

Energy is called the master resource, and we are unleashing it once again. Today, America has become the largest energy producer in the world. We produce more oil than the next two biggest producers combined. We produce as much natural gas as the next three largest countries combined. And we have more clean coal than any other nation in the world. We are also living in a time of cutting-edge nuclear technology. America is blessed with boundless gifts when it comes to energy, and when we use all of our energy resources wisely, as we do, America wins.

The Biden administration got energy completely wrong. Joe Biden told his Cabinet to prioritize climate over energy that was available, affordable, and reliable.

Democrats closed Federal lands to new energy production. Democrats raised taxes on energy producers. Democrats force-fed Americans electric vehicles that people didn't want and couldn't afford. Democrats handed out billions of dollars in subsidies to green energy companies, and these are companies that would never survive without government handouts.

So what were the results? Under Joe Biden, families and businesses paid more for energy. Energy workers in Wyoming and across the country lost good-paying jobs. America grew more dependent on foreign nations for energy—energy that we could and should be producing ourselves.

The Working Families Tax Cut law cleared the way for American energy dominance. The Working Families Tax Cut law opens more energy production onshore, offshore, and in Alaska. That includes oil and gas, as well as clean coal.

This is a major change from the Biden administration. Joe Biden presided over the fewest energy lease sales since President Harry Truman.

Republicans are strengthening U.S. energy production. We are streamlining burdensome regulations. At the same time, we are protecting Federal lands.

The Working Families Tax Cut law repealed the Biden-era tax on natural gas. This saves American families money when they try to cool their home this summer.

The new law also lowered the tax rate for coal production on Federal land. This matters enormously in my home State of Wyoming. Our Powder River Basin produces nearly half of the coal in America.

Coal means good-paying jobs in our State. It means revenue for our schools. It means affordable, available, reliable power for millions upon millions of Americans.

Now, producing clean coal is more competitive.

Republicans promised to unleash American energy and lower costs, and we have done it. That is what the Working Families Tax Cut law did when we passed it, a year ago, and it continues to do it today.

Every single Democrat in this Chamber voted against the Working Families Tax Cut law. They voted to raise taxes by \$4 trillion.

Every Democrat voted to keep high taxes on natural gas. They voted to keep American energy trapped in the ground.

If the Democrats had their way, American families would be paying more for everything.

We need to protect the energy progress that we have made with the Working Families Tax Cut law. Democrats want to go backward. They have said it.

We must not impose new government mandates that raise costs for American families.

America's small refineries are the unsung heroes of affordable American energy. Washington, DC, often overlooks them. Working families depend upon them. And I represent several of those small refineries that are in Wyoming.

The refineries employ thousands of people. They make gasoline prices more affordable. They strengthen our Nation's energy security. And proposed new mandates on small refineries would harm them and harm the people who work there.

Republicans spent the last year cutting taxes and removing barriers to energy production. We should not spend the next few months imposing costly new mandates on American refineries.

Americans want, need, and deserve energy that is affordable, available, and reliable. It is good for our workers, it is good for our economy, and it is good for the safety and security of our Nation.

We, as this Nation, are an energy superpower, and with the Working Families Tax Cut law, we are actually acting like it again.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

VOTING RIGHTS

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, the attack on vote by mail and other efforts to disenfranchise Americans, whether it is the SAVE Act or redistricting to take away representation from minority-majority districts as the result of the Supreme Court decision in *Louisiana v. Chavis*—all of these are actions to take away the right to vote.

Voting in America is a right. It is your right to vote. And for too long, that precious right has been denied to too many. Americans have been beaten, they have been bloodied, and some have given their lives just to secure this right to vote. Women had to fight for it in 1920. It is amazing that I stand here today, just a little over 100 years later, but 100 years ago, I would not even have been allowed to vote.

Wars have been fought to preserve it. My father and uncle both fought in World War II, and I guarantee you they were fighting for our right to vote. And

even in this Chamber, we had to fight to preserve and certify the 2020 election. So when we are talking about voting rights, we are not talking about an abstract idea.

In Pennsylvania, in 1871, a man named Octavius Catto walked towards a polling place in the city of Philadelphia. He was a Black educator, a Civil War militia officer, and a respected civic leader.

He believed that the promise written into our Constitution after the Civil War, the promise that Black Americans would be citizens and voters ought to mean something—that in the streets of his own city, he could cast a vote. On election day, he thought that is what citizens were supposed to do.

So he went to vote. He never came home. He was gunned down in broad daylight by a White assailant amid a storm of racially charged violence designed to drive Black voters away from the polling place.

His killing was not random. It was part of a campaign of terror, a message to every Black citizen: If you dare to exercise your political power, if you dare to walk to that ballot box, you will pay with your life.

