

know, quite frankly, how one can take the oath of office and not respect the Constitution as it delivers that power to this body, not to the President.

My third concern goes to the conflict of interest that he brought into consideration for this position. Specifically, it is the conflict of interest that he carries into his career through his very, very close association with the Koch brothers. He has been given the nickname “the Congressman from Koch.” The headquarters of Koch Industries is located in his district. The Koch brothers gave him the money to start his business. The Koch brothers were the biggest donors to his campaign. His entire career is carefully intertwined with the Koch brothers and advocating for whatever they wanted him to advocate for.

What we see is that the Koch brothers are advocating against our working with other nations to take on the challenge of climate chaos. Now, Mother Nature sent us a big, rude awakening this last year with three powerful hurricanes tearing apart parts of our country and with forest fires stretching from Montana across to the Pacific Ocean and down the Pacific coast, deep into California, because of the carbon pollution that is warming the seas and changing the weather patterns and drying out our forests.

We suffer that, but we see so much more. We see the moose dying. We see the lobsters migrating. We see the oysters unable to have babies. A billion of them died back about the time I took office here in the Senate because of the acidification of the ocean, coming from carbon pollution.

The whole world is coming together to try to take on this problem, but Mr. Pompeo is uninterested in this major threat facing humanity. He supports our disengaging from the international community and taking this on. He is fine letting China take the lead and producing the economic results of taking the lead instead of the United States taking the lead and being engaged in these partnerships. So, colleagues, those are my concerns.

We need an individual dedicated to the power of diplomacy, not someone who reaches first for the sword. We need an individual who respects different religions and respects the opportunity in the United States that we carry to the world as a beacon of freedom, not one who disrespects it. Third, we need an individual whose career is not tied to a single industry and whose outlook is to continue to protect that industry, even in taking this job.

So for those reasons, this nomination should be turned down.

Thank you, Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PERDUE). The Senator from North Carolina.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. TILLIS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate resume legislative session for a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

EARTH DAY 2018

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, last Sunday, April 22, marked the 49th Earth Day. Given the Trump administration’s reckless assault on the environment, it is frightening to think where we might be on the 50th Earth Day.

President Trump hasn’t built that “big, beautiful” wall he promised. More than a year into his term, he still hasn’t filled dozens of critical posts, from Cabinet Secretaries to ambassadors.

Looking at what hasn’t been done, a reasonable person might assume that this President still hasn’t learned how to make government work. That might be true in many areas, but when it comes to the environment, it is dead wrong.

From day one of his administration, President Trump has used budget cuts, executive orders, and other administrative and regulatory tools to push a concerted rollback of environmental protections. President Trump has repealed or frozen some 850 rules and regulations, many of which have a direct impact on the environment.

He has signaled his intention to withdraw the U.S. from the Paris climate accord. America is the largest emitter of carbon gases, and we are the only nation on Earth that is not part of the global effort to save the planet from climate chaos and catastrophe.

Under this President, we have ceded global leadership on the climate to other nations, especially to China. Not only is that shameful, it is bad business. Some of the best-paying jobs of the 21st century will be in renewable energy industries. How are we going to create those jobs and industries in America with a President and administration that refuse to admit even the existence of climate change?

Since Earth Day last year, the U.S. has suffered some of the deadliest and costliest disasters in our history. Last August, Hurricane Irma battered the southern U.S., especially south Florida. It was followed quickly by Hurricane Harvey, which caused an estimated \$200 billion in damage and pummeled Houston. In September, Hurricane Maria caused the worst natural disaster on record in Puerto Rico. Nearly 8 months later, most of the island is still without electricity. After the hurricanes came the wildfires, including some of the worst wildfires in California’s history.

Scientists warn that without significant reductions in carbon emissions, climate chaos will become more frequent, more deadly and more expensive.

What is FEMA’s response? Strategic plans drawn up by FEMA during both the Obama and George W. Bush administrations acknowledged climate change as a serious threat, right up there with terrorist attacks. Under this President, FEMA has dropped any mention of climate change from its strategic plan. The reality we dare not deny has become the crisis whose name the Agency dare not utter.

