

isn't a problem. If there is a problem, let's discuss how to do it while protecting the communications of innocent Americans whose communications could be caught up in this legislation.

Until the Federal assessment changes—the assessment that it isn't a problem changes to that it is a problem, and these are the malefactors, these are the people that are orchestrating this—let's get that from the Biden administration. Tell us what the problem is. Tell us the extent of the problem. Instead, the Biden administration is saying there is not a problem.

So, Madam President, this pattern is all too familiar. History has shown us, time and time again, how fear and manufactured urgency are used as pretexts to expand government power at the expense of freedom.

After 9/11, Congress passed the Patriot Act. In the name of security, Americans were promised that these surveillance powers were necessary; they would only be directed toward foreigners; they would only be directed toward terrorists—until we discovered that these powers were being used on Americans. Americans were promised that these powers were necessary and temporary. Instead, they were abused, misused, and weaponized. Innocent Americans had their privacy violated, their data collected, and their rights trampled.

The lesson here is clear: When Congress legislates in haste, without careful scrutiny, without debate, and without accountability, it is the American people who suffer the consequences. Today, we are facing a similar moment.

The bill before us would grant law enforcement significant authority to intercept private electronic communications without consent.

For example, the bill will allow the government to conduct dragnet surveillance of the phones of innocent Americans traveling through U.S. airports, as long as the government claims they are doing it to neutralize a drone. So in order to look at the information that might be coming to a drone, it may be that you capture all the information of everybody surrounding an airport or everybody who lives near an airport.

Once you have all that data, what are the assurances that the government isn't looking at your data in addition to the data that may be related to flying the drone?

This is not just about security. It is about unchecked government overreach. It is about capitalizing on fear and media-driven hysteria to jam through sweeping legislation that could violate the civil liberties of American people.

Congress has a constitutional responsibility to serve as a check on the Executive power, not as a rubberstamp for it.

The Federal Government already has the power to deal with drones. The

Federal Government already has the power to stop any drones that are in airspace around airports. The Federal Government already has the power to protect its air bases. So if there is a significant problem here, the Biden administration needs to come forward and let us know: Who are these drones? Who is operating these drones?

What is the Federal Government doing to protect either airports or bases from this? Instead, we are told by the Biden administration there is no threat to our national security.

Let's first insist on truth and transparency from the Biden administration before offering up legislation that is feel-good, pat somebody on the back, and say: Oh, we have done something about drones. We are strong on drones.

Congress has a constitutional responsibility to serve as a check on Executive power, not as a rubberstamp. We owe it to the American people to demand compelling justification, meaningful safeguards, and full transparency before granting new surveillance authorities.

We are a Nation of laws, not fear, not panic, and not manufactured urgency. We do not trade away our freedoms, our privacy, and our constitutional protections for vague promises of security.

I will object to this bill today, but I am open to talking with the authors of this bill about how we could have enhanced ability to interrupt drone activity, but done while protecting all Americans' constitutional right to privacy.

I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

PROVIDING FOR A CORRECTION IN THE ENROLLMENT OF H.R. 5009

Mr. REED. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of S. Con. Res. 44.

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

The clerk will report the concurrent resolution by title.

The bill clerk read as follows:

A concurrent resolution (S. Con. Res. 44) directing the Clerk of the House of Representatives to make a correction in the enrollment of the bill H.R. 5009.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the concurrent resolution.

Mr. REED. I further ask that the concurrent resolution be agreed to; that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

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

The concurrent resolution (S. Con. Res. 44), was agreed to.

(The concurrent resolution (S. Con. Res. 44) is printed in today's RECORD (Legislative Day of December 16, 2024) under "Submitted Resolutions.")

Mr. REED. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Colorado.

THE CALENDAR

Mr. HICKENLOOPER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources be discharged from further consideration of S. 3373, H.R. 4385, and H.R. 5770, and the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of the following bills en bloc: Calendar No. 629, S. 4576; S. 3373; H.R. 4385; and H.R. 5770.

