

the Congress of the United States and spent a lot of time doing that. It is our responsibility for oversight, and we have carried out our responsibility for oversight. Any balanced review of the work done by the Department of Justice Civil Rights Division will give the highest marks to Tom Perez on restoring the integrity of that very important division in the Department of Justice.

Let me talk about the second matter Senator GRASSLEY brings up, and that deals with the City of St. Paul case—one case. It dealt with the city of St. Paul in the Supreme Court *Magner* case.

Senator GRASSLEY points out, and correctly so, this is a disparate impact case. It not only affects the individual case that is before the Court, it will have an impact on these types of cases generally. When you are deciding whether to litigate one of these cases, you have to make a judgment as to whether this is the case you want to present to the Court to make a point that will affect not only justice for the litigant but for many other litigants. You have to decide the risk of litigation versus the benefit of litigation. You have to make some tough choices as to whether the risk is worth the benefit.

In this case, the decision was made, not by Tom Perez, not by one person. Career attorneys were brought into the mix, and career attorneys—career attorneys—advised against the Department of Justice interceding in this case. HUD lawyers thought this was not a good case for the United States to intercede.

Senator GRASSLEY says: Well, this was a situation where there was a *quid pro quo*. It was not. There was a request that the United States intercede and dismiss. Tom Perez said: No, we are not going to do that. The litigation went forward. So a professional decision was made based upon the best advice, gotten by career attorneys—attorneys from the agency that was directly affected by the case that was before the Court—and a decision was made that most objective observers will tell you was a professional judgment that is hard to question. It made sense at the time.

I understand Senator GRASSLEY has a concern about the case. People can come to different conclusions. But look at the entire record of Tom Perez. I think he made the right decision in that case. But I know he has a proud record of leadership on behalf of the rights of all Americans, and that is the type of person we should have as Secretary of Labor.

Tom Perez has been through confirmation before. He was confirmed by the Judiciary Committee to serve as the head of the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice. Thorough vetting was done at that time. Questions were asked, debate was held on the floor of the Senate, and by a very comfortable margin he was confirmed to be the head of the Civil Rights Division.

Now the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee has held a hearing on Tom Perez to be Secretary of Labor. They held a vote several months ago and reported him favorably to the floor. It is time for us to have an up-or-down vote on the President's nomination for Secretary of Labor. I hope all my colleagues would vote to allow this nomination to be voted up or down.

I was listening to my distinguished friend from Iowa. I heard nothing that would deny us the right to have a vote on a Presidential nomination. That is the first vote we are going to have on whether we are going to filibuster a Cabinet position for the President of United States and a person whose record is distinguished with a long record of public service—and a proven record.

Then the second vote is on confirmation, and Senators may disagree. I respect every Senator to do what he or she thinks is in the best interests. But I would certainly hope on this first vote, when we are dealing with whether we are going to filibuster a President's nomination for Secretary of Labor, that we would get the overwhelming support of our colleagues to allow an up-or-down vote on Tom Perez to be the next Secretary of Labor.

I started by saying I have known Tom Perez for a long time, and I have. I know he is a good person, a person who is in public service for the right reasons, a person who believes each individual should be protected under our system, and that as Secretary of Labor he will use that position to bring the type of balance we need in our commercial communities to protect working people and businesses so the American economy can grow and everyone can benefit from our great economy.

I urge my colleagues to support this nomination and certainly to support moving forward on an up-or-down vote on the nomination to be Secretary of Labor.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, let me begin by concurring with the remarks of Senator CARDIN. Tom Perez will make an excellent Secretary of Labor, and I strongly support his nomination.

GLOBAL WARMING

Mr. President, it is no great secret that the Congress is currently held in very low esteem by the American people, and there are a lot of reasons for that. But I think the major reason, perhaps, is, in the midst of so many serious problems facing our country, the American people perceive that we are not addressing those issues, and they are right.

Regardless of what your political point of view may be, we are looking at a middle class that is disappearing. Are we addressing that issue? No. Poverty is extraordinarily high. Are we moving aggressively to address that? No, we are not. We have the most expensive health care system in the world, enormously bureaucratic and wasteful. Are

we addressing that? No, we are not. But the issue I want to talk about today—maybe more clearly than any other issue in terms of our neglect—is the issue of global warming.

At a time when virtually the entire scientific community—the people who spend their lives studying climate change—tells us that global warming is real, that it is significantly caused by human activity, and that it is already doing great damage, it is beyond comprehension that this Senate, this Congress, is not even discussing that enormously important issue on the floor of the Senate. Where is the debate? Where is the legislation on what might be considered the most significant planetary crisis we face? I fear very much that our children and our grandchildren—who will reap the pain from our neglect—will never forgive us for not moving in the way we should be moving.

