

Mr. Speaker, I along with fellow members of the Harris County Delegation stand together to honor and recognize the sacrifice of four fallen Firefighters who died last Friday, May 31, 2013 in the City of Houston, Texas serving in the line of duty.

We offer our heartfelt sympathy to the families and fellow firefighters of those who died.

We are united with the City of Houston in grief over the deaths of Captain EMT Matthew Renaud, Engineer Operator EMT Robert Bebee, Firefighter EMT Robert Garner and Probationary Firefighter Anne Sullivan who died on Friday, while searching a blazing hotel and restaurant for possible trapped victims.

In the 118 year history of the Houston City Fire Department this was the greatest loss of life of their members while on duty. Their heroism will not be soon forgotten nor their sacrifice dimmed by time.

EXCERPTS FROM THE FIREMEN'S CREED

I have no ambition in this world but one and that is to be a fireman . . . We strive to preserve from destruction the wealth of the world . . . We are the defenders from fire . . . But, above all, our proudest endeavor is to save lives of men, the work of GOD himself.

We ask that our colleagues join us in a moment of silence in their memory.

We wish a speedy recovery for all those firefighters injured during Friday's tragedy.

MENTAL HEALTH TREATMENT

(Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, today the White House held a conference on mental health and the importance of removing the stigma associated with seeking mental health treatment. The conference dovetailed with an announcement by the Department of Veterans Affairs that it had met its goal to hire 1,600 new mental health professionals.

Despite the positive news from the VA, the President appropriately stated:

It's not enough to help more Americans seek treatment. We also have to make sure the treatment is there when they are ready to seek it.

I could not agree more, for a major barrier for individuals seeking care is not just access, but the stigma that is oftentimes associated with seeking professional help—especially for our veteran population.

Thankfully, there is more we can do.

I encourage my colleagues to learn more about H.R. 2001, the Veterans E-Health & Telemedicine Support Act. This bipartisan, no-cost bill expands the number of qualified providers servicing our veteran population and also helps remove the stigma associated with seeking treatment through the expansion of telemedicine at the VA.

CONGRATULATING MARK CROGHAN

(Mr. SWALWELL of California asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SWALWELL of California. I rise today to recognize Mark Croghan, the longest serving school administrator from Castro Valley Unified School District, which is in my district, who will be retiring this year after 27 years of service in the East Bay.

Mark was raised and educated in Hayward, California. After a swimming career at Hayward High School, he earned a swimming scholarship to attend the University of California at Berkeley, where he received his college degree.

Mark began a long teaching career after college. He taught kids both in and out of the classroom, coaching a variety of sports, including swimming, basketball, softball, and he even served as the advisor for the ski team.

After receiving his master's degree in 1993, Mark began his administrative career as an assistant principal of Canyon Middle School in Castro Valley. Since then, Mark has served as a principal at both Marshall Elementary and Canyon Middle School.

Over his career as an administrator, Mark has created a positive learning environment and has prioritized the needs of students and their families. His leadership surely will be missed.

But if Mark's past service is any evidence of what to expect of him in the future, surely we have a lot in store for what his public service will bring to our community.

I wish Mark the best in his retirement. It is well earned.

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LINE DANCING AT THE IRS

(Mr. POE of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, the taxman has gone wild. The IRS spent \$50 million on boondoggle conferences. At one conference, the agency declined the cheaper government group rate and instead opted for perks including stays at swanky presidential suites, free drinks, and high-dollar tickets to the L.A. Angels baseball game. Now, isn't that lovely?

The IRS spent thousands on touchy-feely speakers, including a \$17,000 lecture about "leadership through art." More like the art of wasting money.

The taxacrats-turned film-makers spent \$50,000 for videos, including spoofs of "Star Trek," "Gilligan's Island," and line dancing to "Cupid Shuffle." Cupid Shuffle? Are you kidding me?

Mr. Speaker, this is corrupt, contemptible behavior. Ironically, instead of tracking our tax dollars, the Internal Revenue Squanderers waste tax dollars.

The head of the IRS says the expenses were inappropriate. Well, no kidding.

When the revenueurs find inappropriate behavior by taxpayers, the taxpayers pay more taxes with interest.

The IRS should return the \$50 million with interest to the Treasury, and it's time it audited the taxman.

And that's just the way it is.

SAFE CLIMATE CAUCUS

(Mr. WAXMAN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. WAXMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today as a member of the Safe Climate Caucus to urge the House to act on climate change.

Last month, scientists recorded atmospheric concentrations of carbon dioxide at more than 400 parts per million. The long-term consequences of this development are going to get worse in the future, but we're already seeing the immediate impacts today.

