

this done, and I thank my colleagues over here who have been extraordinarily helpful. We hope we can find common sense, common ground, and do what the Senate of the United States can do, press forward to create jobs for the American people.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BLUMENTHAL). The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I am here now for the 66th consecutive week the Senate has been in session to ask my colleagues to wake up to the threat of climate change. The topic has become taboo for Republicans in Congress, and so the discussion on climate change is somewhat one-sided around here, but the recent comprehensive National Climate Assessment released this week shows Americans are witnessing the effects of climate change in every State of our Nation.

Colleagues, read the assessment. Find out how climate change is affecting every region of the country.

In March I visited Iowa, where I heard over and over that Iowans are awake to the threat of climate change and are actually ready to hold Presidential candidates accountable on climate when they go there for the first-in-the-Nation Presidential caucus.

Over the April recess I spent 5 days traveling down the southeastern coast of North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida. I went there to talk to people on that coast firsthand. I met with scientists, students, outdoorsmen, faith leaders, and State and local officials—people of diverse backgrounds, but all of them have one thing in common: their concern for the coastal communities they love. These folks know climate change is real because they see it where they live. They are not waiting around for this Chamber to get organized. They are acting.

Last week I spoke here about the business owners, community leaders, and researchers I met in North Carolina. From there I headed into South Carolina. My first stop was the University of South Carolina's Baruch Institute for Marine and Coastal Sciences.

At the Baruch Institute, I learned how salt marshes—the ocean's nurseries and our first line of defense against storms and hurricanes—have to adapt to rising sea levels. These marshes retain sediment as the tide goes in and out, and they slowly increase their elevation as the sea level rises, if given enough time.

Dr. Jim Morris, director of the Baruch Institute, has been studying these

marshes for decades. He is a renowned expert. He explained that sea level rise is starting to happen so fast that the marshes may not keep up. If they can't keep up, then the marsh deteriorates to mudflat, and the mudflat deteriorates to open water, which is already happening in places I visited. That deterioration from marsh to mudflat can devastate coastal property, infrastructure, and wildlife.

Business as usual means sea level rise increases of 3 feet or more by 2100. This chart illustrates what the Baruch Marine Institute and surrounding marshes would look like after this sea level change—before and after. It would be pretty much a goner.

Next I visited the Cape Romain National Wildlife Refuge, which extends for 22 miles and encompasses more than 6,000 acres of barrier islands, salt marshes, intricate coastal waterways, sandy beaches, fresh and brackish water impoundments, and maritime forest. Sea level rise threatens this area as well.

One signal: Last year over 70 percent of endangered loggerhead turtle nests had to be relocated by people in order to prevent them from being flooded. This is a place where these turtles have been nesting for centuries, but now look at how coastal erosion is affecting their nests. These are the turtle eggs, and the coast has eroded. National Park Service officials there told me:

This is not just about wildlife. This is about the community. It's about your livelihood and well-being.

They are right.

According to a foreword in the report titled "Climate Change Impacts to Natural Resources in South Carolina" by Alvin Taylor, director of the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources—I mean, tell me how people from South Carolina are denying climate change is real when the State published a report called "Climate Change Impacts to Natural Resources in South Carolina."

Here is what the report says:

Climate-related changes may adversely affect the environment in many ways, potentially disrupting or damaging ecological services, water supply, agriculture, forestry, fish and wildlife species, endangered species, and commercial and recreational fishing... Fishing, hunting, and wildlife viewing contributes almost \$2.2 billion annually to South Carolina's economy and supports nearly 59,000 jobs.

How can they pretend it is not real? Business owners and executives in South Carolina are starting to take action on climate change. There is a South Carolina Small Business Chamber of Commerce, headed by Frank Knapp, who has organized something called the South Carolina Businesses Acting on Rising Seas to raise awareness among businesses and their customers of the threat posed to the Palmetto State. In cities including Charleston and Myrtle Beach, coastal businesses threatened by rising sea levels are displaying strips of blue tape in their window fronts where the water

level would be to show their support for taking action.

I continued down the coast and visited Charleston's Fort Johnson, where marine research facilities are located for NOAA, the College of Charleston, the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources, and the Medical University of South Carolina. The tide gauges in Charleston are up over 10 inches since the early 1920s. Deny that all you want. It is a measurement, it is not a theory.

