

and what lies beyond the current generation of reactors.

Congress must find a way to help deal with the very real challenges that the current generation of nuclear reactors face. Congress must also address the waste issue, and we must evaluate the safety and cost benefits of regulations the government has placed on this industry. Many of the burdens on the nuclear industry are government created, and so they must be government solved. I look forward to working with my colleagues on the Environment and Public Works Committee to do our part in providing sound solutions.

Congress needs to find a way to multitask. Again, we can't ignore the challenges of the current fleet of reactors, but we must not allow these challenges to keep us from looking forward. The nuclear industry in America is, for better or worse, completely controlled by the government. Congress must lead in preparing government agencies to move forward into the future and to prepare for the next generation of our nuclear reactors. If our government is not able to create an environment in which the industry can grow and advance, companies will take their technologies overseas. We have seen this begin to happen already. Companies are now going to places such as China, Russia, South Korea, and India. These countries want to develop exportable nuclear technology. If we continue down our current path, these countries will take the lead in establishing non-proliferation norms and safety norms in the advanced nuclear industry. I would prefer that America continue to lead in this area.

Today, Senators WHITEHOUSE, RISCH, BOOKER, HATCH, KIRK, DURBIN, and I introduced the Nuclear Energy Innovation Capabilities Act, or NEICA, as an amendment to the Energy Policy Modernization Act of 2016. This measure is the Senate companion to the House measure of the same name, introduced by Representatives RANDY WEBER, EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON, and LAMAR SMITH. I wish to thank my colleagues for their hard work on this measure. As my colleagues can tell from the list I gave, it is highly bipartisan. There is broad support for this legislation on both sides of the aisle and on both sides of the Rotunda.

We are all very excited by this legislation, and we all agree that innovation within the nuclear industry must continue. America's preeminence in all things nuclear must endure.

The Senate version of NEICA would do four very important things to encourage innovation in advanced nuclear.

No. 1, the bill directs the Department of Energy to carry out a modeling and simulation program that aids in the development of new reactor technologies. This is an important first step that allows the private sector to have access to the capabilities of our national labs to test reactor designs and concepts.

No. 2, the measure also requires the DOE to report its plan to establish a user facility for a versatile reactor-based fast neutron source. This is a critical step that will allow private companies the ability to test the principles of nuclear science and prove the science behind their work.

No. 3, NEICA directs the Department of Energy to carry out a program to enable the testing and demonstration of reactor concepts proposed and funded by the private sector. This site is to be called the National Nuclear Innovation Center and will function as a database to store and share knowledge on nuclear science between Federal agencies and the private sector. The Senate version of NEICA encourages the Department of Energy and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to work together in this effort. We would like to see the DOE lead the effort to establish and operate the National Nuclear Innovation Center while consulting with the NRC regarding safety issues. We would also like to see the NRC have access to the work being done by the center in order to provide its staff with the knowledge it will need eventually to license any new reactors coming out of the center. If these reactors are ever to get to the market, the NRC must be able to understand the ins and outs of the science and work behind their development. The NRC needs the data in order to make data-driven licensing requirements.

No. 4, the Senate version of the NEICA requires the NRC to report on its ability to license advanced reactors within 4 years of receiving an application. The NRC must explain any institutional or organizational barriers it faces in moving forward with the prompt licensing of advanced reactors.

As I said earlier, this bill is an important step forward in maintaining the United States' leadership in nuclear energy. It is my hope this bill will enable the private sector and our national labs to work together to create new mind-blowing achievements in nuclear science. This bill encourages the smartest, most innovative and creative minds in nuclear science to partner together to move the industry forward.

The NEICA is an exciting piece of legislation. I look forward to working with my congressional colleagues to help the American nuclear energy industry thrive today and prepare for the future.

Thank you, Mr. President, and I yield the floor.

#### EXECUTIVE SESSION

#### EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of John Michael

Vazquez, of New Jersey, to be United States District Judge for the District of New Jersey.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will be 15 minutes of debate equally divided in the usual form.

The Senator from Montana.

