

the pursuit by the Federal Regulatory Commission of this issue, natural gas prices dropped 38 percent—38 percent because we had a bad actor out of the marketplace.

So it is critical that we have this aggressive action and probe of the oil markets. It is critical that we give the Federal regulators—the FTC and the FERC, if they need to be involved, the CFTC, as well as the DOJ whom I have called on to be involved—the tools they need. But Democrats are going to make sure we police the oil markets.

If you think about that and you think about the fact that oil prices are 100 times over what they were a year ago, and if you had some sort of activity that was driving up that price—I am saying it is not supply and demand, it is not basic supply and demand. We haven't had a supply disruption. We haven't had that big of a change in the demand. So something is going on in the marketplace.

If we would do our job of investigating, we would make sure there is a bright line there for the consumer, for the American people who are paying too much at the pump right now, to say that these kinds of manipulative behaviors will not be tolerated.

The challenge we have is, when we don't have some of these markets having the transparency and the oversight, or people who are supposed to be the policemen on the beat, as well as the FTC not doing its job, then these markets have a lot of activities that can actually drive up the price. When we think about the Amaranth case, just imagine what would happen if you could actually lower the price because you get bad actors out of the market.

That is what we are simply saying. Let's do our job here and have the oversight hearings of this FTC rule and investigation of the oil markets. Let's do our job in making sure the consumer is represented in the development of this rule and a tough Federal statute so that consumers can have a little relief at the pump.

I noticed last night this was the first time gas prices didn't rise overnight. I also took note in the paper this morning of the CFTC Chairman's comment which was an indication of the fact that oil prices might have moved because, instead of investing in commodities, people have taken money out of those commodities and put them in other places in the stock market. People should be aware that Congress and the FTC are looking into any kind of manipulative practices when it comes to the oil market. Even if the rule isn't in final adoption today, the fact that we are going to be aggressive at protecting consumers and looking into this kind of manipulative practice, I believe, can help give consumers relief at the pump.

So let's get about doing our job. Let's get about protecting consumers in what is not a rational gas market today, and get about helping our economy by doing our job here and having

the oversight hearings that it is going to take to make sure this rule gets developed with a strong framework that can be used to root out manipulation in the oil markets.

I thank the President, and I yield the floor. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

WORLD FOOD AID

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I know we are ready to wrap up for the week. First, I want to make a couple points about a news item in today's paper.

I was looking at the Washington Post this morning, page A4. There is a story about the President seeking \$770 million more in world food aid. At first glance, that sounds like very good news, and it is, to a certain extent. But, unfortunately, it is good news about the future in terms of a commitment for 2009, but it doesn't do nearly enough to meet the crisis that has enveloped large parts of the world with regard to the food insecurity we are seeing all over the world.

Here is the point. I and others have asked the President to increase, for this year, our food aid from the \$350 million he has proposed earlier by adding another \$200 million to that. In the short run, we wanted to go from \$350 million to \$550 million. This \$770 million is great, but it is in 2009. When you think about when the food would hit the ground, so to speak, the difference is that if the President's policy stays in place for the near term, what you are going to have is food hitting the ground, totaling \$350 million, in the next couple of months, when we could be adding a lot more to that. The demand really requires that we add \$200 million. Even if we add the number the President put on the table, which is \$770 million, that food won't hit the ground, at the earliest, until November 2008, maybe December, or maybe not even until January 2009.

We are at a point now where we have news story after news story about instability across the world—governments that are not just at risk of collapse because of the food insecurity, and we have seen all the reports about rioting—but this becomes not just a humanitarian crisis, not only a government instability problem, but it really becomes fertile ground, unfortunately, for terrorism. So food insecurity is becoming a national and international security problem.

We know from our history—world history especially—that in places such as Afghanistan, where there is instability, terrorism flourished. We know

the stories in the last couple of years, since before 2001, about the rise of the Taliban and the rise of terrorist elements all over the world.

