

can leverage hundreds of billions in economic activity and job creation activity across the country.

So we have more to do, and we have a ways to go. We have to keep focused and stay focused on strategies that will create jobs in the near term and certainly over time, but especially those strategies that will create 50,000 jobs or 75,000 jobs or 100,000 jobs. As we go, we can continue to create jobs and grow the economy. When we do that—as we learned in the 1990s—we can grow the economy and make good investments in health care and in our infrastructure and in education and in our workers and their skills. We can also do deficit reduction and debt reduction over time. But we cannot do those three things until we are growing in a way that is substantial enough to do at least those three: grow enough to create jobs, reduce the deficit, and even to reduce debt.

So we have a way to go, but I think we are headed in the right direction. I am looking forward to seeing the Small Business Jobs and Credit Act enacted into law, working to help our small businesses and our smaller communities, especially those I have highlighted across Pennsylvania and across the country that have had tremendous and horrific job loss over the last 2 years to 18 months.

With that, I yield the floor and note the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. 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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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. BURRIS). Without objection, it is so ordered.

GLOBAL WARMING

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I come because we are coming to the end of our workweek. Many of our colleagues are gone already, and others are preparing to go. Another week has gone by in which the Senate has taken no action whatsoever with respect to the continuing pollution of our atmosphere by carbon, which we subsidize by allowing our biggest polluters to do it without cost or consequence. The effects of that on our world continue to manifest themselves. This is one of those issues where we can come to an impasse in the Senate and the foes of doing anything about moving to clean energy jobs and requiring carbon polluters to actually pay a price for their pollution can stop all that. It may seem like a victory, but the problem is there is a real cost to continuing to pollute our atmosphere with carbon. It does trap heat. It does warm the planet.

Those are scientific verities that are unavoidable and the consequences continue to cascade through our world, through the environmental systems of

which it is made up. The evidence of that continues to emerge.

Frankly, Mother Nature does not care about what happens in the Senate. She is not subject to our law. She is not subject to our opinion. She will continue to do her thing. It is up to us to be prudent and thoughtful caretakers of our planet and sensible men and women and take the appropriate steps so we can head off the disasters she is loudly signaling are coming our way.

I thought I would share just some of the continuing cascade of evidence and news that is coming out on this subject.

The first thing I will mention is a report from Science Daily that came out about a week ago. According to NOAA, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the U.S. Government agency's recent state of the climate report, the lower 48 States, as a whole, experienced the fourth warmest summer on record, with average August temperatures 2.2 degrees above the last century average.

The American Southwest experienced its warmest summer ever. The Midwest experienced its third warmest summer. The Northeast, where I come from, where my home State of Rhode Island is, experienced its fourth warmest summer ever recorded. Indeed, Rhode Island experienced its hottest ever July on record.

The increase of temperature in our weather systems has the effect of adding energy into those weather systems which suggests that storms are made more frequent and more powerful. Sure enough, the facts confirm that as well.

In 2007, Environment America analyzed rainfall data and determined in a report that came out more recently that extreme precipitation events had increased across the United States by 24 percent between 1948 and 2006. The region in which the extreme precipitation events—these major storms with extreme levels of rain or snow—faced the greatest increase was in New England, with a 61-percent increase from 1948 to 2006. Within New England, the State that faced the greatest increase was my home State of Rhode Island, with an 88-percent increase in extreme precipitation events.

One of those extreme precipitation events was the March flooding in my home State, in which our rivers—the Pawtuxet, Blackstone, and Pawcatuck—some of them went above 100-year floodplain levels. Some of them reached areas beyond 500-year flood levels.

Clearly, something is changing. Actually, there were two floods that happened back to back, just weeks apart. I visited homes in West Warwick, where the mud and the flooding had brought into people's homes and basements thick muck they had to dig out and clean up. As soon as they had dug it out and cleaned it up, boom, it happened again. It was absolutely heartbreaking for them. One can imagine

how frustrating it is to go into your home, your basement, to see what used to be a nice area, what used to be clean, what used to be dry, where your children kept their photo albums, you might have kept old papers, things that were important to you, televisions, sofas, and now just a sea of filthy mud that you are going to have to figure out how to clear out and clean up, cutting out all the wallboard, cutting out everything that is wet, having to rebuild. The frustration of having to do that—people lead busy lives, they do not need that—and then, boom, to have it happen a second time as soon as it was done is unbelievably frustrating and disheartening.

