Arkansas – 40 Articles

Document 1

**AP finds climate change risk for 327 toxic Superfund sites**

Dec 22, 2017

The Associated Press

This year’s historic hurricane season exposed a little-known public health threat: Highly polluted sites that can be inundated by floodwaters, potentially spreading toxic contamination.

TARPON SPRINGS, Fla. — Anthony Stansbury propped his rusty bike against a live oak tree and cast his fishing line into the rushing waters of Florida’s Anclote River.

When he bought a house down the street last year, Stansbury says he wasn’t told that his slice of paradise had a hidden problem. The neighborhood is adjacent to the Stauffer Chemical Co. Superfund site, a former chemical manufacturing plant that is on the list of the nation’s most polluted places. That 130-acre lot on the river’s edge is also located in a flood zone.

“Me and my kids fish here a couple times a week. Everyone who lives on this coast right here, they fish on this water daily,” said the 39-year-old father of three.

Stansbury is among nearly 2 million people in the U.S. who live within a mile of 327 Superfund sites in areas prone to flooding or vulnerable to sea-level rise caused by climate change, according to an Associated Press analysis of flood zone maps, census data and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency records.

This year’s historic hurricane season exposed a little-known public health threat: Highly polluted sites that can be inundated by floodwaters, potentially spreading toxic contamination.

In Houston, more than a dozen Superfund sites were flooded by Hurricane Harvey, with breaches reported at two. In the Southeast and Puerto Rico, Superfund sites were battered by driving rains and winds from Irma and Maria.

The vulnerable sites highlighted by AP’s review are scattered across the nation, but Florida, New Jersey and California have the most, and the most people living near them. They are in largely low-income, heavily minority neighborhoods, the data show.

Many of the 327 sites have had at least some work done to help mitigate the threat to public health, including fencing them off and covering them in plastic sheeting to help keep out rain water.

The Obama administration assessed some of these at-risk places and planned to gird them from harsher weather and rising seas. EPA’s 2014 Climate Adaptation Plan said prolonged flooding at low-lying Superfund sites could cause extensive erosion, carrying away contaminants as waters recede.

President Donald Trump, however, has called climate change a hoax, and his administration has worked to remove references from federal reports and websites linking carbon emissions to the warming planet.

“Site managers had started reviewing climate and environmental trends for each Superfund site, including the potential for flooding,” said Phyllis Anderson, who worked for 30 years as an EPA attorney and associate director of the division that manages Superfund cleanups until her retirement in 2013. “The current administration appears to be trying to erase these efforts in their climate change denials, which is a shame.”

EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt has said he intends to focus on cleaning up Superfund sites, and he appointed a task force that developed a list of sites considered the highest priority. The Stauffer site in Florida is not on it.

Like Trump, Pruitt rejects the consensus of climate scientists that man-made carbon emissions are driving global warming. His task force’s 34-page report makes no mention of the flood risk to Superfund sites from stronger storms or rising seas, but eight of the 21 sites on EPA’s priority list are in areas of flood risk.

Despite EPA’s announced emphasis on expediting cleanups, the Trump administration’s proposed spending plan for the current 2018 fiscal year seeks to slash Superfund program funding by nearly one-third. Congress has not yet approved new spending plans for the fiscal year, which began Oct. 1.

Pruitt’s office declined to comment this week on the key findings of AP’s analysis or why the agency appears to no longer recognize an increasing flood risk to toxic sites posed by the changing climate.

However, Jahan Wilcox, an EPA spokesman, said, “Despite fear-mongering from the Associated Press, not a single dollar has actually been eliminated, as Congress still hasn’t passed a budget.”

Many flood-prone Superfund sites identified through AP’s analysis are located in low-lying, densely populated urban areas. In New Jersey, several polluted sites have more than 50,000 people living within one mile.

In Hoboken, across the Hudson River from New York City, the site of a former manufacturing plant for mercury vapor lamps sits within a mile of almost 100,000 residents, including 7,000 children under 5.

The Martin Aaron Inc. Superfund site is in the heart of Camden’s Waterfront South, a low-income neighborhood of crumbling row houses and industrial facilities stretching along the Delaware River.

