

having to do with science, a subject such as what is happening in the climate and the changes; the fact that the Sun's rays come in and reflect off the Earth and go back—reflect out and radiate the heat back into space—but when you start putting what are known as greenhouse gases, such as carbon dioxide and methane, up there, they suddenly act as a ceiling, a greenhouse gas ceiling having a greenhouse effect, trapping the heat and causing the Earth to heat up. Two-thirds of the Earth is covered with water. Most of that heat is absorbed in the oceans. What happens to water when it is heated? It expands. That is a fact. Sea level rise in South Florida is a fact. It is a measurement over the last 40 years. The seas have risen 8 inches in South Florida. That is a fact, but if there are some who object to that climate science, then under this new law just signed by the Governor, they are going to be able to object to that subject being taught in our public schools. A single hearing officer will determine—Lord only knows whom that officer is appointed by—that single person will determine, under the new law, if the objection is justified. They can force a local public school to remove the subject from its curriculum.

Does that sound a little bit strange? Does that sound a little bit scary? It seems like this is the most brazen attack on science we have seen in a long time. It is a blatant attempt to cover up the truth. Instead of accepting the fact that the seas are rising and what is going to be a very real threat—and already is to a coastline like Florida's—they want to literally rip the subject right out of our children's textbooks, while at the same time silencing the teachers and the scientists. I don't think we can sit back and allow our public schools to become political battlegrounds, and we shouldn't allow politicians to silence our teachers and scientists just because they don't happen to like that part of the science.

While this bill was just enacted in Florida, it may be one of the most egregious examples of hiding the truth. Unfortunately, I am sad to report, it is not the only one. In fact, in 2015, Florida's Governor went so far as to reportedly ban State officials from even using the term "climate change" in their reports. Doesn't that sound like muzzling? Yet the effect of sea level rise is still painfully evident in South Florida. What about the water washing over the curbs on Miami Beach at the seasonal high tide? What about the water that is coming over the streets in the Las Olas section of Fort Lauderdale at the seasonal high tide?

In just a month, the new head of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency fired several members of the Board of Scientific Counselors—the very people responsible for overseeing the Agency's science and research programs. These were scientists at the top of their fields working on behalf of the American people, and suddenly, in one fell swoop,

the new head of the EPA fired them all and wants to replace them with—you guessed it—industry representatives, scientists from the very industries that the EPA is supposed to monitor and oversee. If this is not what completes the picture of putting the fox in charge of the henhouse, I don't know what is.

The henhouse is not just climate science, but it includes basic research in all fields, including healthcare—NIH. By the way, thank goodness we have a head of NIH who is a guy who broke the code on the human genome, Dr. Collins. It includes the fields of astronomy—how about NASA—and it includes the origin of the universe—quantum physics in multiple agencies.

This disturbing trend of hiding the truth if it doesn't match their rhetoric is a trend that is spreading across all levels of government. If information can't be removed from the public domain altogether, then guess what they try to do: They try to discredit it.

For example, look at what has been done now in an effort to pass this disastrous Republican healthcare bill. Instead of—as I have just made comments preparatory to this science subject—trying to work together on a bipartisan bill aimed at improving our Nation's healthcare system, some on the other side of the aisle have resorted to attacking whom? Attacking the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office after it said that the bill will take healthcare coverage away from tens of millions of people.

The nonpartisan CBO is just that; it is nonpartisan. It is responsible for estimating the costs and effects of nearly every bill that Congress considers. Yet suddenly, when the conclusions of CBO don't match the rhetoric coming from one side, they turn their attacks on the scientists and the mathematicians who release the findings.

Listen to these quotes:

"I have a lot of questions about the accuracy of the CBO," one of our Republican colleagues said here in the Senate.

CBO's time has "come and gone," the White House Budget Director said earlier this year.

"We disagree strenuously with the report," HHS Secretary Price said. "The CBO report's coverage numbers defy logic."

"If you're looking at the CBO for accuracy, you're looking in the wrong place," said the Press Secretary at the White House.

If that is not enough, just last week, the White House itself released a video saying that the CBO's score of the Republican healthcare bill is based on "faulty assumptions and bad math."

It is clear what is going on. This administration's war on science is not a myth. It is not fake news. If you want to know an administration's true priorities, you need to look no further than their budget, and if you look at the President's most recent budget request, you will see dramatic cuts to some of our most important scientific

agencies. This Senator has seen that in the jurisdiction of the Commerce Committee—in the NOAA programs and in the NASA programs.

