

solution to the deficit is a tax bill that raises the deficit.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. President, I am here to talk about the U.N. Climate Change Conference that we just got back from in Germany, where the United States stood alone as the only Nation in the world—Syria and Nicaragua having left us—not a party to the historic Paris Agreement. Led by Senator CARDIN, my colleagues Senators MARKEY, SCHATZ, MERKLEY, and I went to Bonn to tell the nations gathered there that the Trump administration does not represent American views on this issue, nor American determination to tackle the climate challenge. It was not just us who went there to say we are still in. American Governors, mayors, universities, and major corporations all brought the same message that notwithstanding the Trump administration's efforts to separate us from the Paris goal, we are still in.

The urgency of the experts at our Nation's universities and Federal agencies is reflected in a major multi-agency climate report that was released last week and makes an astounding contrast to the position taken by the Trump administration. The "Climate Science Special Report" will serve as the scientific backbone for the "Fourth National Climate Assessment" due next year. The authors list is a who's who of top university scientists and Agency experts from NOAA, the EPA, NASA, our National Labs, the National Science Foundation, and the Departments of Agriculture, Defense, Energy, Commerce, Interior, and State—in all, 13 Federal Agencies and Departments. This report was also peer-reviewed by our American National Academy of Sciences. The New York Times properly described it as "the United States' most definitive statement on climate change."

The report wastes no time getting to the heart of what is causing climate change. It states:

This assessment concludes, based on extensive evidence, that it is extremely likely that human activities, especially emissions from greenhouse gases, are the dominant cause of the observed warming since the mid-20th century.

It goes on to say:

The magnitude of climate change beyond the next few decades will depend primarily on the amount of greenhouse gases (especially carbon dioxide) emitted globally.

Further it says:

There is broad consensus that the further and faster the Earth system is pushed towards warming, the greater the risk of unanticipated changes and impacts, some of which are potentially large and irreversible.

In a 2016 interview, President Trump said there is "some connectivity" between human activity and climate change, but, he said, "you can make lots of cases for different views." Well, the President ought to read his administration's own report. There is more than just "some connectivity." To quote the report, "For the warming

over the last century, there is no convincing alternative explanation supported by the extent of the observational evidence," but this administration's industry hacks are not paying attention, and instead of helping, they are out busily doing things like deleting the words "climate change" from Agency websites. The Washington Post reported in September that EPA public affairs officer John Kronkus "told staff that he is on the lookout for 'the double C-word'—climate change—and repeatedly has instructed grant officers to eliminate references to the subject in solicitations."

Maybe they think if they crawl under the bed and scrub out the words "climate change," the scientific phenomenon will disappear, but in science it actually doesn't work that way.

Over at the Department of Energy is Secretary Rick Perry, who called climate change a "contrived, phony mess" in his 2010 book. He backtracked his position in his January confirmation hearings but still said he "believe[s] some of it is naturally occurring, but some of it is also man-made activity." Well, the Energy Secretary might want to read the report. Manmade activity is not some of it; it is the dominant cause.

Then there is EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt, who said about human activity causing climate change: "There's tremendous disagreement about the degree of impact, so no, I would not agree that it's a primary contributor to the global warming that we see." The EPA Administrator needs to read the report too. He is wrong and wrong. "Dominant" is what the report says with "no convincing alternative."

If Perry or Pruitt bothered to look at the report their staffs helped write, they would see this graph: "Human Activities Are the Primary Driver of Recent Global Temperature Rise." This is the human activity column, this is solar effects, and this is volcanic effects.

Every once in a while somebody says: Oh, it is the volcanoes that are doing it; it is not us. It turns out volcanoes are actually having a slight cooling effect.

People say: No, it is solar radiation; it is not us. You can barely see the amount of solar radiation warming.

All of this is human-caused climate change. It is more than dominant. You can barely see other factors up against it.

As for Pruitt's claim that humans are not "a primary contributor to the global warming that we see," well, you can turn to the report's page 31: "Human activities are now the dominant cause of the observed trends in climate." Flip forward to page 36, and it states: "Many lines of evidence demonstrate human activities, especially emissions of greenhouse gases, are primarily responsible."

