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TRANSCRIPT

“U.S. Energy Resources in the lobal Landscape: A Conversation with Senator John Cornyn”

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Chairman, Subcommittee on international Trade, Customs, and lobal Competitiveness, Committee on Finance, U.S. Senate

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Sarah Ladislaw: OK, good morning, everybody. Welcome to CSIS. My name is Sarah Ladislaw. I'm a senior vice president and director of the Energy and National Security Program. And we're delighted for all of you to be here this morning for a conversation with Senator John Cornyn on the U.S. energy resources and the global landscape.

Before we get started, it is my responsibility to make sure that you've all paid attention to where the emergency exits are.

It's really hard to overemphasize the way in which the U.S. energy landscape has changed and what that means for the U.S. on a whole host of issues. And we're really, really pleased that Senator Cornyn could be here today to give us some of his perspective on that.

Senator Cornyn is a man that needs no introduction. A senator from the great state of Texas. And as we were just talking, going on to be a fourth-term member of Congress, and has served in various capacities in the U.S. Senate and also in the great state of Texas for about 30 years. So without further ado, welcome – please join me in welcoming Senator Cornyn. (Applause.)

Senator John Cornyn: Well, thank you, Sarah, for the introduction. And I'm glad to be back at CSIS. This is, I guess, my third gig here. And I'm always grateful to join some real experts. There are a lot of people who claim to be expert on Capitol Hill, but you find they're sometimes – they don't live up to their billing. But I'm glad to be here among real experts to talk about something that I think is very important, but which in the end is a tremendous good news story. So thanks for having me back.

A great American journalist and author, John Gunther, once wrote if a man's from Texas, he'll tell you. If not, why embarrass him by asking? Well, I'll tell you, I'm from Texas, as you heard, which means a couple of things. Number one, I've always had a keen interest in the energy sector, for pretty obvious reasons. And number two, I'm still not over the Astros' loss last week. (Laughter.)

Well, in addition to powering our cities, homes and cars, the energy sector propels our economy and delivers affordable energy and – affordable and reliable energy for consumers. By one estimate, low oil and gas prices have resulted in a $3 trillion wealth transfer from producers to consumers over recent years. So, low energy prices are an enormous benefit to consumers, and certainly to the economy.

But when there's a disruption, whether it's small or large, to our global energy supply, I also pay attention, and I know you do too. A couple of months ago, a drone hit the Saudi oil infrastructure and knocked out about half of the kingdom's production capacity. History has taught us that any massive disruption is all but guaranteed to lead to tremendous price spikes. So we all braced ourselves for the impact.

On the first day of trading after the attack, prices rose sharply, to the highest single-day crude-oil price in the last decade. But after that was what was really interesting. Those increases were mostly blamed on uncertainty and were short-lived. Prices quickly began to drop. And by September the 30th, just two weeks after the attack, prices had fallen before the pre-disruption levels – pretty amazing.

Where were the lasting price hikes, the long lines at the pump, the cascading market instability? Well, what was so remarkable about this attack is how unremarkable its impact was globally. When the world suffered the largest oil disruption in decades, the impact was relatively muted.

I'd like to spend just a few minutes with you thinking about some of the factors that led to this tiny ripple. And then I'd like to spend some time talking about the future and how we can continue to stay at the forefront of the global energy economy.

Let's first go back to the '70s. Some of us, whose hair is a bit whiter, can remember when the U.S. supported our friend Israel in the Yom Kippur War in 1973. The Arab members of OPEC – or as many Texans lovingly refer to them as the cartel – they were not happy. They banned the sale of crude oil in the U.S., and it sent shockwaves throughout the country.

Despite strong domestic production, we were still relying predominantly on imports from abroad. And once that supply was cut off, well, you know what happened then. Prices quadrupled. Suddenly we felt the impact of our energy dependency. Many gas stations were serving customers by appointment only. Some sign – some states banned neon signs to cut down on energy use. And a number of towns asked their citizens not to put up Christmas lights.

Well, it was a hard dose of reality for America, and it brought our energy dependence to light starkly and underscored the need to increase our domestic resources and wean ourselves off of this dependency on imported oil.

Less than two years later, the Congress placed a ban on the export of crude oil. The idea was to grow our oil reserves here at home and protect the United States from future disruptions to the global supply. But after decades of advancements in the energy sector, the export ban has proved to be – did prove to be an antiquated protectionist policy rather than an economic safeguard.

Hydraulic fracturing and horizontal drilling have dramatically increased the production of American oil and gas. In short, the shale revolution revolutionized the tide of the energy landscape in our favor. Now, with a surplus of American oil and gas available to share with global markets, we knew it was time to lift the ban and provide new opportunities for American producers to propel our economy, strengthen our national security, and help our friends and allies around the world.

Almost four years ago, that's exactly what Congress did. We finally ended the 40-year-old – 40-year-old crude oil export ban, which provided an adrenaline shock to the economy and rearranged the geopolitical landscape dramatically. Soon, American crude, which had previously been exported almost exclusively to Canada, was finding its way into global markets. According to the Energy Information Administration, U.S. production has been steadily climbing. From the first full month after the export ban, it was lifted, through July of this year, U.S. crude oil production has increased by 2.6 million barrels per day, and exports are up by 2.2 million barrels per day.

Not only are we producing and selling more oil, we're less reliant on imports. Last December, for the first time on record, the U.S. exported more crude oil and fuel than we imported. And just this week we learned that we broke another record: the value of petroleum exports exceeded that of imports.

Well, they don't call it black gold for nothing. The oil and gas industry has been a boom to our economy, supporting more than 10 million jobs here at home and contributing about 8 percent to our gross domestic product.

But doing away with an outdated protectionist policy didn't just propel the economy; it provided the fuel needed to strengthen our alliances around the world. Several years ago, many of our allies in Europe relied on Iran and Russia for their energy needs. And the Baltic states – NATO allies, by the way – relied almost entirely on Russia for their oil, gas, and electricity. Seven European countries depended on Russia for at least four-fifths of their gas, and on the whole one-third of the gas Europe consumed came from Russia.

When our allies are looking to our adversaries for basic needs like heating, electricity, and fuel, that's obviously a problem. It's a strategic vulnerability, and not only for those countries but also for the United States. My good friend John McCain used to talk about Russia as a gas station masquerading as a country. Having our allies over the barrel, so to speak, because of a lack of energy diversification gives Russia way too much power. That was underscored in January of 2009, when Russia effectively turned off the lights in Ukraine for three weeks. That affected at least 10 countries in Europe whose natural gas traveled through Ukraine.

Today Russia is still the dominant natural gas supplier for Europe and its market share continues to grow. Last year Russia supplied 37 percent of natural gas in Europe, up 7 percent from 2014. Of course, none of this is lost on our friends in Europe. They understand how vulnerable this makes them. So these countries have been working to diversify their energy supply and build strategic gas interconnectors between countries that likewise are relying on Russia for natural gas.

In July 2018 the U.S. and EU agreed to strengthen energy cooperation and send more American LNG to our European allies. Reducing other countries' reliance on Russia and other rogue nations for their energy needs isn't just a win for America, it's a win for global security. It's allowed us to provide cheap, plentiful, and reliable energy to countries that are struggling to provide energy for their citizens.

Here at home it's easy to take dependable energy for granted. We all do. You don't worry about how you're going to cook your dinner tonight or fill your gas tank or – but in countless countries around the world it's a completely different story. Take India, for example, which is trying to keep pace with rapidly growing energy needs. Huge swaths of the population still lack reliable access to energy. So they burn cow dung, coal, wood pellets, or other high-emissions sources. But we now are helping them by providing cleaner and more reliable energy to one of our closest partners in that part of the world. Last year we more than doubled the amount of LNG exported to India, and the sky is the limit.

I recently was at a(n) event in Houston, Texas, with Prime Minister Modi, aptly named Howdy Modi. And one of the – one of the centerpieces of that great – of that appearance there was the signing of a new export agreement for more natural gas to India. So American energy is not just boosting our economy and supporting our allies. It's also lifting people out of poverty. Can you imagine what a difference it makes to be able to cook your food with natural gas or LPG instead of cow dung? This is – this is really a great success.

While oil and gas continue to power the United States and our allies around the world, that does not mean we should turn our back on alternative energy. By the way, a little-known fact, Texas is the leading producer of electricity from wind energy. We like to say we're number one, and we are when it comes to producing electricity from wind. We truly believe in an all-of-the-above energy policy. I'm not talking about the Green New Deal, though. As expensive and unrealistic as this proposal is, or this notion is, it would derail the progress we've made toward global energy security.

But it's important to remember, you can support natural gas and oil and innovation and conservation. In fact, I think what we've seen time and time again is that American entrepreneurs and investors have found their way to innovate their way out of problems. And I have every confidence we can continue to do so in the future. So they're not mutually exclusive. We have the power to harness American ingenuity and craft smart energy policies to secure our place as the global leader in energy innovation. There are some challenges, obviously. And we are not alone. We are competing with other countries.

