

Senator LEVIN, is an example—there are also times when filibuster by amendment takes place and it becomes abusive.

I can remember sitting in the chair where the distinguished Senator from Ohio is now sitting and watching Senator Kennedy on the floor. He had a bill that would raise the minimum wage. We often get big, fat bills on the floor. This was a bill that I think was literally one page. It was the smallest, shortest bill because it was just changing a number, basically.

Hundreds of amendments—literally hundreds of amendments had been filed against it. When the majority leader is faced with that—many of them were completely nongermane and not relevant—when the majority leader is faced with a circumstance where hundreds of amendments are filed on a small bill like that, it is easy to see why you have to move forward by trying to limit the time because the whole rest of the session could have been devoted to that bill if you can't get control. If you can't get an agreement—and very often, agreement is withheld as to a fixed number of amendments—then you have no choice but to take your best shot with the bill by filling the tree.

Even if I am right that the number is 70, I contend that the number of what the minority might consider a malicious filling of the tree might be a number considerably smaller than 70. Many of them might be made necessary by the actions of the minority by offering hundreds of amendments and by refusing to enter into agreements to offer a reasonable number.

I think it is a problem, but I think on balance I stand by the view I have expressed before that there is an unprecedented level of obstruction in this body, and I say that with some humility because the distinguished Senator from Wyoming has been here a bit longer. I have been here only for 6 years. But that is what people who have been here for many, many years confirm—that there has been really nothing like it.

EXTENSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the period for morning business for debate only be extended until 5 p.m., with Senators to speak up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I ask to speak for 15 minutes but probably not that long.

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

FISCAL CLIFF

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I will speak off the topic of the day. Obviously, we are focused on the fiscal

cliff. The measure is now over in the House, and the distinguished Senator from Wyoming and the senior Senator from California expressed their hope—and I would say confidence—that the House will act. Given the dysfunction of the House and its Republican leadership, I am perhaps a little bit more cautious than they are about this.

I remember that we did a very good bipartisan highway bill here. It passed with an enormous vote of 70-some, if I remember correctly, and went over to the House. They could not even pass a highway bill. They had no bill at all. They got so snarled up that finally they passed a bill that did nothing but to appoint conferees to argue about our bill. They could not bring a bill of their own into conference.

We worked very hard on a farm bill here. It was a bipartisan farm bill. Senator STABENOW was particularly energetic in that, as was her colleague from Kansas. Again, that was a bipartisan bill, which required a lot of hard work and had many compromises. We are in a terrible drought—which is something I will talk about more in a moment—and they cannot pass the farm bill over there.

The Speaker tried to respond to having withdrawn from his negotiations with the President on the fiscal cliff by coming up with a new so-called Plan B alternative. He could not even get that through his caucus. There is an unprecedented degree of extremism and dysfunction in the House Republican caucus, and I hope that does not disrupt the progress we have made on the fiscal cliff. We will have to wait and see. Today will tell.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. What I am here to talk about is not the topic of the day because the fiscal cliff is the topic of the day. What I am here to address is never the topic of the day. It is the unmentionable issue; that is, climate change. It is so apparent now that changes in our climate and in our environment are occurring from pole to pole and from the height of our atmosphere to the depths of our oceans. The overwhelming majority of scientific research, indeed statistically the now virtually unanimous scientific view, indicates that all these observed changes in the Earth's atmosphere are the direct result of human activity—specifically the emission of carbon dioxide from our burning of fossil fuels.

If we continue with these destructive levels of carbon pollution, carbon change will not just alter our environment, it will alter our economy. Very often discussions in Washington steer away from things that have to do with environment and the health and enjoyment of human beings of the natural world and instead it comes down to money, as it so often does in this town.

Let's talk about climate change in the context of money. Markets and businesses across this country have de-

veloped to fit the prevailing environmental conditions in their different regions of the United States. These markets and these businesses are going to face real challenges when our climate changes those prevailing conditions. Whether it is higher sea levels, stronger storms, warmer winters or dryer summers, no State and no economy will be unaffected by climate change.

