

our grid, it is good for our economy, and it is good for American workers.

This moment goes beyond technology or trade; this is about the future of our freedom.

While America invests in innovation, China continues to pursue censorship, surveillance, and state control. This week in Shanghai, China released plans for a so-called World AI Cooperation Organization. Let's be realistic here. China's vision of AI is not about cooperation; it is about domination and control. Their AI policy is built on oppression. Ours is built on freedom, privacy, and innovation.

America must lead the AI revolution, and President Trump recently announced an AI action plan. The plan releases American innovators from the painful, punishing regulations they have been living under. It tears down barriers to building new data centers. It encourages more private investors. Most importantly, it recognizes that America's AI future depends on America's energy future.

Republicans have made great progress in unleashing American energy, but, Mr. President, as you know, this is only the beginning. American workers are fueling American AI dominance with American energy dominance.

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.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

APPROPRIATIONS

Ms. WARREN. Mr. President, I come to the Senate floor to discuss how our government is funded.

The Constitution puts Congress in charge of setting up programs and funding them. There are some programs—for example, Medicare and Social Security—that are funded at a certain level every year unless Congress passes a law to change it, but for pretty much everything else, Congress has to pass a new funding law every single year. The list is long. It is medical research, fighter planes, weather satellites, salaries for park rangers, and food inspection programs so that the lettuce you eat doesn't make you sick.

The money we spend is detailed every year in a set of 12 bills that Congress votes on, and they are called appropriations bills. The Senate voted on the first one of these 12 bills last week, the one that deals with funding veterans programs and military bases.

I care deeply about improving the lives of our servicemembers and our veterans. All three of my brothers were proud veterans, and they served their country with honor.

I am the ranking member of the Senate Armed Services Personnel Subcommittee. I voted no on that funding

bill because even if this bill becomes law, I don't believe Donald Trump has any intention of following that law, and I am not willing to be a helpmate on another one of Donald Trump's scams.

Why do I think that Trump won't follow the law? Well, consider his administration's track record of the past 6 months on congressional spending laws.

First, Trump tried to freeze billions of dollars that American families and businesses count on, money that Congress set aside to support everything from food assistance programs to scientific research. Multiple Federal judges blocked the illegal power grab, saying it blatantly violated the Constitution of the United States. Now even Republicans are begging the administration to hand out the money for investments that Congress already passed and, by law, that their communities were promised.

Second, Republicans in Congress are bowing down to Donald Trump and ratifying some of his worst efforts. They are using an obscure piece of Federal law to zero out Federal funding after it was approved by both Republicans and Democrats in Congress. This process is called rescission, and it only requires 50 Republican votes to do Donald Trump's bidding.

If that wasn't bad enough, Trump is already promising to use a shady loophole to defund even more programs, demanding cuts so late in the year that Congress doesn't have time to do anything about it. The Director of Donald Trump's Office of Management and Budget Russ Vought has already said that the loophole is "on the table."

Let's be clear about what is happening here.

Step 1, Congress negotiates a compromise that both Republicans and Democrats support, and it is signed into law.

Step 2, Trump tells Republicans what parts of that deal he wants to cancel.

Step 3, Republicans in the Senate bend the knee and follow Trump's orders to cancel the money.

But wait—there is more. Apparently, step 4 is Republicans turn around and, with a straight face, ask Democrats to negotiate more deals for the next year's funding, starting the whole rinse-and-repeat process again, beginning with this bill to fund veterans services.

Are you kidding me? Do we really look that gullible? Why should Democrats come to the table and negotiate in good faith and throw our support behind a "bipartisan bill" only for Republicans to turn around after the deal is done and, somewhere down the line, delete any parts of the deal that Trump doesn't like? That is like Republicans saying "Let's cut a deal" and that you are going to sell us a car today, and then a month from now, the Republicans come back and steal the wheels.

Of course, Trump may not ask his Republican buddies to rescind spend-

ing. Maybe instead, on his own, he will just illegally refuse to spend it—the way he has done with \$425 billion already this year.

Look, our Founders didn't give the President the power to decide spending. A King can decide anything he wants but not a President. Donald Trump wants to be able to wake up and decide to cancel funding for public education, for transportation projects, for medical research, for food inspectors, for anything, just because Donald Trump feels like it, and he wants the Republicans in Congress to roll over and let it happen—no checks, no balances; just Trump playing King and ending the programs that would help the American people.

Trump is getting a lot of help from his Republican team. Russ Vought, the head of the Office of Management and Budget, has said the problem in Congress is too much bipartisanship—too much bipartisanship. In other words, the Trump administration is saying loud and clear that Donald Trump makes all the decisions. They don't need and they don't want Democrats.

At the very same time, the Republicans need Democratic votes for these funding bills because the Senate rules clearly require 60 votes for them to pass and there are only 53 Republicans in the Senate. If Democrats won't provide those votes, the Republicans want to blame Democrats for shutting down the government when this year's funding runs out at the end of September.

On the other hand, if Republicans really want Democratic votes for these funding bills, then they should ask us what is it going to take to win Democratic support, not just what programs we want to fund or what the level of funding should be—not that, when the promises themselves won't be worth the paper they are printed on. No. Democrats should tell Republicans that if they want our votes, then they are going to have to guarantee that the deal we strike actually means something.

I get it. Democrats and Republicans have different priorities. Here in the Senate, Republicans just voted to end healthcare for 17 million Americans and to drive up health insurance costs for millions more. Republicans have just voted to give billionaires huge tax cuts.

Democrats are willing to make a deal, but our deal is about bringing down costs for families, including the cost of healthcare, groceries, and housing.

If Republicans want to make a deal, then let's make a deal but only if Republicans include an agreement that they won't take back that deal a few weeks later.

Congress is a coequal branch of government. We swore an oath to the Constitution, not to a King. I am asking my Republican colleagues to grow a spine and stand up for Americans instead of bowing down to their pretend King, and I am asking my Democratic

colleagues to join me in using the power we have to fight back.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SHEEHY). The Senator from West Virginia.

PERMITTING REFORM

Mrs. CAPITO. Mr. President, I am really pleased to be here on the last week—or around the last week—that we are going to be here before we return in September. I am particularly happy to be here with the ranking member of the Environment and Public Works Committee to talk about an issue that I think we both care about. So I am going to start off and then yield to Senator WHITEHOUSE.

As we both know, for too long, critical projects central to American energy development, infrastructure improvement, and economic development have been trapped in a cycle of redundant reviews, shifting goalposts, endless redtape, and regulatory uncertainty.

Businesses large and small, looking to build things in our country again, really need the certainty that is necessary for long-term investments. And projects needed to deploy new energy technologies and efforts to restore the environment have been caught in the same regulatory swamp as well. This has been loaded on for years. Years of changes in guidance have created a complex web of ever expanding, duplicative, and contradictory requirements, while Congress has not stepped in to provide the clarifications that our country needs. All this has led to lost jobs, missed economic opportunities, and higher prices across America, underpinning the importance of comprehensive reform to our environmental review and permitting processes.

I can tell you, I get asked about this consistently, every day, and more than a few times a day. So let me talk a little bit about my home State of West Virginia. I have seen firsthand how projects that our communities rely on face needless delays and how costs are then shifted to our families, who pay more for energy, housing, transportation, and basic goods as a result.

These types of delays nearly stopped what will become one of the most environmentally friendly steel production facilities in the world, which will employ over 1,000 people in Mason County.

Top highway projects like Corridor H that would improve both safety, mobility, and create economic development have encountered multiple permitting delays and uncertainty under a litany of environmental statutes.

And even West Virginia waterline extensions, broadband deployment, and bridge replacements have all faced delays from the Federal permitting process.