Nearly a century later, in Mississippi, in 1966, the tactics had changed, but the target was the same: Black Americans who insisted on their right to vote. Vernon Dahmer, Sr., was a Black farmer and businessman. If he dared to exercise his rights, what would happen?

Black Americans insisted on their vote, and Dahmer was a Black farmer who led his local NAACP branch and understood that a poll tax, a fee that poor people could not afford, was being used as a weapon to keep Black people off the voting rolls.

So he made a simple, courageous pledge: No one would be denied the chance to register because they could not afford to pay the tax. He went on radio and told the people of Mississippi that he would personally help pay their poll tax at his store.

The response was not a policy debate; it was terror. In January of that year, the Ku Klux Klan firebombed his home while his family slept inside. Vernon Dahmer fought back long enough to get his wife and children to safety, but he did not survive.

He died from the burns and smoke inhalation because he had taken a public stand that poor Black citizens should be allowed to be registered and vote. And while bombs and bullets are no longer used today, the intent to silence certain voters has not disappeared; it has just changed form.

Disenfranchisement today is more bureaucratic, it is more technical, but the results for ordinary citizens can be the same. Their voices are shunned out of a democracy. In Texas in 2021, a new law, SB 1, rewrote the rules for voting by mail. It required voters to provide specific ID numbers on applications and ballot envelopes.

The rules were confusing, the process was unforgiving, and in the next primary, thousands of longtime voters,

many of them elderly, disabled, or from communities of color, found that their ballot requests or their ballots themselves were rejected—not because they were ineligible, but really because a form and the number on the form did not match.

Researchers working at the Brennan Center describe one such voter, a Texan in her 70s. She had done exactly what was asked: She had voted by mail reliably in 2016 and 2018 and in the 2020 general election. She had played by the rules as they were explained to her. Then, under the new law, her 2022 ballot was rejected.

No one threatened her at the polls with a gun. No one burned her home, but instead, a letter, a notice informed her that her ballot did not count. Her voice had been quietly erased. And now, we know that voters in her situation are far less likely to turn out in the next election.

The Voting Rights Act of 1965 was necessary because a century after the 15th Amendment, voters of color were still systematically blocked from ballots or facing literacy tests, poll taxes, or just plain intimidation.

Before 1965, Southern States in particular used these tactics to ensure that Black citizens would not register to vote everywhere where they were the majority of the population. The Voting Rights Act was needed because early civil rights laws had proven too weak.

Congress needed to say explicitly, in those laws, what the courts and what we needed to affirm. Congress said the Federal Government should oversee elections as it relates to preclearance of voting changes in those States with discriminatory histories, places of discrimination.

Why was this important? Just like all civil liberties that aren't implemented by the States, yes, the Federal Government should step in and make sure your civil rights and civil liberties are upheld, but some people here in this body don't believe in implementing those. And even though the Senate—this body—reauthorized the Voting Rights Act by a vote of 98 to 0 in 2006, the Supreme Court has eroded the gains of the Voting Rights Act over the last decade.

So why are we here fighting today? Because today, Democrats are opposed to an unconstitutional Executive order, a U.S. Postal Service rule-making on mail-in and absentee ballots, and other efforts by the administration to enable the Federal Government to seize control over voter rolls and the vote by mail system.

The administration's actions are unconstitutional. Article I, section 4 of the Constitution gives the States the primary responsibility of administering the elections. Congress has the secondary role. The President has no role. The Framers of the Constitution were deliberate about this. The Constitution entrusts the elections to the States, so that they can't be manipu-

lated by a self-interested executive branch.

In the State of Washington, on a bipartisan basis, vote by mail was implemented more than 40 years ago. By 2011, the State legislature made vote by mail the statewide standard of all elections, and yes, we are talking about a lot of Western States that are in the same boat. Washington was second only to Oregon, which adopted universal vote by mail in 1998.

Today, there are 36 States that use no-excuse vote by mail. That means 36 States say you can get a ballot to cast your vote, and you don't have to make up an excuse, like you are working or in the hospital or are going to be out of the country. You can just request a mail-in ballot. In 2024, among people voting for President in South Dakota, 35.6 percent voted by mail. In Indiana, the number was 53 percent voting by mail, and in Utah, over 91 percent of people voted by mail in 2024. I don't remember President Trump questioning the results of those elections.

The fact is, many election officials in these States are calling on other States to adopt this very secure, very traceable voting system. Voting by mail is not only convenient; it actually encourages civic participation.

Research by the University of Southern California found that universal vote by mail increased turnouts among registered voters by 5.6 percent in the 2020 election. Other research shows that these numbers could be somewhere between 4 and 10 percent for seniors and the disabled.

