

would get the joke. That is why it has to be a covert operation, and that means it needs dark money—anonymous, untraceable funds.

A virulent little galaxy of 501(c)(4) groups, shell corporations, donor trusts, and other screening tools has been crafted to anonymize the donors and hide the connections. Why? Because the blood pumping through this beast that gives it life is dark money. If we expose that secret blood flow, the whole beast shrivels up: no dark money, no covert operations.

That is why efforts to expose the dark money donors provoke such hysterical reactions from the front groups and from their operatives and from their mouthpieces like the Wall Street Journal editorial page.

I have experienced these hysterical reactions over and over. Indeed, there was one in the news today. This speech might provoke even another.

But at the end of the day, as Americans, I believe we share the proposition that nothing could be more corrupting than large flows of anonymous money in politics. That sort of money doesn't even have to be spent to be corrupting. The mere threat of a political attack can do the job, and the donor saves the money. Or it could be a private promise of unlimited support.

Once a political weapon is permissible, private threats and promises to use or withhold that weapon are inevitable, and they are inevitably corrupting.

But don't think the prospect of corruption daunts the schemers. A political regime that allows their corruption and helps cover up their covert operations is precisely what the dark money donors want.

Why else would we do nothing about climate change when it is so obvious? Why else would we ignore every respectable scientist in the field? Why else ignore warnings of financial meltdown looming from bankers and economists across the country, even across the world? Why else ignore the fires that are burning up Siberia, for Pete's sake, and, closer to home, the flood warnings along our coasts and the droughts and the floods and the storms across our States?

When astronomers see celestial bodies behave inexplicably, they look for the dark star, the black hole that influences the behavior of the visible bodies. Dark money is the dark star, the evil star influencing Congress's behavior—or I should say misbehavior—on climate change.

So a preview of coming attractions here: The dark-money-funded race to capture the Court is also a race by the schemers to establish a new constitutional doctrine protecting their dark money schemes. Such a doctrine is already being grown in the dark-money-funded ideological hothouses, a theory that dark money anonymity is protected by the First Amendment rights of association and petition—a theory giving powerful interests the constitu-

tional right to run covert operations against their own government, leaving regular citizens beguiled or bewildered.

That theory may seem ludicrous, and, indeed, this notion got only the one vote from Justice Thomas in Citizens United, but remember that Thomas is the dark money crowd's leading indicator on the Court.

Don't scoff. This argument is now popping up all over the corporate right-wing. Twice so far I have had corporate entities from whom I requested information about their dark money dealings "plead the First" in response to my questions.

The game is on, whether we realize it or not, and one of the stakes in the game is climate action. We cannot be idle about this. Groups that run covert operations against our own country are not to be trusted with that country's welfare.

What a foul convergence it would be if the dark money schemers used dark money to fund a Court capture operation that delivered a Court-created doctrine hatched in dark money hothouses, protecting that dark money from disclosure for eternity, permanently etching into our Constitution this pathway of corruption.

As I have said over and over, take away the corrupting dark money weaponry from the fossil fuel industry, and we solve climate change. We have lost a decade to Citizens United, the decision that gave this industry the weaponry to kill climate bipartisanship. It is a decade we and our children will rue having lost.

Let's lose no more time. Let's, once and for all, root out the corrupting dark money machinery, expose its nefarious and crooked covert operations, shut it down, and start running a real democracy around here again.

If we can't do this now, then let's pray for an election that lets us do it soon.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

#### THE GREAT AMERICAN OUTDOORS ACT

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, I am here on the floor today to talk about some positive news and some positive news that happened just today. It is not about the coronavirus. It is not about politics. It is not about Hurricane Isaias.

It has to do with some urgent and historic help for our national parks, something that is really important to all of us. We all love our parks.

Today President Trump signed into law the landmark Great American Outdoors Act, landmark, bipartisan legislation that will protect and conserve our public lands. I am happy to see this effort finally cross the finish line because the natural beauty and rich history of America is something that we must preserve for future generations.

A big part of the new law is bipartisan legislation that is called the Re-

store Our Parks Act that I have worked on for more than 3 years with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle. Senator MARK WARNER from Virginia was my partner in this, as well as Senator LAMAR ALEXANDER of Tennessee and Senator ANGUS KING of Maine. Our legislation involves urgent stewardship of our national parks, which is something that I have spent more than a dozen years working on. I guess I shouldn't admit that. Sometimes things take a long time around here. But going back to my days as Director of the Office of Management and Budget under President George W. Bush, I started focusing on this issue of the backlog of maintenance projects at our national parks.

It is alarming. It has been growing. It now adds up to over \$12 billion, far more than the parks could ever afford to take care of based on the annual budgets we provide them from Congress. By the way, the annual budget from Congress for all operations and all maintenance is less than \$3 billion. Yet there is a \$12 billion maintenance backlog.

When Teddy Roosevelt started the national parks, he wanted to preserve some of the most beautiful, pristine lands in America. He wanted to be sure they were going to be there for public use. It was a good decision. We now have 84 million acres of parkland all around the country. Some are those beautiful, pristine places like Yosemite and Yellowstone and the Tetons with spectacular, beautiful vistas, but others preserve our history.

We have historical parks around the country. We have battlefields that we have preserved around the country to tell the story of our country, good and bad. We have Presidents' homes that have been preserved to be able to help, again, tell the story of America.

Recently, I was at one of our national park sites in Ohio, and it is the home of an individual who was the first Black colonel in the United States Army. He was also the first Black superintendent of a national park. The home is also a site on the Underground Railroad, so it is a place where people can go and see where escaping slaves were harbored and understand more of the history, not just of slavery but also of the cooperation and the seeking for freedom that came out of the Underground Railroad. This is the Charles Young home near Xenia, OH.

So our national parks are really important for so many reasons. Yet, during the past couple of decades, we haven't taken care of them as we should, and this backlog has built up.

People appreciate our parks. During the past decade or so, we have had an increase of about 58 million in the number of visitors to our national parks. More are coming every year. Why? It is a relatively inexpensive vacation. They are beautiful. People from all over the world know about our national parks, and it is one of the things they love about America.

The problem is that, when these people visit the parks nowadays, they are

going to find that, over the years, we haven't kept up with these maintenance needs so the water systems, the roads, the bridges, the bathrooms, the visitor centers, some of the trails—many of these are now in bad shape. Some are closed, actually.

When you go to a national park, you may find that a facility is closed because of a lack of funding for the deferred maintenance. We just haven't had the funding to do the capital improvements they need so that they can stay functional.

Just the other week, I saw that firsthand at Cuyahoga Valley National Park in Northeast Ohio. It is a great park. It is the 13th most visited national park in America. It kind of runs between Cleveland and Akron, OH.

It suffered from these deferred maintenance problems for years. I saw a crumbling trail. I saw trails that were falling into the Cuyahoga River and couldn't be used. I saw rusting historic train tracks that run through the park. It is a tourist railroad that runs through. Train tracks are an expensive thing to replace. Again, it has to be done. I saw a bridge that was really unsafe to be on and has to be restored. It is a historic bridge. We want to preserve it, but the costs are just too high given the annual budget for that park.

Their maintenance backlog at that park alone is \$50 million, yet their annual budget is about \$11 million, which goes to the rangers and the programs and the maintenance and operations but is not enough money to take care of these big problems.

In a way, by not fixing these problems, we are also increasing the cost. Think about it. These costs compound year after year. In your own house, you might think about what happens if you don't fix the leak in the roof. What happens is the drywall begins to have problems. You might have mold. The floors begin to get wet and wood floors begin to buckle. You have additional costs that, if you had just fixed that roof, you wouldn't have.

Well, that is where we are with the parks. If we take the time and the effort to make the fixes now, we will save money over time for taxpayers because we will not have the compounding costs. Every day, it gets worse and worse.

Now, finally, we have come up with a way to deal with it. Congress has asked our parks, over the last few years, to give us their deferred maintenance projects with specificity: What are your priority projects? What are the top priorities? We have asked them to lay it out in detail.

It has been very helpful because we now know we have over \$12 billion in maintenance needs but about \$6.5 billion of that is high-priority projects—the projects most in need of immediate attention. We know what they are. They are shovel-ready. They have been vetted. We are proposing a source of funding to be able to deal with that because, again, the annual appropriations

process does not come near enough to matching what we need to have done.

