

My bill would make it perfectly clear that Federal officials cannot direct retaliation against contractors any more than they can direct retaliation against Federal employees.

If they violate the law, the bill will allow Agencies to take disciplinary action. The bill would also clarify that employers cannot evade whistleblower laws through nondisclosure agreements and other employment contracts and ensure that contractor employees are not retaliated against for refusing to perform an action that they believe is illegal.

I would like to thank Senator GRASSLEY for joining me in introducing this legislation and Representatives GARCIA and COMER for introducing the House companion, which was unanimously approved by the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

I urge my colleagues to continue to join me in passing this bill through the House and certainly appreciate the support that I received on the floor here today.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Hawaii.

FLOODING IN HAWAII

Mr. SCHATZ. Mr. President, Hawaii experienced its worst flooding in more than 20 years last month. Two storms, less than 2 weeks apart, whipped up hurricane force winds of up to 135 miles per hour and dumped more than 62 inches of rain in parts of the State.

All told, nearly 2 trillion gallons of water fell from the sky statewide, enough to fill 3 million Olympic-sized swimming pools, and the resulting damage was widespread and it was severe.

It all started on March 10 when the first storm known as a Kona low brought close to 10 inches of rain over 4 days and broke daily rainfall records on Oahu, Maui, Hawaii Island, and Kauai. The powerful winds and heavy rain flooded homes, toppled power lines, and shuttered schools and businesses.

Over 100,000 people lost power, but before people could even begin to recover, a second storm quickly followed just days later delivering more than a foot of rain. But the ground was still saturated from the previous storm and drainage capacity was overwhelmed, and so flooding got worse across the State.

More than 5,000 residents were forced to evacuate and seek cover in shelters and schools. Homes were lifted off of their foundations, cars floated out of driveways, roads and highways became inaccessible, crops washed away on farms and fields.

But amid the devastation, rocked by relentless rain, Hawaii's aloha spirit prevailed. We saw it in the heroic emergency responders who rescued hundreds of people who were stuck in danger with no way to get out. We saw it in all the people rushing to check in on their neighbors, sharing informa-

tion on social media in realtime, and helping to clean up the debris and the mud once the rain passed.

Farmers who lost their own fields instead went to help their neighbors to rebuild.

Businesses spring into action to hand out supplies and hot meals, despite losing sales and incurring damages of their own. That is Hawaii. No one is a stranger, especially in time of need. And everybody pitches in.

Recovering from a disaster of this magnitude will take months and years. Homes, roads, schools, and hospitals were flooded and badly damaged and will need to be rebuilt. And doing so requires resources, which is why the Trump administration's approval of Governor Josh Green's disaster declaration request was so important.

As with disasters in the past, these Federal dollars will support cleanup and repairs, as well as help residents to get back on their feet through individual assistance.

The State and county governments are doing everything that they can to help people recover fully and quickly, but they cannot do it alone. They need help.

The Federal Government has a responsibility to share the burden of rebuilding. And while the approval of a disaster declaration is a very important and good first step, it is just that. It is a first step.

In the months and the years ahead, we will need to be there to provide support and resources in any way we can, until the affected people and communities are made whole once again.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

S.J. RES. 139

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I am speaking in advance of my colleague from Colorado Senator BENNET's effort to seek redress in this body for a wave of pollution that is being unleashed in his State and neighboring States as well.

One of the things about our failed Environmental Protection Agency right now is that one State can't regulate pollution that comes to it from another State. And yet the good neighbor policy that somebody has to be able to say "Hey, wait a minute; you can't pollute my State from another State" is one that EPA has just walked away from.

In this case, the problem is a coal facility in Colorado. And just start with coal. It is really indisputable that coal is America's dirtiest, deadliest, and most expensive energy source. It is a dying industry for market reasons. It can't compete because it is dirty, deadly, and expensive.

And yet, since taking office, President Trump has worked desperately to keep coal on life support, perhaps because the coal industry paid \$3.5 billion in 2024 to help him get elected, and

Trump is a man who understands a *quid pro quo*.

The Trump administration has taken every possible action to benefit the coal industry; never mind our health. Remember, it is the deadliest of energy sources. And never mind our bank accounts. Remember, it is the most expensive of energy sources.