So giving people the right to vote is actually helping, and it is no surprise that 40 percent of seniors are voting by mail—but somehow we want to disenfranchise them? In the 2024 President election, 47 million people, about 1 in 3 U.S. citizens, cast their ballots by mail, and 40 percent of the Americans 65 and older did so, the highest rate of any group.

So we have already said it is safe, it is secure, it is reliable, and among the 89,991,893 ballots cast in my State from 2008 to 2025—so really a 16-year period of time—the Heritage Foundation only found 5 cases of voter fraud, 5 cases in 16 years. In the State of Washington, we verify every voter, every election, with 100-percent signature matching bar codes, a paper trail, and an ID number if you want to track it yourself.

But last December, the U.S. Postal Service changed the location where your mail is postmarked. Instead of postmarking your mail where you drop it off at the post office, your mail isn't postmarked until it is processed at a regional distribution center. This can delay postmarking up to several days.

For example, following the changes in the postmark practices, the secretary of the State of Washington is seeing increased numbers of return ballots being rejected for late postmarks. For example, during the 2026 February special election, 75 percent of the total

rejected ballots were due to late postmarks.

Snohomish County, WA, recently conducted a test to assess the postal delivery times in their area. This was a small test: four dates in January and February during a special election, a tiny sample of voters in one county, but of the sample ballots mailed, only about 20 percent were postmarked on the day they were actually mailed—20 percent.

Are we saying we are going to allow voters who vote by mail to be disenfranchised because this administration is trying to force the Postal Service to say they are not going to stamp your ballot on the date that you mail it at the post office?

What about your Social Security check? What about other things that you would like to see postmarked the day they are mailed? What about legal documents? What about other issues? No. We are promulgating here a story of mischief that doesn't need to be here to suppress voters on election day.

Only about half of the 15 test mailings were postmarked that election day. The Postal Service issued a proposed rule to take control of who can receive a ballot and whose vote will be counted if you vote by mail. This is preposterous.

They want to use a Department of Homeland Security database notorious for erroneously finding eligible voters to be ineligible. That is right. That is what can happen to you: All of a sudden, now your name is on a database, and you are ineligible, even though you are really eligible.

On election day in Snohomish, about half of the postmarks were postmarked that day. Let me say this again: The post office is reasserting it can decide who gets a ballot, and they would decide who can cast a ballot by mail.

Fortunately, yesterday, a Federal court blocked the use of the DHS database, at least for now, as a violation of every American's privacy, but that litigation is continuing, and yesterday, the Postal Service declined to provide a witness to testify in the State of Washington at our State legislative committee about this issue.

Why? If you are so proud of these tactics, if you think they are so great, why don't you show up at the Washington State Legislature and testify about what is happening? With the administration's plan, if you are among 1/3 of Americans that vote by mail, you can never know whether your vote was counted. There is no recourse.

I ask my colleagues: This is an assault on your right to vote. This is an assault on having your voice heard, whether it is a new rule delaying when mail is postmarked or prohibiting counting ballots received later than election day, whether it is demanding the DHS continue to purge names, they just want to take your rights away.

Last week, over 100 FBI agents raided the Ohio voting rights group the Ohio Organizing Collaborative, searching

their offices, taking computers, knocking on the doors of volunteers without subpoenas.

A few days later, the FBI went after one of the Nation's leading nonprofit voter outreach coordination hubs, America Votes, a DC-based organization that works to turn out voters nationwide. They went after America Votes because it is among the voter organization that funds the Ohio Organizing Collaborative. America Votes works with 400 organizations, including the AFL-CIO, Human Rights Campaign, Planned Parenthood, Emily's List, and the American Federation of Teachers to educate voters and get out the votes. It is an outrage that Kash Patel is sending FBI agents to intimidate advocacy groups that work hard to turn out voters, particularly those of color.

My family has always fought to get out the vote. My parents lived and worked alongside people like Robert F. Kennedy and knew of Martin Luther King's voice. Martin Luther King, Jr., on a trip to Seattle, said: Are we going to be "an echo rather than a voice, a taillight instead of a headlight"?

When I think about what we are seeing today, I see the same thing for my colleagues over here. Are you going to be an echo for the Trump administration about this ludicrous idea of the SAVE Act? Are you going to be an echo for this ludicrous idea that our States that have vote by mail may all of a sudden now be subject to what the President, Homeland Security, and their enforcement of the post office is going to do to our ballots?

Or are you going to be a headlight for the future of our country and the future of our democracy? I ask my colleagues to stand up for your vote, your constituents' votes, and for our rights, because if we don't stop this, I guarantee you, millions of Americans will be disenfranchised.