We are already seeing real-life examples of economic consequences of a rapidly changing environment. The Economic Research Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture reported that 80 percent of American agricultural land is experiencing drought, making this the most expensive drought since the 1950s—more than half a century ago. Last month, Deutsche Bank Securities estimated that the drought will reduce 2012 economic growth in the United States by one-half to 1 percent.

Shipping on the Mississippi River has been reduced and may stop in areas where drought has left water levels too low for safe passage. The American Waterways Operators and the Waterways Council estimate that \$7 billion worth of commodities are supposed to ship on the Mississippi in December and January alone. An interruption of that would have a considerable economic effect. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has begun a \$10 million project to clear rocks from the waterway to prevent that shutdown. The other option is to release water from the Missouri River, but that would just draw down water supplies in upriver States that are already suffering from drought themselves, such as Montana, Nebraska, and North Dakota.

Water is also essential for power generation. According to the U.S. Geological Survey, powerplants account for nearly half the daily water withdrawn in the United States. Drought and heat go hand in hand to push powerplants toward shutdown. A 2008 drought put several powerplants in the Southeast within days or weeks of shutting down. Texas, California, and the Midwest now face a similar challenge with drought stressing their power production.

In the Northeast, it is not low water but warm water that caused the shutdown of Unit 2 at the Millstone powerplant in Connecticut. The temperature of the water in Long Island Sound, from which the plant draws its cooling supply, climbed to over 75 degrees Fahrenheit this summer—too warm for cooling the Newark reactor. Of course, the cost to our economy of disruptions in our power supply is particularly high during warm weather, when energy use is at its height to run air-conditioners.

Scientists tell us the droughts and heat waves will get worse and water temperature will continue to increase. Agriculture, shipping, and power industries will be operated under new baseline environmental conditions.

Warmer oceans, ocean acidification, and extreme weather events create an

obvious threat for our fishery industries and the marine trades they support. It is not just the fishermen who are affected but the people who repair their engines and nets, sell them equipment and gear, as well as the companies that buy and process their catch are affected.

In my home State of Rhode Island, average coastal water temperature has risen by 4 degrees over the past two decades, affecting our historic fish stocks and hurting local fishermen. It is not just in Rhode Island where the seas are changing. To use another example, rising ocean temperatures and acidity threaten corals, which, as well as being a cornerstone of ocean biodiversity—but never mind, this is supposed to be a speech about the money—the coral reefs are a mainstay of Florida's water and boating industry. People go there to snorkel, scuba dive, and see the corals. If the corals are not there, it is going to affect those industries.

The increasing acidification of ocean water driven by the rising carbon dioxide in the atmosphere lowers the ocean's saturation levels of calcium carbonate. That sounds boring. Who the heck cares about the ocean saturation levels of calcium carbonate? Calcium carbonate is the fundamental building block of the shells of aquatic species such as oysters, crabs, and lobsters. Fisheries we actually do care a lot about, even if we may not care about calcium carbonate. It is the basic building block of the plankton that comprise the very base of the food web. Ocean acidification caused 70- to 80-percent losses of oyster larvae at an ocean hatchery in Oregon from 2006 to 2008. Wild oyster stocks in Washington State also failed under the stress of that more acidic water. This is an industry worth about \$73 million annually along our Pacific coast, and it is faced with the threats from climate change.

The pteropod, which is also known as the sea butterfly, will be harmed by ocean acidification. The pteropod is a humble beast. It is a tiny aquatic snail. Nobody goes fishing for pteropods, so who the heck cares? Salmon care. Indeed, 47 percent of the diet of some Pacific salmon species is pteropods. The salmon fisheries which support coastal jobs and economies care an awful lot about the salmon.

Extreme weather events such as storm surges have become more frequent as our climate and oceans warm. Extreme storms such as that are particularly hard on shell fisheries. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration reported that "because oysters require two or more years to grow to marketable size, full recovery from . . . hurricanes may take years, and some oyster habitats may be lost permanently." National Geographic noted that after Hurricane Katrina, 90 percent of Mississippi's oyster beds and 74 percent of Louisiana's oyster beds were destroyed. Just this fall, Hurri-

cane Sandy disrupted shellfisheries all along the east coast.

