the House bill, but I understand how this place works. We are going to send a letter to Chairman GRAHAM asking him to at the very least convene a hearing on background checks in the Judiciary Committee.

We came to a conclusion here in the Senate as to a bipartisan background checks proposal that could get 50 votes—in 2013—and I would love to start that process again. But there is no reason not to do it because all the evidence tells us that when we make sure that only the right people buy guns, a lot less people die from gun crimes.

This is not controversial anywhere except for Washington, DC. Everybody out there in the American public wants us to pass universal background checks. Maybe some other interventions in this space are a little bit more controversial, split folks a little bit more, but not background checks. This thing is decided outside of the Senate Chamber and the House Chamber. Popular in the public, deeply impactful, will save thousands of lives—that is a triple we don't get very often here, and we should take advantage of the opportunity.

Let me leave you with this: I convened a panel a couple of nights ago to talk about the importance of background checks, and there were a number of parents of those who were lost to gun violence. One of the parents was from Sandy Hook. Another was a parent of a child who was killed in Chicago, and she really wanted to make sure we knew what the real impact of gun violence in America was. She wanted to make sure we knew that the victims aren't just those who show up on the police blotter; the victims are the parents and the brothers and the sisters and the friends and the coworkers.

The average number of people who experience some diagnosable trauma when somebody in their life is shot and killed is 20. So when you hear the number that 100 people in the United States die every day from guns—which is a number 10 to 20 times higher than in any other high-income nation on a per capita basis—you have to understand that number isn't really 100; that number is 20 times higher than that because the people who have to live with that loss have to ask these questions: Why did they shoot themselves? What do I do about that individual who shot my son? How do I get over that combination of pain and anger? That is hard to understand unless you have spent time with the mothers and the fathers who will be dealing with this catastrophic, life-changing trauma for the rest of the time they are on this Earth.

So that is why this is so serious to me. It is because we have an answer for their pain—not an answer that will stop every gun crime in this country but an answer that will result in thousands fewer people dying. We know that because the evidence tells us that. And I can't explain to these families—to that mother in Chicago—why something that has been proven to work and is supported by 90 percent of Americans can't get a vote or a debate in the Senate.

I will leave it at that for today. I hope that when this passes in the House with a big bipartisan majority, we will take advantage of the opportunity to get a big bipartisan majority here in the Senate. If the Republican majority commits to starting that process, I guarantee that will be the result.

I want to thank all of the people who made this possible in the House today.

For the record, I have introduced a version of H.R. 8 here in the U.S. Senate.

To Chairman NADLER, MIKE THOMPSON, Speaker PELOSI, Majority Leader HOYER, and to their Republican cosponsors who helped bring it to the floor—I thank them on behalf of all of the folks they will never know, those lives they will save by their action today if we do the right thing and take it up here in the Senate.

I yield the floor.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PERDUE). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that Senators LEAHY, KLOBUCHAR, KING, and TESTER be recognized in the next 40 minutes or so for a colloquy with me.

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

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, it was 1986, a third of a century ago. Six U.S. Senators wrote a letter to the Office of Technology Assessment, the office then charged with providing technical and scientific advice to Congress.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that their letter be printed in the RECORD.

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

UNITED STATES SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT
AND PUBLIC WORKS,
Washington DC, December 23, 1986.

DR. JOHN GIBBONS,
Executive Director, U.S. Congress, Office of Technology Assessment, Washington, DC.

DEAR DR. GIBBONS: The Senate Environment and Public Works Committee has held three days of hearings this year on the massive and, to some degree irrevocable, alterations in the stratosphere commonly referred to as the ''greenhouse affect'', as well as ozone depletion.

The testimony convincingly portrayed a fundamentally altered planet, with shifts in ocean circulation and climate zones; altered precipitation and storm patterns; more frequent and extreme weather events such as droughts, monsoons, and lowland floods. Individually and collectively, these changes bring about others, ranging from disruption of forest, crop, and ocean productivity to shifts in populations. Witnesses before the Committee testified that the Earth is now committed to a substantial greenhouse warming, projected to be about 2 degrees Centigrade, as well as an ozone layer depletion.

We are deeply troubled by the prospect of such a rapid and unprecedented change in the composition of the atmosphere and its implications for the human and natural worlds. It may be necessary to act soon to at least slow these trends or, perhaps, halt them altogether.

We therefore request that the Office of Technology Assessment undertake a study for the Committee on Environment and Public Works of policy options that, if enacted, could lead to the stabilization and minimization of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. These gases include carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, tropospheric ozone and chlorofluorocarbons. This is a large and difficult task but fundamental and perhaps permanent alteration of the stratosphere has profound implications for the future of the world as we know it.

