

say that on the floor of the Senate and say it in every possible way. I also think it is true that all parties have to be engaged. There is a role for European leadership and a role for Arab leadership.

Certainly, Israel and the United States have to be engaged, also. That is the good part of the President's statement. I think there has to be active support from the U.S., the EU, and the Arab States in strengthening indigenous Palestinian pressure for reform, in advancing the consolidation and control of these competing militias, and insisting on the transparency of government and judicial operations and on more effective leadership. Second, we have to attend to urgent humanitarian needs. Basic public services are breaking down. Power cuts are frequent and there are shortages in a range of products, from school books to critical medical supplies. Ordinary Palestinians are unable to get the medical treatment they need.

The Palestinian economy has to be allowed to develop. We have to rebuild the physical infrastructure and revitalize the economy as the Palestinian Authority is effectively bankrupt, and any semblance of a modern economy is disappearing. We need to understand that vital social, economic, and security functions have broken down. This is leaving an enormous vacuum. I fear that far more radical and more extremist groups would be eager to fill this vacuum.

I believe this was an important missing piece in what the President said. The conditions on the ground for the Palestinian people have to change if, in fact, the democracy that we call for and the reform we call for will lead to the election of what we would consider to be responsible leadership. We are going to have to be very engaged in this process. Israel is going to have to step up to the plate and be very engaged.

Yes, we need to be clear on the need to end the terror; yes, we need to be clear on the need for reform; but also, yes, we need to be clear in calling for the sustained and vigorous engagement of key actors—the United States, Israel, moderate Arab leadership, the European Union, and we must be clear that the conditions on the ground change.

All you have to do is read the paper every day and look at the conditions on the ground. You see a complete lack of hope among Palestinians. You see people not being able to move. People have no access to jobs or to schools. There is very little hope, and this is not the stuff of social stability. We need to address these issues if, in fact, we are to be able to get this crisis back on the political track, with some sort of political process that truly might lead to an end to this violence.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Vermont is recognized.

HISPANIC EDUCATION

Mr. JEFFORDS. Mr. President, first, I thank the Senator from Massachusetts for raising the issue of problems in our educational system. He referred to Hispanics. What makes that dramatically worse is that, as a whole, in the Nation we are in deep trouble with respect to competition, international competition, and the status of our educational system. When you realize how far behind the Hispanics are from a base that is far behind the rest of the world, it doubly amplifies the need for us to be very deeply concerned about our educational system.

POWERPLANT POLLUTION

Mr. JEFFORDS. Mr. President, I wish to shift the talk now to pollution and spend a few moments talking about homeland security in relationship to that.

The citizens of this Nation have been hearing a lot about the war on terrorism. They read daily in the papers about our troops overseas. I think often of our men and women overseas and pray for their safe return to their homes and families. I have the greatest respect for those who serve in the national armed services. I have fond memories of my time in the service myself. I learned about the world, about commitment, and about service during my years in the Navy. I would not have traded that time for anything.

There is a war on, and we all need to remember that we conduct the business of this Nation in accordance with that reality. This war continues to be a top priority for this administration. The administration indicates that we have the opportunity to protect hundreds of thousands and possibly tens of thousands of people by taking the right steps now to root out terror. In fact, this Congress passed a massive supplemental appropriations bill to assist in those efforts. We are also debating a Defense Department authorization bill that adds to that cause.

Here in the Capitol, we have begun debating the need for increased security at home and the creation of a new homeland security agency. I fully support the President in his efforts to address these great challenges, and I agree with the efforts the President has put forth following the lead of Senator LIEBERMAN.

I think this Congress should move quickly and pass legislation creating the Department of Homeland Security.

Let us all pause for a moment and consider what we are doing.

Over the last few months, we have listened carefully to the administration about their efforts to conduct this war both home and abroad. We can prevent the loss of life in the future, they say, by investing in homeland security and the war on terrorism, and I do not disagree with these efforts.

But if homeland security is about protecting our citizens from harm and

even death, I have a suggestion for this administration that they may not like to hear.

I hope they are listening.