So I hope the President, as much as he has heralded his announcement for 2009 of \$770 million, I hope he will reconsider for the short term so we can add another \$200 million in food aid—not a lot of money in the scheme of the aid the United States generously provides to the rest of the world—add another \$200 million in the near term so food can hit the ground in these countries maybe at the end of this month or in June or July instead of waiting until November, December, or even January of next year. Not just the hunger pangs and the trauma that this causes to real people across the world but the security implication here is very grave.

I hope the President will bring the same urgency to this funding as he does to his call for more war funding, frankly. I think we need a sense of urgency because of the humanitarian, moral question here but also because of the security implications.

Mr. President, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CASEY). Without objection, it is so ordered.

EPA IN CRISIS

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, for much of last year, as many of us will remember, the Senate Judiciary Committee was engaged in a very troubling inquiry. We were trying to determine whether the Bush administration had fired several U.S. attorneys for political reasons; not because they were not good U.S. attorneys but because they were not loyal "Bushies," to use the phrase a Department of Justice official used.

That inquiry continues at the Department of Justice, but over its course, we already know the incompetence and misjudgments that it uncovered have cost numerous Department of Justice officials their jobs, and properly so, including former Attorney General Alberto Gonzales who made clear that he put loyalty to the President before the faithful exercise of that important office.

Unfortunately, it also cost that proud Department the morale of its officials and, to a sad degree, the trust of the American people, many of whom have been left to wonder whether Federal prosecutions in this country arise from the pursuit of justice or whether under the Bush administration they arise from the pursuit of political advantage.

Here we go again, perhaps. This morning, we awoke to the news that

the Environmental Protection Agency's regional administrator for the Midwest, Mary Gade, was forced to resign in the midst of a heated debate over dioxin contamination in waters near Michigan.

Dioxin is an extremely dangerous chemical. According to a report by the Chicago Tribune, Ms. Gade invoked emergency powers last year to force Dow Chemical, headquartered in Michigan, to clean up several areas saturated with this toxic chemical, a dangerous carcinogen which was a byproduct, among other things, of Agent Orange, with which we are sadly familiar.

Ms. Gade later broke off negotiations with Dow Chemical on a more comprehensive cleanup, citing concerns that Dow had been reluctant to take steps to protect health and wildlife. That put the company in a tough position.

At that point, the Tribune's report says the company asked EPA officials in Washington to intervene, although Dow said it had nothing to do with Ms. Gade's dismissal. The paper wrote that Ms. Gade said that high-ranking EPA officials "repeatedly questioned her aggressive action against Dow." It quoted Ms. Gade as saying, "There is no question that this is about Dow."

We do not yet know all the details of Ms. Gade's firing or everything that may have gone on between her office and Dow Chemical. But from everything we have heard and seen so far, it looks like *deja vu* all over again from an administration that values compliance with its political agenda more than it values the trust or the best interests of the American people.

Last year, we learned this is an administration that would not hesitate to fire capable Federal prosecutors when they would not toe an improper party line. Today it seems the Bush administration might have once again removed a highly qualified and well-regarded official whose only misstep was to disagree with the political bosses.

Unfortunately, the story of Mary Gade is not only a distressing signal that the Bush administration may again be making hiring and firing decisions based on political loyalty, it is also a piece of evidence in a growing pile of evidence of a troubling and destructive force at work within our Government, one with serious consequences for our environment, for our natural resources, and for the health of Americans, for us, for our families.

We have also known that the Bush administration was no friend to the environment. Over and over again for 7 long years, this administration has put forward under false flags policies that would do great harm to the environment. Remember the Clear Skies Initiative that would increase air pollution? Remember the national energy policy written with DICK CHENEY by oil industry lobbyists? The Bush approach to environmental protection has not only been wrong, it has been Orwellian. That pattern continues even to this day.

Not long ago, President Bush stood in the White House Rose Garden and announced what his administration characterized as a "new strategy" to address climate change. As the distinguished Senator from Pennsylvania well knows, Americans all over this country are crying out for a bold and visionary plan to tackle the looming threat of global warming, a problem that threatens to engulf this Nation and the entire world within generations if nothing is done.

