

His decisions and opinions show respect for due process and strict adherence to the law. Justice Hill is a mentor and inspiration to Wyoming's legal community. He enjoys sharing his experiences and his passion for the legal profession with students and individuals just entering the legal field.

Justice Hill earned a reputation for being a hard worker and a thorough decisionmaker. Anyone fortunate enough to work with him speaks highly of his character and his drive. He respects the rule of law and our foundational legal principles. Justice Hill has consistently shown his commitment to justice and upholding the Constitution.

He has also been a recipient of several prestigious honors throughout his successful career. In 2017, he received the Larry L. Lehman Award for Judicial Excellence presented by the Wyoming State Bar. The award is named in honor of Justice Lehman for his efforts to improve the operation of the Wyoming court system and to provide greater access to justice for all Wyoming citizens. Justice Hill was also inducted as an honorary member of the University of Wyoming's Order of the Coif in 2011.

Justice Hill is married to Mary Kay Hill, and they have two children: Brian and Erin. Their son Brian Hill is married to Molly Hill. Their daughter Erin is married to Chase Rutherford. Mary Kay Hill worked for U.S. Senator Al Simpson in Washington, DC, for 10 years before returning to Wyoming as a policy adviser for former Governor Geringer and current Governor Mead.

The law plays such a major role in Justice Hill's life that he even plays guitar in a band called The Law North of Crow Creek. He is a man of many talents and can captivate a room with his stories. He leaves a lasting mark on everyone he meets.

Retirement opens the door to a new world of adventure and happiness. Justice Hill will continue to inspire and touch the lives of the people of Wyoming for years to come.

It is a great honor to recognize this exceptional member of our Wyoming community. My wife, Bobbi, joins me in extending our gratitude and well wishes to Justice Hill on his retirement.●

REMEMBERING ELDER VON G. KEETCH

● Mr. LEE. Mr. President, I would like to honor the memory of a dear mentor and friend, Elder Von G. Keetch, who passed away suddenly on January 26 at the age of 57.

Elder Keetch was a brilliant attorney who used his gifts in the service of God.

As chief outside counsel and public affairs director to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Elder Keetch had the immense responsibility of representing his faith in the public square.

As an ardent supporter of religious freedom, he also had the privilege of

defending others' ability to worship according to the dictates of their conscience.

"Religious liberty is a God-given right," Elder Keetch said. "It is essential to all men and women exercising their agency and learning to choose between right and wrong."

Elder Keetch had deep respect for our constitutional rights because of his profession, but as a man of faith, he knew that conversions of the heart occur through personal encounters.

Mindful of this truth, Elder Keetch strove to imitate Jesus Christ in all aspects of his life. He encouraged his fellow Christians to do the same, even during contentious public debates.

"Ask yourself how you can best teach and defend the doctrine of the gospel of Jesus Christ while also showing love, kindness, and understanding," he wrote.

Elder Keetch was born in Provo and lived for much of his life in Utah.

He earned his bachelor's degree from Brigham Young University and his law degree from BYU's law school.

During this period, he clerked at the Supreme Court for Chief Justice Warren Burger and Justice Antonin Scalia, where he worked on pivotal religious liberty cases such as *Employment Division v. Speech*, 1990.

As he came up through the ranks, Elder Keetch caught the attention of prominent legal minds, including my father, Rex Lee, who mentored him during law school.

Years later, Elder Keetch would return the favor by mentoring another young BYU law student—me.

I still remember the enthusiasm that Elder Keetch brought to his class on the First Amendment. He wanted to impress upon his students the importance of these old court decisions to our lives.

At least in my case—and I am sure in countless others—he succeeded.

After Elder Keetch graduated from law school, he could have worked at his choice of law firms in Washington, DC, or New York. Instead, after prayerful consideration, he returned to Utah to work at Kirton McConkie, a law firm that works closely with the LDS Church.

Soon, Elder Keetch was an advocate in some of the highest profile public debates of our time, defending religious liberty against coercion and the institution of marriage against attempts to redefine it.

At the same time, Elder Keetch was called to positions of leadership within the LDS Church. He was sustained as a General Authority Seventy of the Church on April 4, 2015.

So tireless was Elder Keetch that, when he was called to a full-time position in the LDS Church, two attorneys were assigned to take over his work.

In spite of these important and time-consuming responsibilities, Elder Keetch made family his first priority.

Elder Keetch is survived by six children and his wife, Bernice, who has

been his steady companion and sweetheart since she invited him to a dance in high school. His family surrounded him with love as he battled cancer, the illness that eventually took him away from us.

It is hard to grapple with the unexpected death of a mentor, father, husband, and leader like Elder Von Keetch, but we should take heart from words that Elder Keetch himself spoke before a General Conference audience in 2015.

He said that trials were to be expected if we want to follow the One who suffered for us on Calvary.

We represent the love and faith of Christ, Elder Keetch taught, "in situations where we don't fully understand the reason for God's command."

I don't know why my dear friend and mentor was called home so soon, but I can take inspiration from his spectacular life.

I still recall a phone conversation with Elder Keetch many years ago, when I was finishing a clerkship with then-Judge Samuel Alito.

Elder Keetch was by then a prominent attorney. By contrast, I was a kid fresh out of school looking for life advice.

Still, he took my call, listened with great care and attention, and gave wise counsel that served me well down the line. Undoubtedly, Elder Keetch's time could have been spent better elsewhere, yet he chose to spend it on me.

That is what I will remember about Elder Keetch. He brought the same enthusiasm to pivotal court cases and seemingly unimportant phone conversations. He knew that matters large and small can be used for the glory of God.

In all things, Elder Von Keetch modeled the words of Paul in his letter to the Philippians: "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain," Philippians 1:21–23, KJV.●

STATE OF THE UNION ESSAY FINALISTS

● Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, last week I entered into the RECORD the winning essays in my office's eighth annual State of the Union Essay Contest. I would like to congratulate the other finalists in this year's contest and likewise ask that their essays be printed in the RECORD. The essays follow, in alphabetical order according to the finalists' names.

The material follows:

BAILEY BLOW, SOUTH BURLINGTON HIGH SCHOOL
SENIOR, FINALIST

At the beginning of December, a video of a polar bear was posted on Twitter by "National Geographic." When people think of polar bears, they imagine snow and ice; however, in this video, snow and ice were nowhere to be found. There was only green. Polar bears are also known for their massive size. The polar bear from the video did not look massive or strong. This poor bear was weak and dangerously skinny. It could barely walk. Without snow and ice, there wasn't a food source for the bear to eat. The scientists that captured the video believed that

it would be dead within hours if it didn't find food to eat.

When I came across this video, I was heartbroken. It was hard to watch and I found myself struggling to finish it. Watching this animal suffer and barely able to move in a habitat that should be covered in ice opened my eyes more. It was a hard sight to see, but this video is important for everyone to see. This polar bear is what climate change looks like. Climate change is not just something that affects animals and their habitats, it's something that affects all of us around the world.

In the recent years, our Nation and the rest of the world have seen an increase in natural disasters, warmer temperatures, a more acidic ocean, and a greater amount of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. Climate change is not something that we can just ignore anymore. If we keep moving in the direction we are going, we will no longer have a healthy planet to live on. Time has not run out yet and there is still hope. If we begin to move towards healing our planet now, we can begin to reverse climate change.

One of the first steps we should take towards addressing climate change is getting back into the Paris Agreement. It was very concerning to most of the Nation when President Trump decided to pull the United States out of this agreement. This decision was concerning because it gives the impression to the rest of the world that the U.S. doesn't believe that climate change is a big deal. Scientists have proven time and time again that climate change is real and it is happening. By getting back into this agreement, the U.S. can continue to contribute to the fight against climate change.

Another step that could be taken is more environmental laws. These laws could cover a wide range of things, such as using alternative energy to cut back on greenhouse gases in the atmosphere or preventing landfill from getting into the ocean. Our priority should be protecting the planet that gives us a home.

Climate change is more apparent now than it has ever been before. It is the most pressing issue facing not only our country, but the entire world. Something needs to be done about it before our only home is destroyed.

