

I know she loved school. Even after getting pregnant, she made good grades and didn't miss a day of school.

She was planning to go back to the volleyball team that she played on after giving birth. She had just gotten off work at Walmart hours before the shooting. "All I want is to hold my grandbaby once, but I can't," said Raven's mother, Tangee Dixon.

Miguel Arguelles was 22 when he was killed in Bridgeport, CT. He was shot in the neck and the shoulder during a shooting at the Charles F. Greene Homes housing complex. Police say he wasn't a target, but he was hit by stray bullets. He was 22 years old. At the hospital, Miguel's mother pounded his chest, urging him to come back to life, saying: "Mommy's here. C'mon, baby, c'mon, baby. Mommy's here."

A veteran officer said the nurses were crying, the priest was crying, and even the police were crying while watching this.

It was one of the saddest things I've seen. You feel so helpless.

His mother said he lit up the room when he walked in.

You saw his teeth every time he smiled—he brought a smile to your face. . . . I just want to hug him. I just want to tell him I love him.

"He was my protector," said his sister. "He loved to make people laugh."

Jabari Saunders was 30 when he was killed in December of 2015 in Wilmington. He was shot on the very same street on which he used to walk his children to school every morning. He was a devoted father of four. His life revolved around his kids. The neighbors said the only time they would see him is with his kids. He was always smiling. It is sad. You can't even let your kids walk to school—walk to after-school stuff now.

When a neighbor's son was shot, irony of all ironies, the victim's mother recalls that Jabari visited her home every single day the week after the shooting.

He just came to pay respect. . . . I know the love he showed me when my son was killed.

Another neighbor said:

I can't say anything bad about him. He was just a nice guy.

That is 5 stories out of 2,600 a month. There is no antidote to this epidemic. There is no one law that we can pass that makes it all better, that makes this all go away. But that can't be the excuse. The excuse cannot be that because there is no panacea legislatively, we shouldn't even try. The excuse can't be that because it is impossible to erase gun violence, we shouldn't take some commonsense steps to make it all better. The excuse also can't be that laws don't make a difference, because they do.

I will leave you with this because my point really is to tell the stories of these victims, not to expound on the data, but the data is pretty irrefutable. Here are all the States where background checks are required in order to

buy a gun through a private gun sale. That is a purchase at a gun store or a purchase at a gun show. Here are all the States with no additional background check laws besides the Federal floor. The data is pretty irrefutable. On average, there is 1 additional death per 100,000 in the States with no additional background check laws than there are in the States that have additional background check laws. It is a 30-some-odd percent increase for the States that don't take extra steps to make sure criminals don't get guns.

So when people say that we shouldn't pass a background check law that 90 percent of the American public support because it won't make a difference, the data doesn't tell us that. The data actually tells us that if we take steps to make sure criminals don't get guns, fewer criminals will get guns and fewer people will be killed, because I will assure you that one of these five people whom I just listed was killed with a gun that was purchased legally. It might have been purchased in a gun show, put in the back of a van, and sold on the streets of Wilmington, Bridgeport, or New Haven.

Laws won't save all 31,000 of these lives, but they certainly will save a handful. And for the individuals, the nurses, the clergy, and the police officers who witnessed Miguel Arguelles's mother pressing on his heart trying to get him to come back to life—simply one less death would make a debate on the Senate floor worth it.

I hope that we take some steps this year, perhaps, to pass a mental health reform bill. I hope we get to where 9 out of 10 of our constituents are and pass legislation that keeps guns out of the hands of criminals. If we don't do it because of the statistics, maybe we will do it because we will start to hear the real voices of these victims.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to speak in morning business for up to 20 minutes.

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

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Madam President, investigative author Jane Mayer has written an important piece of journalism—her new book, "Dark Money"—about the secret but massive influence-buying rightwing billionaires led by the infamous Koch brothers. Jane Mayer's book catalogs the rise and the expansion into a vast array of front groups of this operation and the role in it of two of America's more shameless villains: Charles and David Koch. Some have called this beast they have created the Kochtopus because it has so many tentacles.