Last year and again this year, President Trump has sent Congress budget plans that would gut the Department of Interior and the Environmental Protection Agency.

Scott Pruitt, the President’s choice to run EPA, is an ethical nightmare, but he is a polluter’s dream. He has vowed to withdraw the Clean Power Plan, a plan to cut emissions from the U.S. power sector by 32 percent from 2005 by 2030. Administrator Pruitt has signaled that he wants to roll back modest new fuel efficiency standards for cars and light-duty trucks—standards that would reduce U.S. greenhouse gas emissions significantly. The EPA under Donald Trump and Scott Pruitt has suspended the “waters of the United States” rule, designed to reduce pollution in 60 percent of the Nation’s lakes, rivers, and streams.

EPA is not the only member of the Trump Environmental Wrecking Crew.

Today, 94 percent of the outer continental shelf in the Pacific, Atlantic, and Arctic Oceans is off limits from oil and gas exploration. The Department of the Interior is proposing to open 90 percent of the outer continental shelf for future oil and gas drilling. On top of this, this administration has weakened safety requirements that prevent oil spills.

Interior’s Bureau of Land Management is also selling off thousands of federally owned parcels of land for oil and gas development. Among the national treasures up for sale are two national monuments in Utah: the Grand Staircase-Escalante and Bears Ears, home to some of the richest and most important archeological finds in our Nation.

Interior Secretary Zinke had a special flag designed for himself and ordered that it be flown whenever he was in the Department headquarters. It would be more fitting if he flew the white flag of surrender because that is what this administration is doing.

They are surrendering America’s global leadership in the efforts to save this planet from climate catastrophe, and they are surrendering decades of important and lifesaving progress we have made since the first Earth Day in safeguarding our environment, preserving our natural treasures, and protecting the health and safety of the American people.

They are undoing decades of bipartisan agreements that balanced science

and the public good with the interests of States, localities, landowners, business, and conservationists.

This past weekend, on the eve of Earth Day, the New York Times published an op-ed entitled, "America Before Earth Day: Smog and Disasters Spurred the Laws Trump Wants to Undo." The article recounts five devastating ecological disasters that shook Americans deeply in late 1960s and the 1970s and led to the creation of major environmental laws that have saved millions of lives and reversed horrendous environmental damage.

The accidents include the Cuyahoga River burning in 1969, which helped spur passage of the Clean Air Act, and the toxic poisoning of Love Canal in Niagara Falls, NY—a catalyst for the creation in 1980 of a superfund that would make oil and chemical companies pay for the pollution they cause and not walk away from the devastation and stick taxpayers with the tab.

The Trump administration is working to dismantle not just to these major environmental laws and abdicate America's role as a global leader on environmental protection, it is reneging on a bipartisan tradition on conservation and preservation of America's public lands that goes back more than a century, to a proud Republican President by the name of Teddy Roosevelt.

I ask unanimous consent that that full New York Times op-ed be printed in the RECORD at the conclusion of my remarks.

Fortunately, American businesses and scientists, State and local governments, and the American people themselves refuse to wave the white flag. They refuse to sell America's clean air and clean water and the health of the American people to the highest bidder.

They are working in boardrooms and classrooms, in laboratories, in city halls, State houses, and courthouses to solve the urgent environmental challenges of our time and preserve the bipartisan environmental progress we have made.

The Trump administration needs to listen and stop waving the white flag of surrender. Our world and the health of our children and grandchildren is worth fighting for.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From The New York Times, April 21, 2018]

AMERICA BEFORE EARTH DAY: SMOG AND DISASTERS SPURRED THE LAWS TRUMP WANTS TO UNDO

(By Livia Albeck-Ripka and Kendra Pierre-Louis)

A huge oil spill. A river catching fire. Lakes so polluted they were too dangerous for fishing or swimming. Air so thick with smog it was impossible to see the horizon.

That was the environmental state of the nation 50 years ago. But pollution and disasters prompted action. On April 22, 1970, millions of people throughout the country demonstrated on the inaugural Earth Day, calling for air, water and land in the country to be cleaned up and protected. And that year, in a bipartisan effort, the Environmental

Protection Agency was created and key legislation—the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act and the Endangered Species Act—came into force.

Now, the Trump administration has made eliminating federal regulations a priority, and an increasing number of environmental rules are under threat.

Here's a look at five environmental disasters that shifted the public conversation and prompted, directly or indirectly, lawmakers to act.

THE SANTA BARBARA OIL SPILL

On January 28, 1969, an oil rig exploded off the coast of Santa Barbara, Calif., spewing three million gallons of crude oil into the ocean in one of the worst environmental disasters in the history of the United States.

At the time, there were no federal measures in place to regulate offshore drilling.

After the spill local officials pleaded with the federal government to end oil exploration off the California coast. But it was not until 1978 that the first federal regulations were passed.

Just over 40 years after the Santa Barbara rig blowout, on April 20, 2010, an even worse spill, known as the Deepwater Horizon disaster, resulted in the tightening of federal rules.

But this past January, the Trump administration said it would reopen vast areas of United States coastal waters to new offshore oil and gas drilling projects. Shortly thereafter, the administration began the process of rolling back safety regulations on existing rigs.

Ryan Zinke, the interior secretary, has also proposed revising a five-year plan for offshore oil and gas leasing, which conservationists say would harm marine life and could also pose a danger to humans.

THE CUYAHOGA RIVER FIRE

The Cuyahoga River in Cleveland in 1952. The river burned at least 13 times before the 1969 fire that was covered by Time magazine. On June 22, 1969, the Cuyahoga River near Cleveland caught fire—both literally and in the public imagination. A few months later the conflagration became a big story in Time magazine, which described the Cuyahoga as a river that "oozes rather than flows."

The story prompted outrage throughout the country, where many rivers, after decades of industrial pollution, were too dangerous for swimming, fishing or drinking. (The main photo in Time was actually of the Cuyahoga when it caught fire 17 years earlier, in 1952. The river had burned at least 13 times.)

The fire, fueled by an oil slick on river's surface, and resulting media coverage galvanized the outrage into broader public action.

It culminated in the passage of the 1972 Clean Water Act. That measure, like the Clean Air Act, was an extension of earlier laws. But the piecemeal nature of the earlier rules had resulted in a lack of oversight and regulatory control. The 1972 act coordinated the rules and gave regulatory authority to the nascent E.P.A.

Since the law's creation, waterways across the United States are markedly cleaner, though half still fall short of national goals. Recent decisions, though, could lead to backsliding.

The E.P.A. has suspended the Obama-era Waters of the United States rules, which sought to clarify which waterways are considered part of the national water system. Smaller bodies of water, like intermittent streams and wetlands, have been in a legal gray area since the 1972 act despite having significant impact on water quality.

Scott Pruitt, the E.P.A. administrator, also removed Clean Water Act decision-making authority from regional offices, leaving him the sole arbiter.

THE LOVE CANAL DISASTER

In the late 1970s, residents of Love Canal in Niagara Falls, N.Y., began complaining of odd smells, rashes and liquid leaching into the basements of their homes. Decades earlier, the Hooker Chemical Company had dumped toxic waste in the canal and buried it. Outraged, the residents of Love Canal organized and were eventually relocated from their town.

While the residents of Love Canal were not the first or only community to confront the toxic legacy of industry, their plight caught the attention of national media, and ultimately, helped prompt the creation of the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act, commonly known as the Superfund.

Passed by Congress in 1980, the law meant that chemical and petroleum companies would be taxed to create a cleanup trust fund.

Over time, however, the trust fund has dwindled, with taxpayers increasingly footing cleanup bills. In the E.P.A.'s 2019 budget, staff cuts have been made, while some people nominated for key positions have direct links to polluting industries. In December, the administration also rejected a proposed rule that mining companies prove they have the money to clean up pollution left behind at their sites.

THE SMOG-FILLED SKIES

Pittsburghers used to say that if you wore a white shirt to work in the morning, that the shirt would be as gray as the air by lunchtime. In cities and towns throughout the country, Americans didn't just breathe the air, they could all but touch it. In the nation's National Parks, air pollution clouded the views.

This was the United States before the 1970s Clean Air Act.

There was no single smog event that led to the act. In the years leading up to its passage, though, "You had growing awareness in the scientific community about problems like smog," said Eric Schaeffer, the executive director of the Environmental Integrity Project. "You had the beginnings of an understanding that it was bigger than any state agency could manage."

The act was an overhaul and extension of the 1963 Clean Air Act. It enabled the newly created E.P.A. to set standards related to six key pollutants that were known to harm human health.

In recent months the Trump administration has signaled its desire to undo some of parts of the act. Mr. Pruitt, the E.P.A. administrator, has said that Obama-era car emissions standards designed to reduce greenhouse gasses and other pollutants linked to respiratory diseases and heart disease are set "too high."

THE NEAR-EXTINCTION OF THE GRAY WOLF

In the early 1970s, the gray wolf was teetering on the edge of extinction in the lower 48 states. Throughout the earlier part of the century, the wolf was largely considered a trophy and was hunted and skinned for its fur to within an inch of the species' life.

In its company were dozens of other species at risk of dying out, with few laws to protect them.

In 1973, shortly after the first Earth Day, with the American public increasingly aware of the importance of biodiversity, the Endangered Species Act was signed into law by President Richard M. Nixon. The act was designed to prohibit the killing or harassing of protected species or damaging the habitats necessary for their survival.

Shortly thereafter, the gray wolf was listed as "endangered" under the act and—alongside the bald eagle, American alligator

and dozens of other species—began to slowly recover in some areas. Scientists estimate that the act has directly prevented the extinction of more than 200 species.

The act has long been a point of contention between industry and conservationists, and has come under criticism from previous administrations. But under the Trump administration, at least 63 separate legislative efforts to weaken the act have been undertaken since January 2017, according to the Centre for Biological Diversity.

Among them were the delisting of various species that conservationists argue are not fully recovered, like grizzly bears in Yellowstone National Park. The attempts to water down the act are “among the worst” by any administration, said Bruce Stein, the chief scientist of the National Wildlife Federation.

TRIBUTE TO DWAIN “DOC” PRESTON

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, in honor of April being National Poetry Month, I want to take a few moments to recognize an extraordinary teacher, poet, and Quincy, IL, legend, Dwain “Doc” Preston.

In the winter of 1936, Doc was born on a farm near Barry, IL. The son of a World War II tank crewman and a tough as nails mother who grew up in Oklahoma surviving the Dust Bowl, Doc attended four different one-room schoolhouses, including Berrian Elementary School in Quincy. After graduating from Liberty High School, he enrolled at Western Illinois University. That was the decision that he said “took me out of the cornfield.”

Doc joined the Air Force, attending Chinese language school, spending 6 hours a day for 8 months, studying at Yale University. To this day, much of his work in the Air Force remains classified. After his service, Doc returned to Quincy and was introduced to Regina Higgins by a friend Jay Lenne at Park Bowl, a bowling alley at the corner of 12th and Harrison. They fell in love, got married, and started their family. They had the first of four daughters in 1963, the second in 1964, the third in 1965, and lastly, the fourth, in—you guessed it—1966.

Doc followed in his uncle’s footsteps—a teacher of 55 years—and accepted a position at Quincy Junior High School after two of his former teachers vouched for him. Six years later, Doc used his G.I. bill to work toward his doctorate at the University of Illinois in Champaign. While working on his dissertation, he taught at Western Illinois University and officially became “Doc” Preston. He then did the unexpected and tried his hand at selling insurance, but Doc had teaching in his blood and returned to the classroom after just 1 year. For the next 26 years, Doc Preston could be found in the classroom, teaching writing, speech, and English at Quincy Notre Dame, where each of his daughters would attend high school. He also supervised the QND student council, teaching leadership skills and important life lessons that aren’t normally found in high school textbooks. Even

after his official retirement, Doc continued teaching creative writing to seniors and others.

Throughout the years, Doc has stayed in touch with many of his students. They will send him notes using words like icon, terrific, great, awesome, amazing, special—to describe him as a teacher or writer, but mostly as a man. When hearing these compliments, he responds in his humble simple way: “That’s always fun.” They just don’t make them like Doc Preston anymore.

