quickly to provide assistance to the Maliki government before every gain made by the U.S. and allied troops is lost and before ISIL expands its sanctuary from which it can eventually threaten the United States.

Several weeks ago the President spoke at West Point, and in that speech he vaguely described a new counterterrorism strategy that he said ''matches this diffuse threat'' by ''expand[ing] our reach without sending forces that stretch our military too thin, or [that] stir up local resentments.'' He said that ''we need partners to fight terrorists alongside of us.''

The President must quickly provide us with a strategy and plan that address the threat posed by the insurgency and the terrorist capabilities of ISIL, and he must explain that new strategy.

THE IRS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, when the IRS targeting of conservative groups came to light after the last Presidential election, just about everyone denounced the agency's Nixonian tactics. Members of both parties—from the President on down—called it outrageous and inexcusable and just about everyone agreed no stone should be left unturned in figuring out how it happened in the first place.

Well, that was more than a year ago, and despite the President's assurances that he was as mad as everybody else, his administration has been anything but cooperative in the time that has elapsed since then. Instead of working with Congress to get to the bottom of what happened, the President's allies actually went in the opposite direction. They tried to slip a regulation by the American people that would have effectively enshrined the IRS's speech suppression tactics—the kind of tactics at the center of the IRS scandal—as permanent agency practice. It was a brazen move on the administration's part, and administration officials only backed down after Americans rose up and demanded that the IRS get out of the speech suppression business for good. Even some of our friends on the pro-First Amendment left—a dwindling constituency in recent years—joined us in condemning it. But I doubt we have seen the last of the administration's antifree speech efforts.

We have seen a revival in recent weeks of a truly radical proposal to change the First Amendment. When it comes to the IRS scandal, it is now quite obvious we have not seen the last of the administration's stalling either. The latest claim by the IRS is that it somehow lost a full 2 years' worth of emails from the woman in charge of the IRS department at the center of the scandal. They lost 2 years' worth of emails. But Congress submitted a request for these emails over a year ago, and they are suddenly telling us now? The committees investigating the scandal need those emails in order to figure out who knew what and when and to determine whether any coordination was going on between the IRS and anyone outside the agency.

I will be interested to see what the IRS Commissioner has to say about all of this when he testifies next week. But please, let's get past the ''dog ate my homework'' excuses buried in a late Friday news dump. The President promised to work ''hand in hand'' with Congress on this matter so his administration needs to live up to that promise immediately.

COAL REGULATIONS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, in the Obama administration's latest defensive on the war on coal, it has proposed new regulations that threaten Kentucky's 20 existing coal-fired powerplants while potentially putting thousands out of work. If enacted, the massive new regulations would prove the single worst blow to Kentucky's economy in modern times and a dagger to the heart of the Commonwealth's middle class.

Despite what they are called, the proposed restrictions on Kentucky's coal-fired powerplants amount to little more than a massive energy tax, and they will have a devastating effect on Kentucky.

The administration announced it would hold four public hearings on the new proposed regulations, and given the dramatic effects they are sure to have on my home State, you would think they would hold one of those hearings in eastern Kentucky or, at the very least, somewhere in Kentucky. But then, of course, you would be mistaken.

Once again, just like last year when the Obama administration held public hearings before proposing this national energy tax, not one of the sessions is slated for a nonmetropolitan area dependent on coal. The session that is the nearest to eastern Kentucky is a 10-hour roundtrip.

Since coal employs 11,000 Kentuckians and is over 90 percent of Kentucky's electricity, I wrote a letter to Gina McCarthy, the EPA Administrator, formally requesting that she convene a hearing in coal country. Of course I have yet to get a response. However, it doesn't appear that Administrator McCarthy is too busy to talk to some people. Imagine my surprise when I found she had time to appear on an HBO late-night comedy show where she admitted that the Obama administration is, in fact, waging a war on coal.

The host asked her this question:

> Some people call it a war on coal. I hope it is a war on coal. Is it?

After a moment of indirection, Administrator McCarthy conceded that a war on coal is ''exactly what this is.'' The EPA Administrator said the war on coal is ''exactly what this is.''

