

What the chairman has laid on the table is reasonable. The committee has talked about it for years. Now it is time to act. It is not time to act on one little piece of it for temporary funding. It is time to provide permanent funding for that and to do the rest of higher education.

As proud as I am of our being the home of the majority of Black colleges and universities, I also have about 70 other colleges and universities in North Carolina, and they are the beneficiaries of everything else that is in this education bill.

Compromise is not about "Take what I have" and not give anything else. We have been trying to work, with the chairman and the ranking member working together, to find compromise for 5 years. Many times the chairman has come to me and said: I think we can do it this year. Well, we have to have willing partners on the other side of the aisle. Today is a live example of where it is either their way or no way.

I hope we can get back, and, before we leave this year, we can get this package passed. It is really simple: Just commit to do what we all have sat down and talked about for 5 years. If there are minor changes that need to be made, let's make them in the next day or two. But to say that we are going to wait until next year and be here a year from now when that timeframe has run out, let me assure you, if the chairman is not here to object to this request, I will be here to object to this request.

The time to talk is over. The time to act is now.

I thank the chairman for yielding.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Pennsylvania.

Mr. CASEY. Just a couple of points on where we are: There is no question that, in my judgment, if you have more time to consider these issues for a full reauthorization, we could address some of the shortcomings that have been proposed already. I mentioned earlier issues that are not addressed, such as childcare, housing, food and mental health, the needs of first-generation students, needs of students of color, and students with disabilities. We can do that if we can get through this short-term period. We are asking for help only for a very limited timeframe so that we can work through these other issues.

The second point I would make is, I can't stand in the shoes of the leaders of these institutions, but when they tell us that they are in a difficult circumstance in the short run, I will take their word for it. The word of the Department of Education—just from my point of view—doesn't compare to what these institutions are telling us. So I think we should rely upon the representations by the leaders of the institutions and act in a short-term fashion, all the while committing ourselves to have a longer process to fully explore and try to reach consensus on a range of issues that come under the broad purview of reauthorization.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. ALEXANDER. I want to thank the Senator from Pennsylvania for coming to the floor today on an issue I know he cares about. I thank the Senator from North Carolina.

We are accustomed to working together. We are accustomed to getting results, and I want to get a result on this.

I agree with both Senators in this sense: I think it is time to send a signal to historically Black colleges and minority-serving institutions that they don't have to worry about funding for the future. For the next year, the Department of Education has told them: You have the money for the next year. It shouldn't take us a year to finish our work.

So I look forward to sitting down with the Senator from North Carolina and the Senator from Pennsylvania and working out their differences on the provisions that we have. We have the basis for a very good higher education bill—the permanent funding for historically Black colleges, the simplification of the FAFSA, which affects 20 million families every year. We have broad bipartisan consensus on simplifying how you pay back student loans. There are nine different ways now. We could reduce that to two. That affects 43 million families.

The short-term Pell grants make a big difference.

So we have a number of provisions, and I am working well, as I always do, with the Senator from Washington, Mrs. MURRAY. I would like to bring this to a conclusion as rapidly as we can. I think this debate has been useful to do that. I look forward to continuing it.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, for this 259th climate speech, I am going to return to the theme of corruption. Before diving into the how, let's start with the why because the scale and the remorselessness of the scheme of corruption the fossil fuel industry has run is hard to comprehend without understanding why.

Here is the why. The fossil fuel industry reaps the biggest subsidy in the history of the planet. I will say that again. The fossil fuel industry reaps the biggest subsidy in the history of the planet. The IMF—International Monetary Fund—estimates that the global subsidy for fossil fuel is in the trillions of dollars every year. That is globally. In the United States alone, the fossil fuel industry got a \$650 billion—that is with a "b"—subsidy in 2015, according to the most recent report from the IMF. That is about \$2,000 out of the pocket of every man, woman, and child in the United States. Here is that IMF report. Look it up. Read it and weep.

Stop for a minute and understand this subsidy. Some of it is favorable

tax deals and other direct subsidies that pour public taxpayer money into the pockets of this polluting industry. In recent years, that has been estimated at around \$20 billion annually.

The vast bulk of this \$650 billion is something else. It is people getting hurt. It is the cost of people suffering economic harms. It is the cost of your home burned in a wildfire or swept away in a storm by rising seas. It is the cost of farms withered from unprecedented droughts or crops drowned in unprecedented flooding. It is the cost of fisheries that are lost or moved away as oceans warm and acidify. It is the lost day of work with your kid in the emergency room waiting out a climate-related asthma attack on the ER's nebulizer. It is the cost of tick-borne and mosquito-borne illnesses that didn't used to be where you live. It is the cost to dive tours of tourists seeing dead, white, bleached coral reefs instead of vibrant undersea gardens and the cost to snowmobile moose tours of going through mud instead of snow and when you see moose, seeing emaciated moose calves with thousands of ticks slowly killing them. It is the cost of American military deployments to conflicts caused by resource scarcity or climate migration. It is the cost of relocating Naval Station Norfolk when the community around it floods out. It is the cost of Glacier Park with no glacier. It is the cost of trout streams with no trout. It is the cost of millions of acres of healthy forests killed off by pine beetle infestation. It is the cost to Phoenix of staffing up emergency services when it is not safe to work outside because it is too hot and lost airline flights out of the airport when the tarmac melts. It is the myriad costs of basic operating systems of the natural world gone haywire because of climate change.

All this pain, all this loss, all this suffering has a bloodless economic name: externalities. Externalities are the social costs that are imposed on others by the use of a product. Pollution, of course, is the obvious example. In economic theory, those social costs should be baked into the price of a product. That is why courts and companies and countries around the world apply a social cost of carbon calculation.

But destroying the basic operating systems of the planet is a high-priced externality—by the IMF report, \$650 billion in 2015 just in the United States. And because it is hard to calculate a price for so much of this harm, that is a lowball estimate. For instance, we can estimate the loss to the dive shop of the coral reef off the coast dying, but is that really the full cost of the dead reef? There is a lot more. So the externality is probably well over \$650 billion.

By comparison, let's look at the five major oil companies' earnings. The five major oil companies earned somewhat more than \$80 billion in profits last year all around the world, all right?

Global profits are \$80 billion versus \$650 billion in destruction and harm they caused just in the United States. So make those oil companies follow the rules of market economics. Make them put the cost of the harm of their product into the price of their product—\$80 billion versus \$650 billion—and guess what: Their business is in a \$570-plus billion hole. That is why the fossil fuel industry is so corrupt. It knows it needs to break the laws of market economics in order to survive, and it knows it needs political help to do that.

Fortunately for the fossil fuel industry, up against that \$650 billion subsidy, politicians come cheap. They could put \$650 million into politics every single year, and it would earn them a 1,000-to-1 return on that expenditure protecting the \$650 billion subsidy.

So that is the why of fossil fuel corruption: It pays. It pays hugely. It is as simple as that. They are corrupt because it pays.

Now let's look at the how.

By the way, they have some expertise in this area. These companies operate in the most crooked countries in the world, so they know how to work crooked deals and politics. But what happened here in the United States? Well, I saw it happen. The big change came when five Republican Supreme Court Justices gave this industry and other mega industries big new political artillery. It came in the disgraceful Citizens United decision that let unlimited special interest money into our elections.

I will tell you, there is no special interest more unlimited than fossil fuel. Fossil fuel front groups were all over that Supreme Court case, by the way, signaling to the five Republicans on the Court what they wanted them to do, and sure enough, they did it.

Of course, it does take some fun out of spending unlimited money in politics if people can tell who you are. In theory, we were supposed to know. To get to the outcome the fossil fuel industry wanted, the five Republican Justices had to pretend, as a legal matter, that all this political spending—all this unlimited political spending they were authorizing—was going to be transparent, that we would know who was behind it.

Well, that transparency was not going to work very well for Exxon or Koch Industries or Marathon Petroleum, so they cooked up all sorts of schemes to hide behind. Tax-deductible 501(c)(4)s appeared that can hide their donors. Trade groups like the U.S. Chamber of Commerce got taken over and co-opted. Disposable shell corporations turned up behind political donations. An enterprise called Donors Trust was established, whose sole purpose is to launder the identity of big donors.

By the way—back to Citizens United—those five Republican Justices would have to be idiots not to see this

apparatus of phony front groups out there mocking their assurances of transparency—assurances that were at the heart of the Citizens United decision—but those Justices have studiously ignored this flagrantly obvious flaw and have made zero effort to clean up their unlimited-spending, dark-money mess. I was taught as a kid that you are supposed to clean up the messes you made. That is not a message that got through to the ‘Roberts Five.’

We have addressed this flotilla of propped-up, dark-money front groups in the Senate before. We call it the web of denial. Academics who study these groups have documented well over 100 of them in the last decade. That sounds like a lot—100 front groups—but remember, there is \$650 billion a year riding on this. And it is a really big help if you can pretend you are, say, Americans for Peace and Puppies and Prosperity instead of ExxonMobil or the Kochs or Marathon Petroleum. People tend to get the joke when the ad says: Brought to you by ExxonMobil.

So they have the motive and the means to spend millions of political dollars and to do so from hiding. How much do they spend? Well, that is hard to tell because the whole purpose is to hide. Responsible watchdogs won't even venture a guess as to how much dark money is sloshing through the political system, but total dark money spending on Federal elections has been at least \$700 million since the Citizens United decision, according to the Center for Responsive Politics. The lion's share of that dark money is probably from fossil fuels because, first, nobody else has the same corrupt motive on the scale of fossil fuel. Plus, when you look at the spending, it is usually groups who can be connected to fossil fuel. And for most, the activity is climate denial and obstruction, so it is fossil fuel work being done. So it is pretty easy to conclude who is likely behind all this.

For colleagues who weren't here before 2010, let me tell you, things were different then. In 2007, 2008, and 2009—those were my first 3 years here—there were lots of bipartisan climate bills kicking around the Senate, real ones that would have headed off the crisis into which we are rocketing right now. Heck, in 2008, the Republican nominee for President ran on a strong climate platform.

After the Citizens United decision in January of 2010, all of that was snuffed out. An oily curtain of denial fell around the Republican Party as the fossil fuel industry brought its new political weapons to bear. The before and after comparison is as plain as day, and it cost us a decade of inaction when time was of the essence. It has been a high cost except, of course, for the fossil fuel industry, whose lying and denying, whose front groups and dark money, whose political obstruction and threats still remain fully dedicated to protecting that \$650 billion subsidy.

Do the math just for a second. At \$650 billion a year, from January 2010 until now, Citizens United let the fossil fuel industry protect nearly \$6 trillion in subsidy—\$6 trillion in losses to our constituents, \$6 trillion that this industry dodged in the laws of market economics to foist on everyone else—and you wonder why they worked so hard to take over the courts.

The fossil fuels' denial operation and obstruction operation is likely the biggest and most corrupt scheme in human history. I can't think of one that is worse, and it is still operating today—right now—as I stand here and speak. Its oily tides pollute our public debate with deliberate falsehoods and nonsense, grease our press to steer away from this subject, slosh slimily through the hallways of this very building, and grip the Supreme Court in a web of oily, dark money influence. We have become like the people who have lived in the shadows for so long and have forgotten what sunlight, what free debate, what laws based on facts can look like.

The fossil fuel industry has polluted our American democracy on as massive a scale as it has polluted our atmosphere and oceans. For those in our history who gave up their lives—who died in the service of our democracy—who are looking down on us now, that pollution of the democracy they died defending must be a bitter spectacle.

As a boy, there was an ominous hymn that we often sang in chapel about how “once to every man and nation comes the moment to decide, in the strife of Truth with Falsehood, for the good or evil side.” “Truth,” the hymn went on, is “forever on the scaffold, wrong forever on the throne,” but “though the cause of Evil prosper, yet ‘tis Truth alone is strong.”

Now is our moment to decide: Do we finally bring down fossil fuels' false Babylon of corruption or, in the strife of truth with falsehood, do we keep protecting the evil side?

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

FREEDOM AROUND THE WORLD

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. President, it really has been quite a year here in Washington for drawn-out policy battles. It is November, and we are still fighting over defense spending, trade, and the results of an election long since decided in 2016.

A quick flip through this morning's world news sections serves as my daily reminder that Americans really do have so much for which to be thankful. One might even feel inclined to say we are really lucky to live here in the United States. Yet I will tell you that luck really doesn't have a lot to do with it. Our freedom was bought with the blood of thousands who instigated a revolution in spite of being outspent, outmanned, and outgunned by the global superpower of their time, and thank goodness they had that fighting spirit. That same absolute belief in the