

The door is always open. Today, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

Mrs. BRITT. Mr. President, I see my colleague from Oklahoma here and would love to have the opportunity to hear about his bill.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—H.R. 1121

Mr. MULLIN. Mr. President, thank you and thank you to the Senator from Alabama for doing this.

I think it is very important that we understand what is happening in our economy right now with the energy issue and the energy crisis we find ourselves in.

And so the bill that I bring forward today is Protecting American Energy Production Act.

It is real simple. It allows us to be energy independent. The backbone of our economy is energy, and if you have high energy costs, which we have had a 37-percent increase in energy under this current administration, you obviously are going to have inflation increase because energy is the backbone of our economy. You cannot make a product, nor can you deliver the product, without factoring in the cost of energy.

With a 37-percent energy increase over the last 4 years, we have to bring back that resilience. We have to bring back that energy independence. And the way we do that is we understand real numbers.

For instance, in 2019, fracking, which our current Vice President has been on record saying that she wants to ban fracking, in 2019, fracking accounted for 63 percent of our total crude oil production and 75 percent of our natural gas supply.

Underneath the current administration, we have seen a significant decline in fracking wells. At the same time, we haven't seen demand decrease, we have actually seen demand increase, which by the amount that has actually been taken away from oil or from American producers, now we have seen an increase in imports.

Not all of them are friends of ours. As I said, the bill is very simple, Protecting American Energy Production Act.

So as if in legislative session and notwithstanding rule XXII, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources be discharged from further consideration of H.R. 1121 and the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration; further, that the bill be considered read a third time and passed and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there an objection?

The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. MERKLEY. Reserving the right to object.

My colleague whom I am pleased to work with on a number of issues has

come to the floor with a unanimous consent request that would constrain the power of our President to protect our public lands. So while we may agree on a number of things—and I hope that doesn't hurt his reputation back home—on this particular proposal, I do bring a different perspective.

I think in my role working on the Interior Committee—and understanding that the authority we have granted the President is so essential to making sure that the lands that are publicly held remain a treasure for every single American.

It was not that long ago—well, it seems like quite a few years now, maybe a decade, I attended a hearing in which a number of folks came forward to explain different damages that had occurred to the water table in their community from fracking.

Now, in this case, my real concern here is about constraining the President's ability to protect our treasures, our public lands, from these types of effects.

I think Americans who have traveled to our national parks and our BLM land and our Forest Service land understand that this is a responsibility that we in the Senate take very seriously, but there is also a little bit more to my concern here as well.

One is that if we are going to tackle climate chaos, we have to have international cooperation. And if we continuously say we are going to reduce the ability of the United States to have policies and abilities to address our own production of fossils, then, of course, every other country is like, well, the United States and China are the biggest producers of climate gases—both methane, known publicly as natural gas, methane gas—and they have very large footprints, if they are not going to act, why should we act?

So if we want to address this challenge and sustain international cooperation, we can't be consistently restricting the potential flexibility of our President.

The third is that the climate impact in my home State is very substantial. We have seen a loss of snowpack in the Cascades that is devastating—the water in late spring and early summer—to our ranchers and farmers. Our rural foundation, our rural pillar is our farming and our ranching. And when you constrain the water in our rivers because of the dropping snowpack, that is a big impact.

And in addition, our water tables have been dropping that many farmers have depended on. In fact, we are investing heavily in piping our irrigation ditches at huge expense, knowing how precious every drop of water is.

So if we care about our rural areas, we have to take on climate chaos and not just our farmers and ranchers, our foresters, too, because we are seeing significant devastation to Oregon's famous forests over drought and insect infestation with climate chaos.

Of course, it is not just Oregon that is affected. Every single State is affected. I was very concerned earlier this year, earlier this summer, when I heard about the 115 to 120 degrees in a heat dome that passed over my colleague's State and the impact that that was having. I think every State has their effects that they are experiencing.