This chart shows what Fort Johnson would look like with 3 feet of sea level rise, which is projected for 2100. Nearly all the research facilities at Fort Johnson would be lost ironically to the very seas their research helps us understand. Three feet could actually be on the low end of sea level rise by 2100. This chart of Fort Johnson demonstrates what 3 feet of sea level rise looks like.

During my visit at Fort Johnson, I heard from students, faculty, elected officials, and Federal and State employees all working at the leading edge of climate change and adaptation research. One scientist, Dr. Peter Moeller, described how climate change is allowing algae species to grow in waters where they were previously not found. As these algae species migrate to new areas, they encounter bacteria, fungi, and other unfamiliar algae. As Dr. Moeller explained to me, under these conditions, previously nontoxic algae can make dangerous toxins that are novel to science and nature. It almost sounds as if science fiction, but these are the consequences of human-caused climate change.

My last stop in South Carolina was at a roundtable discussion at the Coastal Conservation League. There I heard from a diverse group of South Carolinians—researchers, environmental advocates, business owners, and faith leaders—about their efforts to raise awareness to the threats of climate change and to promote clean energy. I learned this: South Carolinians are not afraid to talk about climate change and how it is affecting their State—at least not until they get to Washington.

When WCBD-TV in Charleston asked Representative MARK SANFORD about my visit to his State, he actually said something quite nice. He said:

At our family farm in Beaufort, I've watched over the last 50 years as sea levels have risen and affected salt edges of the farm. I applaud Senator WHITEHOUSE for getting people together in the Lowcountry today to discuss this problem, and while we would likely approach solutions differently, building the conversation is a necessary first step.

That is a helpful opening, and I appreciate that.

Jim Gandy, chief meteorologist for WLTX Columbia, has been forecasting South Carolina weather for 28 years. He is affectionately known as South Carolina's weatherman. Jim was at the White House this week to interview President Obama about the National

Climate Assessment. Through his blog, "Weather and Climate Matter," and his broadcasts, Jim makes weather and climate understandable for his viewers. I spoke with him while I was in South Carolina, and I learned that his TV station thought it may actually take some heat for Jim's discussing climate change on the air, and they were braced for the blow back. It never came. South Carolinians have their eyes open. It is only taboo here in Washington.

I continued down into Georgia, to the heart of the Savannah Historic District. Audrey Platt, the former vice-chair of the Garden Club of America's Conservation Committee, invited me to her historic home in Savannah for a local meeting of the Garden Club joined by Savannah Mayor Edna Jackson. Also there was Reverend Mary Beene from the Faith Presbyterian Church who talked about the M.K. Pentecost Ecology Fund they run for ecological stewardship of natural resources.

We headed out to Fort Pulaski and Tybee Island. There is a tide gauge at Fort Pulaski. It takes measurements. It is not complicated. It produces clear, irrefutable facts, not theories. At Fort Pulaski, NOAA measures that sea level has risen over eight inches. Projections for 2100 put most of this region under water. This chart shows that sea level rise of 3 feet will devastate the area.

Here is Fort Pulaski, GA, and the coast around it. That is what is left with 3 feet of sea level rise.

On Tybee Island I had lunch with city officials and council members, representatives of the Georgia conservancy, NOAA scientists, Georgia Garden Club members, and local sustainability directors. The message was clear: Sea level is rising. Oceans are warming. Infrastructure and ecosystems that Georgians depend on are being threatened. One example: According to a University of Georgia biologist, sea level rise will affect the State's oyster crop. The oysters in Georgia thrive at the tidal edge, sometimes above water, sometimes below water, as the tide goes up and down. As rising sea levels come up, it will cause the oyster habitat to shift or leave them vulnerable to predation as they spend more time under water. Being out of the water actually protects them from underwater predators.

The people of Tybee Island are preparing. Councilman Paul Wolff showed me the storm-water tide gate, which the City of Tybee put in place to accommodate higher tides and rising seas. He explained to me that the road out to Tybee Island—Tybee Road—which is, by the way, the island's only access road, will be flooded as much as 45 times per year with just one foot of sea level rise, and the city has already put in place a short-term plan for 14 to 20 inches of sea level rise by 2060. What does that do to an island's economy if, 45 days of the year, people can't get there?

Down the coast, I visited the University of Georgia's Marine Institute at Sapelo Island and its director Dr. Merryl Alber. Sapelo is a barrier island off the coast of Georgia managed by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources. The Marine Institute is a world renowned field station for research into coastal ecosystems. Here I learned how they measure what they call blue carbon, the amount of carbon stored in the salt marsh. They are doing that as part of the National Science Foundation's long-term ecological research program.

Salt marsh, as it turns out, are huge carbon sinks. They absorb massive amounts of carbon. But the carbon that is stored there may be returned to the atmosphere and add to the climate problem if salt marshes succumb to sea level rise and have nowhere to migrate. We also heard how the intruding salt water is changing local marsh ecosystems and jeopardizing fresh water supply.

Georgia actually runs a Coastal Management Program Coastal Incentive Grant Program to increase knowledge about sea level rise. If Georgia runs a Coastal Management Program Coastal Incentive Grant Program on sea level rise, how can people who represent Georgia in Washington pretend this isn't occurring?

I ended the day in Georgia out on the water with Charlie Phillips, who is a terrific character, a great guy to be with—a local, very successful clammer. We went out on his air boat over the marshes that he built himself. He is also very knowledgeable. He is a member of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council that runs the regional fishery. He has been an outdoorsman his whole life, and he needs fresh, clean water for his Georgia clams. Unfortunately, Charlie says that changes in climate are hurting the ecosystem that supports his livelihood—his and his employees. He worries about the future of his business.

This is South Carolina and Georgia. When you actually go there, what do you find? Business owners, researchers, faith leaders, and elected officials, all responding to changes that they are witnessing. They understand. They see the risks that climate change poses, and they hope their representatives in Congress will wake up to the danger of climate change, the home-State danger that their constituents are already seeing happening right around them.

After seeing the beauty of both South Carolina and Georgia along those lovely coasts, it is painful to see there the early warning symptoms of climate change. It called to mind President Theodore Roosevelt's message from more than 100 years ago to America's schoolchildren. It is sort of old fashioned language, but that was 1907. He said this:

[I]n your full manhood and womanhood, you will want what nature once so bountifully supplied and man so thoughtlessly destroyed. And because of that want, you will

reproach us, not for what we have used, but for what we have wasted. . . . [A]ny nation which in its youth lives only for the day, reaps without sowing, and consumes without husbanding, must expect the penalty of the prodigal. . . .

The people I met in South Carolina and Georgia, along with a huge majority of Americans nationwide, know that climate change is real. They see it happening in their lives, and they want us to take action. It is time for Congress to listen to their voices. It is time for Congress to listen to the fishermen who see the fisheries moving around and the oceans warming. It is time for us to listen to the clammers at the seashore who see the changes in the sea level and know what it means for them. It is time for us to listen to the foresters who see the pine beetle killing forests by the hundreds of square miles, and the firefighters who fight fires in those forests who see the fire season expanding by 60 days. It is time for us to listen to the farmers who see unprecedented drought and flooding. It is time for Congress to listen to the voices of their constituents before we all, in our foolishness and in our folly, must pay the penalty of the prodigal. Indeed, it is time for Congress to wake up.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kansas.

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, I spoke yesterday on the Senate floor about my concerns with the nature of the way the Department of Veterans Affairs is being operated. Much of my concern occurred as a result of conversations I have had with veterans back home in Kansas and their experiences both on the benefit and medical side—some real concerns with individual examples of what has happened in some of our VA facilities in our State, and this growing sense that the Department of Veterans Affairs has become unable, unwilling, to provide the necessary services in a cost-effective, efficient, timely manner that our veterans so deserve.

As I indicated yesterday, there is no group of people I hold in higher regard than those who have served our country and believe that the benefits that were promised our veterans must be provided to them, and I am concerned that is no longer the case.

I also indicated yesterday that I have served on the House and Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee for now 18 years. I was the chairman of the health care subcommittee. I have worked with nine secretaries of the Department of Veterans Affairs. During that time I always had the sense, until the last few years, that things were always getting better for our veterans. Today, the frustration that I bring to share with my colleagues is the belief that many veterans no longer have hope that the