Our future is much brighter with a system that allows millions of people in my State—80 percent, sometimes, of voters—to vote and do so with certainty and to follow their ballot. Let's not let this 2026 election be stolen by people who want to get rid of the rules that we have lived by.

Too many of those people that I mentioned died to get this right to vote, or the women who fought to get the right in 1920 and to preserve it, or the people who have fought in wars to make sure that we have this privilege and right. Let's hold on to it.

I yield the floor. The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Virginia.

IRAN

Mr. KAINE. Mr. President, I rise today to address a very serious topic, one that I have often addressed on the floor of the Senate during my 13-plus years here but that I have particularly been focused on since President Trump decided to launch a war against Iran on February 28 of this year. And the issue

is whether we should ever be at war without a vote of Congress.

The consequences of the war that President Trump started are pretty well known to the American public. We have now spent in excess of \$50 billion of United States taxpayer money on the war, with the need to spend more to replenish munition stockpiles and repair infrastructure that has been damaged by Iran—United States infrastructure in the nations near that country.

More important than the dollars we have lost are the lives that have been lost—13 U.S. troops including a Virginian, CW3 Robert Marzan, have lost their lives in this war, and thousands of Iranian civilians have been killed.

The damage has not just been to the U.S. Treasury and taxpayers and to our troops and Iranian civilians; it has also been to everyday American families. Because of the instability of the war, the Strait of Hormuz was closed, as all predicted it might be if President Trump launched this war; and that has led to escalating fuel prices. The estimates are that Americans have paid already \$50 billion more for fuel since February 28 than they would have if President Trump had not started this war.

I could go on about the consequences, now being 110 days or so into this war, but I don't think I need to because I think the American public understands them very well.

But I am here today to rise again, as I have beginning within the first few days of the war—essentially every week—to ask my colleagues to do what the Constitution says we should do and direct the President to cease hostilities against Iran until—until—Congress authorizes a war.

The most solemn power, in my view, in article I of the Constitution—the most solemn power for Congress is Congress has the power to declare war, not the President. That was done very deliberately as the Constitution was drawn up in 1787 in Philadelphia because the delegates to the Constitutional Convention believed, even with someone as talented as George Washington ready to assume the Presidency of the United States, that the stakes and consequences of war were so vast that a decision about war should never be in the hands of a single person but, instead, should be vested in the legislative branch so that a decision about sending our best and brightest, our kids, into war—and the Presiding Officer knows more about the real costs of war than virtually anybody in this Chamber—that before we send our best and brightest into war, it should be based upon a very careful and deliberate debate, in full view of the American public so they can understand the stakes, and then war can be initiated once Congress has decided this is in the national interest.

Congress has not done this with respect to the war in Iran, and that is not unusual. Congress has often abdicated

this responsibility over the years. But we take an oath to a Constitution that brooks no end-running on this, that Congress has to own this responsibility. And so I rise again today for the 10th or 11th time—we have tried to have this vote virtually every week—on the floor of the Senate to say no war in Iran unless Congress, by vote, approves it.

In the earlier votes we have had, we have been voting on Senate resolutions, and most of the resolutions have failed, although they have failed narrowly. There was one positive vote on a resolution that I put forward, and it was a motion to discharge that resolution from committee that actually passed the Senate by a 50-to-47 vote. There were some absences that day, but it did pass. And so my resolution is still pending on the floor, but that is not the resolution we are going to be voting on today.

After lunch, I will ask to be pulled up a House concurrent resolution. The Republican-majority House has passed a resolution saying: Mr. President, no war in Iran without a vote of Congress. And this afternoon I will not be pulling up a Senate resolution, which, if successful, would have to go to the House. Instead, I am pulling up the concurrent resolution that the House has already acted upon.

Why is this vote different than the earlier ones we have had? Well, I have already explained procedurally it is a bit different because we are taking up the House concurrent resolution, but that may not necessarily be a difference maker as people try to decide how to vote.

Let me talk about why this vote is different than the earlier votes in terms of the merits of the case—the merits of saying right now to the President: No more war without a vote of Congress.

The first difference is, with each day, the consequences of the war become more apparent. We are acting with more knowledge. Even since the vote we had last week, we now have the administration has come to us with a supplemental request asking for \$80 billion more, largely necessitated by the consequences of the war: to replenish munitions stockpiles and take other actions that wouldn't fully repair damages, for example, that the Pentagon has incurred but would start to.

So we have some more information than last week.

The second thing we have is, I think we have more information about where Members of this body are. Many of us believe the war was foolish and illegal and never should have been started. Many of us believe the memorandum of understanding that was revealed last week is insufficient. Many of us believe both of those things are true.

In fact, I have been trying to monitor the comments of my Senate colleagues, and I would venture to say that about two-thirds of the Senators—maybe even higher now—have either expressed