

may be on the brink of finally freeing ourselves from the relentless, remorseless political pressures of the fossil fuel industry. They have had their way around here long enough. We need to have a long overdue discussion of the effects of climate change on our national security, on our health, on our economy, and, ultimately, on our national reputation.

Pope Francis has reminded us that we have “a moral responsibility. We have to take it seriously.”

He said: “You can see the effects of climate change and scientists have clearly said what path we have to follow.”

He went on: “If someone is doubtful that this is true, they should ask scientists. They are very clear. They are not opinions made on the fly. They are very clear.”

Pope Francis is a scientist himself, and having heard plenty of confessions, he is also a man of the world, and he understands the weakness of humankind. He understands political pressures. “When you don’t want to see, you don’t see,” he said. But he reminds us that “history will judge the decisions.”

America is an exemplary Nation. As an exemplary Nation, one that projects power by example and not just by force, America will be stronger and more respected if we pull together and craft American climate solutions. For a country that seeks to stand as an example in this world—a city on a hill, we often say—and a country that benefits from the power of that example, this shaming display of out-of-control special interest influence will have consequences. The world is watching. We have a role to play in this world, we Americans, and it is time we got about it before the consequences of climate change become, to quote Donald Trump in 2009, “catastrophic and irreversible.”

I yield the floor.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I send a cloture motion to the desk for the McCain substitute amendment No. 1003, as modified.

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 Senate amendment No. 1003, as modified, to Calendar No. 175, H.R. 2810, an act to authorize

appropriations for fiscal year 2018 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes.

John McCain, Mitch McConnell, John Thune, Thom Tillis, Pat Roberts, Mike Crapo, Richard Burr, Michael B. Enzi, Orrin G. Hatch, Ted Cruz, John Cornyn, Dan Sullivan, Roy Blunt, Cory Gardner, Tim Scott, Shelley Moore Capito, David Perdue.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I send a cloture motion to the desk for the underlying bill, H.R. 2810.

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 Calendar No. 175, H.R. 2810, an act to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2018 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes.

John McCain, Mitch McConnell, John Thune, Thom Tillis, Pat Roberts, Mike Crapo, Richard Burr, Michael B. Enzi, Orrin G. Hatch, Ted Cruz, John Cornyn, Dan Sullivan, Roy Blunt, Cory Gardner, Tim Scott, Shelley Moore Capito, David Perdue.

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

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

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that at a time to be determined by the majority leader, in consultation with the Democratic leader, the Senate proceed to executive session for consideration of Calendar No. 109, the nomination of Pamela Patenaude to be Deputy Secretary of the Department of Housing and Urban Development. I further ask that there be 40 minutes of debate on the nomination, equally divided in the usual form; that following the use or yielding back of time, the Senate vote on the confirmation with no intervening action or debate; and that, if confirmed, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table and the President be immediately notified of the Senate’s action.

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 consideration of Calendar No. 293.

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

The clerk will report the nomination. The legislative clerk read the nomination of Douglas W. Domenech, of Virginia, to be an Assistant Secretary of the Interior.

Thereupon, the Senate proceeded to consider the nomination.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate vote on confirmation with no intervening action or debate and that, if confirmed, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table, the President be immediately notified of the Senate’s action, and the Senate return to legislative session.

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

There being no further debate, the question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Domenech nomination? The nomination was confirmed.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate will now resume legislative session.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I am going to make remarks on two subjects and I believe I will go a bit longer than 10 minutes. I ask unanimous consent to speak for up to 20 minutes as in morning business.

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

WESTERN WILDFIRES

Mr. WYDEN. Thank you very much, Mr. President.

I am going to talk first about the devastating fires that are pounding my State, and then I am going to talk about the new legislation introduced earlier today by our colleagues Senator GRAHAM, Senator CASSIDY, and Senator HELLER.

With respect to the fires, I spent much of last weekend essentially going from one base camp to another, visiting six counties to get updates at fire camps and emergency operation centers. In these travels, I saw major fires burning in Oregon from our northern border with Washington State to our southern border with California. Two of these fires were so large that they covered more than one county. So I believed it was important to visit both their eastern and their western fronts. Doing so in each case took almost 2 hours of driving from just one side of the fire to the other.

Of the 1.5 million acres burning in the West last weekend, almost 500,000

were burning in my home State alone. Now, there are 17 fires burning in Oregon. Thousands of Oregonians have been evacuated this summer, and thousands more are facing the prospect of evacuation.

Thousands of firefighters from Oregon and all over this country have been putting themselves in harm's way to help Oregon battle these infernos. From the Columbia River Gorge on the Washington border to Oregon's southwest corner, hundreds of miles away on the California border, I felt it was an enormous honor just to be able to say thank you to the thousands of hard-working men and women who are battling these life-threatening blazes.

I met with emergency service responders on the Eagle Creek fire in the gorge. The Chetco Bar fire in Southwestern Oregon that stretches across Jackson and Josephine Counties, the Jones fire in Lane County, and the Miller Complex fire in Jackson County. In each of these settings, I met men and women who exemplify what I call the Oregon way. The Oregon way isn't written down anywhere. It isn't a law or a rule, it is an ethic. It is an ethic where Oregonians step up and make sure friends and neighbors aren't in jeopardy, and the Oregon way is all about Oregonians staying on the job until it is finished.

I was also very moved by the presence of those from all over the country who came to our State, sometimes from thousands of miles away, to help save Oregon treasures—people from California, Arizona, all the way from the east coast and many points in between who came to Oregon to help out. It was just stunning to meet folks from Florida who, while worrying about their friends and loved ones in the path of Hurricane Irma, were up and working on our natural disaster, which is wildfire.

To get this job done right for generations to come, you have to recognize the inescapable proposition that the fires are getting hotter, they are getting bigger, and they are getting much more dangerous to fight. In one example, I heard how the Eagle Creek fire raced 13 miles in 15 hours, and it burned with such ferocity, with high winds, that it jumped the Columbia River. It jumped the river to start a fire on the Washington side of the gorge. For those who might not be familiar with normal fire behavior, I want to just take a minute and say how serious that is. Usually a river, and certainly a river as large as the Columbia, acts as a natural fire break, but these fires we are seeing today are not normal fires. These are not your grandfather's fires. These are gargantuan, dangerous fires. I haven't seen anything like it, along with my friend who has been on the Natural Resources Committee for a long time. This year is on track to be the worst fire in history in terms of total acres burned.

The Washington Post newspaper on Friday reported that with the dozens of

fires that have spread across the West, an area larger than the size of Maryland has been burned straight through.

The way the Federal Government has historically paid for fighting fires is just plain wrong, and it leads to a cycle that adds fuel to these exceptionally dangerous fires. I have been on this floor raising this issue. I served as the chairman of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee not too long ago. Our committee has heard in hearings again and again about the dangers fires pose to our community, but the system for funding fire prevention in a timely way before our country has to spend so much more money for putting the fires out hasn't been fixed. That system is still broken as we discuss it here today.

Last week, I came to the Senate floor and talked about this subject the same day Congress passed legislation to keep the government open for 3 more months and provide aid for the recovery efforts after Hurricane Harvey. Thankfully, that legislation also included funding to ensure the Forest Service can refill the funds the agency is being forced to borrow from fire prevention accounts to fight the fires now, but that funding, certainly necessary now, doesn't fix the long-term problem.

The Congress must make sure the Forest Service has the resources it needs to treat the forest before they burn, to help deal with this issue before the forest burns, because that will make them more flame resistant and stronger in terms of the capacity to deal particularly with the heat and lightning strikes and fuel buildup.

Let me lay out the steps the Congress needs to take in the coming days. First, Congress needs to lock in disaster funding to get the communities devastated by wildfires back on their feet. They are facing destroyed homes and businesses. Recreational areas that are the lifeblood of a lot of western communities have been destroyed. They lost timber revenue. The cleanup and restoration efforts are going to be tough and costly. So that is step 1 on this to-do list.

Step 2 is fixing the broken disaster fueling budget system known in the West as fire borrow. As the government spends more on fighting fires, it has stolen, in the past, funds that are supposed to go to fire prevention so the money isn't there to thin out the dead and dying material from our forests, and all it takes is one spark to start an inferno. The problem is only going to get bigger year after year as climate change roasts the landscapes across the West and wreaks havoc across the Nation. This has gone on for years. It is leading to bigger, more threatening fires, and it is critical that this Congress put a stop to it.

Other parts of our Nation faced horrible natural disasters over the last several weeks with hurricanes battering Texas, Florida, and much of the South. The way the government pays for firefighting right now would be like funding emergency hurricane response

teams with the money that is supposed to pay for levies and sandbags for the next storm. The practice of fire borrowing that has plagued so many western communities just defies common sense.

Years ago, along with my colleague from Idaho, Senator CRAPO, I introduced a fix to this problem with the Wildfire Disaster Funding Act. Senator CRAPO and I feel like we have been at it longer than the Trojan War. We have been at this year after year, and now we have the support of 261 groups and experts, folks in the forestry industry, environmental folks, scientists. Senator CRAPO, as chairman of the Banking Committee, has another bill that, in effect, builds on this work we have done for years. I support his sensible proposal as well.

The bottom line is, the West cannot wait any longer for Congress to send them help and repair for the long term, which is fixing this broken system that shortchanges prevention and adds fuel to the raging wildfires. There is bipartisan commitment to solving this crisis, and I know Senators across the West, where these fires are burning, have been going on exactly the same kind of tours I went on last weekend. I am sure they met, as I did, these incredibly dedicated, courageous firefighters who are just working themselves to exhaustion. I am sure they heard from many of the same types of operations teams about the fight they are facing.

Those men and women on the frontlines fighting fire are doing their part. It is time for the Congress to do ours. Let's make sure our communities have the funds they need to fight fires, put the fires out. Once and for all, let us end this bizarre, commonsense-defying budget process called fire borrowing that, in effect, has the Federal Government consistently shorting prevention and then having to spend more down the road when we have these enormous fires as a result of the fact that you haven't gone in there to clean out that dead material.

HEALTHCARE

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I would like to turn to healthcare. For me, healthcare has always been the most important issue. It goes back to my days when I was director of the Oregon Gray Panthers. I have always felt, as a general proposition, that it is extraordinarily important for us to pursue bipartisan approaches in this space. I have focused on that, and, frankly, I got a lot of welts on my back to show for it.

I was very proud last night to be able to work with Chairman HATCH, and we have, in effect, announced the beginning of an agreement to deal with the Children's Health Insurance Program, a bipartisan approach, and do it in a responsible way. Obviously, there are other steps to go, but I think it reflects, again, a big, important issue in