The 2.5-acre lot, which takes up most of a city block, has been home to a succession of factories dating back to 1886 that included a leather tannery. The air around the fenced site hangs heavy with the nose-stinging odor of solvents. Testing found that soil and groundwater under the site contained a witch’s brew of highly toxic chemicals, including PCBs and pesticides.

Earlier this month, workers used heavy machinery to remove contaminated soil and to pump polluted water from deep underground. Long range plans approved by EPA call for eventually covering the land and restricting its future use.

Just around the corner, Mark Skinner and his niece Cherise Skinner pushed her 1-year-old son in a stroller in front of their rented row house. Mark Skinner shrugged when asked about the work at the former industrial site.

“It’s really contaminated, there’s a lot of stuff in the ground, but I don’t know what all it is,” said Skinner, 53, who works at a nearby scrap metal yard and has lived in Waterfront South since he was a teenager.

Foul-smelling water filled the streets there during Superstorm Sandy in 2012, flooding many basements, long-time residents said. Census data show about 17,250 people live within a mile of the Martin Aaron site — 58 percent are black and 36 percent are Latino.

Across the nation, more than 800,000 homes are located near flood-prone toxic sites. Houses are at risk of contamination if intense flooding brings water into them, and many more people could be affected if the contamination seeps into the ground, finding its way into drinking water.

Mustafa Ali, who resigned in March as EPA’s senior adviser and assistant associate administrator for environmental justice, said it’s no accident that many of the nation’s most polluted sites are also located in some of the poorest neighborhoods.

“We place the things that are most dangerous in sacrifice zones, which in many instances are communities of color where we haven’t placed as much value on their lives,” said Ali, who worked at EPA for 24 years.

The Stauffer site in Florida is a scrubby green field along the Anclote River, ringed on its other three sides by chain-link fences with “No Trespassing” signs. Testing showed the 130-acre lot’s soils were contaminated with radium, the long-banned pesticide DDT, arsenic, lead and other pollutants that over the years have fouled the area’s groundwater and the river.

Environmental regulators say the site now poses no threat to people or the environment because the current owner, the pharmaceutical company AstraZeneca, paid to treat contaminated soils, and cover the pollution with a “cap” of clean earth and grass. Still, residential development and use of groundwater on the site are prohibited because of the legacy pollution.

Covering toxic waste is often a cheaper option than completely removing the pollutants, but the installations are not always as long-lasting as the chemicals buried beneath them, said Jeff Cunningham, a civil engineering professor at the University of South Florida.

“As a long-term strategy, capping only works if the contaminants degrade to safe levels before the capping system eventually fails. What if it takes centuries for some of these contaminants to degrade to safe levels?” Cunningham said.

Damage to a protective cap from storm-fueled flooding has already occurred at least once this year.

In October, the EPA said dioxins from the San Jacinto River Waste Pits Superfund site near Houston were released after the cap was damaged by Harvey-related flooding. Tests afterward measured the toxins at 2,300 times the level that would normally trigger a new cleanup. Pruitt has since ordered an accelerated cleanup of the site.

Seventy-six-year-old Tony Leisner has lived near Florida’s Stauffer chemical site all his life. He told the AP he is seeing damage to docks and riverside properties from the ever-rising waters in the neighborhood, and is concerned about what more flooding could mean for the Superfund lot. Although monitoring wells do test local groundwater for contamination from the site, some in Leisner’s neighborhood said they’re fearful enough to drink only bottled water.

The Anclote River is listed as an “impaired waterway” because it fails to meet state clean water criteria, though how much of that is due to the Stauffer site’s legacy is unclear. The state has issued a warning about eating bass out of the river, but there are no signs at the popular fishing spot warning anglers even though tests show heightened levels of mercury in fish.

Leisner said barrels of chemicals at the Stauffer site self-ignited while crews were working. He said he’s disappointed neither the company nor EPA removed the pollutants, especially since rising waters are already threatening the neighborhood.

“Burying things rarely helps. And if you’ve got a chemical that is that toxic ... I think you need to find a way to reuse, recycle and remove (it), to a place where it’s not going to contaminate groundwater,” he said.