Those are the kinds of extreme and unpredicted weather events that are associated with a warming planet and the heating of the atmosphere.

It also changes the way different animals can live and migrate. One of them is the bark beetle. Earlier this month, the U.S. Forest Service predicted that outbreaks of spruce and mountain beetles in Western States will increase in the coming decades because of climate change. These beetles historically had their range kept in check by cold winters, which basically kill off the larvae, and that limits the reproduction of the beetles and it limits their geographic range. As the winters become warmer, then the beetles have survived—because the winters aren't as cold—so they continue to go out and do their thing. Their thing to do is to kill pine trees. The beetles have already affected more than 17.5, I believe, million acres of Western forests.

I have traveled out West. I was in Idaho a few summers ago, and you could fly over the mountains of Idaho and see entire forested mountains, as far as the eye could see from the plane, and it was dead and brown and it was because the beetle had gone in there and killed them.

These changes are going to continue. I can't estimate what cost it was to the industry or to Idaho's economy to have that massive die-off of pine trees, but, clearly, it is no good thing.

The ocean continues to send us warnings as well. According to the University of Colorado's National Snow and Ice Data Center—this again earlier this month—for only the third time in satellite history, ice has covered less than 5 million square kilometers of the Arctic Ocean. As a result of the trend that these researchers see, they warn that global warming could leave the Arctic sea ice free by 2030—20 years from now. Many of us will be around then to see that.

An ice-free Arctic Ocean has very significant repercussions for our world because it is the ice that reflects a great deal of the heat back out of the atmosphere in what is called the albedo effect—the reflection of it. If that is not there, instead there is a dark ocean absorbing the heat. It accelerates the warming and begins the feedback loop that makes the problem worse.

So it is significant that the Arctic sea ice is continuing to shrink and for only the third time in satellite history now has covered less than 5 million square kilometers.

If you go from the far north to the tropic seas, there are signs of distress there as well. On September 20, the New York Times reported that in 1998, 16 percent of the world's shallow water reefs died as a result of record warm temperatures. It is estimated that the die-off could be even worse this year. In May, more than 60 percent of corals off the coast of Indonesia's Aceh Province bleached and died after Andaman Sea temperatures reached 93 degrees Fahrenheit.

It may not seem significant that corals are dying. It may seem indeed insignificant to many of my colleagues. But these coral areas are the nurseries for tropical seas. Many species depend on them to basically grow and feed in their early stages, and if they die, it creates a cascading effect through the food chain that has potentially significant effects for our kinds of species—set aside the local economy wanting to be able to support snorkelers and people such as that who go to see these rare and special beauties.

Finally, the Scientific American reported earlier this summer that the average phytoplankton population in our oceans has dropped about 1 percent a year between 1889 and 2008, resulting in a 40-percent drop overall in phytoplankton.

What is a phytoplankton? It is one of the tiny plant—almost microscopic—species that grows in the ocean and floats free in the ocean. Is that important? It is important because zooplankton and phytoplankton—animal and vegetable plankton—represent the base of the oceanic food chain. They are what the little fish feed on, and the little fish are what the big fish feed on, and up you go.

We have never had a situation in which the bottom of the food chain began to collapse. But we have been seeing it over the past century, and we anticipate seeing a lot more because the carbon our polluters release into the atmosphere with impunity—subsidized by all the rest of us—ends up being absorbed by the ocean—80 percent gets absorbed, if I am not mistaken—and that changes the pH level of the ocean, how acidic it is.

The ocean, right now, is more acidic than it has been in 8,000 centuries, and 8,000 centuries is a long time. We are engaged in a chemical experiment with our oceans that has potentially vast consequences for them by just injecting all this carbon and waiting to see what happens. Now we are out, far enough outside the range of where, in human experience, there has been a pH that we are 8,000 centuries away from it being at this level. All that—the acidification of the ocean—makes it more difficult for these plankton to survive. So the crash we are seeing is consistent with the damage that carbon pollution does to our oceans.

