

Arab States appear increasingly committed to providing those weapons. The only ones who seem overly concerned about a militarization of the conflict is the United States and some of its allies. The time has come to ask a different question: Whom do we want to win in Syria—our friends or our enemies?

There are always plenty of reasons not to do something, and we can list them clearly in the case of Syria. We know the opposition is divided. We know the armed resistance inside the country lacks cohesion or command and control. We know some elements of the opposition may sympathize with violent extremist ideologies or harbor dark thoughts of sectarian revenge. We know many of Syria's immediate neighbors remain cautious about taking overly provocative actions that could undermine Assad. And we know the American people are weary of conflict—justifiably so—and we would rather focus on domestic problems.

These are realities. But while we are compelled to acknowledge them, we are not condemned to accept them forever. With resolve, principled leadership, and wise policy, we can shape better realities. That is what the Syrian people have done.

By no rational calculation should this uprising against Assad still be going on. The Syrian people are outmatched. They are outgunned. They are lacking for food and water and other basic needs. They are confronting a regime with limitless disregard for human dignity and capacity for sheer savagery. For an entire year, the Syrian people have faced death and those unspeakable things worse than death, and they still have not given up. Still they take to the streets to protest peacefully for justice, still they carry on their fight, and they do so on behalf of many of the same universal values we share and many of the same interests as well. These people are our allies. They want many of the same things we do. They have expanded the boundaries of what everyone thought was possible in Syria. They have earned our respect, and now they need our support to finish what they started. The Syrian people deserve to succeed, and shame on us if we fail to help them.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. COONS). The Senator from Illinois.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask to speak in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

TORNADO DAMAGE

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, there are life experiences that come along with growing up depending on one's family and where they grew up. In my part of the world, part of the Midwest, there was a rite of passage that seemed so commonplace that we never questioned it. It was the air raid siren going off in the middle of the night and your dad would come into your room and say: We have to go down to the basement; there is a tornado warning.

That was part of my life. I didn't think twice about it. It happened every year—sometimes not in the middle of the night, sometimes in the middle of the day, but we became accustomed to it because that is what happened where we lived.

When I was elected to Congress and then to the Senate, I spent my time visiting locations all over my State where tornadoes had struck. So I have seen my fair share of tornado damage in the Midwest, but I have to tell you what I saw on Saturday was extraordinary. I went to southern Illinois to two towns, Harrisburg and Ridgway. They were hit the previous Wednesday by what is known as a stage 4 tornado. A stage 4 tornado is a tornado with winds up to 175 miles per hour. That is a tornado so violent that the winds, from what I am told, were even greater than those of Hurricane Katrina. It hit this tiny little town in southern Illinois, and I looked at the devastation afterward. We expect obvious casualties in a tornado. We expect to see the trees blown down and the siding off the house and the shingles torn off the roof and occasionally a window blown in. One looked at the poor mobile homes, which don't have a chance in a tornado, and they are usually ripped and thrown. But in this tornado, houses that were built on a slab were lifted off and tossed in the air.

I met a lady who was driving away from the devastation of her home—incidentally, these photos are fairly indicative of what we saw in the devastation—and I asked her about her experience. It turned out she was very lucky because she had set the alarm for quarter of 5 to go to work that morning. She said she got up and started getting ready and heard the sirens outside. She said: I went to the bathroom, got down face first on the floor, and grabbed the sink to hang on to it. She said seconds passed before the ceiling caved in on top of her. Luckily, she said it didn't reach her; it pinned her underneath. She said she waited and waited and 15, 20 minutes later somebody started hollering: Is anybody in there? She said she hollered back and they told her: Keep talking. We are going to get you out of there. She escaped with a few scratches and bruises. She was one of the lucky ones. Two of the homes across the street had been blown on top of hers. It turned out across the street a 22-year-old nurse at the local hospital had been killed by the same tornado.

I have never seen this kind of tornado and this kind of damage in my

life. I am told it happened one time before in the history of our State. I also have to tell you the response of the people there makes me proud to be from that State and to be a part of this great Nation. From the very minute this devastation took place, people started coming toward the devastation to try to help. There were some amazing stories such as the volunteers who helped this lady out of the debris of her home. At the nearby coal mine, they have a rescue team that is sent in when there is danger of a mine disaster. They have hard hats and breathing equipment and all the right extraction devices and tools. They came rushing to the scene, coal dust all over their faces, digging right into the wreckage pulling people out. That story was repeated over and over.

The heroism and voluntarism didn't end that day. It continued all through the time I was there and even to this day. Special kudos to the American Red Cross, always the first on the scene, always performing a valuable and important job as they did in southern Illinois.

