

I believe these types of proposals are a good starting point for a serious discussion about entitlement reform. I hope my colleagues on both sides of the aisle will want to be part of this conversation.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I will yield the floor for my distinguished friend from Florida, Senator NELSON, with the understanding that I will be recognized at the conclusion of his remarks.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Florida.

GUN VIOLENCE

Mr. NELSON. Mr. President, I wish to address the issue of gun violence. I think my colleague from Rhode Island is going to be addressing this issue on which he has shown tremendous leadership. It will be a continuing issue over the next several weeks as we get ready to consider legislation.

My approach is one of common sense and moderation. I come to this issue as a hunter, as a kid who grew up on a ranch having guns all my life, being very familiar and comfortable with guns and to this day enjoying hunting, although my hunting has primarily been limited to quail, but I enjoy that so much with my son, although I might say that I was hunting Burmese pythons in the Everglades last week, but people do not have to hunt them with guns. Since they are taking over the Everglades, they are caught and then euthanized and, hopefully, we can stop this proliferation of Burmese pythons that are eating up everything in the Everglades, including alligators. But that is a subject for another day.

The subject before us is gun violence. Is there anybody who does not realistically, with common sense, think we should do a criminal background check for anyone who is purchasing a gun? That is about as common sense, as moderate a position one can take given the circumstances we find ourselves in with people who go in and start slaughtering innocent children. Maybe that is the one thing we can get over 60 votes for in this Chamber in order to pass and maybe they will consider it in the other body, the House of Representatives.

Secondly, is there anybody who thinks we should have clips which I showed with the sheriff of Orange County in Orlando last week—clips that are this long and hold 60 rounds? The law I voted to extend back in 2004 said clips of more than 10 would not be allowed. Is that not reasonable? Is that not common sense? I know how people say, Oh, a person can change a clip in a few seconds. But should we make it easier for a killer so he does not have to change the clip?

The question is one of balance, one of common sense. When I go hunting, I don't have any need for anything more

than 10; indeed, I don't have any need for anything more than a few. In quail hunting, of course, if it is an over-and-under, a hunter has two shells because that is basically the number of shots he is going to get off when the quail flush.

The third element is also one of common sense. The sheriff of Orange County and I held up two guns they confiscated from people using them for criminal purposes. I held up an AK-47. The sheriff held up a Bushmaster. The AK-47 is a derivative of the same weapon used by the North Vietnamese against us in the Vietnam war. I simply asked the question: Are these guns for hunting or are they for killing? The legitimate answer is they are not for hunting, they are for killing. That is what they were designed for, as an assault-type weapon in a combat circumstance.

So how do we approach the legitimate recognition of the second amendment, the right to bear arms, with assault weapons? It seems as though among people of good will using common sense and moderation, we can come to some definitions that would ban those types of assault weapons.

I wish to conclude my remarks by saying this is a lot of politics. Some of us are portrayed, as a result of taking this position of moderation and common sense, as if we were not for the second amendment. That is totally false. Of course I support the second amendment. I just gave my history: growing up in the country, having guns all my life, and still having a number of guns in my house. I support the second amendment. I do so in light of the circumstances in our society today that have changed.

My final comment: In all of the politics going on about this issue, the advocacy organization called the National Rifle Association is not the same NRA that grew up representing the interests of hunters and sportsmen. It has become an advocacy group for gun manufacturers that want to sell more of their manufactured products. So it becomes an economic issue to people instead of one of common sense and moderation.

We need to draw that distinction. This organization—the NRA—has gone to the extreme not only, as we saw, in their response to the elementary school killings in Connecticut, but they have gone to the extreme in my State by advocating in the State legislature getting in between the doctor-patient relationship as to what a doctor can inquire about with regard to a patient concerning a wound that might have come from a gunshot.

This is extremism in the extreme. We ought to call it what it is as we are debating this issue.

Moderation and common sense is the answer to this issue facing us.