It has to do with public health. It will not cost the Federal Treasury a penny. It will save thousands of lives. It will reduce hospital visits. It will save consumers money.

What is my grand idea?

Well, it is not new. And it is something we can do today with long lasting results for every man, woman, and child in this Nation. Here it is. It is simple. Reduce powerplant emissions. Let me repeat that: Reduce powerplant emissions.

Studies show that 30,000 Americans die every year due to powerplant pollution—30,000 deaths from powerplant pollution alone. Incredible.

Let me work slow through a list of real, but depressing, statistics on powerplant pollution.

Powerplant pollution results in 20,000 hospitalizations each year, 600,000 asthma attacks, 5 million days of lost work due to pollution-related illness, and 18,000 cases of bronchitis.

Powerplant pollution has resulted in mercury advisories in 44 of the 50 States. In these 44 States, our citizens are asked not to eat the fish caught in the lakes and streams.

Because of powerplant pollution, 6 million American women and children are exposed to mercury levels well above those considered safe by Federal health authorities.

According to the CDC, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 10 percent of women in the United States have mercury levels above those considered protective of newborns. As a result, as many as 390,000 children are born each year at risk for neurological development problems due to exposure to mercury in the womb.

The March issue of the Journal of the American Medical Association found that millions of people who live in areas polluted by fine particles have about the same increased risk of dying from heart or lung disease or lung cancer as people who live with a cigarette smoker. Here is the problem. You can ask a smoker to go outside or to quit, but you cannot kick a dirty powerplant out of your backyard.

This is simply the beginning of my list regarding the impacts of powerplant pollution.

There is acid rain, smog, lung disease, heart disease, asthma, on and on.

Actually, I would like to touch on asthma for one minute. I have a chart indicating what is happening because of these problems. Many of us know children who have contracted asthma. For asthmatics, like the boy in the picture beside me, it is a frustrating and dangerous condition that disrupts many lives.

Just this year, a respected public health journal published the first study showing a direct connection between the onset of asthma in young, healthy children and their exposure to ozone.

The journal found that children exercising outdoors are more likely to contract asthma if they live in areas polluted with high ozone concentrations. This dangerous ozone is created by pollution from old power plants.

Just last week, the General Accounting Office issued this report saying that older power plants are responsible for up to 50 percent of the harmful air emissions released into the air today—50 percent from old power plants.

According to the Energy Information Administration, there has been no change in the average coal-fired power plant efficiency in the last 40 years. Older powerplants emit about twice the amount of harmful pollutants for every increment of electricity generated than newer powerplants.

But even some of these issues pale in comparison to the impact that the release of carbon dioxide from powerplants will have if we do not act soon. Carbon dioxide emissions have been proven to contribute to climate change, and this climate change will have a number of dramatic impacts on our Nation.

Let me list a few. Heat-related deaths will increase 100 percent in cities such as New York, Philadelphia, Cleveland, Los Angeles, and others. In most of New England, the hardwood forest will vanish. In Delaware, a predicted 20-inch rise in sea level will flood 50 percent of Delaware Bay wetlands. Brook trout nationwide may lose 50 percent of their habitat. Drought will be pervasive.

Coastal States, such as Alaska, will see a massive impact, including flooding of coastal villages, storm surges, and extensive infrastructure damage from temperature change, like the melting of the permafrost in northern regions.

Even the administration's recent Climate Action Report recognizes the grave impacts that climate change will have on our health, economy, and the environment.

What are we doing about this air pollution and global warming crisis?

What action is this administration taking to reduce harmful emissions from old polluting powerplants?

What is the Environmental Protection Agency doing to save lives and reduce the health impacts from powerplant—related air pollution?

Let me tell you. Brace yourself. The answer is nothing. This administration is doing absolutely nothing to reduce pollution from old polluting powerplants like this one in the picture.

Why are they doing nothing? I ask that question often, but there does not seem to be an adequate answer.

They are doing something. Let me tell you what they are doing.

The administration just last week announced what could be the biggest roll back in the Clean Air Act in its history. The White House announced a proposal to allow these old polluting powerplants to live on forever, almost unregulated. Remember, these old pow-

erplants are responsible for 50 percent of harmful air pollution.

