(B) by striking ''physicians and dentists'' each place it appears and inserting ''physicians, podiatrists, and dentists'';

(C) by striking ''physician or dentist'' each place it appears and inserting ''physician, podiatrist, or dentist'';

(D) by striking ''physicians or dentists'' each place it appears and inserting ''physicians, podiatrists, or dentists'';

(E) by striking ''Physician and Dentist'' each place it appears and inserting ''Physician, Podiatrist, and Dentist''; and

(F) in subsection (e)(1)(A), by inserting ''podiatrists and'' before ''dentists.''.

(2) ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS.—Section 7433 of such title is amended by striking ''physicians and dentists'' each place it appears and inserting ''physicians, podiatrists, and dentists''.

(3) CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—The heading of subchapter III of chapter 74 of such title is amended by inserting '', PODIATRISTS,'' after ''PHYSICIANS''.

(4) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of chapter 74 of such title is amended by striking the item relating to subchapter III and inserting the following new item:

''SUBCHAPTER III—PAY FOR PHYSICIANS, PODIATRISTS, AND DENTISTS''.

(5) TECHNICAL AMENDMENT.—Section 7433 of such title is further amended—

(A) by striking subsection (b);

(B) in subsection (a)—

(i) by striking ''(1) The Secretary'' and inserting ''The Secretary''; and

(ii) by redesignating paragraph (2) as subsection (b); and

(C) in subsection (b), as so redesignated—

(i) by striking ''In prescribing'' and inserting ''RECOMMENDATIONS AND VIEWS.—In prescribing''; and

(ii) by striking ''this paragraph'' and inserting ''this subsection''.

ORDERS FOR TUESDAY, MARCH 26, 2019

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it adjourn until 10 a.m., Tuesday, March 26, 2019; further, that following the prayer and pledge, the morning hour be deemed expired, the Journal of proceedings be approved to date, the time for the two leaders be reserved for use later in the day, and morning business be closed; that the Senate proceed to executive session and resume consideration of the Bade nomination under the previous order; finally, that the Senate recess from 12:30 until 2:15 to allow for the weekly conference meetings.

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

ORDER FOR ADJOURNMENT

Mr. MCCONNELL. If there is no further business to come before the Senate, I ask unanimous consent that it stand adjourned under the previous order following the remarks of our Democratic colleagues.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, it is my great honor and pleasure to be joined on the floor today by my senior Senator from Rhode Island, the ranking member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, Senator JACK REED. We are here today on the Senate floor to speak about the perils that climate change poses to America's national security.

I am going to frame my remarks around a fact and a proposition.

The fact, as reported in the 2017 climate science report, is that the oceans of the world are absorbing more than 9 zettajoules of heat energy each year.

The proposition is one that I think most of us agree with—that America is and remains the world's indispensable Nation, exceptional and exemplary.

Let's unpack that fact a little bit. More than 9 zettajoules of heat energy go into the ocean every year.

First, what is a zettajoule? A zettajoule is sextillion joules, or 10 to the 21st power joules. That is a lot of zeros. More practically, 9 zettajoules is around a dozen times humankind's total annual energy consumption.

More kinetically speaking, the added heat in our oceans is equivalent to four Hiroshima-sized nuclear bombs exploding in the oceans every second—every second. So every minute, 240 Hiroshima blasts in the ocean—in the time of my remarks, probably 3,000 Hiroshima explosions—with the oceans capturing all of that heat energy.

Let's go back to the proposition that America is the world's indispensable and exemplary Nation. Years ago, Daniel Webster probably said it best, describing the work of our Founders as having ''set the world an example.'' His was not a unique vision of America. From Jonathan Winthrop at the beginning to Ronald Reagan recently, we have called ourselves a city on a hill, set high for the world to witness. From President Kennedy to President Obama, inaugural addresses have noted that the glow of our ideals ''light[s] the world.'' President Clinton argued that ''[p]eople the world over have always been more impressed by the power of our example than the example of our power.''

When Daniel Webster said that our Founding Fathers had set the world an example, he went on to say this: ''The last hopes of mankind, therefore, rest with us; and if it should be proclaimed that our example had become an argument against the experiment, the knell''—meaning the death nail—''of popular liberty would be sounded throughout the earth.''

How does the fact of 9 zettajoules and the proposition of America's role relate to each other? First is the climate chaos mankind will increasingly have to bear. A recent study published by Nature found with 99.9999 percent confidence that Earth is warming due to human activity. I could give you any number of risks, such as global sea level rise or increasing wildfires and droughts or the unprecedented CO_2 concentrations in our atmosphere. All of this affects human health, human agriculture, and human economy, and all of these risks also have national security consequences.

Through the years, America's national security experts could not have made it much plainer. Fifty-eight former military and national security leaders sent this letter this month to President Trump warning that ''[c]limate change is real, it is happening now, it is driven by humans, and it is accelerating.'' They went on to say that the administration's denial of climate science will ''erode our national security.'' They warned that the effects of climate change are already being ''used by our adversaries as a weapon of war,'' citing ISIS's control of water during climate change-exacerbated drought. This letter urges President Trump to ''drop the politics, and allow our national security and science agencies to do their jobs.''

They are not alone. The Pentagon's 2014 Quadrennial Defense Review described climate change as a ''global threat multiplier,'' warning that ''the pressures caused by climate change will influence resource competition while placing additional burdens on economies, societies, and governance institutions around the world.''

Former admiral Samuel Locklear, as head of U.S. Pacific Command, warned in 2013 that climate change was the biggest long-term security threat in his area of operation, noting the need for the military to organize for, as he called it, ''when the effects of climate change start to impact these massive populations.''

''If it goes bad,'' he said, ''you could have hundreds of thousands or millions of people displaced and then security will start to crumble pretty quickly.''

A recent survey of nearly 300 Active-Duty and veteran servicemembers found that 77 percent ''consider it fairly or very likely that military bases in coastal or island regions will be damaged by flooding or severe storms as a result of climate change.''

In response to a provision championed by Rhode Island Congressman JIM LANGEVIN in the House and by Senator REED in the Senate, the last NDAA bill instructed the Department of Defense to provide a report examining the effects of climate change on the military. Of 79 DOD installations evaluated, 53 currently experience recurrent flooding, 43 are experiencing drought conditions, 36 are prone to wildfires, 6 are seeing desertification, and 1 is dealing with thawing permafrost. That is what is happening now. In 20 years, the DOD predicts, an additional seven installations will experience flooding, five more will see drought conditions, and seven will see wildfire risks.

Of course, all of those risks will get worse. This report failed to list the top 10 most vulnerable installations and ignores the Marine Corps, but it nevertheless warned that ''[t]he effects of a

changing climate are a national security issue with potential impacts to Department of Defense missions, operational plans, and installations.''

The national security ties to climate change begin with our military.

A second point. Henry Kissinger once told me that the great revolutions of the world have always come from what he called a ''confluence of resentments.'' I have not forgotten that phrase since he used it, a ''confluence of resentments.'' The poorest on the planet, those who live closest to the land, who lead subsistence lives, will suffer most the brunt of the coming change, and they will resent it. It is human nature.

If you divide the world into three groups, you can call one group the very poorest, who will starve when, for instance, their fisheries collapse. The middle group is distressed when fisheries collapse but has the resources to find alternative food sources. At the top, the fish in our air-conditioned supermarket may cost a bit more and come from a different part of the ocean, and we may drive home in our air-conditioned SUV with a slightly larger grocery bill, but that will be it for us. The first two groups will resent it when they feel the pain caused by the SUV crowd. If you turn that pain up high enough, good luck defending with those injured people the parliamentary democracy and market capitalism system that brought this on. The injustice will amplify the resentments.

My final point. How does America fare as the exemplary Nation through all of this? Well, very badly. Democracy and capitalism are the hallmarks of our country, and the failure of those institutions to address climate change will not be a good story.

Worse than the failure is the reason for it. The climate denial apparatus that has won unseemly influence in Congress now will surely lose the test of time. The consequences of climate change are determined by laws of chemistry, of physics, and of biology. Those laws can't be repealed or wished away. Propaganda can manipulate people and passions and politics, but it has no effect on the immutable laws of nature. So the fossil fuel industry's denial apparatus will ultimately be exposed as a fraud and a scandal, and history will lament and condemn it as one of the great American frauds and scandals. History's judgment will come harshly, and it will fall harshly on an American democracy that let itself be overborne by this apparatus.

James Madison, in the Federalist Papers, warned of ''moments in public affairs when the people [can be] misled by artful misrepresentations of interested men.'' By that, of course, he meant people with a conflict of interest. He went on to say that misled people ''may call for measures which they themselves will afterwards be the most ready to lament and condemn.'' We have certainly been misled by artful misrepresentations of the interested men of the fossil fuel industry.

It may be hard for us in our world of air-conditioning, SUVs, and imported fresh fish to contemplate resentment and revolution, but the harms to the oceans of 9 zettajoules of heat—4.5 Hiroshima explosions worth of heat per second that we are adding to the oceans—those harms are on a collision course with our destiny as a city on a hill. We urgently need to show the world that market capitalism and democracy don't fail when presented with big problems if we are to head off a confluence of resentments that we are now making inevitable.

With that, I yield to my distinguished senior Senator, Mr. JACK REED.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island is recognized.

Mr. REED. Mr. President, let me commend Senator WHITEHOUSE for his consistent efforts to illuminate and discuss the problem of climate change, which affects not just the United States but the entire world. It is a pleasure to join him and once again call attention to this urgent threat.

We know that climate change impacts our health, our communities, our economy, and our infrastructure, but today I would like to focus on how climate change is affecting our national security—some of the points Senator WHITEHOUSE also made.

Beginning with the 2008 National Defense Strategy, the administration of President George W. Bush stated that ''changes with existing and future resource, environmental, and climate pressures may generate new security challenges . . . These risks will require managing the divergent needs of massively increasing energy demand to maintain economic development and the need to tackle climate change.''

With increasing frequency in recent years, climate change has been commonly referred to as a threat multiplier. Simply put, climate change can and will exacerbate conditions in regions with already tenuous stability.

Numerous intelligence assessments have reached the same conclusion. Climate change will have broad impacts for U.S. national security interests over the next 30 years and beyond.

In their words, the National Intelligence Council has found that ''rising sea levels, flooding, droughts, higher temperatures, and more frequent extreme weather events will increasingly threaten military capabilities and facilities on both U.S. and foreign territory, including military bases and training ranges.''

Furthermore, the National Intelligence Council identified six key pathways: threats to the stability of countries, heightened social and political tensions, adverse effects on food prices and availability, increased risks to human health, negative impacts on investments and economic competitiveness, and potential climate discontinuities and secondary surprises.

The former Secretary of Defense, Jim Mattis, has stated to the Senate Armed Services Committee that ''where climate change contributes to regional instability, the Department of Defense must be aware of any potential adverse impacts.'' He also noted that ''climate change is impacting stability in areas of the world where our troops are operating today.''

More recently, Gen. Joe Dunford, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, was asked about climate change at an event held by Duke University's Program in American Grand Strategy. He said:

> When we look at, when I look at, climate change, it's in the category of sources of conflict around the world and things we have to respond to. So it can be great devastation requiring humanitarian assistance/disaster relief, which the U.S. military certainly conducts routinely. In fact, I can't think of a year since I've been on active duty that we haven't conducted at least one operation in the Pacific along those lines due to extreme weather in the Pacific. And then, when you look at source of conflict—shortages of water and those kind of things—those are all sources of conflict. So, it is very much something that we take into account in our planning as we anticipate when, where and how we may be engaged in the future and what capabilities we should have.

The Department of Defense has already observed many negative impacts to readiness and resources due to extreme weather as a result of climate change.

The Congressional Budget Office has concluded ''costs associated with hurricane damage will increase more rapidly than the economy will grow''—$39 billion annually by 2075.

In 2017, the Government Accountability Office found that ''weather effects associated with climate change pose operational and budgetary risks'' to the Department of Defense.

The GAO also found that ''even without knowing precisely how or when the climate will change—[DOD] knows it must build resilience into its policies, programs, and operations in a thoughtful and cost-effective way.''

Last year, the Pentagon also submitted its screening level vulnerability assessment surveys to Congress. It found that roughly half of all military installations that responded stated they had experienced adverse impacts from climate change: damage from high winds, flooding due to storm surge and non-storm surge events, extreme temperatures, droughts, and wildfires. However, that figure is likely much higher because the other half of military installations around the globe didn't even respond to the survey. Oddly enough, those military installations that said they had not experienced negative impacts from climate change were very close to other installations, which said they had. Clearly, this is a broad problem for our military.

The Department's most recent report on climate change was like an introductory primer and carried about as much value as a phonebook. It failed to provide many required elements, such as a top 10 list of the most vulnerable

installations from each military service. Instead, the report focused on 79 installations important for mission assurance and found that about two-thirds of them are—in their words—''vulnerable to current or future recurrent flooding [and] more than half are vulnerable to current or future drought, and wildfires.''

Perhaps the most recent and high-profile impacts occurred this month when a particular type of storm in the Midwest, called a bomb cyclone, left at least one-third of Offutt Air Force Base underwater from flooding.

Just a few months ago, Hurricane Michael made a direct hit on Tyndall Air Force Base in Florida, which was only shortly after the astonishing 1,000-year event of Hurricane Florence in North Carolina, which caused severe damage at Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune. In other words, the amount of observed rain during Hurricane Florence had a 1-in-100 chance of occurring each year.

While initial reporting indicated at Tyndall that roughly 17 F–22s were destroyed or severely damaged after being left at the base during Hurricane Michael, fortunately, the actual damage to aircraft turned out to be minimal. However, the fact that over a dozen advanced fighters costing roughly $130 million per aircraft had to be abandoned in the first place is a fundamental flaw in readiness and aircraft maintenance.

Despite the minimal damage to aircraft, the projected cost to rebuild Tyndall is still roughly $4.1 billion. The underlying issue that must be addressed is that hangars and other facilities are not adequately designed and built to withstand an increased trend of heavy winds above 130 miles per hour or other extreme weather. Meanwhile, the estimated cost to rebuild what was at Camp Lejeune—according to the Commandant of the Marine Corps—is roughly $3.7 billion.

Fortunately, at Camp Lejeune, several hangars survived and did not flood. This is because they were appropriately designed in the first place.

These glaring examples of Offutt Air Force Base, Tyndall Air Force Base, and Camp Lejeune clearly demonstrate that we must plan for climate adaptation now or we will pay much, much more in the future.

General Neller, the Commandant of the Marine Corps, recently wrote to the Secretary of the Navy saying that the Marine Corps ''faces fiscal challenges without precedent'' given that ''Hurricane Florence damage is negatively impacting Marine Corps readiness.''

To put some of that in context, the Commandant said the ''total recovery cost is 9 percent of our annual budget; the building repair cost is 150 percent of our total annual building repair budget; and the building replacement cost is four years' worth of non-Guam MILCON.'' The Commandant closed the letter by warning that the next hurricane season is only 3 months away.

Beyond these most recent events, climate change continues to cost DOD significant resources, measured in taxpayer funding and negative impacts on readiness.

In 2017, the trio of hurricanes—Maria, Irma, and Harvey—cost the Department over $1.3 billion in military construction and facilities sustainment restoration and modernization alone. Hurricane Harvey was the third 500-year flood in the Houston area in the last 3 years—we are getting 500-year floods every 3 years in parts of the United States—and it left four times more than the entire flow of the Mississippi River on the city of Houston, TX.

At Lackland Air Force Base in Texas, there were 81 black flag training days. These are days where training is canceled due to heat. That was in 2012. In 2016, there were 226 black flag days.

The Marine Corps experienced 478 heat-related injuries in 2013. By comparison, there were 688 in 2017 and 744 in 2016.

In Alaska, three locations of early warning radar infrastructure have been damaged and moved due to coastal erosion that was not expected to occur until 2030.

In 2016, a 10,000-acre wildfire in California closed the south side of Vandenberg Air Force Base, stalling the launch of an Atlas V rocket. Wildfires also led to training range closures for multiple months in North Carolina, South Carolina, Idaho, Florida, and New Mexico.

In Arizona last summer, a heat wave caused 40 flights to be canceled, with clear implications for DOD aircraft, ships, and vehicles that must be able to continue to operate in extreme hot and cold temperatures. Yet current adaptation measures attempted by DOD have yet to be comprehensive or entirely successful.

In what could be the beginning of a startling trend, the Air Force recently had to cancel a fiscal year 2018 military construction project in Alaska due to ''thawing permafrost under the existing facility causing significant settling'' with the facility foundation.

Warming Arctic temperatures at Thule Air Force Base in Greenland have caused extensive airfield pavement repairs at a cost of over $30 million, which is roughly the cost of one Army Combat Training Center rotation. So instead of getting brigades down to Ft. Irwin for the training exercises they need, we are going to have to repave and repave bases that are exposed to some of these climate effects.

Meanwhile, melting ice caps continue to open up new sea lanes in the Arctic—a topic that the Presiding Officer knows better than anyone else in this body—increasing commercial traffic and prompting several countries, including Russia, to vie for influence and control over the region.

Notably, the current force structure of the Navy is not adequately postured to respond and operate in the Arctic, and the GAO recently found that even the Navy admits ''significant limitations for operating surface ships in the Arctic.''

Protecting our national security requires tough decisions that are made through a careful evaluation of risks, which, as I have described, must include the real risks posed by climate change.

I am concerned by many actions coming by the current administration, not only to downplay these risks but also to actively undermine the scientific consensus on climate change. Instead of heeding the warnings of scientists, including those from the 13 Federal Agencies that worked on the ''National Climate Assessment,'' the administration is working to create a climate security panel led by a noted climate denier to contradict these warnings.

I will continue—and I know others will continue—fighting any efforts to cast doubt on the fact that climate change is real and that it is human-caused. We need to be able to acknowledge these basic facts so that we can quickly come together to work toward meaningful solutions.

Again, let me thank Senator WHITEHOUSE for inviting me to join him today to highlight the impacts of climate change on national security. The dangers of inaction are many, and as ranking member of the Armed Services Committee, I will be continuing to sound the alarm on this critical issue.

I have tried to emphasize the effects of climate change on our training facilities, on our bases here in the United States, and on our regions that are close by, where we prepare our forces to be sent overseas. But if you look overseas in areas that are suffering drought, in areas where agricultural land is diminishing, and in areas where farming used to be the mainstay of the population and now has disappeared and the population is unemployed, if you look at places like Pakistan, which has significant environmental problems, significant financial problems, and significant problems with terrorist organizations, if you look in thousands of places around the globe, those are real threats that are being accelerated by climate change that our military will have to adapt and adjust to.

This is a multiphase issue. We have to take steps here at home to preserve our training bases and to make sure that our airfields can operate in all types of weather so that we can have the Marine Corps facilities in Camp Lejeune in A–1 condition.

It is the major force-generating position for the Marine Corps on the Atlantic coast. We have to be able to do that. That is just part of the problem.

The other part of the problem is the potential for conflict overseas. In many countries, it is accelerating because they are losing their quality of life, their economic ability, and all these things. There is drought, severe weather, hurricanes, and storms. There was

huge cyclonic activity just reported last week in parts of Africa. That is causing disruption for families, death, and a host of problems that are causing not particularly stable governments to become less stable.

This is an issue that we must address. I look forward to working with all of my colleagues in order to provide the resources and the direction to do that.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SULLIVAN). The Senator from Oregon.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, I understand that this week it is the intention of the majority leader to put on the floor of this Chamber a resolution that is related to taking on the enormous challenge of climate chaos. If I just heard that announced, I would say ''well done'' because it is way past time for us to wrestle with this calamity affecting all of our States and all countries around the globe.

Temperatures across the planet are going up. All kinds of impacts are being felt. So if the majority leader said, ''Yes, we are going to rise to our responsibilities and have a serious debate on the floor; we are going to take a bill to committee; we are going to wrestle with how we in America cannot only take on carbon pollution here but show the type of leadership that mobilizes countries around the world and mobilizes leadership around the world,'' well, then, I would say ''well done.''

But, unfortunately, that is not what is about to happen. The majority leader says he doesn't want to talk about climate. So he wants to put a resolution on the floor with no debate in the committee, no serious effort to develop a series of policies to take on this calamity, and just to create a farce out of this Chamber. This Chamber, which I love, is being used in this horrific fashion, taking very serious issues that threaten our economy and threaten our natural resources and making fun of them and choosing to do nothing.

It was Henry David Thoreau who said: ''What is the use of a house if you haven't got a tolerable planet to put it on?'' But I am sure that when Henry David Thoreau spoke he had no inkling of the challenges we would be facing here in the year 2019.

The challenge in this year of 2019 is that in a single human lifetime the carbon dioxide in the air has gone up 30 percent—trapping enormous quantities of heat, raising the temperature of our oceans, where 90 percent of the heat is trapped, changing the weather that we experience in all kinds of ways, and driving a huge increase in forest fires in our country. If that alone were the impact, that would be enough to take action. In fact, if we just look at that one issue of forest fires, looking at the Fourth National Climate Assessment, it is estimated that the change in climate has doubled the acres burned by forest fires—just that one issue.

In my home State of Oregon, we really see this. In the Northwest there is a beautiful forest. The landscape, particularly west of the Cascades, has the most incredible old-growth forest and timber stands you would ever see, and it is burning at an unprecedented rate.

Why is that? Well, for one, we have summers that are hotter and dryer than before. That hot, dry period extends for about 2 months longer than before. Then, we have storms that are more likely to have lightning strikes than before. Combine this very dry forest with lightning strikes, and you have a huge problem on your hands. It isn't just some remote forest that is burning. It is our natural resources, our ecosystems, and our timber stands. It is also having an impact on the commerce of our cities and the recreational industry.

That is not the only impact that we see in my home State of Oregon. We also see that the acidification of the Pacific Ocean from carbon dioxide is starting to make it hard for shellfish to make shells. Most significantly, 10 years ago we discovered that the acidity of the Pacific Ocean was killing the newly born oysters as they tried to create a shell and to do so in more acidic water. We have to change the chemistry of the ocean water now. We have to buffer it in order to enable the oyster industry to survive. What kind of canary in the coal mine is that? What kind of warning is it that the shellfish is in trouble because the ocean is becoming too acidic?

You may say: Why does that have anything to do with carbon in the atmosphere? It has everything to do with carbon in the atmosphere, because the ocean waves absorb the carbon dioxide, it becomes carbonic acid, and that acid makes the ocean more acidic.

I stand on the beach in Oregon and look out at the Pacific Ocean. Of course, you can only look out at about 20 miles of the sea, but all you see is water. It is hard to imagine that you would have to go thousands of miles to hit another continent. Yet, that ocean, as vast as it is, has changed its chemistry in our lifetime, not just becoming more acidic but becoming warmer. In fact, we have a calamity ongoing right now off the coast of California, Oregon, and Washington. The kelp is disappearing. With the kelp disappearing, that is a concern for every fisherman. The kelp forests provide a lot of shelter and food for a lot of species. How do we know what impact that will have on our fisheries, which are so important to our coastal economy?

We have the fact that the change in snowpack is affecting our winter sports. The lowered average snowpack just means warmer, smaller trout and salmon streams in the summer. People want to fish. They want healthy streams, not streams that are too tiny and too hot for the salmon and the trout. You see the impact we are having on forests, farming, fishing, and on the cities from smoke and on human health as people inhale that smoke. It is not just an impact on the economy. It is an impact on our health and our children's health. That is just in my State.

So I would ask my colleagues across the aisle, every one of them, to say: Do you know what? We have a responsibility to take on issues that are doing great damage.

That damage isn't just wildfires. We are seeing more intense weather events across the country. This is in all kinds of places—severe weather storms, droughts, hail, tornadoes, and, probably most significantly, more powerful hurricanes, like Hurricane Michael and Hurricane Florence just last year in 2018. Of course we saw the trio of hurricanes in 2017.

You say: Are hurricanes connected to all of this? How can that be?

Hurricanes take their energy from the ocean. When the ocean is warmer, it creates a fiercer hurricane. It takes that energy, and it becomes winds that are moving faster and a hurricane that is larger and endures longer when it hits land.

It is estimated that extreme weather events cost Americans nearly a half trillion dollars over the last 3 years. In 2017 alone, between the fires and the hurricanes, damages were estimated at $300 billion. That is real damage. That is real economic damage happening here in the United States of America. When talking about $1 billion of damage, that is talking about a lot of families being set back a long way. We are talking about a lot of infrastructure being ripped up, and we are talking about lives lost.

Despite this enormous damage and despite lives lost, the majority leader wants to create a farce over an issue threatening our country and our planet? That is just wrong. It is way beyond wrong—to see the face of a calamity and to do nothing. Well, it could go with all kinds of adjectives—none of them complimentary, not a one.

We should be the opposite here, taking on the responsibility of addressing these issues that are having an impact—having an impact in the heartland, having an impact on our soy and corn crops, having an impact on the coasts, having an impact in the Southeast, with hurricanes, and the Northeast, with Lyme disease and spreading tick infestations, the loss of the moose, and the lobsters heading north along the ocean into Canada.

So we must not bury our heads in the tar sands. We cannot allow the political donations that are present now in our corrupted governmental system to deter us from doing the work we need to do. Yet that appears to be exactly what is happening. We have a broader responsibility here—a responsibility to our sons and daughters. We have a responsibility to our grandchildren and their sons and daughters and their grandchildren.