Mr. President, I wish to thank my colleague from Rhode Island for his courtesies extended, and I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Rhode Island.

NATIONAL CLIMATE ASSESSMENT

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. The Senator from Florida is welcome. It was one of my great pleasures to sit next to him on the Intelligence Committee for these many years. To tell a brief story, whenever Senator NELSON said, Well, I am just a country lawyer from Florida, everybody on the committee perked up, because they had learned from experience that one of the more withering and devastating cross-examinations of a witness was about to ensue. It is always my pleasure to extend courtesy to the Senator from Florida.

I am here once again to talk about climate change. Alarms are ringing, including the voices of the overwhelming majority of scientists, and indeed the voices of the overwhelming majority of Americans. But here in Congress, it is still time for us to wake up.

Climate change is not a problem that will go away; human activity is driving global change. Climate change is not a problem that can wait; we see its effects all around us. But climate change is a problem that can be solved.

We can and we must leave a healthy environment and clean energy sources to our children and grandchildren. The missing piece is Congress. Congress is sleepwalking through history. It is time to wake up.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration has confirmed that 2012 was the hottest year in the contiguous United States on record, ever. This one wasn't a close call; it did not come down to the wire; 2012 was a full degree Fahrenheit higher than the previous record year—a full degree Fahrenheit higher than the previous record year. To put that into context, 1 degree may not sound like a lot, but when you average it across an entire year, it is a huge shift. The previous warmest U.S. year on record, 1998, was 4.2 degrees Fahrenheit warmer than the coldest year on record, 1917. If you take the warmest year on record—1998 until now—and you take the coldest year on record—1917—the entire span between them is only 4.2 degrees Fahrenheit. This is a jump of a full degree in Fahrenheit in just 1 year. By the way, 2.1 degrees Fahrenheit over 2011 is a seriously big change.

We are just starting to heat up. The most optimistic estimate for the end of the century is a 2-degrees-Fahrenheit increase. That is the most optimistic estimate. More likely scenarios—ones that assume continued current levels of greenhouse gas emissions—project for the continental United States an increase of between 4 and 10 degrees Fahrenheit. Worldwide, last year was the 36th year in a row with an annual global temperature above the 20th-century average—36 straight years above average. In fact, the 12 years of this century, of the 21st century, 2000 to 2012, every single one of them is in the

top 14 warmest global averages on record. Mr. President, 12 for 12, they are in the top 14 warmest global average years on record. Since 1970, global average temperatures have increased more than one-quarter of a degree Fahrenheit every decade.

As the vast majority of climate scientists have confirmed, natural climate forces alone simply do not explain this global temperature trend, nor do they explain regional temperature trends. They do not explain the land surface temperature trends. They do not explain the ocean surface temperature trends. Only models that include the greenhouse effect caused by carbon dioxide emissions explain these trends. When I use the word “explain,” I use it in its scientific sense—i.e., establish a significantly, statistically meaningful correlation between the two.

The United States does a regular national climate assessment. The assessment is based on scientific, peer-reviewed research and technical reports from top scientists at Federal agencies such as NOAA and NASA, the Departments of Agriculture and Energy, and the U.S. Geological Survey. Now, bear in mind that NASA scientists have just put a rover on to the surface of the planet Mars. These aren't people who get things very badly wrong.

The recent draft assessment paints a clear picture of what is happening in America right now. It says:

U.S. average temperature has increased by about 1.5 degrees Fahrenheit since 1895; more than 80 percent of this increase has occurred since 1980. The most recent decade was the nation's hottest on record.

The National Climate Assessment is also required by law to project what is to come. The draft assessment says:

U.S. temperatures will continue to rise, with the next few decades projected to see another 2 degrees Fahrenheit to 4 degrees Fahrenheit of warming in most areas. The amount of warming by the end of the century is projected to correspond closely to the cumulative global emissions of greenhouse gases up to that time: roughly . . . 5 degrees Fahrenheit to 10 degrees Fahrenheit . . . assuming continued increases in emissions.