Document 2

**Climate change could spell disaster for coffee, but science may offer a solution.**

Oct 20, 2017

Caitlin Dewey - The Washington Post

Centroamericano, a new variety of coffee plant, hasn’t sparked the buzz of, say, Starbucks’s latest novelty latte. But it may be the coolest thing in brewing: a tree that can withstand the effects of climate change.

Climate change could spell disaster for coffee, a crop that requires specific temperatures to flourish and that is highly sensitive to a range of pests. So scientists are racing to develop more tenacious strains of one of the world’s most beloved beverages.

In addition to Centroamericano, seven other new hybrid varieties are gradually trickling onto the market. And this summer, World Coffee Research - an industry-funded nonprofit group - kicked off field tests of 46 new varieties that it says will change coffee-growing as the world knows it.

“Coffee is not ready to adapt to climate change without help,” said Doug Welsh, the vice president and roastmaster of Peet’s Coffee, which has invested in WCR’s research.

Climate scientists say few coffee-growing regions will be spared the effects of climate change. Most of the world’s crop is cultivated around the equator, with the bulk coming from Brazil, Vietnam, Colombia, Indonesia and Ethiopia.

Rising temperatures are expected to shrink the available growing land in many of these countries, said Christian Bunn, a postdoctoral fellow at the International Center for Tropical Agriculture who has analyzed the shift in coffee regions. Warmer air essentially “chases” coffee up to cooler, higher altitudes - which are scarce in Brazil and Zimbabwe, among other coffee-growing countries.

Temperature is not climate change’s only projected impact in coffee-growing regions. Portions of Central America are expected to see greater rainfall and shorter dry seasons, which are needed to harvest and dry beans. In Peru, Ecuador and Colombia, rainfall is projected to decrease, potentially sparking dry periods.

These sorts of changes will pose problems for many crops. But coffee is particularly vulnerable, scientists say, because it has an unusually shallow gene pool. Only two species of coffee, arabica and robusta, are currently grown for human consumption. And farmers traditionally haven’t selected for diversity when breeding either plant - instead, essentially, they’ve been marrying generations of coffee with its close cousins.

As a result, there are precious few varieties of arabica that can grow in warmer or wetter conditions. In addition, diseases and pests that might be exacerbated under climate change could knock out entire fields of plants.

A disease of particular concern - coffee leaf rust, or “la roya” in Spanish - devastated coffee plantations across Central America in 2011. It effectively halved El Salvador’s coffee output and cost the region an estimated 1.7 million jobs.

Coffee farmers could see their livelihoods threatened, noted Aaron Davis, a British coffee researcher, because coffee trees are perennials with a 20- to 30-year life span: If a field is damaged by a bad season, farmers aren’t necessarily in a position to immediately replant it. And because coffee takes three years to mature, farmers face several years without income after new trees are planted.

“Under all these scenarios, farmers pay the biggest price,” Davis added.

While few experts expect these factors to drive coffee to extinction, they could severely reduce the global supply - and increase the hardship for coffee farmers.

“The major concern of the industry is that the quantity, and even the future, of good coffee is threatened by climate change,” said Benoit Bertrand, an agronomist with the French agricultural research group CIRAD and one of the world’s most respected coffee breeders. “So the question becomes: How can we address this with new technology and new innovations?”

Despite coffee’s global popularity, few growers have risen to the challenge. There has historically been no real market for improved coffee plants, Bertrand and Davis said: Unlike such major commodity crops as corn or soybeans, coffee is grown primarily by small farmers with low margins who can’t shell out for the latest seed or growing system.

As a result, coffee is coming late to the intensive breeding programs that have revolutionized other crops. But in the past 10 years, interest around plant improvement has exploded, driven in part by the growth of the specialty coffee market.

Plant breeders have begun cataloguing the hundreds of strains of arabica in existence and cultivating them in different growing areas. They’ve also begun to experiment with robusta, which grows in higher temperatures and fares better against diseases but often tastes bitter. There is some hope that new varieties of robusta, or robusta/arabica crosses, could capture that resilience without the bad flavor.

Lately, there has been a particular surge of interest in a type of plant called an F1 hybrid, which crossbreeds two different strains of arabica to produce a unique “child” plant. They can be made from any of the hundreds of varieties of arabica and bred for qualities such as taste, disease resistance and drought tolerance.