I understand that some of my colleagues, including my good friend JIM INHOFE from Oklahoma—whom I like very much—that some of my Republican friends, especially, believe global warming is a hoax. They believe global warming is a hoax perpetrated by Al Gore, the United Nations, the Hollywood elite. This is what people such as JIM INHOFE actually believe.

Well, I have to say to my good friend Mr. INHOFE that he is dead wrong. Global warming is not just a crisis that will impact us in years to come, it is impacting us right now, and it is a crisis we must address. In fact, global warming is the most serious environmental crisis facing not just the United States of America but our entire planet, and we cannot continue to ignore that reality.

Science News reports that cities in America matched or broke at least 29,000 high-temperature records last year.

According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, 2012 was the warmest year ever recorded for the contiguous United States. It was the hottest year ever recorded in New York, in Washington, DC, in Louisville, KY, and in my hometown of Burlington, VT, and other cities across the Nation.

Our oceans also are warming quickly and catastrophically. A new study found that North Atlantic waters last summer were the warmest in 159 years of record-keeping. The United Nations World Meteorological Organization in May issued a warning about “the loss of Arctic sea ice and extreme weather that is increasingly shaped by climate change.”

Scientists are now warning that the Arctic may experience entirely ice-free summers within 2 years. Let me repeat that. The Arctic may experience entirely ice-free summers within 2 years. Scientists are also reporting that carbon dioxide levels have reached a dangerous milestone level of 400 parts per

million, a level not seen on the planet Earth for millions of years.

In fact, the world's leading scientists unequivocally agree. A recent review of the scientific literature found that more than 98 percent of peer-reviewed scientific studies on climate change support the conclusion that human activity is causing climate change. The American Association for the Advancement of Science, one of the most important and prestigious scientific organizations in our country and the world, this is what they say:

Among scientists, there is now overwhelming agreement based on multiple lines of scientific evidence that global climate change is real. It is happening right now. It will have broad impacts on society.

That is from the American Association for the Advancement of Science. We are not into speculation. We are not into debate. The conclusion is there. Global warming is real. It is happening right now. It is impacting the United States of America and the world right now. It will only get worse if we do not act.

The examples of that are so numerous that one can go on hour after hour. But let me give you just a few. Extreme weather events are now occurring with increased frequency and increased intensity; that is, extreme weather disturbances. In 2011 and 2012, the United States experienced an extraordinary 25 billion-dollar disasters—25 separate billion-dollar disasters, so called because they each caused more than \$1 billion worth of damage.

That is unprecedented. NOAA's Climate Extreme Index, which is a system for assessing a wide range of extreme weather that includes extreme temperatures, extreme drought, extreme precipitation, tropical storms—NOAA's Climate Extreme Index tells us that 2012 was characterized by the second most extreme climate conditions ever recorded.

A number of colleagues make the point—they come up and say: Senator SANDERS and others, dealing with climate change is going to be expensive. Transforming our energy system away from fossil fuels is going to be expensive. They are right. It is going to be expensive.

But the question we have to ask is, compared to what? Compared to doing nothing? Compared to conducting business as usual? Compared to allowing a significant increase in drought, in floods, in extreme weather disturbances? Compared to that, acting now and acting boldly is cost-effective. Yes, it will be expensive. But it will be a lot less expensive, cause a lot less human pain and less human deaths than allowing global warming to continue unmitigated.

The cost—and this is an interesting point, especially for my conservative friends who look to the business community for information and for analysis. The cost of catastrophe and extreme weather events has been trending upward for 30 years. This is

very much a budget and economic issue. Munich Re, the largest reinsurance company in the world, the company that insures the insurance companies, has already documented a fivefold increase in extreme weather events in North America since 1980.

They keep track of this stuff pretty closely because for them this is a dollars-and-cents issue. They are the ones who help others pay out the benefits when there is extreme damage as a result of storms and floods, et cetera. Munich Re calculated that the economic cost of damages due to natural catastrophes in the United States exceeded \$139 billion in 2012 alone.

So when you talk about money and you talk about expense and you talk about cost, let's understand that we already are racking up recordbreaking costs in terms of dealing with the extreme weather disturbances we have seen in recent years.

The Allianz insurance company noted bluntly last fall, "Climate change represents a threat to our business." That is an insurance company. But it is not just the insurance companies; it is the businesses that are seeing insurance become unaffordable when they are hit with floods and other disasters. That comes right out of their bottom line.

Global warming, of course, is closely tied to drought and fire as well. Last year's drought affecting two-thirds of the United States was the worst in half a century. But the United States is not the only country on Earth being impacted.

