

costs so we will proceed step by step. A subsequent step will be to try to find a way to create a long-term, more robust individual insurance market, but for the short-term, our proposal is that by mid-September, we will see if we can agree on a way to stabilize the individual insurance market to keep premiums down and make affordable insurance available to all Americans.

I thank the Presiding Officer.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I am here to speak about something else, but let me take just a moment and thank my chairman for what he has done. I had the experience of serving on the HELP Committee with Chairman ALEXANDER and Ranking Member MURRAY when we did the Education bill last year.

Education is nearly as fraught a topic politically around here as healthcare is, and what we saw in a thoughtful, regular-order process that was developed under Chairman ALEXANDER's leadership was a very considerable piece of work with real effect.

Sometimes we agree on something on both sides of the aisle in this body because there is nothing to it. It is "National Peaches Week" or something, and everyone votes for that. But when it is something big and something consequential, that is where difficulties begin to emerge, and what the chairman was able to work in the committee was something big and something consequential on healthcare. To the end of my days in the Senate, I am going to remember that closing vote, when the clerk of the committee called the roll, and every single member of the HELP Committee voted in favor of the measure. It came out of the committee unanimously, and with that burst of energy, it came through the floor fine, and it passed the House without too many changes. It was just a remarkable piece of work. So I have seen what the HELP Committee can do under Chairman ALEXANDER and Ranking Member MURRAY, and I am filled with confidence that the process can be terrific there, and I am filled with goodwill toward a successful outcome.

I just think what the chairman has said is terrific, and I wanted to say a few words of appreciation.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for up to 17 minutes in morning business.

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

#### CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, what I would like to speak about is a new form of fossil fuel-funded climate denial spin that has just entered the climate debate. They are always up to something, and here is their latest. The Trump administration's two great scientists, Scott Pruitt and Rick Perry, the Frick and Frack of climate denial,

have called for a science showdown, where climate denial and climate science can have it out for once and for all—red team versus blue team. "Fossil fuel man" Pruitt has even called for the showdown to be peer reviewed. Well, what is comical about that is that climate science has been peer reviewed all along. That is how it gets to be science—by going through and surviving the process of peer review by other scientists.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD a letter to Administrator Pruitt from a wide range of scientific organizations pointing out to him this very fact, that climate science is called climate science because it has been through scientific peer review.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

JULY 31, 2017.

Hon. SCOTT PRUITT,  
*Administrator, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Washington, DC.*

DEAR ADMINISTRATOR PRUITT: As leaders of professional scientific societies with our collective membership of hundreds of thousands of scientists, we are writing in response to reports that you are working to develop a "red team/blue team" process that challenges climate science.

We write to remind you of the ongoing research, testing, evaluations, and debates that happen on a regular basis in every scientific discipline. The peer review process itself is a constant means of scientists putting forth research results, getting challenged, and revising them based on evidence. Indeed, science is a multi-dimensional, competitive "red team/blue team" process whereby scientists and scientific teams are constantly challenging one another's findings for robustness. The current scientific understanding of climate change is based on decades of such work, along with overarching, carefully evaluated assessments within the United States and internationally.

As a reflection of that work, 31 scientific societies last year released a letter, updated from 2009, to reflect the current scientific consensus on climate change. We urge you to give its text consideration, along with America's Climate Choices, the work of our premier United States scientific body, the National Academy of Sciences.

Of course, climate science, like all sciences, is an ever-changing discipline: our knowledge is always advancing. Robust discussion about data interpretation, methodology, and findings are part of daily scientific discourse. That is how science progresses. However, the integrity of the scientific process cannot thrive when policymakers—regardless of party affiliation—use policy disagreements as a pretext to challenge scientific conclusions.

Given your interest in the state of climate science, we would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to better understand your perspective and rationale for the proposed activity; and to discuss climate science, including which areas are at the frontiers of scientific knowledge and which are well-established because of thousands of studies from multiple lines of evidence.

We look forward to hearing from you, and your office may contact Lexi Shultz, Kasey White, or Joanne Carney to coordinate a meeting.

Sincerely,

Rush D. Holt, Ph.D., Chief Executive Officer, American Association for the Advancement of Sciences; Robert Gropp,

Ph.D., Co-Executive Director, American Institute of Biological Sciences; Chris McEntee, Executive Director and CEO, American Geophysical Union; Ellen Bergfeld, Ph.D., Chief Executive Officer, American Society of Agronomy, Crop Science Society of America, Soil Science Society of America; Brian Crother, Ph.D., President Elect, American Society of Ichthyologists and Herpetologists; Crispin B. Taylor, Ph.D., Chief Executive Officer, American Society of Plant Biologists; Barry D. Nussbaum, Ph.D., President, American Statistical Association; Olin E. Rhodes, Jr., Ph.D., President, Association of Ecosystem Research Centers.

Linda Duguay, Ph.D., President, Association for the Sciences of Limnology and Oceanography; Robin L. Chazdon, Ph.D., Executive Director, Association for Tropical Biology and Conservation; Katherine S. McCarter, Executive Director, Ecological Society of America; David Gammel, Executive Director, Entomological Society of America; Vicki McConnell, Ph.D., Executive Director, Geological Society of America; Paul Foster, Ph.D., President, Organization of Biological Field Stations; Raymond Mejia, Society for Mathematical Biology; Luke Harmon, Ph.D., President, Society of Systematic Biologists.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Climate denial, on the other hand, avoids peer review as if it were Kryptonite, so this call for peer review of the contest between climate science and climate denial is almost comical, except for the evil intent behind it and, of course, the stakes. How very risky and dangerous continuing to get this climate issue wrong is for our country.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD an op-ed written by John Holdren, until recently the President's climate adviser, called "The perversity of 'red-teaming' climate science."

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From bostonglobe.com, July 25, 2017]

#### THE PERVERSITY OF 'RED-TEAMING' CLIMATE SCIENCE

(By John P. Holdren)

EPA administrator Scott Pruitt is reportedly giving serious consideration to investing the taxpayers' money in a "red team-blue team" effort to determine whether current scientific understandings about climate change are actually right. The idea is that a "red team" made up of officials from government agencies with responsibilities related to climate would try to poke holes in mainstream climate science, while a similarly constituted "blue team" would have the task of defending the mainstream consensus against this critique. Supposedly, this process would shed new light on what is known and what is not about human influence on the global climate. But the argument that such a process would be helpful is some combination of naive and disingenuous.

All of science works through the continuous application of the skeptical scrutiny of key findings by essentially everybody working in a given field. This happens in part

through the peer-review process that findings must survive before being published in a scientific journal. It happens far more widely through the scrutiny of the wider community of experts in any given field once the findings have been published. That scrutiny is intense, not least because scientists make their reputations in substantial part by providing corrections and refinements to the published findings of others. This is the essence of the cumulative and self-correcting nature of the scientific enterprise as a whole.

Precisely because climate science has policy implications that appear to challenge the status quo in global energy supply, moreover, the degree of professional skeptical scrutiny to which key climate-science findings have been subjected has far exceeded even the already pervasive and rigorous norm. Climate science has been repeatedly “red-teamed,” both by groups of avowed contrarians sponsored by right-wing groups and by the most qualified parts of the world’s scientific community. The right wing’s “red team” efforts have consistently been characterized by brazen cherry-picking, misrepresentation of the findings of others, recycling of long-discredited hypotheses, and invention of new ones destined to be discredited. Almost none of this material has survived peer review to be published in the respectable professional literature.

Of course, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change itself, which works under the auspices of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, can be regarded as a “red team-blue team” operation, in which every conclusion must pass muster with a huge team of expert authors and reviewers from a wide variety of disciplines and nations (including from Saudi Arabia and other major oil producers inclined to be skeptical). The IPCC has produced five massive assessments of climate science (in 1990, 1995, 2001, 2007, and 2013–14), each more emphatic than the last in its conclusions that human-produced greenhouse gases are changing global climate with ongoing and growing impacts on human well-being.

Climate-change science has likewise been reviewed regularly by committees of the US National Academy of Sciences, the United Kingdom’s Royal Society, the World Meteorological Organization, the American Geophysical Union, and many other reputable bodies, all of which have contributed to and confirmed the overwhelming consensus of knowledgeable scientists on the five key points that really matter for policy: (1) The Earth’s climate is changing in ways not explainable by the known natural influences; (2) the dominant cause is the build-up of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere that has resulted from burning coal, oil, and natural gas, and from land-use change; (3) significant harm to humans and ecosystems from these changes is already occurring; (4) the harm will continue to grow for decades because of inertia in the climate system and society’s energy system; and (5) the future harm will be much smaller if the world’s nations take concerted, aggressive evasive action than if they do not.