The highest priority needs at the parks is about \$6.5 billion. In this legislation—now law of the land—royalty income is taken from onshore and offshore oil and gas, and some of that royalty is directed toward this use.

The next 5 years, enough of that funding will be there to deal with the \$6.5 billion, half of the maintenance backlog. We would like to do better, but, frankly, this is historic. Never have we had so much funding go to the parks, never have we been able to deal with these backlogs that have built up over years.

It is really a debt unpaid. That is how I look at it. It is something we should have been doing all along. We weren't. The costs have now snowballed, and now we need to deal with it. It is not so much a new responsibility as it is stewardship we never did in the first place. It is a debt unpaid.

Second, again, it is going to save us money over time—assuming we want the parks to be working, we want the trails to be open, we want the visitors centers to be welcoming—all of which, of course, we do want and we must have.

The bill is not just important for our parks but also our economy, too, because these projects are infrastructure projects. We have talked a lot about that here on how to get more jobs into our economy right now. With the impact of coronavirus on our economy, we need more opportunities out there. Infrastructure is one. These are infrastructure jobs—over 100,000 new jobs in this legislation alone.

Again, these projects are shovel-ready. They are vetted. They are ones that Congress—thanks to our asking the Park Service for the information—knows what jobs are out there and what projects need to be done.

It is a long-term investment too. As of 2019, visitor spending in communities near our parks resulted in \$41.7 billion of benefit to the Nation's economy and supported 340,000 jobs. It is new jobs in terms of construction, but it is also ensuring the parks continue to be able to be attracting these visitors, which adds such a big economic boost to our economy.

I am proud that Congress has come together as Republicans and Democrats in a nonpartisan way to support this important initiative, and I am thankful for the President and his support. He showed bold leadership by saying: You know what, we are going to do this. Other Presidents have talked about it. In the last three or four administrations, we have talked about it. Again, I have been working on it for a dozen years. Now we have actually been able to do it.

I also want to thank the Director of Office of Management and Budget, Russ Vought, for his help; the Secretary of the Interior, David Bernhardt; and other members of the President's team, including Ivanka Trump, who

has always been strongly supportive of our national parks.

This is about responsible stewardship. These repairs were a debt unpaid. We are finally addressing them before the cost increase. Our parks have stood tall for more than a century now as the embodiment of American history and our shared commitment to preserving some of our most magnificent lands. Thanks to Restore Our Parks Act, we will now ensure that those parks stand tall for centuries to come.

#### HEROES ACT AND HEALS ACT

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, I also want to talk this afternoon a little about the Heroes legislation, the HEALS legislation, and some of the commonalities I see between the two. On the floor of the Senate this week, there has been some discussion about the need for us to come together in a bipartisan way to put together a package to deal with the coronavirus. Some call it the COVID 5.0 package. It is really probably 8.0. We have done a lot of legislation already, but there are things that still need to be done and some urgent matters, including dealing with the expiration of the unemployment insurance.

I am on the floor today to talk about how I see the opportunity for us to move ahead by looking at some of the commonalities between the Democratic support and the Republican support for different legislation. As we all know, the discussions over the past week have not moved forward as quickly as we would like. In fact, it is pretty discouraging. Despite the fact that many people thought the Heroes Act was really a messaging bill—POLITICO wrote a story, one of our news media sources up here—and said: “a messaging bill that has no chance of becoming law.” Others made the same comments. Why? Because it was a \$3.5 trillion pricetag for legislation, which would make it by far the most expensive bill ever passed by either House of Congress. But also, at a time when we had \$1.1 trillion leftover from the CARES package and States have only allocated an average of about 25 percent of their CARES Act funding, it seemed like pushing taxpayers to foot the bill for the costliest legislation in history maybe wasn't the right way to go.

Also, it had virtually no support from Republicans. Also, this legislation included a lot of stuff that had nothing to do with COVID-19. The sense was: Yes, it is an important messaging bill for Democrats—that is out there—but that we needed to figure out a way now to come together as Republicans and Democrats.

Leader MCCONNELL also introduced legislation. That legislation is called the HEALS Act. It is time for us to figure out how to come together and figure out a solution going forward. Particularly with regard to some of these