Because they are the first generation, F1 hybrids also demonstrate something scientists call “hybrid vigor” - they produce unusually high yields, like a sort of super plant.

Since 2010, eight such F1 hybrids have been released to the commercial market. Bertrand is currently testing a class of an additional 60 crosses with the support of World Coffee Research.

The researchers say that the top two or three - which are expected to become available to farmers as soon as 2022 - will offer good taste, high yields and resilience to a range of coffee’s current and future woes, from higher temperatures to nematodes.

“These hybrids deliver a combination of traits that were never before possible in coffee,” said Hanna Neuschwander, the communications director at World Coffee Research. “It’s the traits that farmers need with the traits that markets demand. People used to think the two were mutually exclusive.”

But the hybrids’ success remains largely untested at scale. Of the eight F1 hybrids on the market at present, only one - Centroamericano - has been planted in any significant volume, Neuschwander said. The variety is currently growing on an estimated 2,500 acres in Central America; for context, the U.S. Agriculture Department reports that Honduras alone grows coffee on more than 800,000 acres.

Farmers who have planted the new trees are seeing success. Starbucks has sold coffee made from F1 hybrids as part of its small-lot premium brand. Last spring, a batch of Centroamericano grown on a Nicaraguan family farm scored 90 out of 100 points in that country’s prestigious tasting competition, which some in the industry heralded as a major victory.

But the path to adoption will be steep. Breeders have developed these plants, Neuschwander said, but many areas of the world don’t have the seed industries and infrastructure in place to actually distribute them. That’s particularly true in the case of F1 hybrids, which - thanks to their particular genetics - can only be grown from tissue samples.

F1 hybrids are also expensive - as much as 21/2 times the cost of conventional plants. That puts them well outside the range of most smallholder farmers, said Kraig Kraft, an agroecologist and technical adviser with Catholic Relief Services’ Latin America division.

Kraft, who has worked with World Coffee Research to test F1 hybrids in Nicaragua, said that in his region, at least, only midsize and large plantations have switched to them.

“I think our position is that we need to really understand the requirements for all farmers to be able to use these new technologies,” Kraft said. “My concern is that small farmers don’t have access to the capital to pay for these investments.”

Even if they did, however, some experts caution that the new coffee varieties are only a piece of a much larger adaptation process. To cope with the effects of climate change, farmers may need to adopt other agricultural practices, such as shade-farming, cover-cropping and terracing, said Bunn, the researcher.

In some regions, those practices won’t be economical. And in that case, policymakers should focus on helping farmers transition to other crops or other livelihoods altogether, researchers stress.

“People sell [F1 hybrids] as a silver bullet,” Bunn said. “To be clear, those plants are indispensable, and I don’t question the value of the work . . . but we need more to adapt to climate change. And we need to accept the hard reality that some places will need to move out of coffee production.”

Document 3

**From cloud nine to climate change, here’s why you should always look up**

Oct 9, 2017

Amy Ellis Nutt - The Washington Post

The sky has brought nothing but trouble lately - hurricanes, tornadoes, torrential rain. For good reason, people look up with wary eyes. On ordinary days, a pleasant wisp of white or a menacing thunderhead serve a more pedestrian preoccupation, a pragmatic barometer for how to dress or where to go.

Then there are those who gaze skyward for contemplation, even inspiration - especially when that azure canopy is tinted by white.

Whether they’re streaking from horizon to horizon or floating in whiffs and puffs, clouds play large in our lives. They saturate our speech: Think of cloud nine. Our songs: Cue Joni Mitchell. Our literature, our art, even our geology is filled with clouds. What are some of the highest mountains in Colorado named? Mount Nimbus, Stratus, Cirrus & Cumulus.

As Yeats wrote, “I know that I shall meet my fate somewhere among the clouds above.”

For climatologists, though, clouds are scientifically important as well as deeply challenging.

“Clouds are hard to model,” NASA associate research scientist Kate Marvel said. “They’re the result of water vapor or ice crystals coalescing around microscopic bits of dust, particles of smoke and sea salt. . . . So they have a dual effect on climate. They trap the heat from the planet and spit it back down, making things warmer, but they also block sunlight, which is a cooling effect.”