The Presiding Officer may be wondering why I am talking about secret influence-buying in my climate speech.

The reason is that the story of dark money and the story of climate change denial are the same story—two sides of the same coin, as it were.

Two strategies of that Koch-led, influence-buying operation particularly bear on climate change. Indeed, they are probably the major reason we don't have a comprehensive climate bill in Congress and instead have this present little mouse of a bipartisan energy efficiency bill. "Oh, there goes Whitehouse," I am sure some listeners are saying, "off his rocker, trying to connect the Koch brothers to this climate change." Well, it is not just something I am saying; it is what the Koch brothers' own operatives say when they are crowing about their influence-buying success.

I will get to that later, but first the two strategies. One strategy is to mimic real science with phony science. Real science wants to find the truth. This phony science has no interest whatsoever in the truth. It wants to look like science, sure, but it is perfectly content to be wrong. There is an apparatus, a whole array of front groups through which this phony science is perpetrated. This machinery of phony science has been wrong over and over. It was wrong about tobacco, wrong about lead paint, wrong about ozone, wrong about mercury, and now it is wrong about climate change. They are the same organizations, the same strategies, the same funding sources, even in some cases the same people—always wrong. You would think that if they cared a hoot about right from wrong, they would change their methodology after such an unblemished record of being wrong every time. But they don't care. Truth is not their object; truth is actually their adversary.

This isn't science; it is public relations dressed up in a lab coat. It masquerades as science. But, as a visiting university president from Rhode Island recently said to me, "it uses the language of science, but its purpose is to undermine actual science." To pull off this masquerade, you have to trick people. You have to do what Ms. Mayer describes as a Koch brothers associate saying as this whole scheme was being developed. It is perhaps the most telling quote in her book. Here is what the man said. "It would be necessary," he said, to "use ambiguous and misleading names, obscure the true agenda, and conceal the means of control."

The next quote in her book is this: "This is the method that Charles Koch would soon practice in his charitable giving, and later in his political actions."

Did he ever. Misleading names. How about the John Locke Foundation, the Ethan Allen Institute. The pages listening will know these names from history: the James Madison Institute for Public Policy; the Thomas Jefferson Institute; the Franklin Center for Government & Public Integrity, with a little profile of old Ben Franklin on its letterhead; the George C. Marshall Institute, named after the hero of World

War II and the European recovery that followed. None of them have a thing to do with their illustrious namesakes; they just took the famous names to put on a veneer of legitimacy.

The George C. Marshall Institute—it sounds impressive. You might fool the occasional editorial page editor. Who does that? Maybe someone trying to hide something, “obscure the true agenda.”

Take the Mercatus Center, which the Washington Post described as a “staunchly anti-regulatory center funded largely by Koch Industries Inc.” In “Dark Money,” journalist Jane Mayer wrote that Clayton Coppin, a professor at George Mason who reviewed Bill Koch’s political activities, concluded Mercatus to be “a lobbying group disguised as a disinterested academic program.” And conceal the means of control—a large portion of the funding behind this special interest apparatus is simply not traceable. Why? Because money is funneled through organizations that exist to conceal donor identity. That is their purpose. The biggest identity-laundering shops are Donors Trust and Donors Capital Fund. Indeed, they are by far the biggest sources of funding in the web of climate-change front groups that have been stood up.

Dr. Robert Brulle of Drexel University, who studies the network of fossil fuel-backed climate denial, reports the Donors Trust and Donors Capital Fund operations are the “central component” and “predominant funder” of the denier apparatus; and at the same time he continues it is the “black box that conceals the identity of contributors.”

Jane Mayer reports in her book: “Between 1999 and 2015, Donors Trust redistributed some \$750 million from the pooled contributions to myriad conservative causes under its own name.” There were \$750 million laundered into anonymity with no telltale fossil fuel fingerprints.

