

which can get up to 20 feet long. Indeed, one that was 18 feet 8 inches was caught 6 months ago. Of course, they are at the top of the food chain. They attack alligators. The fur-bearing animals in the Everglades have diminished in population because they are being consumed by these beasts that have a ravenous appetite. But that is a subject for another day.

Hundreds of billions of dollars has been spent to restore it, restoring it to correct a mistake of mankind over the course of the last century when, after the huge hurricane in the 1920s that drowned 2,000 people in the Lake Okeechobee area, the whole idea was flood control: When it floods, get the water off the land. Send it to tidewater—the Atlantic in the east, the Gulf of Mexico in the west. But that messed around with Mother Nature, and as a result the whole of the Everglades started to dry up.

Fortunately, a lot of forward-thinking people—and I am merely a steward who has come along at the right time, at the right place—have continued this effort—the Corps of Engineers, the EPA, so many of the agencies of government, Cabinet Secretaries, such as Ken Salazar at the Department of the Interior, the Department of Agriculture Secretary. It goes on and on. The effort as a 50/50 partnership in funding this restoration has been partnered by the State of Florida and the U.S. Government, and it continues.

Alas, there is now oil drilling in the Everglades. The subject of today's meeting in Fort Myers, FL, was to gather a very courageous county commission from Collier County, their chairman, and representatives of the community, to come in to educate me on the aspects of drilling and the recent brouhaha between the State environmental agency and the Texas wildcatter, the Dan A. Hughes Company; they started fracking without the proper permits and without revealing the mechanism and the material they were using to frack.

Of course, most people have heard of fracking, but we hear of it in terms of North Dakota or Oklahoma or Texas or Pennsylvania. But Florida is not built on that kind of substrate where they are going in and breaking up that rock in the fracking to release oil and natural gas, which has now made us such a tremendous producer of both of those in the United States. No, Florida is on a different type of substrate. It is built on a honeycomb of limestone that supports the surface by it being filled with freshwater. It is not those solid rocks where the fracking for oil and gas is being done and with the high jets with chemicals breaking up that rock to release the natural gas. No, this is porous limestone formed millions of years ago by the shelled critters that ultimately fossilized. It is this honeycomb being supported by freshwater that is the substructure of the State of Florida. So we don't have any idea what this fracking is going to do not only to the

quality of the water but also to the very support structure for the State.

Now, lo and behold, there are attempts for permits to drill in the 250,000-acre Big Cypress Federal preserve, which is part of the Everglades but is adjacent to the Everglades National Park. Therefore, it is time for the EPA of the Federal Government to get involved. It is time to question their authority in law as to what, after this kind of drilling is done to inject all of that stuff that is left over back down into this substrate of freshwater—what is that going to do under the Clean Water Act? What is it that could contaminate the source of drinking water? What is it going to do to the structure that upholds the surface of the State of Florida? And very importantly, since it is colocated right next to Everglades National Park and since it is a part of the area generally known as the Everglades, what is it going to do to the flora and fauna—in other words, all of that delicate ecosystem balance of the critters and the plants? What is it going to do to the very area that we are spending hundreds of billions of State taxpayer and Federal taxpayer money to restore? These are very legitimate questions.

Years ago the Collier family was very generous. They gave, fee simple to the U.S. Government, what is today the Big Cypress preserve. They retained the mineral rights. It was clearly their right to do so, and it was very generous of them to donate the property.

We have a national park ranger manager who manages that preserve. Now we have to look at what are the serious consequences of trying to convert those mineral rights that were reserved into drilling. The most immediate is that instead of seismic testing, another kind of vibration testing is expected to be done with thousands of tests in the Big Cypress Preserve. It is called thumping.

A vehicle comes in and apparently drops things onto the surface to create something—instead of seismic testing where an explosion is let off, to send down vibrations—and these triangulations, since they are doing thousands of these, would determine if there is oil there. Thus, another question that arises is, What is the environmental effect?

We definitely have a reason for the EPA, as an independent agency, for the Department of the Interior, which has jurisdiction over things such as U.S. Fish & Wildlife, U.S. Park Service, to get involved in this process and make some determinations, and if the answer is that there is not sufficient authority in law, to address it so that we can address it here as a matter of legislating law.

I wanted to make the Senate aware of this particular potential threat to the Florida Everglades.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

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

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

THE AMERICAN DREAM

Mr. GRASSLEY. I wish to ask my colleagues as well as myself to think about how many times we have made pessimistic-sounding statements about America's future. I want to remind my colleagues and myself about what I see as excessive pessimism about our great country, because as public figures often what we say maybe has consequences—sometimes positive, sometimes negative. Our attitudes matter and the policies shaped by those attitudes can have an enormous impact for better or for worse on the lives of Americans.

President Ronald Reagan often expressed that America's best days were yet to come. Twenty-five years later I still believe in Reagan's optimism for America. In fact, President Reagan even ended his final letter to the American people: "I know that for America there will always be a bright dawn ahead." His agenda reflected that optimism and his policies worked towards a freer, more prosperous America.

But it seems such optimism about America's future might be out of fashion these days. Instead of searching for a silver lining, many pundits and politicians see nothing but clouds. For instance, after decades of hearing about how we are about to run out of fossil fuel, making energy in the future much more expensive and scarce, improved technologies have unleashed enormous reserves of natural gas. This increase in supply has driven down costs and caused electrical generation to switch from coal to natural gas. That in turn has led to substantial reductions in U.S. greenhouse gas emissions. That seems to be a silver lining.

Now there are clouds on the horizon. However, rather than to celebrate the fact that the free market is achieving one of their long-held goals, many environmentalists want to ban the technology that led to the shale gas revolution based on unscientific claims of potential groundwater contamination. It seems that it would be a terrible shame to let all of that planning for scarcity of energy to go to waste. So I guess we better not take advantage of this Nation's resources.

On another matter, we hear a lot of hand-wringing about the decline in manufacturing jobs, but this is partly due to advances in manufacturing process which seems to require fewer more-skilled and therefore higher-paying jobs. The growth in American advanced manufacturing will require job training to fill those higher-skilled, higher-paying jobs, and of course we have community colleges throughout our country

that are rising to that challenge. This is an opportunity to do insource jobs that might otherwise be done overseas. That is good news for American economic competitiveness and from the standpoint of wanting higher paying jobs for Americans. That seems to me to be a silver lining.

Now the clouds: The decliners are so heavily invested in the story of the decline of American manufacturing that it is easier to bemoan the lack of economically inefficient low-skilled jobs which are the hallmark not of Americans but of underdeveloped countries.

On another matter, the bursting of the economic bubble has forced Americans to spend less and as a result to save more. "Spend less, save more" seems to me to be good news. Now clouds are forming because we have economic pundits saying that "spend less, save more" shows a lack of consumer confidence. You could look at it as a reality check in the face of unsustainable credit card debt financing spending or is it our national goal to get people to go back to saving less in the future and spending more today? Live for today and forget about tomorrow. You would think so, based upon what you hear in the news shows.

American entrepreneurs still produce a disproportionate share of the world's major innovations. Still, we are cautioned by people who always see clouds hanging over America, that America is not graduating enough people with science and technology degrees and the best and brightest in developing countries may soon decide to stay at home to build their companies instead of coming to America.

Doomsayers have existed throughout our history. It seems to be a sign of sophistication and intellectual refinement to predict the inevitable decline of your own society.

Using 20/20 hindsight, the eventual decline of all of history's great civilizations somehow seems to be inevitable. So isn't it logical then to think our great Nation will decline as well? Perhaps the so-called great recession is a sign that America's best days are in fact already behind us. Many people in the media and government seem so caught up in this narrative they cannot see any other possibility but our decline. This fever is starting to spread to the general public as polls show a record number of Americans who think the next generation will be less well off than this generation. As a result there is a tremendous amount of energy being devoted to figuring out how to manage America's decline. This is kind of a historical determinism and pessimism that is very alien to the American character.

The rise of America as the most prosperous Nation on Earth was hardly inevitable 200 years ago. We owe our current level of prosperity to the entrepreneurial spirit and hard work of our forefathers and, yes, to their unbounded optimism in the future of this great country. An excessive focus,

then, on managing decline risks becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy.

For instance, there is a lot of concern about the decline of the middle class, but instead of talking about how to unharness the entrepreneurial spirit that made America an economic super power and grew the great American middle class that we know, all the ideas from our friends across the aisle seem to focus on expanding dependency on government and more government programs. While a succession of new EPA regulations rain down on businesses causing them to pull back from expanding and hiring more people, the Democrats' solution is to keep people on unemployment benefits for a long, long time. Expensive health care reform mandates threaten to force small businesses to reduce the hours of employment and maybe not even hire more than 49 people, because when you get to 50 people there are other requirements in health care reform that kick in.

So what is the answer? Many people in this body would mandate that small business pay a much higher minimum wage. Minimum wage jobs ought to be seen as a stepping stone for low-skilled workers to begin climbing the economic ladder. However, when the economic engine stalls, the ladder of opportunity becomes harder to climb. It happens that more and more people get stuck trying to make ends meet with low wage jobs and no opportunity to get ahead. And it seems that people are concerned about tackling this problem by putting more people on food stamps.

So you get back to the American dream. The American dream is about an opportunity to work hard and earn your own success in life. Proposals to expand the welfare state to the middle class assume the American dream is somehow dead and the best we can hope for is anemic economic growth with high levels of government dependency. That is a defeatist attitude that reflects a distinct lack of faith in our great country. This is the old European model, which the experience of Greece showed to be unsustainable.

In fact, the poster child for an expensive European welfare state, Sweden, has in fact taken a new route to cut taxes and reform entitlement programs—a lesson that we ought to be looking at in America. But who would ever think that we would look to Sweden as an example to teach us how to lower taxes and reform entitlement programs? If we keep planning for decline, we will get it. But if we recover our faith in America's potential and redirect our energy towards removing barriers to economic growth and opportunity, America's best days are still ahead of us.

That leads me to repeat what Ronald Reagan said 25 years ago in that letter to the American people: "America's best days are still ahead of her."

SMARTER SENTENCING ACT

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, I want to speak to my colleagues on another issue as well, and that is something that came out of our Judiciary Committee a long time ago and is still on the calendar but probably will be brought to the Senate floor. A few weeks ago some were calling for the majority leader to bring up the so-called Smarter Sentencing Act to the Senate floor for a vote. So I come to the floor today to express my strong opposition to this bill and argue against taking the Senate's time to consider it.

In the past I pointed out that this bill would put at risk our hard-won national drop in crime. It would also reduce penalties for importing and distributing heroin, a drug that is currently devastating our communities with an epidemic of addiction and a rising number of deaths from overdoses. In part, for these reasons many law enforcement professionals have come out against this legislation. The National Association of Assistant U.S. Attorneys, Federal law enforcement officers associations, and a long list of former high-level officials—in Republican and Democratic administrations alike—are all opposed to it. Indeed page A12 of this morning's New York Times contains an article entitled: "Second Thoughts on Lighter Sentences for Drug Smugglers." According to the New York Times, the sentencing changes that the administration has already pushed for are "raising questions of whether the pendulum has swung too far." "Some prosecutors say that couriers have little to no incentive to cooperate anymore."

Border patrol officials grumble that they are working to catch smugglers, only to have them face little punishment. And judges who once denounced the harsh sentencing guidelines are now having second thoughts.

Today I point out another perhaps less understood effect of the bill which puts our national security at increased risk.

According to the Drug Enforcement Administration, terrorists are increasingly funneling illegal drugs into America, raising large sums of money to fund their activities while simultaneously harming our communities. Undoubtedly, the Obama administration's unwillingness to control our border—which we have seen recently—contributes to the problem.

Derek Maltz, Director of the Special Operations Division at the Drug Enforcement Administration, called this a two-for-one deal for terrorists: "Poison gets distributed in the West, and they make millions in the process."

According to a DEA spokesperson, "Most people talk about the drug issue as a health issue, a parenting issue, an addiction issue. But the truth is, it's really a national security issue."

In 2006, Congress took specific action to address this issue. When it reauthorized the PATRIOT Act, Congress also