

obvious threat for our fishery industries and the marine trades they support. It is not just the fishermen who are affected but the people who repair their engines and nets, sell them equipment and gear, as well as the companies that buy and process their catch are affected.

In my home State of Rhode Island, average coastal water temperature has risen by 4 degrees over the past two decades, affecting our historic fish stocks and hurting local fishermen. It is not just in Rhode Island where the seas are changing. To use another example, rising ocean temperatures and acidity threaten corals, which, as well as being a cornerstone of ocean biodiversity—but never mind, this is supposed to be a speech about the money—the coral reefs are a mainstay of Florida's water and boating industry. People go there to snorkel, scuba dive, and see the corals. If the corals are not there, it is going to affect those industries.

The increasing acidification of ocean water driven by the rising carbon dioxide in the atmosphere lowers the ocean's saturation levels of calcium carbonate. That sounds boring. Who the heck cares about the ocean saturation levels of calcium carbonate? Calcium carbonate is the fundamental building block of the shells of aquatic species such as oysters, crabs, and lobsters. Fisheries we actually do care a lot about, even if we may not care about calcium carbonate. It is the basic building block of the plankton that comprise the very base of the food web. Ocean acidification caused 70- to 80-percent losses of oyster larvae at an ocean hatchery in Oregon from 2006 to 2008. Wild oyster stocks in Washington State also failed under the stress of that more acidic water. This is an industry worth about \$73 million annually along our Pacific coast, and it is faced with the threats from climate change.

The pteropod, which is also known as the sea butterfly, will be harmed by ocean acidification. The pteropod is a humble beast. It is a tiny aquatic snail. Nobody goes fishing for pteropods, so who the heck cares? Salmon care. Indeed, 47 percent of the diet of some Pacific salmon species is pteropods. The salmon fisheries which support coastal jobs and economies care an awful lot about the salmon.

Extreme weather events such as storm surges have become more frequent as our climate and oceans warm. Extreme storms such as that are particularly hard on shell fisheries. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration reported that "because oysters require two or more years to grow to marketable size, full recovery from . . . hurricanes may take years, and some oyster habitats may be lost permanently." National Geographic noted that after Hurricane Katrina, 90 percent of Mississippi's oyster beds and 74 percent of Louisiana's oyster beds were destroyed. Just this fall, Hurri-

cane Sandy disrupted shellfisheries all along the east coast.

Coastal economies, such as in my home State of Rhode Island, are threatened in other ways by sea-level rise and extreme storms. The Rhode Island economic development Council notes that tourism in Rhode Island is at the absolute center of our summer economy. People from all across the Nation come to Rhode Island in the summer to enjoy our beautiful beaches, our sparkling bay, sail, and participate in all the beachside activities. Damage to that economy would be very significant.

We are rebuilding from Hurricane Sandy so we will be ready when our beach visitors come this summer, but it is a reminder of how important that economy is to Rhode Island, and it is a reminder of how vulnerable it is to extreme weather.

Let's turn to the West, where by August of this year more than 6 million acres had burned in wildfires. A new analysis by NASA predicts that by the middle of the century we can expect to match the severity of 2012 fires every 3 to 5 years. It is going to become commonplace.

A recent study by the University of Oregon—and I see the Senator from Oregon on the floor—found that large wildfires caused long-term instability in local labor markets. Increased local spending fighting the fires is not enough to outweigh the economic loss caused by the disruption of businesses and damage to property from the fire.

In August, Reuters reported that wildfires were hurting tourism in Western States. One small business owner in Salmon, ID, claimed she had nothing but cancellations as a result of the fires.

The New York Times has reported that the declining snowfall and unseasonably warm weather had been a drag on winter sports and recreational tourism last winter. The reported forecast is that before the end of the century, the number of economically viable ski locations in New Hampshire and Maine will be cut in half. Skiing in New York will be cut by three-quarters, and there will be no ski area in Connecticut or Massachusetts. That will have an economic effect.

