

you take the ESA to its logical conclusion, which is certain to be done by environmental special interest groups, any activity that allegedly affects climate change or greenhouse gas emissions, they have to be evaluated and approved by Fish and Wildlife for its effect on the icefloes on which polar bears depend. Thus, this proposal could be the ultimate assault on local land use decisionmaking and suppression of private property rights to date.

So it is important that we take the next year to gather information, to make sure it is logical science, and that our decisions are science based. Again, the Wall Street Journal of this past Wednesday—not Tuesday—has an article where they go through and document very well, very succinctly, that we are not having a problem in losing this population. In fact, it is actually growing. So I ask unanimous consent to include the Wall Street Journal editorial in its entirety.

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

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Wall Street Journal, Jan. 3, 2007]
POLAR BEAR POLITICS—USING AN “ENDANGERED” SPECIES TO CHANGE ENERGY POLICY.

Unless you’ve been hibernating for the winter, you have no doubt heard the many alarms about global warming. Now even the Bush Administration is getting into the act, at least judging from last week’s decision by Interior Secretary Dirk Kempthorne to recommend that the majestic polar bear be listed as “threatened” under the Endangered Species Act. The closer you inspect this decision, however, the more it looks like the triumph of politics over science.

“We are concerned,” said Mr. Kempthorne, that “the polar bears’ habitat may literally be melting” due to warmer Arctic temperatures. However, when we called Interior spokesman Hugh Vickery for some elaboration, he was a lot less categorical, even a tad defensive. The “endangered” designation is based less on the actual number of bears in Alaska than on “projections into the future,” Mr. Vickery said, adding that these “projection models” are “tricky business.”

Apparently so, because there are in fact more polar bears in the world now than there were 40 years ago, as the nearby chart shows. The main threat to polar bears in recent decades has been from hunting, with estimates as low as 5,000 to 10,000 bears in the 1950s and 1960s. But thanks to conservation efforts, and some cross-border cooperation among the U.S., Canada and Russia, the best estimate today is that the polar bear population is 20,000 to 25,000.

It also turns out that most of the alarm over the polar bear’s future stems from a single, peer-reviewed study, which found that the bear population had declined by some 250, or 25 percent, in Western Hudson Bay in the last decade. But the polar bear’s range is far more extensive than Hudson Bay. A 2002 U.S. Geological Survey of wildlife in the Arctic Refuge Coastal Plain concluded that the ice bear populations “may now be near historic highs.” One of the leading experts on the polar bear, Mitchell Taylor, the manager of wildlife resources for the Nunavut territory in Canada, has found that the Canadian polar bear population has actually increased by 25 percent—to 15,000 from 12,000 over the past decade.

Mr. Taylor tells us that in many parts of Canada, “polar bears are very abundant and productive. In some areas, they are overly abundant. I understand that people not living in the North generally have difficulty grasping the concept of too many polar bears, but those who live here have a pretty good grasp of what that is like.” Those cuddly white bears are the Earth’s largest land carnivores.

There is no doubt that higher temperatures threaten polar bear habitat by melting sea ice. Mr. Kempthorne also says he had little choice because the threshold for triggering a study under the Endangered Species Act is low. The Bush Administration was sued by the usual environmental suspects to make this decision, which means that Interior will now conduct a year-long review before any formal listing decision is made.

Nonetheless, the bears seem to have survived despite many other severe warming and cooling periods over the last few thousands of years. Polar bears are also protected from poaching and environmental damage by the Marine Mammal Protection Act, so there is little extra advantage to the bears themselves from an “endangered” classification.

All of which suggests that the real story here is a human one, namely about the politics of global warming. Once a plant or animal is listed under the Endangered Species Act, the government must also come up with an elaborate plan to protect its habitat. If the polar bear is endangered by warmer temperatures, then the environmentalist demand will be that the government do something to address that climate change. Faster than you can say Al Gore, this would lead to lawsuits and cries in Congress demanding federal mandates to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Think we’re exaggerating? No sooner had Mr. Kempthorne announced his study than Kassie Siegel of something called the Center for Biological Diversity told the New York Times that “even this Administration” would not be able to “write this proposal without acknowledging that the primary threat to polar bears is global warming and without acknowledging the science of global warming.” Her outfit was one of those who had sued the feds in the first place over the polar bears, notwithstanding its location in the frozen tundra of Arizona. But no matter. For want of a few hundred polar bears, the entire U.S. economy could be vulnerable to judicial dictation.

