

years, with the 5 warmest years on record taking place since 2010.

Every week brings fresh evidence of the damage. My State of Minnesota may be miles away from rising oceans, but the impacts in my State and in the Midwest are not less of a real threat. Climate change isn't just about melting glaciers and rising ocean levels, and we have certainly seen that with the hurricanes, but we have also seen flooding like we have never seen before in Duluth and places across Minnesota.

So we know it is happening. The question is, What do we do about it? Now that the President's own Agencies have said it is happening, what do we do about it?

Well, what I would like to hear, acknowledging this new report about the impacts of climate change, not just the nerdy numbers of climate change—now that we know the impacts, let's do something about it.

No. 1, the clean power rules. When those were first put out a few years ago, I think the business community at first thought they were going to be worse than they were. They were a reasonable path forward, giving some exceptions and more time to small power companies. I know in my State, Minnesota Power, Xcel Energy—in our State, our major power companies were ready to work with those rules. While our small power companies were concerned, we were working with them to make sure there were exceptions and that they had a path forward to make sure they could meet the goals by working with the big power companies.

We already had businesses in my State, like Cargill, that were out front on this, that saw the risk to their consumers and their business if we do nothing about climate change internationally. So we were ready to roll with those clean power rules, but they got reversed by this administration. I call on them to go back at it and put those rules out again. Let's get them done.

Secondly, gas mileage standards. That is something else we should be going back to. We had an agreement with the auto companies just a few years ago to get that done, but instead, once again, they went backward.

Third, the international climate change agreement. Every other country in the world has pledged to be in that agreement. We had pledged to be in the agreement, and then the administration said we were going out of that agreement. At the time they did that, the only two countries that weren't in the agreement were Nicaragua and Syria, and now they have joined the agreement.

I remember a time when the United States was a leader in innovation and a leader in responding to the challenges, not just in our country but our world. We should be leading because otherwise other countries are going to get ahead of us when it gets to innovative technology to meet these climate change and energy challenges of our time.

That is what this is about, and that is what we need to do to move forward.

My State has been a leader on this. With a Republican Governor, a few years back, and a Democratic legislature, we were able to pass a renewable electricity standard that was ahead of its time. Already today, 7 years ahead of schedule, 25 percent of Minnesota's electricity generation comes from renewable sources. That is clearly part of our way forward but not the only way forward.

Guess what. We did it in conjunction with our farming communities with an agreement, as well, on biofuel, and we did it across the aisle on a bipartisan basis. We can do that in this Chamber right now if we have the will to get it done.

As last week's report makes clear, inaction is not an option—not for our economy, not for our farmers, not for our environment and our country, and certainly not for the American people. Military and security experts have reminded us that climate change is a threat to our national security, increasing the risk of conflict, humanitarian crisis, and damage to critical infrastructure.

As you look at some of the refugees that have been moving in places such as Europe and the people coming up from Africa, a lot of that is because they used to engage in subsistence farming and they can't do it anymore.

Yes, we need to adapt with science, and we need to adapt with cutting-edge speeds in farming, but we also need to adapt by putting into place policies that bring down our greenhouse gas numbers so we have a fighting chance of leaving this Earth to our kids and our grandkids in a way that they can live a life like we have enjoyed.

Despite more severe weather, heat waves that can reduce our water supply, and extreme rainfall that can damage critical infrastructure, this country has always gotten ahead of challenges. I ask my friends on the other side of the aisle to remember the Republican Party of Teddy Roosevelt, the Republican Party of conservation, the Republican Party that sought to conserve our resources and not use them all ourselves so that they can leave something to other people. That is what we have to find to get this done.

I will end by quoting Pope Francis. His visit to this Congress and to Washington was something that I will never forget. One of the things he said is this: "What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us, to children who are now growing up?"

That is a pretty good standard. Think in your life of those kids whom you love or your neighbor's kids or your grandkids, and ask yourself what kind of world you want to leave them. This is no longer just some hypothetical thing. It is right there in the report by the Trump administration. It is right before our eyes in the videos we see online of that dad driving his kid through a wildfire in Northern

California. It is right there as we see the damage the hurricanes are doing to the east coast. It is right there in the Midwest, when we see rampant flooding, ticks, Lyme disease, and things that we never used to see in Minnesota. The evidence is right before our eyes. Let's believe it and do something about it.

Thank you, Mr. President.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kansas.

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, I rise this afternoon to discuss the Department of Veterans Affairs and this Department's continued challenges with properly implementing the letter of the law.

As we know, the VA has faced significant difficulties and change over the past 5 years—issues that have spurred Congress to act. In this Congress we have passed multiple pieces of legislation designed to reform numerous policies, from accountability to education under the GI bill to transforming healthcare.

Recent news has put a spotlight on the VA struggles to implement the Forever GI Bill Act, which has resulted in delays or improper accounting of veterans' earned educational benefits. Financial problems with their earned benefits is unacceptable and causes an unnecessary strain on veterans as they pursue higher education. It is critical that the VA fix this problem. This should not be a matter of "if" but "when" the VA fixes this issue and provides accurate earned benefits to deserving veterans. Based upon these struggles of implementing the Forever GI Bill Act, I have concerns that similar challenges will occur in the implementation of the VA MISSION Act, which was signed into law in June of this year and is the most transformative legislation for the VA healthcare system in over 30 years.

We are closing in on a 6-month mark before the VA MISSION Act must be implemented. June 6, 2019, will be when the new community care program under this act takes effect. This law requires several major critical reforms to the VA healthcare system. I want to quickly outline some of the biggest changes that the VA is required by law to implement.

First, the VA must establish new eligibility criteria for veterans to receive care in the community, and that criteria must be based on clearly defined, easy-to-understand access standards. The VA must establish and apply quality standards to make certain that all VA and community care facilities are providing our veterans with the highest level of care—the care they deserve.

The VA must create thorough and reliable processes for the VA and community care partners to coordinate care for a veteran who is receiving care in the community to make certain that the burden is no longer on the veteran and accountability is instead on those

who are charged with providing the care.

The VA must start to plan and properly project their healthcare expenses. This requires the VA to establish a well-vetted strategic planning document that better forecasts healthcare demands and what the VA and the community can supply to our Nation's veterans.

I certainly understand how large of an undertaking this is. Implementation of the MISSION Act, while it is important, is also a challenge. There are many within the VA who share our desire to transform the VA's healthcare system so it can continue to provide care for veterans for generations to come. There are many at the VA who want to see this done well and done right, but I do know it will take time. Change is not something that occurs in a day or a month or even a year, and the changes required here are fraught with difficulty if not done the correct way.

The key to making certain that change is taking place is how you respond to those difficulties. The VA leadership can learn from the past and change the culture and complacency and excuses. We no longer should be asking why but why not.

The VA will be testifying next week on the status of the VA MISSION Act implementation before the House and Senate Veterans' Affairs Committees, and I will be there. I urge them to hold nothing back, to tell us clearly where they anticipate struggles, and that they in no way sweep anything under the rug so they make certain we know the challenges they are facing and so that we then can help them in the solutions.

Without real change within the VA, we cannot hope for real change for our veterans. We cannot afford to fail them any longer or in any additional circumstance.

The American people, Congress, and the President have charged the VA with a daunting mission, but it is a mission that is so worthy—to provide our veterans, those who have served our Nation, with a VA that is worthy of those veterans' service.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nebraska.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

CORPORAL MATT HENDERSON

Mrs. FISCHER. Mr. President, I rise today to continue my tributes to the current generation of Nebraska men and women who have lost their lives defending our freedom in Iraq and Afghanistan. Each of these Nebraskans has a special story to tell.

Today I will recall the life and service of Cpl Matt Henderson of Lincoln, NE.

Matt was born on May 15, 1979, in Columbia, MO, to Owen and Rebecca Henderson. At the time Matt came into the world, his dad, Owen, was attending veterinary school. After Owen finished veterinary school, the Henderson fam-

ily moved to "The Good Life" to raise both Matt and his newly born sister Kellie.

As Matt grew, he made many friends, loved to play outside, and enjoyed hunting and fishing. Many times Matt could be found by his dad's side on his equine veterinary visits.

His favorite furry companion was his curly-haired golden retriever Rocket, with which he spent a lot of time and which he taught to play fetch.

Matt loved sports and participated in many sports growing up, including baseball, basketball, wrestling, track, and football, but his favorite of all was football. He was a devout Nebraska Husker and Chicago Bears fan.

Matt and his wife Jaimie began dating while they attended Palmyra Junior-Senior High School in Otoe County. Jaimie remembers Matt wearing his football jersey on game days and their dates at the movies, the mall, and homecoming dances before they were even old enough to drive.

After graduating high school in 1998, Matt attended Nebraska Wesleyan University where he studied athletic training and criminal justice. He also played on the football team and was an avid weightlifter.

In 2000, Matt joined the U.S. Marine Corps because he was attracted to the discipline and direction that it offered. He completed boot camp at Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego before attending and completing infantry training at Camp Pendleton. Due to his strong interest in the construction field, Matt also finished combat engineer school at Camp Lejeune.

After engineer school, he was assigned to the 1st Combat Engineer Battalion at Camp Pendleton.

On August 4, 2001, Matt proposed to Jaimie on Mission Beach in San Diego, just after sunset. They were so excited to finally get married and begin planning their wedding in Nebraska, which was scheduled for April 12, 2003.

In January of 2003, however, Matt's unit was informed that they would be among the first forces to invade Iraq. Jaimie postponed the wedding, which was supposed to take place in just a few months, and instead she and Matt were married in a civil ceremony in San Diego. The two of them couldn't imagine something happening during Matt's deployment and never being able to marry one another.

In February of 2003, Matt deployed to Iraq. He joined other U.S.-led forces in the invasion of Iraq and Kuwait in order to oust Saddam Hussein. During his deployment, Matt was chosen to be a squad leader due to his leadership abilities, technical skills, and the respect of other marines. Matt's family had no communication with him during this time and were glued to the TV, watching the news every evening with the hopes of catching a glimpse of Matt.

Upon Matt's return home in May of 2003, he and Jaimie finally had their big church wedding in Lincoln, NE,

where they renewed their vows in front of their family and friends. Following the wedding, Jaimie moved to California to live at Camp Pendleton with Matt. Without the distance, she and Matt had more time to spend together, and they enjoyed socializing with their other friends in the Marine Corps.

In February of 2004, Matt deployed to Iraq for the second time and Jaimie moved back to Nebraska to be closer to their families.

As a squad leader, Matt was very aware of and concerned about the dangers of his second deployment. On May 26, 2004, Matt was leading his squad of several other marines and sweeping an area in the Al Anbar Province of Iraq for explosive devices and repairing major roads. This particular area had seen a dramatic increase in violence and demonstrations at the time, and the Province was in full-scale revolt. During the sweep, Matt and two of his men, including Shelton, NE, native Kyle Codner, were killed when an IED was detonated.

Matt warned his squad to get back and take cover but was unable to get out of range himself. The remainder of his squad survived, with one person suffering shrapnel wounds.

Cpl Matt Henderson's memorial service was held at the First Plymouth Church in Lincoln on June 3, 2004. Hundreds of family, friends, and fellow soldiers attended the ceremony to honor Matt and pay their respects. In what seems an impossible task, Matt's father gave the eulogy that day. Matt was laid to rest at the Lincoln Memorial Park Cemetery.

For his ultimate sacrifice, Cpl Matt Henderson received the Naval Achievement Medal with cluster, a Purple Heart, and numerous unit citations and campaign ribbons. He was the first to receive the prestigious Noncommissioned Officer Combat Engineer of the Year Award posthumously.

Matt was a consistent source of inspiration for his fellow marines. He was the kind of young man people were just drawn to. He was a tough, yet selfless marine.

Cpl Matt Henderson lived life to the fullest, and he is missed dearly by his family and friends. I join all Nebraskans and Americans across the country in saluting Matt's bravery and his sacrifice.

Thank you, Mr. President.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CASSIDY). The Senator from Florida.

Mr. NELSON. Mr. President, I say to the Senator from Nebraska, this Senator has had too many opportunities to give the same kind of speech in remembrance of fallen Floridians just like her constituent who gave the ultimate sacrifice in protection of his country, and I thank the Senator from Nebraska.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. NELSON. Mr. President, 30 years ago, a gentleman by the name of Dr. James Hansen was the Director of the NASA Goddard Institute for Space