

these young pages—whom I am looking at now—is way, way too much carbon dioxide in our atmosphere. It is getting worse, not getting better. The greatest source of carbon emissions on our planet are emissions from our cars, trucks, and vans.

The last administration negotiated a 50-State deal, which would have reduced emissions from mobile sources dramatically in the years to come. This administration broke away from it. They walked away from it. The last administration negotiated a rule regulation to dramatically reduce emissions from the second greatest source of carbon emissions in this country and from our utilities: coal-fired utilities, primarily. If you add together the reduction in carbon dioxide emissions going forward from our mobile sources negotiated by the last administration and negotiated in a regulation called the Clean Power Plan, they would provide almost half of the emission reductions by 2050 that we need—almost half. This administration walked away from both.

The last administration argued that rather than always be threatening war with Iran and doing these proxy wars with Iran, maybe what we should focus on is the main thing. A friend used to advise me. He said: TOM, the main thing is keep the main thing the main thing. The reason why we negotiated the JCPOA deal with Iran was to deter Iran from developing and having nuclear weapons that could create a nuclear arms race in the Middle East and put them and, I think, the rest of our planet, literally, at risk. Under the agreement negotiated with Iran and six other nations—including the United States, the Brits, the French, the Germans, the Russians, the Chinese—under the agreement, the Iranians had to agree to stand down, to slow down much of their nuclear enrichment that could actually lead to nuclear weapons. They had to agree to intrusive inspections by the IAEA, the international watchdog for atomic energy. In return for their willingness to do those things, we would reduce the very harsh sanctions that had been put in place by the last administration—very harsh economic sanctions.

The Iranians did what they agreed to do. They stood down their development. They opened up their facilities to intrusive inspections by the IAEA for the last 4 years. There were almost 20 different rounds of inspections, each of which came to the same conclusion: Iran, whether we like it or not, whether we like their leaders or not, kept their word. Some of us remember what Ronald Reagan used to talk about. He used to say that in terms of doing nuclear deals with the Russians—the Soviets—he used to say: “Trust but verify.”

Well, what we did with the Iran deal was mistrust or distrust. We didn't trust them, but we would verify that they were keeping their word. Whether we like it or not, surprisingly, they

did, until this administration came along and walked away from that agreement, which was working. It imposed even harsher sanctions on Iran and led us to, really, where we are today.

Again, Tom Friedman, who gave us the Trump doctrine: Barack built it. I, Trump broke it. You fix it. This is just another example of that happening. We shouldn't be surprised by the events of the past week. It didn't have to be that way. It didn't have to be that way.

I think in the country of Iran, half of the people are under the age of 25. They were never born when the original Ayatollah was in charge, and they had the Iranian revolution. The younger people there would like a better relationship with us. They have elections there, too, where people can actually show up and vote—men and women—vote for municipal elections, for mayors, city councils, and so forth, for Parliament—their Congress is called the Parliament—for their President. I think the last time they voted was 3 years ago. You know which forces gained votes? They don't have Democrats or Republicans over there. They have hard-liners, and they have moderates. The moderates gained election victories in mayoral elections across the country and city council elections across the country. The moderates picked up a lot of votes in the Parliament. The hard-liners lost votes.

The actions of this administration over the last 3 years have pushed Iranian voters, including a lot of young people, away from supporting the moderates in their Nation and pushed them into the arms of the radical extremists, the hard-liners. It didn't have to be that way. It didn't have to be that way.

I don't know how we put this mess back together again, but we need to. I am not sure. I don't have a lot of confidence that this administration is going to be able to do that, given their track record over the last 3 years—at least on this issue.

NOMINATION OF PAUL J. RAY

Madam President, let me talk about Paul Ray. Paul Ray is a bright young man. He is the kind of person I think most of us would say: He ought to be in an administration. I don't care if it is a Democratic administration or a Republican administration. He is smart, well educated, and has good experience. He has been the nominee to head something called OIRA, the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs, an entity that exists within OMB.

I have met him. He has come to my office to talk with me. He is a very polite young man. He has been before our committee. I voted today against his confirmation. I will tell you why. The Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs used to be the Committee on Governmental Affairs. I served on it for 19 years. One of the things I love about that committee is that we have oversight over the whole Federal Government. Every committee we serve on, including committees the

Presiding Officer serves on, all have an oversight role. A lot of that oversight deals with the administration as part of our checks and balances. We can only do that job so well if the administration allows us to do our job.

During the confirmation process—as the Presiding Officer knows—witnesses and nominees come before us from the administration. They have been vetted by the administration. They have gone through staff interviews. Then they come to a committee hearing. We also ask questions of the nominees that are relevant to the jobs they are going to do.

Every now and then, you have a nominee for a particular position who is not forthcoming in his or her responses, so we do something called QFRs, which are questions for the record. They are designed to give the nominee another bite at the apple in responding to the questions that Democrats and Republicans have. A lot of times, the nominees are forthcoming, and that is good. The nominations then move forward, and they get confirmed.

I have learned, if nominees are not forthcoming and are not responsive to the oversight questions we ask before they get confirmed, good luck after they get confirmed, for it doesn't get any better. I don't care whether you happen to be a Democrat or a Republican; you have to be concerned about the reluctance and the unwillingness of nominees to respond to reasonable questions regardless of who is in the White House and regardless of who is in the majority of this body.

Let me say a word or two about OIRA. OIRA plays a central role in establishing regulatory and information collection policies across our entire Federal Government. OIRA oversees the rulemaking process from start to finish—from the reviewing of drafts of proposed and final rules, to managing the interagency review process, to ensuring agencies make rulemaking decisions based on sound cost-benefit analyses.

The Administrator of OIRA is a critically important position because, at the end of the day, he or she is responsible for ensuring that rules promulgated by agencies benefit our society, protect our quality of life, protect our health, protect our safety, and protect our environment.

Earlier today, I joined a number of my colleagues on the Committee on Environment and Public Works in a letter to Mr. Ray. We asked him to review concerns that have been raised recently by the EPA's Science Advisory Board about four specific rulemakings that are currently under review.

The EPA's Science Advisory Board found serious concerns with the Trump administration's clean car standards rule, with the administration's proposed mercury and air toxics rule, with the administration's clean water rule rollbacks, as well as with a proposed EPA secret science rule, which will have the effect of limiting the science

the EPA can actually use in rulemakings. The Science Advisory Board found serious shortcomings with how the EPA conducted these rulemakings. Either the cost-benefit analysis was deficient or insufficient, the Agency did not use the best available science, or the legal rationale that underpinned the rule was faulty.

In case you are wondering who selects the members of this EPA Science Advisory Board, as it turns out, it is the President. In this case, all 44 members of the EPA Science Advisory Board were nominated or were renominated under this administration, by this President. They said that there are serious problems with the four rulemakings that I just mentioned. They are not Obama's people. They were nominated by this President.

Mr. Ray has served in top leadership positions at OIRA since June of 2018. First, he was an Associate Administrator. Then, in March of last year, he was promoted to Acting Administrator. Mr. Ray has presided over or has been involved with dozens of controversial rulemaking decisions in the last year and a half at OIRA, including the rulemakings outlined in the letter that I mentioned we are sending him today.

That is why, during the vetting process of his nomination, I, along with my colleagues on the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, asked for information about Mr. Ray's background and his work in the last year and a half at OIRA, which is within the OMB. Specifically, we asked him about his involvement in many controversial regulatory rulemaking decisions that have been put forward by the current administration. Unfortunately—sadly, really—Mr. Ray and the Office of Management and Budget have refused to provide the Senate with the information needed to vet Mr. Ray's nomination. As best as I can tell, they didn't even try.

Unfortunately, throughout the vetting process, Mr. Ray apparently refused to answer the Senators' questions by asserting privilege or deferring to the OMB's General Counsel more frequently than any past OIRA nominee who has ever appeared before our committee. Something is wrong with that. I don't care if you are a Democrat or a Republican in this body or if the nominee comes from a Democratic President or a Republican President; something is wrong with that.

In fact, Mr. Ray asserted privilege or deferred to counsel 19 times in his prehearing questionnaire responses alone. Is that a lot? That may well be more times than any other nominee in the history of this agency. Think about that. While it might be appropriate to withhold or redact particular content in some narrow circumstances, Mr. Ray and the OMB's Office of General Counsel have misapplied overly broad privileges to avoid providing Congress with critical information and documents related to his work at OIRA.

Have you ever heard of checks and balances? There is a reason we have

oversight. There is a reason we don't have Kings or Monarchs here who can do anything they want without a check or a balance. Sadly, this nomination process, at least for this nominee—and I think he is well qualified and bright—takes a thumb and sticks it in the eye of checks and balances.

Unfortunately, should this body vote to confirm Mr. Ray, his general approach of nonresponsiveness to the committee's vetting process sets a concerning precedent, not just for him and not just for nominees of this agency, but for future nominees and subsequent oversight efforts to hold the executive branch accountable.

It has been my privilege to serve on the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs for 19 years now. We are an oversight committee that conducts oversight not just over the whole Federal Government but on matters that are important to our Nation outside of the government. One of our core duties is to ensure that nominees are forthcoming and provide the Senate with the information we need to do our jobs.

Eventually, we are going to have an election. Who knows who is going to win the next time and who will be in the majority here in this body? Yet, under any administration, we should expect the nominees who appear before the Senate to be forthcoming and to provide us with the relevant information we need to adequately vet their nominations.

For these reasons, I must reluctantly note my opposition to Mr. Ray's nomination for now and urge my colleagues to do the same.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. YOUNG). The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. CARPER. Will the Senator yield?

Mrs. BLACKBURN. I yield to the Senator.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Delaware.

IRAN

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, before Senator BLACKBURN arrived on the floor, I talked about Iran, as many of us have. I mentioned the opposition that some folks in Iran had—that the Revolutionary Guard Corps Quds Force had—to actually entering into negotiations with the United States and five other nations to get the Iran deal, the JCPOA. As far as I can tell, nobody was a stronger opponent to Iran's negotiating with us and five other nations—nobody, as best I can tell, was a stronger opponent for Iran's doing that, for sitting down and trying to work things out—than Soleimani.

We are not going to miss that guy, but he was one of the strongest opponents who had actually taken what, I think, was a reasonable course. Sadly, this administration walked away from it.

I thank my colleague for yielding.

NOMINATION OF PAUL J. RAY

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. President, let me begin by saying that Paul Ray is a

Tennessean and that we are delighted he is being confirmed to the OIRA. He is qualified and will serve our Nation well in the future just as he has in the past.

IRAN

Mr. President, I also want to say a few things about the situation in Iran and about some of the comments that we have heard here on the floor today.

First of all, I think it is important to set the record straight when it comes to the Iran deal. We hear people say: Well, we never should have walked away from it. Let me tell you something. We should never have been in it in the first place. We should never have been in this. How in heaven's name could anybody have thought it was a good idea to put \$1.7 billion of cash on a pallet, stick it on a plane, and fly it to Iran? Whoever would have thought that?

The Iran nuclear deal was not something that helped to stabilize an issue; it incentivized Iran to do bad things. See, the Iran deal included a lifting of sanctions on Qasem Soleimani. Where was the first place he went? Where was the first place he went to get somebody to help to fund the Quds Force—to help fund all of this terrorism? He went to Russia—to his friends. This is why the Iran deal was not a good thing.

Now, you can say they had to open their nuclear facilities to the IAEA, but there was a little caveat in there that doesn't get talked about a lot. They opened it with notification. Well, if you are going to get prior notification that somebody is going to look at your company, to look at your operation, to look at your house, to look at your country, what are you going to do? You are going to clean it up, and you are going to hide things. That is the Iran deal. They didn't stop enriching uranium. What they did was enrich it right up to the point at which it was just under the mark. Did they give it up? No, they didn't give it up.

My colleague had mentioned the Reagan term of "trust but verify." Thank goodness we have a President who decided he would verify, and thank goodness we have an intel community and a U.S. military that did the heavy lifting of figuring out what needed to be done.

When you hear one of my colleagues ask, "How do we put this back together or can we ever put it back together?" we have started putting it back together. We have done it by saying: All right, folks, here is our redline. Guess what. This redline means something. This redline is drawn with the blood of hundreds of Americans who have been killed by this murderous villain. It is a redline of justice.

So let's not have happy talk when it comes to this situation with Iran. Let's make certain we understand what has transpired. We know that our military and our intel communities watched for 8 months as there was escalating violence. We know that violence was orchestrated by none other than