

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Members are reminded to address their remarks to the Chair.

WORK HIGHLIGHTS OF WESTERN CAUCUS

(Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2025, Mr. LAMALFA of California was recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.)

Mr. LAMALFA. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak here as we conclude the week.

Mr. Speaker, I wanted to take the time today to highlight some of the work that we are doing in the Western Caucus, made up of over 90 Members of the U.S. House of Representatives.

I have been privileged to become the chair of that group this year. Chairing the caucus, I get to bring up a lot of key issues on the floor and kind of illustrate to the people who are watching and wish to pay attention how important the issues are that we are taking up and continue to advance while working with the Trump administration.

One of the cornerstones, indeed, is energy. We call ourselves the Western Caucus, but the issues are a little beyond the Western States. Indeed, they are rural issues. They are issues that affect all of our States and the opportunity to strengthen our entire economy with what we have available in the Western States and in rural areas. Indeed, our oil and our energy come from many, many parts of the country. The original oil patch was actually in western Pennsylvania.

The Western Caucus is less about maybe what the real estate is, but more about the concepts of advancing rural issues and the ability to extract resources and to utilize resources in an ecologically sound way. We are all about that, too.

The U.S. gets a bad reputation sometimes that people who are in these industries are misconstrued by environmental groups and such as being against the environment and against doing things properly. The bottom line on that topic is that unleashing American energy and our mineral resources, strengthening agriculture, and tackling the real challenges facing our country, like the devastating wildfires in the West, are key issues that the Western Caucus faces.

One of the things that can help with some of these issues will be modernizing the Endangered Species Act that has been around for over 50 years, and I see the futility as it is interpreted these days in layer after layer of court decisions and lawsuits that basically just hamper the ability for us to do the things we need to do to have stronger energy availability and have the other resources that are key to a strong economy for our country and not import all of these products.

Indeed, with the goals set out, at least by some, to have further elec-

tricity usage for appliances, which we have talked about this week on this floor, there is requirements. There is people being mandated to change what their appliances are powered by.

When you have a gas-powered stove, gas water heater, and on and on with mandates, whether it is my home State of California or has come through the previous Biden administration, this has taken away consumer choices and taken away the best choice for a lot of people for how to power these devices.

That extends also to automobiles, trucks. If you have it, a truck brought it. That is an important aspect to remember, as well, is that just by merely sweeping away the ability to have gasoline and diesel, as California is doing and that they are trying to do and that the Federal Government had been doing until the end of the Biden administration, that is going to cost a lot. It is going to make it a lot less convenient and a lot more difficult to get raw materials and products from where they are created to where they are needed.

The Endangered Species Act is part of the issue that needs to be modernized, as well as getting over the lawsuits and litigation that is used as a weapon, whether it is by Federal agencies or by so-called NGOs or environmental groups.

We have been working in this Chamber, as I mentioned, this week to help deliver solutions to lower energy costs, cut red tape, and reverse the Biden administration's relentless overreach, from blocking costly energy efficiency mandates on consumer products to stopping unnecessary restrictions on American manufacturing and energy production.

We want these things to be manufactured here by American workers, using American technology, American efficiency, and the cleanliness that comes with it. We are much more efficient and much cleaner than what happens in Chinese manufacturing. Our natural gas that we use in this country is actually cleaner than Russian natural gas. We should be exporting more of that to Europe and helping them out instead of them becoming dependent on the long reputation we have had with Russia there.

When we are talking about these overreaches by government by these regulations, it really drives up prices, burdens businesses, and makes us more dependent on foreign products, foreign energy, et cetera.

Let's restore American energy dominance, support these industries that put food on the table, clothing on our backs, and shelter above us. We should support them to make our country stronger and more independent. We will push back against the policies that are failing and harming rural America.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to hearing from my colleagues, some of whom will be joining me during this time here, and what they are working on as part of our Western Caucus partnership here.

I see a couple of my colleagues have arrived here. I would like to recognize, if the gentlewoman is ready, my executive vice chair. The gentlewoman from Utah (Ms. MALOY) is with us here—I am pleased to have her as a partner and friend on the Western Caucus—to inform us on the issues that are particular to Utah, but also the Western States, as well.

I am really, really pleased that she has stepped up to be in this role here, and I appreciate her quite a bit.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from Utah (Ms. MALOY).

Ms. MALOY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I am grateful for the opportunity to be here today, and I commend my colleagues in the Western Caucus for their unwavering dedication to preserving the values and livelihoods of rural America, the Western States, and our Western values that we both represent.

I will highlight today three pieces of legislation that I have introduced. One of them addresses abuses of the Antiquities Act, one of them addresses the inefficiencies and unfairness of our permitting system, and the other one addresses the need to get geothermal energy up and going more quickly and more efficiently.

