

Our first responders in this unprecedented global pandemic did not hesitate or equivocate. They did their duty. They stood up and faced danger. They answered the call. We now must answer the call, and we must have their backs just as they had ours.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

#### KLAMATH AREA DROUGHT

Mr. MERKLEY. Madam President, at this moment, Americans everywhere are confronting unprecedented challenges and uncertainties as we continue to grapple with the coronavirus pandemic and the associated economic implosion.

That is not all that is going on across the country. Although some of the challenges we face are quite severe, they are just getting drowned out by the daily news about the pandemic. But imagine being a family farmer in the midst of this crisis. You have already faced any number of challenges in recent years—low commodity prices, tariff wars—only to face the greatest health and economic disaster any of us have experienced in our lifetime. Then, when you thought nothing else could go wrong, something else does go wrong. You have to face a severe drought. Twelve hundred farms in the Klamath Basin in Oregon and California don't have to imagine this situation because they are living through it as we speak.

The Klamath Basin is sometimes referred to as the "Western Everglades," an area rich with agricultural resources and exceptional populations of wildlife. This basin attracts 80 percent of the Pacific Flyway's waterfowl and supports the largest overwintering population of bald eagles anywhere in the lower 48 States and is home to some of the country's most productive salmon river systems in the country.

It is also home to 1,200 family-owned farms of different sizes, encompassing some 200,000 acres of farmland. That farmland is irrigated with water from both the tributaries of the Klamath River and Klamath Lake. Those who are familiar with the basin will know that the water is essential to the health of the river, the health of the lake, the wildlife in the refuge, and the economic success of the ranchers and farmers.

In many years, there is enough water to address all of these needs, but in other years, such as this year, 2020, there isn't enough water to go around. So when there is a dry year with less water in the lake and river, it is bad for everyone—bad for the refuge, the river, the lake, and it is a horrific challenge for our ranchers and for our farmers.

This year, 2020, isn't just a dry year; it is "as difficult a year as anyone could have imagined," according to Jeff Nettleton, Area Manager of the Bureau of Reclamation, Klamath Basin area office.

As Governor Kate Brown put it back in March, "Drought conditions arrived

early and have persisted, including reduced snowpack, precipitation, and minimal streamflow." In other words, this is a perfect storm of challenges.

The Governor went on to say that "the long-term forecast for the region continues for warmer than normal temperatures and lower than normal precipitation." There has been nothing in the 2 months since she said that which has reversed that course.

As of last Friday, the snowpack in the Klamath region, the natural reservoir that replenishes the lakes and streams providing water for the irrigation system for the summer, was just 28 percent of normal.

You can get some sense of how bad the drought is this year by looking at the historic numbers on this chart. This is one way of presenting it. We can see deliveries that are coming to the Upper Klamath Lake project, and the blue lines are the more normal years. Then we have the worst ever drought of 2001. Then we have the terrible drought of 2010, and here we are with this year's drought deliveries forecast to be essentially the same as 2001.

In 2001 there was a water war in Oregon. Some of you may remember that there was a bucket brigade to take water out of a canal ditch or to put water into the canal ditch. There were protests. There was great anger and frustration. Since then, in 2010, though, we had worked out partnerships between the competing constituencies. They worked together to try to develop a plan for the region so that when crisis hit, they could be in partnership rather than in conflict.

So 2010 didn't end up to be national news like 2001. Well, I am here tonight to say that part of that partnership was working with the Federal Government intensely to provide assistance, to provide assistance in funding that would help retire or disconnect the use of water rights for a given year and to pump water out of the ground—use groundwater—which is very expensive.

The Klamath Water Users Association says that, typically, 350,000 acre-feet of water is needed to fully irrigate the basin. Now, at the beginning of this season, farmers were told they would get a fraction of that, maybe 140,000 acre-feet of water.

So they went to work with that in mind. They have to charge the canals, get initial water into the canals to prepare for planting, prepare for the water that would come with summer. And they used about 25,000 of that 140,000 acre-feet.

But there was less water even than anticipated, unexpectedly low inflows from the snow pack—not enough snow, and it melted too fast.

So, now, it is not 140,000 acre-feet; it is 80,000, again, putting it on par with 2001 that generated so much tension and conflict and anxiety. That means that just 55,000 acre-feet remain. Compare that to the typical 350,000 needed to fully irrigate the basin.

So farmers are going to be cut off. Ranchers are going to be cut off. We need, here in Congress, to come to their aid. The basin and its 1,200 farmers are in deep trouble.

The impacts don't just stop with them. It will be felt up and down the economy. With no crops to harvest, our food chain takes a big hit. The workers who usually harvest these crops aren't going to have jobs to go to. Local businesses that supply things like seed and fertilizer and farm equipment, well, they are hit hard too.

So the farmers and the community—the economic community—need our help, and they need it now. The worst thing we can do is stand by and say that, in these times of trouble, we aren't here to help.

That is why, tomorrow, I will be introducing a bill that will give the Bureau of Reclamation flexibility and authority to utilize the \$10 million a year that has been previously authorized and appropriated to work with the farmers and the basin's ranching community.

Now, this money, as I mentioned, has already been authorized. It has already been appropriated. So why should I need to introduce a bill? Well, the answer is, a lot of bureaucratic redtape.

In 2018, Senator WYDEN and I worked here and GREG WALDEN worked on the House side—the congressman who represents this district—and we got a concept into the Water Resources Development Act, the WRDA bill, and it passed. That bill passed.

It went to the Oval Office. It had President Trump's support. But, after the bill was enacted, the lawyers at the Bureau of Reclamation said: We are sorry. The language we gave you isn't quite right, on further examination, and we can't release these funds.

So, last year, Senator WYDEN and I were able to work again in partnership with Congressman WALDEN, and in July 2019 we passed language here in the Senate to fix this.

Well, OK. That is great, except that bill didn't make it through the House. That technical corrections bill never made it to the Oval Office.

So there is \$10 million out there—authorized, previously appropriated—that needs a technical fix to be able to help out our farmers and ranchers right now. Now, I am not saying to all of you that this will be enough help in this incredibly horrific drought year. We may well need significantly more, but at least this first step should be taken right away.

That is the bill I will be introducing tomorrow with the full support, again, of my partners in this effort: Congressman WALDEN and Senator WYDEN.

Farmers and ranchers need help, and they need it now. This is not a silver bullet, but it is something easily within our reach. Let's do these simple things that are within our reach: Money that has been authorized, money that has been appropriated, money that hit a technical glitch at

the Bureau of Reclamation—let's fix it and get help right now to idle land and to pump water to provide assistance.

I thank all my colleagues who helped so much in 2010 when I came to this floor under similar circumstances and we gave unanimous consent for this bill. Congressman WALDEN came down the hallway to vouch for the issues we were facing, so we were hearing bipartisan representation of the challenges and addressing the challenges that our ranchers and farmers in Klamath Basin faced.

That is all we are doing again. I ask for each and every Member's support that we get this done and we get it done quickly.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BOOZMAN). The clerk will call the roll. The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

#### CORONAVIRUS

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. President, I have just returned from being in Tennessee this weekend and lots of phone calls, seeing a lot of people out and about. I will tell you, this COVID-19 has changed a lot about how we go about our daily lives, but it has not changed the way Congress works out its differences. We are still arguing about spending and debt. We are still debating the importance of federalism and how the Constitution can help us determine what we can and should do on a Federal level to help our communities back at home.

Now, in Tennessee, our cities all across the State, from one corner to another, are getting back to that daily routine. Many of those businesses were able to improvise their way through the early weeks of lockdown, and now they are finding what they are calling their new normal, their new processes.

Some of them received emergency loans from the SBA. Others became one of the more than 80,000 small businesses and self-employed workers who were able to take advantage of the Paycheck Protection Program.

But no matter how hard they work or how smart their plans are, we know that, in the end, we are going to lose a lot of our favorite neighborhood stops. It is tough. It is really tough out there. Some of those businesses are already gone. And that is going to happen in spite of the unprecedented investment that the Federal Government, working with our State and local governments, has made into our business and our healthcare sectors, making certain people are able to stay afloat and bridging from that rescue to a business restart and bridging on to recovery.

Well, as we saw this week, the more Washington spends, the more Washington's focus drifts away from emergency measures and that rescue, and it

doesn't go to a restart or a recovery. What does it do? It goes to, How can we use this crisis to grow government? How can we use this crisis to take away a little bit more of your freedom?

Last week, House Democrats passed a \$3 trillion spending package that they used as a vehicle for a lot of their pet projects. We have all heard about it: pension bailouts, unsustainable environmental mandates, fundamental changes to tax policy, all of these line items that have no business being slapped on the coattails of a bill that was sold as being a safety net for panicked Americans.

You will be relieved to know that that bill will never see the light of day here in the Senate. But, you know, it might not be a bad idea just to put it on the floor and see if our friends across the aisle want to vote for it—\$3 trillion, \$3 trillion.

It is disrespectful to people who are hurting. It is disrespectful to small businesses that they have become a bargaining chip for the Democratic, left-leaning socialist wish list. That is what they think of you. When you walk down Main Street and you see shuttered businesses, I want you to remember that. That is what they think of you: They can use you to get what they want.

In fact, I will say this. We have been pretty busy focusing on bipartisan efforts that will help in the short term and will help with a postpandemic future, something that will really bring relief and clarity to the American people—not things like a liberal wish list.

#### SECURING AMERICA'S MEDICINE CABINET ACT

Mr. President, here is one I have heard a lot about, especially this weekend, for all the moms and dads out there who are wondering about how safe their child's image and their child's data are in the virtual classroom. Well, this is something that I had lots of questions about also. How do you protect your virtual you?

Last week, I led a bipartisan group of my colleagues and asked the FTC to do a deep dive into how the tech industry collects and stores your child's data and to use that information to make children's online privacy protections stronger.

Let's make certain you can protect them in the virtual space the same as you can in the physical space. My bipartisan SAM-C bill, which Senator MENENDEZ and I have introduced, would offer incentives to American pharmaceutical companies to bring those operations back home.

Let's make that in America. This would create thousands of jobs, and it would help secure our pharmaceutical supply chain.

We are focusing on these things because recovery is going to require more than a blank check. If we want to be successful, we have to learn to recognize the practical damage this disease has inflicted on our economy and then do something to address the many root causes of it.

Every day, we witness local, State, and Federal Government officials struggling to balance the provision of community health with the needs of a struggling economy. Often, regulatory constraints prevent them from implementing the more agile policies so desperately needed by local businesses and service providers.

Last week, I and a number of my colleagues asked Majority Leader McCONNELL and Minority Leader SCHUMER to include statutory changes in the next round of relief legislation that would reduce the redtape, the paperwork, and the other requirements that could and will inevitably get in the way of economic recovery.

If we take a hard look at these regulations and strip away those that serve no real purpose, we will save businesses an estimated—get this—\$1.9 trillion, promote competition, and encourage investment. That is \$1.9 trillion. That is what the regulatory state costs American businesses.

To survive the pandemic, each and every one of us is going to have to re-examine our approach. We need to ask ourselves: What is the purpose of all the regulations? Do they help? Do they hurt? If we didn't need it in COVID-19, why do we need it now? What is the actual cost to businesses, to communities, to local governments of these regulations? As companies go through the restart, is this something that is going to speed the process or is it something that is going to slow the process, or is it something that is going to be so cost-prohibitive that that small business manufacturing company will just throw their hands up and say: "I give up. I give up"? That is not what we want. That is not recovery. That is not optimism. That would be defeat. I encourage us all to join in this effort to create an environment that will support a full economic recovery.

I yield floor.

#### CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

#### CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Scott H. Rash, of Arizona, to be United States District Judge for the District of Arizona.

Mitch McConnell, Chuck Grassley, Joni Ernst, John Barrasso, Deb Fischer, John Cornyn, Roger F. Wicker, Roy Blunt, John Thune, Rob Portman, Shelley Moore Capito, Steve Daines, Lindsey Graham, Pat Roberts, Cindy Hyde-Smith, Richard Burr, Mike Crapo.

By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that the nomination of Scott H. Rash, of Arizona, to be United States District Judge for the District of Arizona, shall be brought to a close?