The White House, along with EPA, has decided to exempt most of these old powerplants from further regulation.

These are the same powerplants causing asthma in our Nation's children. These are the same powerplants causing neurological problems in newborns. These are the same plants killing our forests and lakes. These are the same powerplants adding billions of tons of carbon dioxide to the atmosphere. And they just got a ticket to pollute indefinitely.

What else is the administration doing? They have a policy paper, called Clear Skies, that outlines a proposal to reduce three of the four most harmful pollutants from old powerplants. I commend the President for directing the EPA to develop this policy paper. But what have they done to follow up on the announcement of the Clear Skies Initiative? Nothing.

They have not developed legislation. They have not produced supporting analysis on why their proposal works. They have not begun to negotiate with Members of the Senate or the House. They have been all but silent on the issue.

Why? Why are they letting this massive public health crisis continue? It is a great mystery.

Congress, led by the Senate, isn't going to wait any longer. This week, the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee will pass the Clean Power Act.

The Jeffords-Collins-Lieberman-Snowe Clean Power Act sets real pollution targets. This bill will quickly reduce the harmful air emissions that result in sickness and death. We want to give these old polluting powerplants the tools and guidance to clean up and meet modern standards.

I hope this administration can embrace the Clean Power Act. I am skeptical though, that they will. Why? they argue that it will cost too much.

But let's look at the analysis. According to the Department of Energy, a four pollutant bill could lower Americans' electric bills by \$30 billion a year. That's \$30 billion each year. The DOE report outlines that the longer we wait to enact real powerplant pollution reductions, the more expensive it will be.

The other reason this administration refuses to embrace real air pollution reductions is carbon. They are scared of regulating carbon.

Even though the President committed to controlling carbon emissions from old powerplant, today this administration can't even discuss the issues. Even though the President finally acknowledged in his own report this month that global warming is a real problem. Even though the entire international community is working to implement the Kyoto Treaty to reduce carbon emissions.

What is this administration doing about carbon? Nothing. This doing

nothing seems to be a pattern. I would like to ask the administration, how do we get from nothing to something?

I will make it my full-time job to convince the White House that protecting public health is equally as important as public security. The facts are overwhelming, Homeland Security starts at home. It is about saving lives. The greatest threat are the polluters and we can stop them. That is where we will get the best return on homeland security. And I support it.

We can save thousands of lives, and prevent lots of disease and environmental degradation if we act now to reduce powerplant pollution.

I hope and pray the administration will see the light, if they can, through the smog.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. STABENOW). Under the previous order, the second 30 minutes shall be under the control of the Republican leader or his designee.

The Senator from Alaska.

NUCLEAR POWER

Mr. MURKOWSKI. Madam President, I have listened carefully to the Senator from Vermont, and I think how ironic it is that we are at this time contemplating the disposition of the nuclear industry in this State, a nuclear industry that does not emit pollution associated with air quality, an industry that supplies us with 20 to 21 percent of the total power generated in this country. We have an obligation to address what to do with the nuclear waste. The House has done its job. The Senate is postured to act.

The proposal will come up when we return from the July 4 recess. It is anticipated that on July 9 there will be a motion to proceed followed by 10 hours of debate. I urge my colleagues to recognize our responsibility. As the Senator from Vermont suggests, the problems associated with hydrocarbon pollution, of burning oil, gas, and coal, we do not have with nuclear.

We have an obligation, though, as to what to do with the waste. As a consequence, a number of sites were selected for consideration on the east coast and the west coast. The reality that nobody wants the waste is evident, but factually it has to go somewhere. The Japanese and the French are proceeding with reprocessing. Unfortunately, we have chosen not to do that. I personally think that was a mistake. We should reprocess, and I think eventually, regardless of the disposition of Yucca Mountain, that Yucca Mountain should be a retrievable depository. At some point in time, we will take the waste and reprocess it and substantially eliminate some of the concerns, whether proliferation or the long-term concerns, over any water that may go in the site.

YUCCA MOUNTAIN

Mr. MURKOWSKI. Madam President, I am going to talk a little this morning