The Philadelphia Inquirer has recently reported on the sea level rising along the Delaware Bay and the spring season coming earlier to the Philadelphia region. I will insert these two articles into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

And just last month, the Natural Resources Defense Council released a report on the cost of climate change, showing that the Federal Government spent \$100 billion on disaster relief last year. That's more than we spent on education, transportation, or even non-discretionary spending on health.

And, yet, not only does the Republican majority in the House refuse to address climate change; they're actively pursuing legislation that is sure to make things worse. We must address this problem now.

ALONG N.J. BAY, RISING SEA DRAWS EVER CLOSER

[The Inquirer, Apr. 29, 2013]

[By Sandy Bauers]

The night Meghan Wren got stranded by floodwaters and had to sleep in her car, she knew it was time for a reckoning.

She had been driving to her waterfront home along the Delaware Bay in South Jersey. As she crossed the wide marsh in the dark, the water rose quickly. It became too deep—ahead and behind. She had to stop and wait.

To her, no longer were climate-change predictions an abstract idea. Sea level has been rising, taking her waterfront with it.

"This isn't something that's coming," she later told a group of bay shore residents and officials. "It's here. We just happen to live in a place that will affect us sooner."

Wren lives on tiny Money Island—more a peninsula of bayfront land with about 40 small homes and trailers in Cumberland County.

Just visible across the grassy marsh is Gandys Beach with 80 homes. Farther south, Fortescue with 250 homes. All three are steadily disappearing.

On the Atlantic coast, beach replenishment masks the effects of sea-level rise. But along the low-lying bay shore, veined with creeks, the problems are striking.

With each nor'easter, more of the beachfronts erode. More of the streets and driveways flood. Septic systems, inundated with salt water, are failing.

"We're seeing beyond the normal damage," said Steve Eisenhauer, a regional director with the Natural Lands Trust, which has a

7,000-acre preserve in the area “We see the problems getting worse.”

In the last century, sea level in the bay has risen a foot, gauges show, partly because the warming ocean is expanding and polar ice is melting. Also, New Jersey is sinking.

All the while, humans have been pumping more and more greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. The planet’s average temperature has increased.

“All those links are very strong,” said Pennsylvania State University’s Raymond Najjar Jr., an expert on climate change in Mid-Atlantic estuaries.

“The reason the sea is rising as fast as it is in the Delaware Bay is human-induced climate change,” he said, echoing many experts.

Sea level is rising faster now than in the early 20th century, and scientists expect it to rise even faster in the future.

The three towns’ beachfronts and marshes have always been nibbled away by ship wakes, storms, and more typical erosion—but sea-level rise, combined with more frequent and intense storms, makes them all worse.

Can these three communities, all within Downe Township, adapt to climate change?

Or is there a point beyond which no amount of money can stop the sea? Should everyone relocate?

It’s been done. After a \$1.8 million seawall in nearby Sea Breeze failed a year after being built, the state bought out the 23 remaining households three years ago for \$3.3 million. Tiny Thompson’s Beach and Moore’s Beach are gone, too.

These are special places, where people look out their windows and see eagles soaring. The bay turns red at sunset. Salt marshes thick with aquatic life stretch for miles.

With marinas in Fortescue and Money Island, they are among the last places in South Jersey where people can access Delaware Bay—vital for generating support to preserve the rich habitat.

But, like Wren, residents sometimes see white caps in their driveways.

Downe officials have come up with a \$50 million plan to not only shore up the shore, but also add amenities across the township to draw tourists who could revive the economy.

The plan, which would cost the equivalent of \$31,500 per resident, calls for bulkheads and truckloads of sand, restrooms, picnic benches, nature-viewing areas, and a township visitor center.

Officials identified nearly 30 “potential” funders—from agencies to nonprofits. But many feel the project is a long shot. Meanwhile, bumper stickers are plastered on homes: “No retreat. Save the Bayshore communities.”

“I refuse to give up one house, one lot, one piece of land,” said Robert Campbell, Downe’s mayor. “These towns are 200 years old . . . Its a special place. We’ve got to preserve it.”

Their survival is also fiscally crucial: they represent half of Downe’s tax base.

He and others blame flooding not on sea-level rise but on the decline of dikes once used for salt hay farming. (Scientists say the dikes blocked the tides from naturally bolstering marshes with sediment.)

Campbell also blames the state for being too tough in issuing permits for bulkheads and jetties.

After Hurricane Irene struck in 2011, the town put up temporary bulkheads. The state issued violation notices. Now, those structures need restoration, too.