So we looked to the Rose Garden for leadership from our President. And what did we find? We found a proposal that was neither new nor even a strategy. Instead, the President announced what he called a new national goal: voluntary action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 2025.

Let me say that again. Voluntary action to reduce emissions by 2025, 17 years from now, 17 years of increases.

There are a couple of problems with this approach. First, the obvious problem is if you are allowing greenhouse gas emissions to continue to rise for 17 years, you are not doing much effectively about them, even though overwhelming scientific evidence indicates that unless we take immediate action to cut global warming pollutants, we might be too late to prevent the most serious impacts of global climate change.

Mr. President, you and I are in our fifties. We may be gone when it gets bad. I have met your girls. I have a girl and a boy of my own. I look at the young pages here who are gathered in the well. This will be their world, and the responsibility is on us to take action now while we can to protect the world in which they will live.

On that score, President Bush failed again. He literally offered zero initiatives, none, that might reduce emissions now or in the future. He made it clear that, on what is left of his watch, the U.S. Government will never require polluters to make such reductions. As every American who is not working in the Bush administration understands, voluntary action without strength of will or force of law simply is not enough to tackle a problem of this magnitude.

Finally, even if the President announced this empty so-called renewed commitment to fighting global warming, his administration indicated it would oppose a specific detailed plan for addressing the climate change problem the Senate will likely take up after our Memorial Day recess, the Warner-Lieberman plan. Chairman BOXER has worked so hard to get out of our Environment and Public Works Committee.

This trifecta of failure from the White House would be laughable if it were not that the problem itself is so serious. It raises, actually, the distasteful possibility, given this administration's long and destructive history of disregard for environmental concerns, that the President's new strat-

egy is not just a complete failure, a complete nothing, it is actually a stalking horse, intended to prevent real progress on climate change, a way to leave this problem, similar to so many others, for the next President to have to solve.

Regrettably, the President's announcement is also a stunning failure of leadership in a world community that is quickly growing unaccustomed to American leadership—not a good habit for the world to adopt.

We have known for a long time that politics of special interests is at the bottom of this and the Bush White House has repeatedly interfered with the decisionmaking process of the Environmental Protection Agency and other agencies, in thrall to the checkbooks of the oil companies, the gas companies, the chemical companies, the timber companies, the coal companies, the auto companies. If you have a corporate checkbook, they are for you.

A couple of weeks ago, we saw new evidence of how deeply this corrosive political influence has seeped within EPA, the primary Federal agency charged with protecting our environment and our people's public health. A report issued April 23 by the Union of Concerned Scientists, entitled "Interference at the EPA," is a truly scathing indictment of the decisionmaking process at EPA from those who know it best, the scientists inside the Agency. The report consisted largely of a survey of EPA scientists. It found that 60 percent of those surveyed had personally experienced at least one instance of political interference during the past 5 years—60 percent of the scientists. The report documents, among many other things, that many EPA scientists have been directed to inappropriately exclude or alter information from EPA science documents, or have had their work edited in a manner that resulted in changes to their scientific findings. The survey also revealed EPA scientists have often objected to or resigned or removed themselves from EPA projects because of pressure—pressure to change their scientific findings.

The conclusion could not be much clearer: EPA is an agency in crisis. Once upon a time, anyone working at EPA could be proud of their agency's reputation. It was the international gold standard in the area of environmental protection. Indeed, for most of its 40-year history, all Americans could place their trust in EPA's independent, science-based leadership to safeguard our natural resources and our public health.

If you go back to the founding of the Agency, in a 1970 press release by its first administrator, William Ruckelshaus, he stated this role unequivocally:

EPA is an independent agency. It has no obligation to promote agriculture or commerce, only the critical obligation to protect and enhance the environment.

Administrator Ruckelshaus was a Republican appointed by President

Nixon. Yet both he and the President who appointed him intended EPA to be immune from political pressure; to be guided by the twin lodestars of law and science in discharging that critical obligation to protect and enhance the environment.

