

Anyone who ever met or talked with Paul found out that he had a special passion for helping those struggling with mental illness. That was shaped by his own family. As a young child, Paul watched his brother Steven's traumatic descent into mental illness. In college, his brother suffered a severe mental breakdown and spent the next 2 years in hospitals. Eventually, he recovered and graduated from college with honors, but it took his immigrant parents years to pay off the hospital bills.

Paul would always talk about how, when he grew up, his house was dark because no one wanted to talk about mental illness back then because it had so much stigma. He wanted to get it out in the sunlight. He knew that there were far too many families going through the same experience, too many devastated by the physical and financial consequences of mental illness. He knew that we could and we should do better. For years as a Senator, he fought for funding for better care, better services, and better representation for the mentally ill, and he fought for mental health parity in health insurance coverage.

Even years after his death, Paul's voice was heard loud and clear. Congressman Ramstad from Minnesota, a Republican Congressman at the time, took up the cause in the House. I helped. Ted Kennedy led the way and, of course, Pete Domenici, who had paired up with Paul on this important bill.

Finally, in 2008, we passed the Paul Wellstone and Pete Domenici Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act. The bill requires insurance companies to treat mental health on an equal basis with physical illness. For Paul, this fight was always a matter of civil rights, of justice, and of basic human decency, and that landmark legislation is one fitting way we honor him.

Sheila, of course, also dedicated herself to helping others, especially survivors of violence. I had the opportunity to work closely with Sheila when I served for 8 years as Hennepin County Attorney. She focused on domestic violence and was instrumental in creating and getting the funding for the Hennepin County Domestic Abuse Center. That center is an international model for serving victims of domestic violence by bringing together a full range of services and resources in one central location. Victims of domestic violence don't have to go through the redtape that would be difficult even for a lawyer to figure out.

Of course, one of Paul's greatest legislative achievements was the work he did, along with Vice President Biden and others, to pass the original Violence Against Women Act. It was a team effort, and Sheila was right there on the frontlines with Paul.

Together, they accomplished so much. Their commitment to others never wavered, and neither did they.

It was just a few weeks before that tragic crash that I last saw Sheila and

Paul. Sheila and I had been asked to speak to a group of new citizens, immigrants from Russia. It was a very small group, and we were there to talk about our own immigrant experiences, our own relatives. I remember she talked about her relatives in Appalachia, and I talked about my relatives on the Iron Range coming over from Slovenia. The event was winding down. It was a small, small event in a synagogue with these new immigrants, and, all of a sudden, a big surprise—in walked Paul. He wasn't supposed to be there. It was just a few weeks, a month away, from one of the biggest elections he had ever faced in the U.S. Senate. But he had gotten on an early flight and had come home from Washington. There he was—he and a group of immigrants and us—with no press, no TVs, not even a big crowd, all just a few weeks before his election.

He came for two reasons. He loved Sheila, and he wanted to be there to support her. But he was also there because he loved the immigrant experience. He embraced it. His family, like so many Minnesota families, was an example of how you can come to America, succeed in America, and then, in turn, help America succeed.

That is my last memory of Paul as he stood before those immigrants, telling about his own story, embracing them. I will remember him in that way, but I will also remember the joy he felt for politics, how he would run around that green bus of his, with people running alongside him on the parade routes.

In the last year of his life, he told the public he had MS, and he couldn't run like that anymore. So he would stand in the back of the bus with Sheila and wave. What was so amazing about it was that he had energized so many people in those green Wellstone shirts to run around that bus that you didn't even notice he wasn't running. He had given them the energy and the hope to carry on his work, and they were doing it for him.

Now, 15 years after we lost Paul and Sheila, it is our job to carry on and run around that bus. That is organizing, that is politics, and that is the gift of joy in improving people's lives that Paul, Sheila, Marcia, and those other beloved staff members left for us.

Thank you.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

PUERTO RICO AND U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS RECOVERY EFFORT

Mr. FRANKEN. Mr. President, I rise to talk about the devastation in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands and the need to rebuild the electric grid in a more resilient and sustainable way.