Coastal economies, such as in my home State of Rhode Island, are threatened in other ways by sea-level rise and extreme storms. The Rhode Island economic development Council notes that tourism in Rhode Island is at the absolute center of our summer economy. People from all across the Nation come to Rhode Island in the summer to enjoy our beautiful beaches, our sparkling bay, sail, and participate in all the beachside activities. Damage to that economy would be very significant.

We are rebuilding from Hurricane Sandy so we will be ready when our beach visitors come this summer, but it is a reminder of how important that economy is to Rhode Island, and it is a reminder of how vulnerable it is to extreme weather.

Let's turn to the West, where by August of this year more than 6 million acres had burned in wildfires. A new analysis by NASA predicts that by the middle of the century we can expect to match the severity of 2012 fires every 3 to 5 years. It is going to become commonplace.

A recent study by the University of Oregon—and I see the Senator from Oregon on the floor—found that large wildfires caused long-term instability in local labor markets. Increased local spending fighting the fires is not enough to outweigh the economic loss caused by the disruption of businesses and damage to property from the fire.

In August, Reuters reported that wildfires were hurting tourism in Western States. One small business owner in Salmon, ID, claimed she had nothing but cancellations as a result of the fires.

The New York Times has reported that the declining snowfall and unseasonably warm weather had been a drag on winter sports and recreational tourism last winter. The reported forecast is that before the end of the century, the number of economically viable ski locations in New Hampshire and Maine will be cut in half. Skiing in New York will be cut by three-quarters, and there will be no ski area in Connecticut or Massachusetts. That will have an economic effect.

Looking back West again, the Park City Foundation in Utah predicted an annual local temperature increase of 6.8 degrees Fahrenheit by 2075, which would cause a total loss of snowpack in the Park City resort area. The Park City Foundation report estimates this will result in thousands of lost jobs, tens of millions in lost earnings, and hundreds of millions in lost economic output to Utah. Ominously, in Colorado the ski season was pushed back at least a week this winter for lack of snow.

I am sure my colleagues on both sides of the political aisle, whether from coastal, agricultural or mountain States, feel the concern for their State's economy as I do for Rhode Is-

land. To protect these economies, we will all have to act prudently, and that means waking up and addressing climate change head on in Congress. The majority of Americans of all political affiliations accepts the science behind climate change. Yet Congress refuses to act.

There is a consensus among scientists where around 98 percent—the other day I came with a circle graph which showed a tiny little wedge of fringe dispute on this question is barely visible in the sea of agreement. Yet Congress refuses to act. Even after hearing from our national security officials about the dangers and threats from climate change, Congress refuses to act.

That refusal to act will have an impact on the American economy. A Brookings report has found that well-designed climate legislation would increase investment, increase employment, and significantly increase America's gross domestic product, but here in Congress we are more likely to hear that any climate change legislation would hurt the economy and kill jobs. The opposite is true. We are missing opportunities to grow a clean economy that is manufacturing and export intensive and that creates the kinds of jobs that support a strong American middle class. We are failing to protect against carbon pollution that will harm our States' economies all across the country, and we are failing to take prudent steps to protect ourselves against the coming changes from our carbon pollutants that have now become unavoidable. With the carbons up in the air, the changes are going to happen. We can't stop those. We need to prepare for them, and we are failing to take those prudent steps. Those of us on the east coast who weathered Sandy have gotten a preview of coming attractions as the oceans continue to warm and extreme storms become more common.

As I said before, here in Congress we are sleepwalking through history. We are lulled by the narcotic of corporate money from the polluters and from their allies, we are ignoring the scientific facts, and we are refusing to awaken to the many ringing alarms that nature is now sounding. I hope we can soon find a way to correct this grievous folly and omission.

I yield the floor.

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MERKLEY). The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BROWN of Ohio). Without objection, it is so ordered.

EXTENSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the period for