

Pam was a rock for Ohioans. She was a rock for other staff persons because she had already had a life of service and, especially, was a mentor to young people in the office. And she was a source of hope. She made things happen.

We have calculated this. She worked on 1,331 cases in those 5 years. She was a relentless advocate, known for quick responses in care and handling. And for every case, she provided a space for Ohioans to be heard and showed unwavering kindness.

In letters people sent us and descriptions people gave of Pam during the time and since her death, the word “kindness” comes back over and over and over again. Humility is the foundation of virtue, and I would say kindness is too. And Pam understood that. She didn’t bring that to our office; she had lived her life that way.

Ohioans were lucky to have Pam on their side. We were lucky to have her on our team. For some Ohioans, she resolved disputes with the Veterans Administration or the U.S. Postal Service. For others, she helped secure a federally compliant driver’s license. One Ohioan shared that, because of Pam, he was able to return to his union job as a driver for UPS. And those jobs, because they have an effective union—something Pam understood—those jobs have good pay, good benefits, good retirement—again, because of an effective union at the bargaining table. Pam understood all of that, but this was a gentleman who needed a little bit of help to return to that job.

In the numerous notes she received, they thanked her for her dedication and determination in seeing her cases through. They wrote in for different reasons. Every letter shared heartfelt gratitude and warm wishes. In reading those letters, it is clear the impact that Pam had. Again, “kindness”—we heard that word over and over.

“After receiving help from Pam,” one Ohioan wrote in—I mean, people, after they get help, most of them don’t think about writing in because we are the government, even though we are individual people in the government, and the caseworkers are doing what they do. But people don’t think to write in. But an unusually high, an inordinate number of people wrote in to thank Pam Rosado.

This one Ohioan wrote:

There is tremendous value in being able to speak with a kind and understanding person after hours on the internet.

Then he wrote:

You are exceptional, Ms. Rosado.

My staff and I couldn’t agree more. She was exceptional. She cared deeply for the people in her life, strangers whom she met through our office—or never met, only online or on the phone or a few coming in. But she cared deeply for the people in her life.

She was closest to her family, her friends, her colleagues, and, of course, every Ohioan who reached out. And action always accompanied that care.

She wanted to help everyone have a better day, a better life. That makes a difference for so many Ohioans and so many of our colleagues.

To my staff—to the person, I believe—Pam was more than a coworker. She was a friend. She believed in her colleagues. She lifted them up. She knew our job was to help people individually, including coworkers.

Her joy, her spirit were infectious. She lit up every room she walked into. This past November, in a meeting that we did with all members of the staff, she greeted everyone with excitement as she reconnected with colleagues.

We have offices all over the State: Cleveland and Columbus and Cincinnati and Lorain. So they don’t all see each other all the time.

And she met new members of our team. Whenever a staffwide email went out announcing a departure or a new hire—we have had members, people on our staff—it seems to be happening a good bit—who are called up to serve in the military or they are National Guard people, or whenever somebody leaves for a better job or retires or whatever it is, she was the first to respond with heartfelt congratulations, words of encouragement, and—several people told me—a smiley face emoji. She made every member of this office feel appreciated and welcomed, and that warmth touched each of us.

In the Cleveland office where she worked, her laugh filled the halls as she spoke with constituents and colleagues. When you heard her, you couldn’t help but smile and laugh too. She made a difference for every member of our staff and for so many Ohioans. Our office is a better place because of Pam. Ohio is better because of her.

It wasn’t just in our office. Throughout Pam’s entire life, she served others and fought for others.

She served the community in a number of ways. She served on nonprofit boards. She was an active member of her church and community, and she was a mentor to aspiring advocates and policymakers.

Before joining our office—and this was the first time, I believe, years ago; I believe it was the first time I met Pam—she was the political director of the Service Employees International Union, a union that typically represents people who are not the highest income workers. They are people who, because they have a union, make a living wage and have the kind of benefits that unions bring. She was their political director.

She advocated for the United Labor Agency. She organized and taught classes to future union leaders about the history of the labor movement. Something, my God—I know that some people in this body don’t think we should teach history, and many don’t even think of the history of the labor movement. She understood that if you know the history of the labor movement, you know the history of the middle class, you know the history of the

dignity of work. She taught about the fight for good jobs, good benefits, and what their union card means.

She dedicated a decade of her career to leading outreach for Policy Matters Ohio. She made sure their efforts were grounded in what workers needed and reached as many Ohioans as possible.

Her colleagues at Policy Matters recognize Pam’s integral role in making the think tank and the labor movement what they are today. They recall Pam’s ability to make things happen, whether it was planning a last-minute event or helping to secure an Ohioan’s deserved interim benefits.

That ability made her an indispensable member of our team. Frankly, it made her an indispensable member of any team that she interacted with or was a part of.

Her legacy will be upheld by her friends, her family, and every member of our staff. We honor her memory. We grieve for her mother and her family. We will honor it by continuing her public service, her activism, her advocacy, and the work we believe in and she believed in, as we fight for Ohioans with her tenacity and dedication.

Today, our thoughts are with Pam’s family, her friends, those who knew and loved Pam, my staff, all who had the privilege of working alongside her, and all who had the privilege of benefiting from her work. And that was a huge number of people in a State of 12 million.

This office will be forever grateful for our time with Pam. We will miss her every day. I am grateful for my years of time with Pam, on and off, in her different roles, and we were thrilled to have her as a member of our staff.

May she rest in peace.

#### RECESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:47 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Ms. ROSEN).

#### AMENDING THE PERMANENT ELECTRONIC DUCK STAMP ACT OF 2013—Motion to Proceed—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. ROSEN). The Senator from Missouri.

#### CHAMPIONS OF MISSOURI

Mr. SCHMITT. Madam President, I rise to bring this body’s attention to 13 extraordinary Missourians who truly embody the best that our great State has to offer. They represent the inaugural class of my office’s new Champions of Missouri Program, which seeks to identify and honor Missourians who have gone above and beyond the call of duty, selflessly served their community, and achieved great things.

These 13 honorees span the State of Missouri—including St. Louis, Hermann, Kansas City, Wentzville, Sedalia, Springfield, Fulton, Memphis, Fredericktown, and the bootheel.

All of these honorees represent service, sacrifice, and success and make me proud to be a Missourian.

The first Missourian I want to honor today is Detective Sergeant Mason Griffith, who was tragically killed in the line of duty in March of 2023. Sergeant Griffith and Officer Adam Sullentrup of the Hermann Police Department responded to a disturbance call at a local gas station. When a shootout occurred, Sergeant Griffith was shot and sadly killed.

Sergeant Griffith served his community with distinction and truly had a servant's heart. In addition to serving the Hermann Police Department for 12 years, he was the chief of police in his hometown of Rosebud and a Reserve Deputy Sheriff in the Gasconade County Sheriff's Department.

Many describe Sergeant Griffith as one of the most kind and helpful people you would ever come across. His wife Jennifer and son Carson and friends are up in the Senate Gallery here today, and it was my distinct pleasure to present the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD honoring Sergeant Griffith to her and him earlier today.

While this is merely a small token of mine and Missouri's gratitude for your husband's service and sacrifice, it is my hope that his memory will continue in the hearts and minds of those touched by his life and his service. Thank you, Sergeant Griffith, for your unwavering commitment to safety in your community. You truly are a Champion of Missouri.

Another honoree is Officer Adam Sullentrup, who was with Sergeant Mason Griffith on that fateful disturbance call in March of 2023. Officer Sullentrup was shot and critically injured in what ultimately would be a 20-hour standoff with the suspect.

After spending 7 months in a Colorado rehab hospital to recover from his injuries, Officer Sullentrup was finally able to come home to his family right before Thanksgiving.

His community in Washington, MO, lined the highways to welcome him back home, a true testament to his character and his unwavering service to keeping his fellow Missourians safe.

My prayers are with him, his wife Michelle, and their entire family as he continues to recover. Thank you, Officer Sullentrup. You are truly a Champion of Missouri.

Next up is Captain Philip Gregory of Fredericktown, MO. Captain Gregory proudly served with the Missouri State Highway Patrol for over three decades, working to keep his community safe. Before joining the Missouri State Highway Patrol, Captain Gregory served as an EMT and a paramedic.

In his law enforcement career, Captain Gregory has served as a zone supervisor, a criminal investigator, a corporal, a sergeant, a lieutenant, an assistant division director, and, finally, a captain. After 30 years of service and sacrifice, Captain Gregory retired in August of 2023.

I wish him and his wife Tanya all the best in his hard-earned retirement. Thank you for your years of service to our great State, Captain Gregory. You are truly a champion for our great State.