“WE CAN SURVIVE”

Before modern travel made all the Atlantic beaches so easily accessible, Delaware Bay

was the shore that many Philadelphians went to.

In the late 1800s, Fortescue was the Cape May of the bay shore, with hotels and a boardwalk.

“We are so rich in our history,” said Dennis Cook of Money Island, who specified in his will that his ashes be thrown off his pier “We can survive.”

Or at least they feel compelled to try. Many residents are retirees who have sunk their savings into their homes. Now that prices have fallen, they can’t get out unless the state buys them out.

Nine Money Island property owners have already requested that.

One is Tony Novak, owner of the local marina. He wants to stay, and thinks he can for the near future, but “there is no doubt that the only reasonable, logical, long-term approach is strategic retreat.”

“I have neighbors,” he said, “and all they have left in the world is being washed away.”

In October, Wren held a forum on what many consider the hot issue for the bay shore: “Rising Tides.”

About 100 people went to the nearby hamlet of Bivalve on the Maurice River, and filled a chilly room in a historic shipyard shed owned by the nonprofit Bayshore Discovery Project, which Wren founded.

It owns New Jersey’s tall ship, a historic oyster schooner called the A.J. Meerwald, and the walls of the room were lined with vintage oyster cans.

Outside, docks built in the early 1900s still exist, and old-timers notice that the tide comes up higher than it used to. On the serpentine Maurice River, erosion—a natural process worsened by sea-level rise—has almost cut through the bend at Bivalve. If it occurs, the docks might end up high and dry, and land to the east will flood.

Toward the bay are “ghost forests”—skeletons of trees killed by saltwater intrusion.

Upstream, a quarter century of bird counts shows that black vultures, a Southern species, are becoming more numerous.

In decline are American black ducks, which depend on a freshwater wild rice that is being depleted as saltier water moves up the Maurice River.

“The coast is changing,” Jennifer Adkins told the group in Bivalve that night.

The executive director of the Partnership for the Delaware Estuary, she cited research showing the dramatic loss of the bay’s wetlands. Nearly 5,000 football fields’ worth vanished from 1996 to 2006 alone, mostly from sea-level rise and erosion.

Wetlands protect coastal areas by absorbing water from storm surges, so losing these natural buffers makes the bay shore communities more vulnerable.

And then Matt Blake, then with the American Littoral Society, raised the topic few wanted to hear.

“Strategic retreat,” he said “The questions of whether to pull back or reinforce are going to come up again and again.”

He didn’t claim to have an answer. But he said solutions should be based on research, not emotion “We’ll never have enough resources to defend every community. Before we start spending on new roads and bridges and pipes, we have to run a cost-benefit analysis.”

But Campbell wouldn’t hear of it. “There seems to be a double standard between the Atlantic coast communities and the Delaware Bay,” the mayor said when he got to the lectern. A murmur of assent rose from the audience.

“I don’t hear anybody talking about retreat in Atlantic City,” he said. Or “moving the casinos back to Absecon.”

Still, he handed out a summary of township problems: collapsed pavement, eroded road shoulders, failing seawalls.

“Downe Township is just one hurricane away from becoming a bayfront statistic” like the three other abandoned towns.

Eleven days later, Hurricane Sandy hit. Bayfront houses were undermined, the sand washing out from under them. Front steps hung in the air. Decks and front rooms were gone.

Campbell said damage along the bay front totaled \$20 million; about 30 homes were destroyed.

“Sandy focused everybody’s attention,” Wren said. You can’t just quietly ignore [the rising ocean] anymore.”

REMOTE AND LITTLE CLOUT

The bay shore, unlike the Atlantic coast, is ill equipped to respond.

Cumberland County is remote, rural, and economically depressed, the poorest county in the state.

“They don’t have the population. They don’t have the tax base. They don’t have the votes,” said the trust’s Eisenhauer. “They don’t have the clout to get the funding they get on the Atlantic coast.”

Yet the area is hugely vulnerable. About 12 percent of the county’s population lives in a floodplain, according to a federal analysis. Ditto 6 percent of the schools, police stations, and other “critical facilities.” Plus 10 percent of the road miles.

Local leaders feel they aren’t getting much help.

Across the bay, Delaware has a climate-change action plan and a sea-level rise advisory group. It has listed strategies for its bay shore and analyzed the costs and benefits.

“The first step is to have rock-solid science and good economics,” said the state’s environmental head, Collin O’Mara.

In New Jersey, Gov. Christie closed the Office of Climate Change, although a spokesman said several agencies deal with the issue, and many efforts have been launched since Sandy.