We obviously pay attention to what is happening within our borders. But global warming is having huge impacts all over this planet. Brazil is experiencing its worst drought in 50 years. It is directly affecting over 10 million people in that country. Because of impacts to wheat farms, the price of flour rose over 700 percent.

Australia just experienced a 4-month heat wave with severe wildfires, record-setting temperatures and torrential rains and flooding causing over \$2 billion in damage in that country.

In recent years, other parts of the world—Russia, China, Southern Europe and Eastern Europe—have also suffered severe heat waves and droughts, with substantial impacts to agricultural communities and their economic well-being.

Just weeks ago, as everybody in America knows, we watched as fires raged across parts of the Western United States, including the massive and dangerously explosive West Fork fire in southwestern Colorado. Let me take a moment now to acknowledge the deaths of 19 unbelievably brave firefighters from Prescott, AZ, who lost their lives trying to protect their neighbors and property near Phoenix.

Wildfires such as these appear to be increasingly common. In fact, the Chief of the U.S. Forest Service Thomas Tidwell reported to Congress that America's wildfire season lasts 2 months longer than it did 40 years ago

and burns twice as much land as it did then because of the hotter, drier conditions from climate change.

Last year's extraordinary wildfires burned more than 9 million acres of land, according to the National Interagency Fire Center. Chief Tidwell also warned of the increasing frequency of monster fires. When we are talking about drought, it is not just some kind of abstraction. When drought occurs, agriculture suffers. When agriculture suffers, the cost of food goes up. In parts of the world where people have very little money, this is catastrophic.

That is one of the points made by the CIA, the Department of Defense, many of our intelligence agencies. When they talk about national security issues, they often put at the top of the list or close to the top of the list global warming because they understand that drought and floods mean people do not have the food they need, people do not have the water they need, people are going to migrate from one area to another. It is going to cause tension. It is going to cause conflict. So global warming is also a major national security issue.

One of the issues we do not talk enough about—I know Senator WHITEHOUSE of Rhode Island does talk about it—is the impact that global warming is having on our oceans that is driving fish to deeper, cooler waters, threatening the fishing industry and food security. In the Pacific Northwest, for example, according to NOAA and as reported by USA Today, just this spring shellfish farmers on the west coast are increasingly experiencing collapses in both hatcheries and natural ecosystems.

Extreme weather and rising sea levels also threaten people across the planet. More than 31 million people fled their homes just last year because of disasters related to floods and storms tied to climate change. According to a number of sources, climate change will create, in years to come, even larger numbers of what we call climate refugees as low-lying countries lose land mass to rising seas and to desertification, consuming once-fertile territory.

In northern India, nearly 6,000 people are dead or missing from devastating floods and landslides just last month. Closer to home, Hurricane Sandy alone displaced three-quarters of a million people in the United States and is costing us up to 60 billion Federal dollars in helping those communities rebuild.

Permanent displacement is already occurring in the United States. In other words, people are permanently losing their residences. The Army Corps of Engineers predicted that the entire village of Newtok, AK, could be underwater by 2017, and more than 180 additional Native Alaskan villages are at risk. Parts of Alaska are literally vanishing.

Scientists believe that entire U.S. cities or parts of coastal cities are in danger of being flooded as well. In fact,

experts are telling us that cities such as Miami, Ft. Lauderdale, New York, New Orleans, and others will face a growing threat of partial submersion within just a few decades as sea levels and storm surge levels continue to climb and that entire countries—small island nations such as Micronesia and the Maldives and large nations such as Indonesia face similar risk.

Ironically, rising sea levels are even threatening key oil industry infrastructure. For example, scientists at NOAA are estimating that portions of the Louisiana State Highway 1 will be inundated by rising high tides 30 times per year. Highway 1 provides the only access to a port servicing nearly one out of every five barrels of the U.S. oil supply.

What is my point? My point is that we are facing a horrendous planetary crisis. We cannot continue to ignore it. We must act, and we must act now.

In my view, the first thing we must do is we must not make a terribly dangerous situation—i.e., global warming and greenhouse gas emissions—even worse than it is right now. We must break our dependence on fossil fuels, not expand it. We must modernize our grid and transform our energy system to one based on sustainable energy sources, and we must move aggressively toward energy efficiency.

In that process, we must reject the Keystone XL Pipeline proposal, which would dramatically increase carbon dioxide emissions, according to the EPA, by the equivalent of 18.7 million metric tons per year, releasing as much as 935 million metric tons over 50 years. In other words, the planet faces a crisis right now. Why would we think for one second about making that crisis even worse?

Further, Congress needs to end wasteful subsidies for the industries that are causing climate change. According to a report by DBL Investors, between 1918 and 2009, the oil and gas industry received government subsidies to the tune of \$446 billion, to say nothing of State subsidies which have benefited from decades' worth of backroom political deals. In other words, why are we continuing to subsidize those industries that are helping to bring devastating damage to our planet.