Mr. Speaker, I will start with the Antiquities Act. For decades, the executive branch, Presidents of the United States, mostly Democrats, have used the Antiquities Act of 1906 to designate vast areas as national monuments, and that is in an authority that we delegated to them in the Antiquities Act of 1906.

The abuse of that narrow delegated authority has resulted in restricted access to lands, hindered economic opportunities, and it has left local voices unheard and frustrated.

In my district, the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument was created by Bill Clinton in 1996, over the objections of Utah's Governor, Utah's Federal delegation, and local, county, and State-elected officials. Those frustrations and scars and wounds have not healed in the years that have passed since then.

Mr. Speaker, my Ending Presidential Overreach on Public Lands Act ensures that the decisions of this magnitude affecting public lands are made collaboratively, respecting the role of Congress with our jurisdiction over public land, and taking input from local voices. It should be Congress that makes those widespread, large-scale land management decisions.

Mr. Speaker, the next one I will talk about is the FREE Act, which encourages agencies to look at the permits they issue and determine which ones can be done by permit by rule, which means they have a predetermined list of requirements for a permit and firm timelines on making those decisions. An applicant can bring an agency everything on that list, and the agency can either say: Yes, this is adequate for

a permit, and issue the permit, or say: No, it is not adequate for a permit, and give the applicant what they need to do to remedy that so that we can have quicker permitting, especially on infrastructure projects.

Right now, it takes years and millions of dollars to permit infrastructure projects, especially in States like Utah, where most of the land is managed by the Federal Government and everything we do has to go through multiple layers of Federal processes.

Lastly, the GEO Act addresses the time that it takes to permit geothermal energy projects. Geothermal energy is abundant in Utah. We are leading out in a lot of ways on developing new geothermal resources. Yet, the time it takes to get the permit to build a geothermal plant is prohibiting us from developing some of the resources and getting clean, reliable baseload power online that this country needs now and will need even more in the future.

□ 1230

These three bills are not all of my bills, but I wanted to highlight those three today because they are about safeguarding public lands, fostering economic growth, and empowering our communities. They are about letting ranchers, families, small businesses, and entrepreneurs benefit from thoughtful and responsive government as opposed to government that drowns out their voices and ignores their needs.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support these measures, which offer pragmatic solutions to real challenges in Utah, throughout the West, and throughout the whole country.

Mr. LAMALFA. Mr. Speaker, I thank Ms. MALOY for her remarks. I appreciate it.

Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the gentlewoman a little bit about the Antiquities Act because I have shared a lot of that frustration, as well.

The Biden administration, on the way out the door, declared several monument areas—a couple in California, one on the ocean area. It really seems it has been down to just being an executive action with very little input by Congress, and I know that is what she is working on in her legislation.

I can think of a couple of recent examples. Over 600 million acres are turned into an ocean monument area. When you do the math on that, that ends up being about a million square miles of a 1,000-mile square. That is a giant chunk of ocean that is no longer really usable for normal things like fishing and things like that.

In my home State, up in my district, they declared almost a quarter-million-acre area—they really had little consultation with the folks there. It had like a mining operation, and the timber management needed to happen, so it has been quite abusive.

I ask the gentlewoman what she thinks the long-term effects have been

on energy in the West, energy exploration, and the types of things we need to be doing.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from Utah (Ms. MALOY) for the purpose of a colloquy.

Ms. MALOY. It has had a negative impact on energy production—as soon as I get in front of a microphone, I have a tickle in my throat—by restricting the areas that are open for use, withdrawing them from mineral exploration, oil and gas exploration, and energy production.

The original intent of the Presidential proclamation authority in the Antiquities Act was for the President to be able to move quickly and declare a national monument in an area with antiquities, or an area of scientific interest, to hold it until Congress could make a decision.

Since 1976, when the Federal Land Policy and Management Act, FLPMA, passed, it has been the policy of the Federal Government that we don't dispose of land anymore, so that threat has been removed. The need for a President to move quickly no longer exists, and the act is just being used to create land policy that couldn't get through Congress.

The process matters when it comes to land management. We need to take back the authority we gave Presidents because they are not using it in the way Congress intended it to be used. It is being abused, and we need to end that abuse by exercising our legislative powers.

Mr. LAMALFA. I agree. It seems that it has really flipped into this one direction on the invoking of a new monument or wilderness area, what have you. I know your State of Utah has been hit pretty hard by several.

It is not that we are against these measures to protect particular areas, but what we are talking about is gigantic swaths of land instead of something a little more focused.