Nancy Baumgartner Hanson is a resident of Fulton, MO, and has done truly incredible work for individuals with disabilities. Nancy saw a need in her community when her daughter Shelby, a decorated Special Olympics athlete, graduated high school and needed a safe and supporting place to start her adult life.

Nancy is leading the charge to put a WeBUILT in Fulton, which is a self-sustaining community development that provides a safe shelter for individuals with disabilities. It would be the first of its kind in Missouri.

Additionally, Nancy has hosted iCan Bike in Fulton for nearly a decade, which teaches individuals with disabilities how to ride a bike, fostering independence and confidence.

As the father of a son with disabilities, I know just how important these programs are in giving those living with disabilities more opportunities. Thank you, Nancy, for your great work that you have done to support those who sometimes need it most. You are truly a Champion of Missouri.

John Meehan has had a storied career and has been a mainstay in Sedalia, MO, for decades. Throughout his career, John served as vice president of Third National Bank from 1982 to 2009; served as Pettis County presiding commissioner from 2011 to 2014; served on the board of directors for the United Way in Sedalia, Pettis County, from 2008 to 2015; served as president of the board of directors for the Sedalia Area Chamber of Commerce from 2017 to 2018; and has served as council chairman of the Wesley United Methodist Church since 2016.

John also is an active member in civic organizations in the area. He spent a majority of his career aiming to make his community a better place. Thank you, John, for your commitment to Sedalia. You are truly a Champion of Missouri.

Next up, Kevin Jeffries and Justin Parrack were driving along the highway when they noticed a car veering off the road and into a median. The driver was having an untimely medical emergency. Kevin and Justin sprang into action, entering through the passenger door of the car, stopped the car, administered CPR, and ultimately saved the life of the driver.

For their heroic actions, Kevin and Justin were both bestowed with the Honorary Trooper Award, the highest civilian honor bestowed by the State Highway Patrol.

While Kevin and Justin both insist they aren't heroes, I think my fellow Missourians would agree with me that they are. Thank you, Kevin and Justin, for your swift thinking and decisive actions that saved a life. You are both truly Champions of Missouri.

Adam and Melinda Hendrix lost their 23-year-old son Justin to a heroin overdose in 2017. In his honor, Adam and Melinda started Justin Delivers Hope, a charity that has done unbelievable work to combat opioid abuse and addiction in their hometown of Wentzville and in the broader St. Louis region.

JDH has raised money for education efforts, distributed lifesaving Narcan to family members and friends of users, and has worked with local police departments to fund more canine units to fight drug-related crime. Since its founding, JDH has funded 18 canine units to work in local police departments in St. Charles, and those units have helped officers confiscate nearly 300 pounds of illegal drugs in 2022.

Thank you, Adam and Melinda, for honoring your son Justin by building a critical resource for those struggling with opioid abuse and addiction. You truly are Champions of Missouri.

Hannah Montgomery is an inspiration to her community. Hannah has been in a motorized wheelchair since January of 2020 due to a neurological disorder caused by inflammation of her spinal cord, but she hasn't let that keep her down. Hannah has been involved in her local 4-H program since she was 6 years old and has a passion for showing her pigs.

Hannah was recently selected as the Adair County SB40 Spotlight Award recipient for Kids Inclusion. Hannah's positive attitude, love for life, and perseverance in the face of adversity is something we can all learn from. Thank you, Hannah. You are truly a Champion of Missouri.

Jim Chappell ran Chappell's Restaurant and Sports Museum from 1986 to 2018, and Chappell's has become a Kansas City legend and so has Jim. For years and years, there was no better place to grab dinner, a beer, watch a Chiefs or Royals game than Chappell's. Jim's eclectic watering hole for the Kansas City sports diehards also featured a unique collection of rare sports memorabilia that Jim himself curated.

Outside of the walls of Chappell's, Jim demonstrated a tremendous spirit of service across business, civic, and community organizations. Thank you, Jim, for building a memorable safe haven for Kansas City sports fans and for fostering a stronger, deeper community. You truly are a Champion of Missouri.

The city of St. Louis recently welcomed its newest sports team, the St. Louis City Soccer Club. We had an extraordinary inaugural season in front of thousands and thousands of adoring fans. One City player, Miguel Perez, is an exemplary ambassador for St. Louis and the State of Missouri. Just 2 days after graduating from Pattonville High School, Miguel scored his first career MLS goal for St. Louis City. Hailing from St. Louis, Miguel has demonstrated an intense dedication to the sport that he loves and represents that playoff team with a lot of hard work and great work ethic. It is safe to assume we can expect great things from

Miguel, and we are certainly happy to have him in St. Louis. Miguel, you are truly a Champion of Missouri.

Last but not least, is Sheryl Lynnette Branch-Maxwell, affectionately known as Ms. Sherry. Ms. Sherry has dedicated her time and energy in empowering youth in Missouri's bootheel through education and mentorship. Ms. Sherry's work as a program educator at Lincoln University Cooperative Extension in Charleston, MO, has been pivotal in implemented programs focused on leadership, self-esteem, and anti-drug initiatives. Ms. Sherry has worked to improve the well-being and development of our youth in daycare facilities and Head Start centers. Thank you, Ms. Sherry, for spending your time and investing in the well-being of our State's children and young adults. You truly are a Champion of Missouri.

These Missourians have dedicated their time, energy, and efforts to improving the lives of others in their communities, and for that they should be commended and honored.

It is critical that we continue to honor ordinary Missourians who do extraordinary things. These 13 individuals represent the best of the "Show-Me" State and truly exemplify what it means to be a Champion of Missouri.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

#### AMERICAN HOSTAGES IN GAZA

Ms. ERNST. Madam President, these are the faces of the six Americans who have been at the mercy of Iran-backed Hamas for over 100 days. They are brothers, sons, husbands, fathers, and grandfathers. They range in age from 18 to 62.

Their families have been sick with worry. They have been sick with fear day after day, not knowing whether their loved ones are even alive. As they cry out for answers and action, the families have yet once again returned to Congress, looking for hope and looking for leadership. These requests should not go unanswered.

During Hamas's October 7 terrorist assault on Israel, I was in the Middle East leading a bicameral, bipartisan delegation to bring a message of peace and optimism for further normalization in the region. But Hamas shattered this dream for millions in the region and beyond.

We woke up to the terrible news on October 7, knowing that the world was altered and plans had changed. The delegation unanimously agreed that we needed to go into Israel immediately, as the first group on the ground to stand with our ally in the face of this devastation.

In Israel, we met with families in anguish after Hamas had taken our citizens—American citizens—hostage and had killed over 30 Americans in the initial assault.

Since then, I have remained in constant contact with these hostage families. I heard their calls on behalf of

their loved ones: Bring them home. Bring them home now.

The response has only been words. Where is the action from this administration, and where is the outrage from our fellow Americans?

Still, over 100 days later, many do not know the status of their loved ones. That is why I returned with the same delegation from October, plus one, to the region at the beginning of this year—to build upon our work and press for the release of our American hostages; to tell the families and the heads of state in the region that the safe return of hostages is our No. 1 priority.

Back in Israel, we saw firsthand the impact of Hamas's brutality at kibbutz Nir Oz, a place that, pre-October 7, could have been described as an oasis in the desert, a gentle farming community of peace-loving people. We were guided through the wreckage by a gentleman who called this kibbutz home and whose own son is an American being held hostage. In this community of peace lovers, Hamas burned homes, they terrorized children, they killed the innocent, put bullets into bedrooms, and violated the very foundation of peace that the kibbutz stood for.

Armed with heart-wrenching stories from each of the hostage families, our delegation traveled to Egypt, Qatar, and Bahrain. Our message was clear: Bring Americans home. This was the message I delivered to the senior leaders and hostage negotiators in each of those countries. It is a message backed by the entire bicameral, bipartisan delegation. We pressed our partners in the region to bring Hamas back to the negotiating table and release our citizens immediately.

Still, we must do more. These hostage families deserve answers immediately, and it is clear they are desperately looking for action from President Biden and his team.

Shockingly, we are witnessing the absolute wrong action from the Biden administration staff. As American hostages sit in Gaza in tunnels, captives of Hamas, some of the Biden administration staff are staging walkouts and demanding a ceasefire with Hamas. It is unbelievable that they are standing up for terrorists torturing our American brothers and sisters. Without a doubt, these staff members should be fired. Where is their outrage against Hamas? Where is the protest demanding that Hamas release their fellow citizens?