All of which frustrates climatologists trying to understand the effect of clouds on the planet.

“Even small changes to the distribution of clouds with rising temperatures could substantially diminish or enhance global warming,” said David Romps, a professor of Earth and planetary science at the University of California at Berkeley.

In July 2016, the journal Nature published research showing cloud cover had increased over Earth’s polar regions, accelerating greenhouse gas concentrations.

“Right now, clouds are more air conditioner than heater,” Romps noted, “but that will change as the planet warms.”

Some scientists have even theorized certain distinctive cloud formations can be harbingers of imminent earthquakes. A Chinese engineer claims to have successfully predicted more than 30 temblors.

Psychologically speaking, clouds also have both positive and negative impact. Overcast weather turns us inward and helps us focus, the experts say. Sunny weather, by contrast, slows cognition.

Researchers in Australia tested their theory with an experiment several years ago. They showed - for the first time in a real-life setting - weather-induced moods can significantly affect memory. On rainy, cloudy days, which caused a gloomy mood, the ability to recall objects was three times greater than on sunny days, despite all the positive vibes they triggered.

To artists and writers, clouds have been everything from eye-catching backdrops in paintings to humorous metaphors in literature - even objects of philosophical inquiry. Where would religion be without clouds? The Bible’s many references start at the very beginning with Genesis 9:13. (“I have set my rainbow in the clouds,” God says, “and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the Earth.”)

When 17th century French thinker Rene Descartes wasn’t busy becoming the father of modern philosophy (“I think, therefore I am,”) he was looking up at the sky and musing confidently on his scientific acumen.

“We imagine [clouds] so lofty that even the poets and painters depict them as the throne of God,” he wrote. “This makes me hope that if I explain their nature . . . one will easily believe that it is possible in the same way to find the causes of everything wonderful on the Earth.”

More than 400 years later, Dutch visual artist Berndnaut Smilde creates his own fleeting clouds indoors. He uses a complicated mix of smoke and water vapor, then captures the results on photographs before the clouds disintegrate back into nothingness.

Smilde has conjured clouds in a Turkish bath in Istanbul, at a deserted mining company in Belgium, even in a centuries-old London dungeon.

“You need a certain space and want it to float,” he explained. “The search for the ideal cloud can take a long time.”

Clouds have often come with numbers attached, the most prevalent being cloud nine. It played a starring role in The Temptations’ 1968 album of the same name, with its eponymous Grammy-winning song. It then resurfaced 19 years later as an album title for former Beatle George Harrison.

The phrase, indicating a state of euphoria, may have originated from the early cloud classification system in which cloud nine was the tallest formation. Then again, cloud seven carried you into bliss, according to the 1960 American Dictionary of Slang. You definitely didn’t want to end up on cloud eight - it meant you were drunk, per a 1930s book about the criminal “underworld.”

Gavin Pretor-Pinney sees cloud-watching as a leisure activity. On a lark in 2005, the Londoner founded the Cloud Appreciation Society. Its membership today tops 43,500 with “cloudspotters” ringing the globe from the Congo to Canada, Iceland to Iran, China to Chile. The United Kingdom is home to more than half the organization’s members. The United States is second with nearly 10,000.

Many regularly send their best cloud photos to Pretor-Pinney, who uses them for his “cloud of the day” and “cloud of the month” emails. In fact, interest has grown so much that the Cloud Appreciation Society is now a full-time business. Pretor-Pinney, an art designer by training, is leading “sky holidays” to particularly cloudy parts of the world. The first trip was to Canada in February to see the Northern Lights.

“I’ve always felt the sky to be the most dynamic, most poetic part of nature,” Pretor-Pinney said. “So it’s always struck me as a shame that it’s gotten bad press.”

The society even helped identify a new class of cloud, a turbulent formation named asperitas that was officially added this March to the 121-year-old International Cloud Atlas.

The group, of course, has nothing good to say about lovers of cloudlessness - including beachgoers, most prominently. They call the worship of monotonous cloudlessness “blue sky thinking.”

Pretor-Pinney rejects such a limited view of the heavens. “Cloudspotting is a conscious invitation to daydream, a sensitivity to your surroundings,” he said. “It’s a kind of sky geekiness, which is beautiful.”