The original intent was a focus on the particular historic or geographic areas, maybe like an old-growth forest area or something like that, areas where there might be Native American ruins that we want to particularly focus on. Instead, we get these gigantic acreages.

I know the Trump administration is going to be looking at some of these here as he did previously.

I also like what you were speaking about on your geothermal process there because it should be an all-of-the-above way of looking at things, on types of energy we have available, and geothermal is clean power. It is one that is available 24/7. You don't have to wait for the wind to blow, the Sun to come up, or the clouds to go away.

We need a lot more baseload power. Look at what is going on with the tech centers, the amount of AI that is going to be coming onboard and the amount of energy that it is going to be consuming.

These data centers are going to use a mass amount of new electricity if they

are allowed to, and they have talked about wanting to do it all as renewable.

If geothermal can be a source in those areas, that is one thing, but we are going to have to get real on where our power is going to come from because we have to have reliable baseload power.

Geothermal has had a very difficult permitting process. Any idea what kind of timeline? How many years does it take to get one through if you can get them through?

Ms. MALOY. I don't know what the current timeline is, but I know it has taken years when it should take months.

We know what a geothermal power plant looks like. We know how to do it in a way that is environmentally sensitive. We are just taking time and money to get to that end point that we already know we are headed to.

Mr. LAMALFA. Indeed, as another example, there was a copper mine—it is not the same as a geothermal power plant, but one particular one in the West took 29 years to permit. When you are talking about any kind of thing that is moving forward on self-sufficiency in minerals or energy dominance that the U.S. needs to have, it takes a decade or more, in many cases, to get this done.

A desalination plant in southern California, along the coast—I think out of Huntington Beach; the Poseidon project it was called. They fought for two decades to try to get a desalination plant.

We can't build water storage in California, it seems, or other areas, so everybody says, "Desal, we can use the Pacific Ocean," until you try to permit it. They fought for 20 years to work through the permit process and jumped through every hoop, like what requirement will make them happy to take care of the brine, the landscape itself. After all that time, they were still denied by the California Coastal Commission and others to be able to do that.

Permitting does need to be reformed, not thrown away, because we want to have a process where people can have a say and a look at what is happening.

By the same token, when we talk about the Antiquities Act, people need to have a say, as well, not just 2,500 miles away in Washington, D.C., where a stroke of the pen does it, as Ms. MALOY mentioned here. Local input from their legislature, their Governor, and their delegation to D.C. basically was ignored on national monuments that were done in Utah. We didn't hear a whole lot up in northern California on the one done recently, either. It was kind of one-sided.

I appreciate you bringing those to the forefront here today, and you are welcome to make any more comments you wish, but we will move on a little bit to Western water for right now, too.

It is a key issue for agriculture and hydroelectric, with safety from flood, and even recreation, as well as a lot of

the folks who are wanting more water for fish needs, fish passage and such. They sure enjoy the benefits of having stored water in the Western dams or any dams.

I will point out as an example here Shasta Dam in northern California. It is the Central Valley Project, as it is known. It is a Federal project built in the thirties that came online strongly in the early forties.

This is an amazing project. Indeed, it is the cornerstone of California water as well as some of the Colorado River water sources we have, but this is 4.5 million acre-feet in one dam and one lake up in Shasta County, California.

The way it is operated is extremely important, and when we don't have as good of decisions being made, at least in my opinion, on how that water is stored, how it is kept, and how it is allocated, then people suffer on that unnecessarily.

Right now, this lake sits at about 600,000 acre-feet still to fill it up. The thing that gets me is that we are seeing farmers and others in the water districts in central California in San Joaquin Valley, where so much of our important food supply for the whole country comes from, stuck at 35 or 40 percent of what used to be the normal allocation.

Part of that is that they can't point to the water supply. I think it is a bit of a misnomer. There is plenty of water around. I will illustrate that here in a moment, but this lake, when it is 4.5 million acre-feet full, along with our other lakes, why isn't that allocation to agriculture and others closer to 100 percent?

It hasn't reached 100 percent in a long time, and a lot of that is based on what we talked about a moment ago here, the Endangered Species Act and its weaponization in the last 50-plus years.

It is not a matter of us not caring about species and trying to recover them and conserve them. It is that it is used as a weapon to stop further water storage or the other issues we were talking about, other energy projects, even forestry practices that would be helpful to not have continued wildfire at the massive scale we are seeing, especially in the Western States.

What I want to see happening for Lake Shasta, for example, is that they can use more scientific forecasting of what the systems of weather are going to be looking like in a given year, in a given season. We are about to end the rainy season as the Bureau of Reclamation and Army Corps of Engineers—Army Corps is in charge of flood controls, so they control the top portion of this dam, Lake Oroville down near where I live, and many others around the whole country. Their charge is for flood control.

