

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SCHUMER. 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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak on leader time before we have a vote.

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

REMEMBERING GEORGE H.W. BUSH

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, this morning, the life and career of the 41st President of the United States was celebrated at the National Cathedral. Friends, family, former leaders of our country, and leaders from around the world gathered to pay tribute to a life spent in joyful service to our country and unfailing dedication to his family. I was there. It was a very moving and wonderful ceremony.

The Senate now joins the rest of the country in mourning President George Herbert Walker Bush.

NOMINATION OF BERNARD L. MCNAMEE

Mr. President, now on another matter—a less happy matter—at the conclusion of my remarks, the Senate will vote on whether to consider the nomination of Bernard McNamee to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, or FERC. I staunchly oppose this nomination.

Throughout his career, Mr. McNamee has been manifestly biased in favor of the fossil fuel industry and biased against renewable energy sources—so much so that one cannot believe he would be a fair arbiter on these issues at FERC.

Mr. McNamee has called for “a unified campaign” to support fossil fuels. As a policy official at the Department of Energy, he played a significant role in designing a coal and nuclear bailout program that was unanimously rejected by FERC—hardly a liberal agency—the agency he is nominated to join.

When it comes to fossil fuel competitors, Mr. McNamee has expressed thoughts that only a real fossil fuel zealot could have. Not only has Mr. McNamee made numerous false claims about clean energy technologies, he has labeled support for renewable energies “organized propaganda” and likened its boosters to supporters of “tyranny.”

At a time when our globe—with wildfires in California, with flooding and hurricanes—is totally being changed because of global warming, we are putting someone on FERC—or there is an intent to put someone on FERC who has the most regressive views we have seen come around in a very long time.

Commissioners at FERC have matters related to all types of energy brought before them. They are supposed to be nonpartisan. They are supposed to impartially oversee rates and reliability and delivery based on what is best for the American people, not deep-seated personal beliefs and cer-

tainly not views that are so out of touch with so many people.

My guess is that maybe only a handful of Republicans agree with him on his views that are so regressive. I see my friend from Iowa here. What this guy said about wind and things like that are way off the charts.

Just a few weeks ago, the Trump administration itself released a report on climate change outlining its current impact and the devastating and dire consequences we will see if actions are not taken. That was not our report; that was the Trump administration's report. So now would be an awful time to elevate someone to our chief energy regulator who is so clearly biased against renewable sources of energy, such as wind and solar. I strongly urge—fervently urge—my colleagues to oppose this nomination.

I yield the floor.

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. GARDNER). Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The bill clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Bernard L. McNamee, of Virginia, to be a Member of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission for the remainder of the term expiring June 30, 2020.

Mitch McConnell, Johnny Isakson, Mike Rounds, Thom Tillis, Mike Crapo, Pat Roberts, John Hoeven, David Perdue, Tim Scott, John Cornyn, Roy Blunt, Cory Gardner, Tom Cotton, Jerry Moran, John Barrasso, Roger F. Wicker, John Boozman.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of Bernard L. McNamee, of Virginia, to be a Member of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission for the remainder of the term expiring June 30, 2020, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. TILLIS).

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 50, nays 49, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 253 Ex.]

YEAS—50

Alexander	Collins	Enzi
Barrasso	Corker	Ernst
Blunt	Cornyn	Fischer
Boozman	Cotton	Flake
Burr	Crapo	Gardner
Capito	Cruz	Graham
Cassidy	Daines	Grassley

Hatch	Lee	Rubio
Heller	McConnell	Sasse
Hoeven	Moran	Scott
Hyde-Smith	Murkowski	Shelby
Inhofe	Paul	Sullivan
Isakson	Perdue	Thune
Johnson	Portman	Toomey
Kennedy	Risch	Wicker
Kyl	Roberts	Young
Lankford	Rounds	

NAYS—49

Baldwin	Hassan	Peters
Bennet	Heinrich	Reed
Blumenthal	Heitkamp	Sanders
Booker	Hirono	Schatz
Brown	Jones	Schumer
Cantwell	Kaine	Shaheen
Cardin	King	Smith
Carper	Klobuchar	Stabenow
Casey	Leahy	Tester
Coons	Manchin	Udall
Cortez Masto	Markey	Van Hollen
Donnelly	McCaskill	Warner
Duckworth	Menendez	Warren
Durbin	Merkley	Whitehouse
Feinstein	Murphy	Wyden
Gillibrand	Murray	
Harris	Neton	

NOT VOTING—1

Tillis

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 50 and the nays are 49.

The motion is agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

TRIBUTE TO MAJOR AARON HOUSE

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, I am here to talk for a few minutes about Major House and the work he has done in our office. We have benefited for the last several years from a military detailee being on the Intelligence Committee and on the Defense Appropriations Committee and having significant military installations in our State, as many of us do, but we certainly have those in Missouri. It has been valuable having MAJ Aaron House with them.

Major House has been a great resource on a number of important national security issues in our office. The knowledge and experience he has gained as a U.S. Army Reserve officer have helped inform our discussions on defense issues critical to Missouri and critical to the country.

Aaron was born in Plattsburgh, NY, on the shores of Lake Champlain. He joined the Army in 2001. He first served as an enlisted soldier for 3 years and then as a commissioned officer after that. He has served in both the Engineer Corps and the Finance Corps. He deployed to Iraq, where he conducted rapid crater repair, route clearance, and construction operations. His most recent assignment before joining our office was with the joint staff working as an analyst for the Office of the Comptroller in Defense.

He is extremely well educated and holds a bachelor of science in manufacturing management from Clarkson University in New York, a master of science in human relations and business from Amberton University in Texas, and he has both a master of business administration and a master of public administration from Syracuse University in New York.

He comes with all of that background. Combining that with his background in finance, he has been critically important to us as we move through a number of important projects this year. He has been able to devote a lot of time to gathering and analyzing data on historical military construction projects as we move forward on those projects.

He has provided knowledgeable recommendations on a host of foreign policy issues as well. He was very involved in the last year in Colombia, where Senator CARDIN and I cochaired an effort with the Atlantic Council to look at moving Peace Colombia to Plan Colombia and then looking at that again now that the Colombian Government has changed. We have looked at some things that involved Australia and China and Russia, just to name a few of the areas where Major House has been helpful in our office.

On veterans issues, he has been helpful as we try to connect veterans with the resources they need and the benefits they have every right to have, but they sometimes have a hard time accessing those benefits.

Having him in the office has been an asset. It has been a pleasure for me and our entire staff. I certainly wish him all the best in the next chapter of his military career.

He and his wife Mindy have three daughters. They have a newborn son. So even in that year he was with us, they added a fourth child at their house. His family and friends who support him and the sacrifices he and his family—his immediate family—make to serve are deeply appreciated by us. He has been a real benefit to the country. He has been a particular benefit to the Missourians whom I get to work for. I am grateful to have had him this year and will again say that this is a program that really is beneficial to the Senate.

I hear from our past detailees over the years that it was an incredible opportunity for them to understand how the Congress works from the perspective of each of our offices and makes a valuable addition to what they take to their next assignment and every future assignment.

I think the Chief of Staff for the President spent some substantial time in this building representing the Army and said he was the most knowledgeable guy in the Army when it came to talking about issues that he learned right here and how to work with and provide information and advice to Congress.

We are glad Major House has been with us, appreciative of the program, look forward to welcoming our next detailee soon, and wish Major House and his family great success as they move forward.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

NOMINATION OF BERNARD L. MCNAMEE

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I am here today to express my extremely

grave concerns about the person we have just begun to move to a vote to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. He would be Commissioner McNamee if we were to confirm him. This is in an administration that has distinguished itself with terrible energy appointments—conceivably the worst. It is too important to our country to have an independent and reality-based Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to allow an industry plant like Mr. McNamee—who will never be independent, who will always have his thumb on the scale for the vested interests—get onto the Federal Regulatory Commission.

