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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable TIM SHEEHY, a Senator from the State of Montana.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Eternal God, empower our Senators to make consistency a top priority. Lead them over life's mountains and through life's valleys with the spirit of faithfulness and trust in You. Help them to live their lives on an even keel, refusing to give in to despair. Whether in life's sunshine or shadows, may they be aware that You will walk beside them, making the crooked places straight. Keep them from making critical decisions without consulting You or succumbing to the temptation of taking the easy way out. Lord, infuse them with the spirit of gratitude for Your involvement in our Nation and world.

We pray in Your wonderful Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Presiding Officer led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. GRASSLEY).

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,

Washington, DC, February 27, 2025.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby

appoint the Honorable TIM SHEEHY, a Senator from the State of Montana, to perform the duties of the Chair.

CHUCK GRASSLEY,
President pro tempore.

Mr. SHEEHY thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

PROVIDING FOR CONGRESSIONAL DISAPPROVAL UNDER CHAPTER 8 OF TITLE 5, UNITED STATES CODE, OF THE RULE SUBMITTED BY THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY RELATING TO "WASTE EMISSIONS CHARGE FOR PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS SYSTEMS: PROCEDURES FOR FACILITATING COMPLIANCE, INCLUDING NETTING AND EXEMPTIONS"—Resumed

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the following joint resolution, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A joint resolution (S.J. Res. 12) providing for congressional disapproval under chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, of the rule submitted by the Environmental Protection Agency relating to "Waste Emissions Charge for Petroleum and Natural Gas Systems: Procedures for Facilitating Compliance, Including Netting and Exemptions".

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Democratic leader is recognized.

DEPARTMENT OF GOVERNMENT EFFICIENCY

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, when Donald Trump and DOGE began their work, they kept saying the same thing. Donald Trump, Elon Musk, and DOGE said: This is about cutting waste; it is about efficiency; it is about meritocracy. Unfortunately, the truth has not been as advertised. It has been utter chaos.

Yesterday, the Department of Veterans Affairs said they were reversing course on canceling billions of dollars in contract work because, as it turns out, slashing billions in funding that helps veterans is extremely harmful for veterans. These VA cuts were lauded by DOGE as an example of eliminating waste. The VA Secretary claimed these contracts were for consultants "to make PowerPoint slides and write meeting minutes." That is not even close to the truth.

Let me read some examples of what DOGE was actually prepared to cut: Funding for chemotherapy and imaging services, those were going to be cut—hardly make-work, hardly writing meeting minutes. Funding for veterans with disabilities—cut—even funding to help veterans suffering from toxic exposure in burn pits. One contract would help over 20,000 veterans track down their military service records from DOD in order to prove their toxic exposure, as is required. Without these records, getting affordable treatment would not likely be possible, and DOGE said: Let's cut that, too.

Even if the VA reverses course, canceling these contracts and firing VA staff is still immediately damaging—very damaging. There is the risk that you can't rehire workers back in time because they have moved on to other jobs or contracts aren't available because they took their business elsewhere, and, by then, the damage is

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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done. Vital services and operations that serve veterans can't continue as before. It could take months—maybe even years—to build this back, which had been built up carefully to help veterans over the years, and many of us in Congress worked for those things; so to cut these services and then say “never mind” still ends up being very destructive. Sadly, this is only one example.

Yesterday, Elon Musk led his first Cabinet meeting of this administration. He admitted that DOGE's approach has led to many erroneous cuts to staff and programs that are not wasteful but, on the contrary, vital.

For example, he said:

With USAID, one of the things we accidentally cancelled very briefly was Ebola prevention.

Those are his words.

Are you kidding me? Cutting funds to stop one of the deadliest diseases in the world is reckless, especially when there is an Ebola outbreak in Uganda as we speak, and flights leave Kampala every day and go all over the world. When epidemics hit America, they often-times begin abroad, and U.S. funding is essential to prevent those diseases from reaching us here at all.

I should also note that the claims that Ebola funding is back online are false. Reports are out from last night that 95 percent of all USAID funding is now being cut. So we are not sure where it all is.

What DOGE is doing is not what efficiency looks like. If DOGE actually cares about efficiency and meritocracy, then it is failing, in many ways, its own test. It would be better to look at these programs, see which might be wasteful, see which are needed, and then make the cuts to the wasteful programs, not take a meat-ax or a blowtorch—call it what you will—cut everything, and then say we will restore some of the things that we shouldn't have cut, because once you make those cuts, it is very hard to put the pieces back together.

TAXES

Mr. President, on Republican taxes, last month, consumer confidence took its biggest nosedive in 4 years—the biggest nosedive in 4 years. This is how confident consumers, average Americans, feel about the economy. Inflation is trending back up. The price of eggs is sky high. The threat of a trade war looms over our country, and Americans are fearful that things are not going to get any better anytime soon. And what are Republicans doing about all of this? They are trying to cut taxes for billionaires—trying to cut taxes for billionaires—and make the American people pay for it.