They will require that a certain gap from the top of the dam down 40, 50 feet or so. A particular amount of storage has to be available until the end of the rainy season, which is pretty much

April 1. At that point, you are allowed to fill the lake. The lake can fill on up.

Over 600,000 acre-feet down, they are assessing the snowpack, more or less, as I speak, but with still another weather pattern coming in here quite soon that would probably enhance that snowpack number, as well.

What gets me is that we have allowed Bureau of Reclamation and Army Corps 2 million acre-feet to leave this lake, to leave this system, since early January, and that has flowed down, in this case, to Sacramento River and on out to the delta.

If you want to see something about delta numbers, this poster here isn't quite updated, but it illustrates how the water flows down from the north and such and flows through the Bay Delta out to the ocean. These numbers are a little bit older. I have to update my poster here, but it shows a gap. In this case here with this timeline, 29 flowed into the delta. Down below, it shows 22 million acre-feet flowed out. That is a heck of a lot of water to lose that we didn't capture more of.

We have an excellent opportunity to do better at that and keep more water for hydroelectric power, agriculture, recreation, and people's use in the urban areas. There is a bit of a misnomer that people in agriculture use way more water than what is actually the case.

Of stored water in the State, 50 percent goes for environmental purposes, 40 percent and descending goes for agriculture, and about 10 percent for urban and people's use. That is of captured water. There is about another 50 percent of the total rainfall and snowpack that falls on the State that flows out to the ocean or other areas that ends up being—basically, you could call it environmental water as well because people don't get to use it. It is doing what it does in the rivers and streams and such.

We keep hearing that these farmers are wasting water, and people in the cities have to conserve more. Conservation is good. Farmers using better practices is good, as well. If you are telling people in the urban areas—and wait till this really happens to them. This is when we will get their attention, when they get rationed down to 42 gallons per day per person and you see these kinds of numbers.

When you see that much water going out to the delta because we have people refusing to build the storage and run the pumps, for example, at the south end of the delta, that could be filling up what is known as San Luis Reservoir, which hasn't been topped off yet. It was topped off 2 years ago, but last year and this year, under similar snowpack and rain circumstances, they haven't allowed the pumps to run hard enough to fill it.

I am hoping—a lot of stuff seems to be based on hope—that we can have enough melt into Shasta Lake or Lake Oroville and the other large ones that they will fill up and there will be enough water for everybody.

How do you count on having that amount of water, that amount of rainfall, in March and April? I have lived there my whole life. You don't always get heavy rains in March and April that would help top off these reservoirs.

□ 1245

It is, indeed, important to California, but it is an important Western issue, and what gets produced in those areas is important to everybody. I recognize that it is not just a California issue, but an entire Western issue. That is why the Western Caucus will be focusing partly on that.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Alaska (Mr. BEGICH), another colleague of mine who will bring his perspective on what is happening in the great northern area of Alaska and the amazing amounts of resources they have there that this country enjoys and consumes, and it does so responsibly as well. I thank him for joining us.

Mr. BEGICH. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to discuss the many opportunities of Alaska.

As America's most Western State, most Eastern State, and most Northern State, Alaska is nearly 20 percent of the United States' landmass. We have more than half of the United States coastline, and it is estimated that we have more undiscovered estimated natural gas and oil resources than any other State in the country.

We have nearly every critical mineral on the critical minerals list in Alaska. We have base metals, precious metals, and of course we have rare earths in abundance. We have incredible timber resources, and we produce about 60 percent of America's seafood. Alaska is a crucial State, and I am proud to be a member of our House's Western Caucus.

I am the only Member from the State of Alaska. We have about 730,000 people who live in a State that is 2½ times the size of Texas. We are vast. We are independent, and we want to make sure that we have the ability to develop the resources that we have been blessed with.

Under President Trump's leadership, we have seen executive orders that specifically allow for development of our critical minerals, those rare earths that I spoke of, and of our natural resources, including tremendous energy resources in ANWR, NPR-A, and elsewhere. That is what Alaskans want. Alaskans want the ability to be independent, to develop their resources responsibly, and to stand on their own two feet.

I am thrilled to be a part of this body, a body that is focused on making sure that Alaska's resource potential is fully unlocked, that our mineral potential is fully unlocked, and that we restore domestic supply chains again.

As we restore those supply chains, we know that those supply chains begin with resources and begin with energy

to process those resources. Alaska is the cornerstone of this strategy, and we are excited to be a part of that conversation. I look forward to the opportunities that we will be bringing forward in the 119th Congress to advance Alaska's interests, our Nation's interests, and restore domestic manufacturing in this Nation again.

