In my home State of New York, more than 8 million people have health problems. That is almost half my State. They are living with diabetes. They have had treatment for cancer. They have a childhood disease.

Before the Affordable Care Act became law, if you had a health problem and you needed to see a doctor, health insurance companies were allowed to make you pay much more. The health insurance companies were allowed to turn you away. They were allowed to tell you ''Sorry, you are not profitable for us because you are sick,'' and they did it many times. Let's not forget that included women who were pregnant.

But they can't tell them that anymore because of the Affordable Care Act. The Affordable Care Act made that simple statement illegal.

Now insurance companies must cover you if you are sick. They must cover you if you have had a health problem in the past. And millions of Americans are better off now because of that fact.

So what does this have to do with the Supreme Court? President Trump has made it clear that one of his biggest goals as President is to destroy the Affordable Care Act. He has already tried hard to get Congress to repeal the law, and luckily for us, he failed. He failed because people don't want their health insurance taken away from them. It is really that simple.

Millions of Americans raised their voices and told Congress that if the Affordable Care Act were repealed, they would lose their insurance, and that would be devastating for them and their families. And Congress listened to them.

But now there is a new challenge to the law in Federal court, and the Trump administration is refusing to defend the Affordable Care Act.

When this case makes it to the Supreme Court in a few more years, then the next Supreme Court Justice could be the deciding vote on whether the Affordable Care Act is overturned. That means the next Supreme Court Justice could have the power to decide that insurance companies don't have to cover patients anymore if they have a health problem. He could have the power to decide that insurance companies don't have to cover you or your child anymore if your child is sick.

Healthcare costs in my State have already skyrocketed because of the fact that the Trump administration has attacked this law over and over again. But repealing the law would be absolutely devastating to so many families. More than 8 million New Yorkers could lose their health insurance or pay more for their coverage. So would millions more all across the country. I am very concerned that is exactly what Judge Kavanaugh would do if he were given this opportunity.

Just look at his record. When Judge Kavanaugh had a case before him that was attacking another part of the Affordable Care Act, he dissented in the case, and he said that even though the Affordable Care Act requires employers to cover birth control medicines for their workers, they shouldn't have to do it if they don't want to. He even took it so far as to say that if the President doesn't like a law—if the President doesn't like a law—then the President could ignore the law and ignore the courts.

Listen to this one opinion. This will interest the Presiding Officer, I am sure. Tell me if you think this is sound judicial judgment. He wrote: ''Under the Constitution, the President may decline to enforce a statute that regulates private individuals when the President deems the statute unconstitutional, even if a court has held or would hold the statute constitutional.''

Anyone with the most basic understanding of how the constitutional system of government works in this country knows that this is not what our Founding Fathers intended.

If this judge is confirmed, then there is a dangerously high likelihood that he will strike down the Affordable Care Act.

We must not go back to the days when an insurance company could charge a person more just because they have health problems. We cannot go back to the days when an insurance company could say no to a patient because they could say: You are just not going to make us enough money.

We must listen to our constituents—listen to the millions of men, women, and children all across this country who need access to basic healthcare, and they cannot afford to lose their insurance.

We must reject this nominee.

I yield the floor.

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

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

RESERVOIR PROJECT IN FLORIDA

Mr. NELSON. Mr. President, I received very good news for Florida this morning. The Army Corps of Engineers has signed off on a long-awaited report that will allow Congress to authorize a new reservoir project south of Lake Okeechobee in the upcoming Water Resources Development Act—what we refer to as the water bill. Many of us in Florida have been pushing the Army Corps and the Trump administration to approve this project for months and months.

Last week I was in the area of Lake Okeechobee visiting with folks affected by the algae blooms on the west coast over in Fort Myers on the Caloosahatchee River and on the east coast in Stuart on the St. Lucie River. They are facing a problem that seems to repeat itself almost every year.

The heat of summer and the excess nutrients in the water—put those together, and you get the algae blooms that suck the oxygen out of the river, making it a dead river because there is not enough oxygen in the water for the fish. There was a similarly bad algae bloom back in 2016, in 2013, and many times in years past.