Department of Environmental Protection spokesman Larry Hajna said officials visited Downe “to see what we can do.”

“Sea-level rise is clearly one of the biggest concerns along the bay,” he said. “But at this point there aren’t any long-term answers.” Federal, state, and local entities would have to get involved, he said.

Ultimately, the question may not be how to keep the waterfront intact but how to get to the towns in the first place.

A new sea-level rise mapping tool from Rutgers University shows that with one more foot of rise—easily possible before century’s end—the roads through the marshes would be underwater at high tide.

RUDE AWAKENING

Wren thought she would have more time.

She imagined that the changes “would be far enough in the future that I could figure out how to manage it”—maybe by working from home during floods. Not anymore.

She and her husband, Jesse Briggs, subscribe to an alert system for when higher-than-usual tides are predicted.

But in December, an alert went out at 3 a.m. When Wren woke up, it was already too late. Her Prius was swamped. Now, she drives a hybrid SUV that is six inches higher.

She thinks it was hubris for humans to build on the shore. And “it seems like folly to be trying to control nature” now.

But she’s lived on the water her whole life. Briggs is captain of the A.J. Meerwald. They named their son Delbay—for Delaware Bay.

“I can kind of see it from all sides,” Wren said of the debate over Money Island and its neighbors. So far, it comes down to this: “If the township decides to keep the infrastructure, I’m committed to keeping my house.”

[From the Inquirer, May 22, 2013]
SPRING COMES SOONER TO PHILA.—AND THAT’S NOT GOOD
(By Sandy Sabers, Inquirer Staff Writer)

One in an occasional series about the regional effects of climate change and how we're coping.

On May 2, 1908, as he strolled along the Perkiomen Creek in Montgomery County, Bayard Long collected a flowering sprig of redbud.

He mounted it, labeled it, and added it to the herbarium at the Academy of Natural Sciences, where he was the curator.

A century later, but just miles away in Chester County, botany graduate student Zoe Panchen also found a redbud in flower. But this time, the short-lived blooms had appeared much earlier. It was April 13, 2010.

Those two data points—and 2,537 others that Panchen analyzed—show a dramatic change in this region's flowering plants.

On average, about 20 species of common spring plants are flowering a day earlier every decade, Panchen concluded.

That scenario is happening across the biological spectrum in ways that could put nature out of sync, worsening pest problems and helping invasive species to flourish.

Migrating birds are arriving earlier, frogs are calling earlier, and insects are emerging earlier than they were decades ago, according to an analysis of the Northeastern United States by a national group focused on phenology—the study of all the things that animals and plants do that are related to the seasons.

Researchers link the numerous shifts they're seeing to climate change—mostly, the warmer springs associated with it.

Individual years are highly variable, of course. Last year was the earliest spring in the North American record, based on "indicators" such as plant leaf-out and flowering. This year in the Philadelphia region, temperatures were slightly cooler than normal. But many creatures shift their cycles to go with the overall trend.

"Climate change is here, it's now, it's in your backyard: that's the way we put it," said ecologist Jake Weltzin, who directs the National Phenology Network, a federal program that is enlisting citizen scientists to gather data on the plants and animals in their own backyards.

Weltzin and others acknowledge that many factors affect living things—habitat loss, pollution, urban heat islands.

But as they try to understand the changes in timing and shifts in abundance, again and again, climate change appears dominant.

"If you have multiple species that aren't even related, and they're all doing something similar, it's likely that there's a shared cause," said Keith Russell, science coordinator with Audubon Pennsylvania. "Climate change is the one thing that makes the most sense."

An international coalition of scientists that produced the seminal analyses of climate change noted in their latest report, in 2007, that phenology "is perhaps that simplest process in which to track . . . responses to climate change."

Even then, they were seeing it. Numerous studies had documented a progressively earlier spring—by two to five days a decade, the group said.

The evidence continues to mount.

A longtime study of lilacs and honeysuckles across North America shows the plants are leafing out several days earlier than in the early 1900s.

Ten bee species have accelerated their emergence date by roughly 10 days over the last 130 years, a Rutgers University entomologist and others reported in a 2011 paper.

Several studies have pointed to earlier bird migrations. One analysis found that 17 forest species were arriving in Pennsylvania earlier over the last 40 or so years—three days for the cerulean warbler to 25 days for the purple finch.

In addition, a National Audubon Society study looking at 305 species found that birds' wintering grounds had shifted northward an average of 35 miles in four decades.

In Pennsylvania and New Jersey, black vultures moving up from the south are becoming more numerous.