Thirdly, even though fossil fuels are the most expensive fuels on Earth, the fossil fuel industry for too long has shifted these enormous costs onto the public, walking away with billions in profits while the American people have to bear the real costs of rising seas, monster storms, devastating droughts, heat waves, and other extreme weather. When people tell you that coal or oil is cheap, what they are forgetting about are the social costs in terms of infrastructure damage and in terms of human health. These fuels are not cheap.

As we transform our energy system away from fossil fuels, we must finally begin pricing carbon pollution emissions so the polluters themselves begin

carrying the costs instead of passing them on to our children and grandchildren.

I am proud to have joined with Senator BARBARA BOXER, the chairperson of the Environment Committee in the Senate, to introduce the Climate Protection Act earlier this year. Our bill establishes a fee on carbon pollution emissions, an approach endorsed by people all across the political spectrum, including conservatives such as George Shultz, Nobel Laureate economist Gary Becker, Mitt Romney's former economic adviser Gregory Mankiw, former Reagan adviser Art Laffer, former Republican Congressman Bob Inglis, and others.

Our bill does a number of things. One of the things it does is return 60 percent of the revenue raised directly back to taxpayers in order to address increased fuel costs. It puts money, substantial sums of money, into supporting sustainable energy research, weatherizing homes, job creation, and helping manufacturing businesses save money through energy efficiency and deficit reduction.

This begins the process of transforming our energy system by imposing a fee on carbon. It deincentivizes fossil fuel by putting money into energy efficiency and sustainable energy. It helps us move in a very different and healthier direction.

Let me conclude by going back to the point that I made when we started. The American people are shaking their heads at what goes on in Washington.

This country is facing enormous problems, economic problems, social problems, and I would argue that in global warming we face a planetary crisis. The American people want us to act. It is incomprehensible that week after week, month after month, year after year, we are not addressing the issue of global warming.

I hope sooner rather than later we will bring serious legislation to the floor of the Senate, that we have that debate, and we do what the planetary crisis requires; that is, transform our energy system, move away from fossil fuel, and move to energy efficiency and sustainable energy.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MURPHY). The Senator from Texas.

PEREZ NOMINATION

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I rise to express my deep concerns over the President's nomination of Thomas Perez to be Secretary of the Department of Labor.

When executing its advice-and-consent role, which, of course, is ensconced within the Constitution itself, it is the duty of the Senate to ensure that the people the President appoints to positions of power are of the highest caliber. It is our duty to examine their record and to determine whether each nominee ought to be granted the public trust.

While no one can deny that Mr. Perez has spent his career in public service, I

am afraid his record raises serious concerns over his ability to fairly and impartially lead the Department of Labor. Mr. Perez has a documented record of acting with political motivation and being a partisan, selective enforcer of the law. He has been misleading in his sworn testimony and ethically questionable in some of his actions.

For example, during his tenure at the Department of Justice, Mr. Perez has been in charge of the Civil Rights Division, which includes the voting rights section. One would hope that if any part of the Department of Justice would be apolitical, it would be the Civil Rights Division. But under Mr. Perez's watch, the voting rights section has compiled a disturbing record of political discrimination and selective enforcement of the law.

You don't have to take my word for it. All you have to do is take a look at the 258-page report issued by the Department of Justice inspector general earlier this year.

The report cites a "deep ideological polarization" of the voting rights section under Mr. Perez. It goes on to say this polarization "has at times been a significant impediment to the operation of the Section and has exacerbated the potential appearance of politicized decisionmaking."

Instead of upholding and enforcing all laws equally, Mr. Perez launched politically motivated campaigns against commonsense constitutional provisions such as voter ID both in Texas and in South Carolina.

The Supreme Court of the United States, in an opinion written by John Paul Stevens, who was, by all accounts, an independent member of the Supreme Court, the Supreme Court of the United States held that commonsense voter identification requirements are not an undue burden on the right to cast one's ballot and, indeed, are a reasonable means by which voter fraud is combated and protection of the integrity of the ballot is ensured.

Yet Thomas Perez, working at the Department of Justice, targeted the voter ID requirement passed by the Texas Legislature and blocked it effectively, and the same thing in South Carolina, based on nothing but politics—certainly not based on U.S. Supreme Court precedent that states it was not an undue burden on the right to vote, and it was a legitimate means to protect the integrity of the ballot and to combat fraud.

The inspector general goes on to describe misleading testimony that Mr. Perez gave before the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights in 2010 about a prominent voting rights case, stating that it "did not reflect the entire story regarding the involvement of political appointees." This is why, when you are sworn in as a witness in court, you are asked to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. When what you say is the truth but you leave out other information, it can, in effect, by