

serve each other. They find ways to serve their community because it is in their heart, and it is deep within their soul. They have served our Nation, and they will continue to serve our Nation. And while some need our help, I most often hear from veterans: How can I help?

So let me just say from my heart and from my State: Thank you, again, for serving the way that you serve. Allow us to say thank you to you face-to-face today and to tell you once again, we have not forgotten, and we are grateful for the sacrifice you and your family have made.

For those Gold Star families, we cannot thank you enough because every day you remember, and you need to hear from us that so do we.

When the Israelites crossed over the Jordan, they went back into that dry area and gathered stones. And they set those stones on the embankment for one specific purpose.

The purpose was simple. They said: When your children walk past these stones in the days ahead and they say "What are those stones for?" you are to remind them of the faithfulness of God. They were to be a permanent reminder.

Allow Veterans Day and the military memorials all over the State today to be a good teaching moment for our children so that when they say "Why is that there?" we remind them of the freedom that we have and the cost of that freedom and express our gratitude again to the veterans who have served us.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Madam President, as I begin my remarks, let me thank my friend Senator LANKFORD for his eloquent comments about our veterans and those who have served and given their lives for us.

I am here with my trusty and battered "Time to Wake up" graphic because, after 4 dark years on climate, there is at last a glimmer of light on the horizon.

President-Elect Biden has promised to redirect the executive branch to address climate change in the clear light of real science, out of the dark swamp of fossil fuel denial and obstruction, trying—trying—to head off a climate catastrophe while there is still time, if there is still time.

There is a lot the executive branch can do. The President can lead diplomatic and international trade initiatives. The environmental regulatory agencies of government can be freed from corrupting influence to do their duty with vigor based on science and the law. Securities regulators can put climate risk to the economy at the forefront, as the Commodity Futures Trading Commission has just done. Purchasing decisions can be directed

toward a clean energy future. Permitting decisions can be made with the social cost of carbon pollution in mind, as courts have already begun to demand even in the corrupt Trump era.

On the investigative side, the administration can begin a hard look at the forces of corruption that have blocked action on climate change: Who did this and how? Did their political spending violate campaign finance, conflict of interest, or other laws? Did their toxic propaganda violate laws against fraud, as the tobacco industry's did? Was their occupation of regulatory agencies a rolling conspiracy to violate the Administrative Procedures Act, and if so, how and for whom was it organized? Has their interference in the judiciary compromised the rights of parties or the integrity of courts?

American citizens deserve a full and fearless exposition of why Congress has thwarted the public will to do something—anything—meaningful to address this climate crisis and at whose behest.

What were the forces of corruption, and how did they accomplish their nefarious purpose? There is a lesson in democracy here for the citizens of this great Republic—a lesson that is now hidden behind phony front groups and subterranean rivers of anonymous money. There is every reason to believe that the biggest covert op in history has been run in and against our own government. That is no way for a "city on a hill" to be governed.

But with all the executive branch policy work and all the investigations that are due and overdue, there is no pathway to climate safety that does not go through Congress. Action by Congress is a necessity, not a luxury. I have seen no study showing any pathway to safety without action by Congress.

To make that pathway to safety possible, we will have to change a few things. One is, as I said, to investigate the denial and obstruction campaign run by the fossil fuel industry, how it used its dark weaponry of political spending—much of it anonymous—and political propaganda. The executive branch can do this, but so can the House. Sadly, here in the Senate, the power of the fossil fuel industry assures no such investigation will happen in our committees if Republicans keep control of the Senate. But the House or a high-level Presidential commission or our Department of Justice all have tools to bring the light of transparency into these dark and slimy corners.

Separately, we can display to the American people what corporate America says about climate change versus what it does in Congress. It may even surprise some CEOs what their corporate lobbying posture actually is. If you are a CEO who is sincere about this, you ought to commission an audit of your corporate lobbying and electioneering on climate. Here is what you will find, unless you are maybe

Patagonia or Ben & Jerry's: Most every major American corporation does nothing in Congress on climate—zip, zero, nada.

TechNet lobbies for the supposedly climate-friendly Silicon Valley giants like Apple, Google, Facebook, and Microsoft. It even represents green energy companies. Yet this year its glossy, 13-page menu of priorities for Congress never even mentioned climate change or green energy.

Coke and Pepsi lobby Congress through an American Beverage Association that doesn't lift a finger on climate. That corporate behemoth, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce—three times the lobbying muscle of its next nearest rival, sometimes the biggest dark-money spender in elections, a persistent voice in our courts and regulatory agencies—that chamber is in a statistical tie for America's worst climate obstructer—worst.

Representing Ford and GM, Abbott Labs and Johnson & Johnson, Citibank and Bank of America, Delta and United, Target and Home Depot, Intel and AT&T, and dozens of other big businesses is a worst climate obstructer in America. That deserves some explaining.

Don't just blame Congress. By doing nothing, Congress is exactly following what corporate America actually asks of Congress: Do nothing. Do nothing. We don't care.

Want to open a pathway for a safe climate through Congress? Republicans in Congress are going to have to hear that their corporate benefactors demand climate action. They aren't hearing that now. They are hearing the opposite. They are hearing: We don't care.

Democrats are ready. We have been ready for a decade. Republicans, at least since Citizens United—it was quite bipartisan before that decision—won't touch the issue, and by an amazing coincidence, that party is almost entirely funded by the unlimited and often anonymous donations of the fossil fuel industry. The money is often hidden, of course, behind donor trusts and shell corporations and 501(c)(4) tax organizations, but it is there, and it is billions.

The rest of corporate America has not pushed back. They have their own tax breaks to protect and their own industry priorities to pursue, and climate change just doesn't make it into their corporate political agenda. Getting the so-called good guys off the bench and onto the field could make a big difference, but they are not there now—not yet.

If corporations are going to fail this moral test so catastrophically, it is fair to ask what good it does to give corporations any role in our politics, let alone the commanding role they now assert in the U.S. Congress. The Founding Fathers, for one, would be astonished to see these monsters loose in our politics at all, let alone so large and in charge.

But that is for another day. Right now, there is a lot President-Elect Biden can do to break the political logjam fossil fuel money has built: Investigate it, expose it, and then overwhelm it. Recruit allies to help push back hard. Give no audience or corner to corporations funding climate obstruction. Make lobbying groups disclose who their big donors are so the American citizen isn't played for a chump—the mark in a giant con game.

If you don't think big American industries are capable of committing massive fraud, read the decision of the Federal judge in the fraud case the United States won against Big Tobacco for that scheme of lies or read the decision of the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals upholding her verdict. It took investigation to get to the truth, not politics. Indeed, investigation had to pierce through a fog of industry politics and lies. But at the end of the day and, more specifically, at the end of the investigation, the truth was out, and the truth was massive industry fraud.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. INHOFE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. INHOFE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that I be recognized as if in morning business for such time as I shall consume.

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

WESTERN SAHARA

Mr. INHOFE. Madam President, last week, while most of the world was focused on our elections—myself included—and the pending results, a very significant action was taking place halfway around the world in Western Sahara. Simply put, Morocco chose that time—likely purposely, when everyone was occupied doing other things—to threaten to push back on protests by Western Saharans on their own land.

There they are. These are the protesters. These are people who owned the land, have been there for generations, and are protesting the problems they have with Morocco trying to eject them from their land.

It seems simple, but you have to remember how we got here. While the status of the Sahrawi people is still in question, what we need to do to is create a lasting solution. How we got here, as West Africa was being decolonized, Western Sahara was clear and declared itself an independent nation a long time ago. That was despite Morocco's attempt to claim it as a territory.

In 1966, the United Nations General Assembly resolution agreed that a referendum

of self-determination should be held. That is a referendum of self-determination of the people of Western Sahara. Everyone agreed and planned to hold that in 1975.

Self-determination—merely letting the Sahrawi people decide for themselves the imperative principle of action—the right to judge for themselves to be independent or to be a part of Morocco.

This was just the first promise of a referendum. That was 1975. To date, none have been kept. An International Court of Justice opinion from 1975 also agreed that Morocco did not have sovereignty over the land and that a referendum of self-determination should be held. Everyone agreed. That was the second promise.

Morocco maintained its unlawful claim to their land and after decolonization, attempted to annex the territory with force. That was actually in 1975.

Western Sahara—officially called the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic, through the Polisario, defended their rights to land.

We are talking about this area right here. Morocco is up to the north, in Western Sahara. The independent Western Sahara land that Morocco is trying to claim as their own is to the south of that.

After a decade of violence from Morocco, the United Nations finally came in, in 1991, and both sides agreed to a cease-fire and a path forward. Everyone agreed. It was called the Settlement Plan. It solidified that Morocco and Western Sahara agreed to hold a referendum and created the United Nations Mission for the referendum in Western Sahara. That is called MINURSO.

For those keeping track, that was the third promise. It is worth noting that the United Nations regularly reaffirms the 1991 commitment to a referendum for self-determination. This is something that happens on a regular basis.

The planned referendum in 1992 never took place, and the process stalled through a cease-fire that was held. Morocco just wouldn't hold up its end of the bargain.

Former Secretary of State James Baker—it is kind of interesting because back in 1997, he tried to do this again. I can remember talking to him—this was several years ago now, about 15 years ago—saying that sometime we have to get this problem resolved. It has been hanging out there for generations and decades. He said: Well, good luck. We have tried to do everything we could do. Back at that time, he was Secretary of State under President Bush.

He named a special envoy to Western Sahara. Baker worked the multiple plans with Morocco and Western Sahara. He thought he could get it done. He was a special envoy way back in 1992.

The former Secretary of State tried again in 1997. He named a special envoy

to Western Sahara. Baker worked multiple plans with Morocco and Western Sahara again.

The most notable—the Houston Agreement—was signed by Morocco and Western Sahara and recommitted to the referendum of self-determination, planned for 1998. To keep track, that is the fourth time that was promised. That was promised also by Morocco.

Morocco, recognizing they would likely lose the vote, quickly tanked all negotiations the next year by declaring they would never accept a referendum that included independence as an outcome, despite years of promises.

It has been called a frozen conflict—where no outcome exists. Yet there is no perceived active conflict. It makes it easy for the rest of the world to forget about it. But to call this a frozen conflict makes it seem harmless, when in reality it is anything but that.

Tens of thousands of Sahrawi people live in refugee camps, primarily in Tindouf, Algeria. They have been forced from their homes, waiting for a resolution for decades. Allowing this process to stall has cost them a generation of freedom. I have been to those camps many times. I have been there. I have seen it. I have talked to the people.

We are talking about these people here—the ones who are protesting. That is where we have been and talked to the individuals. And they don't give up. They continue generation after generation with the hope that they would get their land back.

Beyond denying the Sahrawi people the right to freedom and self-determination, the Government of Morocco is trying to steal and pillage as much as possible from the land they have unlawfully claimed. They are stealing their natural resources, unlawfully mining and selling valuable, critical minerals—specifically phosphate. They are illegally fishing in the Western Sahara's waters.

And what does Morocco do with these riches? They pay millions of dollars each year to lobbyists in Washington. Their goal? To convince the world they are innocent and demonize the Sahrawi people.

The Moroccans believe that they can wait out the rest of the world. They want us to forget about the human rights of these people, in this picture, who are peacefully protesting today—right now—as we are speaking on the floor.

They know a frozen conflict benefits them and hurts the cause of independence. They know that they can push the boundaries of what is acceptable. That is how we got to this point. That is why we are here at this point now—where just a few weeks ago, while the people of Western Sahara were peacefully protesting in Guerguerat—that is the region. The Guerguerat region is down there. It is not even close to Morocco. It is down to the south end of Western Sahara. It actually comes into Mauritania down there.