In addition to the bad decisions he will make because he will be trying to throw decisions for the fossil fuel industry, he will also create an enormous amount of litigation because people who come before a Federal administrative agency are entitled to an honest look at their claims, and if the regulatory agency is incapable of giving them that honest look, that is grounds for appeal.

McNamee is a walking failure of any honest look at any question in which the fossil fuel industry—and specifically the coal industry—has an interest. Sadly, his position isn't just a question of a personal failing; he comes out of a system, and I am going to take some time to describe the system he comes out of.

No one less than our late friend Senator John McCain was once asked in an interview: Why has it taken so long for Congress to address climate change? Katie Couric was the interviewer. She asked:

Why has it taken so long, Senator?

Here was John McCain's answer:

Special interests. It is the special interests. It is the utility companies and the petroleum companies and other special interests. They are the ones that have blocked progress in the Congress of the United States and the administration. That is a little straight talk.

The way these industries work is kind of interesting. They figured out pretty early on that if they are a big power company or a big coal company or any big fossil fuel polluter and they come forward into a debate and make their argument as ExxonMobil, as Koch Industries, as Murray coal, people will immediately discount what they are saying because people will understand that the companies have a massive conflict of interest, that they have the massive conflict of interest of wishing to continue to pollute for free. So they have set up this whole array of front groups to disguise that it is truly the fossil fuel industry whose hands are pulling our strings.

We came to the floor some time ago—a considerable number of the Democratic Senators—to point out this coordinated, phony, false-front, fossil-fuel-funded operation, and we made the phony front group so mad that they actually sent a letter disputing that they were a coordinated group of phony

fronts by putting all their phony names together on a single letterhead, arguing that they weren't coordinated together in a letter in which they most obviously were coordinated together. That is how upset they were when the mischief they are up to was pointed out.

This was groups like Americans for Tax Reform; ALEC; Cascade Policy Institute; CFACT; Competitive Enterprise Institute; I love this name—the Franklin Center for Government and Public Integrity, which has nothing to do with Ben Franklin and even less to do with public integrity; Georgia Public Policy Foundation; Heritage Foundation; the notorious Heartland Institute, which distinguished itself by putting up billboards equating climate scientists to the Unabomber—classy group, that Heartland; the so-called James Madison Institute, which has nothing to do with James Madison. These groups love to steal the names of historic figures to try to give themselves a little bit of initial credence. There is also a John Locke Foundation—historians will know how important John Locke was to the founding of this country; the MacIver Institute; Kansas Policy Institute; Montana Policy Institute; NPRI; PRI; Pelican Institute; Rio Grande Foundation; Virginia Institute; and, of course, a Yankee Institute for Public Policy.

This whole piece of public relations and propaganda machinery is an ongoing disgrace, and there are some folks who have been looking at it pretty hard recently and saying some pretty rough stuff about it.

I would like to start with two recent articles by Paul Krugman. He is no fool. He won a Noble Prize for economics. He begins by noting what everybody who studies this already knows:

Climate change poses a major threat to the nation, and some of its adverse effects are already being felt.

He goes on to say:

There are almost no good-faith climate change deniers.

I think he is accurate about that. I think there are almost no good-faith climate change deniers because, to use his phrase, "denying science for profit" has become such a constant activity, as shown by this whole array of phony, fossil-fuel-funded organizations.

He goes on to describe some of the history. "Climate denial"—I am quoting here—"actually follows in the footsteps of . . . the long campaign by tobacco companies to confuse the public about the dangers of smoking."

I have given several speeches about this on the Senate floor. The apparatus that the tobacco companies used to confuse the public about the dangers of tobacco morphed into a bigger, more cleverly hidden, and better funded apparatus but basically started with the same route that the fossil fuel industry took to confuse the public about the dangers of its product in the same way that the tobacco industry tried to confuse the public about the dangers of its

product. The tobacco scheme was so fraudulent that they were actually found liable for fraud in Federal court—not just at the trial court level but upheld at the DC Circuit Court of Appeals.

He goes on to say:

Every one of the handful of well-known scientists who have expressed climate skepticism has received large sums of money from these companies or from dark money conduits like Donors Trust.

And, of course, it also flows through those phony front groups whom I described who wrote back to us to deny that they were coordinated phony front groups.

“Climate denial is rooted in greed,” Paul Krugman continues, because it is paid for by the fossil fuel industry.

Then he comes back the very next week with a second article, still on the same theme, bewailing the fact that the Republican Party has “committed itself to denying the facts on climate change; that it is now “completely dominated by climate deniers” and “hostile to science in general.”

He describes the importance of climate denial and the weaponized fake news and the relentless propaganda as being—to use his words, “Climate denial, you might say, was the crucible in which the essential elements of Trumpism were formed.” Denying facts, repeating lies incessantly, manipulating the public debate, delivering weaponized fake news through unreliable sites, and poisoning the public debate with nonsense is how I would generally describe what he was describing.

He says:

Conspiracy theorizing has long been standard practice among climate deniers.

And these are the organizations that propagate those conspiracy theories.

He goes on:

Most prominent climate deniers are basically paid to take that position, receiving large amounts of money from fossil-fuel companies.

He says:

If we fail to meet the challenge of climate change, with catastrophic results. . . it will be a disaster brought on by corruption, willful ignorance, conspiracy theorizing and intimidation.

And this question of corruption isn't just coming from the left. There is a free market think tank called Niskanen Center, and Will Wilkinson from that institute just wrote a piece about what he called the “spiraling crisis of American corruption,” which includes the “failure to require financial transparency of those who would . . . fix our fates.” All of these groups hide who their donors are. There is no financial transparency because they are fronts for the fossil fuel industry, and if they reported all the money they got from them, their purpose as front groups evaporates. Creating, Will Wilkinson continues, “a class of rich and powerful miscreants who profit by gnawing away at the rule of law.”

God forbid we should have real hearings on climate change, that there

should be legislative rule of law. God forbid that we should get honest decisions out of EPA based on the science under rule of law. No. None of that. All of that goes under the wind so that rich and powerful miscreants of the fossil fuel industry can get their way.

Their pooled wealth, Wilkinson continues, can be deployed to keep them in the money, and that is what is going on, creating—and I think this is a really pointed phrase—in our country “a doom loop of corruption, distrust and institutional degeneration.”

What our friend Senator McCain said was the mischief of the special interests in stopping climate action—this is how it is done—through secret money, dark money, front groups, phony propaganda, all backed up with fossil fuel industry political muscle.

It is sickening, and this guy McNamee comes smack out of one of these groups—the Texas Public Policy Foundation.

The Texas Public Policy Foundation has received more than \$3½ million from Koch-related foundations—this is Koch Industries, not Coke the drink; I don't want to disparage the wrong Coke—Koch Industries and Koch brothers-related foundations between 1998 and 2017—\$3½ million. It also received about \$1.5 million from Donors Trust. Donors Trust is an entity that has no business purpose. It is set up to identify-laundry donations. So if you don't want somebody to know that ExxonMobil is funding you, ExxonMobil gives the money to Donors Trust, and Donors Trust gives the money to exactly who ExxonMobil told them to because it is donor directed, and now you can report: Guess what. I got my money from Donors Trust, not ExxonMobil. No business purpose. It simply sells transparency out, brings obscurity in, and is a dark money conduit for big special interests. It really is a disgrace. This guy comes out of this world. By the way, there was \$100,000 from ExxonMobil also, because they don't hide all their money, which goes into the Texas Public Policy Foundation.