This is no small operation. There are over 100 groups involved, all beholden to the same master: the fossil fuel industry. Setting up or supporting over 100 front groups may seem unduly complicated, but remember, an internal combustion engine has more than 500 parts, and we are totally comfortable with that mechanism.

According to the International Monetary Fund, this apparatus is defending a \$700 billion—billion with a “b”—effective subsidy, just in the United States of America, every year. How much work would you do—how much complication would you be willing to create—to defend \$700 billion per year? To use Jane Mayer’s telling phrase, this is a new device. Put it all together and what do you have? “The think tank as disguised political weapon.” Who is behind this elaborate scheme? I will quote from “Dark Money.”

[T]he director of research at Greenpeace . . . spent months trying to trace the funds flowing into a web of nonprofit organizations and talking heads, all denying the reality of

global warming as if working from the same script. What he discovered was that from 2005 to 2008, a single source, the Koch [brother]s, poured almost \$25 million into dozens of different organizations fighting climate reform. The sum was staggering. His research showed that Charles and David [Koch] had outspent what was then the world’s largest public oil company, ExxonMobil, by a factor of three. In a 2010 report, Greenpeace crowned Koch Industries, a company few had ever heard of at the time, the “kingpin of climate science denial.”

By the way, I should say that ExxonMobil has been actively involved in this as well, as a lot of very good recent reporting has showed. But they were outshone and outdone by the Koch brothers.

I will quote again from “Dark Money.”

The first peer-reviewed academic study on the topic added further detail. Robert Brulle, a Drexel University professor of sociology and environmental science, discovered that between 2003 and 2010 over half a billion dollars was spent on what he described as a massive “campaign to manipulate and mislead the public about the threat posed by climate change.” The study examined the tax records of more than a hundred nonprofit organizations engaged in challenging the prevailing science on global warming. What it found was, in essence, a corporate lobbying campaign disguised as a tax-exempt, philanthropic endeavor. Some 140 conservative foundations funded the campaign, Brulle found. During the seven-year period he studied, these foundations distributed \$558 million in the form of 5,299 grants to ninety-one different nonprofit organizations.

It is quite a “Kochtopus.”

The money went to think tanks, advocacy groups, trade associations, other foundations, and academic and legal programs. Cumulatively, this private network waged a permanent campaign to undermine Americans’ faith in climate science to defeat any effort to regulate carbon emissions.

The bottom line is if your faith in climate science is undermined, you have been had by a well-funded, complex, sophisticated scheme of disinformation.

Back to “Dark Money” again.

The cast of conservative organizations identified by Brulle was familiar to anyone who had followed the funding of the conservative movement. Among those he pinpointed as the largest bankrollers of climate change denial were foundations affiliated with the Koch and Scaife families, both of whose fortunes derived partly from oil. Also heavily involved were the Bradley Foundation and several others associated with hugely wealthy families participating in the Koch donor summits, such as the foundations run by the DeVos Family, Art Pope, the retail magnate from North Carolina, and John Templeton, Jr., a doctor and heir to the fortune of his father John Templeton, Sr., an American mutual fund pioneer who eventually renounced his U.S. citizenship in favor of living in the Bahamas, reportedly saving \$100 million on taxes. Brulle found that as the money was dispersed, three-quarters of the funds from these and other sources financing what he called the “climate change counter-movement” were untraceable.

Brulle’s conclusion, as reported by Ms. Mayer, is this:

Powerful funders are supporting the campaign to deny scientific findings about global warming and raise public doubts about the

roots and remedies of this massive global threat. At the very least, American voters deserve to know who is behind these efforts.

But it wasn’t enough for the Koch brothers to have the paid-for, phony science masquerade. You also had to drive politicians to accept the phony science. You had to make politicians willing to participate in the masquerade and put on the phony science costume. To do that, they turned to the mother’s milk of politics: money.

The money was set loose by five Republican justices on the Supreme Court when they decided *Citizens United*. *Citizens United* is described in “Dark Money” as “the polluters['] triumph.” Mayer quotes a defeated candidate the Kochs went after:

There was a huge change after *Citizens United*, when anyone could spend any amount of money, without revealing who they were, by hiding behind amorphous-named organizations, the floodgates opened. The Supreme Court made a huge mistake. There is no accountability. Zero.

The money got loaded into political organizations like Americans for Prosperity, the leading Koch brothers-backed political front group. They waved that money around like a club, touting how they were going to spend \$750 million just in this 2016 election. They told Republicans they would be so “severely disadvantaged” if they crossed them on climate change that they would be in political peril. Do the math. How much more obvious could you get?

Here is how Jane Mayer quotes their own official crowing about their victory. Remember what I said earlier? This is not me making wild allegations. This is them taking credit for what they did.

Tim Phillips gladly took credit for the dramatic spike in expressed skepticism. “If you look at where the situation was three years ago and where it is today, there’s been a dramatic turnaround,” he told the National Journal. . . .

We’ve made great headway. What it means for candidates on the Republican side is “if you . . . buy into green energy or you play footsie on this issue, you do so at your political peril. And that’s our influence. Groups like Americans for Prosperity have done it.”

That is what they say about what they are doing. And don’t think we don’t see that effect in this Chamber. The Koch brothers have had their day, doing their dirty work in the dark. I will give them that. It has been quite a racket, but the truth will come out. It always does.

Jane Mayer is not alone. Academic researchers like Robert Brulle at Drexell, Riley Dunlap at Oklahoma State University, Justin Farrell at Yale University, and Michael Mann at Penn State University are exposing the precise dimensions and functions of this denial machine. Investigative writers like Naomi Oreskes, Erik Conway, Naomi Klein, and Steve Coll are on the hunt. “Merchants of Doubt” is already a movie. Jeff Nesbit’s forthcoming book, “Poison Tea,” about how these big money boys suckered the tea

party down this road, should be illuminating. On the official side, two attorneys general appear to be looking into Exxon's role in this climate denial scheme. In short, what could well be the biggest scam to hit politics since Teapot Dome and Watergate is being unraveled and exposed.

The dirty fossil fuel money has deliberately polluted our American politics, just as their carbon emissions have polluted the atmosphere and oceans. Justice cannot come too soon for these people.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. GARDNER). The clerk will call the roll. The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

ENERGY POLICY MODERNIZATION BILL

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I was in the cloakroom listening to my colleague from Rhode Island talk about the issue he is clearly very passionate about relating to our climate and recognizing that in that space, as we think about energy and our energy needs as a nation, our economic security, our energy security, our national security, how that is all tangled and intertwined, I can't help but think we have colleagues from very different perspectives who have stood on this floor over the course of the past couple of weeks, and it seems that one thing we have found some level of consensus on is that it is time to update our energy policies. It has been over 8 years now since we have seen any energy policies that do anything to move us forward as a nation, that work to help us be more energy efficient, be more energy independent, move toward a cleaner energy future, embrace the technologies we have available to us. There is a recognition we need to act together to update our energy policies.

I have come to the floor this evening to speak to where we are in this process of successfully moving an energy modernization bill across the floor of the Senate. We took this up some 2 weeks ago now. I wanted to comment on some of the comments that were actually made on the floor this morning. There was a comment that was made that as Republicans we need to "get to yes" on assistance for Flint.

I have stood on the floor and have made clear there is no doubt in my mind that Flint is the site of a tragedy that should have been, could have been avoided. There is no doubt in my mind that Federal assistance could be provided to help with the city's ongoing crisis, but there is also no doubt in my mind but that this is something where we need to get to yes on a number to help Flint out. We need to get to yes,

and we need to figure out what that right amount is.

