

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, while the Senator from Tennessee is on the floor—and because he referenced the filibuster of district judge nominees—let me say that there was a concerted effort to try to filibuster a district court nominee, one whom Senator REED and myself had a particularly keen interest in, since we recommended this candidate to the President, and it was the Senator from Tennessee, along with 10 of his Republican colleagues, who decided that was not in the best traditions of the Senate and who voted against the filibuster and to allow cloture so that the precedent remains that district judges will not be filibustered. I just want to take this opportunity to thank him for doing that, and to let him know he has my gratitude for that. I think it was in the best interests of the Senate. I do not think the Senator did it in order to gain any gratitude from me. I think he did it because, as a matter of principle, he thought this was the way the Senate should behave. But I certainly do appreciate it and I want to take this moment to say so.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. I am here, actually, Mr. President, to once again urge Congress that we have to wake up to the growing threat of climate change. The alarm bells are ringing. The signs are all around us. Yet we continue to sleepwalk through history, ignoring the warnings from the scientific community, from economists and business leaders—even from our military—of long-term shifts in the climate of our planet.

Another alarm has now sounded—this time by the Government Accountability Office, the taxpayers' watchdog. For the first time ever, the threat to the Federal Government of climate change has been included on the Government Accountability Office's High Risk List.

Every 2 years, at the start of a new Congress, GAO—the Government Accountability Office—provides the House and Senate with a list of program areas that are at high risk. GAO was the government's nonpartisan auditor, and the High Risk List is its catalog of threats to the integrity and performance of the Federal Government.

GAO says:

Solutions to high-risk problems offer the potential to save billions of dollars, improve service to the public, and strengthen the performance and accountability of the U.S. government.

House Oversight Committee chairman, DARRELL ISSA, has called the High Risk List “the most important report published.” As we face the indiscriminate spending cuts of the multi-billion-dollar sequester, Chairman ISSA pointed out that “the list represents tremendous opportunities to save those billions of dollars.” It is enough, actually, to prevent the sequester we are careening toward twice over.

Only 55 issues have been elevated to the High Risk List since it first began in 1990. The current list comprises 30 big-ticket problems, such as improving defense program management, protecting the Nation's cyber infrastructure, and modernizing Federal health programs. When a problem reaches GAO's High Risk List, it shouldn't matter if you are a Democrat or a Republican. These issues must be among the top priorities of Congress and of the Nation.

Add now to this list of serious national problems the destabilizing fiscal risk posed by climate change.

The Federal Government and our military—and by definition, the American taxpayer—own and operate hundreds of thousands of buildings and extensive infrastructure in every State, including utilities, flood control and navigation systems, powerplants, distribution networks, and irrigation systems, not to mention the usual roads and bridges. The Federal Government also manages about 650 million acres of land for grazing, for timber, for conservation, and for recreation. That is nearly 30 percent of the total area of the United States, and climate change is affecting virtually all of it.

The overwhelming majority of climate scientists tell us that the air and oceans are warming, that sea level is rising, and that we are changing the very chemistry of our oceans. These changes—some of them unprecedented in human history—increase the risk of extreme weather, such as heat waves, floods, droughts, and storms. As GAO points out, Federal assets in every corner of the country are at risk.

Storms crashing into the Southeast, wildfires burning throughout the West, and floods inundating the Northeast are not just local problems. Droughts are draining aquifers in the Midwest, warm temperatures are melting permafrost in Alaska, and rising, warming, more acidic oceans are eroding our national coast lines and threatening our lives and our seas. These are not just local problems. Climate change is a high-risk threat to our shared national well-being, our shared national wealth, and our shared national heritage.

The GAO High Risk List sounds yet another alarm that we are fools to ignore. For instance, GAO found that neither the National Flood Insurance Program nor the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation is prepared to deal with climate change.

Between 1980 and 2005, the Flood Insurance Program's exposure quadrupled to nearly \$1 trillion. The Crop Insurance Program increased 26-fold to \$44 billion. Yet GAO reports that these programs have not even developed the “information needed to understand their long-term exposure to climate change and not yet analyzed the potential impacts of an increase in the frequency or severity of weather-related events.”