The pollution in Lake Okeechobee created a toxic brew of a blue-green algae that blooms and that at one point this summer covered 90 percent of Lake Okeechobee. Because the lake has risen to a 14½-foot level, the Army Corps will most likely have to resume releasing water to the east in the St. Lucie and to the west in the Caloosahatchee because of the pressure on the dike around Lake Okeechobee. Thus, here we go again—more nutrient-laden water flowing into these waterways in the heat of summer, and then the algae blooms just keep going and going.

There is one of many projects that can help, which is definitely a step in the right direction. The reservoir project that the Army Corps approved today is so critical because once it is constructed, it will provide storage so that the Corps doesn't have to discharge as much water to the east and to the west. When you combine that with the fact that just last week, the Army Corps, through the White House budget office, let us know they have approved the funds to strengthen the dike and accelerate its construction—the combination of these kinds of things is going to help, so that the Army Corps of Engineers doesn't have to release that nutrient-rich water, which will cause the algae blooms.

This reservoir to the south of the lake will include water treatment features so that the water can be cleaned as well as stored before it is sent farther south in the long journey that Mother Nature intended—sending that water in a slow, gravity-drained, southward flow through the river of grass otherwise known as the Florida Everglades. Many of us were cheering the news today that this project will be ready for inclusion in the water bill, which the Senate will be taking up perhaps next week. It was interesting timing to get the Corps of Engineers' report so that we could get this project in as a part of the overall Everglades restoration project.

REMEMBERING NATHANIEL REED

Unfortunately, Mr. President, we received the very somber, sad news this afternoon that one of our great Everglades restoration advocates, Nathaniel Reed, has passed away. Nat Reed leaves behind a long legacy as an environmental champion.

Nat served as environmental adviser to Governor Claude Kirk beginning in 1967. In 1971, he became Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Fish, Wildlife and National Parks under President Nixon and stayed in that position through the Gerald Ford Presidency. Nat returned to Florida in 1977 and continued his career in public service by working under seven different Governors in various capacities, including

chairman of the Commission on Florida's Environmental Future, which was instrumental in the land acquisition projects that we now know as Everglades restoration. He also served as a board member for the National Audubon Society, the Nature Conservancy, the National Parks Conservation Association, and the Natural Resources Defense Council, as well as the National Geographic Society.

One of Nat Reed's most passionate projects was to expedite construction of this reservoir south of Lake Okeechobee—the project the Army Corps approved today. I had spoken to Nat numerous times about this important project and about our shared goal of restoring the Everglades.

We have lost a real environmental champion who was bipartisan in his approach. I mentioned that he served seven Governors. It didn't make any difference whether the Governor was a Republican or a Democrat—Nat was about restoring as much of Mother Nature as possible back to its functioning self.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD a column written by Nat in 2012 that lays out the history of the Everglades' environmental problems and how we can fix them.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From TC Palm, Nov. 25, 2012]

NATHANIEL REED: DON'T BLAME THE ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS FOR OKEECHOBEE, EVERGLADES WOES

Until a few weeks ago, billions of gallons of polluted water was flowing into the St. Lucie River, the Indian River and the Caloosahatchee Estuary from Lake Okeechobee.

The environmental damage is massive. After four years of drought and no large releases of excess water from Lake Okeechobee, the near record rainy season again has quickly filled the lake. Every time there is a wet tropical storm or series of hurricanes such as those that hit Florida in 2004–05, the lake rapidly rises 3–4 feet within days, threatening the Hoover Dike and the communities south of the lake.

The Corps has no options. It must reduce the water level in Lake Okeechobee in case of a potential wet hurricane, common in even October like Hurricanes Wilma and Isaac.

Before we collectively blame the Corps for the incredible damage that is being inflicted on our once productive waters, especially the remarkable recovery of seagrasses and inland fisheries since the Okeechobee flood gates were last opened in 2010, we collectively need a short history lesson and then a firm guide on how to stop these all too frequent environmental outrages.

The great Everglades ecosystem has been brutalized by a number of thoughtless decisions.

The private construction of Tamiami Trail by the Collier family to open up Naples to east coast tourists in the 1915–20's formed a dike preventing natural water flow from the northern Everglades marshes into what have become Everglades National Park and the great fishery of Florida Bay.

Although there are gated discharge structures and culverts under Tamiami Trail, they allow a fraction of the excess rain water to flow south as the everglades system once functioned. Water is backed up throughout the Florida Everglades known as water conservation areas.

Overly high water is inundating the unique ''Tree Islands,'' a major feature of the everglades system which provides essential habitat for deer and other mammals indigenous to the Everglades during times of excessive rain water. The Tree Islands also are ''sacred sites'' for the Miccosukee Native Americans.

Before the 1928 great hurricane that destroyed the small dike that then surrounded much of Lake Okeechobee, small farming communities grew around the south side of the lake. Winter vegetables were the main crop, but thousands of acres were devoted to raising cattle on the lush grass that the muck fields provided. U.S. Sugar grew a total of 50,000-plus acres of sugar cane. Their main profit was made from the sale of some of the finest Brahma cattle raised in the world for warm weather cattle ranches in Cuba, Central America and South America. The King Ranch had a similar operation for their famous crossbred cattle.

The low dike failed during a 1926 hurricane, and once again in 1928, drowning 3,000 people. President Herbert Hoover requested the Congress to pass legislation authorizing the construction of a high dike around Lake Okeechobee.

When there were long, wet summer rain seasons and fall hurricanes in the 1940s, excess water flowed through the Everglades and even over Tamiami Trail into what is now the Everglades National Park. The Corps of Engineers studied the average size of Lake Okeechobee and designed a dike to surround it. The dike was made from local sand and gravel. The Corps then made a fateful engineering decision to cut off the natural flow-way from Lake Okeechobee to the downstream Everglades and dump it more ''efficiently'' to the east and west estuaries.

Perhaps the nearly 700,000 acres now known as the Everglades Agricultural Area of rich organic soils—the byproduct of centuries of dying marsh grasses—was the incentive, but this error in judgment has created a conflict that will continue until sufficient land is acquired to restore a flow-way from Lake Okeechobee to the northern Florida Everglades and is then allowed to flow south and under Tamiami Trail into Everglades National Park.

The decision by the power brokers to persuade the then-governor of Florida and the congressional delegation to dredge the Kissimmee River to allow drainage in the headwaters of Lake Okeechobee was an ecological disaster. Thousands of acres of wetlands that served as storage for Lake Okeechobee and slowed down rain-driven floods moving south into the Kissimmee chain of lakes allowed developers to sell real estate around those lakes, guaranteeing an unnatural low water level. The Kissimmee chain of lakes during high rainfall periods used to hold billions of gallons of water that was slowly released down the Kissimmee into Lake Okeechobee naturally. The wetland marshes flanking the Kissimmee's two-mile-wide flood plain were wildlife treasures that were drained and turned into cattle pastures when the project was completed. Excessive rainwater then flowed at unnatural speed into the lake, raising it to dangerous levels and carrying a pollution-filled muck that now covers half the lake's bottom.

The Caloosahatchee River first was connected to Lake Okeechobee by Hamilton Disston, one of Florida's pioneer speculators who envisioned steamboats moving up from Ft. Myers and then the Kissimmee River to pick up winter crops and bring their loads back to Ft. Myers for shipment north.

After about 10 years, the St. Lucie Canal was completed in 1926 to provide easy access from the lake to Stuart, where ships would carry vegetables and fruit to the upper east coast and provide access for the east to the west coast for pleasure boats.

It did not take any length of time for the Corps to realize that an overflowing Lake Okeechobee threatened the ''suspect construction'' of the Hoover Dike and that the two outlets—the St. Lucie Canal and the Caloosahatchee River—would serve as escape valves whenever there was excessive rainfall and a rising lake that could threaten the integrity of the Hoover Dike, especially on the south side, where farming communities had grown in size. With the connection to the Everglades now severed, the present day colonel of the Corps of Engineers and his staff have no options other than releasing billions of gallons of water that is polluted from years of agricultural back-pumping from the Everglades Agricultural Area and now large amounts of nutrients flowing down the Kissimmee and the other headwaters of the lake.

During his tenure, Gov. Bob Graham announced in the early 1980s a major effort to restore the Everglades system. Each successive governor has made a contribution toward that goal. The state has spent $1.8 billion acquiring land to clean up the excess water flowing from the 500,000 acres of sugar cane—a crop that enjoys a federal taxpayer guaranteed price. The amount of cane sugar that is permitted to be imported into the United States is controlled by the sugar cartel to guarantee them maximum profit. Their leadership is unrelenting in its efforts to produce maximum profits at the Everglades' expense.

Unless excessive Lake Okeechobee water is cleansed through a vast series of pollution-control artificial marsh systems built principally by the taxpayers of the 16 counties of South Florida for the sugar cane and winter crop growers, drainage cannot be allowed to flow into the Everglades, as it will change the botanical makeup of the River of Grass within months.

So where are we?

Before the flow way and the pollution control marshes are built and are operational, additional storage—both upstream in the lake's headwaters and within the Everglades Agricultural Area—must be acquired, and a number of other priorities must be addressed.

First, Tamiami Trail must be modified to allow massive amounts of water to flow southward into the park. A one-mile bridge and limited road raising are currently under construction. While this is a very positive first step, more needs to done! The trail needs more bridges and road raising (up to another 2 feet) so that it is protected when the Everglades and the lake are once again connected.

Additionally, the southeast corner of the vast Everglades system known as Water Conservation Area 3B has a vital role in delivering Okeechobee and Florida Everglades' excess water to flow under the proposed five-mile bridge. The Corps admits that when the eastern dike of Water Conservation Area 3B was constructed, it did not consider leakage to be a potential problem, as no one farmed or lived near the dike. Now, there are hundreds of acres of fruit trees and thousands of homes that could be impacted if the dike allowed significant seepage.

This problem must be solved before excess water can be released into Everglades National Park, relieving the entire system of too much water which forces the discharges of billions of gallons of water down the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie rivers.

We also have some local problems that must be faced with private drainage systems

that drain millions of gallons of excess water into the St. Lucie River. Canals C–23, 24 and 25 were built at the urging of the Martin and St. Lucie County citrus growers and developers, who wanted their lands drained at public expense. Together with the C–44 and the St. Lucie Canal, more than 498,000 acres drain through canals into the estuary and lagoon.

These decisions have all combined to seriously add damaging amounts of polluted runoff into the St. Lucie and Indian rivers. There are plans to complete a pair of reservoirs? one on the St Lucie, the other on the Caloosahatchee? to capture local runoff, hold it and clean it before slowly releasing it to flow into the two estuaries.

What is the hope for the two rivers that are being used as drainage escape routes?

The federal and state governments must pay for the cost of modifications of the eastern dike of Water Conservation 3B to prevent seepage.

The Federal government should use fuel tax revenue to raise Tamiami Trail and build additional bridges to allow water to flow into ENP.

The state of Florida must acquire significant amounts of additional land both north and south of the lake or, at minimum, enforceable easements to contain excessive water until it can be leaked slowly down to the lake from the north and south through a flow-way into the Everglades system.

The gross pollution of Lake Okeechobee must become a state priority. Recent phosphorus loads to Lake Okeechobee have been in the 500-ton range, more than three times the goal of 140 tons. Today, estimates are that so much phosphorus has already been spread in the watershed to keep these heavy loads coming for decades. Today, nutrients from the EAA are less than 5 percent of the total into Lake Okeechobee. More than 90 percent is from the northern Lake Okeechobee watersheds. The failure to control phosphorus runoff is shared by the Florida Department of Agriculture and the Department of Environmental Regulation.

Agricultural and water utility interests must accept the fact that Lake Okeechobee's level must be held below 16 feet and that 'back pumping' polluted water from the EAA even in times of drought must not be permitted. Lake Okeechobee cannot continue to be considered a sewer.

Additional lands within the vast EAA must be acquired by the state and the South Florida Water Management District to construct major additional storage capacity and pollution control marshes that will dramatically reduce the nutrients flowing off the sugar cane plantations into the Everglades system.

The sugar cane plantations should be forced to control and treat the thousands of gallons of polluted water on their land before they discharge it into the waters of the state. They should pay a far greater share for cleaning up their wastes for the needed additional pollution control marshes.

These are tall orders, but think for a moment before we continue to rail against the Corps' decision to lower Lake Okeechobee to protect the integrity of the Hoover Dike.

Everything on my ''must do'' list represents one week of the Afghanistan War expenses.

Everything on my wish list is obtainable.

Our congressional delegation has significant power in Congress. Our governor and Florida commissioner of agriculture are very persuasive with our legislature, even in times of recession.

Despite the need to reduce the incredible national deficit, don't you think manmade disasters like what is threatening our rivers and the Everglades ecosystem are worthy of national and state investments?

Mr. NELSON. Nat recommended focusing on projects like bridging the Tamiami Trail, which is U.S. 41—virtually a dike across the southern peninsula of Florida. It is now being bridged, first with a mile-long bridge, and now—under construction—with a 2½-mile bridge so the water can flow under the road into the water-starved Everglades National Park.

He recommended focusing on projects like restoring the Kissimmee River to its natural meandering state. Half a century ago, when all the emphasis was on flood control, getting the water off the land, they took this meandering stream called the Kissimmee River that cleansed the water as it oozed south in all of the marsh grasses, and what did they do? They dug a straight ditch. Nat was one of the leaders in advocating restoring the river to its natural meandering state so that by the time the water gets to Lake Okeechobee, it will have been cleaned up by natural processes.

Both of those projects—Tamiami Trail and the Kissimmee River—are now well underway, and we are already seeing the benefits to the environment and to the wildlife.

Nat also wrote about the importance of water storage and treatment projects both north and south of the lake—a refrain this Senator often repeats as well. That is why I not only respect and appreciate so much what Nat contributed to our country and to our State but also loved him as a friend. His untimely death today in an accident in Canada is a huge loss. Nat and I had been so focused on advancing this new reservoir project south of Lake Okeechobee. It saddens me so much to announce this good news at the same time that I announce the death of one of the Nation's true environmental champions. In the years to come, as we go about actually constructing that reservoir, it would be a fitting tribute to name that project in Nat Reed's honor. All we can do is try to continue his life's work protecting Florida's unique environment.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I spoke before the Fourth of July recess about two financial risks that are coming our way thanks to not getting anything done on climate change.

One, of course, is the risk to coastal properties—not something the Presiding Officer has to worry too much about given his home State but something that Rhode Island, the Ocean State, has to care a lot about and that the distinguished Senator from Florida and his constituents have to care a lot about.

There is a point where rising sea levels intrude on the saleability, the mortgageability, and the insurability of houses. None other than Freddie Mac, the huge Federal housing corporation, is predicting that there will be a coastal property meltdown.

The other risk is that of a carbon bubble. There is a lot of talk in the economic literature about a carbon bubble. One recent financial study reports that ''the potential effects of a carbon bubble on financial stability have been recently discussed in the academic literature and are increasingly on the agenda of [bank] regulators and supervisors.'' Indeed, in an official statement, the Bank of England has warned that ''investments in fossil fuels and related technologies . . . may take a huge hit.'' That huge hit is the other side of a carbon bubble: It pops, and you have a crash. So let's look at the prospects for not just a carbon bubble but a carbon crash.

There are several elements in the runup to a crash. Some of these we witnessed in the crash of the housing bubble back in 2008. When these conditions exist, we should take warning.

One condition is whether you can trust the players. In the housing crash, the rating agencies were in bed with the banks, and you couldn't trust their risk evaluations. The whole thing was cooked. The big fees the rating agencies were taking also took their eye off the ball, and they gave wildly erroneous ratings to high-risk investments. So at the heart of the 2018 housing crash was a failure of trustworthiness.

Can we trust the fossil fuel industry any better than those rating agencies? There is no reason to think so, and there is plenty of reason to think not. This is an industry that has been lying about fossil fuel's effect on our climate for decades, and once you get used to lying about one thing, it is hard to contain the spread of the rot. Exxon even once gave its CEO the infamous, phony Oregon Petition, which urged the United States to reject the Kyoto Protocol, to cite to shareholders at an annual meeting.

I have spoken before about what I consider to be the untrustworthiness of Exxon's response to the BlackRock shareholder resolution, which required Exxon to report the predicted effect of climate policies on Exxon's business model. As fossil fuels are priced out of the market by renewable energy and as nations enact carbon emissions restrictions, fossil fuel reserves now claimed as assets by energy companies may become undevelopable stranded assets.

In a nutshell, Exxon seems to have wildly—indeed, so wildly, you can only conclude deliberately—overestimated the adoption of carbon capture utilization and storage, wildly underestimated the adoption of electric vehicles, and wildly underestimated renewable energy growth, all to reach its rosy conclusions that its assets were more or less secure.

On the subject of trustworthiness, right now big oil companies are still being untrustworthy, telling the world they want a price on carbon, while at the same time telling their political fixers in Congress to kill any such thing. Who knows how much they push around their analysts and others who