But to seek some of the types of solutions that we're after, you might want to stop off in La Porte, Texas, at the NET Power plant right outside Houston, as I did about a year ago with Senator Collins from Maine. NET Power has developed a first of its kind power system that generates affordable zero-emissions electricity. Using their unique carbon capture technology, they've taken natural gas, one of the least-expensive and most prevalent energy sources and made it emission free. It's a great example of the technologies we should be developing here at home and exporting around the world.

I've introduced legislation in the Senate to incentive the research and development of carbon capture technology for natural gas and support energy innovations. And I think the Net Power plant is exhibit one in that effort and shows how this actually could work, how we can keep costs low for taxpayers and continue this revolution in the energy sector, while being sensitive to the environment. The LEADING Act, which is what it's called, passed the Energy and Natural Resources Committee this summer. And I'm hopeful we can take it up in the Senate soon.

These policies are important for conservation, but also for securing our economic competitiveness on the world stage. American companies – if American companies don't produce these technologies first, well, you can be confident someone else will. But I'm proud of the fact that my state has shown that you can promote energy innovation while harnessing the power of traditional oil and gas development, but you can also be pro-energy, pro-innovation, and pro-growth. That is the future of the global energy market.

Well, I know, as we consider how all of this has played into the Saudi attack in September, I'd like to recommend a book that I read recently by Harvard Professor Meghan O'Sullivan, called Windfall. She explores America's newfound energy abundance and dives into the altering geopolitical landscape, and the challenges and opportunities it presents. In the final chapter, she notes that an energy-abundant world is not necessarily a world free from spikes in the price of oil and gas. Prices can be affected by everything from geopolitics, to natural disasters, to technology, to policy. And price spikes, to some extent, will always be with us. But Dr. Sullivan continues by saying the key difference is such spikes are likely to be less enduring and will tend to have tactical implications rather than being long-lasting and carrying strategic consequences.

So the impact of the recent Saudi attack, as we saw, was a far-cry from the reaction after the 1973 oil crisis. You don't have to make an appointment to fill up your gas tank; you can see the glow of business lights on Main Street; and you can enter the holiday season knowing that, no, you don't have to dispense with your Christmas lights.

As a number of my Senate colleagues who are running for president have indicated a desire to reinstate the oil export ban, even going so far as to expand it to all fossil fuels, I could not disagree more. And I wish they would come to wonderful forums like this at CSIS and explain how they're going to do that. Right now fossil fuels account for four-fifths of the world's energy resources – four-fifths – and it's not going to go away anytime soon. The shale revolution and lifting of the oil export ban have made us the leader on the world stage when it comes to energy production, and bolstered both our economy and our allies' security. While some rogue nations will continue to use energy as a weapon to tear down their adversaries, we will use it as a tool to lift up our allies, improve global security, and defeat poverty in places which are energy insecure.

Again, I'd like to thank all of you for the opportunity to be here today. And with that, I'm happy to answer a few questions from – first from Sarah, and then I understand we'll have a chance to take some from the floor. Thank you very much. (Applause.)

Sarah Ladislaw: I'm going to ask a few questions. I know you've got a hard stop, too, at 9:15 or thereabouts, so we'll try and get to audience questions quickly.

I want to sort of start where you ended, which is there's been an amazing sort of, you know, surge in U.S. oil and gas production, certainly, you know, unprecedented. I think it's done all of the things that you've talked about and can have a lot of the geostrategic benefits that you've talked about. There are concerns, though, as you mentioned, on the other side of the aisle both in terms of the reputation of hydraulic fracturing – often, you know, talked about as fracking – both for the potential for local environmental impacts, but probably on a more strategic level – and this is where it gets into the oil export ban – its contributions to global climate change, right? And so for me the big differentiating factor here is, yes, we can produce all of the energy we have today and we can think about innovating, but the concern is that we're not doing any of that fast enough, right, and emissions are rising. And so I just wanted to talk to you about when people say to you, hey, we should have a ban on fracking because the climate crisis is so serious, right? But what do you – what do you do with that thought, both as a policy device and what it's trying to signal about our national conversation on energy?

Senator John Cornyn: Well, as I said, I think we've always found our way to innovate out of problems. And while I'm not going to debate whether humans have an impact on the climate or climate is changing, I think what I'm really interested in is what do people propose to do about it. And if they're proposing more power in the central government, more taxes, more regulation, lower standard of living, less competitiveness, that doesn't strike me as a – as a good solution. If they're talking about doing what we've always done – and that is investing in research and coming up with innovative solutions like the NET Power plant, which is a zero-emissions test case – I think that's the kind of thing we need to do.