So this is a big issue that we need to wrestle with, and this brings me to the fourth item mentioned about energy security. In the last 4 years, under the Biden administration, we have become energy independent. There has been a vast increase in the production of oil and a vast increase in the production of gas. As a result, we are now the largest producer of oil and gas, and we are the largest exporter of gas.

Now, kind of the interesting little piece here is that the goal of the gas industry is to export gas and raise prices on Americans, so it is more expensive for Americans to heat their homes and heat their water. But we could do the opposite. We could, in fact, say we are going to repeal the 2015 law that put us into the world market and created these massive exports and lower the price here in America for our families.

That is a much better idea than raising the prices. Let's lower the prices. In fact, here is the thing. Let's start right now by ending our exports of oil and gas to China. Now, my colleagues just not so long ago advocated that we end any sale of the Strategic Petroleum Reserve to China with good reason. Why should we lower their prices and increase our prices? But that is true for the exports that are going to oil and gas as well.

So let's stand together on both sides of the aisle. Let's lower the price for American consumers and ban these exports to China. And for that reason, I have prepared just such a solution and an opportunity to have it embraced by my colleagues.

And so I turn to the formality here that I ask the Senator to modify his request and that the Merkley substitute amendment at the desk be considered and agreed to; that the bill, as amended, be considered read a third time and passed; and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table, so that we will have the ability to end these exports to China and lower the prices for American consumers.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there an objection to the modification?

Mr. MULLIN. Reserve the right to object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. MULLIN. While I understand my colleague from Oregon, where he stands on this issue, there are just some factual things that need to be checked on that.

One, he said that we are the No. 1 exporter of gas. That is just not true. Russia is the No. 1 exporter of gas.

When they say production has increased, that is actually not accurate either. Could we have been the largest liquefied natural gas exporter? Yes. That was until the permits for the pipelines to go to export terminals in Louisiana were canceled, which put a lot of our allies in Europe in a situation to where now they had to go buy gas from a bad actor that is right now invading Ukraine called Russia.

Our allies do not want to be dependent, obviously, on Russia. They would love to have our gas.

And as far as being the No. 1 seller to China with crude and refined products, it is not true again. At current rate, Iran is the No. 1 seller to China, and they are the ones that are buying it because of the Biden-Harris administration being extremely weak on the sanctions that we put on Iran under the Trump administration—which now Iran is actively funding the Houthis and Hamas and terrorist organizations all around the world.

What we are saying is: Let our allies count on us. We have more reserves underneath our feet, and we can produce it cleaner and more efficient than OPEC, than Russia, than Iran. Our allies want to do business with us, and our economy desperately needs it. We are in a recession, and no one is denying that. Why should we depend on allowing OPEC to set the world price for crude? Why are we allowing them to set the price and become rich off of our backs when we ourselves could easily do that in a much cleaner and more efficient way?

Why are we still importing petroleum products from Russia? Why are we still importing oil, which is a dirty crude, from Saudi Arabia, when we can still produce it—a sweet crude—that comes out of Oklahoma, that comes out of North Dakota, that comes out of Pennsylvania, that comes out of Texas, that is a much easier product to refine and burns cleaner. And there is no denying that.

Because the world's demand for fossil fuels is increasing not decreasing—so why are we doing it at the cost of the American taxpayer? Why are we hurting our economy along the way?

As far as the change that my colleague from Oregon wants to do, it is not necessary. The change isn't there. This is just to try to kill the bill because the legislation that my colleague is trying to do—we already know that the President, currently, already has the authority to restrict oil and gas exports because he did exactly that earlier this year, which is why I brought up Louisiana.

All this does is deflect blame away from the Biden-Harris administration, which has been very soft on sanctions with bad actors—as I mentioned, Iran. The majority of which are bought, as I mentioned before, by China. And as I mentioned before, this does nothing but enable Iran, when they sell their product, to sponsor the largest groups around the world operating in terror organizations.

The bill my colleague from Oregon is raising today would do nothing to address the massive amounts of Russian oil flowing into China, and what Republicans are trying to do here today is bolster American energy production by preventing this administration and future administrations from banning fracking.

As I said, as the current Vice President openly said in 2019, she was 100 percent for banning fracking across the United States.

So with that, I have to object to my colleague from Oregon's legislation and changes to my current bill.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection to the modification is heard. Is there objection to the original request?

The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, re-servicing the right to object—a couple of points—the first is that my colleague mentioned that the bill I am proposing would restrict our ability to support our allies, who count on us.

Actually, my bill is about stopping exports to China. They are not our ally, last I checked. We are in competition with them, and these exports are making their life easier and their economy stronger and making things more expensive for us here in the United States of America. If you want more available for allies, hey, let's stop the exports to China. It is actually compatible with the goal my colleague suggested.

The second is he challenged the question—and I realize we are doing this on short notice; so we have various facts flying around—about whether the United States was the largest exporter of natural gas last year. So I have in front of me the information from the Energy Information Administration, which produces all of the stats on this, and the headline is:

The United States was the world's largest liquefied natural exporter in 2023.

Now a third point, outside of North America, China is the largest recipient of our gas. We are directing more gas to China, whom we are in competition with, than any other nation. That is just a little bit crazy, and I want to support our allies. I want to support our consumers at home through lower prices.

So I am disappointed that I didn't win over your support with my presentation.

But given that I would much prefer to have a bill that lowers prices rather than one that endangers our public lands and raises prices for our consumers, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

Mr. MULLIN. Mr. President, one quick response to this: My colleague is correct about the LNG, or liquefied natural gas. What my colleague said in his remarks was “natural gas.”

Natural gas is much different than shipping liquefied natural gas. Liquefied natural gas is a small percentage of what is exported and as far as what

we call natural gas. Once it is liquefied, what actually is by far the biggest is the pipeline that this administration approved, which President Trump put a hold on, going into Germany for the second time.

So my original statement is true: Russia is the largest exporter of natural gas.

Once again, this wasn't to do anything, as my colleague said, talking about China. The export ban which the administration put on the exporting of LNG out of Louisiana by canceling the permits, that has affected Europe. They are allies of ours.

If this administration wanted to do something about China, they could do it today. They could do it this hour. They could do it right now by an executive order. Last I checked, they still had the authority to do so.

So as I go back to my colleague from Oregon's change to my current bill, the modification does nothing. The current administration, currently, already has that authority.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts.

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. President, yes, this proposal really deserves to be objected to. You know, it really deserves an objection because what we really have to say here is that we object to this bill as a ridiculous attack—a Republican attack—on the authority of the executive branch.

But we don't need to talk about how this bill would work. Let's talk about why this bill is the bill that the Republicans are pushing. Are they lining up here to protest something worthy, like public health? No.

Are they demanding we deliver something meaningful, like clean air or clean water? No.

Are they taking a stand for the future that worries moms and dads and parents and grandparents and neighbors and young people who are asking us to fight for those things? No.

So what are the Republicans doing? They are protecting the profits of fossil fuel companies. They are delivering our dollars to oil and gas exporters. They are taking a stand against a clean, healthy, sustainable future. What a track record—what a track record that they have.

These companies are fracturing American lands to produce gas for fossil fuel executives to export—to export—out of our country to the highest global bidder. They want to export this.

And who takes the environmental risks? Well, the families who live nearby, who are going to be near these pipelines. And then the companies take it to the first port they can get it to and then send it out of our country.

Do they want to keep it here to lower the price of natural gas for American consumers? Absolutely not. They want to get it out on the open market in a ship because that is the highest bidder. Around the world, let them bid for it.

Now, if they were saying, “Hey, we really want to lower the price of natural gas in the United States,” that is one thing. But that is not what this is all about. It is all about an export plan: Get the oil, get the gas out of our country and get the highest price in the world.

They are putting wells filled with toxic chemicals next to schools, your homes, your daycare, your hospitals—all so they can ship tankers filled with natural gas to China or any other country that is the highest bidder.

That is what this is all about, ladies and gentlemen. It is not about lowering the price of natural gas or oil for American consumers. It is about oil company executives getting higher profits for themselves.

The United States exported a record shattering amount of natural gas in 2023, more than 10 percent higher than in 2022. We export more liquefied natural gas than any other country in the world. And what do we get for all of these planet-destroying emissions? While Big Oil and House Republicans say that those fossil fuel exports are good for the economy, soaring LNG exports actually cost big bucks, with Americans spending \$111 billion more on natural gas as exports soared from 2021 to 2022.

While many justified the rapid natural gas export build-out as critical for European energy security, the reality is that European gas demand is not only already met, it is declining. So we are not using this fracked gas here in the United States. We are not benefiting from exports of this fracked gas. In fact, it raises prices at home as we export the oil, as we export the gas.

If we kept it here, it would put pressure on the price of natural gas and oil here in the United States. But they don't keep it here. They put it on ships to send it around the world.

This fracked gas is a reason that prices are going up in the United States, and our allies aren't demanding a surge in fracked gas.

So who benefits from this fight for fracked gas? In 2023 alone, the 15 biggest oil and gas companies made more than \$172 billion in profit. That is money that directly comes out of household budgets for fuel, for electricity, and even food and other necessities affected by the high prices.

Gas companies and oil companies are running the same old-fashioned playbook for their dinosaur products, fossils: Drill and shill their fuels as hard as they can. And as we stop moving toward clean energy, these fossil fuel executives are trying to get other countries hooked and exporting products to keep prices high at home.

So that is a crazy economic strategy for the United States: building export terminals to take our own oil and gas that should be here and lowering the price for consumers, for our businesses, for our homeowners, for our commercial sector. But, no, they say: Put it on the open market around the world and

leave less of it here for American consumers.

So just as we can track earthquakes in States that have large fracking and be able to see that that is happening, we can track this fracking defense bill to the companies that will benefit from it. This bill does nothing to protect Americans' health or their communities or their future or even their budgets. It protects fossil fuel companies from having to answer for their actions and pay for their profiteering.

And for that reason, I stand in support of Senator MERKLEY's objection to this, because this is not a policy which we should allow to go permanently unaddressed in our country. It is time we have the big debate about the impact exporting our oil and gas has upon domestic prices.

You can't have it both ways. You can't say this is good for America because we are exporting it and not understand that the less that we have here is to lower the pressure, to lower the prices for ordinary Americans.

So when you look at all the polling and it says, “People are concerned about high energy prices; people are concerned about our economy,” what is at the center of it? Well, what is at the center of it is oil and gas and high prices.

And what this proposal does is say “Just keep it going; send it to China, send it to other countries around the world.” But, no, at the same time, in the same way, we are importing lower-priced Chinese goods, we are to be sending them even more materials that allow them to become more dominant as an economic power.

I support Senator MERKLEY's objection. And I hope that we actually come to the day where we have a full-blown debate here on the Senate floor on the impact this export of oil and gas, this impact of fracked materials with chemicals in the soil of our country, have upon the totality of our economic and environmental justice issues in our society.

With that, I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. CORTEZ MASTO). The Senator from Alabama.

Mrs. BRITT. Madam President, I would like to give my distinguished colleague from Oklahoma an opportunity to respond and thank him for his leadership on the Protecting American Energy Production Act.

Mr. MULLIN. Madam President, it is interesting to me that my colleague from Massachusetts is lecturing us on energy prices when the last time I checked, Massachusetts has the highest cost of energy to heat their homes in the Nation; when he starts calling fracking a dinosaur technology, when the last time I checked, Boston had one of the collective largest group of individuals still heating their homes off heating oil and propane.

Infrastructure is what creates an opportunity to bring down energy costs, which is why Oklahoma, on the other

hand, which embraces fracking and embraces pipelines, has the lowest energy cost on average around the country.

So if we really want to talk about bringing down cost for consumers, let's look at a model that works instead of having someone lecture us from a State that their model doesn't work. We can build infrastructure. We would love to build pipelines in Massachusetts, but they block them. The infrastructure would be awesome.

I know there is a tremendous amount of companies that would love to supply natural gas to Massachusetts. In fact, there is a pipeline right now ready to go that has been blocked.

So let's have some serious conversations, not just lay blame and call CEOs bad names and give false opinions that they are just wanting to export. This says nothing about exporting. This is talking about becoming energy independent so we don't have to import oil, so we don't have to import refined products. This is about becoming energy dependent so we can bring down energy cost.

As I said earlier, the current policy that we are operating under with the Biden-Harris administration has brought energy costs up by 37 percent, which is directly affecting every single American's pocketbook today, right now as we speak. That is why every single American out there is paying \$1,085 more per month in their household bills and grocery bills than they were 4 years ago, which, if you think about that, that is over \$13,000 a year directly reflecting our current energy policy.

This does exactly what it is supposed to do: help bring down the energy cost and inflation will follow. It is not hard math; it is common sense.

With that, I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alabama.

Mrs. BRITT. Madam President, I could not agree more with my distinguished colleague from Oklahoma. It is important that we are not only energy independent but that we are energy dominant. The truth is we do it better, cleaner, and more efficiently than anyone. And we know the cost of energy affects everything from whether you are at the gas pump to heating and cooling your home to the prices you see at the grocery store.

At the end of the day, the American people are hurting; they are hurting under the policies of this administration. We have now seen the Vice President as a Presidential candidate say, all of a sudden, she is OK with fracking. Today, we saw that her party doesn't stand behind her.

I would like to hear what my distinguished colleague from Utah has to say about another opportunity that we have seen in front of us where candidate HARRIS is very different than the woman that we have seen serve.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 685

Mr. LEE. Madam President, I appreciate my friend and colleague, the Senator from Alabama, for leading this discussion today. This is an important one to have. And I am honored to be here to be part of it.

You know, the situation at the border, across our southern border, is, by any standard, a humanitarian crisis and nothing short of that. Vice President KAMALA HARRIS, appointed by President Biden as his border czar, publicly declared that she would focus as border czar on addressing the root causes of immigration.

However, now that KAMALA HARRIS is the Democrats' nominee for the Presidency, she and the legacy media want to pretend that was never the case. Axios even reported that Vice President KAMALA HARRIS "never actually had"—that is a direct quote—"never actually had" the title of border czar.

That is funny because that is a claim that contradicts the reporting that we have seen from Axios itself on this. In fact, we can see that right here in this chart.

On April 14, 2021, Axios reported that "Harris, [who had been] appointed by [President] Biden as border czar, said she would be looking for the 'root causes' that drive migration."

Moreover, a tweet from her official Twitter handle further emphasized her role:

@POTUS asked me to lead our diplomatic work with Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras. To address the situation at the southern border, we have to address the root causes of migration. It won't be easy work—but it's necessary.

I agree; it is necessary. She took on this role. She acknowledged the role, and she failed.

Since Biden and HARRIS's inauguration a little more than 3½ years ago, over 10 million undocumented immigrants have entered the United States and have done so illegally. This figure exceeds the population of 36 States. Meaning the overwhelming majority of our States, 36 out of 50 have populations smaller than the total number of persons entering the United States illegally on the watch of border czar Vice President KAMALA HARRIS, thus creating a crisis that has been met with a troubling combination of silence and inaction from this administration—the executive branch of government responsible for enforcing our border laws and the border itself.

Now, if the Biden-Harris administration were serious about addressing the crisis at the border and addressing the issue and ensuring, in the process, that the real victims of government persecution in other countries would receive asylum here, then they would support reforming our broken asylum process. And, sadly, they are not. We are still encountering over 100,000 illegal immigrants at our southern border each month.

Now, since President Biden took office, there have been almost 10 million

illegal immigrant encounters nationwide. Keep in mind, this doesn't reflect the sum total of those who have crossed into our country. These are just the documented immigrant encounters throughout the country. Though, there are more. That is a subset of the total flow of illegal immigration. Over 360 individuals on the Terrorist Watchlist have been stopped while trying to cross the southern border.

And, shockingly, 27,583 Communist Chinese nationals have been encountered at the southwest border in the last year alone. That is a lot of people. And China is not close to the United States.

By any metric, the Biden-Harris administration has shown no interest in securing our border. In fact, the data suggests this administration wants as many illegal immigrants to enter this country as possible.

My Democrat colleagues want to pretend that Republicans are somehow responsible for this crisis. Why? Well, it is obvious why. They don't want to own it given that their party owns the crisis, as their party is running the administration and it is responsible for making decisions that has allowed this in.

What argument did they use in order to blame Republicans who are not in control of the administration, do not occupy the White House, or control the majority in this Chamber? What is their argument as to why we as Republicans are to blame? Well, because we were unwilling to pass a bad immigration bill that would have normalized thousands of illegal entries across our southern border each month—and particularly in the hands of the Biden administration, it could have and inevitably would have made the situation much worse.

But today I am offering a smaller bill, a narrower bill, a more focused bill that would help alleviate the crisis by closing loopholes in the law. These would be helpful. They are not necessarily things that represent a complete loophole such that President Biden would be powerless to enforce the border without them, but they would make it harder for President Biden to justify the massive loopholes that he has manipulated.

This isn't the entire answer. This bill wouldn't necessarily solve the whole problem. But if my Democratic colleagues can't agree that these commonsense reforms need to be adopted, then how can we take their concern about the border crisis seriously?

My bill, the Stopping Border Surges Act, would address loopholes in our immigration laws, which have helped create some of the perverse incentives for illegal immigration. It made it easier for the Biden administration to facilitate this flow of 10 million illegal immigrants into our country over the last 3½ years.

The bill would clarify that an adult cannot bring a child into this country

expecting that child to be his or her ticket to avoid detention. This would help eliminate the disturbing practice of what is sometimes referred to by the Border Patrol as the practice of recycling children and babies by coyotes and cartels.

People will bring in a child, and sometimes that same child will be brought in under similar circumstances over and over and over again as the ticket into the United States—the ticket thus making it less likely that they will be detained and ultimately deported.

It allows all unaccompanied children to be returned to their home countries, thus ending the incentive for the parents to send their young children here alone, leaving them vulnerable to abuse.

Sadly, we see what is happening to those children under the supervision of the Biden-Harris administration and Secretary Mayorkas. They are trafficked either into child slavery, sex slavery, or as drug dealers.

My bill would require that the Department of Health and Human Services provides DHS with biographical information about the persons to whom children are being released so that they know something about them, rather than just "This is the person to whom you are going to release the child."

It also requires asylum seekers to apply for and be denied asylum in at least one safe country on their route from their country of origin to the United States. It would combat the Biden-Harris administration's obliteration of the credible fear standard by heightening the burden of proof.

The correct application of this standard is pivotal to the operation of our asylum system and making sure that it is there for those who need it and not subject to rampant abuse by those not eligible for it.

It has been corrupted over the years. But this administration has destroyed it entirely—manipulating it to the point where it is now beyond recognition. We must fix it.

It is sad that we have to fix it, but we have to fix it in large part because it has been so distorted and abused by this administration, profiting international drug cartels to the tune of tens of billions of dollars a year, leaving a huge—huge—wake of human suffering in its path.

It would close loopholes and restrict asylum to aliens who present themselves at an official point of entry. We must eliminate these loopholes and not allow the Biden-Harris administration to make more of them.

Congress needs to take back the authority to establish law. We can start today by passing the Stopping Border Surges Act.

Ending the ambiguities in our current asylum law will help to mitigate the situation at the border and prevent unelected, unaccountable bureaucrats from acting with utter impunity to enforce their own policy preferences, culminating inevitably in open borders