The Republican agenda is quickly taking shape. Under Donald Trump's Republican Party, billionaires win; American families lose.

It doesn't matter if Republicans go with 1 bill or 2 bills or 50 bills. That is what they are debating right now. Their endgame—House and Senate Republicans—has always been cutting

taxes for billionaires and forcing American families to pick up the tab.

Of course, Senate Republicans know that cutting Medicaid by over \$800 billion to lower taxes for billionaires is wildly unpopular. They know that increasing the deficit by up to \$5 trillion to help the ultrarich contradicts everything the so-called party of fiscal responsibility stands for. They say they have to cut all this stuff to reduce the deficit, and then, with their tax breaks for billionaires, they increase the deficit, no matter what sleight-of-hand accounting method they use.

What are Republicans doing about fiscal responsibility? Are they admitting that their plans would be a disaster for the deficit? No. Instead, Senate Republicans are engaged in budgetary hocus-pocus to hide the true cost of their tax cuts for the ultrarich, and there may be signs that House Republicans are going along.

Instead of admitting the truth about the consequences of their plans, they are pursuing a gimmick called “current policy baseline”—a gimmick, if there ever was one—which is essentially an attempt to magically turn \$5 trillion of deficit spending into zero dollars of deficit spending. Well, that can't happen and doesn't happen, and the economy will realize it doesn't happen. Any junior high school math student could tell you this is a bunch of bunk. You can't pass \$5 trillion to cut taxes for the rich and pretend like it doesn't affect the deficit.

The issue isn't complicated. Republicans are trying to hide the true cost of their billionaire tax cuts from the American people. Meanwhile, they are getting ready to eviscerate funding for healthcare that serves over 80 million Americans—kids, seniors, rural communities. These cuts to Medicaid will dramatically hurt rural America, people with disabilities, and more.

The only people who seem to be opposing this is the hard-right Freedom Caucus, because they seem to really care about the deficit. Let's hope they stay strong for the sake of the economy and this country.

Of course, the American people are not going to take these Medicaid cuts lying down.

Last night, I got on a Zoom. Over 3,000 New Yorkers, worried about the attacks from Republicans on healthcare, got on the Zoom, many more than we expected. These were rank-and-file folks, healthcare advocates, union members, and concerned citizens from all walks of life. They were all upset about the cuts to Medicaid and putting those cuts in place in order to give tax breaks for billionaires.

It was a great call. It was an energizing call. I urge my colleagues to do the same, as many of them are. It is a stark reminder of what is at stake but also a reminder that the American people don't like these cuts.

We heard from New Yorkers who are in danger of having their Medicaid cov-

erage taken away if Republicans proceed with their actions, on this Zoom of over 3,000 people. But we also talked about taking action.

I urged participants to call their Members of Congress. I urged them to mobilize online and to organize in their communities. We urged everyone to make their voices heard, like we are seeing in the townhall meetings.

I reminded folks that organizing is not easy, but it works. It changes things, and it is going to make a difference in making sure Medicaid is protected.

NOMINATION OF LINDA MCMAHON

Mr. President, on our Education Secretary nominee, today, the Senate will vote on whether to advance the nomination of Linda McMahon as Secretary of Education.

Mrs. McMahon's nomination comes as President Trump has been clear about cutting funding for education and abolishing the Department of Education entirely.

Is Mrs. McMahon going to go along? I hope not.

Cutting education is not what the American people want. The American people don't want a radical, out-of-touch billionaire slashing funding for public schools. When you slash Federal funding for education, guess what happens. Since so many of our school districts—urban, suburban, rural—depend on this Federal money, it leads to higher property taxes for people back home.

If you eliminate the Department of Education as a whole, that means local communities are forced to pick up the tab to fund the schools. It means that families in these communities will pay in the form of higher property taxes to make up the loss of Federal funding. But communities will also be forced to slash other programs to make room for funding for schools.

Again, this is not what the American people want. This is not what they voted for.

Mrs. McMahon, in my judgment, is not qualified to lead America's public education. She seems not to care very much about it. But that is precisely why President Trump nominated her. She is the perfect choice to bring our public education system burning to the ground.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. THUNE. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The majority leader is recognized.

ENERGY

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, this week, the Senate is focused on unleashing American energy. As I have

said before, our country is facing some serious energy challenges. We need more power, or we face the possibility of a future defined by unreliable and unaffordable energy, which is why President Trump declared an energy emergency on his first day in office—to produce more energy, build more infrastructure, and ultimately bring energy prices down.

But our Democrat colleagues made it clear, yesterday, they don't believe such an emergency exists. The Senator from Virginia called it a "sham." Our colleague from New Hampshire said it was "an emergency declaration in search of an emergency."

Every Senate Democrat voted to deny the emergency that our country faces. I guess they haven't seen the reports of the precarious state of American energy.

Last year, a Washington Post headline read:

Amid explosive demand, America is running out of power.

A recent report from the North American Electric Reliability Corporation warns of "mounting resource adequacy challenges" in the next decade.

