

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

right to self-determination went on to fuel the abolitionists, the women's suffragists, and the civil rights warriors. Their fearlessness inspires freedom movements that we are seeing all across the globe today.

Just a few months ago, heads turned toward China as thousands of Hong Kong people poured into the streets and said no to Beijing's stranglehold, but just saying no wasn't enough. Now their neighborhoods and universities have morphed into war zones, and Chinese authorities have long since justified shooting live rounds of ammunition into the crowds.

Imagine the intensity of the fear it takes to push a government to fire on its own people when the entire world is watching. Beijing is worried, but Beijing will also not hesitate to use any force it deems necessary to tighten its grip on Hong Kong.

Now, here in the Senate, we are working on a few pieces of legislation to let the Chinese and the Hong Kong Governments know that the United States is watching. We have included a bill that will prevent U.S. companies from exporting crowd control supplies to the Hong Kong Police Force. It is important, though, for everyone to understand that the motivating factors behind political oppression have nothing to do with tear gas or with stun guns. There is only so much that legislation can do.

Governments in Iraq, Vietnam, Algeria, and Lebanon are also hard at work in doing whatever they can to prevent their citizens from stepping out of line, because they know what will happen if their citizens are free to criticize the state, and they are terrified of losing power.

This month, the entire world looks toward Central Europe to commemorate the fall of the Berlin Wall. When East Berliners first stepped into the western half of their city, they revealed to the rest of the world the horrors of living under a political regime that sustained itself by consuming the autonomy of its subjects. History serves as an enduring warning against the dangers of the all-powerful state.

As we watch mass protests play out a half a world away, many Americans still see social chaos not as a symptom of a disease but as a spontaneous expression of some nebulous desire to be free. They don't stop to recall what sparked the first feelings of unease long before the Molotov cocktails started flying through the air.

This is why, here in the United States, my colleagues in the majority have forced many conversations on the perils of degrading the foundations of our Republic. We have debated ad nauseam the Constitution's place in civil and legal discourse, asking: Does it provide a workable standard or is it just an outdated piece of paper now rendered illegitimate by the male whiteness of its drafters? I think the Presiding Officer knows my response.

We defend the Constitution and the system of government it created be-

cause we know, from studying history and from observing current events, that freedom does not suddenly expire. Freedom begins to wither the moment those in power convince themselves that a reprieve from uncomfortable policy debates over speech, self-defense, or the size of government will be worth the risk of shelving the standards that protect individual liberty.

The current blasé tolerance and, in some cases, incomprehensible enthusiasm for socialism and other authoritarian philosophies is sending a strong message to the rest of the world that the standard for global freedom is up for debate. If we acquiesce to the argument that America's founding principles have passed their expiration date, we will have failed as a people and as a world leader. That failure will change the course of our history, and it will be used as a weapon to quash dissent elsewhere in the world.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

#### HONG KONG HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY ACT OF 2019

Mr. RUBIO. Mr. President, in a moment here, as my colleagues gather, we hope to pass the Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act.

I first acknowledge all of the people who worked so hard on it—our staffs, obviously, and, in addition, Senators CARDIN, RISCH, MENENDEZ, and over 50 cosponsors, many of whom will join us here this evening. I also thank Leaders McCONNELL and SCHUMER for their support in helping us get here. I thank Chairman CRAPO, who has helped us make some important changes at the end that will make the sanctions easier to implement.

A lot of people have been watching on the news the protests that have been going on in Hong Kong and are wondering as to, perhaps, the depths of what it is all about.

When the United Kingdom handed Hong Kong over to China, they signed an agreement that is known as the Joint Declaration. It basically guarantees a high degree of autonomy and freedom of the people of Hong Kong. As a result of that agreement, the United States has treated commerce and trade with Hong Kong differently than it has its commercial and trade activity with the mainland of China. What has happened over the last few years is the steady effort, on the part of Chinese authorities, to erode that autonomy and those freedoms.

The most recent protests really began with a proposal to pass an extradition law that would allow the Chinese Government to basically have arrested and extradite someone in Hong Kong over to the mainland. There was a huge pushback against that, and protests emerged as a result of it. Even though the Government of Hong Kong has pulled out from pursuing that law, the protests have continued because

the people of Hong Kong have seen what is coming. They see the steady effort to erode their autonomy and their freedoms.

The response by the Hong Kong authorities, with its having been under tremendous pressure from Beijing, has been that of violence and repression. So far, over 5,000 people have been arrested in Hong Kong. The youngest has been 12 years of age. The oldest has been 82. Hundreds more have been injured by violence committed by police authorities but also by street gangs—criminals, thugs—who have been empowered and encouraged by the Chinese authorities.

This effort by China to exert control and remove autonomy continues unabated. Here are some examples. There was a law that was passed that banned wearing masks, and a Hong Kong court ruled that the ban was unconstitutional. The so-called National People's Congress in Beijing today ruled that Hong Kong courts have no authority—no power—to review Hong Kong Government legislation. Under pressure from Beijing, the Government of Hong Kong threatened to cancel the November 24 elections—elections, by the way, that China has been interfering in. China has pushed to ban critics, like Joshua Wong, from running. Seven candidates who are running have been attacked by street gangs during this campaign, and two candidates have been arrested while campaigning.

And now for the latest move, China is pushing the Hong Kong Government to pass what they call the new national security law—a law that would allow them to arrest political critics and opponents. If this passes, if that happens, that is the very definition of control and *de facto* proof of all loss of autonomy.

By the way, China is also pushing for something very ominous. They call it patriotic education. What China is really pushing for in Hong Kong is moving from “one country, two systems” to “one country, one system”—the Chinese system.

So the bill that we will bring up here in a moment, with tremendous bipartisan support, requires five quick things that I will touch on.

First, its most important element is that it requires the Secretary of State to annually certify whether Hong Kong warrants being treated differently than China. If Hong Kong is no longer autonomous—and that is the rationale for different treatment—then, they should no longer receive that treatment.

It says that students in Hong Kong shouldn't be barred from entering the United States or getting a visa to study here, for example, because they have been the subject of a politically motivated arrest or detention.

It says that for the next 7 years, the Secretary of Commerce is going to report on whether export controls and sanction laws are being enforced by the Government of Hong Kong or whether