The Office of Technology Assessment has proven itself capable of policy analysis on difficult and complex issues. Despite this, OTA may find it difficult to immediately provide a set of options which both complete and detailed. However, the Congress must soon begin to weigh the alternatives facing the United States and other nations. For this purpose, we hope that you can provide information on omissions as well as other considerations relevant to those decisions.

Due to the likelihood that legislation will be seriously considered by the Committee early in the next Congress, it would be most helpful if this analysis could be undertaken without delay. If we or our staffs can be of assistance to you or your staff, please do not hesitate to call upon us.

Sincerely,

ROBERT T. STAFFORD,
U.S. Senate,
JOHN H. CHAFEE,
U.S. Senate,
DAVE DURENBERGER,
U.S. Senate,
QUENTIN N. BURDICK,
U.S. Senate,
GEORGE J. MITCHELL,
U.S. Senate,
MAX BAUCUS,
U.S. Senate.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. These six U.S. Senators were troubled by testimony they had heard about climate change in three separate hearings of the Senate's Environment and Public Works Committee. They wrote:

> The testimony convincingly portrayed a fundamentally altered planet, with shifts in ocean circulation and climate zones; altered precipitation and storm patterns; more frequent and extreme weather events such as droughts, monsoons, and lowland floods. Individually and collectively, these changes bring about others, ranging from disruption of forest, crop, and ocean productivity to shifts in populations. Witnesses before the Committee testified that the Earth is now committed to a substantial greenhouse warming, projected to be about 2 degrees Centigrade, as well as an ozone layer depletion.

Well, that was quite a prediction. Who were these six Senators? Quentin

Burdick, Democrat from North Dakota; Max Baucus, Democrat from Montana; George Mitchell, Democrat from Maine; Robert Stafford, Republican from Vermont, the chairman then of the committee; Dave Durenberger, Republican of Minnesota; and Rhode Island's Republican Senator, John Chafee.

You cannot help but be struck that the prediction back then by these six Senators is now our reality. Everything they predicted is happening. The scientists they listened to had it right. Global temperatures have already risen by around 1 degree Celsius, and we are headed to over 2 degrees Celsius of global warming by the end of the century.

Their grim predictions, which we now live with as fact, motivated these six Senators to ask the Office of Technology Assessment for policy options that ''could lead to the stabilization and minimization of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.''

Why did they want these policy options? They wanted to learn about policy options because, as they continued in their letter:

> Congress must soon begin to weigh the alternatives facing the United States and other nations. . . . Due to the likelihood that legislation will be considered by the Committee early in the next Congress, it would be most helpful if this analysis could be undertaken without delay.

''Without delay.'' Since then, Republicans have demolished the Office of Technology Assessment; that office no longer exists. Republicans have relentlessly blockaded legislation to address carbon emissions and have trafficked in phony climate denial, all while accepting hundreds of millions of dollars of political contributions from the fossil fuel industry.

Today, five of those six States are represented again, having a reunion on the Senate floor. I see Senator TESTER from Montana here. I will yield to him now. We will also be joined by PATRICK LEAHY of Vermont, AMY KLOBUCHAR of Minnesota, and ANGUS KING of Maine.

I yield to JON TESTER of Montana, taking the position of his predecessor, Max Baucus—whom, by one of the weird coincidences of the Senate, I just passed coming out of the trolley.

Senator TESTER, the floor is yours.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.

Mr. TESTER. I thank Senator WHITEHOUSE.

I could not in my wildest dreams be able to replace Senator Baucus in what he did. But what he did back in 1986, along with a number of other Senators Senator WHITEHOUSE just talked about, was visionary.

He signed a letter asking Federal researchers to study solutions for limiting the causes of climate change. This was in 1986, some 33 years ago. That same year, as I am today, my wife and I were farming in North Central Montana, a farm that then had been in the family for about 70 years.

During the time before 1986, and since 1986, we have seen a lot of changes on the farm. That is why it is interesting—because those changes have increased more than ever, I believe, in the last 20 years.

When this letter was sent off to study solutions in 1986, it was incredibly visionary because it was before climate change was even talked about much. Yet this group of Senators was able to see the negative impacts of this coming down the pike.

By the way, when we talk about negative impacts of climate change—you probably have this, Senator WHITEHOUSE, but somebody ought to put together how many hundreds of billions of dollars we have spent on natural disasters in the last 10 or 12 years compared to how much we spent in years previous. I can tell you, it was a few years ago that every State in the Union except one or maybe two had a natural disaster. That is because our climate is changing. It is because our climate is getting more erratic. I have seen it on our farm. I have seen August turn from the driest month to one of the wettest months. Over the last 20 years, I have seen a reservoir—a reservoir is a manmade area to hold water for livestock. I have seen a reservoir that never went dry from the time my father built it in the early 1950s to going dry for consecutive years. I have seen dangerous floods. I have seen water where we have never had it before. I have seen drought like we have never had it before.

I would just say, in regard to that, we just had a vote on a guy by the name of Wheeler, whom the President nominated to lead the EPA, who actually is one of these guys who doesn't believe in climate change at all. I don't know where the President finds these people, and I don't know how this body can support somebody who is this big of a denier, who wants to slow enforcement on polluters.

There is one thing we need to keep in mind in this country when we try to put people like Wheeler up for head of EPA. If you take a look at the third-world nations in this world, those are the nations that have destroyed their resource base. If you want to pollute our water and if you want to pollute our air, that is destroying our resource base. I guarantee you, that is not a way to make America great. It is not even a way to keep America great.

This nominee is rolling back the clean water rule. He has allowed more uses for asbestos in commerce when, in our State of Montana, Libby can tell you all about asbestos. People are still dying from its effects.

That aside—the Wheeler nomination, which is a catastrophe in itself—I could tell you that the Senators who stood on this very floor 33 years ago understood—understood—that we have a challenge in front of us greater than any other challenge we have faced before, and that is climate. As we talk about what they did in 1986—we are in 2019 now—now is the time to come up with some workable solutions—workable for our climate and workable for our economy—to get our arms around this very serious problem.

I am going to tell you what is at risk here. I love Nevada, but I don't want Montana turning into an ecosystem like Nevada has. We raise some of the best wheat and the best cattle and the best post-crops in the world, but it takes a predictable environment to do that. In some places in our State, we are on the edge of desertification, turning into desert.

The issue that revolves around climate change impacts each and every one of us in this body. Whether we are in denial or not, that is a fact, and it is incumbent upon us, as Senators who represent great States all around this Nation, to come up with solutions that our kids and our grandkids will be proud of.

I yield the floor back to Senator WHITEHOUSE.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. I thank Senator TESTER.

I will turn to the Rhode Islander who was in that early bipartisan effort to understand and address climate change. Senator John Chafee's history of service to his State and country was remarkable. He saw bloody combat in World War II on Guadalcanal and Okinawa with the 1st Marine Division. He went back as a Marine rifle company commander during the Korean war with Dog Company, 2nd Battalion, 7th Marines. He served in Rhode Island's legislature and as our Governor. In 1969, he was appointed Secretary of the Navy. He was elected to the U.S. Senate in 1976 and chaired the Environment and Public Works Committee from 1995 until his death in 1999. In the small Rhode Island world, he was also my father's college roommate and lifelong friend.

The environment was an abiding passion for this man, and his devotion showed in his work in the Senate. His legacy includes the Superfund Program, the Oil Pollution Act, and the 1990 amendments to the Clean Air Act, and his legacy is his early recognition that climate change, driven by carbon pollution, caused by fossil fuels, poses an existential threat to humanity and the planet we call home.

At the 1986 hearing that led to this bipartisan letter, Chafee declared:

> This is not a matter of Chicken Little telling us the sky is falling. The scientific evidence . . . is telling us we have a problem; a serious problem.

This is 1986, and the Republican chairman of the Environment and Public Works Committee is saying that the scientific evidence is telling us we have a serious problem.

He went on to say:

> Scientists have characterized our treatment of the greenhouse effect as a global experiment. It strikes me as a form of planetary Russian roulette. . . . By not making policy choices today, by sticking to a ''wait and see'' approach . . . [b]y allowing these

gases to continue to build in the atmosphere, this generation may be committing all of us to severe economic and environmental disruption without ever having decided that the value of ''business as usual'' is worth the risks.

Those who believe that these are problems to be dealt with by future generations are misleading themselves.

Senator John Chafee, 1986.

I yield now to the distinguished ranking member of the Appropriations Committee and honorary Senator pro tempore, PATRICK LEAHY, here on behalf of the State of Vermont.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I thank my distinguished colleague from Rhode Island.

I could not help but think—as I saw the picture of John Chafee, with whom I had the honor of serving here in the Senate—of John Chafee's close friendship with Robert Stafford, who was my senior Senator when I came here, both having served in World War II, both with a naval background, both people who cared first and foremost about the country and the environment. I am going to speak a little bit further about Bob Stafford as we go.

When we laid John Chafee to rest in Rhode Island, I remember sitting there and listening to the eulogies. Both Republicans and Democrats were speaking about this man.

Also, referring to what the Senator from Rhode Island has said, more than 30 years ago we had cooperation and bipartisanship. It was a hallmark of the U.S. Senate. It was a bipartisan group of Senators who sounded the alarm about climate change. They made a very modest request to the Office of Technology Assessment. They said: Study the issue of climate change and make recommendations to avert global disaster.

Those Senators, Republicans and Democrats alike, were concerned that human activity might directly cause permanent, destructive, and widespread changes to our planet's climate system—changes that would put our entire economy, ecosystem, and, our very own existence at risk.

As I said, one of these Senators was my senior Senator, my mentor, when I came here and one of the finest Senators who ever served—Republican Robert Stafford, from Vermont.

Today, led by Senator WHITEHOUSE, I think that what many of us are trying to do is what Senator Chafee and Senator Stafford did. We want to recall that moment in 1986 and renew the warning those Senators issued 33 years ago.

Let me speak about Senator Stafford. When I came here at the ripe old age of 34, I was the only Democrat ever elected in my State. Robert Stafford was ''Mr. Republican.'' He took me under his wing. He had been a Congressman. He had been a Governor. He had been an attorney general. He served in World War II and in Korea. He was a mentor, but he was also an example. His legacy is one of sensible, pragmatic Vermont values that he brought to Washington for decades. They weren't Republican or Democratic.

Senator Stafford was—like most Vermonters—a champion for the natural environment. With his work on landmark environmental legislation, like the Clean Water Act, the Clean Air Act, and the Superfund program, Senator Stafford represented the best of Vermont's commitment to sustainability.

His appeals to reason and for common ground, and his belief in sound science resonate even more today than when he left this body three decades ago. If he were here today, I believe he would be calling on both sides of the aisle to act now to ensure that we can pass on a secure and livable planet for generations to come and to act before it is too late.

Today, so many people still refuse to accept what is now an overwhelming scientific consensus—that climate change is real and that humans are the dominant cause of it. What is worse, for the last 2 years many in Congress have willfully accelerated the devastation caused by global warming by enabling the Trump administration's erosion of our Nation's bedrock environmental protections—protections that I have fought for throughout my nearly 45 years in the Senate.

As climate scientists warn of the urgent need to reduce emissions and reverse the global rise in temperatures, many Senators have refused to preserve even the status quo. Instead, in the last 2 years, we have seen the rollback of commonsense regulations, often at the behest of private interests that have spent decades misinforming the public and suppressing their own science on the long-term hazards of the fossil fuel industry.

Alarmingly, this week the Senate is poised to confirm someone to lead the Environmental Protection Agency—the Agency that is charged with safeguarding the air and water on which we depend—who, despite the scientific consensus, denies that climate change is the great threat we face today.

To growing numbers of Americans it is saddening—actually, it is maddening—and most of all, deeply alarming that the Trump administration and many others in leadership positions have made Trumpism's anti-science, know-nothing agenda their default position. This poses existential threats not only to our children and grandchildren but to our generation.

More than three decades ago, long before protecting our planet became a partisan issue, the Environment and Public Works Committee held 3 days of hearings on climate change. Those 1986 hearings compelled a bipartisan group of Senators to acknowledge and warn the public about a ''fundamentally altered planet'' as a result of the ''substantial greenhouse warming'' that was projected.

They asked what could be done to prevent consequences ''ranging from disruption of forest, crop, and ocean productivity to shifts in population,'' and ''extreme weather events, such as droughts, monsoons, and lowland floods.'' These words of warning were neither radical nor partisan. They were sensible.

So what has changed since then? The ice caps are melting—only faster. Certainly, the glaciers I saw when I visited Antarctica 25 or so years ago had been there for eons, and they are now fast disappearing. Our coastline is still disappearing but faster. Farmers and ranchers are still concerned about prolonged droughts and extreme weather, only, today, the fires and storms are more frequent and more devastating.

Just last month, the intelligence community's ''Worldwide Threat Assessment'' offered a sobering conclusion. This is the intelligence community's assessment: ''Global environmental and ecological degradation, as well as climate change, are likely to fuel competition for resources, economic distress, and social discontent through 2019 and beyond.''

We know that bipartisan action on big environmental threats is possible. In fact, soon after the climate change hearings in 1986, Marcelle and I climbed Vermont's Camel's Hump with President Reagan's EPA Administrator. We wanted to show him the terrible damage caused by acid rain. We could see that mountain from our home. We could see the changes up close. They were very obvious. With President Reagan's EPA Administrator's support, we moved ahead with the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990, and they were signed into law by President George H. W. Bush. It was not a partisan issue. The result was a great reduction in the scourge of acid rain. We see these results every day.

Today we are in danger of taking such results for granted. It is up to us to protect this planet. If we don't, who will? There is no more urgent responsibility.

There are bold ideas for how to address this challenge. The Green New Deal offers a valuable roadmap for debate and a pathway for action. The time for dallying around the edges of the issue is over. We all share responsibility for where we are today. So, likewise, we have an obligation to attack this issue, but not with cynical show votes, not with feel-good votes intended to demonstrate a political divide rather than what should be universal acknowledgment of what we know to be true—that climate change is real, and human activity is the primary cause of these threats to our way of life, our communities, and our planet.

We have to channel the American innovative spirit that has improved our lives for centuries. We have to find creative solutions for reducing carbon emissions, and then we have to invest in those solutions. We have to reorient our workforce toward the great opportunities that are opening for green-economy jobs. We should invest in

leading the whole world in developing clean energy solutions. We have to address this real emergency head-on. Not only can we curb climate change, but, in doing so, we can transform the American economy.

Over 30 years ago, a handful of forward-looking Republicans and Democrats stood together in this Senate. I was proud to be here when they issued their challenge, but the time for delay is over. In fact, our time is running out.

Let this renewed vigor in addressing climate change, brought about by the bold proposed Green New Deal, be the catalyst for real change. Let's stand together.

Senator WHITEHOUSE has enlightened us on so many of these issues, but we have also learned, as he did, from our mentors—like Senator Chafee, Senator Stafford, and the others who got together in 1986. It is not partisan and it is not political. It is survival.

I yield the floor.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. I thank the distinguished Senator from Vermont, who is not only a towering physical presence on the floor of the Senate but a towering historic presence on this floor, as well, and brings a rare and valuable perspective. I appreciate his words so much.

The sad thing that we face is that despite words like those uttered by Senator John Chafee—''allowing these gases to continue to build in the atmosphere . . . may be committing all of us to severe economic and environmental disruption''—or the words in the letter that John Chafee signed right here and that Senator LEAHY's mentor, Bob Stafford, signed right here back on December 23, 1986, no Republican Senator can utter those words today. Today's Republican Party will not even acknowledge that climate change is a serious problem—let alone put forward a serious proposal to tackle it. Republican Leader MITCH MCCONNELL's latest trick is to call, for the first time, a climate-related measure on the Senate floor for his side to vote against it. The leader has not brought a single piece of climate legislation to the floor for a vote, ever, until this vote, which he is bringing up for his side to vote against.

It actually gets worse. Since the infamous Citizens United Supreme Court decision almost 10 years ago, no Republican in the Senate has offered or sponsored comprehensive climate legislation to limit carbon pollution—none.

So we look back with some real sorrow to 1986, when this bipartisan letter was written. Of course, Minnesota was represented in that letter by Dave Durenberger, and Minnesota is represented here on the floor today by Senator KLOBUCHAR.

I yield to her.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from Rhode Island for his leadership day in and day out on this issue.

I rise to join him and my other colleagues to talk about this letter and to look back at that moment in time but really to do it to look forward because we know it is long past time for bipartisan action on climate change.

As the Senator from Rhode Island has explained with a copy of that letter, back in 1986, a bipartisan group of Senators came together to voice their concerns about the future of our world.

This forward-thinking group of our predecessors, who were from the same States as my colleagues who are here today, held 3 days of hearings on climate change. That sounds like a pretty good idea for something we should be doing right now. It was chaired by, of course, the Republican Senator from Rhode Island, Mr. John Chafee.

Minnesota Senator David Durenberger was among that group of Senators. He was born in St. Cloud. He earned his law degree from the University of Minnesota, was the top-rated cadet in his ROTC class, and served as a lieutenant in the Army Counter Intelligence Corps and as a captain in the U.S. Army Reserve.

Senator Durenberger took over the seat left by Senator Humphrey, and during his 17 years of service in the Senate, Senator Durenberger proved time and again that he is a true believer in bipartisanship. He worked across the aisle to tackle big issues, and that included talking about climate change way back in 1986.

I called Senator Durenberger this week to talk to him, and our staff did, to get some sense of where he was on climate change years later. He reported to us that, in his words, he wanted to remind Americans there was a time in our very recent history when the U.S. Senate made it its responsibility to define and address some of the critical national and international policy issues that threaten the security of our communities, our Nation, and the world.

This is Senator Durenberger speaking in the year 2019. He said he could say ''without reservation that it was bipartisan Senate leadership that encouraged the four Presidents with whom [he] served—Carter, Reagan, [George H.W.] Bush, and Clinton—to prioritize environmental problem definition and solution.''

He also recalled working with his colleagues on the Environment and Public Works Committee to ''challenge''—and these are his words—''challenge the scientific community and the business community to work harder at reducing the impact [of greenhouse gases] and suggesting what policies best incentivize alternative fuels.''

It was in this bipartisan spirit that this group of Senators sent a letter to Dr. John Gibbons, who was then the executive director of the Office of Technology Assessment. In that letter, they talked about the need to meet ''the massive and, to some degree irrevocable, alterations in the stratosphere commonly referred to as the greenhouse effect.''

The letter goes on to discuss concerns about ''altered precipitation and storm patterns,'' something certainly the Senator from Rhode Island knows we are seeing right now. These Senators were ahead of their time—altered precipitation and storm patterns.

''[M]ore frequent and extreme weather events,'' they talked about that. Look at what we are seeing with the hurricanes, with the rising sea levels, and with the wildfires in Colorado and in California.

''[D]isruption of forest, crop, and ocean productivity.'' That letter may have been sent in 1986, but certainly those Democratic and Republican Senators were ahead of their time. Americans are now increasingly feeling the effects of changing climate patterns and extreme weather events. Farmers are already living through these disruptions to crop productivity.

So what else did the letter say? Well, it said this: ''We are deeply troubled by the prospect of such a rapid and unprecedented change in the composition of the atmosphere and its implications for the human and natural worlds.'' It also stated that ''it may be necessary to act soon to at least slow these trends or, perhaps, halt them altogether.''

Think of those words way back in 1986 asking us to act soon. They were right back then, and they are still right today. The true tragedy is that the final paragraph of the letter notes that any analysis should be undertaken without delay ''due to the likelihood that legislation will be seriously considered by the Committee early in the next Congress.''

Well, the truth is, we are still waiting for that legislation to be seriously considered. The bipartisan call in that 1986 letter came in the 99th Congress, and we are now beginning the 116th. Just as troubling, we have lost some of the bipartisan spirit that guided David Durenberger and those 1986 lawmakers. Our inaction has outlasted even the Office of Technology Assessment itself.

I ask my colleagues, in the spirit of bipartisanship—from back in 1986, my colleague Senator Durenberger, who I hope is listening today—let us continue that spirit, and let's get some serious climate legislation to the floor of the U.S. Senate.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, let me thank Senator KLOBUCHAR for her wonderful remarks, and of course Minnesota is a Northern State which sees this up close all the time.

The Senator spoke of bipartisanship. Do you know who voted with Senator Chafee for the Clean Air Act amendments of 1990? The Republican Senate majority leader did, as did a majority of the Republican caucus in the Senate.

In fact, those powerful 1990 Clean Air Act amendments passed 89 to 10. Where do I go to get a majority leader like that back? Where do I go to get a Senate Republican Party like that back?

As late as 2009, Donald Trump published an advertisement in the New York Times that said that the climate science was ''scientifically irrefutable''—scientifically irrefutable—and that if we didn't do anything about it, there would be ''catastrophic and irreversible consequences for humanity and our planet.'' That is Donald Trump in 2009.

Where do I go to get that Donald Trump back? What happened? In 2007, when I first joined this body, there were Republicans working on climate legislation all over the place. Senator KLOBUCHAR and I came together that year. We had, by my count, five pieces of bipartisan climate legislation that were working through this body in various stages in 2007, 2008, and 2009, when Donald Trump put this advertisement in the New York Times saying that the science was scientifically irrefutable and the consequences would be catastrophic and irreversible.

Then came January of 2010. Then came the Citizens United decision. Then came unlimited and often anonymous fossil fuel money sloshing around in America's politics and all the threats and promises that unlimited money allows special interest to engage in. Now, those days, the Donald Trump of 2009, Republican cooperation of 2007, 2008, and 2009, and of course this letter from as long ago as 1986 seems impossible, but I hope we can get together. We have to do better than Republican political mischief on climate change.

Calling up bills that you intend to vote against—give me a break. Where is the plan, the Republican, conservative, serious plan for addressing the climate crisis? I will tell you where it is. It is nowhere. Zero. Nada. Nothing. That has to stop.

Here, on this letter, is one of the most distinguished, wonderful men ever to serve in the U.S. Senate, Mr. George Mitchell of the State of Maine, and here, representing him today, is Senator ANGUS KING from the great State of Maine.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maine.

Mr. KING. Mr. President, I rise in sadness and somewhat perplexed because what we are doing in this colloquy is recreating a statement, a letter, as the Senator from Minnesota outlined, that was sent by six of our predecessors in December of 1986, warning about the dangers of climate change, warning about what this can do to our country and to our world, about costs, and about how we had to take action.

One of those Senators was George Mitchell of Maine, one of the great legislators of the 20th century. I am honored to be in the seat that once was occupied by George Mitchell and also by his predecessor, Edmund Muskie. I think the story of the major environmental legislation of the 20th century, sponsored principally at the beginning by Edmund Muskie, the Clean Air Act and Clean Water Act, is worth mentioning, if only briefly.

The most important point is that the Clean Air Act, one of the most important and comprehensive environmental pieces of legislation in our Nation's history, passed this body unanimously. It passed this body unanimously.

It disturbs me that we couldn't agree on the time of day around here unanimously these days. I don't know when this issue became a partisan issue, but I deeply regret it because it is causing harm to our country.

What I would like to do is step into George Mitchell's shoes for a moment and read a statement that he himself wrote and made back in 1986, and you are not going to believe how prescient this statement is. It could have been written yesterday. Here are George Mitchell's words:

The problem of global warming is one of immense significance. It is the most serious and more pressing than anticipated. Previously, most of the models forecasting the rate of global warming focused on the air pollutants produced by the combustion of fossil fuels. More recent data suggest that trace gases may also increase the rate of warming by a factor of two. This means that warming may be increasing twice as fast as previously thought.

The data produced to date suggests there may be an average increase in temperature of 1°C since the beginning of the industrial revolution.

This was in 1986. We are now at about 1.5 degrees centigrade.

Considering how much warmer this June has been than average, a 1 degree difference may appear to be insignificant, but an average of 1 degree increase could be devastating, so the experts tell us. A 1 degree increase in the average global temperature would melt glaciers—

That is happening—

and such melting would increase the sea level.

That is happening.

There are uncertainties in predicting how much the sea level would increase in a particular area. In some cases, it could be an average increase of a few feet; in others, much more. For a coastal State like Maine and to other States along the coastline, such an increase would be devastating.

To deviate from George's words for a moment, this is what we see happening. We are now seeing what are called rainy day floods, flooding in areas of our country along the coast that were rare. Six-month events are now every high tide.

George Mitchell says:

An average of 1 degree increase in temperature could have major impacts on agriculture. This country's Midwestern bread basket could again become a dust bowl. More heat would mean less water for crops and variations in growing seasons. It is important to keep in mind that this average increase is global in nature. It is not a national or regional problem. If American farmers suffer for lack of water, so will farmers all over the planet. If shorelines along our coasts are flooded, so will shorelines everywhere in the world.

The enormity of this phenomenon is staggering, and we have a responsibility to limit emissions of pollutants that trap the heat in our atmosphere. As difficult, as immense, and as seemingly remote as the problem is to our daily lives, we cannot delay.

This was George Mitchell in 1986—we cannot delay.

There will be those who argue that more research is necessary to completely understand the phenomenon and to answer every scientific question.

We are still hearing that argument today—we need more science; we need more studies; we are not sure.

George goes on:

As in the case of acid rain, such complete understanding will come only after we flounder in the weight of our shortsighted policies. This is one more indication that the benefits of industrialization carry with them the burden of controlling pollutants. These pollutants threaten our lakes, fish, health, and forests today in the form of acid deposition.

We will hear today that these pollutants also threaten the future of our planet, which cannot tolerate such a sudden and dramatic increase in temperature and survive in a form familiar to us.

In 1986 George Mitchell said:

Solutions are possible and available. The statement released at the conclusion of the Villach Conference in Austria last October—

This was in 1985—

addresses the common nature of some of our environmental problems. That statement said in part that ''climate change and sea level rises due to greenhouse gases are closely linked with other major environmental issues, such as acid deposition and threats to the Earth's ozone shield, mostly due to changes in the composition of the atmosphere by human activity.''

Reduction in coal and oil use and energy conservation undertaken to reduce acid deposition will also lower concentration of greenhouse gases. Reductions in emissions of chlorofluorocarbons—

Which we achieved—

will help protect the ozone layer and will also slow the rate of climate change. The rate and degree of future warming could be profoundly affected by governmental policies on energy conservation, use of fossil fuels, and the emission of greenhouse gases.

Those words were written 32 years ago.

The rate and degree of future warming could be profoundly affected by governmental policies on energy conservation, use of fossil fuels, and the emission of greenhouse gases.

The testimony that they were intending to hear at the hearing that George is describing demonstrated ''that such governmental policies are needed . . . nationally and on a global basis.''

I pause on ''a global basis''—the tragedy of leaving the Paris climate accord, because the only solution to this problem has to be local, national, and global.

The testimony from Federal Agencies will be that the current government policy is to conduct more research, a familiar refrain on issues of this type. George Mitchell said:

What is missing in the Federal effort is action. The problem of global warming brings another round of scientists before us decrying the folly of waiting until it is too late to

prevent irreversible damage. In the case of acid rain, research has been offered as a substitute for much-needed action. This policy has produced more bodies of water that cannot sustain life, more trees that are dying, and more people who find it hard to breathe.

The policy has produced more studies, not any meaningful change in policy. I hope these two days of hearings will help persuade the administration—

And the people of the country—

that inaction has its own costs, almost invariably higher than the cost of action.

George Mitchell was right. The cost of inaction is invariably higher than the cost of action.

George concluded by saying:

I represent a State that already has been affected by acid deposition. I want to do all I can to keep Maine, the rest of our country, and our planet from facing potentially more dramatic environmental damage from global warming. The best way to avoid these undesirable outcomes is to begin taking action now to prevent further damage rather than spending twice as much time and later money repairing damage.

George Mitchell was right in 1986. Tragically, he is even more right today because we did not heed his call. We did not take action. We have avoided action.

I don't want to be the generation that our children and grandchildren look back on and say: Where were you and what did you do when the climate was deteriorating, when the glaciers were melting, when the ice sheets were melting, when the sea level was rising, when the storms were increasing in intensity, when the wildfires were burning our States? What did you do, Senator?

I, for one, want the answer to be ''I took action.'' The answer should be ''we took action.''

Today, this is a challenge even greater—significantly greater—than it was in 1986, but the very fact that people like Quentin Burdick, George Mitchell, John Chafee, Bob Stafford, and David Durenberger saw the future and predicted it so succinctly and profoundly should spur us to the type of action that is necessary to meet, confront, and overcome this most serious of challenges before us.

Thank you.

I yield to my colleague from Rhode Island.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. I will close out this colloquy by pointing out that the Republicans of 2007, 2008, and 2009 who were working on climate legislation before the Citizens United decision have left or died or gone to ground. It is sad to see. These Republicans of 1986, a third of a century ago, would be shocked at what has become of their party. So, today, we, their successors in five of these six States, gathered on the floor to honor their memory, to mourn what has become in the intervening years of the Republican Party, and to grieve for what this body has lost.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

S. RES. 70

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, on February 13 the Rules Committee approved S. Res. 70, which authorizes funding for the Senate's committees from March 1, 2019, through February 28, 2021. For this 24-month period, the 18 committees covered by this resolution are authorized to spend up to $214,055,860. This is a small increase over the funding authorized by the current committee funding resolution, S. Res. 62. For the information of my colleagues, committee funding authorized by S. Res. 70 remains 13 percent below levels from a decade ago.

Committees are the lifeblood of the legislative process. It is in our committees that policy is created and programs and agencies are overseen. Our committees are where the Senate first exercises its advice and consent function over the executive branch's nominees. Well-functioning committees are crucial to the Senate's role as a separate but equal branch of the government.

The resolution before the Senate is the result of a bipartisan process Senator KLOBUCHAR, the Rules Committee's ranking member, and I undertook this year to solicit more input from committee chairmen and ranking members. The resolution reflects the needs identified by our colleagues and will help ensure our committees are able to carry out their responsibilities and duties.

I would like to thank Fitz Elder and Rachelle Schroeder from my committee staff; Lizzy Peluso and Lindsey Kerr from Senator KLOBUCHAR's committee staff; and Cindy Qualley, the Rules Committee's chief clerk. Additionally, I would like to thank Ileana Garcia and Ted Ruckner from the Disbursing Office and John Henderson from the Office of Legislative Counsel. I greatly appreciate their hard work in developing this resolution.

AUTHORIZING EXPENDITURES BY COMMITTEES OF THE SENATE FOR PERIODS MARCH 1, 2019 THROUGH SEPTEMBER 30, 2019, OCTOBER 1, 2019 THROUGH SEPTEMBER 30, 2020, AND OCTOBER 1, 2020 THROUGH FEBRUARY 28, 2021

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, as if in legislative session, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of Calendar No. 25, S. Res. 70.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The assistant bill clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 70) authorizing expenditures by committees of the Senate for the periods March 1, 2019 through September 30, 2019, October 1, 2019 through September 30, 2020, and October 1, 2020 through February 28, 2021.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Mr. BLUNT. I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed to and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

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

The resolution (S. Res. 70) was agreed to.

(The resolution is printed in the RECORD of February 13, 2019, under ''Submitted Resolutions.'')

DIRECTING THE SECRETARY OF THE SENATE TO MAKE CORRECTION IN THE ENROLLMENT OF THE BILL S. 47

Mr. BLUNT. Continuing as if in legislative session, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of H. Con. Res. 21.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the concurrent resolution by title.

The assistant bill clerk read as follows:

A concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 21) directing the Secretary of the Senate to make a correction in the enrollment of the bill S. 47.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the concurrent resolution.

Mr. BLUNT. I ask unanimous consent that the concurrent resolution be agreed to and the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

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

The concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 21) was agreed to.

(The concurrent resolution is printed in today's RECORD under ''Submitted Resolutions.'')

Mr. BLUNT. Thank you, Mr. President.

One of those items was an enrolling correction and the other was funding for committees. Our committees are beginning to do their work, and this makes it, obviously, appropriate and possible for them to do that.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR—Continued

THE GREEN NEW DEAL

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, I just listened to the other debate on the floor, and it reminded me of the fact that our friends on the other side of the aisle introduced a resolution calling on the Federal Government to adopt what they call the Green New Deal.

From my point of view, the legislation is pretty far outside the mainstream in what it is proposing and how it is proposing the problems we should be debating. I don't have any problem with that. Those problems should be solved, and even though it seems pretty far outside the mainstream of thought, at least 12 of our colleagues in the Senate have cosponsored it. The majority leader thought it would be fair if we had that idea out there—it is