What, then, could explain the interest in a new “red team-blue team” effort on climate science organized by the federal government? Some proponents may believe, naively, that such a rag-tag process could unearth flaws in mainstream climate science that the rigorous, decades-long scrutiny of the global climate-science community, through multiple layers of formal and informal expert peer review, has somehow missed. But I suspect that most of the advocates of the scheme are disingenuous, aiming to get hand-picked non-experts from federal agencies to dispute the key findings of mainstream climate science and then assert that

the verdict of this kangaroo court has equal standing with the findings of the most competent bodies in the national and international scientific communities. The purpose of that, of course, would be to create a sense of continuing uncertainty about the science of climate change, as an underpinning of the Trump administration’s case for not addressing it. Sad.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, let’s go back to the basics here. The basic fact is that the scientific truth of climate change threatens the business model of enormous industries that spew carbon dioxide, and it challenges the ideology of rightwing fanatics who spew hatred of government. That is what the background is to all of this, and there has been a scheme for years to protect the industry’s business model and the ideology of its associated cohort of fanatics. That scheme from the industry and the rightwing fanatics has been to attack climate science. They have been at it for years.

If you are a huge polluting industry or a rightwing fanatic, how do you go about attacking science? Well, you can’t win a real attack on the science, precisely because the polluter nonsense could not make it through peer review. Peer review is the most basic test to enter scientific debate, but they fail at peer review because their argument is bogus, phony, and it is a front. So the scheme has always been to avoid peer review because it is a test they would fail.

If you are going to fail the peer review test, what do you do? Instead of a direct attack through peer review journals, they attack science from the side. They create a phony parallel science, a simulacrum of science that doesn’t have to face peer review. Their phony science doesn’t even have to be true. In fact, they don’t care whether it is true; indeed, I contend that some of them know it is not true and are engaged in deliberate, knowing fraud. But, in any event, getting to the truth is not the point of this phony parallel science. The goal is political, not scientific.

What they want is for government—us—to let them keep polluting. Polluting with their product makes them big, big money, and they don’t want to stop. So the goal is not to enter the scientific debate on scientific terms. This is no quest for truth; this is a quest to influence public opinion. So the polluter nonsense doesn’t have to be true; it just has to sound legitimate enough to influence an uninformed public. The goal is to fool the public and mess with politics. That is how they keep the political pressure off having to clean up their act. Their battlefield is the public mind, and their goal is to pollute the public mind with false doubts about the real science.

The climate denial apparatus that Pruitt and Perry serve just needs to create the illusion that there is still scientific doubt, and it just has to create that illusion in the minds of a non-scientific audience—the average voter, people who don’t know any better and shouldn’t be expected to. To do this,

they have set up an elaborate con game to help them foment this illusion that there is a real contest here.

Their first trick, of course, is to hide the hand of the funders who back this scheme behind innocent or respectable-sounding names. If people saw the hand of ExxonMobil or Koch Industries behind this scheme, well, the jig would be up, so they have to back front groups—dozens, indeed, of front groups. The front groups take nice, cozy words like “heritage” and “heartland” and “prosperity,” and they stick them on the front of the front group.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD an article entitled “EPA is asking a climate denier think tank for help recruiting its ‘red team’” in this effort at the conclusion of my remarks.

This article points out that they are actually recruiting one of these phony front groups, the Heartland Institute, comparing climate scientists to the Unabomber, so you know that is going to be a fair contest between climate science and climate deniers when the group involved is a fossil-funded group that has compared climate scientists to the Unabomber. Of course you want them in the debate, don’t you? It is laughable, except for the fact that it is really not.

The other thing these groups do is they go down the shelves of American history and they grab the names of heroes and they slap these great names onto other phony front groups. Even the great GEN George C. Marshall has had his name slapped on a front group.

I am a big fan of General Marshall. He is a hero of mine. Winston Churchill called him “the organizer of victory” in World War II. The Marshall plan saved Europe after that war. He won a Nobel Prize, deservedly. But in General Marshall’s life of dedicated service to our country, he had his share of sorrows, and one of those sorrows was that he had no children. So today, there are no living children or grandchildren to defend his name. Any rascal can put General Marshall’s name on a bogus enterprise, and these rascals did. It is beyond low.

