

needless power grab only places more people under restrictive regulations and rules.

The Federal Government should not have the power to regulate Nebraska's water; Nebraskans should. Nebraska has a special system of natural resource districts that empower locally elected community members to manage water resources based on river basin boundaries. Regular people living their lives at home know better than DC bureaucrats how to use and how to manage their State's natural resources.

That is why I have partnered with my colleague Senator CAPITO in introducing legislation to overturn President Biden's WOTUS rule. The Biden administration is determined to impose an overly restrictive rule right now, and that is before the Supreme Court has an opportunity to decide the Sackett case. We cannot let that happen.

In the past, I have cosponsored a bill targeting the flawed science used by the EPA to expand its definition of WOTUS. I have also helped to introduce legislation that would require Presidential administrations to consult with States and to consult with stakeholders before they impose these restrictions on our State-owned natural resources. This is essential. States understand the complex geological and hydrological factors that affect their own water resources. There is no way that the Federal Government can take all of that into account with its one-size-fits-all regulations.

I dealt with these issues during my time in the Nebraska Legislature, and I know that there are not benefits when the Federal Government tries to take control of State resources through these onerous regulations.

Leave water management to the experts. The States know their own water. The Federal Government needs to stay out of issues that are handled much better under State jurisdiction.

WOTUS is not the issue that everyone wants to talk about, but it is important to regular Americans in Nebraska, in Idaho, and in many other States, and those Americans—well, they are who we are here to represent.

WOTUS has a real, tangible impact on American lives. So let's come together. We can solve this problem that was created by the administration's rash and reckless regulating.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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

TRIBUTE TO RYAN REDINGTON

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, colleagues who have been around for a

while know that it is usually about this time of the year that I come to the floor to talk about my favorite sporting event. I am not talking about March Madness. I am talking about Alaska's version of March Madness, which is the Iditarod, when teams of dogs led by pretty able athletes embark on a thousand-mile mushing adventure across the wilds of Alaska, beginning down in Anchorage, all the way up to Nome.

This year, it is not quite 1,000 miles. It is 998 miles, as they took the southern route, which they try to alternate during different years.

But it has been an adventure for the 33 teams that ventured out just last Sunday, and I am here to announce that literally 10 minutes ago—perhaps less than 10 minutes ago—the winner has just crossed the finish line under the burlled arch in Nome.

So Alaskans are excited. The Iditarod website has crashed because everybody was checking in to see if Ryan Redington had made it across, and I am here to announce that Ryan Redington is the winner of the 51st Iditarod race in Alaska. He and his team just, as I say, crossed. He has been in the lead for the past several days, but we are really, really quite excited about his win.

I am looking forward to being able to give a call myself to congratulate him, but I know that right now his family, his friends, and everyone who is there in Nome to greet them after this 8-day journey are really quite excited. So he is probably not going to be answering his phone just yet.

The Iditarod is really an extraordinary, extraordinary event. It is an experience like no other. And when they say it takes a village, it really takes a village. All of these little checkpoints along the way—some of them are communities; some of them are literally nothing more than a cabin. So it is an opportunity for the musher and their teams to be checking in, be checked out by the volunteer veterinarians who are along the way; refuel in the sense of feeding their dogs, resting their dogs, getting a little food for themselves, but then traveling on.

Think about what it means to drive a dog team for a thousand miles over this period of time and over terrain like this. Mr. President, you are from a northern State. You appreciate snow. We are not afraid of a little weather, but what these mushers and their teams have been through has been pretty amazing.

I was there at the ceremonial start last week. It was zero in Anchorage. It was a pretty great day to be a dog because it was nice and cool. Temperatures increased along the way. They encountered everything from drizzle to rain to mud, then to deep snow, then to freezing cold, then to gale winds—bumps along the way. It is a grueling test for all of these teams.

But as we look to what comes together to put on a race like this, it is

something that Alaskans take great pride in. This is fueled by volunteers, whether it is the Iditarod Air Force, whether it is the veterinarians who come to volunteer. There is going to be a mushers' banquet up in Nome, where people come from all over the country to come and volunteer to serve dinner and clean up after dinner.

I met a group a couple of years ago. They were from somewhere in Florida. I didn't know the name of the community. But they said that they took vacation every year to come to Alaska, to come to Nome, and their job was dinner rolls. They take a week vacation to go to Nome, AK, from Florida to be there, to be a part of this extraordinary, extraordinary event.

So let me tell you a little bit about Ryan Redington and this race that he has just finished. So we are still looking at the exact number of minutes, but he has been on the trail now for 8 days, 21 hours, and—again, trying to figure out what the minutes are. This is his first-ever victory.

Ryan is 40 years old, but Ryan has a stake in this race perhaps unlike any other young musher out there. He is a legacy musher, to put it in a sense. He was born and raised in Knik, AK. On his mom's side, his great-grandfather was an Inupiat who delivered the mail from Unalakleet to other villages by dogsled. That was how we utilized dog teams back then.

Ryan comes from a family of mushers. His brother and his sister-in-law have competed in sled dog races. His father and his uncle have both raced in the Iditarod. Not only did they compete, but they are in the Iditarod Hall of Fame. His daughter and son are taking up the tradition by taking on racing.

On his dad's side, it is his grandfather, Joe Redington, Sr., who is the founder. We call him the "Father of the Iditarod."

Joe Redington, Sr., has raced that race 20 times—almost 20 times. When he crossed the finish line for his last race in 1997, he was 80 years old—80 years old. Can you imagine being 80 years old and running 1,000 miles standing on the runners, running with your dogs? The Iditarod is not for the faint of heart, and so it is just an example here to say that mushing really runs in Ryan's blood.

In addition to competing in the Iditarod, he has competed in numerous races across Alaska and the lower 48. He is a prior champion of the Junior Iditarod. He was named Iditarod's "Most Improved Musher" back in 2017. He is the 2019 and 2021 champion of the Kobuk 440 in Kotzebue.

So, including this race, Ryan has finished the Iditarod now nine times—nine times. He came in seventh in 2021 and then last year had his third consecutive top-10 finish. He placed ninth. So this is a guy who has given his all—given his all—along with his incredible canine athletes, to be where he is today: No. 1.

We are just so excited and so thrilled for him, particularly given the family legacy surrounding the Iditarod. Ryan is the first Inupiaq Iditarod champion since 2011.

It is interesting, Mr. President. I don't want to jinx things, but if you look—this is our reader board that we have outside my office over in the Hart Building.

Every day this week, we have been kind of following the mushers up the trail so that people would know who is in the lead. And these are today's standings: Ryan, of course, in first. But he is followed by Pete Kaiser. Pete is from Bethel. Pete is Inupiaq. Richie Diehl. Richie is from Aniak, an Alaska Native. So if the places hold, it will be quite a strong and telling statement that our top three mushers would be Alaskan Natives.

Dog mushing has been a part of life and culture for Alaskan Native people long, long before the Iditarod. But it is an ongoing reminder—I think a really beautiful reminder—of how men and women and, really, incredible dogs can work together in some pretty extraordinary winter conditions, connecting communities, connecting people.

Ryan is an inspiration to so many of us, inspiring Alaskans and future generations of mushers, for how he cares for his team, for the character that he has shown as he has competed.

And so to Ryan, I am going to have an opportunity to speak with you directly, but you need to know that you represent the true spirit of Alaska. You make us all so very proud. And we certainly congratulate you as the 2023 Iditarod champion.

WILLOW PROJECT

Mr. President, as I am here on the floor today and speaking of great news for Alaskans, I cannot yield the floor without noting the significance of the news yesterday. Yesterday, a record decision was announced by the Biden administration announcing that the Willow Project, in the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska, has been approved and that ConocoPhillips, the producer, will be allowed to advance under what is now a modified alternative that will allow for three pads of drilling activity in the National Petroleum Reserve.

This is significant for Alaska from a jobs perspective. This is going to be about 2,500 jobs to a State that desperately needs that. This will be revenue and income to a State that desperately needs that. Our economy is still suffering in a post-pandemic world.

Our economy is still challenged in many, many ways. We are seeing a net outmigration unlike any State in the country. And it is because it is directly tied to the State of our economy. So we recognize that we are a resource-based State. So to be able to access resources not only for the benefit of Alaskans but for the benefit of the country, and, in fairness, for the benefit of our friends and allies who look to us—who look to us—and our resources to be able to help them as well.

I have been asked by many, “What is the Willow Project?” Well, the Willow Project is an oil project, yes. But Willow represents economic security; it represents energy security; and it represents national security.

It was a pretty incredible effort that came together to advance the cause of this. This was not one oil company that is standing off in the corner, saying: We want to be allowed to proceed here. It was an extraordinary coalition of Alaska Native leaders and individuals. It was an extraordinary coalition of labor leaders not only in the State; 100 percent of the labor unions in Alaska support advancing Willow backed by their national unions back here because they know that these will be good-paying jobs. These will be solid union jobs. These will be jobs for the future.

It was backed by a coalition of industry leaders, the university, unanimous—unanimous—resolutions out of both Houses of our State legislature. Think about that. We have a pretty broad spectrum across the political spectrum when it comes to our State legislature. So to know that from the southeast all the way to the north and the southwest that Alaskans came together, through their elected representatives, to affirm their support of this project advancing, it was really quite remarkable.

It was a united delegation—Senator SULLIVAN, Representative PELTOLA, and myself—coming together to lead this effort, working with our Governor. It was a coalition that was remarkable and remarked upon, and rightly so, because there are oftentimes so many matters that draw us apart. And there are—there are—opposing voices to this in Alaska. We understand that.

But I think it was so important that the voices of Alaskans—particularly those who live and work and raise their families in the North Slope—that those voices were heard. And what they heard from those who were from the North Slope region are that this is not only jobs in economic opportunity; these are resources that will help us with our quality of life, help us be able to resource and finance the search and rescue that goes on when somebody has gone missing on a hunting trip for their subsistence purposes, to help with the community supports, whether it is through the schools or public safety. The North Slope Borough is very unique in how they provide for all of their services for their residents in their eight communities across that huge borough that stretches all the way across the entire North Slope of the State.

And so, for them, this is significant and real in a meaningful way. It means everything to them in terms of health and wellness and life expectancy. As we have seen the benefits of the resources that come to these areas that flow from the oil, we have seen an absolute increase in life expectancy because of the quality of life that then can come

with decent housing, with decent healthcare, with access to food and resources.

What has been seen up north has been consequential. So this was an issue that when presented to the administration, when the Alaskan voices were allowed to be heard, the administration listened. And I thank them for that. I thank them for allowing those voices to be heard.

I also recognize that in addition to allowing Willow to advance, the administration is proposing to submit rule-making in a period of time, maybe within a matter of weeks, maybe a matter of months, that would provide for special protections—further special protections—within the NPRA.

There is much to be seen about what these protections will entail, whether it will allow for any level of activity, whether it be crossings in any way, pipeline or road, in any way. There is much to be learned. The administration has sent that signal that in order to advance the oil production opportunities within the Willow footprint—that vastly reduced footprint—that they want to add additional protections in several different areas.

We will evaluate that. We will take a look critically. There is a process that will follow. We understand that. But I think for today and where we are in recognizing the value that Willow will bring to Alaska, that Willow will bring to our country, it is important to applaud the actions of the administration and the President in advancing this.

At peak production, Willow is expected to bring online about 180,000 barrels of oil a day. That is significant. It is significant and putting it into context with where the United States has had to turn recently as we have looked to meet demand here in this country. The ask, the willingness to go to Venezuela, to lift sanctions, to ask for more production out of Venezuela—Venezuela will be providing us about 100,000 barrels a day.

Think about where we would be if Alaska's Willow opportunity were already online. We would not have had to go to Maduro. We would not have had to go to a country whose environmental track record is abysmal. We would not have to turn to those countries that not only have environmental degradation as they produce their resource but human rights issues that we don't want to see, we don't want to talk about. We just know that for this time we need your oil. We cannot export that environmental consequence.

We should be producing where we know we can do it safely, where it is under tight environmental conditions and restrictions and limitations, where the producers will adhere to the rules of the road, the rule of law, that there is a sensitivity to the environment around there as we operate up north.

They say that we have some of the tightest environmental conditions on how we access our resources out of the northern region than anywhere—anywhere not only in the country but in