

were there, we weren't even allowed to see the worst. Frankly, government employees who were there were mostly doing their best. But the people who make these decisions—the people in the White House, the people at Mar-a-Lago, the people who don't have any idea of what people can see—they didn't want us to see the worst of the worst. They were denying me, as a representative of 12 million people in my State—they don't want people to see what they are doing to these kids. It is troubling because Ohio tax dollars are supporting them. It makes you wonder what else the administration is hiding.

Despite all that, so many parts of this trip were inspiring. We saw the passion and dedication of advocacy groups. So many people in Texas, in Ohio, in Iowa, in Minnesota, and in Wyoming had traveled on their vacation time to these border communities to try to help these refugees, people whose lives are in danger. They were trying to help feed them and clothe them and visit with them and heal them. They were trying to help because they know our government hasn't. They know our government—President Trump and the people around him—have abandoned them.

I saw the Border Network for Human Rights shining a light on migrants' mistreatment and abuse to hold our government accountable. We saw the generosity and kindness of the volunteers at Annunciation House. All of those advocates and volunteers represent the best of American values.

I remember seeing a bus of refugees who arrived at Annunciation House holding babies and children, smiling and waving at us. You could see the relief on their faces because they saw people who remembered: When I was a stranger, you welcomed me. They saw American citizens who love this country, Americans who understand our values, Americans who know we are a nation of immigrants. Those children knew they were welcomed. Their families knew their children were safe.

We saw the innocence of those children who find joy through play even at the darkest times, after witnessing horrors many of us can only imagine.

Connie held a smiling baby. I picked up a Wiffle Ball bat and handed it to one of the children, and then I picked up a ball. I was told this little boy had probably never held a baseball bat because in Guatemala and Honduras and El Salvador, they mostly play soccer. I pitched to him, and he was kind of a natural. It is a reminder of our common humanity—something I hope my colleagues will keep in mind as we think about and actually fix our immigration system.

One place where we ought to be able to start is on something so many of us in both parties agree on—that we have to find a solution for the Dreamers who are American in every sense but the paperwork.

Let me tell you a story. I was in Toledo, OH, 2 months ago. I met a young

woman who is probably in her midtwenties. She is married with a small child. She works full time. She has been in this country since she was 4. Her parents brought her from Central America. She doesn't remember Central America; she was 4. She is from Toledo, not from Guatemala anymore. Her parents speak Spanish. She speaks Spanish at home, but in every other way, she is as American as just about anybody else in Toledo. She said that she and her husband have one car. She goes to work. She drops him off, and she takes the car to work and then picks him up at the end of the day. She said: Senator, when I go to work every day, I go outside and I check my turn signal and I check my brake lights. When I stop at a stop sign, I count to three because I am terrified I am going to get picked up for a traffic violation and deported.

She works hard. She pays her taxes. She does what we ask her to do. She is active in her church. She does all the things that Italian and French immigrants coming to the United States have done.

In fact, I was talking to a gentleman who works downstairs in this body. He works in the Senate. He has worked here for 40 years. He came from Italy when he was 10. He said he was discouraged and unhappy about President Trump's comments about sending them back to where they came from. He said: When I was a kid, my parents were Italian. Their English isn't as good as mine. I was 10 years old. People told us to go back where we came from.

That is just wrong.

I hope my colleagues will keep in mind the comments from a young activist in El Paso, Senaida Navar. She is a Dreamer. She was raised in El Paso. She is a faculty member at the University of Texas at El Paso. She has dedicated her life to fighting for immigrant families. She has been a Dreamer for years. She said: "I don't know what it means to be without anxiety. That is not a dignified way to live." She is always worried. She is worried like that young woman in Toledo.

We share a common human dignity. It is despicable that this administration tries to rob people of that. I hope my colleagues think about that. We know the way we solve our complex immigration problem isn't by locking up families and children in cages. It is not by tearing apart families or by throwing out hard-working, law-abiding teachers and workers and students and families of servicemembers. Many of these Dreamers end up in the military. They have known no other home but America. We can't abandon our values—the same values that have made the United States a beacon of hope around the world for generations.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Mr. President, I come to the floor this afternoon with a number of my colleagues because we are very concerned about the lack of legislating that is happening here in the Senate, particularly on the issue of climate change.

As this poster shows, it has been 76 days since the House passed H.R. 9, which is the Climate Action Now Act. It is legislation that would prevent the President from using funds to withdraw the United States from the Paris climate agreement. We also have a Senate proposal, which is bipartisan legislation that I have sponsored, called the International Climate Accountability Act. It has been cosponsored by 46 Senators. Yet the majority leader has refused to bring these bills to the floor for a debate.