In recent years, and especially during the tenure of Administrator Johnson, we have seen the EPA's leadership, in cahoots with its White House allies, despoil these basic principles of independence and scientific integrity. Here are only a few examples from the long bill of particulars that indicts the leadership of this once-vaunted agency.

The George Bush Environmental Protection Agency falsified data and fabricated results of studies regarding the safety of the air around the site of the collapse of the World Trade Center on September 11.

The George Bush Environmental Protection Agency selectively edited Government reports, including the EPA's 2003 report on the environment, to support uncertainty in climate change science, placing the imprimatur of the Government of the United States on fringe views, soundly rejected by the vast majority—essentially the entire world scientific community.

The George Bush Environmental Protection Agency has routinely tampered with regulatory and scientific processes to achieve results sought by, guess what, industry—at the expense of our public health and the environment. For example, in 2004, EPA allowed North Dakota to alter the way it measured air quality. That is the way they brought the Theodore Roosevelt National Park in compliance with national air quality standards, not by cleaning up the air but by allowing them to change the way they measured air quality. The George Bush Environmental Protection Agency has hidden, suppressed and delayed the release of scientific findings in order to affect the impacts of EPA decisions. If they have two things going on, if you can slow one down and get the other out first, if it is helpful to industry, there they are—as in the case of a 2002 report on the effects of mercury on children's health that EPA delayed for 9 months and released only after it had been leaked to the media.

The George Bush Environmental Protection Agency has disregarded legally mandated scientific and administrative procedures, as in the case of the Agency's failure to abide by the Supreme Court's recent decision on regulating greenhouse gas emissions.

The George Bush Environmental Protection Agency has stacked the EPA's leadership and its advisory committees with industry allies, removing respected scientists who argued for stronger public protections. A prime example of this is the removal, at the request of the industry lobbying group the American Chemistry Council, of toxicologist Deborah Rice from an EPA toxics advisory committee. Dr. Rice had argued for more stringent EPA

standards for regulating certain chemicals used in commercially available plastic products. Not only was Dr. Rice removed from the panel, but her remarks on the panel were retroactively stricken from the record. EPA essentially took the fact that Dr. Rice had ever been on the panel and struck it from the panel's records. They, I guess, administratively “disappeared” her. It is not the kind of thing that happens in the country I know.

The George Bush Environmental Protection Agency has ignored the recommendations of career staff and scientists when they collide with White House political imperatives, as in the case of the Agency's decision on the so-called California waiver—first time ever not to grant the waiver.

The George Bush EPA has reduced enforcement of environmental regulations by opening fewer criminal investigations and filing fewer lawsuits against corporate polluters.

The George Bush EPA has not only failed to protect but sought reprisals against agency employees who pointed out problems, reported legal violations, and attempted to correct factual misrepresentations made by their superiors.

Amazingly, the EPA's Office of General Counsel has invoked the doctrine of sovereign immunity against whistleblowers suing the agency because of actions taken by the agency in reprisal for their whistleblower activity. And, as a lawyer, as somebody who spent a good deal of his life as a government lawyer, it pains me to see how the George Bush EPA has had its lawyering literally mocked, mocked by the U.S. Circuit Courts of Appeal, which, in one case, condemned the EPA's defense of its regulation as possible “only in a Humpty-Dumpty world,” and in another case accused the agency of “deploying the logic of the Queen of Hearts” from “Alice in Wonderland” in the agency's interpretation of the law.

It makes one's skin crawl to see the ways in which EPA's leadership under the Bush administration has put the interest of big business and their lobbyists before the health and welfare of our environment and the American people. This has dire consequences.

First, in a world that presents complex challenges to our public health, to our environment, and to our national security, the elevation of corporate interests over independent, science-based decisionmaking threatens America's very ability to respond effectively and to provide the kind of leadership on complex problems that the world expects and that Americans deserve.

Second, the administration's conduct has demoralized EPA's professional workforce—the scientists, the lawyers, the regulatory experts to whom EPA owes its reputation as a champion of environmental protection. And time and time again during this administration they have seen their expert counsel set aside in favor of a partisan political agenda.