It sounds easy, and those of us who are committed to not only addressing the situation, the urgent situation we see in Flint, there is a recognition that there is a broader problem at play when we think about our Nation's infrastructure and our water infrastructures. I wanted to take a few minutes this evening to speak to that and where we are in this process and why this "getting to yes" has perhaps been more problematic than most had hoped.

I remind my colleagues that what we have been debating on the floor is an energy bill. It is a bill that was written by myself as the chairman of the Energy Committee, along with Senator CANTWELL from Washington as my ranking member. It included the Presiding Officer as a member of the committee, along with dozens of other members who serve on the Energy Committee. It has been the result of more than a year of regular process, regular order, within the committee, where we worked to consider ideas from all over the board.

We undertook an effort that some would say you just don't see around here anymore. We started with an agreement, an agreement between the chairman, myself, and the ranking member, and asked: Do we want to send a message this year about what we need to do with energy and our energy policies or do we want to bring about some change? Is it time to update our energy policies after 8 years?

The two of us agreed we wanted to make that change. We recognized that in order to do that, in order to get it through the committee with a good bipartisan vote, in order to get it to the floor, we were going to have to work together. We made that commitment, our staffs made that commitment, and we not only said we were going to do it, we did it.

We started off with a series of oversight hearings that we had in Washington, DC, and around the country, bringing people in, soliciting their ideas. After the oversight hearings, we had six legislative hearings before the committee, going through a host of different initiatives. There were 114 bills, separate bills—some from members of the committee, some from Members who were not serving on the Energy Committee but who had good ideas, and we reviewed them all, considered them as part of the bill we were building, and then we had our markup. We went into 3 days of markup before the Energy Committee. We considered over 50 different measures, 50 different measures from folks within the committee and outside the committee, Republicans and Democrats, urban and rural.

In the committee process, it was full-on. It was an open exchange. It was any good idea, any amendment that you have, if you think you have the votes, let's run it. If you think you don't and

you still want to run it anyway, let's work it. We worked that committee process. We considered 59 amendments within the committee. It was a good process, and because it was good process and it was so inclusive, we got a bill that moved out of the committee 18 to 4. The four dissenting votes were interesting. We had two Republicans who dissented and two Democrats. Even the opposition was bipartisan.

I say this by laying the groundwork for what we have built because I want colleagues to appreciate the substance of the measure we have before us with the Energy Policy Modernization Act. We then came to the floor the first of the year, the first big bill to come to the floor and take up valuable floor time, and I am pleased we were able to come to the floor early. In the time that we have been to the floor, we have dispensed with 38 amendments. Most of those have gone by voice, not because it has been a take-this-or-leave-it approach. A voice vote means it comes by unanimous consent. You have to get consent to get these before the body. We worked through a host of different issues, all over the board—whether it related to advanced nuclear or whether it related to coal research or whether it related to issues as they relate to our public lands. We have been working this throughout this process.

In fact, I think it is important to recognize that even during this time period where it has been quiet on the floor, we haven't heard people talking much about where we are with the Energy bill. Our staffs on the majority side and the minority side have been working together to clear even more amendments that have that support that we could move by voice, almost 30 additional amendments on top of what we have already done.

We are not letting the moss collect and gather as we are trying to deal with the situation that has detracted and distracted this Energy bill, and that is the nature of the Flint issue. I don't want people to think the basis of the bill which brought us here, a bill that would modernize our energy policies, a bill that would help America produce more energy, a bill that would help Americans save money, a bill that would help our Nation with our national security, our energy security, and our economic security, a bill that would help to cement our status as a global energy superpower—it is important we remember why we are here.

Others are remembering that when we left the floor on Thursday with an indeterminate path forward into how we were going to advance the Energy bill, those groups that have been interested in following this debate come to us with concern saying: Wait. Don't stop that forward movement. The Bipartisan Policy Center has sent out a letter urging us to move forward with this Energy Policy Modernization Act. ClearPath has urged us: Please, this is important to us from a clean energy perspective. Bill Gates has put out a