

turns to ozone, and it lands on us—not them, us. It is their pollution, our lungs.

Thanks a bunch, guys.

Our air is also worsened by smoke from forest fires, even from as far away as Canada, and the warming climate, as the Presiding Officer knows, has created an extraordinary fire situation out West. Changing precipitation patterns have produced more fires, and that means more smoke in downwind States, and we are a downwind State.

The result of all of this is that Rhode Island's air quality receives only a C from the American Lung Association. This poor grade is largely because of ozone, most of which comes from out of State. We end up with grade C air because of, primarily, out-of-State pollutants. This is not just some minor inconvenience. Across the country, air pollution—much of it made worse by climate change—is responsible for a staggering 200,000 premature deaths each year.

Pollen is another problem. Shifting seasons produce a longer pollen season. Increased pollen levels, particularly with increased air pollution, kick in allergies, which takes us into another risk. The warmth of earlier springs and later falls also means that tick and mosquito season in Rhode Island lasts far longer than it used to, and that moves us to yet more health risks and diseases.

Rhode Island already has the fourth highest rate of Lyme disease in the country. We have over 900 cases a year, and as temperatures increase, we are likely to see the number of ticks in Rhode Island increase, which would be expected to lead to even more cases of Lyme disease. In States not too far north of us, the tick situation has gotten so out of control that they are actually seeing moose calves die off because they are so swarmed with ticks. I am sorry. I know this is a little bit gross, but calves are dying when their bodies can't support both their own metabolism and feeding the ticks that have crawled up onto them in the thousands—in some cases, over 10,000 ticks. So we have to be concerned about this not just for ourselves but for the wildlife around us.

Warmer temperatures also provide a longer breeding season for mosquitoes. More downpours—yet another result of climate change—result in more standing water, which is habitat for mosquito larvae. Rhode Island has been up 76 percent in extreme downpours since 1950. That is the largest increase in extreme precipitation events out of all 50 States. Of course, these little critters, the mosquitoes, carry the West Nile virus, the Eastern equine encephalitis, and other illnesses we didn't used to see in our State.

As if all of this were not bad enough, climate change is also worsening another natural hazard that threatens public health—harmful algae blooms. Algae naturally occur in lakes and oceans, but in certain conditions, algae

populations can explode. These blooms, they call them—blooms of algae—can slime waterways and overwhelm ecosystems, eating up nutrients, and they can deplete oxygen in the water and in the oceans so completely that no other life can exist, so that other creatures—fish—actually suffocate in the water. Algae are often, therefore, the reason behind massive fish kills.

Some kinds of algae even produce toxins. People can become sick from exposure to the contaminated, toxin-filled water and even from the air if you get enough surface turbulence and churning of waves that it aerates the toxins, and then it is inhaled. The toxins can get into our food chain. They end up in shellfish and seafood on our dinner plates. Depending on which toxin it is, the consequences for people, for pets, and for wildlife can range from rashes and skin irritation, to pretty severe neurological and gastrointestinal symptoms, to respiratory arrest, and even death.

In 2016, New England was hit for the first time by a Pseudo-nitzschia bloom—a kind of algae that produces a toxin, domoic acid, which caused large swaths of Narragansett Bay to be closed to shellfishing. The Providence Journal reported: “In the more than 15 years officials have tested for [domoic acid], Rhode Island . . . never had a bloom reaching dangerous levels.” In March of 2017, Rhode Island was forced, once again, to institute emergency shellfish closures in Narragansett Bay—stuff that did not used to happen before this—when algae produced dangerous levels of domoic acid.

This may seem funny to my western colleagues, but people make their living doing this stuff, so it is not funny to us in Rhode Island when climate change is warming our oceans and creating these risks. Harmful algae blooms have also been advised for ponds in Portsmouth, Cranston, Greenville, and Tiverton.

In all of these ways—from heat-related illnesses, to respiratory disease, to allergies, to tick- and mosquito-borne illnesses, to toxic algae blooms—climate change has serious and wide-ranging effects on public health. Rhode Island's Department of Health has done an excellent service with this report—in helping Rhode Islanders learn how to be aware and to protect themselves. It was supported, by the way, by a grant from the CDC, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, in its Climate and Health Program. It was a small \$10 million program, but it helped this project's report come to fruition in Rhode Island. We appreciate it. It is a wise investment to help prepare Americans for unfamiliar diseases that are being driven into our neighborhoods by a change in climate.

As I conclude, I know that there are colleagues here who do not care to listen to environmental groups, but they might want to listen to the American Medical Association. The American Medical Association writes: “Scientific

surveys have shown clear evidence that our patients are facing adverse health effects associated with climate change.”

Colleagues might listen to the American Lung Association, which writes: “Climate change seriously threatens our wellness—especially our lung health.”

Perhaps colleagues might consider the opinion of the American Academy of Pediatrics, which writes: “Tackling climate change could be the greatest global health opportunity of the 21st century.” They write that because here is the problem: “Climate change poses threats to human health, safety, and security, and children are at particularly high risk.”

We may disagree about a lot around here, but when the American Academy of Pediatrics is telling us that climate change poses serious threats to human health, safety, and security and that children are at particularly high risk, it is a very callous thing to pay no attention. It is time to wake up. Our constituents' health and well-being actually does hang in the balance, and this Rhode Island report shows it for our State at least.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. TILLIS). The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from Rhode Island for his leadership and his outspokenness—how he has shown the importance of the Senate actually doing its job on both climate change and campaign finance and how much they are related to each other because of the stranglehold the oil industry has on the Republican Party and the hundreds of millions of dollars they spend. Senator WHITEHOUSE has been on this floor well over 100 times to talk about that. The country certainly listens, and the country is, certainly, in the same place he is and a lot of us are. Unfortunately, the special interest groups in this town continue to control this Senate.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. President, right now, American manufacturers and American workers are not competing on a level playing field with foreign competitors. The Export-Import Bank is a vital tool for manufacturers in Ohio. In other States, it is helping them export Ohio products around the world. It is helping them compete in the global marketplace. Yet, for an unbelievable 3 years, the Export-Import Bank has been forced to stop most of its work.

I am joined on the floor today by Senator HEITKAMP of North Dakota, who will make the case, as I do, that it makes no sense that some special interest groups have stopped and some ideology way out in right field has stopped the Senate from doing its job with the Export-Import Bank.

Over these 3 years, 95 export credit agencies around the globe, including China's massive export credit agencies, have been aggressively helping foreign

competitors win sales and the jobs that come with them—jobs that would be in the United States but that don't exist in this country—if the administration and the Republican Congress would do their job and move forward on the Export-Import Bank.

China provides more credit every 2 years than the Export-Import Bank has in its 80-year history. If Congress is serious about ensuring American businesses stay competitive, we have to have a functional export-import credit agency, but this Congress has done the opposite. It starved the Bank of the nominees it needs to function, it has crippled its ability to support American jobs for no reason that anybody can figure out. Right now, the Export-Import Bank under law can't finance any transaction worth more than \$10 million because under the law, if it doesn't have a quorum, it can't do that.

The Bank's opponents in the Senate have spent years blocking votes on Board nominees because they want to kill the Bank. It is a small minority of Members of this Senate and the House, but they have had their way with their parliamentary tricks. Every additional day of delay means lost contracts in Ohio, North Dakota, North Carolina, Pennsylvania and Oklahoma, and lost contracts mean lost jobs and additional costs to taxpayers. Without new transactions, the Bank will not be able to self-finance its operations.

If the Bank is fully reopened, it expects to return more than \$600 million to the Treasury, meaning more jobs, more businesses, more tax revenues, but we are not doing it.

Tomorrow the Ex-Im Bank will begin its annual conference. Senior officials from the administration, including Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross and White House National Trade Council Director Peter Navarro will be in attendance. Why are they there? They played no role in keeping the Export-Import Bank functioning. This meeting is usually an opportunity for American exporters to learn about how Ex-Im can help them grow their business.

I have dozens of those companies. There are some big ones like GE, large businesses such as Boeing. Both do a lot of business in my State, provide a lot of jobs, but it is the smaller companies that most people in this Chamber—I have heard of them because I work with them—but most people in this Chamber haven't heard of these small companies that benefit.

Instead, the Bank tomorrow will have to warn American companies that it is prohibited from doing its work. The Bank is hobbled. There will not be a single member of the Board of Directors to represent the Bank at its own conference. Why? Because we haven't confirmed any of them.

To businesses in Ohio, this makes no sense. They don't understand why President Trump will not do anything about it. He has refused. They don't understand why Senator McConnell will not do anything about this. He has refused.

Dozens of American goods are not being manufactured and sold because the Bank is crippled. American companies sit on the sidelines.

Ohio is the home to GE Aviation, which designs and builds the most advanced commercial aircraft engines in the world. Senator PORTMAN and I have both seen the work they do. Senator PORTMAN, my Republican colleague in Ohio, is very supportive of the Bank. He and I have seen up close this plant and their incredible technology. They build the best aircraft engines in the world. GE Aviation supports 24,000 workers in Alabama, Kentucky, New Hampshire, North Carolina, and Mississippi. That doesn't include the thousands of workers who are their supplier partners. They all risk losing business because their foreign competitors have a tool they don't.

GE can offer the best workforce, the best technology, but without the Export-Import Bank, they can't match the financing the foreign airline gets from the United Kingdom when they buy Rolls Royce engines. GE is far from alone. Many manufacturers, as I said, are being hurt.

When Ex-Im was fully operational, it provided \$20 billion in financing to American companies and supported nearly 165,000 jobs. These are generally good-paying union manufacturing jobs. Maybe that is part of the problem. They are union jobs, and I know the opponents of Export-Import Bank aren't wild about union jobs.

This past fiscal year that financing was cut by more than two-thirds. The Bank supports 40,000 jobs. It went from 165,000 before to 40,000 now. That is why the demand for reopening the Bank is overwhelming—the National Association of Manufacturers, the chamber of commerce, the Aerospace Industries Association—one after another after another—the Ohio Manufacturers' Association and small business across the country.

President Trump last year said he wanted the Bank to get back to work, but he nominated somebody who was determined to kill the Bank. We voted down that nomination with a bipartisan vote, and we supported four others who wanted and believed in the Export-Import Bank and wanted to make it work.

Let's deliver for American businesses and American workers. Let's reopen the Bank. Let's make sure the Bank supports another 125,000 jobs. We can't wait any longer. The Senate has waited 4 months. Senator McConnell doesn't seem to want to move on this. President Trump doesn't want to do anything about this. There are \$44 billion in transactions at the Bank that need Board approval. All of these opportunities for job creation and all these opportunities for growing American businesses could be lost.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to executive session for the en bloc consideration of the following nominations: Ex-

ecutive Calendar Nos. 579 and 580, Spencer Bachus; No. 581, Judith Pryor; No. 582, Kimberly Reed; No. 583 and 584, Claudia Slacik; and No. 585, Mark Greenblatt; that the Senate proceed to 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; that no further motions be in order to the nominations; that any statements related to the nominations be printed in the RECORD, and the President be notified of the Senate's action.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Pennsylvania.

Mr. TOOMEY. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, I have long advocated for profound reform of the Export-Import Bank. My preference has long been that the U.S. administration—in fact, this was an obligation of the previous administration which it chose to ignore—but that the U.S. administration negotiate among our trading partners a mutual phaseout of these taxpayer-subsidized export entities.

My objection to this is the embedded taxpayer subsidy, the embedded taxpayer risk in every transaction the Ex-Im does. The special interest I am defending here today is the American taxpayer.

Now, I am pretty sure I am not going to change anyone's mind on the floor tonight, so let me just make clear about where we are with these nominees. During the Banking Committee hearings, I and other colleagues made it clear. I would support the nominees to fill the vacancies on the Board provided that a reformer such as Scott Garrett was included among them. I would have supported restoring the quorum with the confidence that there would have been at least a good-faith effort to begin the kind of reforms we need. Unfortunately, the committee chose not to advance Scott Garrett, who would have done, I think, a very good job bridging the gap between the opponents and proponents of Ex-Im Bank, but that was not to be.

Instead, Ex-Im supporters are now asking to confirm the remaining nominees but not include Scott Garrett, who has taken himself out of the running at this point, nor would it include any other person as President.

What would the consequences of this be if this unanimous consent request were agreed to? The Ex-Im Bank would constitute a quorum, would resume doing multimillion- and multibillion-dollar deals, all which would put taxpayers at risk and there would be no prospect of any meaningful reform.

I remain open to finding a new candidate who can lead Ex-Im and implement the kind of reforms that are needed, but that is not what is on the table at the moment, and until that time comes, I cannot support the confirmation of these additional Board members, which would reconstitute the quorum; therefore, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard. The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I am disappointed that we can't confirm the Ex-Im nominees today. I know many other Senators want to resolve this situation.

I will continue to push to reopen the Ex-Im Bank.

We were willing—the majority of the Banking Committee was willing to flip and put Mr. Garrett as one of the members, one of the four members, and make Mr. Bachus, another former House Member, who is qualified and is a supporter of the Ex-Im Bank Chairman. We were willing to have Scott Garrett on this Board but not as Chairman because the Chairman sets the agenda. Mr. Garrett would not, when questioned by Senator HEITKAMP, who asked him tough questions, would not commit to the committee that he wasn't out to destroy and undermine the Bank. We were willing to put Mr. Garrett there, just not in the Chairman's position. It is clear Mr. Garrett, on behalf of the Vice President and a small number of Members of this body, want to undermine and destroy the Ex-Im Bank. There is no question about that.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Pennsylvania.

#### UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. TOOMEY. Mr. President, I would like to point out that included in the list of nominees who my colleague from Ohio asked unanimous consent for confirmation, was the inspector general for the Export-Import Bank. That is a different function. That is a function I supported in committee, and I would support today. As far as I am aware, there is no objection whatsoever on this side of the aisle and no objection to confirming the inspector general to this post. Therefore, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of Executive Calendar No. 585; that the Senate vote on the nomination with no intervening action or debate; that if confirmed, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action; that no further motions be in order; and that any statements relating to the nomination be printed in the RECORD.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I reserve the right to object.

Mr. President, how does it make sense to confirm an inspector general for an agency that really isn't an agency that is actually in operation doing its best? So we are not going to appoint the members of the Board. We will have zero Board members. They will not be able to conduct the quality and the quantity of business that they used to, and that they could if we had no objection to the motion earlier, and then we are going to have an inspector gen-

eral to watch over them? That simply doesn't make sense.

I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from North Dakota.

Ms. HEITKAMP. Mr. President, I am here representing a special interest group called the workers of America.

Mr. INHOFE. Will the Senator yield for a unanimous consent request?

Ms. HEITKAMP. Yes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that at the conclusion of remarks by our leader, Mr. MCCONNELL, I be recognized for 45 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, I would like to insert an opportunity to speak for 5 minutes after Senator MCCONNELL and then yield to the Senator from Oklahoma for 45 minutes.

Mr. INHOFE. I have no objection.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, the request, as modified, is agreed to.

The Senator from North Dakota.

Ms. HEITKAMP. Thank you, Mr. President.

#### EXPORT-IMPORT BANK

I just want to say I am representing a special interest group, too, the workers of this country—the workers who have lost jobs because we do not have a functioning Ex-Im Bank; the workers whose opportunity to earn a living has been compromised because we don't have an Ex-Im Bank that is functioning; the workers who are now handed a big 50-pound weight against a Chinese worker, when the Chinese are pumping money into their export agencies and competing unfairly because we don't have an Ex-Im Bank.

Can we just for a minute be for the workers?

The Ex-Im Bank does not cost the taxpayer and has not cost the taxpayer a dime. In fact, it returns money to the Treasury. It is a win-win, but yet here we are, based on strictly ideological grounds, arguing the value of the Ex-Im Bank.

My colleague from Pennsylvania said he wants reform. I will state that we passed an effort I led in order to reauthorize the Ex-Im Bank. That was a big fight. That was not a little deal; that was a big fight. In fact, we had to hold up votes on TPA so we could get a commitment on reauthorizing the Ex-Im Bank because you can't authorize trade agreements and then take away an integral part and necessary part of the trade structure, which is the Ex-Im Bank.

So let me state, all of these reforms that we agreed to were critical, such as the appointment of a chief ethics officer, appointment of a chief risk officer, forming the risk management committee—pretty important to carry out responsibility.

Guess why these reforms aren't being done. Because we don't have a functioning Ex-Im Bank. We do not have what we need to get these actions approved. So when we go through this whole process and we begin to talk about this and we say this is about reform—no, it is not. Is this about saving the taxpayers money? No, it is not. This is about an ideology. This is about third-party interest groups making this their chief whipping boy, inappropriately, and stopping American jobs.

We are in some pretty tough times right now with China, potentially in a trade war, with the potential to really, I think, hurt our country moving forward for decades to come—think about that—at a time when we are trying to drive this economy into the 21st century to provide an opportunity for us to actually win in trade.

Now, I like to tell young people who come into my office: If you don't remember anything else that I have talked about, remember the number five—five. Now, 95 percent of the people on this Earth do not live in this country. If we are not trading with them, if we are not aggressively using every tool in the toolbox to reach out and trade with them, we are going to lose. We are not going to lose just in the next 2, 3, or 4 years, but we are going to lose a whole generation of opportunity and get left behind.

So it is time for us to step up and get a fully functioning Ex-Im Bank. How do we do that? Well, we approve the four nominees whom Ranking Member BROWN has advanced and who have been stopped. The four nominees are incredibly well qualified. They had a great hearing. The Presiding Officer sits on that committee with me and knows how incredibly qualified they are. Yet, because of a minority opinion, we are held off again.

We don't have a Bank that is working, and the people who work for that Bank, who have developed relationships, developed expertise, they have waited too long. We are losing every day. We are losing this piece of trade infrastructure that is absolutely critical to the competition for American businesses.

Let's talk about what we are up against. The lack of the Ex-Im Bank board quorum has left \$44 billion of exports on the table. They can't get approved because we don't have a quorum. OK, so it is a big number. Do you know what is a bigger number? When you take that and you translate it into American jobs, there are a quarter of a million American jobs that are going to be lost, that are going to be diverted to other countries because we are in this petty squabble right here with a minority group of people.

I want to add some other pieces. Every day that passes without a quorum, Congress is risking these deals, so let me tell you about some of these deals. Mack Trucks can't export Pennsylvania-manufactured vehicles to Cameroon. A U.S. engineering company