MASON CASTLE, ST. JOHNSBURY ACADEMY
JUNIOR, FINALIST

The United States was founded as a democratic republic in 1776. The implication of this system of government is that it is one controlled by the American people through their representatives. The Fifteenth and Nineteenth Amendments were even added following progressive social movements whose aims were ensuring that democracy was for all Americans and not just for a fraction of our people. However, recent Congressional elections have shed light on the threat of gerrymandering to democracy. While race-based gerrymandering was declared illegal by the Voting Rights Act of 1965, partisan gerrymandering is technically legal. However, it deprives millions of Americans of their full representation, and results in a system where politicians choose their voters, rather than voters electing their representatives. Gerrymandering runs counter to the fundamental values of a democratic republic, and therefore to American values, so it must be addressed if we are to "secure the blessings of liberty for ourselves and our posterity," as the preamble to the Constitution says.

Gerrymandering occurs when a state legislature draws district lines so that they favor a certain party through "packing and cracking." This is when votes are either condensed into a singular district so surplus victory votes are wasted, or broken up into other

districts so that they are smothered by opposing votes. What results is that the influence of packed or cracked votes become less significant in determining the results of an election. This becomes especially problematic when the victors of gerrymandered elections gain a majority of seats during Census years because they decide where to draw district lines. This leads to one party holding an overwhelming majority that isn't necessarily representative of the American people. While this is a less overt method of voter suppression, it has proven to be far more effective.

In response to this issue, I propose that rather than having politicians draw districts, we use a neutral algorithm that draws fair districts that represent real American communities. This algorithm would eliminate the factor of human bias, and draw the most efficient maps possible.

Wendy K. Tam Cho, a professor of political science at the University of Illinois designed such an algorithm in response to the Supreme Court case *Gill v. Whitford*, in which Wisconsin lawmakers' proposed map eliminated any possibility of opponent victories. This violated the "one person, one vote" principle that came out of *Baker v. Carr* in 1962. So to create a map that would uphold this principle, Tam Cho used the University's supercomputers to draw billions of potential districts. The maps that were decided to be fairest, were the ones with the lowest efficiency gap or "packing and cracking." Using these third party algorithms, States can effectively make sure that every American has a say in politics, and uphold the democratic values this country was founded on.

LILLIAN CAZAYOUX, CHAMPLAIN VALLEY UNION
HIGH SCHOOL, JUNIOR

There is no doubt in my mind that the biggest problem in the country, as well as in Vermont, is the opioid epidemic. No matter where you go, it's impossible to find any community that has not been affected by scourge of these drugs. Whether it's an addiction to prescription painkillers, or dangerous street drugs like heroin, we need to dedicate greater resources to fighting them.

Opioid death tolls have been on the rise over the past two decades and began to accelerate rapidly in 2011. Opioid overdose deaths nearly doubled over the last five years, surpassing 42,200 nationwide in 2016. In Vermont the death toll was 100. Opioids don't care where you come from, nor do they discriminate based on socioeconomic status. Twenty of the deaths in Vermont occurred with people who had no high school diploma, however, an equal number occurred with people who had a college degree. No matter who you are, you are just as susceptible to opioid addiction. It's time as Vermonters, as Americans, as citizens who care for one another, that we take a stand.

There are two aspects to this problem that must be addressed and fixed; keeping addicts alive, as well as preventing more people from becoming addicted.

The big dangers with these drugs are how easy it is to overdose on them, and the diseases contracted by injecting with unsterile needles. The first thing we must do is preserve the lives at risk, by preventing fatal overdoses. I believe the best solution to that would be to open supervised injection sites. Popular in Europe, supervised injection sites allow addicts to use drugs with sanitary materials, provide treatment consultation, as well as medical help in the case of an overdose emergency. With newer, more potent drugs on the market such as fentanyl, it's crucial we find a quick way to save these lives before thousands more are lost. These supervised injection sites would provide a

chance to preserve lives until users can make the decision to begin the rehabilitation process. The main goal of implementing these sites would be to reduce the immediate health issues that opioid addiction presents, as well as attempting to refer the addicts into treatment.

The other preemptive part of this plan would be targeting doctors that over-prescribe highly addictive opioids in unnecessary cases. I believe more stringent rules regulating these prescriptions could prevent many people from becoming addicted to these medicines in the first place, before they turn to the cheaper more dangerous cousin, heroin.

Attacking the epidemic from both sides of the problem could be the solution to saving lives from opioid addictions.

VIJAYATA DAHAL, WINOOSKI HIGH SCHOOL,
JUNIOR

I was eight years old when I immigrated to the United States with my family from Bhutan and Nepal. With us, we brought hope. Hope for better economic opportunities, better education, and a brighter future. Most importantly, we hoped for a country to call home.

Immigrants built America and it thrives because of them. The opportunity to migrate to the United States should be open to everyone despite their race, religion, and the color of their skin. Today, the President wants to stop immigration, deport 11 million undocumented immigrants, and eliminate the program that protects the children of illegal immigrants. Like my parents, millions of immigrants have migrated to the United States for centuries. Some come to flee violence. Some want religious freedom. Some come to escape poverty. Some come to have a home.

According to Michael Shear of the New York Times, the president banned people from seven predominantly Muslim countries to protect the United States from terror attacks. Ironically, non-Muslims commit more terrorist attacks in the United States. According to Ruiz-Grossman's article in the Huffington Post, white supremacists, militias, and sovereign citizens carried out 115 cases of terrorist attacks on the U.S. soil; Islamist extremists executed 63 terrorist attacks. The President should use his power to find a solution to stop the white supremacists rather than banning thousands of innocent human beings who are in search of a home.

In the United States, there are approximately 11.3 million illegal immigrants, many of whom brought their children along. According to Jenna Moon of The New Yorker, almost 800,000 undocumented immigrants came to the U.S. as children. These children are protected by a federal program—known as Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, or DACA. DACA allows the Dreamers the right to live, study, and work in the United States.

In September 2017, the Trump administration announced plans to eliminate DACA and gave Congress six months to come up with a legislative solution. The new development has put the Dreamers at risk. Thousands of Dreamers have worked hard to attend schools, serve the government, and establish their careers. If Congress doesn't pass legislation, innocent children and young adults will be deported.

The U.S. should make background checks more efficient. America should not deport the 11 million undocumented immigrants. Instead, they should get the right to become citizens of the United States so that they receive the same opportunities as legal immigrants. Finally, Congress should create a plan that allows the Dreamers to work, study, and live in the United States and become citizens.

Immigration makes America unique. Our Nation was built and run by immigrants. Even the ones who are born here are all descendants of immigrants who came here fleeing poverty and violence, in search of a brighter future. The doors of America were open then, and they should stay open now to welcome the "tired, poor, huddled masses yearning to breathe free."

PAIGE GREENIA, MISSISQUOI VALLEY UNION HIGH SCHOOL, JUNIOR

How do people attain the goods that they want when the government makes them illegal? They turn to the black market. Now more than ever the United States is seeing a push to take certain goods out of the black market system. Right now, the major topic on the federal level is marijuana. Currently, several States have completely legalized the sale and use of marijuana, and several others are in the middle of making their decision. It would be in the best interest of the whole country to move toward legalizing and decriminalizing marijuana.

Actions towards decriminalizing and legalizing marijuana would make the marijuana trade, something that people that are going to do no matter if it's legal or not, much safer. The first way is that the government could set regulations on the growing and production of the substance. The government could establish a few trustworthy growers across the country to grow the marijuana to governmental safety standards and make sure that consumers don't have to worry about their products being laced with harmful substances. According to the American Addiction Centers, marijuana can be laced with dangerous substances such as lead, glass, heroin, PCP, laundry detergent and cocaine. In addition, if the Federal and State governments worked towards making marijuana a non-black market trade, officials would see countless less drug deal-related deaths and injuries. This is significant because according to Bill Conroy of "The Narcosphere", "the number of people murdered in the drug war inside the United States between 2006 and 2010 exceeds the U.S. troop death toll in the Iraq War." If marijuana isn't part of the black market, there cannot be drug dealers who are willing to do anything possible to get their money. If users don't have to be secretive about their use, they will be less likely to be hostile and more likely to get help and the amount of drug incidents will decrease. If the government officials take marijuana off the black market, it will make communities safer.