I went over to Ridgway, which is a town 24 miles away, and for some reason this God-awful tornado skipped from Harrisburg to Ridgway and did little damage in between. But it came down in Ridgway and ripped through that town. Roughly 400 homes were damaged in Harrisburg and over 100 in Ridgway. There is a Catholic Church there over 100 years old. It was the sturdiest structure in town by far. Had people been given enough notice—this happened early in the morning at about 5 a.m.—they might have said the safest place to go is the church. The church is gone. There are two things left, the doorway for the church and the altar. Everything else has been obliterated. There have been a lot of pictures taken of that altar still standing in the rubble, an inspiration to many. Perhaps a message there will be certain things spared even in the worst disasters.

In that town, the fire department met with the mayor and all the volunteers. The one thing about being a volunteer after a disaster in Illinois, I guarantee you will not lose weight. Everybody brought in food, all kinds of food from every direction—pies, cakes, chili, and hot dogs. A fellow came by there and had his barbecue operation set up. It was a huge operation, and he was just cooking like crazy. It was an indication that everybody wanted to pitch in to help. So I wish to thank all those engaged in the rescue and clean-up work at every level.

John Monken, director of the Illinois Emergency Management Agency under Pat Quinn—the Governor has been down there twice—accompanied me on this trip, local units of the government, the sheriff's office, the local disaster agency people, all the volunteers, the Red Cross, a group called Operation Blessing, which showed up—I had never heard of them before. I bet they have

been around. They knew just what to do. They said: Every religious group or volunteer group that wants to help, come check with us. We will send you to a place where you might be needed. As I walked through the wreckage, there were volunteers of every age, from little kids to elderly folks, with rakes in their hands picking up trash and getting it off to the side and trying to put people's lives together again. The scores of people made me proud to represent that great State and the people living in it.

There are several things we need to talk about as a result of that disaster that cannot go unsaid.

I think it is not considered politically correct now to talk about the state of climate in America, but I am going to because, as I stand here today, we have had 274 tornadoes already recorded in America this year—274. At this time last year we had 50. This tornado that hit my home State and, I might say, that tornado that hit Joplin, MO, last year were extraordinary events when it came to tornadoes. The weather patterns are changing. The weather events are more frequent and more severe. That is a fact. Are we ready? Are we prepared for it? Are we doing everything we can? The simple and honest answer is no.

First, we need to acknowledge the obvious. I know I am walking on dangerous ground, but the climate is changing. We have gone from a situation last year where we had the worst recorded blizzard in the history of Chicago, followed 4 months later by the most rainfall ever recorded in 1 hour, to this situation with 274 tornadoes so far this year and literally scores of people killed—six in Harrisburg, many in Kentucky and Tennessee and other places. It is an indication the weather is changing, the severity is changing, and we need to be honest about it. We have to get beyond the political argument into the world of reality.

I sincerely believe there are things we are doing that are affecting the world we live in—affecting the melting of the glaciers, affecting the disappearance of species, affecting the change of weather patterns all around. As long as we continue to take the politically convenient route of ignoring that, future generations can point a finger of blame at us for failing to acknowledge the obvious when we might have had a chance to make some difference in future lives. That is a fact.

Secondly, I held a hearing and I brought in not government experts but experts from the private sector. Do my colleagues know who knows more about weather and damage events than anyone in America? The insurance industry. I brought them in, property and casualty insurance companies, and I asked them the same question: Is weather changing? They said it is obvious. Why do we think some companies are taking their business out of certain places in America? We cannot set up a reserve for the possibility of damage

that is on the horizon; we are trying to cover ourselves. We are profitmaking people; if we can't see a way to set up a reserve for potential weather disasters, we start backing off of coverage. It has been done. Many insurance companies have walked away from places such as Florida because of hurricanes and because of violent storms.

Then I asked them the question about whether the U.S. Government was adequately prepared to shoulder the burden that comes with these disasters—and the burden does come, particularly for those uninsured. We end up as a government helping them. I don't begrudge people that. I am going to ask for my State, and I am sure the Presiding Officer would do the same. Every Senator would.

Here is the bottom line: When the Bowles-Simpson Commission sat down to try to determine how much we should budget each year for disasters, they came up with what these people in the private sector said was a totally unreasonable formula. It basically averaged 10 years and put an additional cost-of-living adjustment on it. They said that isn't the future. The future is a geometric progression in cost as property becomes more expensive, as the storms become more violent.

We are not thinking about this, and we are not thinking about what we should do to deal with it. We also need to think about ways to warn people about these disasters before they strike. We live in a new world. In the old world we lived in—going back how far I can't say, maybe a century—we would turn on a siren outside. That is still of some value. It warns people and they respond to it. But in this day and age there has to be a better way. Let me suggest a few.