#### ENERGY POLICY MODERNIZATION BILL

Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, the Energy Policy Modernization Act of 2015 is a crucial step forward in modernizing our country's energy policy and public lands management for the first time in nearly a decade, and we are doing it in a strong, bipartisan fashion. Moreover, we are taking the necessary steps to secure our Nation's energy future, in turn increasing economic opportunity and protecting our Nation's security needs.

Here are a few important components of this bill that I would like to highlight.

No. 1, it permanently reauthorizes the Land and Water Conservation Fund. This is an important tool for increasing public access to public lands and one of the country's best conservation programs.

No. 2, this bill also streamlines the permitting for the export of liquefied natural gas, allowing more American energy to power the world.

Montana is the fifth largest producer of hydropower in the Nation, and we have 23 hydroelectric dams. This bill strengthens our Nation's hydropower development by streamlining the permitting process of new projects and finally defining hydropower as a renewable resource. Only Washington, DC, would not define hydropower as a renewable resource. This cleans that up by statute, allowing FERC to provide more time to construct new hydroelectric facilities on existing dams. It also extends construction licenses for Gibson Dam and Clark Canyon Dam, two projects critical to tax revenue and jobs for communities in Montana.

This energy bill establishes a pilot project to streamline drilling permits if less than 25 percent of the minerals within the spacing unit are federal minerals. The provision, sponsored by my good friend the senior Senator from North Dakota, Mr. HOEVEN, is of particular importance to Montana, given the patchwork of land and mineral ownership in the Bakken.

It also improves the Federal permitting of critical and strategic mineral production, which supports thousands of good-paying Montana jobs and hundreds of millions of dollars in tax revenues for our State to support our infrastructure, our schools, and our teachers. Metal and nonmetal mining has created more than 8,500 good-paying Montana jobs. In fact, mining helps support more than 19,000 jobs in total across Montana. Metal mining in Montana has contributed \$403 million in taxes, and nonmetal mining produces \$128 million every year. This includes \$288 million of State and local taxes.

Finally, the Energy Policy Modernization Act of 2015 modernizes and

strengthens the reliability and security of bulk power in America's electrical grid. In Montana, we know the important balance of responsibly developing our natural resources and serving as good stewards of our environment. Our energy sector supports thousands of good-paying jobs for union workers and tribal workers. Access to our State's one-of-a-kind public lands is critical to our State's tourism economy and our very way of life in Montana. This bill facilitates all these goals.

Given the overwhelming support this bill received in committee, I am hopeful that this bill will also receive strong bipartisan support as we work through the amendment process and take a final vote on this bill next week.

I also look forward to having the opportunity to make this bill even better for our Nation. This legislation makes important gains for Montana energy, but there is still work to do. We can't fully discuss our Nation's energy future without also addressing the President's moratorium on new Federal coal leases and royalty increase attempts for Federal coal, oil, and natural gas. I hope we can work together in a bipartisan fashion to address these important issues, which have a significant impact on jobs, tax revenue, and energy prices in Montana.

I would like to thank Chairman MURKOWSKI, Ranking Member CANTWELL, and their staffs for their work in getting us to this point. I look forward to seeing and voting on additional amendments from my colleagues in the coming days, and I look forward to getting this bill across the finish line, providing the American people with a comprehensive energy policy that works to support both our economic security as well as our national security.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, today we will vote on the nomination of John Michael Vazquez to fill a judicial emergency vacancy in the Federal district court in the district of New Jersey. His confirmation is long overdue. He was nominated over 10 months ago and reported out of the Judiciary Committee by unanimous voice vote over 4 months ago.

Mr. Vazquez is an outstanding nominee who has experience both in private practice and in the public sector. Since 2008, he has practiced as a named partner at the law firm of Critchley, Kinum & Vazquez in Roseland, NJ. He has also devoted a significant part of his career to public service, having worked for both the office of the attorney general for the State of New Jersey and as a Federal prosecutor in the district of New Jersey. During his tenure as a Federal prosecutor, Mr. Vazquez handled a wide array of Federal investigations and prosecutions while serving in the general crimes unit, the major narcotics unit, the terrorism unit, and the securities and health care fraud unit.

The ABA Standing Committee on the Federal Judiciary unanimously rated Mr. Vazquez "Well Qualified" to serve as a Federal district judge, its highest

rating. He has the support of his home State Senators, Senators MENENDEZ and BOOKER.

Mr. Vazquez's nomination reflects the enormous progress that the Senate and this administration have made in making the Federal judiciary more diverse and more representative of the citizenry it serves. The fact that there are more women and minorities than ever before serving on our Federal bench is important. The result of this progress is that it increases public confidence in our justice system.

Unfortunately, Senate Republicans have stalled this progress by obstructing several highly qualified Hispanic nominees. For example, Senate Republicans delayed the confirmation of Judge Luis Felipe Restrepo, the first Hispanic judge from Pennsylvania nominated to the third circuit, for more than a year. This was the case despite his excellent legal and judicial career and the strong bipartisan support he had from his home State Senators.

In addition, the junior Senator from Arkansas continues to impose a wholesale blockade on the nominees to the U.S. Court of Federal Claims, including Armando Bonilla, a Cuban American who has devoted his entire career to public service at the U.S. Department of Justice. If confirmed, Mr. Bonilla would be the first Hispanic judge to hold a seat on that court, where he is urgently needed. The chief judge of the Court of Federal Claims has written to Chairman GRASSLEY and me to express the need to confirm the pending nominees; yet Senator COTTON is being allowed to hold up these well-qualified nominees.

And just last week, the junior Senator from Georgia announced that he was withdrawing his support for the nomination of a Hispanic nominee to a Federal district court in Georgia. Judge Dax Lopez has served as a distinguished State court judge in DeKalb County, GA, since 2010. With his experience, I was not surprised that the Georgia Senators submitted Judge Lopez's name to the White House for consideration to the Federal district court. After recommending him to the White House, it is unfortunate that the junior Senator from Georgia is now blocking his nomination because of Judge Lopez's membership on the board of directors for the Georgia Association of Latino Elected Officials. This non-partisan organization's mission "is to increase civic engagement and leadership of the Latino/Hispanic community across Georgia." But some conservatives have focused only on the fact that the organization supported common sense immigration reform—something that a bipartisan majority of this body supported when we passed comprehensive immigration reform in 2013.

I have long noted that I do not vote to confirm individuals to the bench because I expect to agree with all of their views. My standard is whether the nominee would be the kind of inde-

pendent judge who would be fair and impartial. There is nothing in Judge Lopez's record to suggest that he could not or would not be an impartial judge. Judge Lopez has been a State court judge for nearly 6 years. Those who oppose Judge Lopez have decided that, because he was on the board of directors of an organization that advocates certain policies with which they disagree, they refuse to even consider his record or his own merits. This new litmus test for his membership in a non-partisan organization sets a dangerous precedent that Senators should reject.

We also saw this unreasonable treatment from Senate Republicans with the nomination of Judge Edward Chen to the northern district of California. Despite having served as a Federal magistrate judge for a decade, Senate Republicans held up Judge Chen's nomination for years because Judge Chen had previously worked for the American Civil Liberties Union. According to one Republican Senator on the Judiciary Committee, Judge Chen had the "ACLU gene," and so somehow he could not possibly be a fair judge—even though Judge Chen had shown that he could be an independent and neutral arbiter over the 10-year period that he served as a Federal magistrate judge. This new litmus test is completely unfair. I am sorry that Senate Republicans have now subjected Judge Lopez to this.

This afternoon, I hope we do not see a repeat of what happened to Judge Wilhelmina Wright, who was confirmed last week to the district court in Minnesota with a large number of "no" votes from Republicans. Judge Wright was the first African-American woman to serve on the Minnesota Supreme Court and the first person to serve on all three levels of the Minnesota State judiciary; yet many Republicans chose to side with the moneyed Washington interest groups who unfairly attacked her nomination based on a writing assignment from her third year of law school. That a Washington political action committee is opposing a nominee should not prevent Senators from exercising their own fair judgment. The resource needs of our independent judiciary should not be tainted by calls for a shutdown of our constitutional role as Senators.

I urge my fellow Senators to vote to confirm Judge Vazquez.

Mr. BOOKER. Mr. President, today I wish to support the nomination of John Michael Vazquez, whom the President nominated for a lifetime appointment as a United States district judge for the district of New Jersey.

I thank Majority Leader MCCONNELL and Minority Leader REID for giving Mr. Vazquez a vote on the Senate floor. I appreciate Chairman GRASSLEY and Ranking Member LEAHY and their respective staffs for all their hard work on moving this well-qualified judicial nominee through the Judiciary Committee. I also want to thank Senator

MENENDEZ, New Jersey's senior Senator, for his hard work on this judicial appointment.

The district of New Jersey currently has four judicial vacancies, all of which are judicial emergencies. This means that a very heavy caseload exists in that judicial district which, if left unremedied, undermines the quality and pace of access to justice for the people of New Jersey. According to the Administrative Office of the Courts, each judgeship in the district of New Jersey has over 650 weighted filings. That is unacceptable. Senator MENENDEZ and I are committed to breaking the logjam and ensuring New Jerseyans gain more access to justice.

Mr. Vazquez is a well-qualified nominee. He has worked in both public service and private practice and has experience in both criminal and civil cases. His time in public service includes stints as a Federal prosecutor in the U.S. attorney's office for the district of New Jersey and attorney in the New Jersey State attorney general's office where he rose up the ranks to become the first assistant attorney general. He is now a partner in private practice at a Roseland, NJ, law firm.

Mr. Vazquez has litigated both criminal and civil cases, which I am confident will make him a fine and well-balanced jurist. As a Federal prosecutor, he handled a wide variety of Federal criminal cases, including major narcotics prosecutions, as well as securities and health care fraud cases. In the state attorney general's office, he focused on criminal matters, including public corruption and financial fraud. In private practice, he specialized in criminal and civil law.

He has excellent credentials. He graduated summa cum laude from Seton Hall University School of Law and earned his undergraduate degree from Rutgers University—two prominent New Jersey educational institutions. He also clerked for a well-respected judge on the New Jersey Superior Court bench, appellate division.

Mr. Vazquez has also given back to his community. He won numerous awards for his dedication to his community and to law enforcement, including the Latino Legal Community Award from Seton Hall University School of Law's Latin American Law Students Association; the Excellence in Hispanic Leadership Award from the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs' Center for Hispanic Policy; and recognition from the New Jersey County Prosecutor's Association and the New Jersey State Police.

The American Bar Association Standing Committee on the Federal Judiciary has unanimously rated Mr. Vazquez well-qualified to be a district court judge, the highest possible rating. Last September, he was favorably reported out of the Judiciary Committee by a unanimous voice vote. I am confident this well-qualified nominee will serve honorably on the Federal bench.

I urge my fellow Senators today to confirm Mr. Vasquez as a United States district judge to the district of New Jersey. I look forward to continue working with Chairman GRASSLEY and Ranking Member LEAHY and Senate leadership to confirm more judicial nominees to fill vacancies in the district of New Jersey so that we can eliminate existing judicial emergencies.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I come before the Senate to express my enthusiastic recommendation for John Michael Vazquez's nomination and confirmation to the United States District Court for the District of New Jersey, which the Senate will be voting upon shortly.

Mr. Vazquez's credentials are impressive. He is a New Jerseyan who is eminently qualified and highly experienced, and I am confident that he will be an outstanding jurist whose judicial temperament, observance of precedent, and personal integrity will be beyond reproach.

There is an inscription over the 10th Street entrance to the Justice Department that I often am reminded of, and it can't be quoted too often when we are looking to perform one of our most vital duties, selecting those best qualified judicial nominees. It reads: "Justice in the life and conduct of the State is possible only as it first resides in the hearts and souls of its citizens." I believe that justice does, in fact, reside in the heart and soul of John Vazquez and that he will bring that judicial heart and soul to the task, as well as the benefit of a long and distinguished legal career in private and public service.

Mr. Vazquez began his legal career at the law offices of Michael Critchley & Associates after completing a clerkship with the Honorable Herman D. Michels of the New Jersey Appellate Division. He graduated summa cum laude from Seton Hall University School of Law and from Rutgers College. His intellect is of the highest order. He would bring a long and distinguished career to the District of New Jersey bench if and when he is confirmed. He is currently a partner at Critchley, Kinum & Vazquez, practicing commercial, securities, and civil litigation, as well as white collar criminal defense.

Before his time in private practice, he served the people of New Jersey in the New Jersey Office of the Attorney General as the first assistant attorney general. As the second highest ranking law enforcement official in the State, Mr. Vazquez conducted the day-to-day operations of the 9,500-person department and various divisions within the department, including criminal justice, consumer affairs, civil rights, elections, and gaming enforcement divisions, to mention a few. He previously served in that particular office as a special assistant to the attorney general. Before that he was an Assistant U.S. Attorney, where he focused on

health care fraud, securities fraud, and terrorism investigations. These experiences have given him a clear appreciation of the separation of powers, the importance of checks and balances, and I believe he will bring that view to the bench.

The American Bar Association rated him unanimously "well qualified" for the nomination, and I agree. He was voted out of the Judiciary Committee unanimously. When I think about the breadth and scope of what comes before a Federal district court judge, I can only think about the breadth and scope of his experience. He understands both sides of the legal equation—the prosecution and defense of the accused. He is a member of the Hispanic Bar Association of New Jersey, the Essex County Bar Association, the New Jersey State Bar Association, the Association of the Federal Bar of New Jersey, and the Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers of New Jersey.

Mr. President, I can say without equivocation that justice does indeed reside in the heart and soul of John Vazquez. He is an eminently qualified nominee with impressive credentials and experience who will fill a judicial emergency vacancy in the District of New Jersey. In addition to intellect, judgment, temperament, observance of the rule of law, and separation of powers, he diversifies our judiciary as a Hispanic American, which is something I think is also very important—to be able to have any American walk into any court in the land and believe the possibility that someone like them may very well be sitting in judgment of them. When you have all the elements of what we want in the Federal judiciary and we are able to achieve that element of diversity as well, I think it is the highest moment.

I urge the Senate to unanimously support him, and I yield the floor.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. CRAPO. Mr. President, I yield back all time.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Vazquez nomination?

Mr. CRAPO. Mr. President, 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 legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. ALEXANDER), the

Senator from Tennessee (Mr. CORKER), the Senator from Texas (Mr. CRUZ), the Senator from Arizona (Mr. FLAKE), the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. INHOFE), the Senator from Georgia (Mr. ISAKSON), the Senator from Florida (Mr. RUBIO), and the Senator from Nebraska (Mr. SASSE).

Further, if present and voting, the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. ALEXANDER) would have voted “yea.”

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from California (Mrs. BOXER), the Senator from Vermont (Mr. LEAHY), the Senator from Maryland (Ms. MIKULSKI), the Senator from Florida (Mr. NELSON), the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS), and the Senator from Michigan (Ms. STABENOW) are necessarily absent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. DAINES). Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 84, nays 2, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 6 Ex.]

YEAS—84

Ayotte	Feinstein	Murphy
Baldwin	Fischer	Murray
Barrasso	Franken	Paul
Bennet	Gardner	Perdue
Blumenthal	Gillibrand	Peters
Blunt	Graham	Portman
Booker	Grassley	Reed
Boozman	Hatch	Reid
Brown	Heinrich	Risch
Burr	Heitkamp	Roberts
Cantwell	Heller	Rounds
Capito	Hirono	Schatz
Cardin	Hoeven	Schumer
Carper	Johnson	Scott
Casey	Kaine	Sessions
Cassidy	King	Shaheen
Coats	Kirk	Shelby
Cochran	Klobuchar	Tester
Collins	Lee	Thune
Coons	Manchin	Tillis
Cornyn	Markey	Toomey
Cotton	McCain	Udall
Crapo	McCaskill	Vitter
Daines	McConnell	Warner
Donnelly	Menendez	Warren
Durbin	Merkley	Whitehouse
Enzi	Moran	Wicker
Ernst	Murkowski	Wyden

NAYS—2

Lankford Sullivan

NOT VOTING—14

Alexander	Inhofe	Rubio
Boxer	Isakson	Sanders
Corker	Leahy	Sasse
Cruz	Mikulski	Stabenow
Flake	Nelson	

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

Mr. CASSIDY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Under the previous order, the President will be immediately notified of the Senate’s action.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume legislative session.

ENERGY POLICY MODERNIZATION ACT OF 2015—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana is recognized.

Mr. CASSIDY. Mr. President, in this Energy bill we are considering, we are going to offer an amendment regarding the renewable fuel standard—also called the RFS. The RFS requires that fuel sold in the United States contain a minimal amount of renewable fuels. You know it because when you go to the gas pump, it says: contains 10 percent ethanol.

The RFS is outdated. It was created in 2005—a time when American energy consumption relied heavily upon foreign imports. It was thought that the renewable fuel standard will be good for the environment by decreasing the carbon footprint, but in the last 10 years our energy landscape has changed dramatically. We now have more domestic oil than almost ever before, and the drawbacks of the RFS greatly outweigh its benefits.

For example, the Congressional Budget Office projects that Americans will be forced to pay \$0.13 to \$0.26 more per gallon if the RFS is not repealed. For a mom and dad with two teenage sons, this would be \$400 a year, but it doesn’t stop at the pump.

Over the last 10 years, the price of corn has drastically fluctuated. Corn costs have approximately doubled since before the RFS began. The corn price increasing has increased the cost of food as much as 7 percent to 26 percent it is estimated per year. It also raises costs all the way down. For example, your chain restaurants are estimated to spend \$3.2 billion more for the food they purchase and serve to their customers because of the RFS.

Perhaps paying more at the pump, paying more at the grocery store and more at the restaurant will be worth it if there are environmental benefits. Unfortunately, there is not only no environmental benefit, there is tremendous environmental harm.

To begin with, an increase in corn production means that there is an increase in fertilizer use across the Midwest. That fertilizer runs into the rivers, goes down into the Mississippi River, hits the Gulf of Mexico, and causes algae blooms because of the high nitrogen and phosphorous, and that decreases the oxygen in the water, thereby devastating the fish population. If you look at maps of the dead zone in the Mississippi River, they have continuously increased in size since the RFS was put into law.

But it is not just about our water quality. Let’s talk about carbon footprint. One of the original rationales as to why we should have renewable fuels: The Union of Concerned Scientists state that certain types of ethanol have a worse carbon footprint than gasoline. So now we have something that not only increases the cost of food and hurts the water quality in the Gulf of Mexico and the rivers that feed it but also has a higher carbon footprint than the gasoline it dilutes.

By the way, it is not just the Union of Concerned Scientists; the National Academy of Sciences says that the renewable fuel standard has little or no environmental benefit and actually increases the particulate matter and sulfur that is in the atmosphere and harms water quality.

Let’s just say that with the abundance of our domestic oil and increased vehicular efficiency standards, there is no need for the RFS. It is time to repeal the renewable fuel standard so that our farmers, anglers, ranchers, and consumers can reap the benefit.

In addition to this, I wish to mention another amendment I am offering with Senator MARKEY. This amendment would save taxpayer dollars and preserve oil reservoirs in the Strategic Petroleum Reserve. The Strategic Petroleum Reserve is located in my home State, in Harahan, LA. This amendment gives the Secretary of Energy the ability to sell Strategic Petroleum Reserve quantities of crude oil when the price goes up. Right now, he has been instructed to sell the oil to raise \$5 billion but without regard to price. We clearly don’t want to sell it when the price of oil is at \$30. We want to wait until the price of oil goes back up and sell it then so we can reap multiple benefits. It will allow for more supply so consumers will have lower prices at the pump, and it will also get more money for the oil we do sell, which will be good for taxpayers who bought the oil in the first place.

America is blessed with an abundance of oil. Taxpayers invested in this emergency oil stockpile. Yet some must be sold, and it should be sold at the highest price possible to get the best deal for the taxpayers.

I urge my fellow Senators to support both of these amendments. They are important to American families, critical to America’s energy security, and in the case of the RFS, it is critical to our environmental hopes.

I yield back.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Pennsylvania.

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

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

HOMELAND SECURITY AND THE THREAT OF VIOLENT EXTREMISM

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I rise today to discuss for a couple of moments the issue of homeland security and the threat of violent extremism in the United States.

In the last 2 months in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, we have experienced two very concerning incidents of violent extremism—first, in December, the arrest of a 19-year-old man in Harrisburg, PA, who allegedly used social media to propagandize and facilitate on behalf of the terrorist group ISIS. At the time of his arrest, law enforcement officers found ammunition and other signs that he might be preparing for an attack. Thank goodness