He even rolled back health-protecting standards for mercury and toxic emissions from coal plants. Mercury is pretty seriously, deadly stuff; and he rolled back those standards.

He exempted one-third of all coal plants nationwide from toxic pollution standards. Who loses? Anybody exposed to the toxic pollution they emit. Who wins? Trump's big donors.

He even directed the Secretary of Energy to issue orders under the Federal Power Act to force coal plants to stay online, driving up consumer costs against the wishes of the utilities and even the plants' owners. But they still had to buy and burn coal. So there is somebody out there who is going to make money off that.

And now Trump has perverted the Clean Air Act to trample on States' rights to protect their own citizens.

Coal plants are the Nation's most significant source of haze. The same coal pollutants that drive health issues and deaths nationwide drive haze formations. Under the Clean Air Act's Regional Haze Program, States establish plans to reduce haze-causing pollution. States may choose to include coal plant retirements in their plans. Often, that is consistent with the utility and the plant owner's wishes, as an old plant ends its useful life. When the EPA approves these plans, the retirements then become enforceable.

In 2022, Colorado submitted a regional haze plan to the EPA that included coal plant retirements that Colorado utilities had independently and voluntarily planned for. "They do better with cheaper, cleaner renewable energy" is the simple answer.

In January of this year, the EPA turned around and disapproved Colorado's plan, making the argument that Colorado's plan, voluntarily entered into with these utilities, could represent a "taking" under the Constitution.

So we have here a really flagrant abuse of Federal authority: Make it more difficult for Colorado to protect its own citizens from toxic pollution and to provide affordable energy. And the resulting pollution won't just endanger Coloradans. This is a national issue because the haze blows, with prevailing winds, toward eastern States.

My State of Rhode Island, for instance, has occasions when we have bad air days. And if you are driving into work in the morning and you are listening to the talk radio, they will say: Today is a bad air day. Children should stay home. Elderly people and people with breathing difficulties should not go out.

It looks like a beautiful summer day. Kids will want to be in the yard, but it

is a bad air day. And so that health warning gets issued by the State of Rhode Island.

And there is nothing the State of Rhode Island can do about it. If every car in our State was an EV, if everything ran off of clean electricity, we would still be out of compliance because we are a downwind State.

And huge powerplants that push their pollution up into the sky, far enough that prevailing winds carries it out of their State and onto ours, they are the ones that are to blame, and there is nothing we can do about it.

So I am very sympathetic to concerns that the EPA has a particularly important job when neighboring States are polluting one another and can't reach a regulatory solution because it is out of State, and that is exactly the predicament that we are creating here today.

When Congress enacted the Congressional Review Act in 1996 to give Congress the opportunity to vote on regulations, well, that is why we are here today. We have a chance to undo this, and I hope we will because everybody here has a good chance of being a downwind State. Even California is often a downwind State from China. So you have got to be able to have protections from upwind pollution, and this would strip that.

So the Trump administration's effort here—at breakneck speed—to tear down protections of Americans' health, safety, and environment we have a chance to claw back. Congressional Review Act resolutions like this one can help hold the administration to account.

I will conclude by saying I just left the EPW hearing with EPA Administrator Zeldin. The point that I made in that hearing was that we are now headed into an election cycle in which the American people are desperately concerned about the cost of stuff. Stuff costs too much, and the Trump administration is ignoring the problem, if not making it worse. Those are basically the two buckets. They are either ignoring it completely or they are deliberately making it worse.

With respect to electricity costs, the Trump administration is deliberately making it worse. They are raising costs for consumers on purpose.

How are they doing it, and why are they doing it? Well, the "how" is that they are keeping inexpensive clean energy off the grid. We just went through this in Rhode Island. Our Revolution Wind offshore power facility was stalled by illegal orders of the Trump administration not once but twice, and the result was that power was delayed from coming ashore. Well, Revolution Wind has a contract to sell power onto the grid. That contract specifies a price. The price is 9 cents—9 cents. ISO New England—our grid operator—can do fairly easy math to show what the average grid price is for electricity. And guess what. It is 18 cents. So this 9-cent power was stalled going into an 18-cent grid.