So, Administrator Pruitt, humans are not a primary contributor. The actual science shows "human activities,

especially emissions of greenhouse gases, are primarily responsible for the observed climate changes in the Industrial era, especially over the last six decades."

You could flip to the next page where it says: "[T]here are no suggested factors, even speculative ones that can explain the timing or magnitude" of what is happening in the climate or "that would somehow cancel out the role of human factors."

Just last week, Kathleen Hartnett White rolled into the Environment and Public Works Committee out of the President's climate denial clown car. White is a prolific climate denier from the fossil fuel-funded Texas Public Policy Foundation. She wrote that carbon pollution in the atmosphere is "unquestionably a huge social benefit." Unquestionably a huge social benefit? OK. She also compared climate science to a "cult," which kind of lines her up a little bit with that Heartland Institute that has compared climate scientists to the Unabomber, just to give you an idea of the intellectual rigor of the climate denial arguments. Now she is up for consideration as chair of the White House Council on Environmental Quality.

In responding to our questions, Ms. White was, let's just say, a little at a loss. She responded, for instance, that she has "a very superficial understanding" of ocean issues. She said on ocean acidification that there "are different perspectives" and that acidity "changes up and down are not inherently a problem." Well, Kathleen Hartnett White needs to read this report too.

According to the Climate Science Special Report, "The world's oceans are currently absorbing more than a quarter of the CO₂ emitted to the atmosphere annually from human activities, making them more acidic . . . with potential detrimental impacts to marine ecosystems."

How much more acidic are the oceans being made by the absorption of CO₂? The report goes on to say that "the rate of acidification is unparalleled in at least the 66 million years."

Sixty-six million years is way before humankind even existed. That is the kind of dice we are rolling with ocean acidification.

I pressed Ms. White on how much of the heat greenhouse gas emissions add to the atmosphere is absorbed by the oceans. She couldn't even tell me if it was more or less than half of it. Yet she insisted she knew there "are differences of opinion on that, that there's not one right answer." So, in a nutshell, she doesn't know what the science is, but she sure knows that it is wrong.

Well, there actually is one right answer, and wouldn't you know it, it is in the Climate Science Special Report, which says: "Not only has ocean heat content increased dramatically, but more than 90 percent of the energy gained in the combined ocean-atmosphere system over recent decades has

gone into the ocean." In fact, to be more precise, it is 93 percent. By the way, that is heating the oceans at a rate greater than setting off a Hiroshima-style nuclear bomb in the oceans and having all of the heat of the nuclear explosion absorbed by the oceans, more than one explosion per second. So it is quite a heat transfer.

I asked Ms. White about a basic scientific principle: Do you think if the ocean warms it expands? Does the law of thermal expansion apply to seawater?

After a long pause, she replied, "Again, I do not have any kind of expertise or even such layman's study of the ocean dynamics and the climate change issues." For somebody who wants to lead the White House Council on Environmental Quality and help guide the science in this area, it is a pretty rudimentary scientific principle that water expands as it warms. If you can't grasp that, good luck grasping the risks that sea level rise poses to coastal communities like ours in Rhode Island.

The "Climate Science Special Report" states that "it is virtually certain that sea level rise this century and beyond will pose a growing challenge to coastal communities, infrastructure, and ecosystems." Rhode Island has coastal communities, infrastructure, and ecosystems so this challenge is very real for my home State.

Climate change, sea level rise, and ocean acidification are challenges that require smart leadership and initiative. We need to take action to bolster our infrastructure, fortify our coasts, and help communities prepare for those challenges on the horizon. Instead, in this administration, we get the likes of Perry, Pruitt, and White.

I wish ignorance were what is driving these administration officials. Ignorance can be rectified with education, with information. We could assign them to read the "Climate Science Special Report," for instance. They might find it illuminating and realize that what they have been saying is factually false. Unfortunately, it is a much more nefarious condition than ignorance that afflicts this administration on climate change, and it is a condition that cannot be cured with facts.

This is about fossil fuel money. The malady of fossil fuel money in politics is what prevents the stark warnings in the "Climate Science Special Report" from being a call to action in Congress.

In Bonn at the COP23 gathering, we saw that the rest of the world is not turning a blind eye to climate change. The rest of the world is confronting it head-on, along with many American States, many American cities, major American corporations, and virtually every major American university. Those are all very hopeful signs.

While our President and his administration have bound themselves to the fossil fuel polluters, the American people have not. Rhode Islanders and Americans everywhere care deeply

about getting ahead of this problem—about achieving the goals of the U.N. framework. And the American people will carry forward American leadership in combating climate change, no matter how evil the continuing influence of the fossil fuel industry is in Congress.

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

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

The Senator from Wyoming.

TAX REFORM

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, the Senate Finance Committee is working this week on the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act. It is a very important piece of legislation that the country is looking forward to having passed.

This is a Republican plan to give tax relief to the American people. Just as the name of the legislation says, it actually addresses both issues: tax cuts and jobs.

First of all, the legislation will cut the taxes for American workers. One of the biggest cuts in the plan is that it roughly doubles the standard deduction that people take. Right now, the standard deduction for a married couple is about \$12,000. If we double it, people will not pay any Federal income taxes at all on the first \$24,000 they earn. That is a big tax cut. It is aimed squarely at lower income and middle-income families in this country.

A lot of people will decide to take this deduction instead of going through the painstaking process of itemizing deductions on their income tax returns. It saves people a lot of time. It also saves them the cost of accountants and lawyers who help them figure out the complicated taxes that they end up paying in this country each year.

Republicans are also working to preserve other deductions that are important to American families. When we put all of these together, we are going to cut taxes for people and put money back in their pockets instead of sending it to Washington.

The second thing to know about this tax relief legislation is that it is going to be a big boost for jobs in America. In fact, it will help America create more than 900,000 new jobs.

It is also going to lead to higher pay. That is because the legislation will cut the taxes that small businesses have to pay. Small businesses create most of the jobs in America. If we let them keep more of their money, they can hire people and grow their businesses. That is what happens in this country. That is how our economy works; people hiring people matter to grow the economy. They can also give workers a raise and offer better benefits. When Washington takes less and businesses

keep more, workers are better off every time.

Republicans also want to bring down the rates that Washington charges other businesses. A lot of people work for small businesses, but a lot of people also work for large businesses as well. If we are able to cut taxes for those businesses, then those workers can get the same raise. How much more money are we talking about? Well, according to the Tax Foundation, it amounts to about \$2,600 for a typical middle-income family. That is what you get when you combine the tax cut and the pay raise that people will see across the country. For that family, an extra \$2,600 is going to be a very big deal. A majority of Americans say that they don't have enough savings today to cover a \$500 emergency expense if one came up.

Millions of American families will be far better off because of the tax relief that Republicans are working on this week. It will boost the economy, help individual workers, and help their families. This is about tax cuts, and it is about jobs. That is how you keep the economy growing. That is how we keep American families thriving.

PROTECTING VETERAN MEMORIALS

Mr. President, I also want to speak about an issue that is very important to our veterans in Wyoming and across the country. The 2018 National Defense Authorization Act conference report includes a provision that allows America's veteran memorials to be used as a political bargaining chip. I think it is a very bad idea.

There is a specific provision in this report that allows the Secretary of Defense to dismantle a veteran memorial and move it to a foreign nation.

We have one of these memorials at the F.E. Warren Air Force Base in Cheyenne, WY. This memorial honors American soldiers who were massacred more than 100 years ago in a town called Balangiga in the Philippines. On September 28, 1901, a group of 400 Filipino insurgents, armed with machetes, attacked American soldiers in Company C of the 9th Infantry. It was a sneak attack while the Americans were mostly unarmed and having breakfast.

The insurgents signaled the attack by ringing the bells of the local church. Company C had 75 soldiers, and 48 of them were killed in this attack or died of their wounds or went missing in action. It was the worst defeat for the American Army since the Battle of the Little Bighorn in 1876. These bells were used in an act of war against American soldiers.

The Army legally brought the bells back to America to honor the troops of Company C who were lost in this massacre. The 11th Infantry Regiment brought them to Cheyenne, WY, and today the bells of Balangiga are part of the memorial at F.E. Warren Air Force Base.

Over the years, the Department of Defense and the State Department have tried a few times to move these