Mr. LAMALFA. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate Mr. BEGICH's remarks. Indeed, with all the rich resources we have in Alaska, it would be amazing if we could get the permitting process so they can produce these rare earths and critical minerals in our country instead of relying on them from adversaries that are not going to be reliable long term. I appreciate him bringing that to our attention, and the work that he and others are battling to do up there.

Mr. Speaker, I now yield to the gentleman from Montana (Mr. DOWNING), one of our new Members here as well who represents half of Montana. He doesn't get to have the whole State anymore, I think, with two Members there. I appreciate his joining us here.

Mr. Speaker, indeed, these large States are home to so many rich resources that are important to our country, and we are glad to have Western Caucus membership that is recognizing that and working with us here.

Mr. DOWNING. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from California for yielding.

Montana has many mottos, official and unofficial: The Last Best Place, Big Sky Country, the Treasure State. This last one recognizes the rich natural resources we have in the great State of Montana right underneath our feet.

Up until recently, Biden's anti-American policies have allowed foreign actors to dominate mineral markets, and this has stifled domestic energy production to the detriment of Western States like Montana.

I had the opportunity to return home last week, and I heard about these issues firsthand from miners across the Second District. In fact, I probably spent more time below ground than I did above it. Actually, I really enjoyed that.

I am going to talk first about Stillwater County. In Stillwater County, the miners of the Sibanye-Stillwater Mine are hard at work producing the only platinum and palladium that is mined in America. Years of feckless trade policy on the part of the Biden administration has allowed malign foreign actors like Russia to flood commodities markets, crippling smaller producers like Sibanye-Stillwater.

Russia, which represents more than a third of the market, has been subsidizing and dumping these critical minerals, causing artificially low commodity prices.

This resulted in the layoff of approximately 700 hardworking miners just last year as the negative effect from dumping has not only affected the commodity price, but it has made it so that

the commodity price is below the actual cost to extract it. The ripple effects are still being felt throughout my district.

This is why Montana's congressional delegation is stepping up. I stand shoulder to shoulder with Congressman ZINKE and Senators DAINES and SHEEHY. We introduced the Stop Russian Market Manipulation Act. This bans imports of critical minerals from Russia.

We are creating a competitive market for U.S. mineral producers not driven down by dumping from foreign actors and extending a vital lifeline to operations like Stillwater. This not only allows these mines to support their work forces, but this also drives the local economy, my State economy, and is also a factor in the security of the United States of America.

Our bill encourages domestic production, decreases reliance on foreign minerals, shores up supply chains, and significantly bolsters national security, all while dealing a critical blow to Putin's war machine. These factors combine to make a real difference in the lives of hardworking Montanans who rely on these jobs to make ends meet.

Signal Peak Mine, in Musselshell County, has faced a similar reality after years of regulatory foot-dragging and America-last energy policy threatened Montana's only underground coal mining operation.

I spoke with miners who expressed concern about Signal Peak's future amidst permitting uncertainty and resource unavailability. My Crow Revenue Act eliminates this uncertainty by facilitating a critical land transfer that unlocks access to minable Federal coal while providing the Crow Tribe with a piece of the revenue. With bicameral support, I am confident we will get this bill across the finish line for our Tribal communities and our State economy. More importantly, this is another step in ensuring American energy dominance.

In closing, let me make one thing abundantly clear: There is a new sheriff in town. None of these efforts would stand a chance of becoming law without this administration. President Trump has taken swift executive action to declare a national energy emergency, reopened exploration on Federal lands and waters, appointed an all-star Cabinet with the likes of Secretary Wright and Secretary Burgum to streamline permitting and unleash American energy.

This is why I am hopeful for projects like Black Butte Copper near White Sulphur Springs that are committed to unlocking the Treasure State's resources and driving rural economic development, all in a responsible manner. I can't wait to see what these next 4 years bring for my State and others like it. Let us not squander this opportunity and work together to make American mining great again.

Mr. LAMALFA. Mr. Speaker, I thank Mr. DOWNING for his perspective on

that. We are finding that these Western States, the Western Caucus focus area, I guess, is very rich in so much of what we need here. I appreciate his work with those folks in the mines to illustrate how important they are to the whole country and our energy grid, et cetera.

I thank him for his time with us, and the technical issues with the podium emphasized the point.

I am pleased to have excited, new freshman Members who really want to take charge and get going here. It is good stuff.

Mr. Speaker, I yield now to the gentlewoman from North Dakota (Mrs. FEDORCHAK), a new Member who has shown a lot of enthusiasm in jumping in with us here in the Western Caucus and helping to make it happen.

She represents another at-large district, which means the entire State. Even though there are maybe not a lot of people in these areas, what they do is extremely important.

Mrs. FEDORCHAK. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to be here. This little podium seems to have a mind of its own, so I will leave it down so it doesn't scare us all again.

Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleagues in the Western Caucus for leading the charge to strengthen rural America's future.

As a fourth-generation North Dakotan, I have seen how the hard work of our energy and agriculture producers fuels our economy, strengthens our communities, and secures our very way of life.

That is why on Monday, I introduced a resolution to overturn the Biden administration's reinstatement of the Once-in-Always-in rule. This is a short-sighted, bureaucratic mandate that punishes energy producers, manufacturers, and small businesses for investing in emissions reduction.

This rule permanently classifies certain industrial facilities as major sources of hazardous air pollutants, even if they take meaningful steps to reduce emissions below the Federal thresholds. That makes no sense. Facilities that make major investments to reduce emissions should be rewarded, not locked into outdated, costly regulations that discourage further improvements.

By refusing to let businesses reclassify after making progress, this rule removes any real incentive to invest in cleaner technologies. Instead of supporting innovation, it sends a clear message: Don't even bother.

Democrats like to use the mantra of hope and change. This regulatory approach says there is no hope, so don't change. That is not environmental stewardship. That is Washington overreach.

The United States has reduced emissions more than any other nation since 2005, all while leading the world in energy production. We should be building on that success, not undermining it with policies like this outdated, overly

burdensome Biden regulation that stifle investment and progress.

North Dakota is proof that responsible energy production and environmental stewardship go hand in hand. It is not one or the other. Our State has never violated Federal air quality standards. I will say that again. Our State has never violated Federal air quality standards, while being one of the largest energy producers in the whole country. This is a testament to the more than \$2 billion our energy producers have invested in emissions control technologies. They did that because they took their responsibility seriously. They want to be good stewards of our resources and of our air and water.

American businesses are dedicated to protecting the health, safety, and vibrancy of their communities. What they need is regulatory certainty, not a rule that locks them into compliance with outdated standards even after they have done the right thing. This is about more than just one burdensome regulation. It is about standing up for the industries that power our economy and rejecting Washington's one-size-fits-all approach.

American energy solutions are climate solutions. American energy producers are providing the solutions that are going to solve energy needs and environmental needs for the world over. Let's encourage investment in technology, not support regulations that make it impossible to do business.

I am proud to lead this effort in the House, and I urge my colleagues to support this resolution. Let's restore regulatory certainty, the number one cry from the industry that I meet with. We need regulatory certainty. Let's send a clear message that we stand with American energy producers, farmers, manufacturers, and we stand with innovation.

□ 1300

Mr. Speaker, our Nation has been blessed abundantly with natural resources. Misguided regulations and policies are strangling the very people in our Nation who are building and producing everything that we need. They are strangling the people who create jobs, who produce the products, the food, who pay taxes, who employ people. People make our communities strong. We need to stop doing that. We need to correct course in our approach for government and regulations.

Our Republican House Conference, the President, and the Senate Republicans are committed to doing this for America and to making our Nation, our States, our energy producers, our farmers, our manufacturers, and our communities great again.

Mr. LAMALFA. Mr. Speaker, I thank Representative FEDORCHAK. Those were great points she emphasized for us. It is a common theme here, and I thank her for that.

Mr. Speaker, there is red tape and endless delays in doing the work that

needs to be done to produce what comes from the Western States, Western Caucus, and our whole country. I have to remember and to emphasize these products come from all over. When we talk about mined materials, farmed materials, and wood, it is all important. The same laws that affect us in the Western States affect us everywhere.

Why do we spend so many years on permits to do things that we know how to do well? Indeed, the United States does this with a better set of environmental regulations and are way more conscientious than what will be produced in China or some of the other Pacific Rim areas. We have the technology to do it the best, as Mrs. FEDORCHAK was talking about.

I don't talk about CO₂ a whole lot because I think CO₂ is an essential building block. It is not a pollutant, as has been whipped for so many years amongst regulatory agencies and NGOs and such. If we look at how the United States has been doing, we are one of only a couple of countries that has been able to level off and even reduce CO₂ production.

We are going to get to the point where it will be so critically harmful to our industry that we need to reassess how burdensome these regulations are, especially as CO₂ is not a poisonous pollutant, per se. I mean, plants need it, and all things in moderation we might say. It is important that we have some reality on how these regulations affect us.

We have talked about water storage. We have talked about energy production. When we talk about our water storage, we know how important hydroelectric energy is in that it is a CO₂-free source. Ms. MALOY talked about geothermal. That is a clean source of energy to produce electricity.

What we haven't touched on much but is a potential issue the Western Caucus will be working on is nuclear energy, another CO₂-free source of electricity. If we want to deal with CO₂, here it is.