So that is the first trick: Hide the polluters’ hand behind an innocent or respectable-sounding name.

The second trick is camouflage. They ape real science by setting up groups with names that sound like scientific organizations. So when the United Nations convenes the real Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, they put up a Nongovernmental International Panel on Climate Change.

They ape scientific activities. If scientific organizations have conferences, they have conferences. If scientific organizations have colloquiums, they have colloquiums. If scientific organizations publish findings, they publish findings. The difference is, it is all phony. None of it is peer reviewed. It is not real science; it is a masquerade designed to give the appearance of science without any of the rigor of peer

review and the other attributes of real science.

They even ape the publications of real science. I don't have the chart with me, but there is a publication by the legitimate U.S. Global Change Research Program that is entitled "Global Climate Change Impacts in the United States." That is for real. It is real science. Then there is a look-alike publication called "Addendum: Global Climate Change Impacts in the United States," which was cooked up by the Koch brothers-backed CATO Institute—same print, same text, same color. It virtually is a masquerade of the real item.

The first thing is to hide industry's hand behind the front group, and the second is to mask propaganda activities in camouflage that resembles actual scientific activity without having to pass any tests of scientific activity.

The last thing is to run the operation like a marketing campaign, since, well, that is what it is. You wouldn't market soap in peer-reviewed scientific journals, would you? First of all, the journals wouldn't publish it. Secondly, that is not your audience anyway. It is the same here. It doesn't do these scoundrels any good to be publishing in peer-reviewed scientific journals, even if they could get their nonsense published there. The people who read scientific journals know better. That is not their audience, and they know that they will lose in front of a scientific audience. They would shrivel up like the Wicked Witch. So they want to go right to the public with Madison Avenue-quality salesmanship and glossy messaging, marketing their dressed-up climate denial nonsense like you would market a new soap or spaghetti sauce. Go straight to TV, straight to talk radio, straight into the political debate.

The notion that the climate denial crowd now wants a scientific showdown—some "high noon" for climate denial—is ridiculous. First, they do not. We know they do not. They have been dodging away from peer review for years. They want peer review like the Wicked Witch wanted water.

So what are they up to?

Their gambit is yet another climate denial rhetorical trick to misdirect people to the thought that maybe climate science has not been peer reviewed either.

Climate science is nothing but peer reviewed—that is how it gets to be science—but this bit of trickery sets up in the unknowing person's mind the thought that climate science might not be peer reviewed. If our Frick and Frack of climate denial, Pruitt and Perry, had said outright that climate science is not peer reviewed, that would be a flat lie, and they would be caught out. Instead, they performed this rhetorical bank shot just to lay that suggestion out there, knowing perfectly well that it is false. It is a little like the old "when did you stop beating your wife?" trick. It lays out a false predicate by insinuation where

the fact, itself, could not be properly asserted.

The purpose here, like the purpose of all climate denial schemes, is to buy more time for the polluters. Think how long this imaginary process of preparing for climate denial "high noon" will take. Oh, they could spin this out for years.

One thing you can bet is that game day will never come, but in the meantime, they have the craftily embedded lie out there that climate denial and climate science stand on an equal footing and just await peer review to decide between them, and now that lie can just hang out there, leaking its poison into the public debate.

I have to ask: Who thinks this stuff up? They have made a new art form out of propaganda. Think what a schemer you have to be to think this stuff up. That is the kind of people we are dealing with here, and in this bizarre world, Frick and Frack hold high office.

The problem is that there actually is a judge here. A real "high noon" will actually come. As the old saying goes, time will tell. When it comes to climate change, the laws of physics and chemistry and biology are at work. The things that CO<sub>2</sub> concentrations do in the atmosphere are going to happen no matter what we say or believe about them. The laws of physics do not depend on political beliefs. The chemistry of what happens when seawater is exposed to more and more CO<sub>2</sub> is going to happen, and it will follow the laws of chemistry, not our opinions or beliefs.

What we humans say or what we believe or what we have been conned into believing by the climate denial scheme will not matter at all. Our views—our opinions—are not part of the equation. Fill one room with climate deniers and fill another room with climate scientists, and the same chemistry experiment will have the same results in both rooms. Chemistry does not care about our opinions.

The way trees and animals and fish and insects and viruses and bacteria react to new temperatures and new levels of acidity and new environments we have no say in. The fossil fuel industry can cow westerners into silence or even con them into believing the industry's climate denial nonsense, and the bark beetle will not care. It will not even know that the con game is being run. The bark beetle will just keep eating its way up the warming latitudes and altitudes and killing pine forests by the hundreds of square miles.

What science does for us is give us the ability, as humans, to understand the laws of science so that we can predict what will and will not happen. Science provides mankind with headlights so that we can look ahead and see what the future portends, but turning off those headlights by denying the science or trying to distract the driver so that we are not even looking out the windshield will not change what is ahead. Whatever is coming at us is still

coming at us. We just will not see it in time to steer around it in order to minimize the collision or slow down and soften the impact. We will not have time because we will have given that time to the polluters. Time is what they want—more time for the polluters to make big money.

All of this lying, all of this science denial is actually, truly, an evil thing, and the cleverer it gets with these bank shot, faux "high noon" show-down, tricky lies, actually, the more evil it is. The people who are behind this are doing a very grievous wrong. They are dishonorable, dishonest, and disgraceful. Time will tell us just how wicked they are.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From ThinkProgress, July 25, 2017]

EPA IS ASKING A CLIMATE DENIER THINK TANK FOR HELP RECRUITING ITS 'RED TEAM'  
(By Erin Auel)

The Environmental Protection Agency has asked the Heartland Institute, a D.C.-based rightwing think tank that denies the human causes of climate change, to help identify scientists to join the agency's so-called red team-blue team effort to "debate" the science of climate change, according to the Washington Examiner.

The move is part of EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt's efforts to undercut established climate science within the agency. In an interview with Reuters earlier this month, Pruitt suggested the possibility of creating a red team to provide "a robust discussion" on climate science and determine whether humans "are contributing to [warming]."

The Heartland Institute offers a model of what the EPA red team might look like. Their contrarian Nongovernmental International Panel on Climate Change—often referred to as a red team—publishes regular volumes of a report called "Climate Change Reconsidered."

Heartland communications director Jim Lakely told the Washington Examiner the red team exercises to critique climate science are necessary "to critically examine what has become alarmist dogma rather than a sober evaluation of climate science for many years." But, as many scientists and experts have noted, the peer review process for scientific publications already requires and facilitates rigorous examination.

For years, the Heartland Institute has spread misinformation about climate change and attacked the credibility of climate scientists. In 2012, the group launched a billboard campaign with the photographs of Ted Kaczynski (the Unabomber), Charles Manson, and Osama bin Laden, saying those men "still believe in global warming." Heartland's website at the time declared "the most prominent advocates of global warming aren't scientists. They are murderers, tyrants, and madmen."

More recently, the group announced plans to send a report titled "Why Scientists Disagree About Global Warming" to every K-12 teacher and college professor in America. The report incorrectly denies humans' contributions to rising global temperatures.

Pruitt has adopted much of the misinformation that Heartland promotes. Since being confirmed, Pruitt has continued to question the science behind climate change and repeated climate denier talking points claiming that humans are not the main contributors to a warming planet.

And Heartland experts have already had an active role in Trump's administration. Dan

Simmons, currently an assistant to Energy Secretary Rick Perry, is still listed as an author on Heartland's website. Myron Ebell, a noted climate denier, led Trump's EPA transition team and has written several pieces opposing climate policy for Heartland.

Heartland has received funding from several fossil fuel companies, though it no longer publicly discloses its funders. In 2012, leaked documents from the group showed the group received contributions from the Charles G. Koch Charitable Foundation and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, among others. It has also received funding from ExxonMobil to support work to refute the human causes of climate change.

Last month, Heartland announced former Kansas congressman Tim Huelskamp will become president of the organization. During his political career, Huelskamp's top donor was Koch Industries, and he received more than \$250,000 in campaign contributions from the oil and gas industry. Koch Industries and the Koch family foundations have been one of the biggest funders of organizations that deny humans' role in causing climate change and oppose policies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

It remains to be seen who will staff the EPA's red team. NYU professor Steve Koonin, a scientist who formerly worked with both BP and the Obama administration, is reportedly the top contender. In 2014, Koonin wrote a Wall Street Journal op-ed detailing the ways in which climate science is not settled, which included the extent to which humans are causing climate change, a now-frequent talking point among Trump administration officials.

In April, Koonin published another op-ed in the Wall Street Journal, suggesting that a Red Team/Blue Team would be "a step toward resolving . . . differing perceptions of climate science."

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

#### FDA REAUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2017—MOTION TO PROCEED

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to proceed to Calendar No. 174, H.R. 2430.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the motion.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 174, H.R. 2430, a bill to amend the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act to revise and extend the user-fee programs for prescription drugs, medical devices, generic drugs, and biosimilar biological products, and for other purposes.

#### CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

#### CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the motion to proceed to calendar No. 174, H.R. 2430, an act to amend the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act to revise and extend the user-fee programs for prescription drugs, medical devices, generic drugs, and biosimilar biological products, and for other purposes.

Mitch McConnell, Steve Daines, Mike Crapo, James M. Inhofe, Lamar Alexander, Pat Roberts, Thom Tillis, Orrin G. Hatch, John Cornyn, Cory Gardner, Roy Blunt, James E. Risch, Roger F. Wicker, Tim Scott, John Thune, Mike Rounds, John Hoeven.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum call be waived with respect to the cloture motion.

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

#### EXECUTIVE SESSION

#### EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to executive session for the en bloc consideration of the following nominations: Executive Calendar Nos. 61, 63, 162, 174, 194, 246, 248, and 249.

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

The clerk will report the nominations.

The legislative clerk read the nominations of Elaine McCusker, of Virginia, to be a Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Defense; Robert Daigle, of Virginia, to be Director of Cost Assessment and Program Evaluation, Department of Defense; Robert R. Hood, of Georgia, to be an Assistant Secretary of Defense; Richard V. Spencer, of Wyoming, to be Secretary of the Navy; Ryan McCarthy, of Illinois, to be Under Secretary of the Army; Lucian Niemeyer, of Pennsylvania, to be an Assistant Secretary of Defense; Matthew P. Donovan, of Virginia, to be Under Secretary of the Air Force; and Ellen M. Lord, of Rhode Island, to be Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics.

Thereupon, the Senate proceeded to consider the nominations en bloc.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate vote on the nominations en bloc with no intervening action or debate; that if confirmed, the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table en bloc; that no further motions be in order; that any statements relating to the nominations be printed in the RECORD; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action and the Senate then resume legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the McCusker, Daigle, Hood, Spencer, McCarthy, Niemeyer, Donovan, and Lord nominations en bloc?

The nominations were confirmed en bloc.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, for the information of Senators, the Senate just confirmed eight nominees for the Defense Department.

#### LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate will now resume legislative session. Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. DAINES). Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### FDA REAUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2017—MOTION TO PROCEED—Continued

#### CLIMATE DISRUPTION

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, climate disruption is a seminal challenge of our generation. It affects everything from our farms to our forests to our fishing. We see the impact in disappearing glaciers, melting permafrost, shrinking ice sheets, raging forest fires, dying coral reefs, migrating animals and insects, and more powerful storms.

The world is changing right in front of us. It is appropriate to call this climate disruption because our climate is broken, and it is affecting so many things that we value. In response, communities across the globe are transforming their energy economies—from increasing the energy efficiency of buildings, vehicles, and appliances to replacing a carbon-polluting fossil-fuel-energy economy with a renewable and clean-energy economy.

How much do you know about the changes under way? Let's find out. Welcome to episode 4 of the Senate Climate Disruption Quiz.

Here we go. First question: Atmospheric carbon dioxide is at its highest level in at least how many years? Is it 88 years? Is it the highest level in the last 8,000 years? Is it the highest level in the last 800,000 years, or is it the highest level in the last 80 million years?

Think about your answer.

The correct answer is C, 800,000 years.

In September 2016, we reached a historic milestone. The carbon dioxide readings for the planet reached 400 parts per million. For perspective, before the industrial revolution, before we started burning fossil fuels in massive quantities, that number was about 280 parts per million.

Here is something that is even scarier. The rate is going up faster and faster. In 1965 and 1975, it was going up at about 1 part per million per year. Then, a couple of decades later, it was 2 parts per million per year, and the last 2 years, it has gone up at a rate of 3 parts per million per year.

As the human civilization, we have to turn this around. We have to not only slow it down, but we have to turn it around and lower those levels of carbon dioxide if we are going to save our blue-green planet.