thomas R. Carper, Tammy Baldwin, Sheldon Whitehouse, Peter Welch, Richard J. Durbin, Tina Smith, Alex Padilla, Debbie Stabenow, Tammy Duckworth, Chris Van Hollen, Ben Ray Lujan.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I move to proceed to legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 25.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Hernan D. Vera, of California, to be United States District Judge for the Central District of California.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 25, Hernan D. Vera, of California, to be United States District Judge for the Central District of California.

Charles E. Schumer, Richard J. Durbin, Richard Blumenthal, Christopher A. Coons, Benjamin L. Cardin, Tina Smith, Christopher Murphy, Mazie K. Hirono, Tammy Baldwin, Margaret Wood Hassan, John W. Hickenlooper, Sheldon Whitehouse, Catherine Cortez Masto, Brian Schatz, Gary C. Peters, Alex Padilla, Michael F. Bennet.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I move to proceed to legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 171.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Jared Bernstein, of Virginia, to be Chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on nomination of Executive Calendar No. 171, Jared Bernstein, of Virginia, to be Chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers.

Charles E. Schumer, Sherrod Brown, Raphael G. Warnock, Robert P. Casey, Jr., Margaret Wood Hassan, Tina Smith, Jeff Merkley, Jack Reed, Ben Ray Lujan, Tammy Baldwin, Gary C.