If you spend time in my State and visit our communities and travel across our mountains, it is obvious how important these projects are to our State of West Virginia. They impact

everything from how we heat our homes to how we connect our schools with internet and maintain the roads and bridges that our residents travel on every single day. Point blank, these delays are holding our State and every State back from reaching our full potential, robbing our people of investments and economic development that would improve the quality of their lives.

So I believe it is time for Congress to act. Clearly, I am no stranger to the ever elusive topic of permitting reform. Throughout my time in the Senate, I have introduced multiple bills on the subject and have been involved in the regulations on this topic. And while we were able to include some reforms in the bipartisan Fiscal Responsibility Act, it is very clear that much more needs to be done.

The fact of the matter is, each one of us in this Chamber has a critical need in our State that could be addressed by improving our permitting and environmental processes, like building more housing—we always hear about a housing shortage—or bringing energy projects online—we hear about the expansion of nuclear that are going to be held into the permitting process—or improving the conditions of surface transportation infrastructure, just to name a few.

No matter what our constituents need, we all know that permitting reform is needed to deliver projects more quickly and more efficiently.

In my role as the chair of the EPW Committee, where we have jurisdiction over the laws that set the framework for our environmental review and permitting processes, I could not be more earnest in my desire to lead this effort with our ranking member. And our committee's involvement on this issue remains apparent by the delivery not just of this speech, as we are doing together, but as we continue to work together with the goal of crafting bipartisan legislation.

Together, we started bipartisan conversations in our committee in February when we held a hearing to gain the perspectives of leaders who are directly involved with navigating these processes to ensure that we would gather a complete look at all of the issues. We kept the hearing record open for over a month to give all stakeholders the opportunity to share their experience with the existing environmental review and permitting processes and identify challenges and recommend possible solutions to this Congress.

From this record, we garnered 107 submissions representing 146 individual organizations and an additional 854 individual requests on how to improve the Federal environmental review and permitting process. These responses have helped the EPW Committee identify the challenges that persist across the wide variety of projects and to identify consensus on potential solutions to address these challenges.

While we have talked about the issue of permitting for a number of years in Congress, it is important that we currently find ourselves, I think, in like thought all across the spectrum. Each branch of the Federal Government—from executive to Congress and the judiciary—are united in our dissatisfaction with the current permitting and environmental review processes.

The Trump administration has taken numerous actions to cut redtape and to put the United States in its best possible position to grow our economy and create jobs. The Supreme Court delivered a unanimous decision in the Seven County Infrastructure Coalition case in May that validated what many of my colleagues and I have long been saying, and that is that the responsibilities of Federal Agencies under the NEPA policy act have evolved beyond what Congress intended, creating roadblocks instead of considering the environment in Federal decision-making.

Right now, we have the momentum, I believe, needed to deliver meaningful and lasting reforms to the environmental review and permitting process, and I believe this is an unprecedented opportunity and something we can truly accomplish. I do believe—and Senator WHITEHOUSE and I know this well—that there are areas of strong disagreement in this area between the two of us, and what we are going to try to do is to find those areas of like thinking that moves the process along. No matter how difficult it might be, this is the only way we get a permanent solution so that we don't see the swings of the environmental process that we have seen over the last few years.

So, to start, durable and implementable reforms need to be successful. They have to be bipartisan. Legislation that the Senate crafts must take into account all types of projects, not just politically favored projects, no matter who is favoring them, or projects that will support the infrastructure needs of some Americans but not others.

We must provide clarity and transparency in these processes and be thoughtful in the way we craft the legislation. We need to address every stage of these processes to find efficiencies, while balancing public health, the environment, and the needs of our economy. And our legislation must establish guardrails that cease the endless amounts of Agency delays and litigation that stunt the development of our projects. I have seen investments in my State collapse under the weight of legal challenges, denying benefits to those that need it the most.

I want to stress that modernizing these processes does not mean cutting corners or weakening our environmental and public health protections, and this is exceedingly important to all of us and to the process. It means focusing the government on meeting the needs of the American people, ensuring