Looking back West again, the Park City Foundation in Utah predicted an annual local temperature increase of 6.8 degrees Fahrenheit by 2075, which would cause a total loss of snowpack in the Park City resort area. The Park City Foundation report estimates this will result in thousands of lost jobs, tens of millions in lost earnings, and hundreds of millions in lost economic output to Utah. Ominously, in Colorado the ski season was pushed back at least a week this winter for lack of snow.

I am sure my colleagues on both sides of the political aisle, whether from coastal, agricultural or mountain States, feel the concern for their State's economy as I do for Rhode Is-

land. To protect these economies, we will all have to act prudently, and that means waking up and addressing climate change head on in Congress. The majority of Americans of all political affiliations accepts the science behind climate change. Yet Congress refuses to act.

There is a consensus among scientists where around 98 percent—the other day I came with a circle graph which showed a tiny little wedge of fringe dispute on this question is barely visible in the sea of agreement. Yet Congress refuses to act. Even after hearing from our national security officials about the dangers and threats from climate change, Congress refuses to act.

That refusal to act will have an impact on the American economy. A Brookings report has found that well-designed climate legislation would increase investment, increase employment, and significantly increase America's gross domestic product, but here in Congress we are more likely to hear that any climate change legislation would hurt the economy and kill jobs. The opposite is true. We are missing opportunities to grow a clean economy that is manufacturing and export intensive and that creates the kinds of jobs that support a strong American middle class. We are failing to protect against carbon pollution that will harm our States' economies all across the country, and we are failing to take prudent steps to protect ourselves against the coming changes from our carbon pollutants that have now become unavoidable. With the carbons up in the air, the changes are going to happen. We can't stop those. We need to prepare for them, and we are failing to take those prudent steps. Those of us on the east coast who weathered Sandy have gotten a preview of coming attractions as the oceans continue to warm and extreme storms become more common.

As I said before, here in Congress we are sleepwalking through history. We are lulled by the narcotic of corporate money from the polluters and from their allies, we are ignoring the scientific facts, and we are refusing to awaken to the many ringing alarms that nature is now sounding. I hope we can soon find a way to correct this grievous folly and omission.

I yield the floor.

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MERKLEY). The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BROWN of Ohio). Without objection, it is so ordered.

EXTENSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the period for

morning business for debate only be extended until 6 p.m., with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

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

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MERKLEY. 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 FISCAL CLIFF

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, I want to first address the bill we passed in the early hours this morning.

It is very unusual to be passing a bill in the early hours, certainly on the first day of the year. And this bill had a lot in it. This is the fiscal cliff bill. There are a number of reasons that I supported this bill, but there are a number of concerns I have as well. I thought it might be appropriate to just summarize why it was important this bill pass last night, but also why we should also be aware that the bill has laid out a path that requires us to do substantial additional work in order to avoid having that path be one that leads us into a thicket.

First, we do not pass this bill if the House does not get it done. It is being considered by the House right now. Then there would be a very good probability, economists estimate, that the economy would turn down in the coming year by somewhere in the range of about 2 to 3 percent, and so we would go into a recession. That means living wage jobs for American families would disappear. That is an enormous amount of hardship, and this is a self-inflicted political wound. So it was important to pass that bill last night to avoid that.

The second is that one of the immediate impacts would have been the end of unemployment insurance for a huge number of families across this country. In Oregon, it would be about 30,000 families immediately terminated from unemployment insurance, and in the course of January it would be another 10,000 families. So if you can imagine a bill that would have directly impacted the ability of 40,000 Oregon families to pay their car payments, to pay their rent, to pay their heating bills in the middle of winter, that was the bill we were considering last night. It is a very big reason why it is important that it pass.

In addition, the bill we addressed last night adjusted the rates in terms of the compensation to doctors under Medicare, called the doc fix. If the doc fix did not get adopted, and we had roughly a 25-percent reduction in payments, then what we would see is that folks would have a very difficult time getting in the door of a doctor's office. We

don't really have a Medicare plan if we can't get in the door of a doctor's office, and we don't really have medical care at all if we can't get in the door of a doctor's office. So it is important that we address that—again, affecting thousands of people in my home State of Oregon.

In addition, there was a lot of concern that this fiscal cliff bill would do some things that were entirely unacceptable in regard to compromising the benefits under Medicare and Social Security. There was a proposal to increase the age limit for Medicare from 65 to 67. I advocated fiercely that that would be unacceptable. I cannot tell you how many townhalls I have gone to and had folks approach me and say: You know, I am 62 years old. I have these three conditions I am wrestling with. I have no medical care, and I am just trying to stay alive until I hit 65 so I can get medical care.

That is a common situation in a country where many people do not have health insurance. To raise the age by an additional 2 years for those folks who have no medical care would be cruel at best, and for some it would be a death sentence. That was unacceptable.

Others proposed that instead of making the cost-of-living provision in Social Security match better what seniors buy, they proposed making it match less well what seniors buy, saving money by inaccurately estimating the impacts of cost-of-living increases. It is important to recognize that neither of these elements that would have attacked the benefits of Medicare and Social Security was in the bill last night. Those programs were not on the table.

Because we needed to avert a recession, because we needed to make sure we did not slash unemployment, cut people off at the knees overnight, block folks from being able to get in the door of their doctor's office, and because the bill did not do some of the things that would have been 100 percent unacceptable, it merited support last night in this Chamber. I say last night, but it was actually in the early hours of this morning, the first day of 2013.

I supported this bill, but I have grave concerns about certain elements. This bill essentially adopted 90 percent-plus of the Bush tax cuts. Unless we continue to wrestle with the fact that revenue is at a historic low in this country and the gap between revenue and spending is very high, we are laying out a path for structural deficits as far as the eye can see. That is not in the best interests of this country.

Folks who are well off got a very good deal last night—a very low tax on capital gains, a huge loophole in the estate tax, a very low tax on dividends, and only the very top tax bracket for the most wealthy among us was touched at all. It was not the \$250,000 level President Obama had said he was fighting for, it was \$400,000-plus. There

are not many folks who are at that level, and only that top bracket was touched. If you are very well off in America, you got a very good deal last night, but America got a big problem, which is the potential for enduring deficits, structural deficits that undermine the soundness of our future finances.

In addition, the bill we considered last night created some additional fiscal cliffs in the very near future, within 2 months—in March. One is that it does not address the debt ceiling. The debt ceiling is not about what we spend, not about the decisions on what we spend, it is whether we are going to pay the bill after the spending has been authorized. It is like saying to yourself: When the credit card bill comes, I am just not going to pay it because I should not have spent so much money. That is what the debt ceiling problem is—not to pay the bills we have already incurred.

What happened the last time we had this controversy was our national credit rating was diminished. That means when you borrow money, you have to pay more. So we shot ourselves in the foot to no purpose.

The time to make the decision over what you spend is when you are making the spending decision, not when the bill arrives later. You have already made that commitment. You are already in that boat. You have a responsibility to fulfill payment of the bills you have signed up for. But we will have that ahead of us in just 2 months.

In addition, the bill we had in the wee hours this morning pushes off the sequester for only 2 months. What is the sequester? The sequester is a series of mandatory payment cuts that fall on working people. There was a big budget deal a year ago that I voted against because what it said is that if the supercommittee does not come up with a good plan, we are going to balance the budget on the backs of working people. I voted against it. The bill last night did not do that because it pushed off the sequester, but it only pushed it off for 2 months. So if you are concerned about a nation in which the bonus breaks for the best off are untouched while cuts fall on working people, then you should be concerned about the battle that is just 2 months ahead.

In addition, there was a last-minute addition of a farm bill—not the Senate's farm bill, not a bill that was adopted in committee process, not a bill that was adopted on the floor of this Chamber, it was an individual leader's farm bill. The minority leader's farm bill was inserted last night.

Earlier, we had a speech by one of my colleagues, who was saying that it is so important that we do the hard work in committee and that we do the hard work on the floor with an open amendment process. That is what we did with the Senate farm bill. Senator STABENOW from Michigan, the chair of the committee, Ranking Member ROBERTS—they worked very hard to have