Over the last few months, communities around the country have been devastated by natural disasters. We have had terrible hurricanes in Texas, Florida, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands, as well as tragic wildfires across the West. These communities need immediate help, and that is why the disaster supplemental appropriations bill we passed yesterday is so important. I am glad this bill provides nearly \$19 billion to replenish FEMA's emergency disaster accounts that help communities start to rebuild, but it is just a downpayment. As we know, it will take a lot more Federal assistance.

One thing we need to focus on is the electric grid. Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria demonstrated the risks the electric grid faces from extreme weather. The communities hardest hit in Texas and Florida underwent days—sometimes much longer—without any power, and when this happens, it is a serious risk to the safety and health of everyone in the area.

Now, American citizens in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands are facing a major humanitarian crisis, and the Federal Government needs to do everything it can to assist.

More than a month after Hurricane Maria hit, only 25 percent of Puerto Rico has access to electricity, and it will take many months to get power back to those communities. That is completely unacceptable. Without electricity, pumping stations can't supply drinking water to households. In fact, 25 percent of the island still lacks access to potable water. Without electricity, wastewater treatment facilities can't operate, which means raw sewage is contaminating rivers and streams. Without electricity, cell towers cease to function, making communication with first responders difficult. Without a stable electric grid, hospitals have to rely on backup power to keep lifesaving equipment working. That backup power is often diesel generators that require fuel, which is in short supply.

Given the dire situation, it is no surprise that we have already seen tens of thousands of Puerto Ricans leave the island, with nearly 60,000 arriving in Florida alone.

The majority of the transmission and distribution lines were destroyed in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. We need to rebuild them, and I think we can all agree they should be rebuilt to withstand the next disaster. So let's rebuild the electric grid in a more resilient and sustainable way that reduces future threats and future costs. I have been talking with my Republican colleagues and members of the administration, and everyone agrees this is a good idea. That is why I want to work with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to include language in the next supplemental disaster aid package that does exactly this.

I am talking about investing in a more modern and more decentralized

grid so that not everyone is relying on a handful of powerplants that can go down. Decentralized energy resources operating in microgrids are more likely to remain functioning during and after storms. There are many instances of distributed energy keeping important facilities online after natural disasters, including the Texas Medical Center, which is the largest medical complex in the world, which has a combined heat and power plant that kept running during Hurricane Harvey. That is because during extreme weather, these technologies can go into island mode or operate independent of the grid.

Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands have some of the highest electricity prices in the United States, and that is because they rely on oil, coal, and gas that must be shipped from the mainland. While these islands do not have fossil fuels, do you know what they do have? Lots of Sun. And the rapidly declining costs of distributed clean energy technologies such as solar, wind, energy efficiency, and battery storage, in many instances make them more affordable than existing power generation, which means these clean energy technologies could help reduce prices.

These investments will also save money in the long run. In 2005, the National Institute of Building Sciences completed a study for FEMA that found that every dollar invested in disaster preparedness and resilience saves \$4 in future avoided losses. We know we are going to see more hurricanes and extreme weather events, so let's rebuild in such a way that impacts are not as severe the next time around. Let's protect people and save taxpayer money.

That is my message: Let's protect people, and let's all save taxpayer money and do the thing that makes sense.

Thank you.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, it is nice to see the distinguished Senator in the chair presiding. I am not sure, in my 183 “Time to Wake Up” speeches, I have yet had the pleasure of speaking while the Senator was presiding.

I am here to once again call for us to wake up to the corporate capture of Congress and this administration—the capture of governance by the fossil fuel industry that keeps us from honestly addressing climate change. There is a saying that “personnel is policy.” Well, the Trump personnel for positions at the Environmental Protection Agency reflect a policy to undo the public welfare mission of the Agency and align it

with the special interests of the fossil fuel industry.

There is a word for that. It is called corruption, at least as the Founding Fathers knew the meaning of that term. It starts at the top. Trump named Scott Pruitt head of the EPA. Pruitt has a long record of dark money fundraising and long, cozy relationships with Big Energy industry political donors. In effect, he is a tentacle of the fossil fuel climate denial operation, wiggling and wriggling in the Administrator's chair, near his new \$25,000 “cone of silence” secret communications booth that he built so no one would hear him checking in with his masters.