The President's budget calls for more than a 30-percent cut to EPA. It calls for the firing of nearly one-quarter of its staff and the elimination of all funding for programs aimed at fighting climate change. Climate change isn't just about Florida nor is it a coastal State problem; it is a problem of the entire country. The extreme weather events caused by climate change affect us all. Droughts become more frequent, floods become more severe, and major storms like hurricanes and tornadoes become stronger and even more deadly.

The scientists at NOAA, the National Weather Service, NASA, and most of the other agencies, including our military, who study climate change aren't trying to create a mythical problem that doesn't exist. They are trying to solve real-life problems that affect all of us and that affect them in the carrying out of their duties.

They work at Federal agencies across the country with one goal in mind—to make credible, valid data publicly available for researchers, academic institutions, and businesses that use the information to better understand things.

I see the leader is here to speak. I will conclude with just a couple of thoughts.

These scientists know that we can't just stick our heads in the sand. Science doesn't work like that. Facts are facts. And the fact is that the Earth is heating up, and there is a reason for that, which I explained. If we don't do something about it, the communities that are already affected in my State are going to be communities all over the world. These are not alternative facts.

Yet, instead of helping these scientists do their work, some political leaders are using their positions to hide this information and to make it unavailable. We ought to be speaking out against it, and that is what this Senator is trying to do.

I have filed legislation to protect scientists' rights to speak publicly about their research—not to let them be muzzled—and to ensure that all agencies maintain their scientific integrity.

I hope we can stop this nonsense of hiding the truth. Let's stop this war on science. Let's accept facts as they are and then debate the issues, the policy. The American people deserve an open and honest government that works for them, not a government that distorts the truth to match its rhetoric.

I thank the Senate for indulging me, and I thank the leader for listening patiently.

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The minority leader is recognized.

THANKING THE SENATOR FROM FLORIDA

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, first, I want to tell my colleague from Florida

that it is always a pleasure to listen to him. He is erudite, well-researched, and passionate—always about a subject that matters.

On the subject he just spoke about, no State in our entire Nation has more experience with the frailties of this planet, given that it is heating up, as the Senator from Florida, given all the low-lying, heavily populated areas on the oceanside and the Gulfside. I thank him for his continued pursuit of these issues that are very important to every one of us.

WISHING SENATOR MCCAIN A SPEEDY RECOVERY

Mr. President, before I begin, for once I would like to express my hope—and I think the hope of every Member of this Chamber—that the senior Senator from Arizona, my good friend JOHN MCCAIN, has a full and speedy recovery from his recent surgery. There is no one who has done more to serve this country in this Chamber than JOHN MCCAIN. There is no one who is more passionate in his defense of our soldiers and our defense than JOHN MCCAIN. He is just an outstanding man and a very, very good friend. I admire him very much, treasure his friendship, and wish him the best. Godspeed to Senator MCCAIN and his family.

HEALTHCARE LEGISLATION

Mr. President, because of Senator MCCAIN's recent illness, it seems that it will be at least another week until the Republican majority forces a vote on the Republican TrumpCare bill. I would suggest to my good friend, the Republican leader, that he use this time to hold public hearings on the bill.

My Republican friends propose to pass legislation that would reorganize one-sixth of our economy and touch the lives of every American without a single hearing. Is that amazing? There has not been one hearing, even though we have been on the bill for 7 months now. There has been no opportunity to hear from experts in a public setting, let alone consider amendments.

So I say to my friend, Senator MCCONNELL: Let's use this extra week or extra weeks to do what Republicans should have done a long time ago. Hold public hearings and allow the stakeholders to come in and express their concerns.

Today we Democrats sent the leader a letter to make this request formally, and we will include a list of non-partisan stakeholders we believe should have a chance to air their views on the Senate Republican healthcare bill. These are groups known for their followings and for the good they do, known for not being political at all, like the American Cancer Society, the American Lung Association, the American Hospital Association, AHIP—the largest trade group for insurers—to name a few. Let's have these groups testify on the policies in this bill so that the American people will have a chance to hear what experts and patient advocates have to say.

I say to my friend, the leader: When you don't have hearings, when you try

to hide a bill, it usually results in poor legislation. That is what is happening now: a bill done behind closed doors by a handful of Senators—even Republican Senators didn't know what they were putting together. It doesn't work.