Because it is 9-cent power, what would it have done? It would have been called up first by the grid because every grid calls up the least expensive power first. So that 9-cent power would have been flowing into the grid. It would have been filling up demand, and that would have meant that some dirty fossil fuel-polluting units would not have been called up. They were too expensive to run.

So, when they push all that clean energy off the grid and buy time for the dirty, polluting fossil fuel plants—that is money directly to the fossil fuel industry—two things happen: One, costs go up for all consumers because those new, more expensive plants called on-line raise the price for everybody. So electricity bills go up. They are driven up on purpose by the delay of clean energy getting onto the grid.

Where do those billions of dollars in extra costs that are extracted from American consumers go? Guess where—to the owners of those fossil fuel plants that are in the margin, the ones that get run because the clean energy has been kept off of the grid.

It is a ginormous money pump out of the pockets of ordinary American rate-payers and into the pockets of the fossil fuel billionaires who put so much money into getting Trump elected. That is being done on purpose. Electricity costs are being driven up on purpose.

Don't tell me that the Department of Energy or the Environmental Protection Agency or the Department of the Interior, for that matter, don't understand how the grid works. They have people who know exactly how the generation stack works. They know exactly that the least expensive units get run first and that the least expensive units displace the more expensive units, which is good for consumers, until the heavy hand of a fossil fuel-influenced government steps in and tries to prevent consumers from getting low-cost clean energy. Then the hole that that leaves that would have been filled by clean energy—you have got to go fill that hole by going up the stack to more and more expensive units, and virtually every time, that more expensive unit is a fossil fuel unit.

So, like I said, what the Trump administration has created on purpose is a ginormous money pump to extract billions of dollars from regular consumers who would otherwise be enjoying the benefit of low-cost clean power, and they have done it as a reward for Trump's big fossil fuel donors, the ones who threw hundreds of millions of dollars at his campaign and who are now reaping a multiple-times reward with that investment.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SCHMITT). The Senator from Colorado.

S.J. RES. 139

Mr. HICKENLOOPER. Mr. President, Colorado is one of the most beautiful

places not just in America but in the world.

In Denver, we have got over 300 days of sunshine annually. We have access to incredible green spaces, and if you look west, you can lose yourself in the best view in America—the Rocky Mountains.

But it wasn't always this way.

In the 1950s, Colorado was and still is one of the fastest growing cities in America. Even stretching back to my days as mayor back in the 2000s, one of our main goals was to attract young people to not just come and ski in Colorado but to visit Denver, perhaps consider starting a business there, building a business, growing your family, building a life.

To put it in perspective, between 1950 and 1960, Denver's population grew by just about 20 percent. This brought more cars, more industry but also more pollution. By the 1970s and 1980s, the smog was so bad that, nationally, there was a nickname for Denver—the "brown cloud." There were days you couldn't even see the mountains at all, which, as a geologist and a Coloradan, pained me.

But then something incredible happened. In 1970, a Democratic Congress passed the Clean Air Act. It was signed into law by a Republican President. It is a reminder that clean air has never been a partisan issue. It benefits literally everyone. The Clean Air Act helped to propel States like Colorado and others to turn things around, to look at that pollution in a different light. Emissions testing and fuel standards soon followed, and guess what happened. The air got cleaner. Visibility improved. People such as my son who has asthma would be healthier.

Then, in 1999, the EPA created the Regional Haze Program. The initiative was rooted around one single idea: If you go to a national park, you should be able to see it. So States were asked to develop plans to cut pollution that limits those gorgeous views.

Once again, Colorado stepped in and led the way. In my first year as Governor, Colorado submitted our Regional Haze State Implementation Plan, which was first approved in 2012. It put us on a path to improving the quality of air we breathe in the place that we are lucky to call home.

We also brought environmentalists and the energy industry together to create the first methane regulations in the world in 2014. This was the blending of environmental and industry discussions. I think those regulations—again, the first methane regulations in the world were in Colorado—helped in the years leading up to 2017 to reduce methane emissions from Colorado's oil and gas sector by 70 percent. That is right—70 percent.

Despite all that success, the Trump administration is now threatening to turn back the clock and reduce and diminish the success of Colorado's clean air efforts.