And as you and I were talking about earlier, some of the things that are the most obvious when it comes to climate are things like nuclear power, which because of the low price of natural gas may not be commercial in its traditional form. But I don't know how you can be serious about climate and be anti-nuclear. So I truly am an all-of-the-above kind of guy. But again – (laughs) – I don't know how you replace the four-fifths dependency on energy – on fossil fuels immediately.

And I'm honestly a little bit – you know, we found that these models, this is not, you know, a scientific experiment where you can replicate the results. This is really a model that predicts future – the future. And I remember growing up, Paul Ehrlich wrote a book called "The Population Bomb" where he predicted that millions of people were going to starve to death because the population would outpace the food supply. Well, he didn't – he didn't consider Normal Borlaug, the father of the Green Revolution, that would address that, again, through innovation. And as one of my favorite books, "SuperFreakonomics," used the example of horse-drawn carriages in transportation – and the byproduct of that, of course, were huge piles of manure in our cities. And you can imagine what an environmental hazard that was. And they point out it went away almost overnight. And how did that happen? Well, it's called the internal-combustion engine.

So I just think that – I'm interested in people talking about what they propose to do, and I think we should get past this silly argument about whether human beings have an impact and whether it's changing. I accept both of those things. And let's just talk about how are you going to solve the problem.

Sarah Ladislaw: So, one more question on sort of the environmental side of the ledger. And you mentioned conservation a number of times. I mentioned we had this Permian country event, you know, to sort of talk about everything in the Permian Basin, the enormous economic impact it's had – you know, sort of enormous oil and gas production, the impact it's had.

One of the questions I get a lot from both conservation-minded folks here in the U.S. but then also people abroad who are thinking about the emissions impact of U.S. oil and gas production, it's just the large amounts of flaring that's going on, particularly in Texas and the Permian Basin. And there's lots of reasons why some of that is happening, but I think that there's sort of a general concern that even though the U.S. is producing so much, it looks wasteful. It looks like we're not doing it in a responsible way. What do you think about that?

Senator John Cornyn: Well, it has – that gas has value. And I assume if there was a technology to be able to put it in a pipeline and sell it to somebody, it would be done. And I'm not an expert in the details of that, but – and I know – but I do know there are people working on that problem.

There are going to be, I think, about 10 new pipelines coming online here in the near future. And I think, in a way, we've just got so much that that's a byproduct. It's not something we want. It's something we need to fix. But if we can figure out how to put it in a pipeline and sell it and lift somebody out of poverty and give them an opportunity to use that instead of cow dung to cook their dinner, that seems like a good thing.

Sarah Ladislaw: OK. On the geopolitical side of the equation, I thought you laid out the landscape in a very interesting way. One of the things, again, is there's lots of ways of reading the changing geopolitics for the U.S. in terms of being the largest hydrocarbon producer in the world.

One of the questions we have a lot is does the U.S. not care so much about the Middle East and relationships with Saudi Arabia, strategic relationships with Saudi Arabia? Is that the message to take away from some of this? You seem to have a different perspective about leaning forward and helping allies. But there is also this sort of concern that there's a lot of instability in the Middle East right now. There's attacks on energy infrastructure all the time. Is it your sense that U.S., you know, sort of politicians in particular feel kind of separate from that now because of the lack of a price response?

Senator John Cornyn: Well, I do think there's been a little bit of a shift. But I think it'd be a mistake to ignore what's happening in the Middle East. Obviously we found on 9/11 that the problems they have there don't stay there, and they can export them to the United States, like occurred on 9/11. So I think we need to maintain our vigilance there, working with partners to try to manage the terrorism threat.

But we know, you know, Iran is perhaps the single biggest challenge to regional and world peace. And I think it's absolutely critical we prevent them from ever acquiring a nuclear weapon. It's been 74 years since Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and I think it's beyond scary to think about how they might use that capacity.

But I think it is nice to know that, you know, we can, as I said, turn on your Christmas lights and not have to make an appointment at the gas station based on what happens in the Middle East. But I think we're always going to be interconnected and it'll always have an impact, and we will always have a national-security interest in what happens in the Middle East.

Sarah Ladislaw: OK. We've got a few minutes left. I'd like to take as many questions as we can in that time since we've got such a great audience here today. If you could please just raise your hand. Wait for the microphone. State your name and affiliation, and question in the form of a question. And we'll get as many in as we can.

We'll start here.

Tom Tiernan: Hi. Thank you. Tom Tiernan with the Foster Report.

You talked about the U.S. becoming a global supplier in energy and less of a factor for infrastructure threats around the world. There's currently the trade dispute with China, tariffs affecting exports to that country. I was wondering if you could, A, comment a little bit on any trade negotiations you're hearing on possible agreement, and B, the fact that the global supplier aspect brings trade negotiations into strategic effects of energy markets, more so than physical.

Senator John Cornyn: Well, as you know, the -- President Trump, when he talks about trade, talks about trade deficits. And actually the – or the exporting more of energy does a lot to address that particular concern.

But I see that in Dr. O'Sullivan, in her book, talks about this is a great opportunity for the U.S. and China to work more closely together, because they have huge energy demands and we have a lot of energy to sell. And that could be an area of mutual cooperation that I think has some real opportunity.

I recently ran a – read a characterization from the RAND Corporation, a little paper I read just talking about how to think about China and Russia. And they said that Russia was – is a rogue, not a rival. They said that China is a rival, not a rogue. And I thought that's kind of an interesting way for me to think about it. And I think we need to find ways to coexist peacefully and I think President – this administration has done what previous administrations have been reluctant to do, and that is to challenge China, their theft of intellectual property, their unwillingness to play by the rules, even though they were admitted to the WTO. And I think he's right to call them on that.

But I'm a little skeptical they're going to change their stripes in the long run, but they're pretty clear about what their goals are. Made in China 2025, the Belt and Road Initiative are pretty clear about what they intend to do, and I think we need to take that seriously, with the goal of peacefully coexisting with this rival nation.

So I'm hopeful that we'll see some interim deal. It sounds like because of the cancellation of the meeting in Chile now they're looking for another location for President Xi and President Trump to go to sign this interim deal, and I think that makes a lot of sense, is let's see what we can agree on now and then keep that conversation going. In the long run I'm skeptical, because China is definitely on the march and wants to dominate economically and militarily too, particularly in the region. So that's going to be a continuing challenge for us, but I'm – like I said, I'm somewhat optimistic that we can continue to engage in a peaceful and constructive way.

Sarah Ladislaw: OK. And we'll do Bill.

Bill Ichord: Thank you, Senator. Bill Ichord, energy consultant.

Just a question for you. There's always the perspective of how much government regulation. Some people say none; some people say a lot, and therein – there's a big middle and there's – so I'm looking for sort of the Goldilocks moment. What is your view in terms of getting to the innovation agenda and the all-of-the-above strategy? What's your view of where we should be, how much government intervention there should be in the market, if there's a feeling that we're not getting to the more innovative approach fast enough?

Senator John Cornyn: Yeah. Well, that's the – that's the right question to ask. I think everything doesn't have to emanate out of Washington D.C. though, and there's a lot of innovation that occurs at the state level and there's a lot of people, people like Bill Gates and others who are using their philanthropy to try to advance research and innovation and solve some of these problems too.

There are – I was talking to my staff about how the U.S. Congress invests in research and development, but unlike our competitors, we sort of hand the ball off to the private sector and say, OK, now it's all yours, while they have to compete with other countries that provide more resources to actually deploy this technology and this innovation in a way that actually can work. And so that's something we need to figure out. So I don't think it's certainly a choice between no regulation and complete regulation, or government-run. I think it's good to let the private sector continue to do what it does best.

For example, when I go to the CERAWeek down in Houston every – just about every year, I'm always struck that this is – this is an energy conference, but it strikes me as more of a technology conference. I mean, it's like going to NASA almost the way that the private sector has come up with new and ingenious ways to address our energy resources.

So obviously there are environmental, public safety concerns where the government does have an important role to play. But I think what we need to try to do is to find ways not only to help with the research and – basic research and development at places like the Department of Energy, like my LEADING Act would do on this emissions-free natural gas electricity production, but how do we actually facilitate the deployment of that research and technology in ways that actually be viable and competitive with our – with other competitors around the world.

Sarah Ladislaw: Great. Great, question, Bill.

I'll go to sir right back there, and then we'll come back here.

José Pérez: Thank you for your remarks, Senator. I'm José Pérez, with Hispanics in Energy.

And I would like to see if you could comment on the implications of your message this morning as it relates to Mexico, which is our closest neighbor. And we know that Mexico uses natural gas as one of its renewable energy strategies in order to deal with carbon emission issues. But what are your thoughts in terms of the energy relationship with Mexico going into the future?