Whether Democrats want to acknowledge it or not, the signs of a rapidly approaching energy crisis are clear. There is a threat of blackouts, not enough power to meet demand, heightened prices for gas and utilities. Apparently, Democrats don't think these are cause for alarm. But whether they are willing to acknowledge it or not—and yesterday's vote, I think, made clear that they are not—we have a serious problem, and if we don't do something about it, we face a future with an unreliable and unaffordable energy supply.

Republicans are taking action. This week, the Senate is working to prevent two of the Biden administration's anti-energy policies from going into effect.

On Tuesday, the Senate passed Senator KENNEDY's resolution to stop the Biden administration's marine archeology rule. Offshore oil and gas producers have long been required to submit an archeological report before drilling if their project area was thought to include things like shipwrecks, settlements, or other archeological sites. But last year, the Biden administration decided to require archeological reports for all offshore projects, even when there is nothing to suggest the project will be near an archeological site. It is just another way to slow down production and heap more costs on producers—costs that consumers eventually pay. And it is another part of the Biden administration's efforts to close off America's waters to conventional energy production.

Under President Biden, offshore permits dropped to a two-decade low. The administration's offshore leasing plan included only 3 possible leases, down from 47 in an earlier draft from the first Trump administration.

And, of course, there was President Biden's last-minute ban on oil and gas

production in 625 million acres of America's waters. Why we would so severely limit the use of our natural resources is beyond me. Under Republican leadership, we will be leveraging assets to restore American energy dominance.

Later today, the Senate will also vote on a resolution to block the \$6 billion natural gas tax that was included in the Democrats' so-called Inflation Reduction Act. This tax would increase costs for energy producers and limit energy production, leading to higher utility bills for many Americans.

Under the Biden administration's implementation of this tax, it would hit smaller operations the hardest. On top of that, the tax puts tens of thousands of jobs at risk, including in natural gas-rich States like Pennsylvania, New Mexico, Texas, and North Dakota.

The Senate will vote later today to stop implementation of this tax on energy producers. I appreciate Senator HOEVEN's leadership on this issue. Thanks in substantial part to his efforts, energy producers will not have to worry about this unnecessary natural gas tax, and the American people won't have to worry about it driving up their utility bills.

It would be nice if Democrats would join us in our efforts, if not to avoid our rapidly approaching energy crisis, at least to promote more affordable prices for Americans. I have recently been hearing our Democrat colleagues express newfound interest fighting inflation. If they are serious about that, they should be joining us in blocking these anti-energy policies that are driving prices up.

But with Democrats or without, Republicans will keep working to build a more secure and more affordable energy future.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

ELECTRIC VEHICLES

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, before coming to the floor each day, I try to make sure I go through the morning newspapers, and today I found in the Washington Post an interesting column: "Multi-car pileup as electric vehicles collide with reality."

"Multi-car pileup as electric vehicles collide with reality."

And the reality is the Democrat electric vehicle mandate is a failure. It failed the American people, failed the taxpayers, and just plain failed.

For years, President Biden and Democrats tried to force Americans to buy electric vehicles. They tried to do it by banning gas-powered cars. They tried to do it by bribing people with taxpayer subsidies.

President Trump has, rightly, promised to pull the plug on Joe Biden's unpopular electric vehicle mandate. People are delighted. President Trump fulfilled that promise on day one in office. He ended the Biden ban on gas-powered vehicles. In my home State of Wyoming and the Presiding Officer's home State of Montana, that is welcome relief.

The next step is for Congress, for this body, to end the subsidies on electric vehicles, and I have introduced legislation to do just that. My bill ends the \$7,500 subsidy for EVs. It also closes the Biden loophole that funnels taxpayer moneys, believe it or not, to communist China. Finally, it ends the subsidies for the EV charging stations.

The EV subsidies were, in essence, a Biden giveaway. He wanted to give money away to the coastal elites who drive electric vehicles, and it was connected to Biden's unpopular climate dreams.

The aggressive push for EVs began with Democrats' reckless tax-and-spending bill. It included a \$7,500 handout for anyone who bought an electric vehicle, while not a single Republican in the House or Senate voted for that reckless tax-and-spending bill.

The Joint Committee on Taxation looked at the cost of these EV subsidies because there was going to be a mandate attached; you were going to have to buy an electric vehicle at some point or other. So originally they said it might cost \$14 billion. That is a lot of money. When they redid the math a year later, they said the cost estimated would be \$100 billion. Outside analysts estimated the cost even higher. Goldman Sachs said that the EV subsidies could cost taxpayers as much as \$394 billion, which is 28 times as much as the original thought that it would be when the Joint Committee on Taxation looked at it.

These subsidies—this is for a vehicle that most Americans can't afford, don't want, and doesn't work for them. It doesn't work in my home State of Wyoming. It doesn't work in the Presiding Officer's home State of Montana. Most Americans know that EVs are luxury items with severe limitations. They certainly can't be the primary source of transportation for most Americans.