In the interest of saving the government money, the decriminalization and legalization of marijuana can contribute majorly. If the government legalizes marijuana, they can alleviate the cost of making arrests related to marijuana use. After all, "authorities spend more than \$3.6 billion enforcing laws against marijuana possession" according to a frequently cited report by the American Civil Liberties Union. Fifty-two percent of all arrests made in 2010 were due to marijuana related incidents, and a staggering 700,000 marijuana arrests were made in 2014. As a baseline statistic, the average cost to keep an inmate in a New York state prison is around \$60,000 per inmate annually. All the money saved by the State and Federal governments could be more appropriately be dedicated to lessening the country's increasing national debt.

For these reasons, the decriminalization and legalization of marijuana for recreational use, removing it from the black market, would benefit not only our state, but the entire country.

KAITLINN LITTLE, WINOOSKI HIGH SCHOOL, SENIOR

I am afraid to walk down the street. I cannot afford to spend mental energy on how I

present myself in order to remain sexually safe. Instead, I focus on leaving a positive and impactful mark on this world. From a young age, my sex wasn't an obstacle in anything I did. I played with pink and blue toys. Stranger danger applied to all children. I played in the mud with a dress on. Then, I wanted to look like Barbie. I wanted to be rescued by a prince instead of saving myself. Children on the playground told me when a boy was mean, it meant he had a crush. Slowly but surely, we fell into the roles we were taught to follow. Today, women are coming forward and insisting that sexism is still an issue and I find that from the shallow strides I take in the presence of a man, this reality is with me, too.

According to "Psychology Today", 56% of women in the United States are dissatisfied with their appearance. I've seen that young and old women will change their looks or even who they are so that a man will accept and notice them. Carolyn Coker Ross, MD says that how media portrays female bodies influences how women see themselves. She writes about the physical alterations women started performing during the 1800's. Women have put themselves in danger through plastic surgery to be "beautiful." Such behavior should not be socially acceptable. Biologically, humans look for traits in a mate that they consider attractive. We were not built to harm ourselves to reach that appearance.

Gender roles in the past assigned women to be meek. Although the roles aren't as black and white today, those mentalities are still common throughout media. People in power make it difficult to move forward. Planned Parenthood explains that gender roles can occur in different forms such as personality traits, domestic behaviors, occupation, and physical appearances. But there are also ways to fight back, such as pointing out stereotyping in media to help people become aware of it. Speaking out about roles that could hurt us will draw attention to the issue. Speaking up for victims of sexism will spread awareness. And finally, not strictly following traditional norms will open people's minds. No drastic measures need to be made in order to prove a point. Simply being yourself, no matter how you act, dress, or look, should be the American norm.

My existence is not to be blanketed by fear but to thrive as a woman who is beneficial to a world that is hurting. If we are silent, power remains in the hands of those who impose silence on us. Listening to the people who witness hate with their own eyes surely will bring some relief to American women who are afraid to stride with the confidence and strength they are meant to have.

DUNCAN MCGRADY, CHAMPLAIN VALLEY UNION HIGH SCHOOL, SOPHOMORE

Today, the United States faces its greatest threat since the Cold War. It does not have a flag, or an ideology. It is unarmed, but deadly. It is the critical issue of our times. The greatest challenge America faces today comes from climate change and the unwillingness to act to stop it. The 2017 Atlantic hurricane season broke records with 17 storms, hundreds of direct fatalities, and \$292,000,000,000 in damages. It was the first such hurricane season, but it will not be the last. Scientists are still assessing the unprecedented hurricane season of last year, but the Union of Concerned Scientists has made clear that new, unnatural climatic conditions have worsened natural disasters, and will continue to do so. With millions of people living near the Caribbean and the eastern seaboard, including in U.S. states and territories, inaction is unacceptable. Funding must be provided to create, improve, or maintain storm resistant infra-

structure and housing, and to treat the cause: climate change.

New climate threats are not only impacting the East Coast—far from it. The West Coast has been plagued with yet another series of un-natural disasters: wildfires. Wildfires are short but destroy lives nonetheless. In the past year alone, thousands have been displaced, and 46 people have been killed. Experts fear this is merely a harbinger of far worse wildfire seasons to come, and the mass damage, casualties, and displacement that they will bring.

Climate change displacement is not only an American problem, but a global one. Today, 21.5 million people have been forcibly displaced due to directly climate-related events, according to the UNHCR. Many of these refugees have fled to developed states, which have largely failed in their humanitarian obligations. Developed states must do better because millions more climate refugees are expected in the coming years. Directly climate related catastrophes are not the only force behind the greatest refugee crisis since the Second World War. Outright resource conflict has reared its head, with resource scarcity and inequality an amplifier of other conflicts that directly impact U.S. interests, such as the disruption of merchant shipping in vital maritime chokepoints due to piracy, a behavior fundamentally driven by poverty. For pragmatic and moral reasons, the U.S. must address poverty at home and overseas. One way to manage this issue is at the source, by halting climate induced scarcity of resources.

Today, the United States faces a critical threat: climate change. The death and destruction caused by climate change is no longer a hypothetical. It is a current and critical threat to the security of the people of the United States and the globe, today and tomorrow. Climate change has already caused catastrophic environmental and humanitarian crises. The United States must halt climate change by subsidizing the blossoming green energy movement, aiding worker transition to renewable energy careers, correcting an anti-science culture, and re-entering the Paris Climate Accord immediately. We must act now because America's lethargy of today is humanity's calamity of tomorrow.

JAKE MCNEIL, MILTON HIGH SCHOOL, SENIOR

Vermont is a unique State that is comprised of small, tight-knit communities; these communities have a close relationship with local government. Teachers, a vital component to both the community and in promoting students to be forward-thinkers, help shape Vermont into the innovative and creative state that it is. Lately, however, there has been a lack of consideration in regards to the teachers who are at the heart of Vermont's schools and communities. Scattered across our Facebook feeds and blasted from our car radios are stories of local school districts' strife. For decades, teacher strikes have become commonplace, each with a lasting impact on the Vermont education system. The Vermont-National Education Association, VT-NEA, has recorded over 26 strikes in the state. However, this issue is not just relevant to Vermont, but every State across the country. Teachers are a fundamental part of our school systems and are influential in the development of future generations, which is why I believe it is essential that attention is paid to the underlying issues that spark these strikes. From underfunded schools and issues with employee contracts to unsatisfactory working conditions and hefty workloads, the laundry list of problems is anything but miniscule. We must do two things: open the door to productive communication by letting teachers

air their grievances, and have school boards focus more resources on trying to resolve those issues. This will help teachers attain and deliver the curricula they desire by coordinating cost saving measures, all without breaking the town budgets. The students of America, our future generation, deserve an education without interruption.

We need to have teachers and leadership communicate constantly to get the schools and outcomes we desire. By engaging in productive, civil and persistent dialogue between all parties, teachers serve as models in promoting the behaviors they want to instill in their students, like myself, and the community: standing up against injustice, making difficult decisions, and insisting on being treated with dignity and respect—despite such actions being perceived as very difficult and unpopular. In essence, continual dialogue among all parties is a more productive, and instructive, model for our teachers and leadership to follow. The process of continual dialogue will help all parties involved identify areas in the system that need funding by communicating and pinpointing the specific areas of interest: materials, professional development, and teacher contracts. This allows leadership to make informed choices about budgeting, which is a more effective use of limited funds.

Education is an essential service, and as such we must strive to make it better. As President John F. Kennedy said, “The race between education and erosion, between wisdom and waste has not run its course.” We are still in the race, and by having teachers, state, and national leadership continue to work together, we can place ourselves in the best position to win the race. As Americans, it is critical for citizens to support the educators that shape our communities into the melting pot of growth and creativity that they are today.

LILY MINER, CHAMPLAIN VALLEY UNION HIGH SCHOOL, SENIOR

During this first year of the Donald Trump presidency, we have witnessed many questionable decisions being made for our country that not only affect us, but also those around the world in a negative way. One particular decision, however, has set our country on a path to continue the horrific damage being done to Earth. President Trump’s adjudication to pull out of the Paris Climate Agreement has left us as the only nation in the world to oppose it since Syria signed to join in November. The main objective for this agreement was to restrict levels of CO2 emissions from each country. The consequences of Trump’s withdrawal are grave, as CO2 levels in the atmosphere have risen past 400 parts per million—levels that are already superseding what Earth can handle to support the flora and fauna living on it. Continuing this trend will most likely result in a mass extinction event.

Hearing the White House argue that removing us from the agreement will help boost our economy filled much of the American public as well as climate experts around the globe with a sense of outrage. We have already accumulated a surplus of evidence that manmade climate change is having a drastic negative impact. In the past two decades, sea levels have risen at a rate of .13 inches, which is twice the rate of the past century. From 1992 to 2011, Greenland lost 152 billion tons of ice per year, West Antarctica lost 65 billion per year, and the Antarctic Peninsula lost 20 billion per year. Increased intensity in extreme weather including hurricanes, floods, and snowstorms has been recorded since the 1950’s. These are just a fraction of the plethora of examples. Given the massive amount of damage that has already been done, how can it be justified to place the economy as a higher priority?

This choice is especially irresponsible when considering the fact that the United States produces more excess CO2 than any other country. While there are many factors to blame, one of the largest and least necessary of these is the use of fossil fuels. They provide 81% of the energy in the United States, yet they are both incredibly harmful and incredibly easy to replace. A change needs to be made.

It is imperative that we as a global superpower begin to invest in renewable energy such as wind and solar. Many economists agree that the long term benefits from switching to renewable energy would outweigh the short term costs, improving the economy through more environmentally sound means. Certainly a more competent course of action than removing ourselves from the Paris Agreement. Though the cost of installation for these methods are pricier than more conventional ones, they have no fuel costs once they are functioning and the maintenance costs are cheaper. The United States has not only the resources, but the duty to fight against these issues. We need to combat this now, because we will not be given a second chance later.●

MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Messages from the President of the United States were communicated to the Senate by Ms. Cuccia, one of his secretaries.

EXECUTIVE MESSAGES REFERRED

As in executive session the Presiding Officer laid before the Senate messages from the President of the United States submitting sundry nominations and withdrawals which were referred to the appropriate committees.

(The messages received today are printed at the end of the Senate proceedings.)

MESSAGE FROM THE HOUSE

At 3:03 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mrs. Cole, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has passed the following bill, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H.R. 4292. An act to reform the living will process under the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act.

MEASURES REFERRED

The following bill was read the first and the second times by unanimous consent, and referred as indicated:

H.R. 4292. An act to reform the living will process under the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

MEASURES READ THE FIRST TIME

The following bills were read the first time:

H.R. 1551. An act to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to modify the credit for production from advanced nuclear power facilities.

H.R. 2372. An act to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to clarify the rules re-

lating to veteran health insurance and eligibility for the premium tax credit.

H.R. 2579. An act to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to allow the premium tax credit with respect to unsubsidized COBRA continuation coverage.

EXECUTIVE AND OTHER COMMUNICATIONS

The following communications were laid before the Senate, together with accompanying papers, reports, and documents, and were referred as indicated:

EC-4137. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Flonicamid; Pesticide Tolerances for Emergency Exemptions” (FRL No. 9971-94) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on January 29, 2018; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC-4138. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Difenoconazole; Pesticide Tolerances” (FRL No. 9971-95) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on January 29, 2018; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC-4139. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Calcium Salts of Phosphorous Acid; Exemption from the Requirement of a Tolerance” (FRL No. 9970-96) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on January 29, 2018; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC-4140. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “*Bacillus thuringiensis* Cry51Aa2.834 16; Exemption from the Requirement of a Tolerance” (FRL No. 9972-62) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on January 29, 2018; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC-4141. A communication from the Director of Defense Pricing and Procurement and Acquisition Policy, Department of Defense, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Defense Federal Acquisition Regulation Supplement: Procurement of Commercial Items” ((RIN0750-AJ01) (DFARS Case 2016-D006)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on January 29, 2018; to the Committee on Armed Services.

EC-4142. A communication from the Assistant Secretary of the Navy (Research, Development and Acquisition), transmitting, pursuant to law, a report entitled “Report to Congress on Repair of Naval Vessels in Foreign Shipyards”; to the Committee on Armed Services.

EC-4143. A communication from the Director of Defense Pricing and Procurement and Acquisition Policy, Department of Defense, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Defense Federal Acquisition Regulation Supplement: State Sponsor of Terrorism—North Korea” ((RIN0750-AJ68) (DFARS Case 2018-D004)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on January 29, 2018; to the Committee on Armed Services.

EC-4144. A communication from the Assistant Secretary for Export Administration, Bureau of Industry and Security, Department of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant