

called self-appointed corporate mouthpieces—the Wall Street Journal editorial page, the so-called U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the National Association of Manufacturers—what you get from all of them is flat out climate denial, the absolute hard stuff—just complete denial, absolute ignorance and ignoring of the science, totally in the tank with the polluters and the oil and coal industry. What is interesting is that actually doesn't represent the views of America's corporate community, and it doesn't represent them by a lot.

If you look at big brand name American corporations, if you look at Coke and Pepsi, if you look at Apple and Google, if you look at WalMart and Target, if you look at Mars and Nestle, UPS and Federal Express, GM and Ford, look at the entire casualty property insurance industry, look at the bulk of the electric utility industry, look at the entire green energy sector, all of them know that climate change is a real problem, understand the undeniable science of what carbon pollution does to the Earth's atmosphere and to our oceans, and they are doing things about it.

They have sustainability policies. They have climate policies. WalMart has probably done more to get rid of the incandescent bulb than any other force on the planet. They are very strong on this issue. But within those great corporations, it tends to be cabined into their corporate business and sustainability divisions. It hasn't really influenced yet the way they communicate with the public, and it certainly hasn't influenced much their government relations. So there is a huge mismatch between the so-called voice of the corporate community, which is really a polluter-paid propaganda effort coming through the Wall Street Journal, coming through the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, and coming through the National Association of Manufacturers—a huge difference between that and what the underlying leaders of what regular Americans think of as the American corporate community believe. That difference is eventually—like these other forces—going to tear apart the foundation of the denial castle.

We have the chance to make this happen and to make this happen soon, and we need to. We absolutely need to. The Presiding Officer is the senior Senator from Connecticut, a State which borders mine. Connecticut and Rhode Island share a critical factor, which is coastline. If you follow the logic, such logic as exists in the denial machinery, they will take you off into distant and complex computer models of what the temperature is going to be and what the atmosphere is going to be like 30 or 40 years from now. And yes, that is complicated. In that area there is room to sow confusion.

Come to the coast. At the coastline you see sea levels rising because of an immutable law of nature called the law of thermal expansion. The ocean is

warming because it has caught more than 90 percent of the excess heat that the carbon has trapped, and when it warms, it expands.

It is as simple as that. That means when you go to my State to the Newport tide gauge off the Naval Station Newport, you see it is 10 inches higher than it was in the 1930s. That is a big deal because in the 1930s we had the hurricane of 1938. And if you look back at the devastation that hurricane caused to our coastline and you adjust for what 10 additional inches of sea would do and adjust again for stacking up that 10 inches in what a storm surge would do, you end up with a truly apocalyptic vision of the Rhode Island shore, and it is not deniable.

You cannot quarrel about a tide gauge. It is in effect a yardstick nailed to a dock, and the water has gone up 10 inches. To deny that is not just to deny science; it is to deny measurement. I think it is a bit of a stretch for even the most ardent of my denier colleagues to deny measurement. With a thermometer you measure that Narragansett Bay is nearly 4 degrees warmer in mean winter water temperature, and that means a lot for fishermen who used to fish for winter flounder. It doesn't take a very complicated test to determine what the acidity of the ocean is and to measure just the way you would measure the acidity in an aquarium. Our oceans are acidifying at the fastest rate that has been measured in 50 million years.

Remember we are a species that has been on this planet as *Homo sapiens* for a little over 200,000 years. So when you are talking about the steepest rate of acidification in millions of years, that is a dramatic shift in the habitability of our planet. If you want to know who that matters to, go to the west coast, go to the oyster fisheries and look at the wipe-out of young oyster species that took place when acidified ocean water got into the growing oysters and killed them all off. It was simply too acidic for their little shells to survive.

These are the harbingers of things to come. These are the undeniable facts. These are the truths the oceans tell us and our coastlines tell us. For all those reasons, I am confident that we will be at serious business to address climate change a lot sooner than the deniers think. The American public simply is not going to put up with a Congress that has become the prisoner to a barricade of special interest propaganda when they know better. Now the American people do, indeed, know better.

I yield the floor, and I note the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kansas.

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

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

VETERANS HEALTH CARE

Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, there has been a lot of conversation among many of us here in the Senate and last week in the Veterans' Affairs Committee about the circumstances we find ourselves in at the Department of Veterans Affairs and its ability to provide the necessary care and benefits for our military men and women who have become and are becoming veterans.

What we heard last week at the Veterans' Affairs Committee was very disturbing to me because it still appears that the Department of Veterans Affairs has no plan to solve circumstances our veterans find themselves in. Who in this country would we expect to have access in the most timely fashion to the highest quality of care other than those who served our country and who were promised that? A commitment was made to them to make certain that those benefits would be made available. They were told that would be the case.

I went home this weekend. Part of our job is to help people. Every week at the end of the week I get what is called a weekly State report. I and other members of the Senate have staff who spend significant amounts of time trying to solve people's problems with government. We call it case work.

Every week I get a report of people who called my office to tell me something they want me to know, people who contacted me asking for help with a variety of federal agencies. But it struck me as so evident in reading my report from my State staff about the circumstances that our veterans find themselves in. So every week there is a report that I read generally at the end of the week, on the weekend. It is really page after page of things that have happened involving me and my staff and our relationship with Kansans who have a story to tell, who have a concern to raise, who have a request for how I vote. This week's staff report I thought I would highlight for my colleagues. My guess is that the circumstances that Kansan veterans find themselves in is probably no different for me than it is for my other colleagues here in the Senate.

These are just reports from Kansans who called or stopped by my office or wrote to us this week at home looking for help, asking me to help them solve their problem and telling a story about their relationship with the Department of Veterans Affairs.

A veteran from Hutchinson, KS, called to tell us that he filed a claim with the VA. It has been filed for 6 months, and he is still awaiting a decision. Unfortunately, that is all too common. A veteran from Norton, KS, filed a claim for service due to Agent Orange. He has been diagnosed with cancer and is seeking treatment through the VA. He has been informed that it could take 7 to 8 months before the VA will examine his claim, and while his cancer is not curable, it is treatable. And yet he has a 7- to 8-

month waiting period before he can receive benefits.

A veteran from Salina, KS, in the central part of our State indicates that he received double vaccinations before he was deployed to Desert Storm due to the fact that his predeployment package had been lost. He indicates he now suffers from several health conditions as a result and has been informed that the VA denies his benefits.

A veteran from Hutchinson, north of Wichita, indicated he has been fighting with the VA for 7 years on appeal. He has something pending with VA. They provided him an answer that was unsatisfactory, and he is appealing that decision. He claims the VA has continued dragging out his appeal process, and he has difficulty finding updates on his appeal when he contacts the VA. That is an example of someone who called the office and asked for help.

A veteran from Wichita said his doctors discovered a mass on his brain, and it will require an MRI to determine what the mass is. The earliest appointment available for him is on June 30. He, of course, as all of us would be, is concerned over that long wait. This is a veteran who has been diagnosed with a mass on his brain, doesn't know what it is, needs an MRI—exactly what a doctor would order to get additional diagnostic information—and cannot get the MRI until June 30.

A veteran from Junction City—which is a community that is adjacent to Fort Riley where a significant number of veterans and military retirees reside—indicates that he is living in a nursing home. He is 100-percent service connected with a disability and the VA is currently paying for his nursing home services. He has recently been informed that his physical therapy will no longer be covered by the VA and they are discontinuing payment but offer no explanation as to why. He filed an appeal late last year and has not received a response or status update from the VA since that request.

A veteran from Lawrence has had an appeal pending with the VA for over 1½ years and wants our help because he has received no communication from the VA in more than a year.

A veteran from Overland Park, KS—a suburb of Kansas City—is the primary caregiver for his wife who suffers from Alzheimer's. He has had tremendous difficulty in working with the VA to schedule appointments when he can be away from her to receive his treatments from the VA.

A daughter of a veteran from Wichita who passed away in the Wichita VA is concerned about the events that took place while he was in the care of the VA.

A veteran who lives north of Bird City, KS, is a category 1 disabled marine veteran due to a service-connected disability. He indicates that he has had two heart attacks and is now paying for stress tests and his own medical bills out of pocket because the VA has denied him fee basis. What that means

is if you are a veteran in Bird City, KS, which is the very northwest corner of our State, access to a VA hospital is a long way away, and that fee basis allows the veteran to receive care and treatment from a doctor and hospital closer to their hometown or neighborhood.

My point is that the people who are most deserving of care and attention are not receiving the care and attention they need. The Department of Veterans Affairs is supposed to provide the services and benefits earned and promised to those veterans. This is not anything that is out of the ordinary.

This report is something I read every week, and the reports that I convey to my colleagues here on the floor of the Senate are not unusual. I suppose what is unusual is that the number is increasing. What used to be a shorter list of problems with the VA has grown over time to be a longer and longer list.

I have been asking for a plan by the Department of Veterans Affairs from its top leadership, Secretary Shinseki, to explain to me, the Senate, the American people, and veterans what the Department of Veterans Affairs is going to do to meet the needs of these and other veterans across our country.

As I have indicated on the Senate floor before on this topic, if we are incapable of caring for our veterans today, how are we going to be capable of taking care of veterans in the future as more and more military men and women return from our wars in Iraq and Afghanistan? The physical and mental circumstances those veterans will find themselves in will be even more difficult and challenging.

We have an aging veteran population from World War II and now Vietnam veterans will most likely be needing more care and treatment from the Department of Veterans Affairs. What we need is the leadership that is necessary to meet the needs of these veterans and a commitment that the status quo is unacceptable and that the bureaucratic culture at the Department of Veterans Affairs is not something that is going to remain. There is going to be a concerted effort to make certain that the Department meets the needs of those who served and sacrificed for our country.

Again, who, other than those who served our country, would we expect to be at the top of the list to receive the most timely and highest quality of care than those who served our Nation? It seems to me that as these issues are raised, we have a Department of Veterans Affairs that is doing damage control. What we need is a Department of Veterans Affairs that reduces the damage being done to the veterans—the men and women who served our country—in Kansas and across our Nation.

I yield the floor and note the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now proceed to 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.

BROWN V. BOARD OF EDUCATION ANNIVERSARY

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, last Saturday we celebrated the 60th Anniversary of Brown v. Board of Education. In that unanimous opinion, the U.S. Supreme Court held that the State-sanctioned segregation of public schools was a violation of the Fourteenth Amendment and therefore unconstitutional. The Court "concluded that," in the field of public education, the doctrine of separate but equal' has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal." This landmark decision is rightly celebrated every year.

The case of Hernandez v. State of Texas, however, decided by the Supreme Court just 2 weeks before the Brown decision, is an often overlooked and yet momentous advancement of civil rights in our country. In that case, the Supreme Court held that the Fourteenth Amendment protects those beyond the racial classes of white or black, and extends to all racial groups in the United States. Fortunately, we are only left to imagine a world without the Hernandez decision, a world that would have blocked Hispanics and other racial groups from the promise of equality made in the Constitution.

Taken together, the Brown and Hernandez decisions stand as landmarks of progress in our country. We have come far in the march towards equality; yet, we must recognize that we can and must achieve more. Six decades after the Brown and Hernandez decisions, our country must continue to confront social, economic, and racial inequalities throughout this country.

Racial inequality is not an issue that our society can just wish away in the 21st century. It still exists in our criminal justice system, educational, and voting systems, and in our housing and lending markets. As chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, and as a member of the Senate for nearly 40 years, I have fought to uphold the promise of equality in our fundamental charter.

The anniversary of these civil rights cases is a moment to reflect on our past, and to evaluate and commit to the next steps that we need to take as we strive to build a more perfect Union. As many families across the Nation celebrate the graduation of hard-