In the face of the vacuum created by this administration, Congress has a role to play in bringing Americans home, and that is a role I have stepped into. And congressional pressure is working. Already, the world is witnessing some of the effects of this call to action. After meeting with leaders in Qatar, Qatari negotiators reportedly paved the way for Israel to send medicine to the hostages in Gaza for the first time since October 7.

I am glad to see Qatar has responded to our calls to action; however, this is

only a first and a very modest step. More action is required, and I will continue to fight to get Americans home immediately. After all, every day that Hamas holds Americans captive is a win for evil. That is why I will continue to hold our partners' feet to the fire to reunite these families.

I encourage every Member in this body and every American to join me in pressuring Hamas to free our citizens. American lives are on the line. Folks, now is a time for choosing.

As these hostage families call out for the strength of America to reunite them with their loved ones, there should be only one response: Bring our hostages home now.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arkansas.

#### HONORING DEPUTY JUSTIN SMITH

Mr. BOOZMAN. Madam President, I rise today with my friend and colleague, Senator COTTON, to recognize the service and the sacrifice of Stone County Sheriff's Deputy Justin Smith, who was fatally wounded in the line of duty on January 2, 2024.

It takes a special person to wear a law enforcement officer's uniform. For Deputy Smith, being part of this select group of individuals called to serve and protect was a dream come true. He was a distinguished member of the law enforcement community for 24 years, honorably serving first as a corrections officer in Jackson and Independence Counties and then as a constable and deputy sheriff in Stone County, where he spent 14 years.

Deputy Smith loved his job. He loved working for the good of his family, friends, and neighbors. He was so proud to be in a position to make a difference in the lives of the Arkansans and took advantage of that opportunity on countless occasions.

Those who served alongside him recognized his compassion and the helpful influence he had on the youth he worked with—two marks of any special public servant. Stone County Sheriff Brandon Long described Deputy Smith as a team player who was always willing to go the extra mile. The sheriff said:

There was never a time he was called to come in that he didn't show up.

By living his life dedicated to public service, he also instilled that passion in his family. His sons have taken up roles with a higher calling as well, one being a veteran, another currently serving in Active Duty in the Air Force, and another who followed directly in his father's footsteps by pursuing a career in law enforcement. They all benefited from the love of their dad, not only for them but for others, and the faithful way he went about showing it in every aspect of life.

As Deputy Smith knew, we depend on law enforcement officers to keep us safe. His death is a tragic reminder of the risks these men and women face each day, and it prompts us to ensure

we always offer the gratitude and respect they so richly deserve in exchange for the tremendous sacrifices that they make.

I join all Arkansans as we mourn the death of this hero.

I ask my colleagues to lift up Deputy Smith's wife Lori and his entire family. Stone County's law enforcement personnel, and all who loved him in prayer. We will forever remember him as the true hero he was.

I yield to my colleague, Senator COTTON.

Mr. COTTON. Madam President, today, I join Senator BOOZMAN in mourning the death of Stone County Deputy Sheriff Justin Smith.

On January 2, Deputy Smith was shot and killed in the line of duty while serving a warrant. With his passing, Arkansas has lost a selfless public servant, reflecting the very best in our State.

Deputy Smith grew up in Arkansas, and he worked in law enforcement for 24 years—first as a corrections officer and then at the Stone County Sheriff's Department, where he worked for the past 14 years.

Time and again, he went above and beyond the call of duty. Stone County Sheriff Brandon Long said of Deputy Smith:

There was never a time he was called to come in that he didn't show up. He was the type of person that when his shift ended, if he needed to stay over, no questions asked.

Deputy Smith was a gregarious and generous man who made friends and smiled easily. He enjoyed hunting and spending time with his large family.

Deputy Smith is survived by his wife Lori, 3 sons, 2 daughters-in-law, 3 stepchildren, 4 siblings, and 14 grandchildren, along with many nieces, nephews, and cousins.

Our prayers and the prayers of all Arkansans are with his family in this time of pain and mourning.

One of his sons reflected:

Perhaps the hardest part of all of this is that my dad only exists in memories and photos, and that's all we'll have left of him.

Those heartbreaking words reflect the terrible danger that our men and women in blue and their families endure every single day. It is one of the many reasons our police deserve the lasting gratitude and support of their communities, States, and our Nation.

That gratitude was on full display at Deputy Smith's funeral, where leaders from across the State attended, including Governor Sarah Sanders and Attorney General Tim Griffin. In fact, so many people wanted to honor Deputy Smith's life that the service had to be simulcast into a second church.

On behalf of a grateful State, Senator BOOZMAN and I want to thank Deputy Smith and his whole family for their service to Stone County and to Arkansas.

God bless them, and God bless Arkansas.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. BALDWIN). The junior Senator from California.

#### MAIDEN SPEECH

Ms. BUTLER. Madam President, before I begin my formal remarks, I would like to take a moment to acknowledge the delegation of California mayors who are here in the Gallery today.

Madam President, I rise today with gratitude, honored to be a Member of this esteemed body. I rise having never imagined that this opportunity to serve would be a part of my journey. But I am grateful to so many who have helped it become true.

I was appointed by Governor Gavin Newsom to serve the people of California after the passing of Senator Feinstein. No one could ever fill Senator Feinstein's shoes, but there are so many of us who stand on her shoulders. To both of them, I am grateful.

I also know that my presence in these hallowed Halls is only made possible by Senator Carol Moseley Braun and now-Vice President KAMALA HARRIS, both of whom were historic Members of this great Chamber. And to stand on their shoulders as the only Black woman in this Chamber today, I am eternally grateful.

I appreciate the sacrifice and support of my friends and my family and the leadership of EMILYs List, who allowed me to turn their lives inside out and upside down to meet this moment in our Nation's story. To my partner, Neneke Lee, and my daughter, Nylah Grace, who are in the Gallery, I am especially grateful.

Madam President, I know that I am the newest Senator to join this Chamber, and while I may be new to this title and to this institution, I am not new to the struggle and the work of justice. You see, I am the proud daughter of the South, born in Magnolia, MS, the youngest of three children. I am the granddaughter to Kary, a sharecropper from Louisiana, crippled at a young age by polio; the granddaughter to Lettie Ruth, a maid who had to take her children to the homes of the White families for whom she cleaned and children she cared for even as she worked to get her certificate as a nursing assistant.

My grandparents were patriots who had to be urgent about the promise of America for their 11 children, the promise that if they worked hard and played by the rules, that their children would never have to see sharecropping as their destiny.

My mother Sarah was number six. She had five in front and five behind. She was born in 1953, 1 year before the Brown v. Board of Education decision. Yet it would be 13 years before she and her classmates saw an integrated school or had any semblance of equal.

As an adult, my mom made ends meet by working sometimes three jobs in the same day—working as a classroom assistant for mostly special needs children. She worked as a certified nursing assistant, just as her mom before her. She was a security officer, a cashier at a gas station. But her full-

time job was unpaid. For more than a decade, she was the primary caregiver for my father Delos, who died after suffering six heart attacks, angioplasty, and receiving a heart transplant from an 18-year-old who died in a motorcycle accident. My father passed when I was 15 years old.

Colleagues, my mother, too, needed to be urgent about the future of her three children. She knew she had to be and do everything and anything she could to ensure that we had the opportunities to break beyond the barriers of poverty and to chase our dreams.

I went on to be educated at the Jackson State University in Jackson, MS. I had professors who were lawyers and scholars and organizers in the civil rights movement, who were urgent about the young minds and lives they were there to educate, leaders like Dr. Mary Coleman, who chaired our political science department and at the same time was a part of the litigation team that sued the State of Mississippi for equal funding for its historically Black colleges; professors like Dr. Leslie-Burl McLemore, who taught in our lecture halls but also served as a model of leadership, becoming the president of our beloved university, the mayor of Jackson, MS, and today, at 83 years old, one of the first Black elected officials in his hometown of Walls, MS. They and others taught me the urgency of opportunity inherent in the promise of America, but they also were clear that the arc of our moral universe bends toward justice only when people keep our heart and our hands pushing it in that direction.

My time with workers, their families, and other leaders at SEIU was also formative because we built coalitions to win—to win healthcare benefits for healthcare workers who had never been able to see a doctor. We built a coalition to win to raise the minimum wage in California to \$15 an hour when the average Californian was spending 40 percent of their disposable income on housing and on food. Together, we fought for environmental justice and to restore redemption and rehabilitation to our criminal justice system. We knew that we urgently needed to work to build the California that our children deserved.

I was able to continue that work during my time at EMILYs List, supporting pro-choice women who advanced values that united their communities at every level of government. We were intent on creating that new generation of leaders.

Madam President, today, I am clear that my time in the Senate can be no different, and I rise today urgent about the future of our Nation's children. I rise carrying the urgent hopes of my grandfather and my grandmother, the deferred dreams of my mother. I rise bearing witness to the urgent sense of action of my professors, who were determined to show that next generation of leaders that change is possible only when we choose to do it together.

There are those who believe that the greatest test of our democracy is coming this November. I would submit that it is already happening. It is happening in our high schools and on our college campuses around the country. That is where my sense of urgency really comes from today.

My impatience emerges from listening to my own child, who, at my staff holiday celebration just last year, shared the story of her elementary school lockdown as if it were commonplace.

My sense of urgency comes from the facts amplified by the American Psychological Association that 13 percent of high school girls had attempted suicide, while 30 percent had considered it. Those numbers rose to 20 percent for LGBTQ+ students. And amongst Black girls, the suicide rate rose 36½ percent.

My impatience was formed on June 24, 2022, when millions of women and girls across the country, just like my little girl, came home less free than their mothers and grandmothers the morning of the final Dobbs decision.

My urgency was affirmed this past weekend while I was home in California celebrating the legacy of Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

I had the opportunity to visit some of our State's best, brightest, and youngest minds. One of them is Jesus Francisco Estrada, Jr. He goes by "Paco."

Paco is going to turn 22 years old a week from today. He is a first-generation college student at Loyola Marymount University, and he is from South Central Los Angeles—he wanted me to make sure that I said between Green Meadows and Watts. His father is a member of UFCW Local 770, and he was the primary income earner in their house when he was working full time for over 20 years at a meat-processing and meat-cutting facility. Paco's mother was often too sick to work, as she suffered from a complex diabetes condition as well as having had a scare with cancer.

Paco shared with me that, his entire childhood, he had grown up watching and knowing that his family was not going to be able to secure housing month to month. He knew this because he knew that his father was barely making ends meet and that sometimes they couldn't afford the rent. He saw the stress this added to his father's already grueling responsibilities.

Then, 2 years ago, his younger sister had a psychotic episode that was later diagnosed as schizophrenia. As her condition progressed, she became violent in her behavior and once had to have the police come and take her away. As he had to be the translator for his Spanish-speaking parents about what was happening in his home that day, he said that he learned then, watching his sister be taken away, that police aren't equipped to deal with people with mental health disorders.

The challenges and headwinds of Paco's life are enough to set anyone back. Instead, he has chosen to live and to lead forward.

So my commitment to Paco, my urgency about the future of our children, my service to the people of California has to start with democracy and freedom, protecting and advancing its very ideals, determined to preserve it for those who must carry it forward. And I look forward to working with my colleagues to pass the Freedom to Vote Act and the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act.

Freedoms once thought to be protected by our Constitution for decades—like reproductive healthcare, abortion access, and equal opportunity—are being stripped away right in front of us. I am eager to get to work with my colleagues to pass legislation to restore these protections and do today what cannot be left as the unfinished business of generations to come.

My commitment to generation now includes a focus on their mental health and well-being. I am impatient to work with my colleague Senator PADILLA and others to improve access to mental health and eager to work with Senator BROWN and Senator SCOTT to advance the FEND Act to stop the spread of fentanyl in our communities and the killing of our children.

According to recent data gathered by the AFL-CIO, 80 percent of workers under 30 want to be in a union. I am urgently ready to stand with those workers and with my colleagues who are committed to taking on the corporations that would stand in their way.

We must pass legislation like the PRO Act and the Home and Community-Based Services Access Act to create the workforce necessary to provide the care in our communities, advancing economic opportunities for generation now, who will lead and work in the economy of the future. We must do all that we can to ensure the tools necessary to believe in the American dream again.

In closing, Madam President, while I am urgent, I am also filled with abiding hope. Generation now may be cynical, but they are not sitting it out. Even as they have had to question whether government could truly work for them, even as they have seen dysfunctional and bitter politics, their advocacy on behalf of themselves and their future deserves its own recognition.

The world watched as students from Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, FL, organized the March for Our Lives rally, bringing together almost 2 million people across the country to demand that Congress act on gun safety legislation. That rally became one of the largest student-led protests since the Vietnam war.

From the Women's March to the Black Lives Matter marches around the globe, the most racially and ethnically diverse generation of our time has shown up time and time again, demanding that we do better. Whether it is the movements for gun reform, envi-

ronmental protection, racial justice, or your local barista's fight to join a union, young people are demonstrating their willingness to be the force, the energy, and the face of change.

While this is true across the Nation, it is especially true in my home State of California, the State home to the largest number of Gen Zers in our country.

One of them is Kamarie Brown, a 20-year-old student now at Spelman College, who discovered a passion for education equity. At just 17 years old, she was the first Black female ever to be selected to the student seat on the Los Angeles County School Board, the second largest school district in our Nation.

It is thanks to Kamarie's leadership that students in L.A. have access to greater resources that they need to thrive. She secured unanimous support for resolutions that leveraged district funding to improve the communities around her, beyond the walls of Crenshaw High School.

It is young leaders like Kamarie, who don't sit on their hands and stand idle as the world passes them by. It is the stories of Generation Now, who believe that their lives can add up to something more that truly inspires them.

As I take my seat, I offer again the clarion call that was shared with this body and the world almost 3 years ago to the day. On January 20, 2021, Amanda Gorman, the youngest person ever to serve as the inaugural poet, said this:

[W]e are far from polished, far from pristine, but that doesn't mean that we are striving to forge a union that is perfect. We are striving to form a union with purpose, to compose a country committed to all cultures, colors, characters and conditions of man. And so we lift our gazes not to what stands between us but what stands before us. We close the divide because we know, to put our futures first, we must first put our differences aside.

If our children are our future, let us be urgent about the promise of America. It must be that we put our future first because their lives are depending on us today.

I yield the floor.

(Applause.)

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia.

#### CLIMATE LEGISLATION

Mrs. CAPITO. Madam President, I rise today in light of the news that John Kerry, America's climate czar, will soon be leaving his post. Mr. Kerry's exit presents, I think, us with an opportunity to comprehensively reexamine the Biden administration's record on energy and the environment.

For 3 years now while Mr. Kerry has been there, we have had energy regulation after energy regulation, climate mandate after climate mandate; and President Biden has clearly and unapologetically put the American people last.

His Cabinet Secretaries and unelected staff members from the State Department to the EPA, from

the White House to the U.S. Department of Transportation, have followed his lead. They have pushed an unworkable, untenable agenda meant to appease the global climate community and environmental activists alike.

The problem is that these goals and proposals are completely detached from reality. Well, let's just start with Mr. Kerry's recent comments:

There shouldn't be any more coal-fired power plants permitted anywhere in the world.

Followed by him signing an international pledge to do just that.

Well, that is a big statement for someone in his position, yet he has outlined no plan to replace this baseload energy source that is critical to our Nation and, really, critical around the world, especially in these winter months on days like we see today and this past week where we have had record freezing—and below-freezing—temperatures.

He makes comments like this but does not acknowledge that States like mine—West Virginia—or States like Michigan, Minnesota, Kentucky, and Colorado all rely heavily on coal-fired power plants for our electricity.

Acknowledging this reality would not be wise for Mr. Kerry because decimating the entire electric grid of dozens of States across the country and the thousands—tens of thousands of jobs that go with it would not be a good look for the administration.

So they never quite get to the next point of what would happen if we actually followed what he is saying. But not to fear, the EPA has Mr. Kerry's back when it comes to threatening America's energy grid with policies that are just not based in reality.

Despite the Supreme Court knocking down the Obama administration's previous attempt to close down coal- and gas-fired power plants in West Virginia v. EPA, the Biden administration has doubled down on this reckless policy. The Clean Power Plan 2.0 is, again, designed to prematurely force the retirement of these power plants and require the use of technologies that are not nearly ready for prime time.

Unfortunately for the American people, by the time the courts catch up, as they did before, a lot of the damage is done. Jobs are lost, the electric grid is undetermined and undermined, and the lives of entire communities are disrupted. Believe me, I know this firsthand. We lived through this in West Virginia during the Obama administration, and I would not wish it on any other parts of this country.

But the Biden administration is not stopping there. In a mind-boggling display of irony, the EPA is simultaneously pushing a rapid transition to electric vehicles. What do you have to use for that? That would be more electricity.

So let's look at what happened this week. In Iowa, we saw how cold it was during the caucuses, below zero everywhere. Many Americans faced a cold

snap this week across the country, but owners of EVs were stuck because, No. 1, the EVs couldn't hold a charge in the cold weather and, No. 2, they found they couldn't even charge them at the charging stations.

A rapid and unreasonable transition to these vehicles—and I am not anti-electric vehicle at all—with serious reliability concerns would also increase electricity demand as the Agency works to shut down reliable baseload energy sources of power. It makes no sense.

And, again, ignoring reality, the Biden administration just carries on. More recently, the EPA announced a tax on energy companies through a methane fee, using the Democrats' really disastrous Inflation Reduction Act to target and penalize American energy producers. And, currently, a complex set of cases is winding through the courts on the topic of the EPA's so-called good neighbor air regulation.

This policy would take away the authority of 23 States, mine included, to determine how best to regulate ozone and reduce emissions in their own borders, which is what the Clean Air Act calls for, an alarming consolidation of power for Washington bureaucrats.

The EPA's approach ignores the cooperative Federalism framework of the Clean Air Act and deprives the States of their rights to regulate first. Our States know our States better than the Federal Government. Twelve States have already been successful in convincing courts that this program has serious legal challenges and issues, and that the courts have issued stays of the rule.

And this was all followed then by the EPA's disastrous Waters of the U.S., better known in these Halls as WOTUS, which illegally expanded the jurisdiction of the Federal Government at the expense of American farmers, builders, and private landowners.

Unsurprisingly, this was roundly rejected by the Supreme Court—including a 9-to-0 agreement that the scope of the proposal went way too far.

Yet even as the highest Court in the land sends clear warning signals that President Biden's energy and environmental overreach is illegal, those down the street at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue just don't seem to care.

We have seen the resounding theme of Federal overreach, not just at Departments and Agencies but also directly from the White House.

As the administration is touting investments being made in our Nation's infrastructure, a bill that I roundly and soundly supported and also helped to create, the White House Council on Environmental Quality—better known as CEQ—has actually proposed making it harder to build and complete these projects.

So on the one hand, we are going to create a huge program for infrastructure; on the other hand, we are going to restrict how you build, when you build, how much it costs to build, and

if you can build at all. They have championed burdensome permitting rules and redtape regulations, none of which—none of which—were agreed to by this Congress. And the White House Office of Management and Budget—better known as OMB—published a governmentwide mandate on Agencies to consider its flawed “social cost of greenhouse gases” metrics.

Well, I have asked for transparency here because I want to know how these numbers are developed and used, and I have gotten no substantive answers in response. It is crickets over there when I ask these questions. All we have received are broad public pronouncements that these numbers are to be used by Departments and Agencies when purchasing any goods or services in this time of high inflation and supply cost issues and when reviewing any proposed energy or infrastructure projects as they see fit.

Again, the irony is astounding for those of us looking at this from a realistic point of view. The same White House boasting about infrastructure investments—I am going to repeat—and growth is simultaneously hamstringing itself with climate mandates and memos that will impact millions of workers, families, and employers across this country, with all of the details hidden out of the sight of the American people.

After 3 years, there is a clear message President Biden and Mr. Kerry need to hear, regulations meant to signal climate action that don't follow the law and aren't based in reality are not the answer.

There is a better way—one that will unite us and actually make our Nation and world healthier and stronger. I have said so many times that our energy and environmental policies do not have to be at odds. So instead of targeting natural gas production, which was the major reason America reduced its emissions in the last 20 years, we should continue to support it. Doing so will boost our American energy, make for a cleaner environment, a better environment, and help our allies abroad, all at the same time.

We can also support the future expansion of nuclear energy, which holds great promise. It is emissions free. It is a linchpin of America's energy grid by enacting these policies that will drive development here on our shores and help us grow.

And we could move ahead with permits for carbon capture, use, and storage, in States who want to harness innovative technologies like mine, create jobs, and protect the environment at the same time and use natural gas, coal, as long as we can, because it is abundant in this country.

There is room for all of that, if we would just stop the hyperbole and the alarmism that is so often encountered when discussing this issue. When I and so many Americans hear somebody say “shut it all down” comments from the “climate czar” that are then mirrored



in actual regulations from the Federal Government, it just is not helpful. And I believe that history will show and has shown that it only hurts us.

So as Mr. Kerry exits the administration, let's take stock of the path the Biden administration has taken us down. And it is clear we must reverse course; we must leave behind the unworkable proposals and job-killing overreach and work together to allow realistic solutions to thrive right here in America.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The junior Senator from North Carolina.

Mr. BUDD. Madam President, I want to thank the Senator from West Virginia for holding this event to highlight one of the biggest issues facing working families today, and that is the cost of energy in America.

Since President Biden took office, the overall price of energy has skyrocketed by almost 35 percent. And when you dig down into the numbers, individual sources of energy, the news doesn't get any better. Fuel oil is up nearly 50 percent; gas prices are up over 40 percent; natural gas is up over 27 percent.

You know, in real terms, everyday Americans are spending an extra \$111 per month to fuel their car and to heat their home. Businesses of all sizes are having to spend thousands of dollars more to produce goods and to move them around the country.

So what is causing all of this? Well, if you ask President Biden, he trots out talking points blaming foreign conflicts for the rising prices. But, to be fair, turmoil in the Middle East and Russia certainly plays a part. But the real question is, Why is the United States so dependent on foreign nations in the first place? Why are we at the mercy of petty despots and dictators for the fuel that we need right here?

It is because President Biden has orchestrated an all-out assault on American energy, starting on his first day in office. The Biden administration stopped construction of the Keystone Pipeline; they canceled all remaining oil and gas leases from the Trump administration in the Arctic Refuge; and they shut down energy exploration on Federal lands. Make no mistake, this is a crisis of President Biden's own making.

In response, President Biden has grasped for a political solution to a policy problem. His administration began to tap the U.S. Strategic Petroleum Reserve. Now the SPR is designed for times of war, national disaster, or a true national emergency. President Biden, on the other hand, has used it over and over again to bail himself out of the political consequences of his anti-energy crusade.

The result? The SPR has declined by nearly 287 million barrels of crude oil since President Biden took office. Our Nation's emergency energy reserves are now at their lowest level since President Reagan's—President Reagan's—first term.

Our country is no longer well-positioned to deal with the next crisis because this President is tilting at windmills and pursuing a radical Green New Deal agenda. For example, this President's EPA is mandating that 67 percent of new car sales in the United States in 2032 be electric. The only problem is, in 2023, only roughly 8 percent—8 percent—of new car sales were EVs. It is clear that the consumer demand is nowhere near sufficient to satisfy his big government mandate.

Even so, if we are going to push such a drastic increase in electric vehicles, President Biden has to get serious about ways to produce enough reliable, affordable energy. He cannot continue to rely on our own emergency reserves to meet this supply. It is time for us to get back to an America-first energy plan: drill on our shores, refill our emergency reserves for a real crisis, and lower gas and electric prices for hard-working Americans.

In order to be a strong nation, we have to be a self-sufficient nation and energy dominant. We know what to do. All we need is the right leadership to get it done.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. BUTLER). The Senator from Nebraska.

Mrs. FISCHER. Madam President, last week the Biden administration announced over half a billion dollars in subsidies for electric vehicle, or EV, charging stations. That half billion follows 2 billion more that has already been handed out to States, despite the fact that only 4 percent of Americans own EVs.

This is a common trend for this administration: forcing untested, expensive solutions onto the American people in the name of climate change.

But according to the Wall Street Journal, only two federally funded EV charging stations have been built since Biden became President, even though billions of taxpayer dollars are subsidizing those projects.

And Americans remain hesitant to drive these expensive cars. Last year, 84 percent of Americans said they are not considering buying one. The EV malfunctions that have happened over the past few days of this winter weather that we have been having across my part of the country only serve to confirm their choices.

The administration's plan for massive adoption of EVs over the next 8 years is a pipedream. But there are realistic, practical reforms we can make that would benefit the environment without limiting freedom or harming our economy. One of them is approving the sale of gasoline blends with 15 percent ethanol, or E15.

My legislation, the Nationwide Consumer and Retailer Choice Act, would cut redtape and remove roadblocks to the sale of E15.

Today, California is the only State that hasn't approved the sale of this partially renewable fuel, an unusual stance for a State that styles itself as a leader in protecting the environment.

Should California join the other 49 States in approving E15, that nationwide approval would benefit our environment, our economy, and our energy independence.

Emissions from ethanol are 46 percent lower than from traditional gasoline. One study found that corn ethanol contributed to a reduction of 500 million tons in emissions between 2005 and 2019.

Studies show that if all the gas in California had been E15 in 2022, there would have been a 450 million-gallon reduction in petroleum consumption. That switch, it would have resulted in greenhouse gas savings of 2.2 billion metric tons, and that is in California alone. These environmental benefits would increase exponentially if E15 were used more across this country.

Not only do higher ethanol blends of gasoline emit less greenhouse gases, but the corn used in its production soaks up massive amounts of additional CO<sub>2</sub>. This is a doubly positive effect that should please even the most skeptical of our environmental friends.

It has been proven by NASA—by the scientists at NASA with data that they have gathered from their satellites—that during the summer, the Corn Belt in the United States of America has more photosynthetic activity than even the Amazon rainforest.

Family farmers in the Corn Belt are helping our climate by producing cleaner fuel, and they don't have to own an EV to do it.

Unlike EV subsidies, E15 is a sensible way to advance environmental goals that do not weigh down our economy. This fuel does not require taxpayer money. It is cheap enough to be market driven. The average price of E15 during the 2022 summer driving season was 16 cents less per gallon than regular gas. In an age of record inflation, that makes a big difference.

It benefits retailers that can profit off of E15, and it benefits millions of American drivers who can switch to a more affordable fuel. Access to E15 will free retailers and consumers from a dependence on energy that is produced abroad. Instead, we will be relying on producers here at home.

This is the way that we can unleash American energy, prioritize our domestic production, and take advantage of the wonderful natural resources that we have.

California's approval would make E15 a nationwide fuel option, and my bill eliminates Federal regulatory roadblocks to the year-round nationwide sale of E15, a lower cost, lower carbon fuel.

Congress and President Biden must come together to pass legislation that will truly advance an "all of the above" approach to energy, one that uses many resources that we produce right here in America.

E15, the approval of that is a win. It is a win for family farmers who produce ethanol; it is a win for consumers at the gas pump; and it is a win

for our environment, which makes it a win also for American energy security.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nebraska.

Mr. RICKETTS. Madam President, over the last week, my home State of Nebraska has been hit by bitter winter storms. We have had subzero temperatures, snow, and high winds that have closed many roads across the State of Nebraska.

As always, in times like these, Nebraskans step up to help. I want to thank all of our first responders, whether they were snowplow drivers, law enforcement, firefighters, EMTs, other emergency personnel—all the folks who demonstrated their grit and service this last week to be able to help people out. And I especially want to thank Nebraska State Patrol for the over 1,400 drivers they assisted during this crippling winter weather.

Hospitals saw a number of frostbite injuries. Our farmers and ranchers continued to work to ensure our food supply here at home.

I want to thank my Federal delegation as well and will work with them to provide any support that is needed. I appreciate that Governor Jim Pillen declared a state of emergency and will also assist with any Federal assistance that may be needed for this emergency. As we recover from these storms, I stand ready to work with my colleagues.

It is also an opportunity for us to be able to think about how government can do better. Many times a storm like this will create situations where we need to tease out what we should do better for the next time. However, in this case, one of the lessons has become clear right away.

As we all know, the EPA has a mandate that they want all new cars and trucks sold by the year 2032—I shouldn't say all; two-thirds of all cars and trucks sold by the year 2032—to be electric vehicles. This weekend we saw why this is just a dumb idea. These EV mandates are burdensome and do not work in places like the upper Midwest, where we can see these bitter cold temperatures. We saw that EVs don't work well when the temperature drops so precipitously. It turns out they are just not reliable when the weather turns this cold.

FOX 32 in Chicago has a story which I am going to quote from here. They reported that "public charging stations have turned into car graveyards over the past couple of days."

The story goes on to describe "dozens of [EV] owners trying desperately to power up their cars at the . . . super-charging station in Oak Brook. It was a scene mirrored with long lines and abandoned cars at scores of other charging stations around the Chicago area."

Also in the story there was a driver who referred to all these stalled electric vehicles as "dead robots."

"Car graveyards" and "dead robots"—is that the future we want? I don't think so.

And this happened in Chicago, where there are a lot of EV charging stations. What about my home State of Nebraska, where we don't have as many?

President Biden's own Department of Energy map shows no EV chargers on a 244-mile stretch of highway from Broken Bow to Scotts Bluff. There is not a charging station within 65 miles of Mullen, NE. Many rural communities are more than an hour's drive away from a charging station in towns like Hyannis, Cody, Merriman, Kilgore, and Thedford.

Nebraska is the "Beef State." I can guarantee you that electric trucks are not practical when you are hauling livestock. One cannot afford just to pull over and start charging for 2 hours or even longer when the temperature is below zero—cattle cannot tolerate it.

And the thing about not being able to charge at all—imagine EV ambulances that break down trying to get to a rural hospital or EV buses breaking down trying to connect people to their jobs.

These are very real considerations in States like mine. Nebraskans tell me over and over again: The east coast Washington bureaucrats have no idea what their policies will do in the Midwest of the United States.

Guess what. They are right because, as it turns out, EVs don't work in cold weather.

These bureaucrats on the east coast have no idea of the implications of what their policies are to people in the Midwest. These major winter storms are a reminder that, right now, EV's don't have the performance or the reliance or the range in cold weather to be able to work in the Midwest.

Imposing an EV mandate on Midwestern States like Nebraska is foolish, unworkable, and it is wrong. I urge President Biden to reconsider this terrible policy. Until he does, I will continue to fight here in the U.S. Senate with every tool at my disposal.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. HOEVEN. Madam President, I am pleased to join my colleague from Nebraska and others in discussing the importance of continuing to develop our energy resources here in North Dakota. We have the most abundant energy resources in the world, and we need to use all of them to develop and continue to build an "all of the above" energy policy.

Much of the Nation continues to experience very cold temperatures—in some cases, really record cold temperatures. In my State of North Dakota, coal typically provides 35 to 40 percent of the 24/7 baseload power generation to not only our State but to other States in the region. We supply both the MISO and the SPP power pools with energy for our region that they can count on 24/7—baseload energy. In the coldest times or in the hottest times—at peak energy times—they know that those baseload powerplants are going to be

there to keep the lights on, to keep the heat going, and to provide whatever other power needs are called for. That is 24/7 baseload power provided all the time.

Also, not only is it 24/7 energy when needed and at peak times, but according to the Energy Information Office, in their October 23 report, North Dakotans paid the lowest electricity prices in the country—the lowest in the country. Let's compare that, for example, to California. California paid four times as much for electricity during the same time period.

My colleague from Nebraska just talked about electric vehicles. Well, you need charging stations for those electric vehicles. Where is that electricity going to come from? Particularly, where is it going to come from at times when you have peak power needs? You still need that electricity for all of these different purposes.

We have to recognize that, even as we develop new technologies and do all of these things that people want, we have got to have that baseload power coming from somewhere. We simply can't take our baseload energy—our coal-fired electric—for granted, and our other sources have to be there. Again, we continue to develop new technologies and continue to press for the best possible environmental stewardship, but we have got to recognize that we need more energy and that we have got to continue to use all of our resources to generate that energy.

Access to affordable and reliable energy is not only a quality-of-life issue but, obviously, a public safety issue, and we have seen that with these record cold temperatures. That includes keeping our homes warm and our businesses running. It includes keeping the lights on for our critical infrastructure like hospitals, schools, police, fire departments, and many, many other public services that we depend on every single day.

But the reality is our electric grid only works when there is sufficient power generation available to meet demand in realtime. You can't not have that energy when you need it and expect the grid to keep working, and of course those vital needs to be met.

In its "2023 Long-Term Reliability Assessment," the North American Electric Reliability Corporation, or NERC, as it is commonly referred to, is warning that our grid—our power grid—continues to face higher risks of blackouts and brownouts because of planned powerplant retirements alongside rising electricity demand.

Again, think about this. Whether it is electric vehicles, whether it is your computer or data processor, whatever it may be, we can continue to develop all of these new things—these new technologies and all of these things we want to do—but you have got to have the power to run them. When you go into the house and flip on that switch, where is that electricity coming from? People take it for granted, but if we



don't have the baseload out there, you can't take it for granted because it won't happen.

FERC's Commissioners emphasized these concerns in testimony before our Senate Energy Committee last year, of which I am a member, and that included Commissioner Christie, who noted:

The United States is heading for a reliability crisis.

Once again, Commissioner Christie—one of the FERC Commissioners—said specifically in front of our Energy Committee that the United States is heading for a reliability crisis because of the lack of baseload generation. We need to take this seriously. It is a national security issue.

Despite these warnings, the Biden administration's Green New Deal approach and regulations continue to accelerate the problem. This includes the EPA's proposed Clean Power Plan 2.0 and an unworkable MATS standard—new rules that seek to drive up the cost of operations for our powerplants. Of course, at some point, those powerplants are no longer economical, and that forces them to shut down.

In addition to its powerplant regulations, the EPA is proposing a new methane regulation, including, in just this past week, a new tax on methane. That was authorized by the IRA legislation. Again, it is a tax that is not only going to reduce supply but that will drive up costs on consumers. Somebody has to pay for that. It gets passed down the line, and consumers pay for it. That means higher electricity costs—not only less electricity, less energy but higher costs to consumers.

The Interior Department continues to restrict access to our taxpayer-owned energy reserves, which also drives up the cost of energy production because we produce energy on Federal lands as well as on private lands. Producing less energy here at home means higher costs, but it also makes us dependent on sources of energy from other parts of the world—in many cases, parts of the world that are unstable and have environmental standards that are vastly inferior to our own here in this country.

Once again, we have got to find ways to make American energy production less expensive and more reliable. That means producing the energy here at home. That means having an environment that encourages energy development, not more regulation and more taxes which make it harder to produce energy and drive up costs. That means energy from all sources—right?—meaning tradition and renewable—all sources with the latest technology.

So, again, if we are going to continue to develop all of these wonderful new things that we want to utilize, we are going to have to have the energy to make sure that we can power them. We are going to have to have the energy to make sure that, on the coldest day, we are comfortable in our homes for our families and all of those we care about.

In my State of North Dakota, we have over 700 years of coal supply alone, and we are developing the latest, greatest technology to produce that coal and are doing it so that we have baseload electricity, dependable low cost, and the best environmental stewardship. We continue to do that. America leads the world in this kind of innovation. Let's empower that. Let's empower that. It is, again, all about our country producing electricity here at home so that we are truly not only energy independent but energy dominant.

In fact, developing resources like natural gas and LNG helps our allies so they are not depending on countries like Russia or countries that are adversarial to us and our allies but rather that are working together—America and our allies—on important things like energy development. We can do that, and that is the kind of thing that we should be doing.

A little over a decade ago, we cracked the code on the shale production. In places like the Bakken in my State of North Dakota and at the Permian in Texas, we have produced incredible amounts of energy as a result. Again, that is not only important in terms of our economy, it makes sure that we don't have to get energy from places like OPEC. We all know the incredible problems that that has created for us through the years when we can't produce that energy at home and have to look at players like OPEC.

The fact remains that coal, oil, and natural gas remain vital to our economic interests and to our national security because these resources are reliable and energy-dense compared, in many cases, to renewable energy, which only provides energy part of the time.

What do you do when you need energy and the Sun isn't shining and you are only dependent on solar energy? What do you do when you need energy, and you are relying on wind power, and the wind isn't blowing? We have got to have this baseload electricity.

Again, this is common sense. This is about having an energy policy that truly empowers this country to produce more energy; to do it with the best environmental stewardship; to make it reliable, dependable, affordable; to make sure it is there 24/7, every day—on the coldest day, on the hottest day—for whatever those growing needs are. Let's make sure we have that energy here at home. Let's not just be energy independent but energy dominant. We can do that in this country, and we need to do it in this country.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

#### WOMEN'S RIGHT TO KNOW ACT

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Madam President, this Friday is going to mark the beginning of the 51st annual March for Life, and we have got thousands of Americans and, indeed, hundreds of Tennesseans who are coming to our Na-

tion's Capital to celebrate life, to talk about how to defend life, and to uphold the sanctity of life.

This is the second March for Life since the Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade*. We know, with the Dobbs decision, it really sent the authority back to the States and to the people, and that is where it does belong. Across the Nation, we have seen States step up and take responsibility for the rules and regulations around abortion practices.

Now, one of these areas they have looked at is informed consent laws. This would require abortion providers to inform expectant mothers of all the medical risks to the mother and to the child because of this abortion procedure. What we know is that informed consent is a very important part of medical ethics.

According to the AMA's medical ethics code, this is what it says:

Patients have the right to receive information and ask questions about treatments so that they can make well-considered decisions about care.

But not all States have informed consent laws, and there are abortion providers who withhold this information, which prevents these expectant mothers from understanding all of the risks that they face. A nationwide safeguard regarding informed consent is something that is long overdue.

So this week, I introduced the Women's Right to Know Act, which would set reasonable medical requirements for physicians to meet and protect the life of the mother and the child before the abortion can be performed. So they would have to meet these standards and give this information to the patients.

Now, the providers would be required to explain all of the medical risks associated with the abortion procedure, explain the probable gestational age and development features of the unborn child at the time the abortion is to be performed, and to present this information at least 24 hours in advance of an abortion procedure.

We think that this is essential legislation that will really do so much to raise the safety standards and protect the health of vulnerable women, and it will help to save lives.

#### IMMIGRATION

Madam President, last week, House Republicans launched their impeachment proceedings against Secretary Ali Mayorkas for a simple reason: The Secretary of Homeland Security does not believe in securing the homeland. We know that he has failed to carry out his duties, and we know it because of the numbers.

Over 8½ million illegal immigrants have come into this country on his watch. That includes 1.7 million or thereabouts of what are called known "got-aways." These are people who can be seen on surveillance, but Border Patrol cannot get to them.

There are also tens of thousands of pounds of fentanyl that have been trafficked into this country, and once it is

across that border, it ends up in your towns, in your communities. This, we know, is happening.

In addition, there are hundreds of individuals on the Terror Watchlist who have been apprehended at the southern border, including 30 since the start of fiscal 2024.

In addition to this, there are thousands of individuals from countries of interest. We wonder why they are choosing to come to the country, but we do know many of them are young men. They are not coming with a family; they come separately.

These numbers alone would give reason for why the Secretary should be removed from office. His job is to secure the homeland. Obviously, with these numbers, with the concerns that come with these numbers, the homeland is not secure.

Ultimately, you have to look at the harm that this administration is inflicting on our country with its open border policies because those harms go way beyond the stats I have given you today.

These policies of this administration, of this Secretary, are failing this country. They are upending the rule of law, which is foundational to this democratic Republic. It is foundational.

At every opportunity, what is astounding to me is this administration continues to look for ways to make illegal legal. We have seen this action with Executive orders. We have seen this with Agency rules and regulations. We see it at the border as they try to find new ways—maybe it is using their app. Maybe it is letting you know that they are coming. But what they are trying to do is say: Discard the rule of law. We are going to give you a new way to come here. And by the way, we are doing everything we can to make illegal legal.

Does that make any sense at all? Of course not.

Under President Biden and this administration, illegally entering the country is something that they say: Well, we don't consider that to be a crime.

Now, if you or I, Madam President, were in Mexico and said "Oh, the border crossing is backed up. We are just going to walk across the Rio Grande. We are going to just walk on back into the country because it is faster. We don't want to drive to the border crossing. We are here, there is the river, and we are just going to skip on over there," do you know what? We would be apprehended. And where would we be taken? We would be taken to jail. We would face prosecution. Think about that. Why is it that we would do that? Because it is illegal.

But to those who are trying to enter our country illegally—and by the way, it is not just from Central America. Border Patrol tells us we have had people from about 170 countries over the last year come to that southern border. And who is in charge of all of this? It is the cartels that work on the Mexico

side of the border. They are big, global businesses, and they are bringing people from that many different countries to our southern border. They are bringing thousands of pounds of fentanyl. By the way, who creates the chemicals for fentanyl? China. They are in cahoots on this.

But it is so disappointing to me that at every opportunity, this administration is trying to make illegal legal. In doing that, what they are doing is putting lawbreakers ahead of law-abiding Americans.

Secretary Mayorkas last week admitted that 85 percent of the illegal immigrants who are apprehended at our border are released into the country—85 percent. These are people who are not being sent before a judge for an asylum hearing. These are individuals who are being given a notice to appear, and then they are waved on into the country. Then they are given a phone, they are given food, and they are given a plane ticket to wherever they want to go. And who pays for this? Who is footing the bill on this? We know who is paying for this. It is the hard-working taxpayer. They are bearing the cost for this.

With these hundreds of thousands of migrants crossing into our country each month—by the way, last month, 302,000 people. Think about the cities in your State. How many of them have more than 300,000 residents in that city? This is the number coming across that border.

What we have seen is that States are taking this matter into their own hands, States like Arizona and Texas that have constructed their own barriers across the southern border. What has the Biden administration done to them? Instead of saying "Thank you for helping us carry out this duty to protect illegal entry into our country. Thank you for the assistance"—no, no. That is not what they have done. They are suing the States. They are suing them for trying to protect their property. This makes no sense.

Let's think about this. There is immigration law in this country. There is a way to come into this country. There is a way to ask for asylum. It is not to go pay a cartel and have them bring you across our border and enter the country illegally. So these States are saying: We are going to protect our sovereignty. By the way, we have ranchers and farmers who live here on the border. We are going to allow barriers to go up so that it helps to protect their private property.

This administration says: If you do that, we will sue you.

Under this administration, border agents are not putting up fences and razor wire. They are actually out there cutting the razor wire because this administration is telling them that is what they have to do. They don't want to do it, but they are being told they have to do it.

That is how far this administration is going to make illegal legal. They are

saying to law-abiding citizens: You can't protect your ranch. You can't protect your farm. They are saying to Texas and Arizona: You can't put up containers. You can't put up razor wire. You cannot protect your State. We are going to make you sit by and watch as we violate Federal law.

Whoever would have thought—whoever would have thought—that you would have an administration going in here and finding ways to violate Federal law, but that is exactly what they are doing, and they are doing it every day.

Once the migrants have illegally come into the country, the administration doesn't just resettle them; they use taxpayer dollars to even pay for their healthcare. I have already mentioned they get a phone, food, clothing, and a plane ticket to wherever they want to go.

In fiscal year 2022, taxpayers shouldered the cost for \$94.3 million of medical expenses for these migrants. In fiscal year 2021, Immigration and Customs Enforcement healthcare budgeted more than \$74 million for the Department of Veterans Affairs to assist with outside referrals and medical claims processing. Think about this. The VA—the VA—is subsidizing healthcare for illegal immigrants. So while the VA is helping to treat migrants, more than 1 million veterans are waiting for staff to process their claims. Can you see the problem here?

We are talking about healthcare for our Nation's veterans, people who have raised their hands and have sworn an oath and have worn the uniform, men and women who have protected this Nation, and we have said: When you do this, we will provide your healthcare. But oh, no. Look at what is happening. Those who are illegally entering the country are being put in front of our Nation's veterans. And right now, we are seeing this backlog grow. There had been a quarter of a million claims about this time last year, and then it went to 400,000, and now we are at a million—a million. But those who have illegally come, they are put at the head of the line, and our veterans are at the back. Do you think that is fair? Is there anyone in this Chamber who thinks that is fair and that is right?

On top of this, we learn now that New York City—again, led by Democrats—in New York City, what are they doing? They are shutting down high schools, and they are sending kids home for remote learning. We tried that during COVID, right? It didn't work out very well, did it? But kids in New York are being forced to go home so that their school can be used as a shelter.

You know, it might be more appropriate if New York City took some of those Federal buildings where the workers are not showing up for work and used those for temporary housing. But allowing these facilities to be used and kids to be sent home and placed on remote learning—it is so inappropriate, and it is wrong. But at every step, my

Democratic colleagues have supported this administration's disastrous open border policies.

And for more than 7 months, they have refused to bring H.R. 2 to this floor for a vote. H.R. 2 is the House Republicans' Secure the Border Act. It would help end this crisis. In fact, since the House passed H.R. 2 and sent it over here to the Senate, the Senate Judiciary Committee has held 83 hearings—83 hearings and meetings since that bill was passed. H.R. 2 has never been brought up for 1 minute of discussion in this Chamber. It just shows you: Open border is this administration's policy. This is what they want.

Now, I think that it is very telling what the Democrats are for on this. Their inaction on what is a crucial issue and, indeed, the No. 1 issue with the American people reveals a lot about their priorities.

But I would have to ask my Democratic colleagues: Why is it that you are for illegal immigration? Why is it that you are working so hard to make illegal legal? What is it about circumventing the rule of law that you think is the right thing to do? Do you want to circumvent the rule of law and throw away all immigration policy? Or is it just you want to allow illegal entry into this country?

I will tell you what, Madam President: We need to know who is coming in this country and why they are coming. I would yield time on this floor to any Democrat who wanted to come and explain why you are working so hard to make illegal legal. I would like to hear that explanation because it seems, every time we turn around, you are looking for some way to codify illegal entry into this country.

How about abiding by the rule of law, because when you circumvent the rule of law, what do you do? You devalue our citizenship. What about the thousands of people who are working legally toward citizenship, who are spending money, who are spending time? Have any of you spent time going to a naturalization ceremony, a citizenship ceremony? Have you heard these stories of how hard people work, how they want to be a U.S. citizen?

But, oh, no. What some of you want to do is devalue that. You want to say: Let's make it OK for people to just waltz across the Rio Grande, walk in here, and enter this country illegally outside of the rule of law, wait 10 years to get an asylum hearing.

What is right about that? And you know the answer: Nothing is right. Nothing is right. And it is amazing to me. Give me an explanation of why you think you should preference people who illegally come in this country before our Nation's veterans and hard-working taxpayers. Why do you do that? Why do you think that that is OK?

I will tell you what right now: Tennesseans don't think that is OK. They don't think having a million people on the VA backlog for services is OK while you are spending millions of dollars for

healthcare for veterans for processing claims. They don't think that sending outside referrals for them when veterans can't get into community care—this is not right.

I can't imagine an explanation from one of my Democratic colleagues that would say: I think that is what we ought to do. We ought to just say: Illegal immigrants, we are going to take care of you first, and everybody else to the back of the line.

But, in essence, that is what your actions are showing that you support. Your actions and inactions are showing that you think making illegal legal, that that is a really good thing.

And the other thing I don't get about all of this: Each and every one of you know you do not come to that southern border on your own; you have paid a cartel. People pay the cartels.

And then, Border Patrol will show you the bands and bracelets that are put on people. What it shows is the cartel and what this person needs to do to work out their fee, because not everybody can pay the \$5,000 or \$10,000 to the cartel to illegally come in this country and then have the U.S. taxpayer finish the job for them once they get to the U.S. border because they get their asylum claim, their notice to appear, their phone, their food, their clothes, their plane tickets, and their healthcare.

But they have a band on them, a tracking device, and that is what tells the cartel and their job. It may be going to a gang. It may be going to a work crew. It may be selling drugs—fentanyl—and pushing that into our communities. It may be that these people are part of a human trafficking ring, they are going to be put into human trafficking and sex trafficking.

So to my Democratic colleagues: Do you think this is compassionate? How do you say this defines compassion? It is beyond me. You all know that this is modern-day slavery. And if you haven't seen these bands, I think there are some of us that would show you these bands that people have to wear, will show you the Department of Homeland Security stats that shows that just a few years ago, human trafficking was a \$500-million-a-year business. Today, DHS tells us it is a \$150-billion-a-year profit center. That is right: \$150 billion a year.

Let me tell you something. These women and children that are being sex trafficked, they are being mentally, physically, emotionally, sexually, and drug abused as they make these journeys. You all know that. But why would you say an open border is a compassionate policy? It is not.

This is a humanitarian crisis. This is a crisis where people are having their lives ruined. They are sold a bill of goods by a cartel who is incentivized because the cartel says: Biden said come on, border is open. The policy is an open border.

You know, it is imperative that we stand with the rule of law. I have got a couple of pieces of legislation that I

filed hoping that they will help. One is the CONTAINER Act that would allow States to protect their portion of that southern border, give them the ability. They have got that right. If the Federal Government falls down on their job, they have got the right to protect their citizens, and they want to do that.

The other is No VA Resources for Illegal Aliens Act. This is something that I have done along with Senator TUBERVILLE to stop the administration's Department of Veterans Affairs from providing taxpayer-funded healthcare to illegal aliens or engaging in claims processing for anyone unlawfully present in the United States.

It is time that we secure this southern border and that we end this illegal entry into this country.

I yield the floor.

(Ms. CORTEZ MASTO assumed the Chair.)

(Mr. OSSOFF assumed the Chair.)

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. HASSAN). The majority leader.

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I know of no further debate on the motion to proceed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. If there is no further debate, the question is on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.

#### AMENDING THE PERMANENT ELECTRONIC DUCK STAMP ACT OF 2013

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 2872) to amend the Permanent Electronic Duck Stamp Act of 2013 to allow the Secretary of the Interior to issue electronic stamps under such Act, and for other purposes.

#### ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. SCHUMER. I ask unanimous consent that the only amendments in order to H.R. 2872 be the following: Paul No. 1384, Marshall Motion to Commit, Braun No. 1382, Murray No. 1381; and that at 12:30 p.m. tomorrow, Thursday, January 18, the Senate vote on adoption of the amendments in the order listed, with each subject to 60 affirmative votes required for adoption, with the exception of the Marshall Motion to Commit and Murray No. 1381; that there be 2 minutes for debate equally divided prior to each vote; further, that on disposition of the Braun amendment, the Murray substitute amendment No. 1381, as amended, if amended, be agreed to, the bill be considered read a third time, and the Senate vote on passage of the bill, as amended, if amended, with 60 affirmative votes required for passage, all without further intervening action or debate.

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

#### AMENDMENT NO. 1381

(Purpose: In the nature of a substitute.)