Major private insurance companies such as Allianz, Swiss Re, Munich Re,

and Lloyd's of London have for years been developing strategies to address climate change. Our Federal insurance programs don't even have the basic information to address these risks.

Understanding and preparing for these risks is essential to protect our communities from catastrophic loss. According to NOAA, the value of flood insurance coverage in my home State of Rhode Island was \$2.2 billion in 2011. The Ocean State has received \$57 million in payouts since 1978, some of which helped Rhode Islanders recover from our record floods of 2010 brought on by extremely heavy rainfall. Folks who have flood coverage through the National Flood Insurance Program should know that heavy rainfall has increased in the Northeast by 74 percent since the 1950s, and scientists predict that warmer air will continue to increase the frequency of heavy rainfall and consequent flooding in the Northeast.

Disaster aid is expensive. FEMA has obligated more than \$80 billion in Federal disaster aid between 2004 and 2011. Another \$50.5 billion in emergency aid was just approved for the northeastern communities devastated by Hurricane Sandy. PSE&G, New Jersey's largest utility, plans to spend over \$4 billion over 10 years to make its electric and gas systems more resilient to these severe storms. New Jersey's second largest utility, JDP&L, announced that it intends to spend \$200 million to do the same. According to Jeanne Fox, who is a commissioner on the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities, “This is a cost of climate change, pure and simple.”

It is really time for us to wake up. In the private sector, the insurance and utility industries are facing the threat. Congress must now act responsively.

House Oversight Committee ranking member ELIJAH CUMMINGS asked GAO Comptroller Gene Dodaro if it was “GAO's opinion that regardless of the outcome of global negotiations to reduce carbon emissions, the United States Government should take immediate action to mitigate the risk posed by the climate change.” Comptroller General Dodaro responded with a simple and unequivocal “yes.”

In the High Risk List, GAO states that despite any possible future reduction of emissions, “greenhouse gases already in the atmosphere will continue altering the climate system for many decades.” That is the way the laws of physics and chemistry work. Damage with lasting consequences is already done.

Many effects of climate change can be mitigated, and it is the responsibility of this Congress to help our Nation prepare and adapt. Some Federal efforts are underway. In 2003 the U.S. Department of Transportation initiated a study of climate risks to gulf coast transportation. It is now cooperating in that study with the South Alabama Regional Planning Commission. The Bureau of Land Management and

the U.S. Forest Service are developing a drought vulnerability model, a carbon storage map, and an alpine monitoring program to help land managers in southwestern Colorado cope with the effects of a changing climate. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have a Climate-Ready States and Cities Initiative to help local health departments prepare for changes in health risks driven by climate change. EPA partnered with New York City's Department of Environmental Protection to develop a software tool that helps drinking water and wastewater utility operators understand how climate change poses risks to their facilities.

Rhode Island, I am proud to say, is one of many States that have formed a climate change commission. The commission is coordinating with Federal officials to identify specific State and local challenges that are presented by our changing climate. Twenty other States have similar climate action plans developed or underway.

Despite the actions by States, the actions in the private sector, and the warnings in the GAO High Risk List, special interest politics in Congress prevent the Federal Government from using our resources effectively and efficiently against this threat. The polluting special interests have Washington gripped in a barricade of obstruction, and the effect truly is disgraceful.

Consider, for example, NOAA's proposal to create a National Climate Service, akin to its renowned National Weather Service. This was a no-cost restructuring that would have centralized NOAA's work on understanding the climate, including its observations of climate change. The National Climate Service would have helped meet the growing local demand for climate change science information. This proposal was blocked by Republicans over in the House who simply don't want to hear about climate change. That kind of thinking will not get climate change off the High Risk List.