The average cost of an EV: \$62,000. Well, that is \$16,000 more than the cost of most gas-powered vehicles. The dealers I have talked to in my home State of Wyoming tell me that it takes significantly longer to sell an EV than a gas-powered vehicle. And the EVs that they are able to sell, they end up selling for a loss. The nationwide sales of EVs is also stalling. They actually lost market share in 2024.

Despite endless subsidies, EVs account for less than 10 percent of all car sales in America. Most of these are sold to wealthier Americans, people who don't need a subsidy from the government to begin with. This is social engineering to benefit the liberal elite. It is

a transfer of money from hard-working American families to the wealthy.

Every time a wealthy liberal in San Francisco gets a government subsidy when they go and buy an electric car, a working-class family in Sheridan, WY, ends up paying in their taxes.

My legislation ends all of that. EVs are a bad investment for American people and for American automakers. This month, Ford projected that, in 2025, it would lose over \$5.5 billion on its electric vehicles. In 2024, Ford sold only 21,000 EVs. It lost \$5 billion. That is a loss of \$60,000 for each and every electric vehicle that they were able to sell. Now, Ford isn't alone. Major car companies—General Motors and others—are also losing money on EVs.

The transition to EVs is also estimated to kill hundreds of thousands of jobs, including in the Midwest, manufacturing jobs of gas-powered vehicles. It is already sending thousands of American workers from the assembly line to the unemployment line.

Ending subsidies for EVs is about saving taxpayer money, protecting American jobs, but it is also about protecting our national security. Initially, only EVs made in America were supposed to be eligible for this \$7,500 subsidy. But before leaving office, Joe Biden made it easier for those tax credits on EVs to go for those made with parts from China. It wasn't supposed to happen that way, but Biden and the Democrats, so desperate to force EVs onto the American public, they created a leasing loophole specifically designed to help China.

This is how it works. It allows customers who lease EVs instead of buying them—but who lease EVs—made with Chinese parts, they could still fully receive the subsidy. Well, since 80 percent of the EV batteries come from China, they had noted a major problem because they weren't going to be able to get the subsidies. That is why they came up with this leasing loophole.

Because in 2022, before they had the loophole, only 7 percent of new EVs were leased. Because of this Biden gimmick, that number jumped to 45 percent—almost half of all the EVs in America then being leased rather than bought.

The American taxpayers are subsidizing technologies controlled by communist China. It is wrong. My bill ends that.

Republicans are focused on what matters: lowering prices, unleashing American energy, creating American jobs, and putting Americans back in the driver's seat.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MULLIN). Without objection, it is so ordered.

H.J. RES. 35

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I am here today in opposition to the measure that we are about to vote on, which would undo a rule that regulates the release of methane into the atmosphere.

Let's just start with the most basic simple proposition that methane is dangerous, it is poisonous, it is explosive. And for those reasons alone, it is something that the fossil fuel industry should not be leaking. The fossil fuel industry should be responsible about taking care of its leaks of a gas that is dangerous, poisonous, and explosive.

But in addition to that immediate danger, methane is also a really, really potent greenhouse gas. If you look at the effect over a 20-year period, methane in the atmosphere is 80 times—80—times more dangerous than carbon dioxide. So we talk all the time about carbon emissions, carbon limits, carbon pollution. Methane is actually 80 times more dangerous.

So there are two reasons why the fossil fuel industry should not be leaking large amounts of methane. First, it is dangerous, poisonous, and explosive. And, second, it is an 80 times worse greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide over a 20-year period.

So how much methane is industry leaking, and why did we do this measure in the first place?

Well, industry told the EPA for years that it was leaking about 8 million tons—8 million tons—of methane, which all by itself is a pretty big number, but it turned out that the industry was not telling the EPA the truth.

It turns out that once independent sources got a chance to spot methane leaks using, for instance, satellites—this is a satellite image of a methane plume that is being released from a leak site—when they could find that—and satellites can now do that so we are beginning to know how much methane is actually being leaked and particularly when you backstop the satellite information with information from aircraft where the readings can be more sensitive than from a satellite—it turns out that what they were actually leaking was more like 32 million tons. They were only disclosing a quarter of what they were leaking, and even that 8 million that they disclosed was a pretty bad number. When you go to 32 million tons, that is a great deal of leakage of a gas that is dangerous, poisonous, explosive, and 80 times more powerful a greenhouse gas over a 20-year period than carbon dioxide.

Now, you would think that, as an attribute of basic human decency, these companies that are leaking methane would go and clean it up. It is the decent thing to do, but they didn't, obviously. They didn't even disclose truthfully and accurately what they were leaking. So, when we were confronted with a 32-million-ton annual leak of poisonous, dangerous, explosive methane, and its greenhouse effects on top of that, we tried to do something about it.

So what did we do?

Well, we did two things: a little bit of carrot, a little bit of stick.

The carrot was \$1.5 billion—1.5 billion taxpayer dollars—in flatout corporate welfare to the leaking oil and gas companies so that they could use taxpayer money to clean up the mess they were making to deal with the pipes and the valves and the wells that they weren't properly maintaining and that were leaking, it turned out, 32 million tons of methane.

