

was presumptively caused or not by the exposure I had.

I am just telling you as one who, if I wanted to, could take a benefit from this end run. I am not going to do it because I think it is time, as chairman of the committee—that it is time we make sure that every benefit we promise veterans, that we have the money to do it so we don't spend too much money on other benefits and leave ourselves short for theirs.

I object to the motion.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. BROWN. Senator ISAKSON knows this is no sort of false kind of flattery. He knows how much I think of him. He runs the most bipartisan committee in the Senate. I have been honored to be on it my entire 13 years in this body. No Ohioan ever served on this committee as long as I have. I consider that a privilege, No. 1, and an opportunity to pay people back.

I didn't serve in the military. I know Senator ISAKSON did. President Trump had deferments from Vietnam. He didn't serve in the military. I think that maybe perhaps, because I didn't serve in the military, I should work a little bit harder to make sure those people, most of whom are older than I by a little bit, during the Vietnam war—that they be treated better than they were by the country and by the public upon their return from Vietnam; that they, in this case, get the benefit of the doubt and the history of what happened with Agent Orange.

You may remember years and years ago, veterans—people who had fought in Vietnam and had been exposed to Agent Orange—had to prove, initially, case by case, why they got sick, which was darn near impossible, especially when you are sick, trying to do that and go through that pain.

Congress, on a bipartisan basis, did the right thing back then. They put a list of these illnesses together that exposure to Agent Orange was likely responsible for. If you had one of these illnesses and you were boots on the ground in Vietnam, you automatically qualified. You didn't have to fight in court. You didn't have to get lawyers or do any of that. That was then.

Now, even though Secretary Shulkin—and I don't know how many Secretaries have come and gone. The President can't seem to keep Secretaries of the VA or staff of the VA because of the erratic policy he follows with veterans. The President of the United States goes to New York and makes a great speech about veterans, and we all applaud that, but then he is not willing to give them the benefit of the doubt. These are four illnesses Secretary Shulkin thought—you heard the term I used earlier, which is the term he used—he used the term about these conditions that it was "imperative" that we do something.

I understand as well as anybody how important it is to protect taxpayers. I also remember less than 2 years ago

that Congress gave a tax cut—hundreds of billions of dollars, and 70 percent of it went to the richest 1 percent of people in this country—and we can't come up with a few billion dollars to help veterans who are dying from these four illnesses? We can't expand this list and give them healthcare as we try to comfort them at the VA in Cleveland and Dayton and Cincinnati and Columbus and in Atlanta—all over? This is no end run around process. These aren't four illnesses I heard somebody talk about in Steubenville or Cleveland that ought to be covered. These are four illnesses the VA has looked at, the scientific community has looked at, the medical community has looked at, and Secretary Shulkin—who served as Secretary of the VA, appointed by President Trump, initially was acting under President Obama—we can't give them the benefit of the doubt? This is no end run. We can't give them the benefit of the doubt and say, yes, we should cover this. I hope the chairman of the Veterans' Committee—that at some point we can sit down and talk and he can reconsider.

Why do we think we need to protect President Trump, who, like me, didn't serve in the military? For me, it—I will not get into that. But why can't we help these veterans and give them the benefit of the doubt, cover these illnesses, and move forward with the VA taking care of people the way we should?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Dakota.

#### UNITED STATES-MEXICO-CANADA AGREEMENT

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, it has now been 13 months since the administration concluded negotiations on the United States-Mexico-Canada Free Trade Agreement. It has been 13 months of uncertainty for U.S. farmers and ranchers, manufacturers, small businesses, digital firms, financial institutions, and many others. It has been 13 months of wondering what the rules of the road on trade are going to look like going forward.

We should have passed the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement months ago. The Republicans in the Senate have been ready to take up this agreement for a long time, but trade agreements have to be considered by the House of Representatives first, and the House of Representatives is controlled by the Democratic Party, which is far more interested in partisan pursuits than in actually doing any meaningful legislating.

While the House Democrats are happy to consider far-left messaging bills that have no chance of going anywhere, they have no interest in working with the Republicans to actually get something signed into law. Why? The Democrats have convinced themselves that partisan posturing is more important than securing a bipartisan legislative victory, like a strong, new trade deal that will benefit the American economy. So they are currently opposing a trade agreement that would benefit millions of American workers.

Let's be very clear. The Democrats' decision to prioritize partisan politics is having real consequences for the American people. Right now, the members of our military are unable to fund new priorities because the Senate Democrats are blocking the consideration of Defense appropriations. Farmers and ranchers in my home State of South Dakota and around the country are struggling, but the House Democrats refuse to move forward on a trade deal—the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement—that would bring them relief.

Thanks to low commodity and livestock prices, natural disasters, and protracted trade disputes, farmers and ranchers have had a tough few years, and one of the biggest things we can do to help them is to take action on trade. Our Nation's farmers and ranchers depend on trade.

When I talk to farmers and ranchers at home in South Dakota, they emphasize that the most important thing Washington can do to boost our agricultural economy is to take action on trade agreements. Farmers and ranchers need access to new and expanded markets for their products, and, just as importantly, they need certainty about what international markets are going to look like going forward.

The United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement would help to meet those needs. It would preserve and expand farmers' access to two critical export markets, and it would give farmers certainty about what these markets will look like long term.

I am particularly pleased with the improvements the agreement makes for dairy producers. South Dakota has experienced a major dairy expansion over the past few years, and this agreement will benefit U.S. dairy producers by substantially expanding market access in Canada, where U.S. dairy sales have been restricted. In fact, the U.S. International Trade Commission estimates the agreement will boost U.S. dairy exports by more than \$277 million.

The agreement will expand market access for U.S. poultry and egg producers, and it will make it easier for U.S. producers to export wheat to Canada.

Of course, the benefits for the agricultural industry are just one part of this agreement. From manufacturing to digital services, to the automotive industry, virtually every sector of our economy will benefit from the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement. The USMCA breaks new ground by including a chapter specifically focused on small and medium-sized businesses. It is the first time that a U.S. trade agreement has ever included a dedicated chapter on this topic. Roughly, 120,000 small and medium-sized businesses around our country export goods and services to Mexico and to Canada. The USMCA will make it easier for these businesses to successfully export their products.

It would be nice if the House Democrats woke up tomorrow and decided that 13 months was long enough to make America's farmers and ranchers and manufacturers and small business men wait for the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement, but my hopes of seeing action from the House grow dimmer each day.

The Democrats in the House should be addressing the American people's priorities. American workers shouldn't be sacrificed for the Democrats' partisan political goals. I hope that enough of my Democratic colleagues in the House of Representatives will urge their House leadership to bring up the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement in the very near future. Americans have waited long enough.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CRAMER). The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I appreciate Senator THUNE's comments about the USMCA. Some might call it NAFTA 1.6. It just doesn't do very much. I was not in this body when NAFTA passed. I was down the hall in the House of Representatives. I voted against it.

I saw what NAFTA did to my State and what it did to our country in the number of lost manufacturing jobs. States in the industrial Midwest still have not recovered from that legislation, from that trade agreement—the North American Free Trade Agreement. During the Clinton administration, I opposed the President of my own party on this. In the Bush administration, the other party pushed the one for Central America. There was one after another after another of these trade agreements, and we see the lost jobs. President Trump made a huge campaign promise that he was going to do something about it, and this agreement simply doesn't do it.

We have talked to the U.S. Trade Representative repeatedly about enforcing labor standards. The whole point of fixing this agreement is so that companies will not shut down in Mansfield, in Zanesville, and in Lima, OH, and move to Mexico to build plants there and sell the products back to the United States. Yet do you know what is happening? Even the USMCA has no language in it that is going to stop the outsourcing of jobs. So, if this Congress moves on the USMCA, you can bet that month after month after month, we are going to lose manufacturing jobs, that the business plan of shutting down production in Ohio, in Rhode Island, in North or South Dakota, or in Montana will continue, and that the USMCA will not do anything about it.

This is the same President who went to Youngstown, OH, as Lordstown was about to shut down, and said: Don't sell your homes. We are going to bring those jobs back.

No, we aren't. GM moved more and more jobs to Mexico at the same time it shut down the GM plant in Lordstown, OH. There were 4,500 jobs lost. This USMCA is simply a

wallpapering over of an agreement. It doesn't do what you have to do to stop the outsourcing of jobs.

I look at trade agreements in one way. Does it mean more jobs in our country or does it mean fewer jobs? The USMCA will do nothing to stem the tide of jobs that are moving to Mexico. That is why we should go back to the table and include the Brown-Wyden amendment on labor enforcement—language that will, in fact, mean there will be more prosperity in both countries.

I thank Senator WHITEHOUSE for yielding the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I am not going to be that long. I ask unanimous consent to speak for up to half an hour as in morning business.

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

#### TRIBUTE TO ADENA LEIBMAN

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, today is my 258th "Time to Wake Up" speech, and I want to use this occasion to take us back to our oceans.

Before I get into the substance of my remarks, I note that this will be the last "Time to Wake Up" speech during which Adena Leibman will be with me. She has been closely involved in all of my office's oceans work. She has, indeed, led it. She came to my office as a Knauss fellow.

We loved Dean Knauss in Rhode Island. He was the dean of the Graduate School of Oceanography at the University of Rhode Island. In working with Senator Pell, he helped to launch NOAA, helped to start the Sea Grant Program, and was extremely significant in the ocean work of our government. So one being a Knauss fellow—one of the Knauss legacies—is a really big deal and is a particularly big deal in Rhode Island.

Adena has been coordinating the oceans work now for 4 years and has also been coordinating our appropriations work. In the time that Adena has been working on this, the bipartisan Oceans Caucus, which Senator MURKOWSKI and I established, has grown to 40 Members. It is very bipartisan. It is very effective. We set it up as a working caucus, and it is working.

Adena helped us get the Coastal Resilience Fund passed into law. It is now producing tens of millions of dollars in grants for coastal communities that need the support as sea levels rise.

She helped to get the Save Our Seas Act passed. That was a unanimous effort. DAN SULLIVAN, of Alaska, was a remarkable partner in all of that. The participants in that included leaders from landlocked States. Senator INHOFE was a real leader on that bill. We had such a good time with it that we are now working on Save Our Seas 2.0, which today came through the Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee after having passed the Foreign Relations Committee unanimously and the Environment and

Public Works Committee unanimously. We are hoping that soon we will be able to organize the floor consideration of it and, perhaps, pass it by unanimous consent in the way we did with the Save Our Seas Act. The work of all of that progress in those committees and the negotiating of Save Our Seas 2.0 was led by Adena.

Lastly, this week, I started going around to collect cosponsors for Senator MURKOWSKI's and my BLUE GLOBE Act, which is the ocean data monitoring bill that we have worked on and are now ready to launch. An enormous amount of preparatory work goes into getting that ready—getting supporters lined up and doing all of the work of cross-referencing the different points of view—and getting a bill that we also hope stands a good chance of passing this body by unanimous consent. So I give the speech with gratitude to Adena for her work.

#### CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. President, the oceans send a clear and consistent signal about climate change, and it is a signal that has been untainted by fossil fuel industry propaganda attacks that have been problematic in other areas. The signals are untainted for good reason, because it is hard to dispute sea level rise measured with tide gauges all around the country. It is hard to dispute acidification that is measured with the kind of pH test kit that a middle school science classroom has, and it is hard to dispute rising ocean temperatures that are measured with that complex, analytical device—the thermometer. Even the fossil fuel industry has trouble fouling the climate signals from our oceans.

The recent "Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate" confirms through grim data that the health of our oceans is in rapid decline, and it confirms that these changes are caused not by nature but by man. Headlines extracted from the report are pretty alarming.

These are quotes: "The global ocean . . . has taken up more than 90 percent of the excess heat in the climate system."

" . . . the rate of ocean warming has more than doubled."

"Marine heatwaves . . . are increasing in intensity."

" . . . the ocean has undergone increasing ocean acidification."

" . . . mean sea level is rising. . . ."

"Increases in tropical cyclone winds and rainfall . . . increases in extreme waves . . . extreme sea level events and coastal hazards."

" . . . multiple climate-related hazards. . . ."

As if that is not enough, "the ocean is projected to transition to unprecedented conditions."

It is a grim warning.

Look at acidification. Ocean acidification is a chemical phenomenon. It is not deniable. You can replicate it in a middle school science lab. You can demonstrate it with your breath and a