

Mr. PETERS. Mr. President, the history of the United Auto Workers is at the heart of what has made the United States a global economic powerhouse. It is tied to the growth of the thriving manufacturing sector and the birth of the American middle class.

Dennis Williams, UAW president since 2014, is a strong contributor to this history. His leadership reflects a deep commitment to American workers and a clear eye toward the future. Since the union's formation in 1935, UAW members have stood together to ensure that their hard work is met with fair wages, safe workplaces, and reasonable hours. For over 80 years, the voice of the UAW has amplified the voice of the American worker. Dennis Williams is a champion of keeping this voice strong in the 21st century.

Williams joined UAW Local 806 as a salvage welder in 1977, following his service in the U.S. Marine Corps. There, he started his long path of elected union leadership and served as chairman of the Bargaining Committee. In the coming years, Williams would rise to the positions of international representative, Region 4 assistant director, and Region 4 director. In 2010, UAW members elected him as secretary-treasurer, followed by the presidency in 2014.

No matter what position Williams undertook during his decades of UAW leadership, he always stayed true to his roots. After becoming UAW president, he prioritized visiting union plants and locals to engage with members directly. He stated: "I love the smell of black coffee and the smoke of the factory and walking up to UAW members and saying, 'brother' or 'sister'."

His passion for everything the UAW stands for, along with his businesslike approach to tough decisions, enabled Williams to take on some difficult challenges during his presidency.

Just as Williams started in his role, Michigan—home to around one-third of UAW members—had recently become a so-called right-to-work State. Michigan is now one of 28 States with policies designed to undermine union participation and workers' rights to collective bargaining. Despite tides of State and Federal anti-worker efforts, Williams remained practical and optimistic about overcoming any challenges that came the UAW's way. He emphasized the importance of sitting down and talking through issues rather than resorting to confrontation.

Williams was steadfast about not giving up on organizing, and he has actively pursued new approaches to organizing that would keep the UAW strong in the future. His strategy has definitely paid off. During Williams' tenure, he successfully fought for the establishment of local unions at Volkswagen and Mercedes locations in the United States and for casino workers in Las Vegas. Under Williams' leadership, UAW membership has increased by almost 7 percent—over 27,000 new members—between 2014 and 2017. The

growth rate and membership over this past year has been the highest in a 1-year period since 2010.

I am deeply honored by Dennis Williams' representation of over 430,000 UAW members, including tens of thousands of workers in my State of Michigan. I wish him well in his retirement, along with his wife, Donna, of 43 years, his sons, Ryan and Matthew, and his grandchildren, Kendahl and Kai.

I know I speak on behalf of many Michigan workers when I sincerely thank Dennis Williams for his admirable service as the UAW's 11th president.

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

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

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for up to 20 minutes as in morning business.

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

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, 30 years ago this month, Dr. James Hansen testified before the U.S. Congress on the need to address climate change—30 years ago this month. He was a top NASA climate scientist. On a hot summer day in June of 1988, before the U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, Dr. Hansen testified that "global warming has reached a level such that we can ascribe with a high degree of confidence a cause and effect relationship between the greenhouse effect and observed warming." He said, "It is already happening now."

Thirty years have passed since then—30 years of added science, 30 years of new science, 30 years of updated reports, and 30 years of mounting evidence of how right Hansen was. Yet, here we still are in Congress still willfully ignoring the unprecedented changes to the climate and the oceans—changes that threaten our planet and its rich array of plant and animal life, changes that put at risk homes, farms, forests, and coasts, changes that affect our very human health and well-being. These are not computer model projections of the distant future but changes we are seeing right before our very eyes now.

Carbon-driven climate change is particularly acute in polar areas. Today, I want to focus on the melting and destabilization of the Antarctic polar ice cap.

Rhode Island is a long way from Antarctica. Florida is a less long way from Antarctica—it is still a pretty long way—but we are coastal States. In Rhode Island, the sea level is already up 11 inches along our shores, and far

more sea level rise, accelerating sea level rise, is expected. The coastal towns and cities in the Presiding Officer's State are seeing similar encroachments of the ocean into their territories.

