

impacts to the crab larvae . . . were not expected to occur until much later in this century.”

The sentinel implications for the entire ecosystem are grave. If the Dungeness are feeling the effects of ocean acidification now, what other creatures are feeling those effects too? Another lead author of this study said: “If the crabs are affected already, we really need to make sure we start to pay much more attention to various components of the food chain before it is too late.”

These concerns about the Dungeness crab and its happening too soon echo what scientists actually said of early findings about the pteropod. Oceanographer William Peterson, who is the co-author of an early study on the pteropod, said: “We did not expect to see pteropods being affected to this extent in our coastal region for several decades.”

So we are way ahead of schedule in terms of what scientists have predicted for ocean acidification outcomes for these foundational creatures in our ocean ecosystem. Together, the pteropod and the Dungeness crab send a common message, one echoed by a Rhode Island fishing boat captain who told me: “Sheldon, things are getting weird out there.”

And they are getting weird faster than expected. The rapid ocean acidification that we are measuring now and that we are causing now with further carbon pollution is nearly unprecedented in the geological record. Scientists look back to try to find historical analogs for what is happening. The closest historical analogs scientists can find for what they are seeing now in the oceans go back before human-kind. There is no analog in human time. You have to go back before humans existed, back into the prehistoric record, back to the prehistoric great extinctions, back when marine species were wiped out and ocean ecosystems took millions of years to recover. That is the historical analog that best matches our current direction.

In his encyclical “*Laudato Si*,” Pope Francis, who is a trained scientist himself, reflected on what he called “the mysterious network of relations between things” in life. In that mysterious network of relations between things, the pteropod and the crab larva give their lives to transmit food energy from the microscopic plants they eat, which would be of no use to us, up to the fish that consume the pteropod and larva—fish, which we, in turn, consume—all in that great mysterious network of relations between things.

What is happening to these two species is more than just an event. It is a signal. It is a signal of a looming global ecological catastrophe. Lesser species, species that we may mock or ignore, can sometimes be sentinels for humans, like the legendary canaries taken down into coal mines. When the sentinels start to die, it is wise to pay attention.

What happens when, in our arrogance and pride, we refuse to heed the warnings from creatures so humble as the pteropods or crab larvae? Well, remember why Jesus was so angry with the Pharisees. What was their sin? Their arrogance and their pride blinded them to the truth. The Senate, this supposedly greatest deliberative body, has blinded itself to the devastation fossil fuels are unleashing on our Earth’s mysterious network. We careen recklessly into the next great extinction.

Pope Francis says:

Because of us, thousands of species will no longer give glory to God by their very existence, nor convey their message to us. We have no such right.

Indeed, we have no such right.

So I come here today to challenge us to see the damage we have done—the damage we are doing now, today, to this mysterious network of life, this mysterious God-given network of life that supports us. I challenge us also to turn away from dark forces of corruption and greed—specifically, the fossil fuel industry forces that have deliberately, on purpose, crippled our ability in Congress to stop their pollution.

I close by challenging us to heed the message of the humble creatures sharing this planet with us—the least of us, who share God’s creation. They suffer at our hands, and in their suffering they send us a message, a warning, that we would do well to hear.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to 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.

LITHUANIAN INDEPENDENCE

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, when one looks at a largely unified and democratic Europe, today it is easy to forget just how different it was in Eastern Europe not that long ago. For half a century, millions lived under the tyranny and repression of the Soviet Union.

But in the late 1980s, things began to change, particularly in the Baltic nations of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. Who can forget when 2 million people joined hands across these three

nations to form the 420-mile Baltic Chain of Freedom in August 1989? And not long after in February of the following year, Lithuania held its first free elections since World War II, voting for the country’s first postwar non-Communist government. Immediately thereafter, the new Parliament voted to make Lithuania the first occupied Soviet republic to declare independence. Lithuania’s bold move was followed later that year by Latvia and Estonia. These brave efforts culminated a year later in February 1991, when the Lithuania people overwhelmingly voted for independence—a historic move recognized by the US and Soviet Union that same year.

My first visit to Lithuania was nearly 40 years ago, but my ties reach back even further. One hundred years ago, my grandmother left her village of Jubarkas with her three small children to join my grandfather in America. In her arms, she carried a 2-year-old toddler—my mother, Ona Kutkaite.

Hidden in my grandmother’s baggage was a small Catholic prayer book, printed in Vilnius in 1863, the last year before printing in Lithuanian was outlawed by the czars. That prayer book—the last, cherished relic of my family’s life in their beautiful and ancient home—escaped the czars and was kept safe with our family in America during the brutal Soviet occupation. When I had the honor of addressing the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania on the 20th anniversary of independence, I was proud to bring that prayer book home to a free Lithuania. Those brave Lithuanians 30 years ago—including my friend Vytautas Landsbergis, who served as Lithuanian’s first post-independence head of state—led the country to a prosperous and democratic future.

Lithuania today is a vital member of the European Union, NATO, and the community of democracies. It held the presidency of the European Union earlier this decade and is a leading voice on the continent for standing up to Russia, defending Ukraine, and upholding key democratic values. And as it faces renewed threats from Russia, I have been a strong supporter of strengthening NATO operations and defenses in the Baltic nations. A few years ago, I visited the Lithuanian town of Rukla, where U.S. and German forces were rotating through as part of the European Reassurance Initiative aimed at keeping the Baltic safe.

As the cochair of the Senate Baltic Caucus, I will be introducing a resolution in the weeks ahead reaffirming this security cooperation and recognizing Lithuania’s great achievements around its 30th anniversary of independence.

In February 1990, when I came to Lithuania as part of an American delegation to observe the historic elections, my friends took me inside the Seimas to show me the arsenal of the Lithuanian freedom fighters. In the corner stood a handful of old rifles—no