In some counties in my State, the disaster agency has on record all of the telephone numbers of all of the residents. If something is coming, their phone is going to ring too, not just the siren outside that maybe they don't hear because they are sleeping or because the television is too loud but the telephone is going to ring too. That is something we need to make standard across this country so there is a way to reach everyone.

I don't know this because I am a liberal arts lawyer. What do I know about these things? It seems to me that we ought to be able to deal with some mechanism that allows people to receive a notice when there is a warning going out of something disastrous on the way. I think that ought to be doable. I am working with people in FEMA and others to talk about that possibility.

The point I wish to make is this: I think we have an obligation to reopen a conversation which we have walked away from. There is not a chance that we are going to pass significant legislation on this floor this year when it comes to climate change and what we need to do about it. There is little or no chance that we will even get a ma-

jority—perhaps a majority; maybe not 60—to acknowledge this is a problem we could do anything about. But for us to ignore this is to ignore the obvious. Things are getting worse. Future generations will see even more challenges than we do today, and those of us with the responsibility to serve and lead need to at least stand and engage the conversation, engage the dialogue with the American people about this issue.

I urge my colleagues all across the political spectrum to take a look at the reality and to stop turning their head and looking away. What is happening out there with our weather patterns is something that needs to be acknowledged and something we need to respond to.

GAS PRICES

Mr. President, one other thing I wish to say is that as I went home, the tornado was the first item of discussion, but the second was gasoline prices. I went through the suburbs of Chicago Friday night and saw a gasoline station with gas at \$4.09 a gallon. It got a little more reasonable as I went through deep southern Illinois, but it was still very expensive.

We have seen a significant increase, but those of us who have been around know that isn't the first time. I could dust off my springtime press release that I put out every year expressing outrage with the oil companies for gasoline price increases. It happens every spring before Easter. Usually, after all of the politicians get red in the face and sputter and run out of things to say cursing the oil companies it kind of moderates in May or June and then, get ready, it is coming again during the summer vacation season.

We are not helpless but we are certainly at the mercy of oil companies which, even when investigated by major government agencies, can't be found to have engaged in any conspiracy or collusion, though it seems passing strange that the same gas stations in town after town watch their prices go up in lockstep day after day and week after week.

There are those who think they have a good, quick, easy answer and can't understand why the rest of the world isn't cheering them on. They want to drill their way out of this situation. They believe if we find enough oil in America, gasoline prices will come down and we are going to find ourselves oil independent. By last measure, the United States has about 3 percent of the world's reserve of petroleum. We consume each year 25 percent. Drilling our way out of this is physically impossible. Yet that doesn't mean we shouldn't look for new, environmentally responsible and safe sources for oil.

Here is the record: Domestic oil production is at the highest level in 8 years. We would never believe it, hearing speeches from the other side of the aisle. In 2011, U.S. crude oil production reached its highest level since 2003, and we are now drilling more than ever before. The number of oil drilling rigs in

the United States is at a record high—quadrupling over the past 3 years of the Obama administration.

Between oil and gas drilling rigs, the United States now has more rigs at work than the rest of the world combined. Let me repeat that: Between oil and gas drilling rigs, the United States now has more rigs at work than the rest of the world combined. Those who are saying there is lack of effort don't know the obvious. We keep adding more. The administration has announced a new offshore oil and gas development program—they want to do it carefully after the BP spill of 2 years ago—which will open more than 75 percent of our potential offshore oil and gas resources.

Last year, Americans relied less on foreign oil than at any time in the past 16 years. Even the American Petroleum Institute agrees that American producers and refiners are producing more oil and reducing our reliance on imports. The American Petroleum Institute has said without these two factors, today's prices might be even higher.

We simply cannot drill our way to lower gasoline prices. The President has proposed an approach that is balanced, and it is an approach with vision. It gets beyond the press release of the moment or Presidential campaign rhetoric.

The President recently announced new fuel efficiency standards for cars and light-duty trucks that will save Americans \$1.7 trillion and reduce oil consumption by 2.2 million barrels per day by 2025. My wife and I drive a Ford Fusion hybrid. I looked at Consumer Reports, and it is still rated very highly. We get over 30 miles a gallon. Prius does even better—over 40 miles a gallon. Toyota Camry is somewhere in the upper thirties. There are ways to reduce the use of gasoline with more fuel-efficient vehicles. I can tell my colleagues I don't believe our family makes any sacrifice when it comes to comfort and safety while driving this Ford.

The administration has also finalized the first ever national fuel efficiency standards for heavy-duty trucks, vans, and buses. These standards will reduce oil consumption by over 500 million barrels, saving the owners more than \$50 billion in fuel costs.

The Department of Energy will make \$30 million available for a new research competition to find ways to harness our abundant supplies of domestic natural gas for vehicles.

There is no magic bullet that can bring Americans lower gas prices—not drill baby, drill, and not the Keystone Pipeline in and of itself. Senator HUTCHISON stated that the Keystone XL Pipeline would transport 830,000 barrels of crude oil from Canada to refineries in Texas and that oil would provide Americans with 34 million gallons of gas a day.

Unfortunately, Senator HUTCHISON's statement doesn't quite match up with

the testimony of the oil companies. Canada's oil production ships less than half of its current pipeline capacity to the United States. There is plenty of room for Canada to ship more right now without a new pipeline.

Existing pipeline capacity would offer 4.2 million barrels per day of crude oil to be transported from Canada to the United States. However, in 2010, Canada exported less than half of it—1.9 billion barrels a day—with existing pipelines. Even doubling Canada's current production levels would not fill the Keystone XL Pipeline or bring an additional 830,000 barrels a day to gulf refineries in the Texas region. So 830,000 barrels of crude oil simply can't produce 34 million gallons of gasoline. Even the best refiners could produce only about half that amount of gasoline.

I might also add that one of the things that is troubling to some of us is when the TransCanada Company was asked in a hearing in the House by Congressman ED MARKEY of Massachusetts whether the oil coming down from Canada through the Keystone XL Pipeline would be used for domestic consumption in the United States, he said he couldn't make that promise. So this argument that the Keystone XL Pipeline is going to reduce gas prices, first, that pipeline is in the future; second, there is existing pipeline capacity that is unused; and, third, the company that is transporting it will make no promise that it will be used in the United States. It may not have any impact on our gasoline prices whatsoever.

We just can't drill our way or "pipeline" our way out of this problem. One pipeline isn't going to solve the problem. Drilling in pristine areas such as the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is not going to solve the problem. We need a coordinated, balanced approach. We need to walk away from the heightened campaign rhetoric into a rational discussion about an energy policy for America: a balanced policy and one that is respectful of our environment, provides the energy we need for economic growth, as well as looks to innovation and green energy approaches that will create new businesses and new jobs for the 21st century in America.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

REMEMBERING NICK BACON

• Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. President, today I wish to honor a true American hero who always had our veterans at heart—Nick Bacon.

Bacon served in the U.S. Army from 1963–1984 serving two deployments to Vietnam. As a staff sergeant during his second tour, Nick solidified his legacy as a hero.

On August 26, 1968, while commanding a squad of the first platoon of Company B, 4th Battalion, in an oper-

ation west of Tam Ky in Vietnam, Bacon destroyed several enemy positions with hand grenades. When his platoon leader was wounded, Bacon led the platoon to destroy remaining enemy positions. Bacon also took command of a second platoon, 3rd Platoon, Bravo Company, when its leader was killed and rallied both platoons against the enemy. Providing cover for evacuation of wounded, Bacon climbed a tank to fire at the enemy, a move that exposed himself to enemy fire. He was credited with killing at least four enemy soldiers and destroying an anti-tank gun.

President Nixon awarded Nick the Medal of Honor for his bravery, heroics and valiant actions during this battle.

Nick's heroics extended well beyond the battlefield. He exemplified what it means to be a Medal of Honor recipient in the way he lived his daily life through his service to others.

After retiring from the military, Nick continued his commitment to his fellow soldiers by fulfilling the needs of our veterans. He is considered by many in Arkansas as the Father of Veterans Affairs in the Natural State. Under his guidance as the director of Arkansas Department of Veterans Affairs, State veterans saw the completion of the Fayetteville VA Long-term Care Facility, the development of the Arkansas State Veterans Cemetery and the creation of the Arkansas Veterans' Coalition.

Nick's leadership in the department helped countless veterans in Arkansas receive the benefits they deserve. His actions throughout his life have inspired selfless service and sacrifice. Nick's legacy will live on as we remember his consistent passion for veterans and his tireless advocacy on behalf of the men and women who wore our Nation's uniform.●

RECOGNIZING PHELPS MEMORIAL HEALTH CENTER

• Mr. JOHANNES. Mr. President, today I wish to applaud the spirit of community betterment that led to a beautiful new wing of the Phelps Memorial Health Center in Holdrege, NE. As often occurs across our great State, citizens in the area saw a need and rose to meet it. They joined forces with officials at the hospital and set a determined course, without holding out their hands for taxpayer dollars to make it happen. They recognized that high quality medical care is part of the lifeblood of the community and knew the hospital would benefit from renovation and expansion. So, they rolled up their sleeves and came together to create the vision, raise the money and turn the dirt.

Some doubted the community would accomplish a multimillion dollar expansion during a recession in a rural area without taxpayer dollars. Those doubters underestimated the motivation of Nebraskans who love their community. Citizens in the area have proven that there is no limit to what can be