Doc and his wife, Regina, spent 44 years, or as Doc put it, “over 16,000 days” together before Regina passed away in 2006, just 4 weeks following Doc’s retirement. In his beautiful poem titled, To Regina, he writes:

For over 16,000 days
You were part of me.
Now only memories are left
Of days that used to be.
But Ah! What memories they are!
The Buoy of my very life,
Which would have been of little worth
Had you not been my wife.

His words are haunting as he takes us on an emotional ride that both breaks the heart and allows us to celebrate the blessings that are memories.

Doc Preston didn’t write to publish or make money. He wrote because he loved it and his audience, consisting largely of his family, loved it. When each of his four daughters were married, Doc wrote them a sonnet. When each of his 11 grandchildren turned 13, he wrote what could be called a “good-bye to their youth” poem. When they were younger, Doc wrote each of them a book. All told, Doc estimates he has written about 150 books. On his 80th birthday, Doc’s children compiled and presented him with a book of his poem’s that he dedicated to Regina.

Despite being a brilliant writer and teacher, Doc’s proudest accomplishment is his family. In an interview last year, he said, “One of the things that is joyful about being a parent is watching them grow up and succeed.” His children certainly did. Two even went into the family business and became teachers. Doc loved parenting, but he once said, “Grandparenting is better.” I couldn’t agree more.

When looking for heaven, many look toward the sky—not Doc Preston. Doc and Regina, looked along the river bluffs of the Mississippi River and built heaven in Quincy, IL. Whether it was with Doc’s wife, Regina, four daughters—Carolyn, Cheri, Debbie, Teresa—11 grandchildren, or countless student, his life, love, and poetry have touched so many lives, including my own.

I want to thank Doc Preston for his dedication to teaching and his generosity to the wonderful people of Quincy. They call Quincy “Gem City.” Well, there is no gem shining brighter than Dwain “Doc” Preston.

Thank you, Doc, for sharing your gift with us all.

I would like to share the final lines of Doc’s poem, Southern Memories.

Oh, yes, I’ll savor snapshots,
To be sure,
But what I’ll treasure most
Are all the memories I made with you.

Doc’s right. I would like to tell him that what will be treasured most by those who know Doc, “Are all the memories [we] made with you.”

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I wish to call attention to what has been called the world’s most neglected humanitarian crisis and call upon the administration to play an active leadership role in helping bring a sustainable peace to the Central African Republic, CAR. Diplomatic attention, especially from the United States, has waned over the past 2 years. If we fail to commit diplomatic attention to CAR, we risk increasing threats to regional stability, U.S. investments, and, most tragically, the lives and livelihoods of millions of Central Africans.

CAR has long been beset by political and social upheaval. Since independence in 1960, the country has endured coups, military mutinies, rebellions, and incursions by the infamous Lord’s Resistance Army. The most recent civil war accelerated in 2013 after rebels opposed to the government of Francois Bozize took over the capitol. Their campaign to seize the capitol and the response by resulting self-defense militias were characterized by widespread violence against civilians. France, the European Union, and the African Union all deployed troops to prevent further bloodshed, and in 2014, the U.N. deployed a peacekeeping mission mandated to protect civilians and prevent further intercommunal fighting. The State Department’s Atrocities Prevention Board identified CAR as a country at risk, and the United States took action accordingly, working on the ground to support interventions to prevent mass atrocities.

These vigorous diplomatic actions ushered in a period of relative calm. In the wake of Pope Benedict’s visit in 2015 and peaceful elections in 2015–2016, the situation on the ground appeared to stabilize. President Faustin-Archange Touadera was elected in what was arguably the most competitive contest of any leader in the central Africa region. Donors pledged \$2.2 billion to support stabilization and postconflict reconstruction in late 2016.

However, in 2017, security in the country began to precipitously decline. Militia and criminal gangs in the north and eastern parts of the country began fighting each other in a quest for control over territory and resources, threatening the fragile peace. Entire villages have been destroyed, civilians targeted and killed. While the government and 13 armed groups signed a notional peace deal in June 2017—the fifth disarmament agreement signed by armed groups in 4 years—renewed fighting quickly followed.