

a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each; further, that Senator Kaine or his designee be recognized to make a motion to discharge S.J. Res. 98, and if made, the Senate vote on the motion to discharge at 11 a.m.; finally, following the vote on the motion to discharge, the Senate proceed to executive session and resume consideration of Calendar No. 574, Van Hook, and the Senate execute the order of December 18 in relation to the nomination at 1:45 p.m.

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

ORDER FOR RECESS

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, if there is no further business to come before the Senate, I ask that it stand in recess under the previous order, following the remarks of my colleagues.

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

The Senator from Rhode Island.

PERMITTING REFORM

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I am here to give, I guess, an explanation and update to my colleagues about the status of permitting reform.

I think, as you know, the chair and ranking member of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee and the chair and ranking member of the Environment and Public Works Committee were working on a permitting reform bill until very recently. I have, together with Senator HEINRICH, declared a pause in that permitting reform process, and I want to explain that because the progress had actually been good. We were working toward what I think could have been a very meaningful, very effectual, very bipartisan permitting reform bill. There were fairly new ideas being developed in it—like requiring front-loaded stakeholder engagement so the whole rest of the process, as it goes forward, is accelerated; disciplining the despised-by-me inter-agency process mechanism that excuses so much executive branch delay and indecision. I was actually pretty pleased with the way the process was going.

Off of Rhode Island, we are developing offshore wind. Our offshore wind project, Revolution Wind, had already weathered one stop work order which came out of the blue from the administration. This was a project then with about \$4 billion of investment already expended and north of 80 percent complete—a lot of turbines fully complete out there.

And that order was without any lawful basis. As a result, the order was challenged in court. And in court, the Federal judge said: You can put that project back to work. The stop work order from President Trump is invalid.

The judge made that decision on September 22. The Trump administration had 60 days to appeal. It did not appeal.

We got to November 21, the last appeal day, no notice of appeal was filed. The matter was settled; work could continue; and everybody was already back at work.

Thirty days later, the 22nd of December, a new stop work order was dropped by the Trump administration with no explanation.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the stop work letter of December 22 be printed in the RECORD at the end of my remarks.

So the first stop work attempt by the Trump administration had cited the protection of national security interests of the United States as one of its bases. And, obviously, that was deliberated in court. There were pleadings on that subject. The Trump administration lost. They did not appeal the order finding that they had lost, declaring that they had lost, so that was a settled question.

This second letter goes back and says again, national security risks. It does not identify them. In comments made on FOX News, it has been said that radar interference is the risk. Radar interference was deliberated in the initial permits. Radar interference was deliberated in the stop work order proceedings where the Trump administration lost. So what this looks like is a vindictive attack outside the law and proper due process by the Trump administration.

It is not the only mischief, and I am going to be joined here by Ranking Member HEINRICH to talk about some of the more westerly tricks that the Trump administration has been up to to interfere with clean energy.

But that second stop work order kind of tore it for me—because any negotiation that we would enter into, any good bill that would result from it, would then have to be implemented by this administration; and this administration has been found to have illegally stopped work on this project, did not appeal that finding, and then came up with a new stop work order 30 days later. If that is not vindictive harassment without legal basis, I don't know what is.

It is in litigation right now. With any luck, it will be stopped again, and they can go back to work again. And—who knows—maybe there will be a third imaginary stop work order that drops. But in an environment like that, where the executive branch refuses its constitutional duty to faithfully execute the laws, it doesn't make any sense for us to continue negotiations on a major bipartisan bill.

I want to say, in particular, that Chair CAPITO has been helpful, thoughtful, a good partner. All the Environment and Public Works Committee Republicans have been helpful and thoughtful. There is literally zero blame for this to land on the other side of the aisle in the Senate. This is entirely a legislative versus executive problem of an executive branch—a rogue executive branch—that refuses

to faithfully execute the laws, notwithstanding its constitutional duty.

It is so bad that the three major miscreants in this process—Zeldin, Burgum, and Wright—have gone on a campaign of falsehood about the cost of offshore wind. Here are some of the things that they have been saying. Secretary Burgum said that “intermittent, highly expensive wind is bad.” “Highly expensive,” he called it. He then tweeted:

Offshore wind is one of the most expensive . . . schemes ever pushed upon American taxpayers.

He said:

Offshore wind forces consumers and taxpayers to pay CONSIDERABLY more for electricity.

He said that “blue State offshore wind policies . . . lock in high prices.”

Zeldin criticized the economic impacts of wind.

Wright said that “wind and solar brings us . . . less reliable energy delivery and higher electric bills.”

So all three of them have falsely asserted that offshore wind will raise electric bills.

In court proceedings, where you actually need to tell the truth—as opposed to in tweets and talk shows—the story that emerges is exactly the opposite. In the Rhode Island and Connecticut sworn complaint, we alleged that Revolution Wind, the project off our shores, “will . . . yield substantial cost savings to the States’ ratepayers.”

[S]avings to ratepayers—

the pleading continues—

are estimated to be hundreds of millions of dollars over 20 years.

The September complaint brought in the Federal court by Orsted—again, a court filing—pled that long-term contract prices “are expected to act as a successful hedge against rising electricity rates,” projected to save ratepayers “hundreds of millions of dollars.”

In January—just now—in the litigation about the second stop work order, an affidavit was filed that swore that Revolution Wind would be a new source of low marginal cost power in New England; that “once operational, Revolution Wind alone will provide hundreds of millions of dollars each year in energy bill savings to New England.”

The ISO, the grid operator, specified that during a specific cold snap, from December 24, 2017, to January 8, 2018—what is that?—2 weeks, basically—had this offshore wind been online during that period, it would have “lowered regional electricity production costs by \$80–85 million” over those 2 weeks, “resulting in an \$11–13 per megawatt-hour reduction” in what the grid charged ratepayers.

Revolution Wind has cleared in the New England capacity market, and if it were to fail, it would require increases in electricity rates in New England of hundreds of millions of dollars per year.

Over and over again, when people who know what they are talking about

have to say in court pleadings, where they have an obligation to tell the truth, what the cost effect of Revolution Wind will be, they talk about cost savings of hundreds of millions of dollars. And that is confirmed across the country by grid operators. You can go to any grid, and you can see pretty much the same thing. They call up power units by cost. They call up the least expensive power units first, for obvious reasons, and wind and solar tend to be the low marginal cost units. They are the ones that are called up first.

So the allegations made in court of savings to ratepayers are backstopped by the actual economic practice of our electric grids.

So back to Zeldin, Burgum, and Wright. If they are conspicuously and consistently failing to tell the truth about savings, specifically misleading the public, telling them fossil fuel is cheaper when it isn't, what does that tell you about their motives and their bias and inability to faithfully execute the laws?

It tells me that there is really no point in passing a bipartisan bill, which would be a really good one, because we wouldn't get the benefit of the bill. They would just continue with illegal acts and false statements—anything to help fossil fuel.

It is not just Revolution Wind. Dominion Wind is set to lower consumer power prices in Virginia, once it is operational, and it is, too, now under a stop work order.

I want to resume. I want to get back to work. I want to do this permitting reform bill. In order to get there, I am going to need some help. The artificial intelligence folks, the crypto folks, the data system folks who need massive amounts of electrons, you all need to start showing up and letting people know that you actually want permitting reform, and you actually want an administrative and regulatory process in which electrons are treated fairly, irrespective of source, so you can get the power that you need. That is where we need to go.

If you want permitting reform, don't come to me. I am not the problem. Don't come to Democrats in the Senate. We are eager to do permitting reform. Don't bother Chairman CAPITO and the Republicans. They are ready to go too. Leader THUNE has been very supportive of our effort.

The problem isn't in the Senate. The problem is in the White House and in Environment and Public Works, Energy, and Interior. They are simply not executing the laws fairly, and the bias and injustice and illegality they have already demonstrated have got to stop if we are going to go forward.

It ain't just this bill that has to come through EPW and go through the Congress. There is also a highway bill coming. There is a water resources bill for the Army Corps bill. Are we really going to have to stop work on those big bipartisan bills because we can't trust

the Trump administration to implement them according to law?

Something has to give here, and nobody has done anything wrong in this building. All of the problems are in illegal, false, unfair, and biased enforcement of what should be faithful execution of the laws. That is where we are.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
BUREAU OF OCEAN ENERGY
MANAGEMENT,

Director's Order, December 22, 2025.

Rob Keiser,

Head of Asset Management, Orsted North America Inc., Boston, MA, College Park, MD.

DEAR MR. KEISER: The Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) is issuing this Director's Order to Revolution Wind, LLC, pursuant to 30 C.F.R. §585.417(b), to suspend all ongoing activities related to the Revolution Wind Project on the Outer Continental Shelf for the next 90 days for reasons of national security. During this time, BOEM will coordinate with you to determine whether the national security threats posed by this project can be adequately mitigated.

In November 2025, the Department of War (DoW) completed an additional assessment regarding the national security implications of offshore wind projects, and provided senior leadership at the Department of the Interior with new classified information, including the rapid evolution of relevant adversary technologies and the resulting direct impacts to national security from offshore wind projects. These impacts are heightened by the projects' sensitive location on the East Coast and the potential to cause serious, immediate, and irreparable harm to our great nation.

Based on BOEM's initial review of this classified information, the particularized harm posed by this project can only be feasibly averted by suspension of on-lease activities. In coordination with DoW, BOEM will determine whether the national security threats relating to this project can be mitigated and invites you to meet and confer about that possibility. Given the construction status of this project, BOEM will consider all feasible mitigation measures before making a decision as to whether the project must be cancelled.

Finally, while BOEM and DoW endeavor to reach a determination on feasible mitigation measures within 90 days following the date of this letter, BOEM may further extend the 90 day suspension period based on the status of those discussions. Even though all ongoing activities at this project are suspended, you may perform any activities that are necessary to respond to emergency situations and/or to prevent impacts to health, safety, and the environment over the next 90 days and during any subsequent extensions.

I appreciate your attention to this matter and look forward to hearing from you quickly.

Sincerely,

MATTHEW N. GIACONA,
Acting Director.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Mexico.

PERMITTING REFORM

Mr. HEINRICH. Mr. President, I am here today to join my colleague Senator WHITEHOUSE in talking about permitting reform.

I want to start with a story from my home State of New Mexico. Right now,

across my State and Arizona, hundreds of workers are putting the finishing touches on a 3.5-gigawatt wind farm and a 550-mile transmission line.

For context, 3.5 gigawatts is roughly the equivalent of 3½ nuclear reactors. This project is literally the largest clean energy project in North American history, bigger than the Hoover Dam. That is pretty unbelievable.

But what is even more unbelievable is that the permitting process for that transmission line and that generation started over 17 years ago, and the project is being energized, as we speak. Think about that. It took nearly two decades to get the permits needed to build the project. That is 17 years of redtape. That is 17 years without the jobs this could create; 17 years of lost income, lost local spending, lost tax revenue; 17 years without the energy our Nation needs to grow; and 17 years without the roughly \$20 billion of economic impact on the southwestern part of our country that we are finally seeing—because the reality is that electricity is what powers our communities, our innovation, our economies, and our lives. And electricity has powered this country since the 1880s.

But, right now, we are facing an energy crisis of the Trump administration's own making. First, electricity is becoming prohibitively expensive. While we know that permitting reform will help lower costs, the Trump administration is dismantling the permitting process that we use to build new energy projects and get cheaper electrons on the grid.

Put simply, costs are high. We need reform, and the President is blocking our ability to do just that. It is no secret that, right now, Americans' electric bills are going through the roof. Since Trump took office, electricity prices have risen an average of 13 percent in just a matter of months. That is double digits in well under a year.

Beyond the growing costs, demand is growing too. Grid Strategies, the power sector consulting firm, predicts electricity demand will grow 32 percent by 2030, just 5 years from now. Across New Mexico and the country, people are looking at their bills and asking how they are going to find the money to keep their lights on.

The answer is that Americans need more affordable energy, more electrons on the grid, not less, and they need it now. But we can't build a future using the last century's infrastructure and redtape. We need to set up a system that can reliably get to a yes or a no on a permit in 2 or 3 years, not 10, not 17.

We know that permitting reform can work. Scientists at the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory estimate that by 2050, transmission expansion could save \$270 to \$490 billion—billion with a "b." And for every dollar spent on new transmission, over \$1.50 would be saved in system costs. That is a 150-percent savings margin. That is a deal that is hard to argue with, and it is one of the reasons why I have been such a