I say this because I know we are not going to get anywhere with energy before the election. Maybe nobody cares. But again, we can be as ignorant as we please. We can be as pleased with ourselves that we have delivered for interest groups and special interests as we please. We can suggest to Americans that climate change isn't real or isn't happening. We can participate in the propaganda battle the big polluters are sponsoring to try to raise doubt about the established science. We can do all those things and we can claim victory and block legislation and we can serve our special interest supporters. We can do all those things to prevent any serious legislation from coming through this body for years and years and years and, you know what, the Earth will not care.

You cannot legislate our environment. King Canute could stand in the oceans and order that the tide not come in, and he could have all his courtiers and all his supporters around him. He could have all the people who keep him in office and provide campaign contributions and it wouldn't make a darned bit of difference. The tide comes roaring in.

Our job in this body is not just to represent special interests, not just to achieve temporary political victories, not just to block progress of bills that interests that support us disagree with. We have another job as well; that is, to look out for the welfare of our country and of the American people and to prepare when the Earth plainly warns us of coming dangers. It is in the service of that job that I intend to continue coming to the floor to remind my colleagues that no matter what their opinions are, no matter what their politics are, no matter what the interest groups that support them are, the facts continue to announce themselves, and the announcement they are making to us is a warning. If we are not smart enough—with our God-given intelligence and foresight—to read the warnings nature is giving us and respond appropriately before it is too late, then it will be on us that we failed to do so.

People will look back from 20 years hence, from 30 years hence, from 40 years hence—the young pages who are here in the well, when they are my age, will look back at this generation that sat in this Senate, in this year, on this occasion, at this time—and they will say: How could you have been so negligent? How could you have allowed the politics of the moment to put you on this march of folly that failed to protect us when you knew—when you knew?

So I intend to continue because this is an issue that will not go away. Nature's warnings to us are persistent, and I intend to be persistent as well.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant editor of the Daily Digest proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

EXPIRING TAX CUTS

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I will be mercifully brief. I wished to come to the floor to briefly speak about a couple issues.

First and foremost, the raging debate that is occurring in the country about the expiring tax cuts—the so-called Bush tax cuts that were enacted in the year 2001 that cut taxes across the board. They cut taxes more generously for the wealthiest Americans, but nonetheless they cut taxes for all Americans as well, and they were designed, in 2001, to expire this year.

I did not vote for them in 2001. I voted in 2001 against those tax cuts and not because I wouldn't want to provide tax cuts to the American people, but the proposition, I thought, was flawed. The President inherited the last year of President Clinton's fiscal policy, which produced the only budget surplus we had had in 30 years. From that budget surplus that year, the projection by economists was that we were going to have budget surpluses for the next decade. As a result of that, Mr. Greenspan, the Chairman of the Federal Reserve Board, had an apoplectic seizure. He said he couldn't sleep because he was worried we were going to pay down the debt too fast.

The Bush administration said: If we are going to have these surpluses, we must return surpluses to the American people. We have to do that through these tax cuts.

I stood on the floor, at my desk, and I said: Why don't we be conservative? Let's decide to wait and see what happens. If we do, in fact, have surpluses, let us provide some tax cuts. But all we have are 10 years of projections. We don't have the real surpluses; we just have projections.

The response was: No, we are not going to do that. We are not going to wait. We are going to have big tax cuts, with the biggest tax cuts going to the wealthiest Americans.

So they were enacted. I did not vote for them, but they were enacted nonetheless.

Almost immediately, we were in a recession. Almost immediately after that, our country was attacked, on 9/11, by terrorists. Then we were in a war in Afghanistan. Then we were at war in Iraq and a war against terrorism generally. We began sending soldiers overseas in harm's way, and thousands were killed and tens of thousands were injured in war. Still the question has always been and remains now, even while we are watching our soldiers walk into harm's way, when do I get my tax cut? Will I continue to get my tax cut next year?

Let me read something Franklin Delano Roosevelt said at a time of war. He said: