

success in securing our scientific workforce by strengthening the STEM pipeline.

One of the most significant barriers that imperils our ability to attract new talent into the STEM pipeline and keep our young people in the pipeline once they are there is the many financial stressors that make it difficult for graduate and postdoctoral researchers to provide for themselves while conducting critical research.

Alongside issues with their salaries, young researchers face challenges concerning food insecurity, student loan debt, health, housing, childcare, and more.

Research shows that graduate and postdoctoral researchers identify compensation, including salaries and benefits, as one of the most significant barriers that they face as young people trying to support their personal lives and jumpstart their early careers.

Alongside requiring Federal research Agencies to update their policies to address these concerns, we must also collect more data on this problem to ensure that our solutions are well thought out and effective.

Ensuring continued American leadership in STEM depends on what we do now to support the researchers who will guide the future of our scientific enterprise.

SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS

SENATE RESOLUTION 207—CELEBRATING THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE GRAND OLE OPRY

Mrs. BLACKBURN (for herself and Mr. HAGERTY) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 207

Whereas, on November 28, 1925, the Grand Ole Opry was born when the WSM Barn Dance was launched with Uncle Jimmy Thompson, a 77-year-old fiddle player;

Whereas, in December 1927, the program was officially named the Grand Ole Opry when George D. Hay, a legendary announcer and program director, proclaimed on-air, "For the past hour, we have been listening to the music taken largely from the Grand Opera, but from now on we will present the Grand Ole Opry";

Whereas the Grand Ole Opry was housed in the Ryman Auditorium, the "Mother Church of Country Music" in Nashville, Tennessee;

Whereas some of the most historic moments of the Grand Ole Opry occurred inside Ryman Auditorium, including the inductions of country music legends like Hank Williams, Patsy Cline, Loretta Lynn, Tammy Wynette, Willie Nelson, George Jones, Jeanne Seely, Dolly Parton, and Johnny and June Carter Cash;

Whereas the popularity of the Grand Ole Opry surged during the 1930s and 1940s, with its live radio broadcast becoming a staple in households across the United States;

Whereas, on March 15, 1974, the Grand Ole Opry broadcast its final show from Ryman Auditorium;

Whereas, on March 16, 1974, the Grand Ole Opry debuted its first show in the new 4,400 seat Grand Ole Opry House in Nashville, Ten-

nessee, with President Richard Nixon in attendance;

Whereas a piece of the Ryman Auditorium stage, known as the circle, was laid into the center of the new Grand Ole Opry House stage and remains a hallowed piece of country music history;

Whereas the Grand Ole Opry is the longest-running radio show in the history of the United States, reaching millions of listeners each week;

Whereas the contributions of the artists and members of the Grand Ole Opry family have had an innumerable impact on the culture and history of the United States;

Whereas the Grand Ole Opry is more than just a concert hall or a radio show, it is a United States institution that has played a pivotal role in shaping the music landscape in the United States;

Whereas the Grand Ole Opry has continued to be the most famous stage in country music and has solidified Nashville, Tennessee, as the country music capital of the world; and

Whereas, in 2025, the Grand Ole Opry is celebrating its 100th anniversary: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) recognizes and celebrates the 100th anniversary of the Grand Ole Opry;

(2) commemorates the legacy of the Grand Ole Opry and the lasting contributions of the Grand Ole Opry to the advancement of country music; and

(3) congratulates the artists and members of the Grand Ole Opry family on 100 inspiring years.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I come to the Senate floor today for the 298th time in my "Time to Wake Up" speech series to once again call attention to the looming climate calamity.

I went last week to the Our Ocean Conference—a conference founded by the United States of America and dedicated to protecting our oceans before the damage to them and ultimately to us becomes irrecoverable. It was the 10th such conference, which made it a bit of a benchmark.

I was the entirety of the U.S. delegation. You are looking at it—100 percent of the entire U.S. delegation. Ordinarily, many executive branch officials come. In this case, not one executive branch official attended from the United States. And of course not. This administration is nothing more than hirelings of the fossil fuel industry, and the conference, of course, addressed the harm that fossil fuel emissions are doing in the oceans and the harm that petrochemical plastics are doing in the oceans.

Fossil fuel emissions are heating up the oceans in zettajoules. It is a massive number. The joule, as you probably know, is the unit measure for heat energy. "Zetta" means it has 21 zeroes behind it. In more commonly articulated big numbers, it is a billion trillion joules. It looks something like this: 14 zettajoules of heat going into the oceans every single year.

To give a more practical definition, the entire energy production of the human species across the entire planet Earth amounts to one-half of a

zettajoule of energy—everything. All the energy sources of humankind produce one-half of a zettajoule of energy every year. That is how much our species relies on.

The price to all of us of the fossil fuel component of that half-zettajoule is that those 14 zettajoules get pushed into the ocean, get absorbed by the ocean, every single year. The heating of the oceans from fossil fuel pollution is more than 30 times the energy used that causes the heating. It is not a part of it; it is multiple of it, magnified by the greenhouse effect. It is not that fossil fuel creates some excess heat and some of that goes into the oceans; the fossil fuel creates changes in the Earth's physical environment that magnify the heat retention of the planet, the so-called greenhouse effect. So for the component of the half zettajoule of human energy use that comprises the entire species' energy, 14 zettajoules of heat go into the ocean.

Put another way, if you imagine the heat energy given off by the nuclear bomb explosion over Hiroshima, multiply that by seven. Seven Hiroshima nuclear detonations' worth of excess heat is what fossil fuel emissions are driving into our oceans every single second—every single second. Every second, seven Hiroshimas' worth of heat.

In the 10 minutes that it takes me to give this speech, the oceans will absorb 4,000 Hiroshima detonations' worth of heat. That is why seawater off the Florida Keys hit jacuzzi temperatures. That is why measuring devices along our coasts show a foot of sea level rise already. That is why fish species are moving about and fisheries are collapsing. That is why the world's coral reefs are bleaching out—over 80 percent of the world's reefs hit in the last ocean heating surge caused by fossil fuel.

The physical disruption of the ocean with this massive injection of multiple Hiroshimas-per-second of excess physical heat is matched by a chemical effect—acidification.

The excess carbon dioxide added to the atmosphere by fossil fuel pollution interacts with the surface of the ocean, covering 70 percent of our planet—so a lot of surface to interact—and it causes the seawater chemically to acidify.

I actually did an experiment here at my desk, blowing the carbon dioxide in my breath through an aquarium bubbler into my water glass. And, sure enough, pH strips showed that the water in the glass acidified, measurably, just from my breath.

Acidification in the ocean degrades structures that are made up of calcium. It injures coral reefs, worsening the problems of pollution and warming. We are headed for a world of dead reefs at this rate. It makes life harder for shelled creatures, particularly in their larval stages, to grow. There are many of them, but one species measurably hit is the pteropod.

Who cares about the humble pteropod, you may ask. Well, you might,

and your kids likely will because it is an important part of the oceanic food web. Crash the pteropod, and a lot of other species fall.

A trawl survey a few years ago off the Pacific Northwest found that most of the pteropod caught in the trawl survey showed what the scientists called severe shell damage—severe shell damage. Pteropods don't survive well in acidified oceans. That much severe shell damage in a foundational species is a bad harbinger of things to come, and it is just one of many harms from fossil fuel emissions acidifying the world's oceans.

Then we get to the other petrochemical problem, plastics. The ocean is awash with marine plastic waste. Unlike natural substances that biodegrade into basic elements that return into the cycle of life that other beings can consume, plastics are man-made. Unlike natural substances, they break down eventually into microplastic and even nanoplastic particles that have no use to anything.

Ocean plastic waste is a menace. Large ocean plastic waste ends up in the bellies of whales, indigestibly, killing them. Ghost gear made of plastic goes about its lethal business with no fisherman ever retrieving the catch, just killing, killing, killing.

Pretty much every sea bird consumes plastic, lodging in its belly, starving its young of real food. You can walk midway island and see the cadavers of dead young birds with stomachs full of indigestible plastic unwittingly fed to them by their parents.

Small creatures consume tiny plastic particles. Bigger creatures consume the small creatures. We consume the bigger creatures. And now we find plastic particles in mothers' breast milk, in human brain tissue samples, even in rain drops over Colorado. Unless we change direction, there will soon be more plastic by weight in the world's oceans than the weight of living fish in the world's oceans.

The plastics and fossil fuel industry may chortle about their profits, but none of this is good for humans. These industries are damaging the natural systems of the planet, the natural systems to which we have adapted as a species, the natural systems that make Earth so beautifully and abundantly livable. And there comes a reckoning. As Pope Francis said, you slap Mother Nature, she will slap you back.

Regrettably, the plastics and fossil fuel industries are also damaging the political systems of the planet, corrupting government so as to disable our ability to remedy their pollution. The question of the moment that people should be asking is why are so many politicians lying to us about climate change? The answer, of course, is money. Fossil fuel money floods our political system, pours into it, much of it secretly.

Politicians, whose home State universities teach about climate change, lie about climate change. How is that

possible? It is not like there is some unfathomable mystery about how climate change works that eludes human understanding. No, it is known. There is a counterforce at work against knowledge. Fossil fuel money and political pressure is that counterforce.

That force—that malign, corrupt, political operation of the fossil fuel industry—has now become dangerous. If you delay treatment of a disease, things get worse and a treatable disease can become lethal. If you delay dealing with termites in your house, things get worse, and it is no longer a repair but a teardown.

The fossil fuel political operation, for very selfish reasons, has delayed the remedies that would have given us a broad pathway to climate safety, and it is now getting dangerous.

The control of our government by this political operation is right now complete. Neither House of Congress will do anything right now to avert the looming danger. After asking for \$1 billion from the fossil fuel industry and getting massive donations, our madman President says there is no danger—a supposedly educated man calling our climate perils a “hoax.”

His executive officials are all in tow to the fossil fuel industry, doing exactly as they are told—puppets on a fossil fuel string. They even put Justices on the Supreme Court to ignore the facts about climate danger.

Here is their problem, which is our problem as well: Politics responds to money, but nature, she can't be bought. She couldn't care less. Nature will keep administering the consequences dictated by natural laws, by laws of physics and chemistry, and biology.

I flew home from the Our Ocean Conference, thanks to our understanding of those natural laws when you honor those laws, aerodynamics and metallurgy, and make flying from Seoul, Korea, to Dulles airport outside Washington, DC, possible. Dishonoring those laws is foolhardy and dangerous. Dishonoring those laws for money is reprehensible and dangerous.

A corrupted U.S. Government, a polluted planet, and trillions—literally trillions—of dollars in economic harm is headed our way fast, well and completely predicted, all from the bad behavior of a greedy and amoral industry that knows no bounds—not of decency, not of honesty, and certainly, not of protection for our planet. If taking that fight on is not a fight worth having, I don't know what is.

I yield the floor.

ADDRESSING THE HOMEWORK GAP THROUGH THE E-RATE PROGRAM

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. President, I rise this evening in strong opposition to S.J. Res. 7, the Congressional Review Act resolution that would repeal the Federal Communications Commission's commonsense rule allowing schools and libraries to use E-Rate funds—“E-

Rate” stands for “Education Rate funds”—to ensure that there is access to the educational tools of a school or a library to every child in America, and that would occur by extending out the way in which we view this program so that Wi-Fi hotspots can be provided to students and to educators so that they can use them even when they are not in the school, even when they are not in the library.

If we pass this resolution—the resolution which the Republicans are malevolently bringing out onto the floor—we are not simply undoing a regulation; we are pulling the plug on progress in our country; we are abandoning millions of students who lack the internet access needed to complete their homework, to attend class, to reach their full potential.

This repeal will widen educational disparities in our country, it will deepen the digital divide, and it will slam shut the doors of opportunity for millions of children in our country.

We should be doing everything in our power to close the homework gap that exists between rich and poor in our Nation, not reopen it, not make that homework gap even larger, making it more difficult for poor kids to get access to these educational tools they need. In this modern era, that absolutely meets the definition of a Wi-Fi hotspot. That is the society of 2025. You have to move to that era.

That homework gap is the cruel chasm that separates students who have reliable internet access at home from those who don't. It is a gap that existed long before the COVID-19 pandemic, but it was laid bare when schools closed and kids were forced to learn from kitchen tables and living rooms. For some, the transition was difficult; for others, it was impossible. For too many children, especially in low-income, rural, and Black and Brown communities, they were locked out of virtual learning because, simply, they lacked a basic internet connection.

You didn't have to worry about the families that had a good income. Those kids had internet at home when their schools were shut down during COVID. But you had to create some kind of a solution for kids who didn't have that at home.

We saw the stories of the students sitting in parking lots outside fast-food restaurants just to pick up a Wi-Fi signal strong enough to complete their assignments. We saw families choosing between paying rent and paying for broadband. We saw the urgent, indisputable need for action.

In that moment of need, Congress stepped up. We passed, at my request, \$7 billion to help provide hotspots and other connectivity tools to students and educators. Demand was overwhelming in our Nation. We had a COVID shutdown. Schools were closed, and there was going to be a huge digital divide which would open up because kids in the suburbs, for the most