Here is how Antarctica is changing and what it means for our American shores.

The Antarctic ice sheet spans the South Pole, extending almost 14 million square kilometers—roughly the size of the contiguous United States and Mexico combined. The Antarctic ice sheet is the largest single mass of frozen water on planet Earth, containing 30 million cubic kilometers of ice. If the Antarctic ice sheet were to melt completely, you could actually do fairly simple math as to what would happen to that water. Sea levels could rise 200 feet above current levels, engulfing coastal regions worldwide.

This map shows Florida if we lose the West Antarctic ice sheet. As the map shows, it would inundate much of coastal and southern Florida, putting Miami and other cities completely underwater. It looks about the same here, if you lose the Greenland ice sheet, with there being similar damage and loss to Florida. Yet, here, if you lose the East Antarctic ice sheet, you more or less wipe out the entire State of Florida. You wipe out a few little islands here, a little nub below Georgia there, but essentially Florida is gone.

Imagine the entire population of Florida having to migrate to other States with its State now being uninhabitable. It seems like a crazy notion, but Kentucky's climate planning documents have included the prospect of climate refugees having to flee to Kentucky from America's inundated coasts. So it matters to understand how Antarctic ice sheets work and how they differ from ice shelves.

Ice sheets form on land when more snow accumulates in winter than melts during the summer. Over thousands of years, layers of snow pile up, growing thicker and denser as the weight of new layers compacts the layers below into ice. Over time, that ice flows downhill to the coasts and then ultimately out to sea as glaciers and then ice shelves.

Floating ice shelves surround Antarctica. These shelves physically brace the land-based ice sheet, slowing down its flow into the sea. A rough balance emerges as new snowfall on the ice sheets and the slow flow of the ice balance the melting of the ice shelf around the periphery where the ice shelf meets the ocean. We are now witnessing what appears to be an unraveling of this equilibrium. Climate change is what is causing this massive destabilization.

Since 1950, on the Antarctic Peninsula, the air has warmed 2.5 degrees Celsius. Warming ocean waters erode the West Antarctic ice sheets from below as the warming air melts them from above. Once the ice shelf melts back, you have the loss of the buttress

effect, and the ice sheet on land can then accelerate, with that buttress effect diminished, more rapidly into the sea, causing a more rapid rise in sea level.

The effect of this is actually measurable, and we measure it. Observations from the NASA and German Aerospace Center's twin Gravity Recovery and Climate Experiment satellites measure these losses to be around 125 gigatons of ice per year. What is a gigaton of ice? A gigaton is 1 billion tons. Meredith Nettles of the Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory at Columbia University described a gigaton-sized piece of ice this way: "If you took the whole National Mall"—here we are in Washington—"and covered it up with ice to a height about four times as high as the [Washington] monument. . . ."

Imagine walking out onto the Capitol steps, looking out all the way down the National Mall to the Washington Monument and imagining that not only to the top of the Washington Monument but four times as high is a single, giant mass of ice—as she said, "all the way down from the Capitol steps to the Lincoln Memorial" and four times as high as the Washington Monument. Then imagine 125 times that—every year.

The destabilization of the ice shelves is most dire in West Antarctica, where research shows the massive Thwaites Glacier retreating at 300 to 400 meters per year along a 125-mile segment. Larger than Pennsylvania, the Thwaites Glacier has discharged more than 100 gigatons of ice per year in recent years. That is the flood of 100 of those blocks that are four times the height of the Washington Monument and running from here all the way to the Lincoln Memorial 100 times every 3 days—another one into the ocean, piling up, piling up. If we lost the Thwaites Glacier, that alone would contribute several meters to global sea level rise.

So far, in Rhode Island, remember, we are dealing with less than 1 foot of sea level rise that we have experienced—6 to 12 feet is predicted—but add this in and the situation of our coastal States become quite dire.

