

I don't know if there will be criminal charges, but these are pretty egregious actions taken by the State of Michigan.

She said that ready access to clean water is something most Americans take for granted, but something like this can cast doubt on the whole system. "Now there is a crack in that trust relationship," she said. "In Flint it is gone." That is certainly true.

So I would certainly hope my Republican colleagues will understand it is important that we do something now to help these people. We have something that can be done. It should be done. Republicans should stop it. It is not something that is a local issue or a State issue.

RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

Mr. REID. Mr. President, yesterday, President Obama visited a mosque in Baltimore, MD. It was a powerful expression to counter the divisive, hateful rhetoric used by too many Republicans and to emphasize the importance of giving all Americans the respect and dignity they deserve. For years right-wing extremists have attacked the religion of Islam and stoked fear about the presence of Muslims in our country.

Some of those same extremists attacked President Obama for visiting the mosque yesterday. That is an attack on millions of American citizens who are being slandered. I was so gratified that the Presiding Officer had the courage to show solidarity with the Muslims in the State of Arizona and the country by visiting a mosque a short time ago. The Presiding Officer was attacked by rightwing extremists for this visit. I am sorry about that, but I admire what he did.

When hateful extremists set their sights on attacking one religion, they are attacking the core values of American society upon which our Nation was founded. President Obama could not have made this point more clearly yesterday. He said, "An attack on one faith is an attack on all our faiths."

Religious liberty is a priceless American value that should be cherished. We cannot allow the threat from menacing radicals to change who we are and how we treat our fellow citizens. As President Obama also said yesterday, "We are one American family. We will rise and fall together." So I applaud the President for his courage and willingness to combat the detestable hatred that leading Republicans have embraced and far too few Republicans have spoken out against—the hateful rhetoric—especially in the Presidential election by our Republican colleagues.

As defenders of democracy, we must stand against the bigotry wherever it arises. Doing so is the only way to ensure that we stay true to our fundamental values. As election season begins to kick into high gear, I encourage the American people to heed the call that President Obama made yesterday at the Islamic Society of Baltimore,

when he closed by saying, "We have to reaffirm that most fundamental of truths—we are all God's children, all born equal with inherent dignity."

Will the Chair announce the business before the Senate today.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

ENERGY POLICY MODERNIZATION ACT OF 2015

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of S. 2012, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 2012) to provide for the modernization of the energy policy of the United States, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Murkowski amendment No. 2953, in the nature of a substitute.

Murkowski (for Cassidy/Markey) amendment No. 2954 (to amendment No. 2953), to provide for certain increases in, and limitations on, the drawdown and sales of the Strategic Petroleum Reserve.

Murkowski amendment No. 2963 (to amendment No. 2953), to modify a provision relating to bulk-power system reliability impact statements.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the time until 11:30 a.m. will be equally divided between the two managers or their designees.

The assistant Democratic leader.

FLINT, MICHIGAN, WATER CRISIS

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, what happened in Flint, MI, is incredible. In the 21st century, in the most developed country on Earth, to think that 100,000 people were exposed to contaminated water, to think that 9,000 or 10,000 children were exposed to lead poisoning—it was not a natural disaster but the results are disastrous. It was a disaster created by those who were in charge of managing the city of Flint.

The governmental agencies and those who worked for them made what they considered to be the right budgetary decisions, but they certainly made the wrong decisions when it came to the health and the well-being of the poor people who were victimized by their wrongdoing. Every time I hear the story, the same question comes to my mind: Who is going to jail for poisoning 9,000 children? Think about the circumstances here. A knowing decision by a city manager to switch to a water supply which was contaminated endangered the health of thousands of children, tens of thousands of citizens. If that is not the grounds for at least investigation, I don't what is.

So the Senators from Michigan, Senator PETERS, Senator STABENOW, have come to the floor of the Senate and said to America: Will you help Flint, MI? It is right that they do so. I have been fortunate to serve in the House

and Senate for many years. I cannot tell you how many times Senators from States all across the Nation have asked that same question: Will you help us in Louisiana? Will you help us in Alabama? Will you help us in Texas?

There is hardly a State that has not come to the floor of the Senate asking for help. Yet, for reasons I cannot explain, the Republican majority in the Senate is resisting this idea. Almost 100,000 people were forced to live without access to clean water in their homes. They could not turn on their faucets in the morning to make breakfast or to take a shower, as all of us do. They started their day by waiting in long lines for bottled water to feed and bathe their kids, to take showers, and to stay healthy. They started rationing the water.

The elderly and disabled who could not make it to a pickup location for bottled water, they were left with the option of continuing to use water they know was poisoning their bodies. This is a disaster by any definition. I cannot understand why there is not more understanding and empathy from my colleagues when it comes to Flint, MI. It could happen anywhere. If it happened, would you hesitate for a moment as a Member of the Senate to ask for help?

Nine thousand children exposed to lead poisoning has been called an earmark by the critics of our Senators from Michigan. They said it is just special interest legislation to try to help these victims. That is hard to imagine, that it could reach that level in criticizing this effort. Just like those who suffered from tornadoes and hurricanes, these families did nothing to deserve it. Just as the Federal Government always helps when Americans are hit by disasters, we should do it in Flint.

There were no complaints last May when the Federal Government declared an emergency and reached out to the residents of Texas to help them rebuild their lives after a tornado hit. So I am wondering if the Republican Presidential candidate from Texas is willing to step up, the junior Senator from Texas, and ask for the same level of Federal assistance for Flint, MI, that he asked for his own State.

This crisis is not the fault of the kids, the pregnant women who still call Flint home. Their only crime was living in a city that was so poorly managed by the Michigan State government. Their only crime, if there was one, was being the victims of cheap, dirty water. These kids and pregnant women are the most vulnerable when it comes to lead contamination. We are not going to know for years the extent of the damage, but we know there will be damage.

Many of them live in homes that have been found to have 10 times the EPA limits for lead in drinking water. The Senator from Michigan, Ms. STABENOW, yesterday told us that some of the lead samples reached the level of toxic dumps, so far beyond the level