Of course, this talk show was recorded in front of a friendly anti-coal host and audience in a television studio in Los Angeles. It almost sounds like the site of one of her EPA anti-coal hearings.

So why does Administrator McCarthy have the time to appear on HBO but does not have the time to appear on WYMT–TV in Hazard so she can explain her war on coal to the people it is most directly affecting? Why does she have the time to sit down with a TV comedian but not with the editors of the Appalachian News Express in Pikeville so she can look my constituents in the eye and explain how these rules will impact them?

Of course, for those of us who watch this administration closely, this kind of admission is nothing new. A year ago an adviser to the White House acknowledged that ''a War on Coal is exactly what's needed.''

Last year, because the administration refused to hold any of its listening sessions in coal country, I held one of my own. We heard a lot of riveting testimony from those in the industry and their families, and I brought their stories back to the administration where I testified on their behalf since the Administrator would not directly hear from them.

I am committed to making sure Kentucky's voice is heard on this issue even if the Obama administration doesn't want to listen. That is why I immediately responded to the administration's new regulations in my own legislation, the Coal Country Protection Act, to push back against the President's extreme anti-coal scheme. Supported by the Kentucky Coal Association, my legislation would require that the following simple but important benchmarks be met before the rules take effect.

Here is what it would do: No. 1, the Secretary of Labor would have to certify that the rules would not generate loss of employment.

No. 2, the Director of the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office would have to certify the rules would not result in any loss in American gross domestic product.

No. 3, the Administrator of the Energy Information Administration would have to certify the rules would not increase electricity rates.

And No. 4, the Chair of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission and the president of the North American Electric Reliability Corporation would have to certify that electricity delivery would remain reliable. That is it.

My legislation is plain common sense, and I urge the majority leader to allow a vote on my legislation.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, this morning there was a scene on television I had never seen before. In fact, the commentators said they had never seen it either.

I might preface this by saying I grew up in the Midwest. Tornadoes are a part of our lives. I cannot recall how many times I was rousted out of my bed in the middle of the night as the sirens were going on outside and mom and dad would take me to the basement. That is what we did as I grew up in the Midwest. Tornadoes were part of our lives.

This morning showed what happened in Nebraska yesterday to be a virtually unique occurrence—twin tornadoes came ripping through the State of Nebraska killing people and destroying lives and businesses and homes and farms. There was a reflection on this about how the weather seems to be getting more extreme in this country. Are we getting more and more extreme weather events, many of which are very destructive? I think the clear answer is yes. Don't trust a politician or even an environmentalist for that answer. Go to the people who do this for a living. That is what I did. I held a hearing and called the leaders from the property and casualty insurance companies. They do this for a living, and they said not only are we getting more extreme weather events, they are much more expensive than ever before. The destruction is much larger. So many insurance companies, because of these extreme weather events, are starting to charge higher premiums and backing off of coverage. They said they can't create a reserve for the possibility of an extreme weather event that would be so destructive.

There are some people who hear what I just said and say: Well, God has his ways—or her ways—and God may decide the weather is going to be a lot tougher for you in this generation than in other generations. I heard that back home. But there are some people who believe—and I am one of them—that this is not just God's work, this has something to do with our work on this planet.

I happen to believe carbon pollution is a challenge, not just for America but for the world, and we need to reduce carbon pollution, which is changing the planet we live on. Because of carbon pollution, this warming climate—this warming planet—is creating situations which are troubling.

There was an article in the paper over the weekend. Norfolk, VA—not a liberal bastion—is now taking steps because of the rising ocean. It is up about a foot and a half from what they knew as the standard and they expect it to grow even more, threatening buildings, commerce, and homes all around that area. The impact of climate change and carbon pollution is evident in every direction of this world.

I have said this on the floor four or five times and I will repeat it: There is only one major political party in the world today that denies climate change and denies these extreme weather events have anything to do with our activity on Earth. The Republican Party of the United States of America is in denial. So when they deny the premise that something is happening on this Earth that we need to think about and worry about, it is easy to dismiss any and every effort to deal with it.