Senator John Cornyn: Well, Mexico is blessed with a lot of natural resources as well. And historically, of course, as you know, Pemex has run that, the state-owned oil company. And – but they have not kept up with the sort of innovation and investment that we've seen in the United States and elsewhere, which has allowed them to produce those resources. They also have a – as unfortunately we were reminded of just a few days ago – they have a terrible problem obviously with corruption and with, you know, theft of oil from the pipelines as one of the chief sources of revenue for the cartels, in addition to selling drugs and other things. That's a real problem for Mexico.

But as a friend of mine pointed out one time, they said the, you know, shale doesn't stop at the Rio Grande. And there's a lot of opportunity I think Mexico has to develop its natural resources further and to become much more prosperous and much more – raise the standard of living for the Mexican people in a way that will help them, but it also will have a beneficial impact on us. But dealing with the – dealing with the cartels is really I think the number-one challenge they have. And I was – I've been disappointed to see President Lopez Obrador said that it's – he believes in hugs not bullets when it comes to fighting the cartels. That's just – it's a little frightening. And now to see American citizens murdered down there, where previously they've been out of bounds because the cartels knew if you attract the United States' attention in that way that it would have negative consequences for them. And I trust there will be negative consequences.

But as I always tell people, the United States and Mexico are – we are joined with a common border. We're like an old married couple. We have to get alone. We have to make the marriage work. We don't really have any other choice. And so I believe in constructive engagement with Mexico. Obviously they're a huge trading partner for the United States.

But helping them develop their natural resources in a way that raises the standard of living for Mexicans and helping them deal with their law enforcement problems I think are high priorities.

Sarah Ladislaw: That's great. One more question, if we can.

Elisabeth Buchwald: Hi. I'm Elisabeth Buchwald from MarketWatch.

You mentioned the LEADING Act quite a bit. I understand you're also a sponsor of the ESCAPE Act. Can you give us an update on how that's going?

Senator John Cornyn: Well, there's actually a handful of bills that are focused on innovation. And those – you just named two of them. Really, I think what we're trying to do, as I said earlier, is come up with a constructive, problem-solving approach, as opposed to what I would consider to be more of an ideological approach to climate and people's concerns about the environment. And so, again, getting back to this innovation solution approach as opposed to more government, more taxes, more regulation, really with a lot of uncertainty as to what that impact would be on our economy, on job creation, and on our competitiveness globally.

So both of those are part of a package of about – I think about five or six bills that different members of the Senate have introduced. We're still at the very early stages of this. It's uncertain what we're going to be able to get done legislatively between now and November. This little thing called impeachment sort of is sucking a lot of the oxygen out of the air. But that is – those are certainly high priorities for me and I think something we need to talk about during the presidential campaign and during these races in November. That's where we need to have a public debate and ask the question how is this going to work. If we ban fracking and we swear off all hydrocarbons, how are you going to get from here to pick up your kids at school? You can't. And so I think that's the kind of conversation we really need to start focusing on.

Sarah Ladislaw: Well, when Senator Murkowski was here last week I had said, you know, it seems really implausible that you'll be able to get some of these bigger energy ticket items done. And she said, no, no, you know, when the government was shut down it was a very chaotic situation but we managed to pass one of the largest public lands bills, you know, ever, she said, so. And I said, well, if the recipe for a chaotic situation – (laughter) – is for a chaotic situation to be able to pass big legislation, you just might get your wish next year, so. (Laughs.)

Senator John Cornyn: Well, I think, you know, there's sort of the public face of what's happened in Congress and then there's really what happens, members working together to try to do what we can in spite of a challenging, polarized environment. But we're going to keep at it. And I think one of the things that I've found is most important in legislation is perseverance.

Sarah Ladislaw: (Laughs.)

Senator John Cornyn: And so sometimes – it never happens as fast as you'd – as you'd like, but by sticking with it and staying focused and not distracted you can actually get some of this stuff done.

Sarah Ladislaw: Well, that's great. Well, listen, one of the ways we get senators such as yourself to come here and speak is we let you go when we know you have meetings on the other end.

Senator John Cornyn: (Laughs.)

Sarah Ladislaw: So, we'll do that now. But thank you very much for joining me.

Senator John Cornyn: Thank you, Sarah.

Sarah Ladislaw: And please join me in thanking Senator Cornyn.

Senator John Cornyn: Thank you. (Applause.)

(END)