These forms of electricity generation continue to be pushed out or pushed off in the regulatory climate we have here. We have the opportunity to mine uranium—a lot of it in the Western States—and build the plants that are going to serve our urban centers.

I was talking earlier about how AI and data centers are going to use so much more electricity, as well, if the electrification of cars and trucks keeps getting pushed. Where is that electricity going to come from?

It is amazing how we mandate this in a lah-de-dah atmosphere of, well, we are just going to have more EVs. The folks regulating that and pushing that are not accountable for where that electricity is going to come from. They think more and more acres of prime farmland covered with solar panels is going to do it or offshore windmills will produce a certain amount of electricity. They find that they have prob-

lems with that. There might be negative effects on the wildlife and the ocean life there.

We need to have the ability to take a look back at these layers and layers of court decisions since these laws were made with good intentions back in the early 1970s. We talk about the Endangered Species Act, NEPA regulations, Clean Water Act, or the Clean Air Act. All had good intentions, but they have been weaponized by NGOs, environmental organizations, and even those certain belief systems of government. My home State of California is weaponized to stop some very good projects from happening.

When we talk about the Endangered Species Act reform, there are species that are basically used to stop water storage, stop highways from being built, stop power plants from being built, and even things like levees being repaired in areas that have the potential to be flooded.

One project in my district took 20-plus years to finally get approved and through for a project on a levee that already existed. They required that it be set back from the river more. Then a bunch of habitat created out of the farmers' orchards that were adjacent to that on the outside of the old levee but now inside the new levee. That took over 20-plus years.

It is because a species was listed as an endangered species by the Fish and Wildlife 20 or 25 years ago, maybe longer. Fifteen years ago they recommended to delist it. Mr. Speaker, it seems you can hardly delist anything under the way these rules have been misinterpreted.

One issue ravaging much of the West and right now has really taken hold in my district has been the wolf population that has been introduced. I know the Biden administration had done some of that at the end with over 40 wolves being dumped into Colorado last minute on their way out the door.

Wolves in California have really taken hold in the northeast part of the State. They are ravaging Modoc County, Siskiyou County, Lassen County, Eastern Shasta, and other areas to a little bit lesser extent. The deer population is being decimated.

When they run out of deer, guess where they look next? They look at livestock. Here is an example. I don't mean to be morbid, but people need to see what this really looks like. Here is a wolf toting off a deer right here. There is a deer head right there. This isn't native to that area. These are Canadian gray wolves. These are great big, powerful, scary wolves that really aren't indigenous to the farther Western States.

It is still listed. We are making efforts to delist this wolf from that list, but it is running into problems and difficulties because of the environmental movement saying, no, we need to have mating pairs in every county in order to satisfy their desires on that.

These wolves are plentiful in areas like Minnesota and neighboring States

and the central part of Canada. It is not an endangered species. There are plenty of numbers there. Mr. Speaker, if you want to look at it in North America, go to the zoo. We don't have them here. We can't deem them an endangered species in North America because we don't have them here. Someone would have to start a new program to encourage and build a giraffe habitat to bring a species that really doesn't belong in that area.

I like the giraffe analogy. If we want to look at a giraffe, go to places in Africa. If we want to look at it in North America, go to the zoo. We don't have them here. We can't deem them an endangered species in North America because we don't have them here. Someone would have to start a new program to encourage and build a giraffe habitat to bring a species that really doesn't belong in that area.

It doesn't make a lot of sense, and it is really devastating. Over 200 calves have been taken in the northern California area and part of Oregon, as well. Here, we see a calf that has been devastated. It has been just completely annihilated and fed upon by a pack of wolves there. Again, I am not doing this to be morbid.

Mr. Speaker, I hope it does shock you. I hope it does shock you because this is really happening to the livelihoods of the people who are producing food that Americans want and that others want. They can't do so because of a wolf population that has been introduced by government at the behest of basically urban people who think, oh, that would be a nice ideal to have these wolves in that area. They don't have to live with the results.

These wolves have become so brazen in how they act in the area. It has taken a sheep. Any livestock is on the menu for them because when they start running out of the local wildlife, they are going to take what they need.

The ability for people to push back on that, to haze them, or to move them away is very, very limited by how U.S. Fish and Wildlife has made the rules. They have very, very few options to keep them not only out of their herds but away from their doorstep, including this doorstep right here.

Yes, this is the family dog right here. This is what is happening to families that are working in and living in those rural areas for four, five, six, or longer, generations. They provide food and put it on the table for Americans, and this is what they have to live with today. They can't let their pets out in some of these areas anymore. They can't let their kids go down to the bus stop without being guarded and to do normal things like go to school.