Now, one could argue that that was a pretty poor use of taxpayer money; that a basic tenet of corporate responsibility should be: You clean up your own mess. You take care of your own equipment. That is a basic tenet of human responsibility. I don't know why it shouldn't be a basic tenet of corporate responsibility, but the measurement of 32 million tons of leakage shows that, obviously, those companies were not meeting that basic corporate tenet of responsibility.

So along comes the \$1.5 billion of free taxpayer money—corporate welfare—to polluters and leakers for taxpayers to pay them to clean up the problem that they were causing. I didn't love that, to tell you the truth, but it came with an incentive as well, and the incentive was, if you are still leaking methane after a certain period and if you are still leaking methane above a certain level—you had to be a big leaker yourself. It had to be a big leak, like 300 tons per leak, and you had to be in the worst sector of the oil and gas industry. If those things were true—if you had big leaks and you were a big leaker and you were in the worst performing sector of your industry—then you would be assessed a fee for the leakage, which would be an incentive, in addition to the free \$1.5 billion the industry got to go out there and fix the darned pipes and valves and wells and stop the leaking.

What we are doing today is saying to this industry: You can keep the \$1.5 billion. We gave you that whether you used it to clean up or not. I don't know that. I don't think the jury is back on that, but they did get the \$1.5 billion. But the part where you have to pay if you are still polluting, after all of this, beyond industry standards—that is what we are stripping out today. This Congressional Review Act measure specifically helps the segment of the oil and gas industry that is not even meeting oil and gas industry standards for controlling leaks.

I think it is a pretty reasonable test to impose on industry leakers that they at least meet their own industry standard for leaking. This isn't some arbitrary standard that government has imposed. This isn't something that came out of the Green New Deal. This is the industry's own standard for responsibility about leaks, and you pay this fee if you don't meet your own industry standard for taking care of your equipment properly and avoiding leaks of a dangerous, explosive, poisonous

greenhouse gas 80 times more dangerous than carbon dioxide.

So that is where we are, and that is where we are at today. Today's vote only protects those worst industry performers who have not cleaned up their act and met their own industry standards. If there were ever an undeserving group for Congress's solicitude, that is the group. They are not even meeting their own industry standards. They are comfortable with dangerous levels of leakage beyond what even their own industry recommends as a standard, and on they go.

This is just a little bit of a piece with the recent designation by the Trump administration of what "energy" is. The Trump administration just put out a definition of "energy" that doesn't include solar or wind. Most of what came online and is slated to come online in 2025 has been solar and wind. It is the booming part of our energy economy. It is where the growth is and the jobs are and the innovation is. It is also a leading energy source in red States. If you look at who is best on solar and who is best on wind, you see States like Texas; you see Iowa; you see Wyoming. They have considerable investments in solar and wind, but the Trump administration won't even call solar and wind energy.

So we are in this bizarre circumstance in which the fossil fuel industry, which drives so much behavior in this body after \$100 million spent on the Trump campaign that we know of—probably hundreds of millions more secretly—has gained two big things: one, a completely false definition of "solar energy" and "wind energy" as not being energy despite the fact that it is fully operational, producing electrons, and was the largest source of new additions to the grid for 2025, and they just decree: This is not energy.

Why the fossil fuel industry would want that is a pretty strong signal of how low that industry will go in using its power over Congress. They will basically press the Trump administration to claim that solar energy and wind energy aren't even energy. It is a spectacularly foolish and false proposition, but bending the knee to the wishes of the fossil fuel industry appears to have no limits.

This vote is the second expression of that subservience to fossil fuel because of all the things that you could do, of all the things that would help grow America's energy markets, of all the things you could do to help take care of people who live near energy facilities or people who are being subjected to harm from climate change—of all the things you could do, probably the worst one would be to take the worst performers at leaking, which shouldn't happen in the first place, who leak so badly they don't even meet their own industry standards, who for years have been falsely saying that they leaked only a quarter of what they have actually been leaking, and they are the people whom we are going to come to the rescue of.

They had two choices here so that they didn't have to pay the fee for being among the worst leakers and not meeting their own industry standards. One is, clean up your darned equipment. Fix your pipes. Fix your valves. Fix your wells. Stop the leaking or at least reduce it to your own industry standard. If you do that, you don't pay this fee—or come to Congress. Use your power, the force of your dark money, of your influence, of your super PACs, of your political control, and get that requirement removed so that you can continue to leak, continue to leak methane—a dangerous, explosive, and poisonous substance—into your communities, continue to add this far more dangerous greenhouse gas to the atmosphere, and continue to meet no reasonable standard of corporate responsibility for taking care of your own gear and quitting the leaking.

And you know what they chose; they chose to come here and get a free pass—a hall pass from Republicans in Congress, a hall pass from the Trump administration—so that they can continue to leak to their hearts content, never mind their culpability of not meeting their own industry standards, never mind the harm that it causes.

This is an industry that lives off a pollute-for-free business model. If this industry were not allowed to pollute for free—if it had to compete, head-to-head, with hydro, geothermal, solar, wind, without the free right to pollute—we would have a very different energy mix, and they know that. So they insist on protecting their right to pollute for free, but of all the little quadrants of the industry whose pollution-for-free we should be coming to the floor to defend, those worst leakers who aren't taking care of their own equipment even to industry standards are at the bottom of any reasonable person's priority list, and yet they are the ones we are here to serve today.

The backdrop to this is, of course, "climate change," a term that the fossil fuel industry has so ingratiated itself with the Trump administration that it is able to excise the term—a language attack—excise the term from official documents, a little bit like saying that "energy" is everything except solar and wind. That is obviously false—provably false, in fact, and a preposterous assertion—but when serving the fossil fuel industry, that is the stuff they make you do, and here you go with saying that climate change isn't real when Exxon scientists talked about its being real 30 years ago. We are driving down a path of polluter-funded falsehood that ends in very dangerous places.

We have a pretty good idea of where it ends because scientists have been telling us where this goes for decades now, scientists in our major universities. I do not believe that there is a single State university, a State university with the name of the State in its name—University of Rhode Island, for instance. I don't think there is a single

State university in this country that does not teach climate change. That is how well-established climate change is as a factual proposition, and what it is going to do has been known for a long, long time.

The predictions are astonishingly accurate. Here in the Senate, we heard all those predictions. The first hearing on those warnings was actually by Republican Senator John Chafee of Rhode Island in his role then as chairman of the Environmental Public Works Committee. He had a senior scientist from NASA, John Hanson, come over and describe what the science was, what we knew about what was going on.

So there is a long, clear, indisputable scientific record warning us of what is coming—preview of coming attractions.

But then it came here, and, here, the fossil fuel industry butted in with enormous political force, turbocharged after the Citizens United decision allowed that industry to spend unlimited amounts of money. And in the enforcement—or nonenforcement—of that decision, allowed that industry to spend those unlimited amounts of money secretly from behind front groups and through Super PACs and from other devices where the public was denied the knowledge of who was trying to influence them. The basic right of citizenship is to know who is doing what to whom on the field of politics American citizens are supposed to police with their votes. That knowledge was denied them, and that flood of industry pressure came into this Chamber. And before you knew it, climate change was suddenly a partisan issue. If you wanted to be a Republican, you had to deny climate change. It was pretty much as simple as that.

Ask Bob Inglis from the House of Representatives what happened if you tried to break that grip of the fossil fuel industry on the House leadership, the fossil fuel industry grip on the House leadership on the Republican side.

So the science was right all along. We failed at the politics because of improper fossil fuel industry influence, probably the most maligned and large-scale political influence campaign in American history. We yielded to it. We allowed ourselves to not heed the warnings and take the steps that would have put us on a pathway to safety.

Now, having heard the scientific warnings, having failed at taking appropriate safety steps, we are now entering the third era, the era of consequences, when the stuff starts to hit the fan. And the warnings are coming from all over.

Just about 2 weeks ago, the chair of the Federal Reserve testified to the Senate Banking Committee that in 10 to 15 years, it will be impossible to get a mortgage in entire regions of the country. How does that relate to climate change? That relates to climate change because climate change is creating changes in weather patterns that

make it impossible for the insurance industry to predict risk. That is why insurance rates are quadruple the national average in Florida, which is first and worst into this insurance crisis because of its storm and flooding risk, because it is on the path of so many hurricanes, because the Gulf of Mexico is warming so fast that it is powering worse storms, more heavily laden storms, with rain onto Florida's coasts. And when you can't get insurance on your home, and you go to sell it, you have got a problem because the buyer can't get a mortgage if your home is uninsurable.

What the chief economists of Freddie Mac warned, the mortgage giant, is that the climate risk creates an insurance crisis, which rolls over into a mortgage crisis, which drives down property values so badly that it creates a 2008-style national economic crisis.

Those aren't the only warnings. Reinsurers look at this climate mess as a business proposition. The insurance industry has to get the future right in order to do its business, and it knows that what the fossil fuel industry is saying about what is going to happen in the future is a whole pack of lies. So they are raising their rates. The reinsurance companies are looking and saying, wow, this is getting way more dangerous. We are not going to reinsure without getting a lot more money.

Reinsurance rates have more than doubled since 2017. They were up as much as 40 percent in 2023 alone in some markets.

So it is not just the voice of the Fed; it is not just the voice of the chief economists of Freddie Mac; it is the reinsurance industry.

Go below the reinsurance industry to the insurance industry and look at the first and worst place, Florida. All the major insurers are out—pulled the plug. Gone. Done. Pop-up insurers have come to fill the gap. Twelve to fifteen of them have gone bankrupt already. And when they go bankrupt, they don't pay claims, and Floridians are left stuck behind an insurer that was not solvent.

Florida has had to stand up its own homeowners insurance company, which now has a huge share of the market and an even bigger share of the risk because they have allowed the other insurers to come in and cherry-pick out the lowest risk properties. So Florida is carrying a liability right now on homeowner's insurance that is greater than its entire State debt.

If you want to look at the solvency of a State, look at what Florida's risk is for its property insurance companies, citizens' property insurance, and its backup fund that comes in when the pop-up insurance companies go bust and somebody else has to come in and pay the claims.

The insurance industry, which has to look accurately at the future is also telling us this is deadly, deadly serious.

There is an international Financial Stability Board whose job is to look at

the world banking industry, the world banking sector, and warn of risks to the banking sector. They just put out a comprehensive report on the danger that climate change poses to the banking sector.

It comes in a couple of ways. One is the one I just described. When banks can't issue mortgages, they lose a huge revenue proposition. So they get hurt in the "insurance to mortgage to market value to economic crash" cascade.

But, also, as those values fall—let's say you went from carrying a \$4,000 carrying cost for your property insurance to a \$20,000 carrying cost. The present value of \$20,000 every year into the future as long as you are going to own that home, diminishes the value of that home. It doesn't just diminish it for you and for the next buyer, it diminishes it for the bank that holds your mortgage. It is really important to banks that they have enough collateral to back their loan. Their loan-to-value ratio is what helps determine their solvency. So the International Financial Stability Board is warning banks around the world: Look out. The climate crisis is coming at you and for your solvency.

This was, perhaps, said best by The Economist magazine in April, which led with a cover article warning of the next housing disaster and saying that "the severe weather brought about by greenhouse-gas emissions is shaking the foundations of the world's most important asset class"—real estate.

The number that they put to that risk that is shaking the foundations of the world's largest asset class is \$25 trillion. A \$25 trillion hit to the world's largest asset class.

In the United States, a new report by First Street, which is a technical firm that looks at flooding risk for a whole variety of corporate clients but also publishes as well—they just published a report that climate change could erase \$1.4 trillion in real estate value by 2055—i.e., in the 30-year mortgage period—a \$1.4 trillion hit to real estate values here in the United States. While \$25 trillion dollars was The Economist's global number; First Street's is \$1.4 trillion here in the United States.

Trillions are big, big numbers. And when it is hitting people in their most prized and valuable family asset—their homes—it is a very, very dangerous proposition.

Here is what The Economist said:

The impending bill—

For climate harms—

is so huge, in fact, it will have grim implications not just for personal prosperity—

i.e., the homeowner—

but also for the financial system.

Hence the report from the International Financial Stability Board about the need to shore up the international financial system.

Here is how it goes down, they say:

If the size of the risk suddenly sinks in, and borrowers and lenders alike realize the collateral underpinning so many trans-

actions is not worth as much as they thought, a wave of repricing will reverberate through financial markets.

Punch line:

Climate change, in short, could prompt the next global property crash.

Instead of dealing with this—even as Americans are already seeing their property insurance prices rise and double, are getting more and more non-renewal notices to get them off the company—what are we doing? We are helping out the absolutely worst offenders at climate leakage.

Here is Deloitte. I will close with this. Deloitte is a corporate consultancy. This is not Green New Deal. This is a corporate consultancy:

If we allow climate change to go unchecked, it will ravage our global economy. For the United States, the damages to 2070—

Which was their prediction date—

are projected to reach \$14.5 trillion, a lifetime loss of nearly \$70,000 for each working American.

And we are not even talking about that seriously. We are here, instead, to let off the hook that segment of the oil and gas industry that is the worst polluters, that doesn't even meet their own industry standards, and that can get away from the fee that we will be voting down now by simply meeting industry standards. This is a shameful moment for the Senate.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HAGERTY). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for a little more than a minute.

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

H.J. RES. 35

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, every American should be paying close attention to what is about to happen on the floor. In just a few moments, the Senate will vote on a Republican resolution that is straight from the wish list of Big Oil and Big Gas.

Instead of spending floor time pushing legislation that will lower costs for American families, Republicans are bowing to Big Oil and Gas billionaires by trying to reverse the methane waste emissions charge which Democrats passed in the Inflation Reduction Act. Donald Trump and DOGE claim to care about efficiency, but Republicans are undoing a measure to reduce oil and gas waste and are making prices for the consumer go up—prices going up—when they are saying they want prices to go down. The rule we passed has been one of our most important tools to lower energy prices, to hold Big Oil and Big Gas accountable, to keep excessive and harmful levels of methane

out of our atmosphere, which my friend Mr. WHITEHOUSE, who has done such a good job on this issue, tells me is 80 times as poisonous as CO₂. Without this safeguard, Big Oil and Gas can waste as much natural gas as they like and then pass the cost on to consumers.

Why are Republicans doing this? Well, it is simple. They are putting the needs of Big Oil and Gas companies over the needs of the American people, over the health of the American people and the health of our environment, our climate, our globe. And the consequences for the American people, for their health and their energy bills, are going to be very harmful.

I urge my colleagues to think carefully, one last time, before voting to overturn it.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, all time has expired.