It didn't used to be this way. Even in my time in the Senate, it didn't used to be this way. The Senate used to take up important issues, put them on the floor for substantive debate, and at the end of the day, work to pass legislation to improve the lives of Americans. Sadly, what we see now is that the Senate is turning into a legislative graveyard. Unfortunately, the International Climate Accountability Act is one of several proposals that the majority leader wishes to bury. Yet, without a doubt, climate change is the greatest environmental challenge the world has ever faced.

At the end of last year, the U.S. Global Change Research Program released its "Fourth National Climate Assessment." This report makes it abundantly clear that every American is affected by climate change and that the threat it poses will get worse over time unless we take action.

I want to be clear that climate change is not just an environmental issue; it affects our public health, and it affects our economy. In New Hampshire, we understand this all too well. Rising temperatures are shortening our fall foliage season. They are disrupting maple syrup production. They are affecting our ski industry and snowmobiling industry. We are seeing stresses on our fisheries. Our trout is moving farther north in streams. We see an increase in insect-borne diseases. Lyme disease is on the rise in New Hampshire and throughout New England. Our moose population is down 40 percent, and other wildlife is being affected. All of these changes are tied to the effects of climate change.

A few months ago, I met with members of the New England Water Environment Association to discuss the enormous effect climate change is having on our water infrastructure. Rising temperatures and increased rainfall brought on by climate change make flooding more frequent and rainstorms

more intense. We are seeing that now on our gulf coast, where we have seen 20 inches of rain in parts of Louisiana.

Americans are witnessing this firsthand across the country with the historic flooding and with the tornadoes that have swept across the South and the Midwest. These extreme weather events not only endanger families and homes and businesses, but they increase the strain on our Nation's overburdened water systems. They take water treatment plants offline. This means debris is discharged into our rivers and streams, which affects our water quality.

These extreme weather events are particularly dangerous for coastal communities. I see my colleague from Maine is here, Senator KING. They face this in Maine with its long coastline. In New Hampshire, we have 18 miles of coastline, but we still see it at our coastline.

Accelerated sea level rise, which is primarily driven by climate change, is worsening tidal flooding conditions and imperiling coastal homes and businesses.

According to a 2018 study from the Union of Concerned Scientists, projected tidal flooding in the United States will put as many as 311,000 coastal homes that are collectively valued at \$117 billion at risk of chronic flooding within the next 30 years. That is the lifespan of a typical mortgage. By the end of the century, the report estimates that 2.4 million homes and 107,000 commercial properties that are currently worth more than \$1 trillion will be at risk for chronic flooding. This includes properties in towns like Hampton Beach, which is located in New Hampshire's Seacoast Region.

For those who haven't had a chance to visit Hampton Beach, it is beautiful. It is a perfect vacation destination. It is a barrier island town with the Hampton River on one side of the city and the ocean on the other. Unfortunately, this makes Hampton Beach one of the State's most at-risk towns from rising sea levels.

In this photograph, we can see the impact of rising sea levels. This was taken in November of 2017. We see what is happening. All of these homes should not be underwater here. Yet that is what we are seeing.

A 2019 report from Columbia University and the First Street Foundation found that Hampton Beach lost \$7.9 million in home value due to tidal flooding between 2005 and 2017. In total, increased tidal flooding has cost New Hampshire homeowners \$15 million in lost property value. This is just in recent years, and the problem is only going to get worse.

The impact of climate change will get worse if we don't act now to reduce harmful greenhouse gas emissions. I am proud that in New Hampshire, we understand the need for climate action. We have implemented policies that reduce carbon emissions, that help us transition to a more energy-efficient,

clean economy, but New Hampshire can't do this alone, and the United States can't do this alone. International cooperation is key to reducing global greenhouse gas emissions. That is why the Paris Agreement is so critical in mitigating the worst effects of climate change.

With a delegation from the Senate, I had the opportunity to attend the 2015 U.N. climate summit, and we participated in discussions that led to the Paris climate accord. During the summit, we were impressed by the leadership and the determination that was shown by the United States to encourage other nations to reach ambitious emissions reduction goals. Unfortunately, when President Trump announced his intention to withdraw from the Paris Agreement, the United States forfeited this leadership to other countries.

In the absence of leadership from the White House, the majority leader should allow the Senate to consider the International Climate Accountability Act, which would keep the United States in the Paris Agreement. Let's take up the bill that has been sent over by the House. Let's take up the Senate bill. Let's bring this bill to the floor, and let's have a debate. If people don't support it, they can debate it, but we should be talking about this. The threat to New Hampshire and to this country is in doubt, and until we act, it is only going to get worse.