The Senator who spoke before me is from my neighboring State of Kentucky. His coal fields abut my coal fields in Southern Illinois, so we have a common energy resource. But I will say in all honesty, if we want to use the energy resource of coal in Illinois, we have to change the way we use it to reduce pollution. I think we can do that. It will be better technology in the electrical powerplants and uses something that is underway in our State: carbon capturing sequestration. Imagine if we could take the carbon pollution that is headed for the atmosphere that causes the problem and never let it reach the atmosphere.

That is what we are going to do. We are going to dig deep into the Earth over 1 mile down under three levels of shale rock and store compressed CO_2 so it doesn't go into the atmosphere. Carbon capturing sequestration, that is not a war on coal; that is a war on our energy problems and a responsible approach for dealing with coal.

I think that is the honest answer to my friends in Southern Illinois and those who value the coal industry and what it means to our economy. We have to be thoughtful, reflective, and innovative in making certain we use the energy resources we have responsibly and leave this Earth in a situation where our children and grandchildren will say our generation did not ignore the obvious.

Twin tornadoes in Nebraska are an indicator to me that time is not on our side. We have to step up. Both parties have to step up and find solutions that are responsible.

YANDLE NOMINATION

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I rise in support of Staci Yandle, who has been nominated to serve as a Federal district court judge in the Southern District of Illinois. She is going to replace a fine Federal judge, J. Philip Gilbert, who took senior status in March. It is a judicial emergency, so I am glad we are moving to it today.

Staci Yandle has the experience, integrity, and the judgment to be an excellent Federal judge. Born in Centreville, IL—incidentally, the hometown of my wife—she currently lives in Carlyle, IL, downstate. She received her undergraduate degree from the University of Illinois and her law degree from Vanderbilt.

Over the course of her career, Staci Yandle has gained extensive experience in the courtroom. She has her own solo practice based in O'Fallon, IL, which she has operated now for 7 years. She has worked for several outstanding law firms in southern Illinois and handled a wide range of litigation matters, including employment, education, medical injury, civil rights, and nursing home abuse cases. She also worked as an arbitrator for the Twentieth Judicial Circuit Court in Illinois.

Ms. Yandle currently serves on the board of the Illinois Bar Foundation. She has taught as an adjunct law professor at the St. Louis University School of Law.

Additionally, she has a distinguished record of pro bono service in southern Illinois, representing indigent clients and nonprofit corporations, including the Delta Economic Development Corporation, which operates a childcare center in St. Clair County.

Ms. Yandle's nomination is historic in several respects. Never before in the course of the history of our State has there been an Article III Federal judge who was openly a member of the LGBT community. Upon confirmation, Staci Yandle will be the first. Upon confirmation, she will also be the first African-American Federal judge ever to serve in the Southern District of Illinois. She will be only the second woman to serve, as she is joining Nancy Rosenstengel, who was approved by the Senate just a few weeks ago.

In short, Staci Yandle's confirmation marks another important milestone in America's journey toward equality of opportunity.

Ms. Yandle was recommended to me by a bipartisan screening committee which I established to take a look at all of the judicial candidates, and I was pleased to recommend her to President Obama. He forwarded her nomination for consideration by the Senate Judiciary Committee where it passed with a strong vote. I hope there will be an equally strong vote today in support of her nomination.

In conclusion, Ms. Yandle is an excellent nominee and I hope my colleagues will join me in voting to confirm her.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

NOMINATION

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I rise to speak about an important vote we are going to be taking today to confirm the next U.S. district judge for the Eastern District of Washington State.

It is not every day that I get to support a nominee who also happens to be a former intern in my Senate office, but it is also not every day that a man who is the son of a migrant farmworker and himself worked on farms in the Yakima Valley is called upon by the President of the United States to become the very first Latino Federal judge in the Eastern District of Washington. So I am incredibly proud to stand in support of Judge Salvador Mendoza, Jr., whose confirmation we will vote on shortly.

Through his life story, Judge Mendoza represents the very best of my home State's honest, hard-working spirit. Through his work ethic, his commitment to his community, and