Results are as expected. The New York Times has reported: “How Rollbacks at Scott Pruitt's EPA are a Boon to Oil and Gas.” No surprise. In the 4 months that followed his appointment, Pruitt moved to undo, delay, or otherwise block more than 30 environmental rules benefiting his fossil fuel friends. This regulatory rollback, larger in scope than any over so short a time in the Agency's near-half century history, went straight into the pockets of the fossil fuel industry.

Longtime Pruitt benefactor Devon Energy is cashing in dividends on its investment in Scott Pruitt's political career, as Pruitt is working to eliminate rules on the leaking and flaring of methane, and has rescinded requirements for reporting methane emissions. Devon, as you may recall, is that company whose letter to the EPA Pruitt put on his own Oklahoma attorney general letterhead to mask Devon's hand and submit their work as his own official work as attorney general of his State.

So this hand-in-glove relationship between Devon as the hand and Pruitt as the glove goes back a long way. The EPA has career scientists and legal experts who bring decades of experience in environmental law and science to the EPA who are all being cut out as the Administrator takes drastic steps to undo environmental protections. Just this week, EPA scientists were yanked from a conference in Rhode Island where they were going to talk about climate change. The matter of climate change on Narragansett Bay in Rhode Island is pretty significant. This is the day's Providence Journal, our leading newspaper in Rhode Island. Headline: “Will climate change negate Bay cleanup?” It has a big map of Narragansett Bay with all the facilities at risk of being flooded and overwhelmed. It is front page news.

It is a matter of extreme importance in Rhode Island, and EPA yanked out its scientists. They weren't allowed to come down and talk at an event where they were going to talk about climate change. It is not just yanking the scientists. Here is a New York Times article by Lisa Friedman from October 20. Headline: “EPA scrubs a climate website of ‘climate change.’” An EPA website has been scrubbed of scores of

links. “About 15 mentions of the words climate change have been removed from the main page alone. . . .”

It is not just at EPA. Here is today's exclusive headline: “The Interior Department scrubs climate change from its strategic plan.” I mean, they act as if this is the Soviet Union and the government is allowed to tell scientists what they can say and not say and put phony propaganda onto official websites and keep scientists from going to meetings because they might actually tell the truth about climate change.

I am the son and grandson of Foreign Service officers. I grew up serving in countries that did that, where the government could tell the scientist: No, you don't say that. No, you don't go there. No, this is the party line. I never thought that would happen in the United States of America—and here we are.

To aid Pruitt in his fossil fuel industry crusade, our President has nominated a parade of fossil fuel lackeys, lobbyists, and operatives whose main qualification seems to be allegiance to their corporate clients and benefactors. It is not just the fossil fuel industry that gets their hacks planted in government offices.

Do you remember in the “Cat in the Hat,” where they had Thing One and Thing Two running around? Let's look at Hack One and Hack Two, who just cleared committee today in the Pruitt “EPA for Sale” roster.

Hack One is a toxicologist who consults for major chemical corporations and has spent the better part of his professional life fighting regulation of potentially toxic compounds in consumer goods. His name is Michael Dourson. President Trump nominated him to run the EPA Office of Chemical Safety and Pollution Prevention. A lobbying group for sellers of pesticides, fungicides, and rodenticides called Dourson “a perfect fit” for the job—the perfect industry hack for that job, more like.

Hack Two is William Wehrum, nominated to run the EPA Office of Air and Radiation. Wehrum is a lobbyist who has represented a host of major industrial and energy corporations, and the Rubber Manufacturers Association, the American Forest and Paper Association, and the American Petroleum Institute. President George W. Bush actually nominated this guy to the same post in 2006, but the White House withdrew his nomination because it was so controversial.

Well, that was 2006. That was before Citizens United. That was before that decision amped up industry power to the point where it can now ram through conflicted and objectionable candidates with—as happened this morning—unanimous Republican support. Not one Republican Senator on the committee would voice an objection.

When Senators asked questions for the record in the Environment and