We have a number of our colleagues who would like to come to the floor and speak to this issue, and I am pleased that Senator KING from Maine, my colleague, is here to talk about these impacts.

Yet, before my colleagues speak, I ask unanimous consent to show a banner that was delivered to my office by the Moms Clean Air Force.

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

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Let me just show everyone this. This was made by the mothers who came to our office. What they have written is: "Please protect the families of New Hampshire from air pollution and climate change. Moms Clean Air Force." You are able to see all of the folks who were with the delegation and who visited my office to sign this because everyone is concerned about what the impact is going to be on their families and on their communities if we don't address climate change.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maine.

Mr. KING. Mr. President, I am happy to join my colleague from New Hampshire and other colleagues tonight to talk about one of the most serious threats to ever face this Nation or, in fact, this world.

A few years ago, Tom Brokaw, the television news anchor, wrote a wonderful book called "The Greatest Generation." He was writing about the generation of our parents and grand-

parents who fought in World War II, who paid off the debt from World War II, who built the Interstate Highway System—who, by the way, paid for it—and who built the greatest economy the world has ever seen. That was the "greatest generation."

The characteristic of that generation was that of meeting their responsibilities. It was not of avoiding problems but of meeting them head-on and establishing for the world and for this country an example of governance and of the responsible dealing with issues and problems the likes of which we have not seen in our lifetimes.

If Tom Brokaw were writing another book today about us, it would be called "The Lousiest Generation." We are the ones who have built up an unconscionable debt for our children. We cut taxes in the middle of a war in 2005. It was the first time I had been able to find in world history when that had ever happened. We have given ourselves tax cuts and not paid the bill, and we are passing on this enormous \$22 trillion debt to our children.

None of us on our deathbed, when our children are standing around, would lean up and say: Here is the credit card, kids. I have run it up to the max. You can now pay for it. Yet that is exactly what we are doing collectively—the lousiest generation, the one that hasn't paid its bills.

Infrastructure. We have allowed our infrastructure to fall to pieces. It is the infrastructure that was given to us by our parents, that was paid for—the bridges, the roads, the railroads, and the airports. Now we have one of the poorest infrastructure situations in the world. It is embarrassing to go to a small country somewhere else in the world and walk into an airport that makes ours look old and falling apart.

So we haven't kept up with the infrastructure, and that is a debt that we are passing on to our children, just as real as the national debt.

Finally, we are facing a known, real, unquestionable crisis in terms of the effect on the climate, and this is something that we are shamefully passing on to our children. They are the ones who are going to have to deal with the consequences that we will not face. They are the ones who are going to have to pay the bills, who are going to have to shore up the infrastructure, who are going to have to respond to the drastic changes in the climate not only here but around the world, and we are doing nothing.

What will it take? What will it take for us to meet this responsibility? What is it going to take?

Well, OK, let's go down a list. Maybe it will take scientific data that demonstrates the level of CO₂ that we have put into the atmosphere.

I don't seem to have a chart. I don't need a chart. For millions of years, CO₂ has varied between 180 and 280 parts per million. People say: Well, it varies over time. This is nothing new. No, between 180 and 280 is the variation until the

last 50 to 75 years, when it has become a hockey stick. We are now at over 400 parts per million, the highest it has been in 3 million years, and, by the way, the last time it was at 400 parts per million, the oceans were 60 feet higher.

CO₂ in the atmosphere is our responsibility. It didn't come from volcanoes. It came from the consumption of fossil fuel, which developed and built the wonderful economy that we have and the economy around the world. Nobody can gainsay that.

The question is, Now that we are seeing the consequences, don't we have a responsibility to do something about it? Has there been a gigantic increase in CO₂ in the atmosphere? Check. Yes. Unquestionably.

No. 2, how about Arctic ice? Here we are. In the last 30 years, two-thirds of the Arctic ice has disappeared—two-thirds.

I was at a conference this morning on the Arctic. The Arctic Ocean is open for the first time in human history. The conference was about shipping and mineral exploration and Native peoples losing their habitat and their way of life. Two-thirds of the Arctic ice is gone in 25 years. This is a place that has been covered with ice for thousands of years—as long as we have any memory, but now the Arctic ice is going.

Every time I see a prediction of where it is going to be in 10 years, lo and behold, it is there in 2 or 3 years. It is opening up. That is telling us something.

Is there an indication from the Arctic ice that something drastic is happening to our climate? Yes. Check that box.

No. 3 is the increased intensity of fires. We have seen the most intense wildfires in this country in the last 10 years that we have ever seen—more acreage, more intensity, more lives lost, more property lost. This is caused by drought and by changes in the climate, all wrought by our activity.

Increase in fires and wildfires? Check.

Sea level rise. Here is the background on the sea level. We tend to think of the sea level as being a fixed quantity. We walk out in the ocean, and it always looks pretty much the way it is, whether it is off the Maine coast or the New Hampshire coast.

Well, it turns out that back here, 24,000 years ago, when the glaciers were covering most of North America, the sea was 390 feet shallower than it is today. Chesapeake Bay was dry land. It was 390 feet shallower than it is today.

Then, the glaciers melted, and the sea level started to rise. This is an interesting period about 14,000 years ago called the meltwater pulse 1A.

This drastic rise in sea level is about a foot a decade. That is what is predicted for the next century.

Oh, it could never happen. A foot a decade? You must be crazy.

It happened. We know that it happened.

Now, here is why we aren't paying attention. The last 6,000 years, it has been pretty flat. It has been pretty level. The sea level has plateaued, in effect, and, therefore, that happens to be recorded human history, that 6,000 years. So we think that is just where the ocean has always been.

But do you know what? The last remnant of the glaciers are in Greenland and Antarctica, and they are going. They are going. There is 20 feet of sea level rise in the Greenland ice sheet and 212 feet of sea level rise stored in the Antarctic ice sheet, and they are going.

I have been to Greenland. You can see it. The Jakobshavn Glacier has retreated as much in the last 10 years as it retreated in the prior 100 years.

The only thing slower than a glacier, by the way, is the U.S. Congress. We make glaciers look like they are moving fast, and, in fact, the Jakobshavn Glacier is moving fast.

Sea level rise is happening. In Norfolk, VA, they have seen a foot and a half in the last decade. They are having sunny day floods. They are having sunny day floods in Miami. They are spending millions of dollars to build up their roads.

People say dealing with climate change is too expensive. Not dealing with it is too expensive. In not dealing with it, the expense is going to be astronomical.

By the way, if you talk about sea level in Norfolk, VA, it is a national security risk. With the number of bases that we have around the world that are at or near sea level, it is going to be an enormous task and a very expensive one to protect those assets.

There is another national security issue involved in this that we are ignoring, and that is the displacement of peoples. During the Syrian civil war, there were 4 to 6 million Syrian refugees. A few came here, not many. Most went to Western Europe, and, as we know, that refugee flow turned the politics of Western Europe upside-down. Call it 5 million people.

The estimates for refugees from climate change over the next 100 years is between 200 and 400 million people. Imagine what that is going to do to the geopolitics of this world—200 million people on the march, looking for water, looking for a place that is habitable, looking for relief from drought, from fires. This is a national security threat.

Is it a national security threat? Yes. Check that box.

What is it going to take? What is it going to take?

Intense storms. We don't need to tell people about the intensity of storms. We have seen them. We have lived through them. I once made a joke in Maine that I am 300 years old, and somebody said: Why? I said: Because according to the news, I have lived through three storms of the century.

We keep having storms of the century or 500-year storms, and they are happening more and more frequently.

The heat. Nine out of 10 of the hottest years on record occurred in the last 15 years. This past June was the hottest June since records were kept—the hottest June since records were kept.

Now, there is a difference between weather and climate. I understand that, and I am not going to say that the heat wave that the Midwest is suffering this weekend is a reflection of climate change. It may or may not be. Weather is what happens day-to-day. Climate is what happens in the long term, and we know that we have already increased global climate by about 1.5 degrees Celsius. In many cases, it is causing irreversible damage.

When we get to 2 degrees Celsius, which we are headed for, it is going to be catastrophic for coral, for farms, for animals, and for people.

Species are already on the move. Senator SHAHEEN mentioned the ocean. There are the lobsters in Maine. There used to be a vigorous lobster fishery in Massachusetts and Rhode Island. It is essentially gone now, and the lobsters are in Maine, which is a mainstay of our economy. It is a \$1.5 billion a year business. The lobsters are moving north and east. Why? Because the Gulf of Maine is heating faster than 99 percent of the areas of the world. The only place heating faster than the Gulf of Maine is the Arctic, and those lobsters are doing what any animal does. They seek out more hospitable climate.

Climate. This isn't academic. These aren't predictions. This is something you can see. The people on the water in Maine know it is happening. The woodsmen know it is happening because they are seeing different species of trees. Bugs are moving farther north. Ticks are a huge problem in Northern New England and places where they weren't before. This isn't something that is academic.

What is it going to take?

One of the things that the Senator from New Hampshire talked about is—and I think it is important to emphasize because I hear this sometimes—why should we do this? It is happening everywhere in the world.

Yes, that is why the Paris climate accord was so important. It wasn't mandatory, but it was a set of goals, and the entire world was engaged. Now there is the entire world but one—us. We are out. We are outliers. We have lost our voice. We have lost our influence. We have lost our leadership position on one of the most important challenges faced by this or any generation. Yes, we haven't met our responsibilities as our parents and our grandparents did.

On December 1, 1862, Abraham Lincoln came to the House Chamber and spoke about the crisis of the Civil War. The Congress didn't get it. They were doing politics as usual, and President Lincoln was trying to move them from the lethargy of the legislative process into the emergency and the urgency of the Civil War.

He said two things toward the end of that speech that I think are profoundly instructive for us today. The first is how to deal with this change. And this is a change. This is new. I understand that, and dealing with change is difficult.

Abraham Lincoln uttered what I think are the most profound words about change that I have ever encountered. Here is what Abraham Lincoln said:

The dogmas of the quiet past, are inadequate to the stormy present. The occasion is piled high with difficulty, and we must rise—with the occasion. As our case is new, so we must think anew, and act anew.

And here is the punch line:

We must disenthral ourselves, and then we shall save our country.

“We must disenthral ourselves,” and that means to think in new and different ways, to see reality as it is, “and then we shall save our country” and, in this in case, the world.

The other admonition from Lincoln that day, which I think is very important for us, puts the responsibility directly on us right here. He was talking to Members of Congress.

He said:

Fellow-citizens, we cannot escape history. We of this Congress and this administration, will be remembered in spite of ourselves. No personal significance, or insignificance, can spare one or another of us. The fiery trial through which we pass—

Of course he was talking about the Civil War, and we are talking about a fiery trial of our generation.

The fiery trial through which we pass, will light us down, in honor or dishonor, to the latest generation.

The fiery trial through which we pass will light us down, in honor or dishonor, to the latest generation.

I want to meet this responsibility. I want this Congress to be remembered, as we will be, either way, but I want this Congress to be remembered as people who met the fiery trial, who met our responsibility, who thought about others more than ourselves and made a difference in the life of this country and the world.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Mexico.

Mr. UDALL. Mr. President, I rise with my colleagues to talk about this urgent issue that faces us: climate change.

Climate disruption is an existential threat to our planet—an existential threat. Scientists recognize this, so do the American people, and so does the international community. One hundred ninety-four countries and the European Union have signed the Paris Agreement, and so did the United States.

Quite frankly, we shouldn't even have to argue this anymore, but for those who still don't see the evidence of climate change, it is all around us: a warming climate; record-breaking hurricanes off the Atlantic, the Gulf of Mexico, and in the Caribbean; unprecedented flooding in the Midwest; Native

villages in Alaska actually falling into the sea; and drought and the most severe wildfires in the West we have ever seen.

This is from a 2003 fire near the Taos Pueblo in New Mexico. We in New Mexico are on pins and needles every fire season now. We don't know what disaster will hit us. We know this climate catastrophe is caused by human activity. Report after report tells us we don't have any time to waste; that we need to act now.

Even this administration's most recent climate analysis finds that global warming “is transforming where and how we live and presents growing challenges to human health and the quality of life, the economy, and the natural systems that support us.” The report concludes we must act now “to avoid substantial damages to the U.S. economy, environment, and human health and well-being over the coming decades.”

That is coming from an administration of a climate change-denying President. Yet this administration has slashed and burned every protection, program, and agreement aimed at combating climate change it can find, from the Clean Power Plan to methane control regulations, to the Paris Agreement. I can tell you who in this Congress is the administration's No. 1 accomplice: the majority leader of the Senate. The leader's legislative graveyard is littered with legislation the American people want and deserve, from improving healthcare to reforming our democracy, to commonsense measures to prevent gun violence.

Climate change threatens the land, the lives, and the livelihoods of homeowners, small businesses, farmers, ranchers, fishers, and so many others all across the Nation. The majority leader's refusal to take up climate action is about as bad as congressional malfeasance gets.

In May, the House of Representatives passed the first major climate legislation in nearly a decade—the Climate Action Now Act. H.R. 9 aims to decrease greenhouse gas emissions by about one-quarter by 2025. The bill ensures the United States stays in the Paris Agreement.

This bill is not extreme, but it does respond to the dire situation we face. The Senate should debate this bill and pass it, but we will not. We all know the majority leader will continue to stand in its way.

Due to this negligence and inaction, States are filling the void and taking it upon themselves to act. My home State of New Mexico passed legislation this year aimed at transitioning to 100 percent carbon-free electricity. Our largest utility says they can do this by 2040. It is an approach that is consistent with the renewable electricity standard bill I introduced last month. That legislation is designed to achieve at least 50 percent renewable electricity nationwide in 15 years, putting the United States on a path for a zero carbon power sector by 2050.

The fact is, no American is immune from the threats of climate change, and many of our most underrepresented and vulnerable communities are at the greatest risk. For example, the most recent National Climate Assessment finds that Tribes and indigenous peoples are impacted disproportionately and uniquely. Many Native people's way of life is intimately tied to the land and water. These natural resources—that they have depended on for hundreds or even thousands of years—are being disrupted in ways that upend their communities. Their subsistence, their cultural practices, their sacred sites are all being threatened.

Look at the proximity of this fire to the Taos Pueblo. It is not only sacred to the Taos people, but it is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Last week, Senator SCHATZ and I wrote to American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian leaders seeking their input on how climate change is affecting their communities. We want to foster a dialogue about what actions Congress and Federal agencies should take to mitigate the impacts.

I am the vice chairman of the Indian Affairs Committee. Senator SCHATZ is the chair of the Special Committee on the Climate Crisis, and we were joined by all Democratic Senators on the Indian Affairs Committee. This effort should have been bipartisan—climate change is blind to political party—but it wasn't because too many Republican members just follow President Trump and the majority leader, killing anything aimed at progress.

The majority leader jokes that he is the grim reaper, sounding the death knell on legislation, but climate change is no laughing matter and neither is access to healthcare for millions of Americans, or our broken campaign finance system, or the safety of American schoolchildren.

The Senate must do its duty to the American people and tackle these most pressing problems. This does not mean rubberstamping legislation sent to us by the House. The Senate has a storied tradition of debate and compromise. Let's return to that tradition, have a real climate debate, and pass some real bipartisan solutions.

We all came to the Senate to solve problems—problems like climate change. We didn't come here to spend time in a legislative graveyard. We don't want to be a place where good ideas come to die.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Hawaii.

Mr. SCHATZ. Mr. President, Leader McCONNELL may, in fact, be proud that he has turned the Senate floor into a legislative graveyard, but that doesn't mean we Senators have abandoned our effort to make this body work for the American people.

Today the special committee on the climate crisis held its very first hearing, where we heard from five mayors from cities across the United States.

They told our committee that the average temperature in Atlanta has already increased 2 degrees since 1980; that 3 of St. Paul's 10 biggest floods ever recorded have happened in the last 10 years. So it is clear to them that climate change is not something that will happen eventually, in 5 or 10 or 20 years. It is happening now. It is happening in realtime.

That is why these mayors are not waiting for Leader MCCONNELL, or for the Trump administration, or anyone else to start doing something about it. Honolulu, St. Paul, Pittsburgh, Atlanta, Portland and cities and towns across the Nation are working to transition to 100 percent clean energy.

Atlanta is converting an abandoned quarry into a reservoir to increase the city's emergency drinking water supply. Portland, OR, has designated more than \$50 million for a green jobs and healthy homes initiative.

The experience of these mayors stands in contrast to some of the rhetoric we hear on the Senate floor and elsewhere about how climate action is somehow economically unwise.

The Portland mayor, Ted Wheeler, pointed out that his city's investments in reducing carbon emissions are the very things that make people want to live in Portland. He said in his testimony that "failing to take meaningful action to address climate change is bad for the economy."

That is why Senate Democrats are not going to wait for Republican colleagues—because the cost of climate inaction is so much higher than the cost of action. The damage that is being done to our cities, our farmers, our fisheries—and the risks that are threatening our workers, our small businesses, our financial industry, and our taxpayers—are too high for us to wait any longer. The benefits of action are way higher than the cost of inaction.

The Pittsburgh mayor, William Peduto, said today that if you want to turn a coal miner into an environmentalist, then give them a paycheck. If you want to turn a coal miner into an environmentalist, then give them a paycheck.

Hawaii isn't a coal mining State, but his words rang true to me because they illustrate the basic point, which is that climate action can, should, and will work for everybody.

So we are not going to let Majority Leader MCCONNELL stop us from taking action. He is certainly slowing us down, but he is not going to stop us.

Over the coming months, the Senate Democrats' special committee on the climate crisis will establish the predicate for climate action. Through hearings both in Congress and out in the field, we are going to build the record and the coalitions needed to move forward.

We are also going to keep an open door for our Republican colleagues to join us. There is a way to address the climate crisis that is consistent with

conservative principles. Senator WHITEHOUSE and I have introduced a carbon pricing bill that aligns with traditional conservative principles and has the support of Republicans outside of the U.S. Senate, but as long as Leader MCCONNELL keeps standing in the way of the Senate doing anything, as long as he has turned this body into a legislative graveyard—not just on climate but on healthcare, on prescription drug costs, on the cruelty shown to children and families on the southern border of the United States—then we are going to have to find other ways to act without it.

All of this stuff should be bipartisan, and one day it again will be, but right now we cannot wait. We will not wait. The severity of the climate crisis and the urgency for action are just too great.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I join my colleagues in bringing up the challenges of climate change and our responsibility to do something about it.

Climate change is real. It is putting our communities at risk. Our activities here on Earth are affecting climate change, and we can do something about it. By reducing carbon emissions, we can make a real difference in the trajectory of the catastrophic impact of climate change. I just want to give a couple examples.

Last Monday, we had record flash flooding in this region. In less than 1 hour, we had 1 month's worth of rain. That is becoming typical as a result of climate change. In our region, we saw streets that were flooded, sinkholes that developed, water pouring into our Metro stations, and roads that were literally ripped apart.

This shows one major road in Potomac, MD—not very far from here—that is critically important for a community to be connected. The road was destroyed by the record rainfall during that period of time.

We had CSX and Amtrak put high-speed restrictions on the rail service. In Baltimore, we had 1.3 million gallons of sewage from the Jones Falls river flow into the Inner Harbor, which produced a sight in the Inner Harbor of Baltimore that is truly regrettable.

This photo I think shows beautiful downtown Baltimore. It doesn't look very beautiful. That was just this past Monday and was as a result of the high amount of water flow and the inability of our sewage treatment facilities to treat that amount of runoff. We are just not prepared for it. It is another example of why we need to act.

We need to act now. Climate change is here. The catastrophic impacts are here, and we can do something about it.

Let me just make a couple of suggestions. We need to upgrade our stormwater systems in this country. We have a 21st-century problem with 20th-century infrastructure. It can't

handle it. We need to invest in adaptation and deal with the realities of the new weather systems we are confronting every day.

Yes, we have to act on climate change. As I said, it is real. Our activities are impacting it, and we could do something about it. There are many examples I could give that are affecting our lives. I have already shared some about some water. We have wildfires in the West. We have extreme weather conditions throughout. We have unprecedented concentration and frequency of rainfall in the mid-Atlantic, driven by climate change.

Studies have shown that tropical storms move more slowly, with much more precipitation. We saw that with Hurricanes Harvey and Irma in 2017 and Florence in 2018. All those were slower moving hurricanes, dropping a lot more water, saturating our inlands, and making it more difficult to deal with the next weather condition. We have warmer ocean temperatures that are making these storms more costly to our communities. We have what is known as compound flooding as a result of climate change—storm surges that hit our shorelines, which are already saturated by inland precipitation.

After Tropical Storm Barry, FEMA said: "Given [the] unprecedented magnitude of natural disasters over the past two years and the current projected path of the storm, a hurricane making landfall is likely to impact communities still working to recover from the previous event." That is how frequent we are going through flooding.

I will give another example of how much flooding we have had. In my region, in Baltimore, if you use the period from 1957 to 1963, that 6-year period, we had an average of 1.3 floods per year. If you use 2007 through 2013, we have had 13.1 floods per year. In Annapolis, those numbers are 3.8 floods in the 1957 through 1963 period, compared to 39 floods from 2007 to 2013. That is a tenfold increase in the number of flooding events.

This is an issue that is with us today. Thanks to climate change, Baltimore may feel more like the Mississippi Delta than Chesapeake Bay country.

Professor Matt Fitzpatrick at the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science published a study in February in the journal *Nature Communications* with Robert Dunn, an ecologist at North Carolina State University, to match cities with their climate counterparts in 2080. If we continue this trajectory, they predict that the average city will come to resemble climates more than 500 miles away, often to the south or west. Each one of our communities is going to be impacted by climate change if we do not take action to change the trajectory.

Like all States, Maryland has a very important agricultural community. As a farmer, it is difficult to make ends meet today, but with these extreme weather conditions, it becomes even more difficult.

It is in our economic interest, our environmental interest, as well as our security interest for us to deal with the climate issues. Unchecked, the sea level in Maryland coasts will rise. If we don't do anything about it in the next century, it is projected to be at least 16 inches and could be as high as 4 feet. We know the catastrophic impact to our coastal communities if we do not take action to prevent that from happening.

Our activities of reducing carbon emissions can make a difference, and we should do that now to reduce our use of fossil fuels.

Our States have acted. I am very proud of the actions we have seen from local governments and from the private sector. Nine Northeastern and Mid-Atlantic States, including Maryland, announced an intent of a new, regional, low-carbon transportation policy proposal. All are members of the Transportation and Climate Initiative. This is great. Our States are doing what we need to do.

But I just want to underscore what many of my colleagues have said. President Trump made the egregious decision to withdraw us from the Paris climate agreement. I was there when U.S. leadership was indispensable in bringing the world community together to take action. Every country in the world joined us in making commitments to reduce our carbon emissions. It was U.S. leadership. The President has withdrawn us from that agreement—or is attempting to do that. We can act. We are an independent branch.

I applaud the action of the House in passing H.R. 9, the Climate Action Now Act, but it has been 76 days since the House has taken action on this very important climate issue.

Senator SHAHEEN was on the floor earlier and has introduced S. 1743, the International Climate Accountability Act. The United States should meet its nationally determined contributions. We determine our own contributions. We should meet those contributions and join the international community in doing something about climate change.

So, yes, I do ask the majority leader to let the Senate do what we should do. Let us consider climate legislation. Let us debate and act on climate legislation. We shouldn't be the graveyard on these important issues. The Senate must stop denying action on important issues and do the right thing to meet the threat of climate change. It is real here today. I urge my colleagues to bring this issue up so that we can, in fact, do the responsible thing.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that at 11:30 a.m. on Thursday, July 18, the Senate vote on the Corker and Blanchard nominations and that if confirmed, the motions to reconsider be considered

made and laid upon the table and the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action; further, that following disposition of the Blanchard nomination, the Senate resume consideration of the Tapia nomination; finally, that at 1:45 p.m., the Senate vote on the Tapia nomination and that if confirmed, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table and the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to legislative session and be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

U.S. VICTIMS OF STATE SPONSORED TERRORISM FUND

Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, I commend my colleague from New York for his tireless work to ensure that the brave men and women who selflessly responded to the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, receive the compensation and care they deserve. Out of respect for his work and their sacrifice I do not want to hold up the passage of this bill. However, I think it is also important that we remember the other Americans who have suffered and lost loved ones at the hands of foreign terrorists. In 1979, a group of Americans were taken hostage from the U.S. Embassy in Tehran, Iran.

In 1981, after 444 days of torture, 52 of them were finally released. Years later, I had the opportunity to meet with several of these brave Americans who reside in my State. In 2015, I worked with my colleagues in this body to ensure that these victims, their families, and other victims of international terrorism were able to receive compensation through the creation of the U.S. Victims of State Sponsored Terrorism Fund. Congress was clear that this fund was created specifically to help the Tehran hostages and other victims of state-sponsored terrorism who were not eligible to participate in other compensation funds.

However, due to a misinterpretation of the statute, the fund has become overwhelmed. This year will mark the 40th anniversary of the Iran Hostage Crisis. Time is not on our side. People who have been waiting for decades are now dying without the compensation they were promised.

Will Senator SCHUMER work with me and Chairman GRAHAM to secure a solution to this problem in the next appropriate vehicle so that the Tehran

hostages and other victims of state-sponsored terrorism can finally receive their due?

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I promise to work with Senator ISAKSON to ensure that the Tehran hostages receive the compensation they deserve and provide equitable treatment for all victims of terrorism.

AFFORDABLE CARE ACT

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, on October 22, 2018, the Departments of Health and Human Services and the Treasury issued a document, entitled State Relief and Empowerment Waivers, relating to section 1332 of the Affordable Care Act and its implementing regulations.

Although it was not submitted to Congress for review under the Congressional Review Act, CRA, this so-called guidance document seemed to me to be a substantive rule that should be subject to review under the CRA. Accordingly, I wrote a letter, along with Chairman PALLONE of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, asking the U.S. Government Accountability Office, GAO, to determine whether the CRA applied.

This week, I received a reply, in which the GAO general counsel concludes that the 2018 guidance "is a rule under the CRA, which requires that it be submitted to Congress for review."

I ask unanimous consent that the letter from GAO, dated July 15, 2019, be printed in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD following my remarks. The letter I am now submitting to be printed in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD is the original document provided by GAO to my office. I will also provide a copy of the GAO letter to the Parliamentarian's office.

Based on Senate precedent, my understanding is that the publication of the GAO legal opinion in today's RECORD will start the "clock" for congressional review under the provisions of the CRA.

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

U.S. GOVERNMENT
ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE,
Washington, DC, July 15, 2019.

Subject: Department of Health and Human Services and Department of the Treasury—Applicability of the Congressional Review Act to State Relief and Empowerment Waivers

Hon. RON WYDEN,
Ranking Member, Committee on Finance,
U.S. Senate.

Hon. FRANK PALLONE, Jr.,
Chairman, Committee on Energy and Commerce,
House of Representatives.

This responds to your request for our legal opinion as to whether guidance issued by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the Department of the Treasury (Treasury) on October 22, 2018, entitled "State Relief and Empowerment Waivers" (2018 Guidance), is a rule for purposes of the Congressional Review Act (CRA). Letter from Ranking Member of the Committee on