Document 4

**Letter: Climate change not settled science**

Sep 28, 2017

Channon Phipps, Mulberry

Here we go again, after Harvey (Robert McAfee, Community Matters, Sunday, Sept 10) with the obligatory climatology chant (repeat after me): Mankind is responsible for: (70s-80s “Global Cooling”), (80s-90s “Global Warming”) and of course 2000s-Present “Climate Change” (so no matter what it does, it’s covered). Despite the fact the Earth has gone through cyclical warming and cooling cycles throughout its history, and that it’s a naturally occurring, repetitive cycle — somehow THIS TIME mankind is doing it.

No matter that volcanic eruptions like Tambora in 1815 was the equivalent of 2.2 million nuclear bombs like those dropped on Japan and it released 60 Tg (teragram, or 10-12 grams) sulfur, 100 Tg chlorine (as HCl) and 70 Tg fluorine (that’s ~262,000 Saturn V rockets of sulfur and fluorine and 437,000 of chlorine) into earth’s atmosphere, all in a few days. Far more than humans could do on purpose, and yet strangely enough, even all that didn’t destroy the environment and if you employ evolutionary timescales (billions of years) the Earth fully recovered from it all in less than a millionth of the blink of an eye.

Add all the other volcanic eruptions in history to that, and mankind cannot compete with the destructive powers of nature in its wildest dreams. Despite what the Chicken Little Climatologists would like us to believe, man-made ”\*climate change” (\*we know it as “weather”) is NOT “settled science.” Isn’t it odd that climatologists who get paid to preach man-made climate change do so, and (the majority) of those not getting grants or being paid to preach it do not? Of course if you have a doctorate, that exempts you from ever having an agenda or being wrong about anything, right? Oops, except this particular bunch has been wrong every single step of the way: <https://www.thenewamerican.com/tech/environment/item/22289-climate-alarmists-have-been-wrong>- about-virtually-everything.

Document 5

**Inhofe Backs Amendment Stating Climate Change No Hoax, But Says Man Can’t Change Climate**

Jan 22, 2015

NA

WASHINGTON — U.S. Sen. Jim Inhofe, R-Okla., the most vocal opponent in Congress of proposals to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, supported an amendment Wednesday declaring climate change is real and not a hoax.

Inhofe, who wrote a book in 2012 called “The Greatest Hoax: How the Global Warming Conspiracy Threatens Your Future,” voted minutes later against a separate amendment linking climate change to human activity.

The votes came amid Senate consideration of a bill requiring construction of the Keystone XL pipeline to carry tar sands crude from western Canada to refineries on the Gulf of Mexico.

Inhofe pulled a surprise move when, just before the vote, he announced he was co-sponsoring a one-sentence amendment by Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse: “It is the sense of the Senate that climate change is real and not a hoax.”

Inhofe told his colleagues, “Climate is changing. Climate has always changed and always will. There is archaeological evidence of that, there is biblical evidence of that, there is historical evidence of that. It will always change.

“The hoax is that there are some people who are so arrogant to think they are so powerful they can change climate. Man can’t change climate.”

A large majority of climate scientists have said carbon emissions contribute to global warming, and President Barack Obama has made greenhouse gas reduction part of his agenda. Inhofe, who now runs the committee that oversees the Environmental Protection Agency, has vowed to block carbon regulations.

Democrats this week sought to use the Keystone XL debate — which has greenhouse gases as an element — to put Republicans on record on the broader issue of climate change.

Inhofe and Republicans voted almost unanimously for the statement that climate is changing. The amendment passed 98-1.

A separate amendment by Sen Brian Schatz, D-Hawaii, failed. It said, “Climate change is real; and human activity significantly contributes to climate change.” The amendment needed 60 votes to pass, failing 50-49.

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Document 6

**RISE: China, US agree on some trade; no rush on climate change policies**

May 12, 2017

Staff Reports

**China, US reach agreement on beef, poultry and natural gas**

WASHINGTON — China will finally open its borders to U.S. beef while cooked Chinese poultry is closer to hitting the American market as part of a U.S.-China trade agreement.