The last contribution from the Texas Public Policy Foundation to the Trump's nominee pool was a woman named Kathleen Hartnett White, who did such a horrendous job in the Environment and Public Works Committee, showed such ignorance of environmental matters, and had no clue that carbon dioxide actually reacts chemically with water and is acidifying the oceans—that is science you can do in a high school lab. It is incredibly simple. I have done it here on the Senate floor with one of those bubbler stones for an aquarium and my own breath and our glass of water. To not know that carbon dioxide acidifies the ocean is appallingly ignorant. She also didn't know how much climate change and the warming atmosphere was warming the oceans. Well, it is more than 90 percent of the excess heat trapped by greenhouse gases that have gone into the oceans.

The oceans are warming at such a rate that if you took the explosive power of a nuclear weapon—the Hiroshima nuclear bomb—and converted 100 percent of that energy into heat, you would have to be setting off multiple bombs per second in our oceans to match how fast climate change is warming our oceans. You can measure that with thermometers. This is not complicated. It was too much for her. She couldn't figure it out.

When oceans warm, they rise, because oceans expand. Warm water expands as it warms. This is basic physics—no clue. This you can measure essentially with yardsticks. You can measure it at the tide gauges that NOAA and the Navy have run in some cases for a century. This is the world he comes out of. This is the infiltration of the fossil fuel front groups and Koch Industries into what used to be legitimate institutions of government.

What really kills me is that McNamee, at one point talking about climate science, said:

There's an organized propaganda campaign. . . . The problem is, it's taken hold . . . and there is a lot of money behind this.

Well, he is describing something very accurately, but it is not the scientists all across this country, in every one of our home State universities, working on studying and teaching climate science. This is called projection. It is the rhetorical device where you take the sin that you are most obviously guilty of and immediately accuse your adversary of it, so that when you are caught, it looks like it is a tie of mutual criticisms. As Paul Krugman said in one of his pieces, “Projection much?” Indeed.

I will close by talking about this guy's effort to prop up coal through these completely bogus power protection plans that have come out of the Department of Energy on his watch and that he has defended here. Even the Trump appointees to FERC threw these dumb things out. They were so bad, totally violating the Federal Power Act. But he was for them.

He has said that if you don't preserve coal, you risk resilience and security on the grid. That is a question that FERC is going to be looking at. He ought to recuse himself on this. He has refused to recuse himself on this, but I will tell you there are people who say that it is actually working the other way.

Here is an article: “Powering into the Future: Renewable Energy & Grid Reliability.”

In addition, renewable energy can strengthen the grid. . . contributing to capacity and resource adequacy, maintaining local voltage and frequency performance, minimizing grid disturbances, providing grid balancing services, and creating a more flexible and diverse generation fleet.

Do you think they are going to get a fair chance in front of this guy when they come to FERC?

Here is another headline: “Renewable microgrids can enhance grid resilience.”

Here is another one: Against “physical risk and cyber-attacks . . . the electric grid have made renewable energy sources more attractive.” They are more attractive when you measure for protecting against physical risk and cyber attacks. They “can add a layer of protection from physical damage to the grid.” It is not coal.

Here is a report out of Texas suggesting that the State’s power production can be made more reliable by the addition of solar and wind renewables.

Here is an article, headlined: “Solar energy is better than coal for national security infrastructure—says Department of Energy.” I would love to know how McNamee let this get by him. This is his Department of Energy telling the truth because nobody seems to notice.

“Deloitte: The case for renewables has never been stronger”—in part because “wind and solar power are now viewed as a solution to grid balancing,” says Deloitte, “while placing downward pressure on electricity prices.” Solar and wind are “placing downward pressure” on solar and wind prices, and they “have also demonstrated an ability to strengthen grid resilience and reliability and provide essential grid services.”

So give me a break about this “coal needs to defend the grid” nonsense. That was cooked up probably by these phony-baloney front groups as an excuse to continue to sell their polluting product.

The Deloitte report itself, in the executive summary says: “[U]tilities are beginning to demonstrate how distributed, renewable generation in a microgrid setting can be a cost-effective alternative to traditional [transmission and distribution]” alternatives and protect the grid that way and “that [independently owned utilities] are exploring opportunities to enhance resilience through strategic renewable integration.”

Integrating renewables strategically improves grid resilience. Here is the clincher: “Various [independently owned utilities]” will need “regulatory license to innovate.” “Whether those reforms will drive innovation fast enough to keep consumers’ lights on during future catastrophic weather events” is yet to be determined.

So here they are saying that getting renewables will help to keep people’s lights on, but how are they ever going to get a fair hearing from this guy who pretends, based on phony-baloney front group information, that it takes coal grants to keep the grid secure when all these reports show that just plain isn’t true? It is nonsense.

The worst of all and the closer for him was that he was on the 2009 transition team for Attorney General Ken Cuccinelli when he was elected attorney general of Virginia.

I am really honored that our departing Senator from Florida happens to be here on the floor today, because he and I are both graduates of the University of Virginia. There was a scientist at

the University of Virginia named Michael Mann. He was a climate scientist. He is the guy who did what became known as the hockey stick graph, which showed carbon emissions and then boom, up it goes—like the blade of a hockey stick—at the beginning of the Industrial Revolution.

So how did the fossil fuel industry react to that? Did they engage him in scientific debate? No, they tried to get him fired. They sent their front groups out to attack his emails to try to get into his emails so they could mock him and set their trolls to work on him. Our university, the University of Virginia, had to fight Attorney General Cuccinelli and take him all the way to the Virginia Supreme Court where his bogus effort to harass and intimidate a climate scientist was finally, once and for all, thrown out by the Supreme Court of the State of Virginia. It was one of the lowest points in rule of law in the history of this country when an attorney general is using his powers of office to flack for an industry that supported him to try to damage the reputation and career of a climate scientist because the science was not showing what the industry wanted.

Their solution was to go after the scientist and try to ruin his reputation. It was a disgrace, and this guy was on his transition team. Give me a break. If we can’t do better than this, we should all be ashamed of ourselves. I yield the floor.

Mr. NELSON. Mr. President, would the Senator yield for a question?

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. LEE). Would the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Of course.

Mr. NELSON. I say to my friend, the Senator from Rhode Island, would it be fair to sum up the Senator’s statement of what is happening to the planet by saying that the additional heat is prohibited from radiating out into space and is trapped by the greenhouse gases, 90 percent of which is absorbed by the oceans, and as the ocean water heats up, the volume rises, and thus, sea levels rise, and there is an increased heating up of the entire Earth’s temperature; is that a true statement?

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. That is a very true statement, and I would add that there are very few transcendent moments that take place here in the temple of mammon, where big special interests throw their weight around, but one of them that I have been privileged to be here for was the Senator from Florida, Mr. NELSON, talking about his time in space in a NASA spaceship and looking down on this Earth, not seeing red States or blue States, not seeing sectarian differences or differences among countries, not seeing national boundaries, but seeing us as the small globe spinning through the void that we are. It is a moment I will never forget.

When you look at that and think of that message that he brought and think that we are busily doing everything we can to ruin the balance of the

systems upon which we depend because we will not say no to the biggest and most muscling and remorseless industry that probably has ever stalked the halls of this building, it is such a national tragedy that this would happen in the United States of America.

The whole world will suffer for our failing. The finger will end up pointing at us because the story will come out—and it is coming out already—about fossil fuel money and influence and their threats and hidden money and the front groups and the whole piece of stinking machinery in which they operate.

So the contrast between the Senator’s transcendent view of the globe from space and the foul politics of this industry that we experience here every day is one of the great discrepancies that is hard for me to take into my heart.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

Mr. NELSON. Mr. President, would the Senator yield for a further question?

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Yes.

Mr. NELSON. I say to the Senator from Rhode Island, since it is documented over time that the average annual temperature of the Earth is rising and we see in statistics the measurements of temperature, is it not true that scientists tell us that there is a temperature some 4 degrees-plus Fahrenheit more beyond which there is no return for the Earth continuing to heat? Is that a true statement?

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. That is a true statement.

The scientists of the world have more or less reached consensus that that 2 degrees Centigrade increase is one we do not want to go beyond because it could set in force further consequences that would accelerate the problem—for instance, large amounts of frozen Arctic methane or undersea methane letting loose.

We already see lakes that bubble in Canada and Russia from methane melting up through them. They are methane bubbles, not air bubbles. If that accelerates, there can be a feedback loop in which the input we have done releases more greenhouse gases, which, in turn, makes more greenhouse gases and more temperature and more greenhouse gases and up you go. Of course, a lot of that goes into the oceans, and nobody knows better than Florida what that is doing along your coasts to people’s property. So you don’t have to wait to hit 2 degrees Centigrade. Right now the safe opinion is that 1.5 degrees Centigrade is all we can afford. The risk that you are wrong is enough to justify trying to stop at 1.5 degrees Centigrade. Why not be safe when you are dealing with our planet?

Even well before then, in your State, we are seeing what is going on and we are seeing the daytime flooding. You and I have been walking around in boots on sunny days as the tide comes washing in where it has never been before—these king tides.

We have groups like Freddie Mac—which is not exactly a leftwing, green organization—warning that because of this, there is a significant chance of there being a coastal property value crash along our coasts as that danger of sea level rise backs into the insurance and the mortgage that you need to be able to buy a house. If you can't insure your house or can't mortgage your house—let me put it another way; if the next person to buy your house can't get insurance or a mortgage, good luck getting a good price on your house. That is it. They predicted it could be as bad as the 2008 mortgage meltdown.

It is happening now, and we think that 1.5 to 2 degrees Centigrade that scientists say is a tipping point, with 2 degrees as a clear point of no return where these knock-on consequences will begin to move us out of control—we can't stop it at that point.

Mr. NELSON. Mr. President, if the Senator will further yield just for a concluding statement, the Senator from Rhode Island has outlined exactly what is happening in the State of Florida with the rising sea levels, the intrusion of saltwater into the fresh water, the ferocious and highly intense hurricanes. He has also outlined the threat to property values and the normal financial commerce of building buildings and houses that now, along the coastline, may well be threatened in the near future.

I thank the Senator for his recitation this evening.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. I thank the distinguished Senator from Florida.

He has been a particularly dear friend in our years here together. We sat next to each other on the Intelligence Committee, and I was able to see in that classified session his extraordinary skill as an examiner and cross-examiner of witnesses. He usually began by saying "I am just a country lawyer from Florida," and everybody on the Intelligence Committee knew when they heard that, it was time to pay attention because something really good was about to happen. This country lawyer knew how to get to the bottom of things in a hurry.

His work to protect his home State has been nothing less than inspiring to me, and I appreciate it. If there is one thing we can say is hopeful in all of this mess—on the other side of this building, there are going to be gavels that go into the hands of a party that is not controlled by the fossil fuel industry, and there are going to be inquiries and subpoenas and questions and witnesses, and a lot of what I am talking about is going to become very apparent to the American people.

The coverup of the role of the fossil fuel industry and putting people like McNamee into these positions is going to be exposed.

I yield.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

REMEMBERING GEORGE H.W. BUSH

Mr. NELSON. Mr. President, I have a couple of subjects to talk about, and the first one is that all of us in the Senate have just attended a most moving State funeral in the National Cathedral for the late President George H.W. Bush.

There have been many accolades, and so much of it was said so beautifully, so eloquently, and so movingly today by the speakers at the service. I just want the Senate record to reflect one little vignette that I think underscores the kind of compassion and goodness of the man, George H.W. Bush.

Many years ago, when this Senator was a young Congressman, I had the privilege of serving with former Senator and then-Congressman Claude Pepper, a fellow who had risen to the heights of political power in the 1930s during the Depression, became a champion of the little people, and then, as he transitioned to the House of Representatives, became known as "Mr. Senior Citizen" and the protector of Medicare and Social Security.

Many times in the Reagan administration, he was a constant irritant to the Presidential administration. Those two Irishmen knew they had their differences, but they knew when to set aside their differences for the sake of the country.

That, too, was carried over by the then-Vice President who became President—President Bush. An example of George Bush's humanity was in the late 1980s. The Florida delegation got an emergency call to go to Walter Reed army hospital because it was the final hours for Senator, then-Congressman, Claude Pepper. By the time we got to the hospital, they were proceeding to get Claude into a wheelchair. He had come out of a deep sleep—very possibly a coma—and he was being wheeled into the waiting room.

Who should appear but President George H.W. Bush and Mrs. Bush because the word had gotten to them that Claude Pepper was about to pass on from this life into the heavenly life. The President decided to make that a real occasion, so he joined everybody who had gathered about Senator Pepper. Claude was actually the master of ceremonies, greeting everybody and introducing this one to the other one: Mr. President, this is so-and-so. It was an extraordinary scene.

President Bush, who knew this fellow was his political opponent, but he had been such a substantial part of American political history, said: Claude, I have something I want to produce and I want to present to you on behalf of a grateful Nation, on behalf of your public service. President Bush bent down and put around Senator Pepper's neck the Medal of Freedom. Naturally, there wasn't a dry eye among those of us who were there.

It is another little vignette in the life of George H.W. Bush that shows the humanity, the care, and the concern for his fellow man that was exhibited that day in Walter Reed army hospital.

I wanted to share that little vignette, which is appropriate today after such a moving service over at the National Cathedral.

VOTING RIGHTS

Mr. President, I rise to speak about the importance of the sacred right to vote.

In the tumultuous days of the 1960s, on a hot afternoon, I watched as a law student on a grainy black-and-white TV as Dr. King delivered his memorable "I Have a Dream" speech on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial. His soaring, spiritually laced speech challenged us to commit our lives to ensuring that the promises of American democracy were available, not just for the privileged few but for "all of God's children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics."

"Now is the time," Dr. King urged, "to make real the promises of democracy."

He stressed that the central promise made to the citizens in a democracy is the right to vote and to have that vote counted.

Half a century has passed, and our country has changed with the times, but one thing has not changed. The right to vote for "all of God's children" in America is still under assault.

Unbelievably, we are not so very far from the problems of 1963. Despite the passage of time and landmark civil and voting rights legislation, five decades later there is still considerable voter suppression in this country. In fact, several States have recently enacted restrictive laws cutting back voting hours on nights and weekends, eliminating same-day registration, and basically making it harder for people to vote.

Standing between a citizen and the voting booth is a direct contradiction to the vision of equality put forth by the Founding Fathers. In 1776, they declared that all men were created equal, but many in our country had to wait another 94 years before the 15th Amendment to the Constitution granted citizens the right to vote—though not all citizens.

Ratified in 1870, the amendment states:

The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude. . . . The Congress shall have the power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

But it still took another 50 years before women in America were allowed to vote. After her arrest for casting a ballot in the Presidential election of 1872, Susan B. Anthony delivered a number of speeches in Upstate New York on women's suffrage. In those speeches, she noted that the right of all citizens to vote in elections is key to a functioning democracy.

Specifically, one line from her speech stands out: "And it is a downright mockery to talk to women of their enjoyment of the blessings of liberty

while they are denied the use of the only means of securing them by providing the democratic-republican government—the ballot.”

After the passage of the 19th Amendment granting women the ballot, it took another 45 years before our Nation belatedly enacted the Voting Rights Act of 1965, intended to guarantee every U.S. citizen the right to vote. Does this principle really hold true in practice?

The continued voter suppression of which I speak may not be as blatant as it once was with Jim Crow laws and poll taxes and literacy tests and the like, but it is still very much with us.

In recent years, it is obvious that hurdles have once again been placed between the voting booth and the young and minority.

A devastating blow was dealt by the U.S. Supreme Court when it gutted the Voting Rights Act as recently as 2013. Our Nation's highest Court struck down a central provision of the law that had been used to guarantee fair elections in this country since the midsixties, which has included the guarantee of elections in my State of Florida since that time.

Congress passed the Voting Rights Act of 1965 to protect our right to vote. It required States with histories of voter suppression to get Federal approval before changing their voting laws. For nearly five decades, the States had to prove to the Department of Justice why a change was necessary and demonstrate how that change would not harm voters and their right to vote.

In a 5-to-4 decision, the Court declared that part of the law was outdated. Essentially, it rendered a key part of the law void until a bitterly partisan and gridlocked Congress can come up with a new formula for determining which States and localities need advance approval to amend their right-to-vote laws. The majority of the Court justified its ruling by pointing out that we no longer had the blatant voter suppression tactics that had been once used to disenfranchise voters across the country.

I vigorously disagree because removing much needed voter protections also prevents the Federal Government from trying to block discriminatory State laws before they go into effect. In essence, States and local jurisdictions are now legally free to do as they please. In fact, just moments after that Supreme Court decision, the Texas attorney general said his State would begin immediately honoring local legislation that imposed, in the words of a Federal court, “strict and unforgiving burdens” on many Texans who attempt to cast a ballot.

As has been noted, the right to vote was not always given to all American adults, but our laws adjusted as we became a more mature and tolerant democracy, but the reverse is what is happening in America today.

Since the 2010 election, in addition to cutting back on early voting, North

Carolina, Ohio, Wisconsin, and Florida have approved voting restrictions that, according to some experts, are targeted directly at reducing turnout among young, low-income, and minority voters who traditionally vote Democrat.

In 2011, the Florida Legislature and State officials reduced the number of early voting days. It reduced them from 2 weeks down to 8 days, including very conveniently canceling the Sunday right before the Tuesday election—a day that historically had seen heavy African-American and Hispanic voting. State officials countered that registered voters would still have the same number of hours and that they could still vote early, only in 8 days instead of in 2 weeks. Well, it didn't work out that way.

Florida also made voting harder for people who had recently moved to another county and had an address change, such as college students. It also subjected voter registration groups to penalties and fines if they made mistakes or they didn't turn them in within a certain number of hours. These laws were so burdensome that the League of Women Voters challenged these provisions in Federal court, and they won. Judges found that Florida's 2011 reduction of early voting “would make it materially more difficult for some minority voters to cast a ballot.” As a result, Florida had to restore 96 hours of early voting.

Even with these added protections, the next election in 2012 was a fiasco. Lines outside polling places were prohibitively long, with some people waiting up to 8 hours to cast their votes.

This year's 2018 midterm election brought added difficulties in Florida and across the country. This year, in Broward County, FL, ballot design caused over 30,000 people to miss voting in the U.S. Senate race because they didn't see it buried in the lower left-hand column under the instructions in English, Spanish, and Creole.

In North Dakota, the Republican State Legislature moved to require residential addresses in order to be able to register to vote. This move was widely seen as an attempt to prevent Native Americans, which is a Democratic-leaning constituency, from voting since many of them used post office boxes to get their mail on reservations.

In North Carolina, nearly 20 percent of early voting locations were closed this year because many of them simply couldn't meet the burdensome requirements imposed by the State legislature. There being absentee ballots that were stolen or missing and were never delivered has prompted a Federal investigation for fraud.

In our neighboring State of Georgia, the Republican candidate for Governor was the sitting secretary of State and was responsible for administering his own election. His office pursued aggressive policies that made it measurably harder for many people to vote, particularly African Americans and other minorities.

So, in light of this evidence and following a widespread public outcry, what can we do now? As I had said earlier, it may not be as obvious as poll tactics and all of the other blockades to voting. We have seen a lot of that in the past, particularly by all of the marches and so forth during the 1970s civil rights era. It might not be as obvious, but there are all of these subtle attempts. So what should we do?

I submit that though the problem is complex, the solution, the answer, is relatively simple. As Americans who cherish the right to vote, we must turn to those schemers and say: “There is a promise of democracy that we will not allow you to break.” We have an obligation to keep this promise of democracy for our children.

There are bright spots we should celebrate. In my State of Florida, voters, overwhelmingly this year, approved a ballot initiative that will restore the right to vote to nearly a million and a half individuals who have been convicted of nonviolent felonies and have served their time. This is a positive step. Congress may be dysfunctional, but we must continue to push lawmakers for a fix to the Voting Rights Act that the Supreme Court struck down on a divided 5-to-4 vote—to the provision that I spoke about. We ought to be making it easier to vote, not harder.

Keep in mind what President Johnson said one-half century ago: “The vote is the most powerful instrument ever devised by man for breaking down injustice and destroying the terrible walls which imprison men because they are different from other men.”

Also, remember what Dr. King said:

So long as I do not firmly and irrevocably possess the right to vote, I do not possess myself. I cannot make up my mind—it is made up for me. I cannot live as a democratic citizen, observing the laws I have helped to enact—I can only submit to the edict of others.

That is what Dr. King said. So don't we owe it to our children the right to possess themselves if this is to be a truly free and fair democracy?

I believe that some of the most fundamental rights in our democracy are the right to vote, the right to know whom you are voting for, and the right to know that the vote you cast is going to be counted as you intended it.

If that were not enough, just as concerning as the ongoing efforts to suppress certain votes is the amount of undisclosed and unlimited money that is sloshing around in our campaigns. The Supreme Court's 2010 decision in Citizens United has opened the floodgates and allowed the wealthiest Americans to spend unlimited amounts of money to influence our elections. Allowing such unlimited, undisclosed money into the political system is corrupting our democracy.

I have strongly supported several pieces of legislation, such as the DISCLOSE Act, to require groups that spend more than \$10,000 on campaign-

related matters to identify themselves. Tell us who is giving the money by filing a disclosure with the Federal Election Commission. The American people have a right to know whom they are voting for—not just the name on the ballot but who is behind that name on the ballot. The Supreme Court itself said: “Transparency enables the electorate to make informed decisions and give proper weight to different speakers and messages.” That was straight from the Court.

I believe we as a Congress have a moral obligation—a moral obligation—to correct what has happened in our system and to ensure that our voters have the information they need to make informed decisions in the election process.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

REMEMBERING GEORGE H.W. BUSH

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I just want to make a few comments in memory of President George Herbert Walker Bush, whose funeral we attended today.

Losing a parent or a grandparent is never easy. I know I speak for the people in Louisiana when I offer my heartfelt sympathies to the entire Bush family in their time of grief. I want them to know their loss echoes in the hearts of all Americans this week. I also want them to know their family is in our thoughts and in our prayers as we mourn together.

At an age when most kids are trying to figure out what kind of smart phones they want to buy, President George H.W. Bush thought of nothing except answering the call of duty. He really was a part of the “greatest generation.” I believe he was a hero and a patriot, not because he made the choices that he made to fight for his country but because he got up and continued to make the choice to serve the American people every single day of his life as a Navy aviator, as a Congressman, as an Ambassador, as CIA Director, as Vice President of the United States, and, ultimately, as Commander in Chief.

President Bush, very simply, was a great American, not just because he served his country during some of the darkest days in world history—although he did, and he did courageously—but because he embodied so many of the values that distinguish the American spirit. Traits like bravery, selflessness, faith, and kindness are things we don’t have enough of in the village of Washington anymore and seem to be in short supply, but President Bush had them in spades. He was smart as a whip. He was a patriot, but he was also a person who deeply believed in the importance of working together to try to build a better world.

Upon leaving office, President Bush started the Points of Light foundation. Points of Light is a charity whose mission is based on a fairly simple premise—that there is nothing more

transformative than an individual’s choosing to be generous with his or her time, gifts, and talents. This idea has resonated with millions of Americans across the world.

Since its founding in 1990, Points of Light has electrified the American spirit of volunteerism, and each year the foundation supports more than 20 million hours of community service—what an extraordinary legacy.

President Bush understood that at its core public service is about—this is going to sound strange—loving your neighbor. The Points of Light foundation is a fitting legacy for this fine American who loved his country and his family to the fullest, and he devoted every day of his life to serving all 350 million of his neighbors. Without a doubt, he was one of the brightest of those thousand points of light, and our loss is Heaven’s gain.

A smart person once told me that people don’t really care how much you know until they know how much you care. President George Herbert Walker Bush knew a lot, but he cared a lot too.

America weeps, both in joy for his life and in sadness because his soul is in a better place but not with us. America and the world have lost a favorite son.

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

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

H.R. 6931

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I rise today to speak about a very special child, whose photo you see here on my left. Her name was Scarlett. Scarlett and her mother Stephanie are the people whom I will mostly talk about tonight.

Stephanie was a former staffer in my Senate office, and Scarlett was, as you can tell from the photograph, a ray of sunshine for her parents, Stephanie and Ryan, and also for her extended family and for her many friends. That is how they describe Scarlett. She was their sunshine.

Tragically, Scarlett passed away on January 8, 2017, at just 16 months old. Scarlett’s mom Stephanie said the following about her daughter:

Our little Scarlett lived up to her name. She was a little spitfire, strong and determined. She took in the world around her with such wonder. Her favorite things were books, blueberries, and our pets. Her favorite song was “You Are My Sunshine.” She was our sunshine. We lived and breathed for her, but shortly after midnight, very early on Sunday, January 8, all that ended. It didn’t just end; it was shattered. Every shred of happiness we had and any semblance of the lives we knew before was demolished shortly after I entered her room to check on her that night.

That is what Scarlett’s mom, Stephanie, said in that horrific moment.

In the time since Scarlett’s death, as I and my current and former staff members who know Stephanie can attest, Stephanie and Ryan have been consumed—consumed—by the loss of their little girl. They did what any grieving parent would do. They sought answers about what caused Scarlett’s death. Sadly, despite an autopsy and genetic testing, the only answer they got was that her death was “unexplained”—unexplained. They still don’t know what caused her death.

Stephanie and Ryan have endured so much pain—first, of course, because of their grief over losing Scarlett and, second, because they still don’t know what caused her death.

That means that Scarlett’s death falls in the category known as sudden unexplained death in childhood, known by the acronym SUDC. Many people have never heard of sudden unexplained death in childhood, but it is estimated to be the fifth-leading cause of death for children between the ages of 1 and 4 years old.

We are not doing enough to learn why these children are dying, and it is time that we take action.

Sudden unexplained death in childhood too often has been ignored. Of course, the acronyms can be very confusing. Many of us are already familiar with SIDS—s-i-d-s—or sudden infant death syndrome. After the “back to sleep” campaigns of the 1990s that taught parents how to put their babies to sleep safely on their backs, we learned a lot more about that category as well.

SIDS is part of a broader category of sudden unexpected infant death as opposed to unexplained. Unexpected is the broader category. I will be speaking mostly about the sudden unexplained category.

The most prevalent cause of unexpected deaths in infants—and this is children under the age of 1 year old—is SIDS. One in three unexpected infant deaths is unexplained, and the remaining deaths are related to unsafe sleep.

Similarly, sudden unexplained death in childhood—as I said before, SUDC, what took the life of Scarlett disproportionately impacts children between the ages of 1 and 4, beyond the age of 1, such that in 2016, more than half of all unexplained childhood deaths were in children in this age group, like Scarlett.

We don’t know why these infants and children have died, and we still don’t know how to prevent future deaths. We don’t know how many children are at risk even.

As a parent, these numbers are horrifying and terrifying. Each one represents a beloved child, like Scarlett, who was taken from their family too soon. That is why I introduced the Scarlett’s Sunshine on Sudden Unexpected Death Act, to shine light on this problem of unexpected and unexplained infant and childhood deaths.

I am grateful to U.S. Representative GWEN MOORE of Wisconsin for her work

on this issue. I used her bill as a starting point for this new legislation. Representative MOORE introduced companion legislation in the House of Representatives. I am also grateful that JOHNNY ISAKSON and SHERROD BROWN have cosponsored this new bill.

The bill, Scarlett's Sunshine on Sudden Unexpected Death Act, will bring light to the darkness of these tragic and unexplained deaths. The bill provides resources to help standardize and improve investigations into and reporting data from sudden unexpected child and infant deaths and to enable full medical review of all—child and infant deaths. The bill also directs the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to commission a study to advise on best practices for genetic testing that may identify the cause of death.

We need this consistent and complete data about unexpected and unexplained childhood and infant deaths in order to drive research that can find the cause or causes and then to develop interventions and ways to prevent future deaths.

The bill also creates a new grant program to support safe sleep, since we know preventable, sleep-related, infant deaths are still happening.

Finally, the bill requires an annual report to Congress on the incidence of sudden unexplained infant and child deaths, a summary of actions the Department of Health and Human Services has taken, and any recommendations that the Department of Health and Human Services has developed to reduce these deaths.

As Stephanie said at Scarlett's funeral: "There is no measurement for the size of our love for you or the hole you leave behind."

Nothing we do will bring Scarlett or other precious children, lost to unexpected death, back to their grieving families, but this legislation will be a big step forward in figuring out why these children are dying and what we can do to prevent it.

Stephanie and Ryan's daughter, Scarlett's younger sister, is named Eliana. Eliana's name means "daughter of the sun," and that is a tribute to the big sister she never met.

To Ryan, Stephanie, Eliana, and to all the other families and friends of children taken from us too soon, we say to you: Although we cannot truly understand the awful gravity of your pain or the depth of your loss, we are listening to you, and we are listening to your plea for help. We want to bring the bright light of data, medical reviews, genetic testing, and other research to this problem. In other words, we want to bring some of Scarlett's sunshine to this cause.

We are summoned by little Scarlett and other infants and children to take action. I urge my colleagues to support this legislation, the Scarlett's Sunshine on Sudden Unexpected Death Act, and I ask for their support.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Virginia.

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, first of all, I thank my colleague from Pennsylvania for his impassioned plea and his work on this legislation. I intend to support this legislation. I know the story he just told and the notion that SIDS is still such a challenge to so many families are a little remarkable.

I am going to be speaking about a piece of legislation now named after another person not quite as young as Scarlett, where there was another tragedy that I hope we can act on as well. I intend to have it acted on before the end of this Congress. We are dealing with different circumstances, but there are times when we can, sometimes with relatively small legislative fixes, make a real difference in people's lives.

So I commend the Senator from Pennsylvania for his legislation.

ASHANTI ALERT ACT OF 2018

Mr. President, I rise to support H.R. 5075, the Ashanti Alert Act of 2018. To start, I would like to take this opportunity to thank my friend and colleague, the Congressman from the Second District of Virginia, SCOTT TAYLOR, for introducing this important legislation in the House of Representatives and for ushering it through the Chamber so now we can take part and pass this legislation or similar legislation in the Senate.

The Ashanti Alert Act seeks to establish a national communications network within the Department of Justice to help locate missing adults by providing assistance to regional and local search efforts.

The Ashanti Alert Act of 2018 is named after a 19-year-old Virginia resident, Ashanti Billie, who was attending culinary school in hopes of opening her own bakery one day. To preserve her dreams, she split her time between working at a Blimpie's restaurant at Fort Story and taking culinary classes at the Art Institute of Virginia Beach.

On September 18, 2017, in Norfolk, VA, Ashanti's dreams were cut short when she was abducted shortly after arriving at work. Unfortunately, Ashanti was found murdered in North Carolina 11 days after she was first reported missing.

Her parents, who were not living in Hampton Roads at that point, rushed to the region after she disappeared and spent literally 2 weeks—almost 2 weeks—trying to get law enforcement engaged and get the word out. The truth is, after she was missing for those 11 days and discovered in North Carolina, the authorities did later find and arrest her killer, but Ashanti's tragic murder raised an important question about whether more could have been done to save her life.

At the time of her abduction, at just 19 years old, Ashanti Billie was too old for the issuance of an AMBER Alert and too young for the issuance of a Silver Alert.

This tragic murder made me realize something I hadn't thought of before.

We have alerts in place named after Amber for young people up to the age of 18. We have an alert system in place for seniors called Silver Alert for folks over 65. What about everybody between 18 and 65? No such alert system exists. So in the case of 19-year-old Ashanti Billie, her family had nowhere to turn to get the word out about her disappearance.

The unfortunate circumstance is—and it is again fairly remarkable that this issue has not been raised at a legislative level before because of this glaring gap of young adults and not-so-young adults, including folks who are younger than 65—Ashanti is not an isolated case. Families across the country are affected by loved ones who have gone missing. Right here in Washington, DC, we are having a conversation about the plight of missing teens, many of them young women of color and many of them who fall into that same age group as Ashanti—19, 20, 21, 22, 23. I think about my three daughters who are 23 to 29. God forbid if they were ever abducted, where would I turn to get an alert out? There is no system in place.

According to the National Crime Information Center database, over 55,000 missing adults are and have been recorded as missing. In my State, according to the Virginia State Police, there are currently 240 people aged 18 and older who have gone missing in our Commonwealth.

Of course, nobody wants to overload this kind of good, functioning alert system with too many reports which could take away the effectiveness of existing systems like the AMBER Alert Program. So this legislation addresses that issue to make sure that in order to issue an alert, the missing adult must either suffer from a proven mental or physical disability or law enforcement must certify the person's physical safety may be in danger or their disappearance was not voluntary. In this way, the Department of Justice can help States and localities create a system that provides alerts only when a missing adult is in real danger.

What I know is, we need lifesaving protections for missing adults between the ages of 18 and 64. While, as Senator CASEY mentioned, we can never replace the hurt of that family because of that young child who died from SIDS, we can also never replace the hole that has been left in the Billie family by the loss of Ashanti. By passing this legislation and naming it after Ashanti—by calling it the Ashanti Alert Act—we may be able to prevent some tragedy like this from happening in the future.

It is past time for Congress to enact legislation that can help save the lives of many—many like Ashanti. As I mentioned, while we can't bring Ashanti back, her memory can live on by helping save the lives of others who may find themselves in this same kind of unfortunate situation.

I had planned to come to the floor today and ask for unanimous consent

to pass the House bill in its current form. However, out of respect to some of my colleagues who have raised non-substantive but certain technical issues that can be corrected, I will hold off for today on asking unanimous consent, but this legislation cannot wait. This legislation cannot be held up by technical concerns.

I am anxious to work through these concerns tonight so we can move forward, perhaps on a hotline version, so it can get back to the House, so this legislation can become law, and so the Billie family knows Ashanti's memory will be honored.

I intend to work with my colleagues tonight on making sure their corrections are included, but the spirit and heart of this legislation—no one opposes the idea that we have a system for young people on alerts under 18 and a system for folks over 65. What about the rest of the adults who also fall into these kinds of circumstances? We have to make sure they are protected as well.

I look forward to making these technical corrections. My hope is, we can get this passed even with the hotline and that we can then send appropriate legislation back to the House and fill in this needed gap.

I thank folks on both sides of the aisle and the law enforcement community for working with us. There is complete agreement that this hole needs to be filled. I think it will be filled with this legislation, and Ashanti Billie's legacy will be honored by the Ashanti Alert Act becoming the law of the land. I yield the floor.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BARASSO). The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

POINT MACKENZIE EARTHQUAKE

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, Senator SULLIVAN and I have just returned to Washington after an almost surreal 24-hour period up in the State.

We went up on Sunday night, Monday morning. We hadn't anticipated being there, but the State of Alaska—and more specifically Southcentral Alaska—experienced a powerful earthquake on Friday. It was certainly an unsettling event, a frightening event to many, and it caused significant damage in the most populated part of our State.

Last Friday, at 8:29 in the morning, we had an earthquake that struck the community of Anchorage with a magnitude of 7.0 on the Richter scale. The epicenter was about 7 miles north of Anchorage. It was about 25 miles deep. That shock lasted anywhere, folks were saying, from about 40 seconds to 1 minute; that was the initial hard jolt. Then, movement after that depended

on where you were and what kind of ground you were located on, but it was a very significant earthquake by all standards.

I heard about the earthquake, not because I got an alert on my phone but because my phone rang when my son called. He lives and works in Anchorage. He had been at his shop, and he called me right after the shaking stopped. My son is a pretty calm young man, but I could tell that something was wrong, something was different. I could hear it in his voice. He was clearly rattled. His comments to me reflected so many of the comments I have heard from so many with whom I have had a chance to visit.

As we were speaking on the phone, it was about 7 minutes after the initial jolt that we had another earthquake, a 5.7 that followed. He literally said: You have to hold on, Mom, because we are having another one. These are significant at any time, but to have a 7.0 followed by a 5.7 and then to know that the aftershocks have been continuing—they have continued until today. As of this afternoon, the total number of aftershocks we have had is about 2,500.

Think about that. From Friday morning to midafternoon Alaska time, about 2,500 aftershocks, and we have had 14 above 4.5 in magnitude. We have had 14 in that time period that were over 4.5. Now, 4.5 is going to get anybody's attention.

Yesterday morning, when I was leaving Alaska to come to Washington, I was getting ready in the bathroom, and there was another shaker then, and that was a 4.8.

People have asked me: How are things back home?

I said: Well, we had the big jolt on Friday, but it is still rocking and rolling.

People are anxious, but the report I would like to share with folks today is that there has been an incredible response at so many different levels. The initial response was pretty intense.

After I spoke with my son, I talked to a staff member whose pipes had burst in her home, and she was dealing with flooding. One of the main arterials in Anchorage, Minnesota Drive, is one of the access roads to get to the airport, and parts of that had collapsed. Many people have seen the picture of the vehicle sitting in the middle of a depressed area where the bottom literally has dropped out the overpass of that road.

Across Anchorage and in the Mat-Su Valley, school had just started for the middle schools and the upper grades, and kids were doing what the kids have been trained to do for decades now. Since the 1964 earthquake, believe me, every kid in Southcentral Alaska—I think probably every kid in Alaska—knows what the earthquake drill is, to duck and cover. But during this quake, they were ducking and covering as books from the bookshelves were crashing to the floor and as ceiling tiles were coming down. It is extraor-

dinary to think that during all that we saw and all of the damage in the schools, there were two injuries. There are 48,000 kids in the Anchorage School District and about 17,000 or 18,000 in the Mat-Su district—and two injuries. One was somebody cleaning up glass; another was a student who was putting his arm up to shield himself from a ceiling tile that was falling down, and he injured his wrist. It is absolutely extraordinary—nothing short of a miracle—that we suffered no loss of life.

It was pretty dramatic. Transformers blew, and much of the city went dark. A tsunami warning was issued for the Kenai Peninsula in the low-lying areas in the Anchorage Bowl, even down past Kodiak. We got a call from friends in Kodiak out on a hunting trip, and they got word that they needed to hike to higher ground. Hike to higher ground. Of course, there is no communication and no way to know whether it is all safe. These stories are coming in from all over the State.

What we heard in those first hours, the first reports coming in from our first responders, who truly jumped into action and were responding to calls as they were coming in—the civil engineers were dispatched to go out to check on the highways, the bridges, and the essential infrastructure, such as the hospitals. We had almost immediate updates from the U.S. Geological Survey and NOAA—the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration—about the earthquake and what was happening with the subsequent tsunami warning, the aftershocks. All of these were in realtime. We kept waiting to hear whether there were any reports of serious injuries or fatalities, but fortunately—amazingly, miraculously—they never came.

Meanwhile, the utilities were working to restore power and to test the cities' water systems. ENSTAR, which is our natural gas supplier, received over 700 requests to check on broken gas lines. They went house by house to make sure that they were safe.

It was extraordinary in terms of the immediate on-the-ground response by the Alaskans who were there in place, the teams that are at the ready because that is what they are trained to do, and those who were just being good neighbors and knew that when you have something hit, we are all hands on deck.

Congressman YOUNG, Senator SULLIVAN, and I gathered on Friday afternoon. We got updates from the Vice President, who was traveling. We spoke with FEMA Administrator Brock Long and Secretary of Transportation Chao. All of them—all of them—were all in with their promises of help from throughout the Federal Government with resources. President Trump also—his support in promising to spare no expense as we work to recover from this natural disaster went a long way to providing levels of assurance there.

Senator SULLIVAN and I, as I mentioned, flew up on Sunday evening. We

waited until the weekend was over to fly back home. We didn't want to get in the way of the immediate recovery efforts. I got in at 1 o'clock in the morning and went to work cleaning up the glass and broken things in my house, as many of my neighbors and fellow Alaskans had been doing all weekend long.

Over the course of the day on Monday, we were able to see some of the damage that this earthquake has caused. You think about the words when you are trying to describe something that—the scenes are just so, so different, and it is words like “gut-wrenching” and “astounding” and then “remarkable,” but it was really gut-wrenching being in the school.

We went out to Houston Middle School. This is an area out in the Mat-Su Valley. This is one of the schools that will not be opened, at least not this year and perhaps for longer. But you are standing in a building—this is the library there in the middle school, and you see all of the books that have fallen to the floor. You see the guts of the ceiling that have come out. The sprinkler system is activated, so not only do you have the chaos of the books but now you have got the saturation.

There is another picture here of the group of us who went in.

The ceiling literally disintegrated on top of the library there.

When you think about the time that this all happened, there were students in the library. There were students who were passing in the hallway. This school is cinderblock construction, and the actual concrete cinders popped out and crashed to the floor and broke. The metal struts coming out of the ceiling, the panels—this was all happening at 8:29 in the morning. It is dark in Alaska at 8:29 in the morning. The lights had gone out, and they had this crashing all around them.

When I use the word “remarkable” to describe some of it, how the students and the teachers responded was remarkable, the calm. The kids knew what to do. They got under their desks. They did what they were trained to do. When they got the order that they needed to get out, to evacuate, what they did was exactly what they were trained to do. And no injuries. No injuries. It is absolutely extraordinary.

The schools in Anchorage are going to be closed for the entire week. Mat-Su is opening some of theirs this week, but more than 85 of them sustained damage that clearly needs to be cleaned up, needs to be repaired.

The schools were one aspect of the damage that we saw, but what many have seen out there has been the damage to the infrastructure.

This is a picture of a collapsed road. This is Vine Road, out in the valley. This is kind of a boggy area that runs through here, but it is just as if there were a big suction that came underneath and literally sucked the ground out from underneath that.

This is an area that we visited. We took this picture from above, in the air. This is it up close. As you are standing here on these slabs of asphalt, the crevices you are looking down into are extraordinary, and you realize the intensity of the action of the Earth.

You see scenes like this, and you say: How are we going to get through all of this? And the work that is ongoing now, whether it is the on-ramps, whether it is the bridges, whether it is roads like this on Vine Road, our department of transportation is working to firm up the roads, to, believe it or not, fill them in, repave them, even restripe them, and get folks back on their way. What we saw in just those first 72 hours is absolutely extraordinarily impressive.

The Alaska Railroad is assessing their damage. They are operational. They are going to be going much slower than they would like, and that is going to cause complications, but they are up.

The Port of Alaska is undergoing an expansion right now. It has been complicated by this earthquake. That is something that, again, is very critical. As you look to how goods move around our State, 85 percent of them come through that port. So being able to allow for functionality is critical.

We look at our assets. We look at the Trans-Alaska Pipeline. That was closed down temporarily just for precaution, but it is up and running.

You know, when I think about all this, given what happened, the visible damage we saw earlier this week, I find myself thinking that we are so lucky—not that we were hit by this major earthquake but that it could have been so much worse.

We talk a lot about resilience—resilience of a people. I think we learned a lot from the 1964 earthquake, the Good Friday earthquake. That registered at 9.2 on the Richter scale and lasted 4½, almost 5 minutes. Extraordinary. What we have been doing—we are the most seismically active State in the country, so we work to be prepared.

Again, I mentioned that last Friday's earthquake was deep, and that mitigated some of the shaking that was associated with it, but the proximity to our State's population center put people and infrastructure at great risk.

The depth of the source and the mechanism of the fault helped reduce the damage. That is one part of it. The other part of it is being prepared, and this is where I am so proud of the resilience of Alaskans. Whether it is at the schools that practice these earthquake drills where the students get under the desk, they hold on to the leg of a chair or their desk, and they cover their heads to protect themselves—I know we have one Alaskan as a page. She has gone through this drill. I know you have. So even in the dark, even in the chaos, with all the noise and the crashing, students knew what to do, and they did it not only for themselves, but they did it for other students as well.

There are some stories of some very young heroes out there, and I have a young nephew who not only took care of himself but made sure that a fellow student who had severe mobility issues was able to get under a desk. I think about the calmness and the presence that so many exercised.

I am going to end by noting again how we have worked as communities in our State to be prepared for disasters when they come. We have some of the most stringent building codes in the world, and for the most part, our buildings held up. Families have earthquake kits in their houses. They have batteries, flashlights, nonperishable food—all of which came in handy as folks kind of hunkered down over the weekend.

I will end my remarks by noting how grateful I am for the first responders who took action in the aftermath of the earthquake, even amid all of the ongoing aftershocks, even with their households totally turned upside down—and not only for our first responders but for all those who acted as first responders, the neighbors who came together. It is Alaska at its finest when we all work together.

I am very grateful that we had no tsunami. I am very grateful that the damages, at least on the surface, are not worse. And we are certainly grateful that there have been no reports of major injuries or fatalities. I am grateful that we have strong Federal partners who have committed to helping us in any way that they can. I also appreciate the reach-out from so many colleagues here in the Senate who sent me texts and who called and said: Is everything OK in Alaska? Is there anything we can do? Thank you for that.

We know we are tough in Alaska. That is the reputation we have. We are kind of proud of that. We know we are hardy and resilient. But knowing that others are going to be with us as we go through this recovery period makes that much better. I thank so many who have been there to help Alaska.

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.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

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

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

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that notwithstanding rule XX, all postcloture time on the McNamee nomination expire at 12 noon on Thursday, December 6; further, that if the nomination is confirmed, the motion to reconsider be considered made laid upon the table and the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action. I further