With that much at stake, Mr. Kempthorne could have shown a stiffer backbone in resisting this political pressure. At the very least he now has an obligation to ensure that Interior’s year-long study be based on real science and the actual polar bear population, rather than rely on computer projections. Any government decision to limit greenhouse gases deserves to be debated in the open, where the public can understand the consequences, not legislated by the back door via the Endangered Species Act.

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered. The Senator from Kentucky is recognized.

Mr. BUNNING. I thank the Chair.

(The remarks of Mr. BUNNING pertaining to the introduction of (S. 154

and S. 155) are located in today’s RECORD under “Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.”)

RESTORING FISCAL DISCIPLINE ACT OF 2007

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, on this very first day of the first session of the 110th Congress, I am proud to introduce, with Majority Leader REID, the Restoring Fiscal Discipline Act of 2007. By including this act in our top 10 legislative priorities, Democrats are sending a message. We are saying to the Nation that it is time to restore fiscal discipline in Washington.

Unfortunately, we are inheriting a fiscal mess. It is a fiscal mess of historic proportion. The head of the Government Accountability Office, General Walker, has told us:

The U.S. Government is on an imprudent and unsustainable fiscal path.

General Walker is right. General Walker is the head of the Government Accountability Office. He is the person responsible for reporting to Congress on our fiscal condition, and he is warning us of the serious course correction that is required. As General Walker has said, and as I agree, the fact is that our budget outlook is far worse than what has been claimed. The increase in debt in 2006 is far greater than the reported deficit.

It is very interesting how the media reports these things to the American people. They say to the American people that the deficit last year was \$248 billion. That is true. What they do not tell the American people, what is not said, is the debt last year increased by \$546 billion—almost \$300 billion more than the stated deficit. This is an utterly unsustainable course. To add almost \$550 billion of debt in 1 year after having done about that amount each of the last 5 years has put us on a course that is utterly unsustainable. It fundamentally threatens America’s economic security.

Read the reports. Yesterday and today in the national newspapers you saw stories about the declining value of the dollar. The dollar has been in a deep slide for 3 months. There are reports of countries, one after another, announcing that they intend to diversify their investments out of dollar-denominated securities. There is a message here to all of us—a warning, a warning of America’s preeminent position in the financial world being threatened. It is being threatened by a mountain of debt.

I have tried to put into visual terms how dramatically the change in debt has been in just the last few years. When this President came to office, after his last full year, the debt stood at \$5.8 trillion. We do not hold him responsible for his first year because obviously he was operating under the budget of the previous administration. But look what has happened since. The debt has skyrocketed to \$8.5 trillion. If the President’s course is pursued, over

the next 5 years the debt will rise inexorably to \$11.6 trillion, and all of this at the worst possible time, before the baby boom generation retires. This is a time we should be paying down debt, not exploding debt. There is no sober or objective observer who does not recognize the fundamental threat to our economic security caused by these budget policies. We must change course.

The result of this rising debt is that increasingly we are borrowing the funds to float this boat from abroad. In 2005, our country borrowed 65 percent of all the money that was borrowed in the world by countries. Let me repeat that. In 2005, our Nation borrowed 65 percent of all the money that was borrowed by countries in the world. The second biggest borrower was Spain. They borrowed one-tenth as much.

As we look back, this is a historic time with great challenges. The question before this body and the Congress of the United States and this President will be whether we are honest with the American people about the extent of our financial problems. This is a moment of testing. Will we be honest? Will we be truthful? Will we make the tough choices that are required?

In the last 5 years, foreign holdings of our debt have doubled. In other words, it took 42 Presidents 224 years to run up \$1 trillion of U.S. debt held abroad. That amount has more than doubled in just the last 5 years. This is a course that cannot be sustained. It must be changed.

I come to the floor today to offer an important measure, a measure to restore fiscal discipline, by reimposing the pay-go rule that was so effective in the 1990s at helping us get back on track after the record deficits of the 1980s.

We know that pay-go works. It was instrumental in our turning deficits into surpluses in the 1990s. The pay-go rule says simply this: If you want more tax cuts you have to pay for them. If you want new mandatory spending you have to pay for it. If you do not pay for it, you have to muster a supermajority vote on the floor of the Senate for more tax cuts or new mandatory spending to go forward.

