

shape our two most aggressive enemies into two of our most stalwart allies; the generations who crafted pivotal international organizations such as NATO, the United Nations, and the World Trade Organization, forums for multilateral compromise to take the place of war as the primary arbiter of conflict between nations; the generations who negotiated nuclear disarmament treaties, pulling us back from the brink of atomic Armageddon—but no more.

Instead we find ourselves today led by those who express admiration for authoritarianism in Russia, China, the Philippines, and other places that make common cause with bullies and who flirt with tyrants. We see a world descending into an atavistic tribalism, a political primitivism where dealings between nations are driven by fear and antagonism, bullying and threats, taunts and brinkmanship, rather than mutual benefit and comity.

We find ourselves led by those who would fall for isolationist instincts and antiquated, preindustrial, protectionist economic philosophies—the very same shortsighted nostrums that ushered in the Great Depression. Those who would reject the decades-long consensus on the virtues of free trade, open markets, international interdependence—the policies which have led to the greatest sustained growth our world has ever seen.

What shall our friends make of such erratic behavior? How will they respond to such confusing actions? Most importantly, how long will they remain our friends if this irrational approach continues?

Alliances, institutions, and pacts that took generations to patiently build, generations more to solidify, that were paid for in both blood and treasure, are shattered in an ill-tempered second, an ill-considered tantrum, a childish taunt here, a bellicose insult there, incoherent policy utterances, often as not by tweet, contradicted in the space of a single news cycle. Muddled and mercurial, this is not grownup leadership. Our allies are left baffled, confused, and often appalled.

Make no mistake, our allies and those who look to American leadership will not wait for us to come to our senses. If we abandon our role as a leader in the world today, it may very well not be there tomorrow. We saw this vividly displayed in the decision to withdraw from the Trans-Pacific Partnership. After we hastily withdrew from those negotiations, the 11 other countries involved did not go home. They did not give up on trade or come back to us on bended knee, begging us to rejoin the process. They simply shrugged and continued on their own, leaving us behind.

Countries in Southeast Asia that would prefer to be part of the American trade orbit will have no other choice than to be sucked into China's vortex. This is the same China our President

correctly acknowledges as America's primary global competitor. Once again, the absurdity of protectionist policies is laid bare.

The question facing us today is this: Do we really want to be the generation that finally gave in to the backward, regressive tug of American isolationism? Do we want future generations to refer to American leadership in the world only in the past tense, with a rueful nostalgia? Are we truly ready to abandon this “shining city on a hill” described by John Winthrop and echoed so eloquently by Ronald Reagan? Do we believe the United States of America is still “the last best hope on earth,” as Abraham Lincoln once proclaimed?

We are not perfect. We have faltered in our leadership at times; at others we have struggled to determine how best to project our national values, but it is our leadership as the designated driver of the vehicle of world order, the so-called Pax Americana that for more than 70 years has maintained unprecedented peace and prosperity throughout the world. Yes, the world we live in is far from perfect, but I believe it is a far better place as a result of American leadership.

It has been said that the universe abhors a vacuum, and if we do not lead, someone else will. Those who are most likely to do so do not share our democratic values. We should not wish for future generations of Americans to come of age in a world led by someone else.

“Freedom,” as John F. Kennedy once proclaimed, “is not merely a word or an abstract theory, but the most effective instrument for advancing the welfare of man.” We owe it to those generations who have come before us, and those who will come after us, to recognize that our defense of that freedom, in all its forms—from free speech and free thought to free markets and free trade—is not an act of recreation. Let us pointedly declare to those who would suggest otherwise that the crossroads in which we find ourselves is not the early innings of any game but a historic moment in which we will either affirm our commitment to the values that have served so well for so long or engage in a trade war that will only lead to economic disaster. Let us not falter in our mission to promote and protect the values of freedom. Let us not turn away from this most noble of responsibilities. Let us proudly take the torch passed to us from our parents and our parents' parents.

Let us continue to serve as a beacon of hope, a shining light of freedom seen across a volatile world. This light stretches from the lanterns in Boston's Old North Church, lit during the ride of Paul Revere, to the light that shines above our Capitol today. It is the light of freedom, the very spirit of America, and it must never be extinguished.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

Mr. NELSON. Mr. President, I thank Senator FLAKE for his comments, his willingness to speak out, and for the courage with which he has spoken. His beliefs, I think, are admirable, and this Senator wants to state that for the record. What he has spoken about does not look down the blind alley of partisanship. He is talking about looking at America, and this Senator appreciates his remarks.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. President, I want to talk today about what is happening to the coastal communities in Florida. The Presiding Officer represents Alaska, the State that has the most coastline. Next to Alaska, my State of Florida has more coastline than any other State, and I would venture to say that since Alaska has very few beaches, it ought to be very clear that the State of Florida has more beaches than any other State. That, of course, is an attraction that becomes an economic engine because people from all over the world want to come to enjoy the sands of Florida's beaches and enjoy the bounty of nature the Lord has provided, but we better watch out because we are starting to mess it up.

Yesterday, NOAA, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, released data that the contiguous United States had the warmest May on record. The entire continent of the United States had the warmest May on record. The heat is having real-world impacts.

NOAA also released its “2017 State of High Tide Flooding and 2018 Outlook.” During 2017, the average high-tide flooding in the United States was the highest ever recorded. In 2018, NOAA predicts that high-tide flooding will be 60 percent more frequent across U.S. coastlines than it was 18 years ago in 2000, primarily because of the local sea level rise.

Doesn't this suggest something? In the lower latitudes, our seas are rising. It should not surprise us. It doesn't surprise this Senator. We got a glimpse of this when 4 years ago I took our Commerce Committee to Miami Beach and in fact had a hearing.

One of the witnesses was a NASA scientist, Dr. Piers Sellers, a prestigious scientist and former astronaut who, unfortunately, we lost to cancer just recently. At the hearing he said, “By the end of the century, the intensity of hurricanes . . . will increase . . . but even if hurricane frequency and intensity do not change, rising sea levels and coastal development will likely increase the impact of hurricanes and other coastal storms on those coastal communities and infrastructure.”

I would like to show a picture. A picture tells the real story. This shows a sunny day in Miami Beach—a sunny day when the king tide is flooding Miami Beach. OK. That is obvious, looking at it. This happens frequently at high tide.

What has the city of Miami Beach had to do? Spend tens of millions of

dollars on big pumps and raising the level of the road to try to alleviate this problem. This is happening with some frequency in South Florida. Dr. Sellers testified back in 2014 that not projections or forecasts but actual measurements showed the sea had risen over the last four decades 5 to 8 inches.

Let's take another look at other flooding. That photo was Miami Beach, which is down at the southeast part of the peninsula of Florida. This photo was taken in downtown Sarasota. Sarasota is on the Gulf Coast and is closer to the middle of the peninsula; in other words, about 150 miles north of the latitude of Miami Beach. The vice mayor brought me these pictures of Sarasota. Look at this car on the street. Pictures don't tell the full story.

We held another field hearing in West Palm Beach a year ago, and the Broward County resilience officer came to Palm Beach County for that hearing and showed a video of a man biking along the city of Fort Lauderdale, where the sidewalk is submerged in water. In other words, what has happened in Miami Beach is happening in the Las Olas section of Fort Lauderdale.

Then we took the committee to St. Petersburg, which is on the opposite coast, the gulf coast, where the city has designed its new pier out of floating docks to accommodate the rising sea as they rise up and down in Tampa Bay.

Or how about St. Augustine, where the public works department is seeing nuisance flooding from high tides that are overwhelming their storm water system.

All of these are examples of how sea level rise affects coastal Florida on sunny days, not rainstorm days. The NASA scientist at our hearing was talking about how climate could exacerbate damage from hurricanes. Why? Because if the water is warmer, that is the fuel for a hurricane, and that is what is sucked up into that vortex as the hurricane feeds itself. The hotter the water it is over, the more ferocious—and likely frequent—those storms will be. Warmer ocean water fuels hurricanes, making them more intense, and the sea level rise compounds the storm surge and the rain-induced flooding.

Let me show you another image. Here is an image that shows what Florida's coastal communities face when the Sun is not shining. This is during a rainstorm. Here is flooding in Jacksonville. Where is Jacksonville? It is at the north end of the peninsula. It is almost right next to the Georgia line. You can see a sign that says "no skateboarding" is almost completely engulfed by the rising water.

Then you think: What about a place further south on the latitudes, Puerto Rico? Hurricane Maria absolutely ravaged that island, and it is not an exaggeration to say that climate change and sea level rise are putting people's

lives and their property at risk. It is the reality.

I am going to continue to extend an invitation to our colleagues. I want you to come with me to Florida, and I want to show you these impacts. I have had the privilege of taking several of our colleagues to the Florida Everglades, where alligators are plentiful, to see this unusual ecosystem as we travel about in an airboat. I want you to come and see what is happening as a result of the rising water, and the real question is, What are we going to do about it?

There are two pieces to the solution. One is that we are going to have to stop putting so many greenhouse gases into the air. CO₂, which is carbon dioxide, and methane are the two big culprits. Part of the solution is climate mitigation, which means we must invest in new technology, in the economy of the future—things like wind, solar, electric vehicles, and more efficient buildings. We are going to have to make our communities more resilient to the greenhouse gasses and the warming that they already have caused in the system. This is called climate change adaptation.

You don't have to agree with climate science to know that it makes sense; it makes dollars and cents to do this. We are talking about strengthening our building codes to withstand wind events. We are talking about restoring the function of the floodplains so that when 2 to 3 feet of rainwater suddenly gets dumped in one place, it can absorb and gradually recede. We are talking about rebuilding natural flood protection, like sand dunes and beaches. In the Commerce Committee we have heard countless stories from local government officials that if they could have invested before the natural catastrophe that hit them, they would have saved the Federal Government a lot of money by avoiding the enormous cost of the disaster response and relief itself, not to mention reducing the risk to human life.

The proof is in front of our very eyes. The photos we have shown—let's show the rest of them here—don't lie. Yet here we are upon another hurricane season. Of course, we hope the big storms don't come, but the likelihood is that they will. Remember, they don't necessarily go just to Florida. Remember Hurricane Sandy? Look what it did to the Northeast.

We hope we don't see any more of these harrowing images. But, as we hope, we are going to have to act because what we have shown here in these photos today is not about projections; it is about real-time observation. Let's quit ignoring the obvious.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE REPUBLICAN-LED CONGRESS

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, sometimes when I am traveling across Tennessee, someone will come up to me

and say: Why don't you guys in the U.S. Senate ever do anything? So I have taken to carrying around a little card that I keep in my pocket. I hand it to them and I say: Well, I can read this to you in about 30 seconds, and this is what has happened in the last 18 months: the best economy in 18 years; lower taxes; biggest reforms in 31 years; biggest increase in financial support for the military in 15 years; biggest pay raise in 8 years for the military; more repeal of regulations than anyone can remember; a Supreme Court Justice; 21 conservative appeals court judges; Alaska energy, which took 38 years, and the Presiding Officer knows all about that; a new National Labor Relations Board, which could be the most important change of all; repealed the ObamaCare individual mandate; the Dodd-Frank mortgage rules are gone; Veterans Choice, which the President signed yesterday; Iran, Russia, and North Korea sanctions.

All of that would not have happened without a Republican President, and it would not have happened without Republican majorities in the U.S. Congress. It took both.

The person who asks me "When are you guys ever going to do anything?" will often say "Well, I didn't know that; I hadn't realized that."

So I am very proud of that record; that is in 18 months. I think if you like a conservative government, a center-right government, you would have to agree that those are the most accomplishments in at least 30 years in this country. The President should be justly proud of that, and so should the Congress.

TARIFFS

Mr. President, despite the fact that I agree with President Trump on taxes, judges, regulations, and the list I just read, there is one area in which I have been supremely ineffective in persuading him, and that is in the area of tariffs.

I care about tariffs, especially because Tennessee has become, in many ways, the No. 1 auto state. I have spent a lot of time over the last 40 years watching the auto industry in Tennessee grow—ever since I helped to recruit the Nissan plant to Tennessee in 1980 as Governor at a time when we had literally no auto jobs—and suddenly today, one-third of our manufacturing jobs are auto jobs. They are not only in three big auto plants, like Nissan, General Motors, and Volkswagen, but they are in over 900 different auto suppliers in 88 of Tennessee's 95 counties.

Let me say that again: We have over 900 auto suppliers in 88 of 95 of Tennessee's counties—one-third of all of our manufacturing jobs. Nothing has done more in the last 40 years to move us from the third poorest State in average family incomes up toward the middle and heading toward the top. It has been the greatest source of benefit for Tennessee families of anything that has happened, so you can see why I become concerned when anything threatens that.