I represent the Ocean State, Rhode Island. I see that the new senior Senator from Hawaii is presiding, and certainly he represents an ocean State too, so let's talk about oceans.

Atmospheric warming brings sea level rise, and as global sea levels rise, storms, waves, and tides wash ever higher against the coast, putting our coastal infrastructure at greater and greater risk of storm surges, flooding, and erosion. Five million Americans live within 4 feet of the high-tide line—it is not just us in Rhode Island, it is not just your folks in Hawaii—and it has real human consequences. Hurricane Sandy, I hope, reminded us of that.

Already, sea level rise is up about 8 inches over the past century. These changes are very evident to Rhode Islanders. We have been monitoring the ocean for centuries. Just outside Nar-

ragansett Bay, the crew of the Brenton Reef Lightship took nearly 22,000 ocean temperature measurements between 1878 and 1942. We have been at this a while. Alarming, the modern temperature record from points around Narragansett Bay shows that since the 1960s, the annual temperature in Narragansett Bay has increased about 4 degrees Fahrenheit. This has real-life effect—crushing our winter flounder fishery, for instance. Long-term data from the tide gauges in Newport, RI, show an increase in average sea level of nearly 10 inches since 1930. The rate of sea level rise at Newport is accelerating too. In southern Rhode Island, local erosion rates doubled from 1990 to 2006. Some of our freshwater wetlands near the coast are already transitioning to salt marsh.

Oceans warm and expand. Snow, glaciers, and icecaps melt into the sea. And the sea level is projected to rise between 1 and 4 feet by the end of this century.

Deniers should look to the assessments of our defense and intelligence agencies. Diego Garcia, a small island south of India, is the home to a logistics hub for U.S. and British forces in the Middle East and to Air Force Satellite Control Network equipment. The average elevation of Diego Garcia is approximately 4 feet. This installation is threatened by inundation from slow, steady, sea level rise, set aside storms. Norfolk naval air station and naval base on the southern end of the Chesapeake Bay is the Navy's largest supply center and home to the U.S. Atlantic fleet. Eglin Air Force Base on Florida's gulf coast is the largest Air Force base in the world. Both bases are threatened by rising seas.

The oceans are rising because they are getting warmer. Water expands as it warms. Warmer seas also threaten multibillion-dollar maritime industries here in our country, industries such as fishing, tourism, and energy. When water is too warm, it stresses fish, coral, and other sea life. As I said, the winter flounder catch in Rhode Island has been crushed by warming water. When water is too warm, it can't be used for cooling powerplants. That is what caused last summer's shutdown of Unit 2 at the Millstone powerplant in Connecticut. The temperature of the water in Long Island Sound climbed to over 75 degrees Fahrenheit—too warm to cool a nuclear reactor.

Carbon dioxide, of course, doesn't just warm the atmosphere and warm the oceans, carbon dioxide also gets absorbed into the oceans, and the oceans become more acidic. Carbon pollution by humans has caused a nearly 30 percent increase in the acidity of the ocean, and this ocean acidification is certainly caused by human activity.

As the draft National Climate Assessment explains, ocean acidification harms species such as oysters, coral, and even the plankton—like the humble pteropod I have spoken about before on this floor—that comprise the

base of the ocean food chain, a food chain to which humankind is inextricably linked.

For my ocean State, carbon pollution presents a triple whammy from the sea: higher seas, warming seas, and more acidic seas. But the draft National Climate Assessment shows that you don't have to be an ocean State to be at risk. In the far North, Alaska is threatened by the loss of permafrost. Most of the permafrost in Alaska is tens of thousands of years old. It is a natural wonder whose loss threatens structures, such as buildings and roads, as well as plants and wildlife that over many centuries have adapted to that frozen tundra environment. In the Midwest, the draft assessment warns of “the occurrence of extreme events such as heat waves, droughts, and floods. In the long term, combined stresses associated with climate change are expected to decrease agricultural productivity, especially without significant advances in genetic and agronomic technology.”

The dangers of carbon pollution are bearing down on us all. In the face of the clear warning of this national assessment, there are some who counsel surrender. The oil industry-backed Institute for Energy Research says this:

If the worst-case scenarios are correct, then even very strong action by the Federal, State, and local governments in the United States will do very little to alter the global climate.

The polluters deny the ability of the United States to lead. Well, they are wrong. They are wrong. They are very wrong. With our vast economy, with our ingenuity, and with the trust the rest of the world has put on our experiment in democracy, we can lead. We can lead the world toward a cleaner future. To do any less would be, as President Obama said in his inaugural address, to betray our children and future generations. I will not countenance that betrayal, and neither will most Americans. A recent poll conducted by Yale University and George Mason University found that a large majority of Americans—77 percent—say climate change should be a priority for President Obama and for all of us here in Congress. Yet, for the last 2 years, opponents and skeptics, polluters and lobbyists, special interests and their paid-for front organizations have blocked Congress from acting to reduce carbon pollution and reduce the threat of climate change.

Today, a very distinguished Member of the House of Representatives who has worked on environmental issues for 38 years in this building, Representative HENRY WAXMAN, and I announced the formation of a bicameral House and Senate climate change task force to fight back. We welcome all Members of Congress, regardless of political party, who recognize the urgency of what is happening to our world all around us and who feel a duty to our descendants. We intend to focus sufficient attention on what is happening in the world

around us to at last—at long last—reduce the carbon pollution that is causing it.

It is time to wake up. Carbon pollution from fossil fuels is threatening our future. Unless we take serious action to scale back the pollution, the consequences may well be dire. Congress is sleepwalking through history. It is time to hear the alarms, roll up our sleeves, and do what needs to be done. It is time to wake up.

Mr. President, I yield the floor, and 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. BLUNT. 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.

THE BUDGET

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, I want to talk a little about the bill that is coming over from the House that would require the Senate to—surprise—have a budget. I know the law already requires the Senate to have a budget, but apparently that law wasn't good enough for us to have a budget for the last 3 years. So I am supportive of the House decision to do that. In fact, I am supportive of almost any discussion that requires us to talk about what we are going to do about spending.

You know, if you have been living outside your means, if you can't pay your bills and you go to a credit counselor, the credit counselor is highly unlikely to say: Your problem is you need another credit card. The credit counselor is going to say: You need to figure out how you are going to pay your bills, and that includes things such as having a budget, it includes things such as figuring out what you are spending money on that you can stop spending money on. That is what we need to do, and it is what we need to do with a budget.

Somehow in the face of unprecedented spending and record Federal debt, the President and even Senate Democrats for a few years now have been saying that in Washington all we need to do is get another credit card. Our problem, I hear, is not a spending problem, it is a health care problem or it is a whatever kind of problem it is. It is clearly a spending problem.

There is no doubt that Washington is living outside its means. The Federal debt has skyrocketed to a record \$16.5 trillion. President Obama's first term added almost \$6 trillion to that total. There is no reason to believe we have done anything to slow down the spending and debt path we have been on. Meanwhile, it has been 1,360 days since the majority in the Senate and the Senate itself has managed to pass a budget. In fact, I think during that 1,316 days we haven't even had the

Budget Committee report a budget out for the Senate to vote on.

Last summer Vice President BIDEN said: Show me your budget and I will tell you what you value. Well, let's find out what we value. Let's find out what the majority in the Senate values. When the Vice President talked about showing the budget, he was talking about the Republican budget, because there actually was one. The Republican House had passed a budget. In fact, the Senate and the House both passed a budget every single year from the passage of the Budget Control Act in the mid-1970s until 2010. In 2010, both the House and the Senate—the House with Speaker PELOSI and the Senate with the current majority—said: We don't care what the law says, we are not going to pass a budget. That lasted 1 year in the House, but it has lasted now 3 years in the Senate. In 2011 and 2012 the House came back and passed a budget.

The Republicans have voted for serious budgets that make tough choices, and even those choices were choices that made us go out and explain what we were for. And, of course, that is exactly what the Vice President was talking about when he said: Show me your budget, I will show you your values. There was only one side that had a budget. So that was a pretty harmless position, from the point of view of the Vice President, because he was saying: Let's look at the budget the other guys have put on the table because we don't have one on the table; we have not said what we are for.

The Senate Democrats have ignored the law, ignored their legal obligation to pass a budget, while House Republicans have now said the Senate should either pass a budget or not be paid, and I agree with that. It is a fundamental step toward planning.

The second step is to vote on appropriations bills. We haven't voted on a single appropriations bill in the Senate in over a year. We don't have a budget, so there is no plan to try to get spending under control; and then we don't vote on how we are going to spend the money in any way other than some big continuing resolution, which basically is a bill that says we are going to continue spending money as we have been spending money, and here are the two or three exceptions. But we are not going to have the debate I think the Senate needs to have. Frankly, I believe our new Appropriations chairman, BARBARA MIKULSKI, is going to be insisting we bring appropriations bills to the floor, and I think that is a good thing.

The failure to have a Senate budget has too often been described as a minor procedural matter. Senator SCHUMER said recently: Well, the Democrats didn't have a budget because there was a budget that came out of the sequester agreement in mid-2011. Never mind the Senate hadn't had a budget that spring or the spring before that or that the Parliamentarian said the sequester

deal wasn't a budget, somehow coming up with one number was supposedly good enough to come up with a budget.

That is like sitting around the kitchen table to decide how you are going to spend your money, and here is how the discussion would go: OK, I think we ought to spend X amount of money. That is the meeting. We have just decided that is what we are going to do. And somehow that is the budget? Particularly when X amount of money didn't relate at all to the amount of money coming into your family. Nobody believes that would make sense.

We will see whether Senator SCHUMER's words this weekend will produce a budget. The House has acted. The President says he wants the debt ceiling increased. Hopefully, the majority has decided to pass a budget. The new budget chairman, Senator MURRAY, said yesterday that her committee will draft a budget. Now let's let the Senate produce a budget. Let's have a budget drawn up, let's have a budget debated, and let's figure out what our plans are.

Budgets lay out plans. We will see if a budget that a majority in the Senate would vote for will pass the straight-face test with the American people. We will see if this is just another budget that says: OK, here is the amount of money we want to spend; it has no relationship to the amount of money we have, but let's let that be our budget.

The people will no longer tolerate, I am convinced, the amount of debt and taxes that that type of spending plan would require. For them to think about that, they have to have a spending plan, and so I am grateful the House passed legislation that says we have to have that plan. When the majority in the Senate—Democrats in the Senate—have a budget, we will see how they feel about continuing to attack the budget the House has been willing to come up with for the last two Congresses. Right now they can talk about the cuts that Republicans in the House want because there are no Senate cuts. There is no Senate budget.

So let's have an apples-to-apples comparison. Let's compare what Republicans in the House would do compared to what Democrats in the Senate would do and figure out what our plan needs to be. It is often said that when you fail to plan, you plan to fail. Not having a budget is sort of the entry level of failing to plan. We have failed to do the first thing you would do if you were going to have a plan, if you were going to get your spending under control.

My Republican colleagues and I in the Senate have—even though there wasn't a Budget Committee product—actually found ways to vote for and support the Republican-passed budget from the House and, of course, we paid the price for that. People were out there saying: Here is what you want to do about this program and here is what you want to do about that program. But we are going to move quickly from where, rather than just attacking one