

effect, and the ice sheet on land can then accelerate, with that buttress effect diminished, more rapidly into the sea, causing a more rapid rise in sea level.

The effect of this is actually measurable, and we measure it. Observations from the NASA and German Aerospace Center's twin Gravity Recovery and Climate Experiment satellites measure these losses to be around 125 gigatons of ice per year. What is a gigaton of ice? A gigaton is 1 billion tons. Meredith Nettles of the Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory at Columbia University described a gigaton-sized piece of ice this way: "If you took the whole National Mall"—here we are in Washington—"and covered it up with ice to a height about four times as high as the [Washington] monument. . . ."

Imagine walking out onto the Capitol steps, looking out all the way down the National Mall to the Washington Monument and imagining that not only to the top of the Washington Monument but four times as high is a single, giant mass of ice—as she said, "all the way down from the Capitol steps to the Lincoln Memorial" and four times as high as the Washington Monument. Then imagine 125 times that—every year.

The destabilization of the ice shelves is most dire in West Antarctica, where research shows the massive Thwaites Glacier retreating at 300 to 400 meters per year along a 125-mile segment. Larger than Pennsylvania, the Thwaites Glacier has discharged more than 100 gigatons of ice per year in recent years. That is the flood of 100 of those blocks that are four times the height of the Washington Monument and running from here all the way to the Lincoln Memorial 100 times every 3 days—another one into the ocean, piling up, piling up. If we lost the Thwaites Glacier, that alone would contribute several meters to global sea level rise.

So far, in Rhode Island, remember, we are dealing with less than 1 foot of sea level rise that we have experienced—6 to 12 feet is predicted—but add this in and the situation of our coastal States become quite dire.

These images were created with NASA satellite data. They show changes in Antarctic ice mass just since 2002. This data does not measure the floating ice shelves which are shown here in gray. On the ice sheets, dark orange and red colors indicate losses of ice sheet mass and light-blue shades indicate gains. Climate deniers focus on the gains in actually a fraudulent abuse of the data and the public's trust, but that is what they do; but, overall, during the past 15 years, the West Antarctic ice sheet experienced major ice mass loss. The darkest red, representing the biggest loss, is at the Thwaites Glacier.

Of course, when glaciers melt, the seas rise. In April, a U.S. Geological Survey study, funded by the Pentagon, found that our military bases on low-

elevation islands may become uninhabitable within mere decades. The recommendation is, we have to start planning to relocate them because they will no longer be useful. Just 2 weeks ago, our National Park Service released a report showing sea level rise damaging park sites like Jamestown and Assateague Island in Virginia and Jean Lafitte National Historical Park in Louisiana. NASA is concerned enough about this Antarctic ice situation that it is launching new satellites to monitor it.

Fossil fuel industry front groups continue to deny and disparage the work of scientists at NOAA, NASA, and other Federal scientific agencies. The polluters have an obedient mouthpiece in the Wall Street Journal editorial page, which just last month ran climate denier Fred Singer denying that rising sea levels observed around the globe are the result of global warming, and of course saying it is not the result of carbon pollution or fossil fuels. The Journal page, of course, neglects to mention this denier's deep connections to the fossil fuel industry, the Heritage Foundation, the Heartland Institute, the CATO Institute, and other climate denial front groups bankrolled by ExxonMobil and the oil industry and the Koch political apparatus.

We even heard a Republican Congressman claim that erosion and rocks falling into the sea are what is driving sea level rise—anything but fossil fuel. He said, "Every time you have that soil or rock or whatever it is that is deposited into the seas, that forces the sea levels to rise, because now you have less space in those oceans, because the bottom is moving up."

It is laughable. Phil Duffy, president of the Woods Hole Research Center and former adviser to the U.S. Global Change Research Program responded: "On human time scales, those are miniscule effects."

Once again, anything for the fossil fuel industry. Complete subservience to the fossil fuel industry seems to be the rule around Congress.

About this sordid political equation, retired U.S. Navy RADM Dr. David Titley probably said it best. He said:

The ice doesn't care. The ice doesn't care who is in the White House. It doesn't care which party controls your Congress. It doesn't care which party controls your Parliament. It just melts.

Of course, in addition to the melt, a warming ocean expands, following the law of thermal expansion, and our coasts, as a result, face new and serious dangers.

Republicans in Congress can continue to ignore all of the evidence, but that doesn't change what our carbon pollution does in the atmosphere and the oceans. Our carbon pollution will still trap heat in the atmosphere. It will still acidify the oceans. The laws of chemistry don't suspend because we can't pass sensible laws to solve this problem. The chemistry and the physics of these effects of our carbon pollu-

tion don't care what we do. The polar icecaps melting don't care that fossil fuel flunkies deny it. Denial of these facts doesn't protect our coasts and doesn't protect our coastal communities from looming danger. One day soon, we are going to have to wake up. Fossil fuel influence or no fossil fuel influence, we are going to have to wake up.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that notwithstanding the provisions of rule XXII, the confirmation vote on the Axon nomination occur at 11 a.m. on Wednesday, June 6; that if confirmed, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table and the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

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

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. McCONNELL. 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.

VOTE EXPLANATION

Mr. NELSON. Mr. President, I was necessarily absent for the June 4, 2018, vote on the motion to invoke cloture on Executive Calendar No. 542, the nomination of Robert Earl Wier, of Kentucky, to be United States district judge for the Eastern District of Kentucky. I would have voted yea.

VOTE EXPLANATION

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I was unavailable for rollcall vote No. 112, on the motion to invoke cloture on the nomination of Robert Earl Wier, of Kentucky, to be United States district judge for the Eastern District of Kentucky. Had I been present, I would have voted yea.

Mr. President, I was unavailable for rollcall vote No. 113, on the nomination of Robert Earl Wier, of Kentucky, to be United States district judge for the Eastern District of Kentucky. Had I been present, I would have voted yea.

Mr. President, I was unavailable for rollcall vote No. 114, on the motion to