

The report is clear. Climate change is the most serious threat to Arctic biodiversity and to its fisheries and tourism. Arctic warming has wreaked havoc on the ice cover of the Arctic terrain and ocean.

Look at the Greenland ice sheet. In 2012, the National Snow and Ice Data Center recorded melting over a larger area than ever in more than 30 years of satellite observation.

Here is a map of the average annual days of melting across the Greenland ice sheet from 1979 to 2007. That is the average. Here is 2012. Some areas, such as along here, the southwestern coast, saw more than 120 days of melting in 2012. Scientists estimate that the water pouring out of this ice sheet accounts for 30 percent of current global sea level rise. If the entire Greenland ice sheet were to melt, the seas would rise 6 meters.

Here is what 20 feet of sea level rise would look like for the east coast. Much of Rhode Island's coastline here would be lost. Florida, ground zero for climate change, would lose the entire southern region of the State. Here is Miami, completely underwater. Here is Tallahassee's new oceanfront.

Sea ice in the Arctic, not just land ice, is also in full retreat. Our scientists at NASA track disappearing sea ice using satellites. Since NASA started measurements in 1979, Arctic ice coverage has diminished in almost all regions and seasons. The winter record low ever—ever—was this March.

The ice is not just a feature of the Arctic landscape. It supports the way of life of Native people. Thinning ice, dangerous to traverse, threatens traditional sustenance such as quail hunting. Sea ice protects the shoreline from powerful ocean storms and waves. As that ice barrier fades away, land and infrastructure flood and wash away. Entire villages are facing wholesale relocation, as Senator MURKOWSKI from Alaska has indicated on the floor. It is the climate that has sustained them for generations that is being disrupted.

A new national security theater has opened in the Arctic as melting ice frees up the Northwest Passage for transportation and shipping, for new fishing grounds, and for its natural resources. The Departments of Homeland Security and Defense need new strategies and equipment to protect American interests in this new theater.

In 2013, the Pentagon released its “Arctic Strategy.” Then Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel, the former Republican Senator, said:

Climate change is shifting the landscape in the Arctic more rapidly than anywhere else in the world. While the Arctic temperature rise is relatively small in absolute terms, its effects are significant—transforming what was a frozen desert into an evolving navigable ocean, giving rise to an unprecedented level of human activity.

His words are echoed by former Coast Guard Commandant ADM Robert Papp, Jr., who is now the U.S. Special Representative to the Arctic Region. It is

his job to help manage risk in this remote but increasingly accessible region of the world. He had this to say about the disruptions of the Arctic climate:

I am not a scientist. I can read what scientists say, but I am in the world of consequence management. My first turn in Alaska was thirty-nine years ago, and during the summertime we had to break ice to get up to the Bering Strait and to get to Kotzebue. Thirty-five years later, going up there as commandant, we flew into Kotzebue at the same time of year; I could not see ice anywhere. So it is clear to me there are changes happening, but I have to deal with the consequences of that.

Last weekend, Secretary Kerry headed to the Canadian city of Iqaluit to assume the chair of the Arctic Council on behalf of the United States. The Arctic Council is the international forum for Arctic nations to work together to ensure a secure and sustainable Arctic future. Secretary Kerry made it clear that climate disruption would be a focus for America's chairmanship, saying plainly:

The ability of future generations to be able to adapt, live, and prosper in the Arctic the way people have for thousands of years is tragically but actually in jeopardy. . . . So if we want to know where the problem begins, all we have to do is look in the mirror.

Secretary Kerry sees this problem for what it is and knows we need to lead in addressing climate change. Congress, too, should seize the opportunity to do big things, to understand the changes that are occurring, and to protect against these climate disruptions. Our executive homeland and national security leaders must deal in real world consequences. So should we. They do not have the privilege of shrugging off serious risk analysis; neither should we.

But the big polluters and their front organizations ignore the consequences of carbon pollution, cherry pick the evidence, and traffic in denial, doubt, and delay. Deniers are quick to point out that Antarctic sea ice is increasing while Arctic sea ice is melting. But the fact is that, overall, the globe is losing sea ice at a rapid peace. Since satellite measurements began, the planet has been losing sea ice at an average rate of 13,500 square miles per year.

The deniers usually also leave out the melting of the great ice sheets of Antarctica. Remember, see ice floats on the sea and its melting does not much raise the sea level. Ice sheets rest on land. Their melting adds to the seas. Scientists now warn that the melting of some of those massive Antarctic ice sheets may have “passed the point of no return.”

Rhode Island has already experienced nearly 10 inches of sea level rise. The implications of an Arctic ice sheet melting are measured in feet, not inches. Many thought that the Alaska Purchase was a mistake. Some called it “Seward’s folly.” But Secretary Seward had vision when he secured Alaska for the United States, and now it is a treasured part of this great Nation.

We in Congress, in the Senate, should try to see through the haze of polluter

influence and muster some vision ourselves on what scientists and world leaders alike call the greatest challenge of our time. The United States should be leading—not stalled by special-interest politics. Secretary Kerry knows we should lead. He has made fighting carbon pollution a priority for the State Department in the lead-up to the global climate talks in Paris this fall. More than 100 Democratic Members of Congress sent a letter last month to the President, supporting U.S. leadership in these talks. We told the President: “We stand ready to help you seize this opportunity to strengthen the global response to climate change.”

But what do our Republican colleagues try to do? They try to undermine American leadership. The majority leader openly warned other countries that the United States would not be able to meet its climate plan and that they should proceed with caution before entering into a binding, unattainable deal. It is past time to take action. The price of being wrong on this will be very high, particularly if the reason turns out, in the eyes of history and of our fellow nations, to have been partisan politics and special-interest influence.

One of America’s great powers is the power of our example. What a sickening example we are setting now. Our inaction is our folly. It is, indeed, time to wake up.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

REMEMBERING JOHN PAUL HAMMERSCHMIDT

Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. President, today I honor a longtime champion of Arkansas, Congressman John Paul Hammerschmidt, who passed away earlier this month at the age of 92 after a long life as a dedicated public servant.

As a member of the “greatest generation,” John Paul served as a combat pilot during World War II and was a decorated war hero. As a Congressman from the Third District of Arkansas for 26 years and the only Republican member of the delegation at the time, he worked across the aisle to provide infrastructure and various improvements to Arkansas, paving the way for the growth in the northwest corner of the State.

Even following his retirement more than 20 years ago, John Paul continued to serve the people, who fondly referred to him as “JPH.” He always put Arkansas first. His vision for a two-party system in Arkansas led him to seek elected office. He paved the way for the

Republican Party in the State, and his vision continues to be realized as the party continues its growth in the State.

“John Paul” is a name that is just as familiar in Arkansas as it is to my colleagues in the Senate who served with him before serving in this Chamber as well as the many Members in the House who worked alongside him during his years of elected service and through decades more of providing assistance to his beloved Arkansas.

You would have been hard-pressed to find a kinder, gentler man than John Paul Hammerschmidt. As a mentor and friend, John Paul’s wisdom and counsel have shaped my Washington experience more than anyone else. When I ran for Congress in 2001, I sought John Paul out for advice. I quickly learned, as a newly elected Member of Congress for the Third District of Arkansas, how fond his former colleagues were of him. Senior Members of the House of Representatives had so much respect for him that they welcomed me into their inner circle because he had given his approval.

It was John Paul who taught me that after the election is over, there are no more Republicans, no more Democrats, there are only the people of Arkansas. His dedication to his constituents during his career of public service was unmatched and is a marker we should all strive to meet. During his time in Congress, he served in the minority, but he would disagree without being disagreeable.

I always valued John Paul’s friendship and his continued advice.

John Paul set the standard for helping Arkansans. That bar is something members of the Arkansas congressional delegation continue to strive toward today.

His vision to improve life for Arkansans led him to serve on the House Veterans’ Affairs Committee as well as the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee. By the time he retired, he served as the latter’s ranking member.

Using his position on the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, he helped secure funds for roads and infrastructure projects, including Interstate 540, which now bears his name, the Northwest Arkansas Regional Airport, as well as protecting the Buffalo River and getting a designation as the first national river.

John Paul left big shoes to fill. He believed he could make a difference in the lives of Arkansans because he believed in loving his fellow man. We are capitalizing on the benefits he helped provide—a testament to his time in Washington.

From all Arkansans, I thank John Paul for his devotion to public service, his leadership, and his dedication to Arkansas. His example is something we should continue to strive for in Washington.

REMEMBERING SERGEANT EDWARD GOBEL

MR. REID. Mr. President, I rise today to honor the life of SGT Edward Gobel, a long-time resident of Las Vegas, NV, who passed away on April 1, 2015. Ed Gobel was a man whose strong sense of duty to his Nation drove him to continuously seek new ways to help others and improve his community, and I am grateful for his years of service. He will truly be missed.

Sergeant Gobel proudly served in the 101st Airborne Division during the Vietnam war. After his military service left him confined to a wheelchair, he drew from his personal experiences to help enact positive change in Las Vegas. He became a leading advocate for military veterans and the disabled in Nevada. Recognizing the importance of being involved in his community, Sergeant Gobel took on numerous roles, from director of the Council of Nevada Veterans Organizations to State commander of the Veterans of the Vietnam War. His tireless efforts to push key bills through the Nevada Legislature, such as a bill to create Nevada’s first veterans home, earned him the Jefferson Award for Public Service in 2003. And in 2014, he was honored with the Chapel of Four Chaplains Legion of Honor Gold Medallion for his giving nature and commitment to service. I am impressed by Sergeant Gobel’s investment in the people and issues that mattered most to him and by his continuous belief that change was possible.

Sergeant Gobel is survived by his wife of nearly 40 years, Caryl Gobel, along with his sister, children, and grandchildren. My thoughts are with his family as they celebrate him and a life well lived.

MARRIAGE EQUALITY CASES BEFORE THE SUPREME COURT

MR. LEAHY. Mr. President, this morning, the U.S. Supreme Court heard oral arguments on the marriage equality cases. The legal principle at stake is whether the 14th Amendment to the Constitution protects marriages between individuals of the same sex. But at the heart, these cases represent something more fundamental. They are about the right of every American to marry the person they love and to have their relationships treated with the respect and dignity to which every American is entitled.

I am proud that my home State of Vermont has embraced love, equality, and freedom in its active and leading role on marriage equality. In 2000, Vermont was the first in the Nation to provide for civil unions. As the years went by, Vermont came to see that civil unions were insufficient to provide the protections all American couples are entitled to, and in 2009, the Vermont Legislature on a bipartisan vote was the first State legislature to enact marriage equality into law.

Vermont, which has led by example, is now one of 37 States and the District of Columbia that recognizes marriage equality.

While the arguments in the cases today analyzed legal principles and precedent, we should remember that they are ultimately about love and recognizing the extraordinary commitment between two people. Jim Obergefell had been with his partner, John Arthur, for over 20 years. They wanted to marry, but the marriage laws in their home State of Ohio would not allow it. Bedridden and incapacitated with ALS, John could neither drive nor fly commercially to get married in another State. It took the generosity of friends and family, along with the kindness of coworkers and others, to cover the cost of a \$12,700 chartered, medically equipped private plane.

After more than 20 years together, Jim and John finally married during a seven and one-half minute ceremony in an airplane at a Baltimore airport. Upon their return to Ohio, the State refused to recognize their marriage. And John passed away just a few months later. Jim, now a widower, should not have to live in a State like Vermont to be able to have his 20-year relationship validated and recognized by the State. He should not have had to fly to another State to say his vows and pledge his commitment to his partner. Jim’s current fight—and our current fight—is to show that relationships like his should be treated with the same respect and dignity that has been accorded to all other Americans. It is to persuade the Supreme Court to live up to the motto engraved in Vermont marble above its own building, which declares “Equal Justice Under Law.”

Nearly five decades ago when the Supreme Court decided *Loving v. Virginia*, the Court recognized that:

Marriage is one of the ‘basic civil rights of man,’ fundamental to our very existence and survival. To deny this fundamental freedom on so unsupportable a basis as [] racial classifications . . . is surely to deprive all the State’s citizens of liberty without due process of law. The Fourteenth Amendment requires that the freedom of choice to marry not be restricted by invidious racial discriminations. Under our Constitution, the freedom to marry, or not marry, a person of another race resides with the individual, and cannot be infringed by the State.

In the marriage equality cases heard today, the Court has a simple job to do. It need only apply these same constitutional principles to hold that the same principle applies equally regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.

When the Supreme Court issues its decision this summer, I am hopeful that it will be another landmark moment demonstrating that ours is a more perfect union when it is a more inclusive union. And that the name Obergefell will come to signify love, equality, and freedom the same way it does when Loving and Windsor are invoked.