There being no objection, the committee was discharged of the relevant bills, and the Senate proceeded to consider the bills, en bloc.

Mr. HICKENLOOPER. I ask unanimous consent that the substitute amendment to S. 3373 at the desk be considered and agreed to; that the bills, as amended, where applicable, be considered read a third time and passed; and that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table, all en bloc.

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

The bills passed, en bloc, as follows:

COLORADO RIVER BASIN SYSTEM CONSERVATION EXTENSION ACT

The bill (S. 4576) to amend the Energy and Water Development and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2015, to reauthorize the Colorado River System conservation pilot program, which had been reported from the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time, and passed as follows:

S. 4576

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Colorado River Basin System Conservation Extension Act".

SEC. 2. REAUTHORIZATION OF COLORADO RIVER SYSTEM CONSERVATION PILOT PROGRAM.

Section 206 of the Energy and Water Development and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2015 (43 U.S.C. 620 note; Public Law 113-235), is amended—

- (1) in subsection (b)(2), by striking "this Act" and inserting "the Colorado River Basin System Conservation Extension Act";
- (2) in subsection (c)(2), by striking "2024" and inserting "2026"; and
- (3) in subsection (d), by striking "2025" and inserting "2027".

REQUIRING THE FEDERAL ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION TO EXTEND THE TIME PERIOD DURING WHICH LICENSEES ARE REQUIRED TO COMMENCE CONSTRUCTION OF CERTAIN HYDROPOWER PROJECTS

A bill (S. 3373) to require the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to extend the time period during which licensees are required to commence construction of certain hydropower projects.

The amendment (No. 3343) in the nature of a substitute was agreed to, as follows:

(Purpose: In the nature of a substitute)

Strike all after the enacting clause and insert the following:

SECTION 1. EXTENSION OF TIME TO COMMENCE CONSTRUCTION OF CERTAIN HYDROPOWER PROJECTS.

(a) **DEFINITION OF COVERED PROJECT.**—In this section, the term “covered project” means a hydropower project with respect to which the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission issued a license before March 13, 2020.

(b) **AUTHORIZATION OF EXTENSION.**—Notwithstanding section 13 of the Federal Power Act (16 U.S.C. 806), on the request of a licensee of a covered project, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission may, after reasonable notice and for good cause shown, extend in accordance with subsection (c) the period during which the licensee is required to commence construction of the covered project for an additional 4 years beyond the 8 years authorized by that section.

(c) **PERIOD OF EXTENSION.**—An extension of time to commence construction of a covered project under subsection (b) shall—

(1) begin on the date on which the final extension of the period for commencement of construction granted to the licensee under section 13 of the Federal Power Act (16 U.S.C. 806) expires; and

(2) end on the date that is 4 years after the latest date to which the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission is authorized to extend the period for commencement of construction under that section.

(d) **REINSTATEMENT OF EXPIRED LICENSE.**—If the time period required under section 13 of the Federal Power Act (16 U.S.C. 806) to commence construction of a covered project expires after December 31, 2023, and before the date of enactment of this Act—

(1) the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission may reinstate the license for the applicable project effective as of the date of expiration of the license; and

(2) the extension authorized under subsection (b) shall take effect on the date of that expiration.

The bill (S. 3373), as amended, was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time and passed.

DROUGHT PREPAREDNESS ACT

The bill (H.R. 4385) to extend authorization of the Reclamation States Emergency Drought Relief Act of 1991 was ordered to a third reading, was read the third time, and passed.

WATER MONITORING AND TRACKING ESSENTIAL RESOURCES (WATER) DATA IMPROVEMENT ACT

The bill (H.R. 5770) to reauthorize certain United States Geological Survey water data enhancement programs was ordered to a third reading, was read the third time, and passed.

Mr. HICKENLOOPER. Madam President, in Colorado and across the West, as you know as well as I, many, many communities are facing a historic drought crisis. Decades of drought are, in fact, long-term aridification and in many ways have become the new normal.

These bills respond to the urgent needs of our drought-stricken communities. They maintain the Federal Government’s ability to respond to drought and allow voluntary water conservation in the Upper Colorado River Basin.

We need these now as we are seeing in realtime how drought threatens our very way of life. More than 40 million people rely on the Colorado River for water, food, recreation, energy. Our communities, our farms, our environment all depend on water. These bills extend programs that we already know work. At risk is our entire way of life.

Thankfully, the two House bills I mentioned, the Drought Preparedness Act and WATER, the Water Data Improvement Act, will now become law. My colleague from Boulder, JOE NEGUSE, has done the heavy lifting to get this across the finish line in that Chamber. I am happy to do the same here.

But the two Senate bills just passed will still need to pass the House to help us out in the West. We really are running out of time.

The System Conservation Pilot Program enables voluntary water conservation in the Upper Colorado River, and I have been working closely with Senator BARRASSO to reauthorize it. It is supported by the Upper Colorado River Commission and got its start in the depths of the 2022 Colorado River drought that continues to this day.

It is critical that we pass this 2-year reauthorization because water users and farmers who participate need to make decisions now about signing on for next year. Any delay that will limit the Upper Basin’s ability to find participants and run a successful water conservation program, we can’t afford that.

We are asking Speaker JOHNSON to please put this lifeline for western farmers and ranchers on the suspension calendar and make sure that it is able to pass this year.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

Mr. CASSIDY. Madam President, I am speaking to S. 3373, the hydropower license extension, which helps a lock on the Red River and Overton Lock projects. This bill is incredibly important to Louisiana.

Hydropower is reliable, safe, and responsible; and the Federal Government should be enabling projects, not standing in the way.

Today’s actions are bipartisan, pro-job and pro-American energy. I am glad to see Congress cut the redtape holding up the Red River and Overton Lock projects.

These hydropower projects have been negatively impacted by supply chain issues the last 4 years. They simply need more time to start construction.

I am very pleased to see this get across the finish line.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

Ms. LUMMIS. Madam President, I am proud to support H.R. 4385, the Drought Preparedness Act, which I joined my colleague from Colorado in introducing.

Senator HICKENLOOPER has been fabulous to work with, as have all of the Senators from the States that headwater and utilize the Colorado River, including yourself, Madam President.

This bill would reauthorize the Reclamation States Emergency Drought Relief Act and allow the Department of the Interior to prepare drought contingency plans and provide technical assistance to State, local, and Tribal governments on their drought contingency plans.

This is one of the many bills I have had the pleasure of partnering with Senator HICKENLOOPER on, and I look forward to the President signing it into law.

Again, Madam President, I appreciate your help on these matters as well.

I am also pleased to support H.R. 5770, the Water Data Improvement Act, also sponsoring and introducing with my colleague Senator HICKENLOOPER, to reauthorize three water data programs at the U.S. Geological Survey that address water scarcity in the West. The West continues to lead the Nation in water conservation and management practices and is home to some of the best and brightest experts in this field. By extending these successful programs, we will improve water quality, secure our water infrastructure, and ensure we remain good stewards of our natural resources.

Again, with my appreciation for my fellow Colorado River Senators, with whom we have been working for the last couple of years on these measures and others to support our State’s engineers in the more than 100-year-old Colorado River Compact, I thank you and look forward to continuing to work with you to address the important Colorado River issues to the West and to our country.

I yield the floor.

SOCIAL SECURITY FAIRNESS ACT—MOTION TO PROCEED

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

TRIBUTE TO ANNE STANSKI

Ms. STABENOW. Madam President, I rise today to pay tribute to a wonderful staffer who has been indispensable to me and the entire Stabenow team. She has left us now; so she is in the Gallery, rather than sitting next to me. But I am so grateful for Anne Stanski and her incredible work.

Anne began as a scheduler in my Washington office at the beginning of my second term in the Senate, and after just a few weeks, I wondered how I got along for 6 years without her. Anyone who knows congressional offices knows that being the scheduler is not the most glamorous job. But having a great scheduler is the secret sauce of every successful Hill office.