According to GAO, "The Nation's vulnerability can be reduced by limiting the magnitude of climate change through actions to limit greenhouse gas emissions. . . . While implementing adaptive measures may be costly, there is a growing recognition that the cost of inaction could be greater and—given the government's precarious fiscal position—increasingly difficult to manage given expected budget pressures."

Congress has been asleep long enough. We have a tradition in this body of taking the accounting of GAO—our nonpartisan watchdog—seriously and of taking GAO's High Risk List seriously. GAO now joins our defense and intelligence communities, our scientific research communities, our State and local governments, and major sectors of private industry that have all elevated climate change from their to-do list to their must-do list. It is time for Congress to wake up to its duties and to get to work.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

The Republican leader is recognized.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—S. 16

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Inhofe-Toomey bill at the desk be considered as the bill that qualifies for introduction under the February 14 consent agreement.

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

TO PROVIDE FOR A SEQUESTER REPLACEMENT—MOTION TO PROCEED

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. MCCONNELL. I now move to proceed to S. 16, and I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, hereby move to bring to a close debate on the motion to proceed to Calendar No. 19, S. 16, an Inhofe-Toomey bill to cancel budgetary resources for fiscal year 2013:

Mitch McConnell, John Cornyn, Patrick J. Toomey, James M. Inhofe, Johnny Isakson, Richard Burr, John Thune, Tom Coburn, Jeff Sessions, Roger F. Wicker, Mike Johanns, Mike Crapo, Pat Roberts, Ron Johnson, James E. Risch, Jerry Moran, John Barrasso.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that tomorrow, February 28, at a time to be determined by the majority leader, after consultation with Senator MCCONNELL, the Senate proceed to vote on the motion to invoke cloture on the McConnell motion to proceed to Calendar No. 19, S. 16; that if cloture is not invoked, the motion to proceed be withdrawn and the Senate then proceed to vote on the motion to invoke cloture on the Reid motion to proceed to Calendar No. 18, S. 388; further, if cloture is invoked on the McConnell motion to proceed, the motion to proceed be agreed to and the Senate resume consideration of the Reid motion to proceed to S. 388 and vote on the motion to invoke cloture on the Reid motion; that if cloture is invoked on the Reid motion, the motion to proceed be agreed to; that if the motion to proceed to S. 16 was pre-

viously agreed to, the Senate then resume consideration of the bill and, upon disposition of S. 16, the Senate resume consideration of S. 388 if the motion to proceed was previously agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to a period of morning business with Senators allowed to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

REMEMBERING C. EVERETT KOOP

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I rise to speak about the passing of an extraordinary American, a man who received the Presidential Medal of Freedom. I think he was one of the true leaders in my lifetime when it came to issues related to health care. Of course, I am referring to former U.S. Surgeon General C. Everett Koop.

It is hard to imagine today, as we reflect on all that has happened in the last several decades, the courage it took for Dr. Koop to step up and honestly describe the HIV/AIDS epidemic to the American people. This socially conservative doctor went so far as to make sure there was a mailing to every household in America that described the threat of this disease. There were many who thought that would never happen because of the political environment of the day. But Dr. Koop rose to the challenge and, in doing that, he saved lives in America. And he informed this country in a way that no other Surgeon General has about this looming danger.

If only that alone were his legacy, it would be more than enough. But I had a special personal friendship with him that related to our mutual efforts against the scourge of tobacco and the deaths related to that product. We have come a long way in America, and Dr. Koop was part of the progress we made. He was resolute in making it clear that tobacco was the No. 1 avoidable cause of death in America at his time, and is still today.

He was helpful in so many ways. When Senator FRANK LAUTENBERG and I, more than 25 years ago, teamed up—I was then in the House; FRANK in the Senate—to ban smoking on airplanes, it was something that neither Senator LAUTENBERG nor I could have predicted would have had the impact it did. It is one of the Malcolm Gladwell tipping points in health history in this country because when we took smoking off airplanes, people started asking the obvious question: If secondhand smoke is not healthy on an airplane, why is it healthy in a train, in a bus, in an office, in a hospital, in a restaurant, in a government building? And all of the dominoes started to fall.