People are afraid to go outside their homes at night in certain areas because they hear the wolves howling, and the wolves don't feel any fear of mankind. They don't feel any deterrent due to the very limited and meager measures that people can take to deter them. They are not allowed to shoot them. They are not allowed to shoot over them. They are not allowed to be very aggressive with vehicles and such.

Indeed, one anecdote I received on visiting some folks in the district is

that they have drones they try to fly over and move the wolves away from the herds and away from their area. Funny, the wolf just looks up at it and lays down and watches it. They fly pieces of a flag or a ribbon on their fence and hope that ribbon flapping in the wind will scare the wolf away. It is called fladry.

The wolves are pretty smart. They are going to go around that. When they are running in packs like that, they are very effective at moving the livestock, moving them, herding them to other areas. There are stories about them coming in and wiping out an entire flock of sheep on one farm just for the heck of it. A single wolf in one case killed 30 sheep, killed the dog, and basically scared the horse, ran the horse over a cliff area, killing it. That is more or less for sport.

This is what is happening to people. This is what is happening in the northeast part of my State and all over the West. The elk and deer population is being devastated in these areas. We don't talk about that much because it is an ideal under the Endangered Species Act that we have to move these animals wherever someone deems they need to go, indeed, when we have populations that will sustain and prevent extinction just from what is in the upper Midwest and Canada.

What is it going to come down to? Do people have to be victimized to get a nice, idyllic scene like this with people hiking the trails? The Pacific Crest Trail runs through that portion of my district. Have warnings been sent out by the people promoting this wolf population to those who are looking to utilize these trails, such as the Pacific Crest Trail, or to climb the different mountains around northern California?

Are there adequate warnings going out to the urban areas when people expect they are going to be able to do this as they come travel and recreate a little later on this spring and summer and fall? Are they doing that?

We have this idyllic scene of a family hiking out there. Do they know possibly there might be wolves lurking in here if they are hungry and they have run out of deer to attack? The farmers and ranchers have sold their livestock herds or pulled them out or just lost them to wolf attacks. They are going to get hungry and start coming after anything they can find. Are people going to be on that list?

Am I being dramatic? No, this is the reality. This can happen. Will this scene be allowed anymore in those areas? Well, it is a wolf habitat now. We don't have any people recreating on their lands, on their national lands, on their parklands, the forestlands that are deemed to be multiuse. That use is being narrowed more and more to not doing timber operations and preventing wildfire and having wildlife flourish but to satisfy a very narrow group.

This is part of the work that we need to get done. The Western Caucus is going to be focusing on endangered spe-

cies reform, our energy, and agriculture. We need to make the farm bill a reality here soon because the farm bill has had extensions so far. We need to pass a full farm bill this year that is good for 5 years. Agriculture is a very important cornerstone of Western Caucus priorities, as well as a national priority.

We have our work cut out for us, but we have a great team on our Western Caucus staff. Nearly 100 Members of the House are in this, as well as our colleagues over in the Senate, led by my good friend, Senator LUMMIS from Wyoming. It is a very positive thing, and I am looking forward to the work here. I am honored to be able to chair that.

Mr. Speaker, with that, I yield back the balance of my time.

□ 1315

PROTECTING MEDICAID FOR CALIFORNIANS

(Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2025, Mr. KILEY of California was recognized for 30 minutes.)

Mr. KILEY of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to inform folks throughout California and the entire country of one of the biggest scandals in our State's history, which is that Governor Newsom is literally bankrupting Medicaid in our State. He is driving it insolvent through a policy that exists nowhere else in the country, in no other State, a policy of offering free, comprehensive, universal Medicaid, or Medi-Cal as we call it, to the entire population of illegal immigrants in our State who meet the income threshold. No other State has done this, and in California, it has been an absolute disaster.

Initially, it was estimated that this unprecedented expansion would cost just a few billion dollars. It turns out that it is going to cost \$9.5 billion just for this year.

Because of that enormous cost overrun, because of the resulting shortfall of some \$6 billion, Governor Newsom has just taken out an emergency loan from the general fund in order to cover payments. On top of that, he has asked the legislature to appropriate even more money, billions more.

Think about what this means over, let's say, the next 10 years. If the cost has grown from a few billion dollars to \$9.5 billion just in this first year, what can we expect year over year going forward? We are likely talking about hundreds of billions of dollars of money from California taxpayers that will be spent this next decade implementing a policy that exists nowhere else in the country to provide comprehensive care, comprehensive government-provided healthcare, to those who are in our State illegally.

Here is the worst thing. Not only is this fiscally unsustainable, but those are funds that could be going to shoring up Medicaid, Medi-Cal, and improving the system, improving access to