Third, President Bush and this administration have compromised the faith of the American people in the integrity of their Government. We can disagree. This is a Chamber that is built for disagreement. We can disagree on policy considerations; we can argue about what the right or the wrong decision is to make. But it is a tragedy when we doubt the integrity of the process of America's agencies of Government.

The President's eagerness to do the bidding of the special interests and the Administrator's willingness to kowtow to the White House, to the detriment of sound public policy, only confirms what too many consider fear that the United States of America is no longer governed by and for the people.

When policy is made for special interests and not for public good, America is left weaker. No matter our partisan or ideological standings, no one in this great Chamber, I hope, would want to do such a thing to this great country.

The Bush administration has done lasting harm both to our environment and to the confidence of the American people. Next Wednesday, May 7, at 9:30 a.m., I will join Senator BARBARA BOXER, the chairman of the Environment and Public Works Committee, for an oversight hearing to look into the actions by this Bush administration and the EPA Administrator which seem to be so badly at odds with the recommendations of the agency's scientists and the best interests of the American people.

Chairman BOXER—we can be so proud of her—has been dogged, relentless in her pursuit of the truth behind the screen of machinations of the EPA's leadership and the Bush White House. And her leadership will continue to be critical as we try to get to the bottom of this issue. We plan to ask the tough questions, and we will expect honest answers because the American people deserve an Environmental Protection Agency that lives up to that name.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Would the Senator yield for a comment and a couple of questions?

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. I will yield.

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, I want to commend the Senator from Rhode Island for his extraordinary, eloquent, and very insightful comment into some of the machinations behind closed doors that we have seen going on in this administration that absolutely perplexes the mind; that governmental agencies that are set up for the purpose of serving the people and protecting the public and, indeed, the EPA is supposed to be the Environmental Protection Agency, that they go off on these half-cocked ideological ideas.

The Senator has said it so eloquently. I thank him for it. I thank him for his leadership. I thank him for calling attention to the hearing that is

going to be held next week. And as the Senator has been speaking—and I have been mesmerized by what he said—completely off the top of my head I remember, for example, 3 years ago the EPA decided that it was going to do a study in my State, in Jacksonville, FL.

Now, get this. You will not believe this. It was going to expose toddlers to pesticides to see what the effects were. And, of course, where do you think those toddlers were going to be? They were going to be in a minority neighborhood. It was going to be in a low-income neighborhood. And the EPA had concocted this scheme. It was sending out these flyers.

In order to get a household to participate, it said: We want you to participate in this study. I cannot remember the amount of money they would pay, but they were going to give them a T-shirt; they were going to give them a certificate that they completed this process over several months; and they were given a camcorder that then, at the end of the study, if they successfully completed it, they would keep. And the study was, they were going to put pesticides all over this house and see what the effects were on these toddlers. This was the purpose of the study.

You could not believe it. I happened to discover it about the same time that the chairman of the environment committee—she was not the chair then. Senator BOXER was the ranking member. And the two of us collaborated. We had a press conference. We blew this thing sky high. As a matter of fact, now that it is coming back to me, Senator BOXER held up the nomination of the newly appointed EPA Administrator until he finally relented and said he was not going to have this study before she would allow the confirmation. Yet he “bumfuddled” around and tried to dodge and weave and not even answer the question. I mean, it defies description.

The Senator from Rhode Island has given a number of examples, and that one leapt to my mind. I want to give the Senator from Rhode Island another example.

In the little agency that I cherish so much, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, can you believe that one of the most distinguished and noted scientists in that institution of NASA, Dr. Hansen, little underlings in the PR department of NASA—and when I say little underlings, I don't remember what their job description was, but I think they were in their twenties. They had the audacity to go in and change the wording on Dr. Hansen's conclusions with regard to a climate change study.

Finally, this came out. Ultimately, his words were restored.

I will give you another example in that little agency. They have an inspector general in NASA who is just running amok. There was a theft of a \$2 billion rocket design in the NASA computers, and he refused to inves-

tigate. Then when the rest of us tried to get him dismissed, the buddy-buddy club wouldn't allow him to be fired.