PROVIDING FOR CONGRESSIONAL DISAPPROVAL UNDER CHAPTER 8 OF TITLE 5, UNITED STATES CODE, OF THE RULE SUBMITTED BY THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY RELATING TO "WASTE EMISSIONS CHARGE FOR PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS SYSTEMS: PROCEDURES FOR FACILITATING COMPLIANCE, INCLUDING NETTING AND EXEMPTIONS"

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to the Congressional Review Act, the clerk will report H.J. Res. 35 by title.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A joint resolution (H.J. Res. 35) providing for congressional disapproval under chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, of the rule submitted by the Environmental Protection Agency relating to "Waste Emissions Charge for Petroleum and Natural Gas Systems: Procedures for Facilitating Compliance, Including Netting and Exemptions".

VOTE ON H.J. RES. 35

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The joint resolution having been read the third time, the question is, Shall the joint resolution pass?

Mr. TILLIS. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. BARRASSO. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. CRAMER).

The result was announced—yeas 52, nays 47, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 97 Leg.]

YEAS—52

Banks	Blackburn	Britt
Barrasso	Boozman	Budd

Capito	Husted
Cassidy	Hyde-Smith
Collins	Johnson
Cornyn	Justice
Cotton	Kennedy
Crapo	Lankford
Cruz	Lee
Curtis	Lummis
Daines	Marshall
Ernst	McConnell
Fischer	McCormick
Graham	Moody
Grassley	Moran
Hagerty	Moreno
Hawley	Mullin
Hoeven	Murkowski

NAYS—47

Alsobrooks	Hickenlooper	Rosen
Baldwin	Hirono	Sanders
Bennet	Kaine	Schatz
Blumenthal	Kelly	Schiff
Blunt Rochester	Kim	Schumer
Booker	King	Shaheen
Cantwell	Klobuchar	Slotkin
Coons	Lujan	Smith
Cortez Masto	Markey	Van Hollen
Duckworth	Merkley	Warner
Durbin	Murphy	Warnock
Fetterman	Murray	Warren
Gallego	Ossoff	Welch
Gillibrand	Padilla	Whitehouse
Hassan	Peters	Wyden
Heinrich	Reed	

NOT VOTING—1

Cramer

The joint resolution (H.J. Res. 35) was passed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Linda McMahon, of Connecticut, to be Secretary of Education.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 770

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, I speak with senior citizens all over Vermont and, in fact, in many parts of the country. Just last night, we held a telephone townhall in Vermont, and in our small State, 34,000 people were on the line. I think the reason for that is there is a great deal of anxiety among people in general and seniors in particular regarding the Republican budget proposal that was passed the other day in the House. Seniors and Americans all over this country have reason to be concerned.

At a time of massive income and wealth inequality, the Republican budget would give over \$1 trillion in tax breaks to the top 1 percent—that is billionaires and the wealthiest people in our country. In Vermont and all over this country, seniors are asking: Well, how are they going to pay for that trillion-dollar gift to the 1 percent? The answer is not complicated. They have made it clear. Republicans will be making massive cuts in

healthcare, nutrition assistance, affordable housing, and education. These are precisely the programs that working families and kids and the elderly and the sick and the poor most depend upon. The Republican budget would cut Medicaid by \$880 billion. The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities has estimated that if these cuts are implemented, up to 36 million Americans, including millions of children, would have their health insurance taken away from them.

Let's be clear. When we have Republicans in the House passing a budget to make massive cuts to Medicaid, we are not just talking about throwing millions of kids off of the healthcare they need; we are also talking about massive cuts to community health centers, where some 32 million Americans receive the primary healthcare they need and where community health centers receive 43 percent of their funding from Medicaid. So a massive cut to Medicaid is a cut to the services that 32 million Americans receive, including many, many seniors.

At a time when we have a major crisis in nursing home availability in Vermont and all over this country, let us understand that Medicaid provides for two out of every three seniors who live in nursing homes. A massive cut to Medicaid is a massive cut to nursing homes and the people who utilize those homes. How many seniors would be thrown out of nursing homes if the Republicans cut Medicaid by \$880 billion? Nobody knows, but it would be a disaster for working families and their parents. That is for sure.

But it is not just Medicaid cuts that seniors are worried about. Today, nearly 22 percent of people over 65 years of age are trying to survive on an income of less than \$15,000 a year. That is an unbelievable and horrific reality. Imagine anyone in America, in any part of this country—let alone a senior citizen—trying to survive on \$15,000 a year or less. I don't know how anybody can possibly do that, especially seniors who have healthcare needs and need prescription drugs and who need to heat their homes more than the general public. And it is not just seniors trying to get by on \$15,000; half of our Nation's seniors are trying to get by on less than \$30,000 a year.

The bottom line is that in the richest country in the history of the world, you have millions and millions of seniors today—people who helped build this country, people who raised us—who are barely getting by in the year 2025.

According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the OECD, the United States now has the dubious distinction of not only having one of the highest rates of childhood poverty in the industrialized