The wisdom of the Founding Fathers, the wisdom of this body through the centuries is to do it in public, have a discussion, have a debate, and the crucible of the legislative process will make it better. The suggestion we are making—obviously we oppose many parts of the bill; obviously so do the American people. But maybe something that would be said at a hearing would change things around.

Additionally, we ask the majority leader to wait for a complete score from the Congressional Budget Office before proceeding to his bill. The Republicans now have a week—maybe more—to get their bill scored by the nonpartisan CBO. They have no excuse to proceed to a bill of this significance without knowing its cost or consequence. Now that they have plenty of time to get that done, we Democrats hope there will be a full CBO score before a vote on the motion to proceed. We make these requests respectfully.

Let me just say one more thing about the CBO. The White House has had an awful tendency—when they don't like a fact, they call it fake, and they try to discredit the fact giver. We have never seen a Presidency like this. I say to my colleagues on the other side of the aisle: Don't let this infection spread to you.

CBO is a nonpartisan organization. The head of CBO was appointed by the Republican leaders of the House and Senate. To discredit CBO simply because you don't like the answer they give is not the American way. The American way is to debate the facts, not deny them, not call them fake because you don't like them.

Unfortunately, our President has made this a hallmark of his Presidency. Anything he doesn't like is fake, even though it is real. His son gives an email, gives a statement, and he says that is fake—what was said is fake. Let it not spread to this body. CBO is a respected organization, as I said, with leaders appointed by Republicans, not by us. Let's hear what they have to say, and let's take it seriously, even though we may not agree with the outcome of where their facts lead.

I would like to make some additional points on one of the more controversial parts of the Republican TrumpCare bill—the Cruz amendment. The Cruz amendment, by allowing insurers to sell junk insurance, would actually increase out-of-pocket costs on average Americans. Premiums might come down for some plans because insurers wouldn't have to cover very much, but the reduction in premiums would be more than offset by skyrocketing deductibles and copays. So the average American would be paying more, not less. The average American, or so many of them, would likely get junk insurance.

My friend Senator COONS of Delaware put it best when he said: Yes, we will sell you a car. It will be cheaper, but it will have no bumper, no steering wheel, and no carburetor. It will be cheaper, but it will not serve its purpose. It will not get you where you have to go. On these Cruz insurance policies, the insurer can say: no hospitalization, no payment for drugs. What good are they? It is a talking point, but it doesn't help people. It hurts them.

The Cruz amendment would also make insurance unaffordable for Americans who need it most, creating what even the very conservative American Action Forum says would be a death spiral in the marketplace. My friend the senior Senator from Iowa said the Cruz amendment would “annihilate the preexisting condition requirement.” That is not CHUCK SCHUMER or BILL NELSON speaking. That is CHUCK GRASSLEY, one of the most senior Republican Senators from the great State of Iowa, who says that. It is not fake. It is real, what he said. You can't wash it away.

The Cruz amendment winds back the clock in America to the days of the worst practices of insurance companies. It seems that the *raison d'être* of the Cruz amendment is to let insurance companies do whatever they want. In the 1890s, that philosophy may have governed, but America has learned under Republican and Democrat alike that it doesn't protect them. It would allow insurers to sell policies without the ban on preexisting exclusions, without covering essential health benefits, and without lifetime limits on out-of-pocket costs. It would even allow insurers to sell policies that include excessive waiting periods of more than 90 days.

If your kid has cancer, this policy in its fine print says that you have to wait 90 days while you watch your child suffer. What kind of freedom is that? It is freedom for the insurance company. It sure isn't freedom for the family with a child who is suffering.

I find that the Cruz amendment—and sometimes my good friend from Texas cares about freedom for very wealthy people, for millionaires. What about average people? You need freedom to be able to have your insurance company pay when your kid has cancer. You need to be free of that—that they can't pay or will not pay or that you have to wait 90 days. But the Cruz amendment blesses those kinds of restrictions. Remember, the Cruz amendment was added to a bill that slashes Medicaid in a way that would shatter protections for Americans in nursing homes, those struggling with opioid addictions, and Americans in rural parts of the country. The Cruz amendment is a cruel insult adding to a devastating injury.

We have another week or more before the Senate will vote on this bill. The Republican leader can spend that time trying to find new or ever more cynical ways to buy off necessary votes with