"We're seeing this in real time," said Eric Stiles, president of New Jersey Audubon, whose data collectors are part of a national breeding bird survey that is seeing species show up two and three weeks early. "It's all happening in our lifetime."

Some of these changes in patterns may not be bad. They're just changes.

But some changes have been linked to pest outbreaks. A longer growing season for some plants means a lengthening of the allergy season.

Scientists don't know how the changes will reverberate. "If you tug at anything in nature, it's a web," said Gary Stolz, manager of the John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge at Tinicum. "You pull one little string, and it's tied to everything else on Earth."

Researchers have found some cases where early bird arrivals put them out of sync with the sweet spot of insect emergence—their dinner.

Plants that shift their bloom times earlier could be damaged by even a normally timed frost—a potential disaster if the flower happens to be a crop species. Last year in Michigan, frost damage to fruit trees totaled half a billion dollars.

Organizers may need to rethink the timing of a few festivals to boot.

Last year, the parade for cherry blossoms in Washington happened just as the flowers were beginning to fade. The town's cherry tree cultivars now bloom an average of seven days earlier than in the 1970s.

Scientists say much more research is needed.

Some important data are coming from citizen scientists—people who go out in their backyards and simply notice what's going on. Even with inevitable mistakes, the bigger picture emerges.

Observers are reporting leaf-outs and flowering times to Project BudBurst, nighttime trills and croaks to FrogWatch USA, and backyard bird sightings to Cornell University's FeederWatch project.

Diane House, a physician who lives in Newtown Square, tracks beeches and red maples for the Phenology Network's "Nature's Notebook."

The granddaddy of citizen-science efforts, it has nearly 2,000 data gatherers. Its more than 1.8 million records on plants, trees, animals, and birds are already informing research, including a paper showing how ruby-throated hummingbirds are arriving in North America 12 to 18 days earlier than in the 1960s.

In 2010, with a grant from Toyota, Moravian College biologist Diane Husic began a local version, the Eastern Pennsylvania Phenology Project.

She now has 50 regular contributors—master gardeners, nature center staffers, even grade-school teachers who take students on a recess walk past the same trees every day.

Scientists also have a mother lode of data from more than a century ago—before the Industrial Revolution, when temperatures and CO2 levels began to rise.

In the mid-1800s in Concord, Mass., Henry David Thoreau noted enough about the flowering plants of the region that a modern Boston University professor was able to determine that, on average, spring flowers in Concord are blooming 20 days earlier. The work is being featured in a special exhibit at the Concord Museum through Sept. 15.

Philadelphia's Academy of Natural Sciences of Drexel University is known for its wealth of early data.

Its herbarium—with 400,000 specimens from Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware, and Maryland—was crucial to Panchen, who at the time was in the Longwood graduate program at the University of Delaware.

In recent years, volunteers at the North American Bird Phenology Program have begun to transcribe more than 1.2 million bird-migration records—most of them handwritten on old cards—that were collected between 1881 and 1970.

The idea is to digitize the records and make them more researcher-friendly.

None too soon. Within the last month, the level of heat-trapping carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, as measured at a key station in Hawaii, has breached levels that haven't been seen in millions of years.

"All the models say changes are going to accelerate," Husic said. The more data, the better.

AMERICAN FAMILIES CANNOT AFFORD OBAMACARE

(Mr. FLEMING asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. FLEMING. Mr. Speaker, two-thirds of the uninsured say they may not purchase insurance under ObamaCare. A new survey of the uninsured says only 19 percent will opt for coverage by January 1, meaning that only the sickest will buy insurance, driving up the cost of health care for all of us.

In fact, 61 percent expect their health care costs to go up as a result of ObamaCare. You may recall that earlier this year a Federal analysis estimated that the cheapest health insurance plan available for a family in 2016 will cost no less than \$20,000 a year per family.

And it's not just the uninsured who are filled with uncertainty about ObamaCare. More than two-thirds of small business owners surveyed by the U.S. Chamber say ObamaCare will make it harder for them to hire more employees. Many are busily converting employees to part-time as we speak.

American families cannot afford ObamaCare. It must be repealed, just as I and my Federal Republicans, and even some Democrats, have voted to do.

CONGRESSIONAL BLACK CAUCUS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. WEBER of Texas). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2013, the gentleman from Nevada (Mr. HORSFORD) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. HORSFORD. Mr. Speaker, tonight the Congressional Black Caucus comes before this body and the American people for the next hour to talk about important issues facing our country.

Tonight, we will discuss the problem of poverty in America and what we can do to bring more Americans into the middle class. From SNAP to the earned income tax credit, from Head Start to TRIO and GEAR UP, we have effective programs that reduce poverty and open