These images were created with NASA satellite data. They show changes in Antarctic ice mass just since 2002. This data does not measure the floating ice shelves which are shown here in gray. On the ice sheets, dark orange and red colors indicate losses of ice sheet mass and light-blue shades indicate gains. Climate deniers focus on the gains in actually a fraudulent abuse of the data and the public's trust, but that is what they do; but, overall, during the past 15 years, the West Antarctic ice sheet experienced major ice mass loss. The darkest red, representing the biggest loss, is at the Thwaites Glacier.

Of course, when glaciers melt, the seas rise. In April, a U.S. Geological Survey study, funded by the Pentagon, found that our military bases on low-

elevation islands may become uninhabitable within mere decades. The recommendation is, we have to start planning to relocate them because they will no longer be useful. Just 2 weeks ago, our National Park Service released a report showing sea level rise damaging park sites like Jamestown and Assateague Island in Virginia and Jean Lafitte National Historical Park in Louisiana. NASA is concerned enough about this Antarctic ice situation that it is launching new satellites to monitor it.

Fossil fuel industry front groups continue to deny and disparage the work of scientists at NOAA, NASA, and other Federal scientific agencies. The polluters have an obedient mouthpiece in the Wall Street Journal editorial page, which just last month ran climate denier Fred Singer denying that rising sea levels observed around the globe are the result of global warming, and of course saying it is not the result of carbon pollution or fossil fuels. The Journal page, of course, neglects to mention this denier's deep connections to the fossil fuel industry, the Heritage Foundation, the Heartland Institute, the CATO Institute, and other climate denial front groups bankrolled by ExxonMobil and the oil industry and the Koch political apparatus.

We even heard a Republican Congressman claim that erosion and rocks falling into the sea are what is driving sea level rise—anything but fossil fuel. He said, "Every time you have that soil or rock or whatever it is that is deposited into the seas, that forces the sea levels to rise, because now you have less space in those oceans, because the bottom is moving up."

It is laughable. Phil Duffy, president of the Woods Hole Research Center and former adviser to the U.S. Global Change Research Program responded: "On human time scales, those are miniscule effects."

Once again, anything for the fossil fuel industry. Complete subservience to the fossil fuel industry seems to be the rule around Congress.

About this sordid political equation, retired U.S. Navy RADM Dr. David Titley probably said it best. He said:

The ice doesn't care. The ice doesn't care who is in the White House. It doesn't care which party controls your Congress. It doesn't care which party controls your Parliament. It just melts.

Of course, in addition to the melt, a warming ocean expands, following the law of thermal expansion, and our coasts, as a result, face new and serious dangers.

Republicans in Congress can continue to ignore all of the evidence, but that doesn't change what our carbon pollution does in the atmosphere and the oceans. Our carbon pollution will still trap heat in the atmosphere. It will still acidify the oceans. The laws of chemistry don't suspend because we can't pass sensible laws to solve this problem. The chemistry and the physics of these effects of our carbon pollu-

tion don't care what we do. The polar icecaps melting don't care that fossil fuel flunkies deny it. Denial of these facts doesn't protect our coasts and doesn't protect our coastal communities from looming danger. One day soon, we are going to have to wake up. Fossil fuel influence or no fossil fuel influence, we are going to have to wake up.

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.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that notwithstanding the provisions of rule XXII, the confirmation vote on the Axon nomination occur at 11 a.m. on Wednesday, June 6; 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.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate resume legislative session for 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.

VOTE EXPLANATION

Mr. NELSON. Mr. President, I was necessarily absent for the June 4, 2018, vote on the motion to invoke cloture on Executive Calendar No. 542, the nomination of Robert Earl Wier, of Kentucky, to be United States district judge for the Eastern District of Kentucky. I would have voted yea.

VOTE EXPLANATION

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I was unavailable for rollcall vote No. 112, on the motion to invoke cloture on the nomination of Robert Earl Wier, of Kentucky, to be United States district judge for the Eastern District of Kentucky. Had I been present, I would have voted yea.

Mr. President, I was unavailable for rollcall vote No. 113, on the nomination of Robert Earl Wier, of Kentucky, to be United States district judge for the Eastern District of Kentucky. Had I been present, I would have voted yea.

Mr. President, I was unavailable for rollcall vote No. 114, on the motion to