That is a good rule, but it will not solve the problem. No one should overpromise. No one should overstate. It is going to take serious, consistent discipline on spending, on revenue, and on entitlement reform for us to truly make progress.

In the joint caucus this morning, the leadership called on all of us to set aside partisanship to make genuine progress. This is going to be an area in which we have that opportunity. We have a window of opportunity, before we get into the next election cycle, to face up to these fiscal challenges. One part of a successful strategy is to reimpose the pay-go discipline. It is not the only thing, but it is a beginning.

In addition to reestablishing the pay-go rule, the legislation I am offering today prohibits the use of the fast-

track reconciliation process for any legislation that would add to the deficit. Reconciliation is a big word; it is a fancy word. It confuses people, but it is a special process in the Senate to go around the standard rules of this body to pass legislation. It circumscribes Senators' rights. It restricts their ability to offer amendments. It sets a strict time limit on debate. The only reason those procedures were ever adopted in this body—the only reason—was to reduce budget deficits. Unfortunately, over the last 6 years those special procedures have been used to increase deficits, not to reduce deficits. That stood the whole rationale for reconciliation on its head.

It is time for us to go back to the reconciliation process that was intended and only use those extraordinary procedures for reducing deficits, not for increasing them.

(Mrs. MURRAY assumed the Chair.)

Mr. CONRAD. I note the very distinguished Member of the Senate, the Senator from the State of Washington and a member of the Senate Budget Committee, who understands full well the subject we are discussing today and the critical need for our Nation to return to a more sound fiscal course.

I offer this measure today to restore fiscal discipline. I ask my colleagues to bring their ideas to the Senate floor. You have my commitment as the incoming chairman of the Senate Budget Committee to do my level best to bring our country back. Our country needs us now. Our country needs us to be truthful and honest and to work together.

I felt, in the Senate Chamber this morning, a new spirit, a new sense of possibility—perhaps the chance that we can come together in a way that would make us all proud.

I very much hope we seize that opportunity. I look forward to working with my colleagues to achieve that result.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

REINTRODUCTION OF LEGISLATION

Mr. SPECTER. Madam President, on the first day of the 110th Congress, it is an appropriate occasion to reintroduce legislation which was introduced in the 109th Congress which was not enacted. I have a number of legislative proposals to introduce today and to discuss.

(The remarks of Mr. SPECTER pertaining to the introduction of S. 185, S. 186, and S. 187 are located in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

STEM CELL RESEARCH

Mr. SPECTER. Mr. President, I strongly support legislation introduced earlier today which would permit Federal funding to be used for embryonic stem cell research. That is a subject which has been at the top of my agenda since November of 1998 when stem cells were first exposed. Within 10 days, in December 1998, the Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health, Human Services and Education held the first hearing to explore the potential of embryonic stem cell research. In the intervening years the subcommittee has held some 19 hearings exploring this issue in some great detail.

The Specter-Harkin bill was passed last year, vetoed by the President, and the bill is back before the Congress this year where it may be possible to override a Presidential veto. That depends upon how much public support there is—really, how much public clamor there is—for this legislation to be enacted.

Embryonic stem cells have the potential to replace diseased cells. They are a veritable fountain of youth. They have enormous potential in Parkinson's, Alzheimer's, cancer, heart disease, and almost all of the known maladies. I don't know of any malady where they are not a potential for a cure because the cells in a person's body become diseased, and if the embryonic stem cell can replace the diseased cell, there is a potential for a cure.

There is opposition to this legislation on the ground that it would destroy life. That is factually not correct because there are some 400,000 embryos created for in vitro fertilization which are going to be destroyed. When the issue was raised about destroying a life, the subcommittee took the lead and appropriated \$2 million to facilitate adoptions. There have only been about 100 adoptions in the past several years, so there is no doubt that using some of these embryonic stem cells will not destroy life because they will not be used to create life. If there were any chance they would create life, I would not consider utilizing them for medical research.

When the alternative is to throw them away or to use them, it seems to me a clear choice to utilize them to save lives and fight disease. That is the thrust of this legislation.

PRESIDENTIAL SIGNING STATEMENTS

Mr. SPECTER. Madam President, moving now to the issue of signing statements: I had introduced legislation in the 109th Congress to provide standing to the Congress to go to court when the President issues signing statements which, in effect, cherry-picked the provisions in the legislation he liked and disregarded the provisions in the legislation he disliked.

That kind of a proceeding, in my view, is unconstitutional because the