

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. CASIDY). 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

Studies. He testified to the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee that he was 99 percent certain that the year's record temperatures were not the result of natural variation. That was 30 years ago. It was the first time a lead scientist drew a connection between human activities, the growing concentration of atmosphere pollutants, and a warming climate.

This Senator was a young congressman at the time representing East Central Florida and Florida's Space Coast. Just 2 years prior, I had flown for 6 days on the 24th mission of the space shuttle. In this case, our orbiter was the Space Shuttle *Columbia*.

Growing up on the Indian River on Florida's Atlantic coast, it is easy to think that nature's bounty is endless, that the sand beaches, the crystal clear water, the blue sky, and the warm Sun will continue forever. It would be like Camelot. But peering out the window back at the planet from the window of a spacecraft, when I looked, all of the Earth suddenly took on a new meaning. I realized how thin the line was between our protected shared home—the planet—and uninhabitable space.

When Dr. Hansen testified about the greenhouse effect and how that thin layer of atmosphere was becoming polluted, it got my attention because I remembered looking at the rim of the Earth and seeing that thin film as we orbited the Earth every 90 minutes. Since his 1988 warning, the evidence has unfortunately confirmed Dr. Hansen's 1988 prediction.

Extreme events in 2017 and 2018 alone included back-to-back, record Atlantic and gulf hurricanes and unprecedented and devastating wildfires. Global temperatures are rising, and so are the seas. Why? The extra heat is absorbed by the oceans, which cover two-thirds of the Earth. That extra heat, when absorbed in water, causes water to expand. Also, 2016 and 2017 had two of the highest global temperatures ever recorded since we began measuring in 1880, and 2018 is on track to be the fourth hottest year on record.

Warmer air and water make the environment more hospitable to toxic algae blooms, mosquitos that carry deadly diseases, and things like poison ivy. These are three things that I think we can all agree that we need less of, not more.

The oceans are warming, and they are fueling the intensification of hurricanes—as we saw recently with Irma and Michael—and that warming water is creating the conditions that bleach coral reefs and feed toxic algae blooms.

My beautiful home State of Florida, which I have had the great privilege of serving, is ground zero for these impacts. According to the fourth National Climate Assessment report released by the administration just last week—the day after Thanksgiving—climate change is expected to make South Florida more vulnerable to diseases like the Zika virus. Florida could see more than \$346 billion in lost property

value over the course of this century. But this stretches beyond property values. A Florida Department of Health assessment determined that almost 600,000 people in South Florida are going to face extreme or high risk from sea level rise. Warming water, nutrient enrichment, overfishing, and coastal development are all contributing to the dire situation of one of our Nation's crown jewels—the coral reefs of the Florida Keys.

The real question is, What are we going to do about it? I think there are three things we ought to consider.

First, we truly cannot afford to politicize the air we breathe. The science is not up for debate. The greenhouse gas emissions are heating the atmosphere, which in turn heat our oceans, supercharging the hurricanes, leaving us vulnerable to drought and threatening the water we drink and the food we eat. Reports of political censorship or political interference with science—that is unacceptable and foolish. If we ignore the science, we do so at our peril.

Second, I think we are going to have to stop putting so many greenhouse gases into the atmosphere so fast. This is called climate mitigation. It means that we must invest in new technology, in the economy of the future, things like wind and solar, electric vehicles, and more efficient buildings. Each one of them would have a huge impact in lessening the amount of derivatives of carbon that we put into the atmosphere.

Third, I think we should consider that we are going to have to make our communities more resilient to the impacts of climate change—climate change that is already upon us and climate change that, in the future, we are not going to be able to avoid. You can't just cut off the greenhouse gases going into the atmosphere and the warming that results therefrom that is already in the system.

You talk to the scientists. There is something just beyond about 4 degrees Fahrenheit more than the average annual global temperature—that if it rises beyond that, there is no return.

We have a chance, but time is of the essence. We ought to consider climate change adaptation. You don't have to agree with climate science to know that it makes sense to do that.

I want to urge our colleagues on both sides of this aisle that separates Republicans from Democrats. You need to take this seriously. For the sake of your States and mine, for the good of our planet, for the good of our children, for the good of future generations, take climate change seriously. Listen to the experts, and come together to work on solutions. Instead of saying "I am not a scientist," listen to the scientists. Don't try to censor their warnings or hide from the truth. Instead of saying that making changes could cost money, think about the cost to our economy and our society if we don't act.

Coastal communities inundated with catastrophic flooding, midwestern droughts that raise food prices, and soaring health costs—these are some of the costs that are coming to our country—indeed, to our society—indeed, to the civilization of planet Earth. We must act, and we must do it now.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, first, I am going to commend the senior Senator from Florida for what he said. Throughout my career, I have been so impressed and so grateful for his strong voice on the environment. He is the only Member of this body who has seen Earth from space.

#### FREEDOM OF THE PRESS

Mr. President, I thank my dear friend, the senior Senator from Iowa, Senator GRASSLEY, who is going to speak but said I could go ahead, and I will. I will be brief.

In the 44 years I have served in the Senate, I have never been so concerned about the state of press freedom around the world, including, I deeply regret to say, in our own country.

I was brought up in a family that owned a weekly newspaper and owned a printing business. The First Amendment was the most important part of our Constitution because it promised the freedom of speech and it promised the diversity of religion, and that Amendment was the foundation of our democracy.

Yet the premeditated murder and dismemberment of Jamal Khashoggi by Saudi authorities and then their ridiculous, transparent attempt to cover it up have shocked the consciences of people everywhere. Yesterday, by voting to discharge S.J. Res. 54, the Senate demonstrated that the Saudi royal family needs to hold accountable all those who are responsible for that horrific crime if it wants to salvage relations with the United States.

Look at what happens if we don't speak out in defense of a free press. Just a few days after Mr. Khashoggi's murder, the body of Bulgarian journalist Viktoria Marinova was discovered. The investigation suggests that she was raped, beaten, and strangled. I think the motive is undeniable. She had spent the previous year reporting on corruption.

According to the Committee to Protect Journalists, so far, in 2018, at least 43 journalists have been killed for their work while 15 other journalists have also been killed, although their deaths have not yet, at least, been officially linked to their work. According to data compiled by Freedom House, the muzzling of journalists and independent news media is at its worst point in over a decade. Similarly, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists, the number of reporters who have been jailed for their work—who have been jailed for being reporters doing their