I will give you another example. This will just blow your mind. For years, the Florida Everglades have been on the endangered list in a list that is kept by the United Nations, a list of the most environmentally endangered sites in the world. A third-ranking Department of State employee took it upon himself, in a conference in New Zealand, to speak and to have the Florida Everglades stricken from the list of the most endangered environmental sites, something we work on every day in Everglades restoration, in combination, the Federal Government with the State of Florida, in trying to restore the Everglades to something of what Mother Nature intended.

These are things that have popped into my mind of what we have seen over and over again, of the ideological rigidity, the excessive partisanship, which, when you combine the two, is lethal to common sense and to protection of the public. Yet that is what we have seen. Then when some of us, in our role of oversight, try to start changing it and get accountability and responsibility in the executive branch, they won't do anything about it. The NASA IG is still there. That third-tier Department of State employee was there until he finally retired. The EPA Administrator is still there. So here we are.

I thank the Senator for yielding. I thank him again for his eloquence today and for his service to our country in representing his State.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. I thank my good friend from Florida.

I will close with the following point, which my friend Senator NELSON, the distinguished Senator from Florida, calls to mind, because of his extraordinarily distinguished service to our country. He was willing to put himself at great risk in the extraordinarily challenging pursuit of becoming an astronaut for the United States of America. I mean, talk about the best and brightest. As we know from many tragedies, it is not only an extraordinarily challenging pursuit, it is one where you do put your life very much at risk on behalf of the progress of this country. He, in that very important way, and I, in a much slower way, share an important belief, which is that the Government of the United States of America, our American system of government which has been passed down to us after a revolutionary war, a civil war, two great world wars, the Great Depression, essentially intact and, indeed, improving through the decades and generations, is one of God's great gifts to humankind. It is now in our hands, particularly as we represent our States in this body. It is to be treasured. It is to be viewed with respect. It is, indeed, to be viewed with reverence.

The thing that, to me, is worst of all from his politics, from his corruption, from his debasement of public service,

is the lack of respect, the lack of reverence for what we have been given, for what we hold in trust for ourselves and future generations. It has never been as low as it is now. But the light still burns, and we will continue to call attention to the miscreancy that we find. Soon, in January, it will be over.

I thank my friend from Florida and yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

FOREIGN CONTRACT PERSONNEL

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, I came to the floor to discuss another matter. I thank the Senator from Rhode Island. As a matter of fact, before the Senator from Rhode Island departs the Chamber, he might want to hear what I came to talk about. It is actually a little success story, but it is borne on another failure we have seen. This, I am sad to say, is a failure for American women who are contractor personnel serving in Iraq and Afghanistan, when sexually assaulted, when raped. They have not been able to have their assailants prosecuted, as contractor personnel.

We dramatically brought this to light in a hearing about 3 weeks ago. Two very courageous Americans stepped forward, one for the first time publicly. In her particular case, she had been drugged and then gang-raped by not only fellow American contractor personnel, KBR, a subsidiary of Halliburton, but in that case also participated in by members of the military. When she tried to seek help, it was all swept under the rug, and in her particular case, she did not even get any medical attention until 3 weeks later.

Well, the little success story we have, Mr. President, is that in the passage of the Defense Authorization Act, which occurred on Wednesday in the Armed Services Committee, there is inserted a new requirement under law. That requirement is that contractors to the Department of Defense—and, mind you, we have tens of thousands of those contractors in Iraq and Afghanistan—No. 1, will be required to report the offenses of sexual assault to the appropriate investigative authorities; No. 2, they will have the responsibility of providing victim and witness protection and assistance to contractor employees.

If we can maintain that position in the Defense authorization bill as it works its way here to the floor of the Senate and then to work out the final product with the House—and I think we will be able to protect this because who is going to vote against it—that is one little happy victory that will give some additional protection to American women who are serving in harm's way, who are not members of the military but, in fact, are Americans serving overseas as contractors to the military.

Over and over, the testimony was they are assaulted, they cannot find