Trump administration officials hailed the deal as a significant step in their efforts to boost U.S. exports and even America’s trade gap with the world’s second-largest economy.

The United States would also allow U.S. companies to ship liquefied natural gas to China as part of the bilateral agreement reached following President Donald Trump’s meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping in April. The agreement covers a number of long-standing barriers in areas ranging from agriculture to energy to the operation of American financial firms in China.

Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross hailed the agreement as “a herculean accomplishment” forged in record time.

**Tillerson says US won’t be rushed on climate change policies**

FAIRBANKS, Alaska — Arctic nations have renewed calls for the world to address climate warming, but U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson says the United States will not rush to make a decision on its policies.

Tillerson spoke Thursday in Fairbanks, Alaska, at a meeting of the Arctic Council, an advisory group made up of the eight Arctic nations and indigenous groups.

The council adopted a nine-page “Fairbanks Declaration 2017,” which noted that the Arctic is warming at more than twice the rate of the global average. The document noted the importance of reducing soot and methane emissions and said climate change is the most serious threat to Arctic biodiversity.

Tillerson signed the document. But in opening remarks, he cautioned that the United States is reviewing several important policies, including how the Trump administration will approach the issue of climate change.

**4-nation drills postponed after craft runs aground on Guam**

NAVAL BASE GUAM — Multinational military drills on Guam designed to show support for the free passage of vessels in international waters amid concerns China may restrict access to the South China Sea have been indefinitely postponed after a French landing craft ran aground Friday.

U.S. Navy Capt. Jeff Grimes, chief of staff for Joint Region Marianas, told reporters he didn’t know when the drills would resume.

“Currently we are working with our partners to include the Coast Guard, the Guam Environmental Protection Agency, the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration and other federal and local agencies and stakeholders to further assess the situation,” Grimes said. “Finally, I have directed that we stop all operations associated with this exercise until we conduct a further assessment of the situation as we gather all the facts.”

A French catamaran landing craft ran aground just offshore, said Jeff Landis, a spokesman for Naval Base Guam. The vessel didn’t hit coral or spill any fuel, he said. No one was injured. Friday’s landing was meant to be a rehearsal for a drill at Tinian island on Saturday, Landis said.

**US Justice Department to probe police shooting of Texas teen**

DALLAS (AP) — The U.S. Justice Department has launched an investigation into the fatal shooting of a black 15-year-old by a white police officer, a spokeswoman for the Dallas County District Attorney’s Office confirmed Thursday.

The investigation prompted by the April 29 fatal shooting of Jordan Edwards by Balch Springs police Officer Roy Oliver is separate from the district attorney’s prosecution of Oliver on a murder charge, said Brittany Dunn, a spokeswoman for District Attorney Faith Johnson. She said she did not know the scope and focus of the investigation of the Balch Spring Police Department, and a message left for a Justice Department spokesman was not returned.

Oliver was fired and charged with murder in the April 29 shooting and is free on bond.

Document 7

**What climate change has to do with the price of your lettuce**

May 12, 2017

Caitlin Dewey - The Washington Post

Unusual weather in the Southwest could cause a nationwide salad shortage later this month. But that’s just the tip of the iceberg (lettuce): Scientists say the weird weather is probably caused by climate change - which means these sorts of problems are likely to happen again.

The shortage, first reported by NPR, is the result of two separate phenomena in Arizona’s Yuma County and California’s Salinas Valley, the two places where the United States grows most of its leafy greens. In Yuma, the lettuce harvest, which usually runs from November to April, wound up early because of unusually warm weather. And in central California, which typically picks up the harvest once Yuma is done, heavy precipitation delayed some plantings.

That could cause a gap at some point between lettuce supplies, said George Frisvold, an agricultural economist at the University of Arizona. Frisvold’s colleague, Jonathan Overpeck, the director of the university’s Institute of the Environment, says we can blame ourselves, in part, for the great salad shortage.

“There’s this old adage in climate science that you can’t attribute any one event to human causes,” Overpeck said. “That’s not really true anymore, because now it’s really been established that humans alter the whole global climate system. Anything related to increased warmth in the atmosphere likely has some element of human causation.”

Both the temperature in Yuma and the rain in Salinas have a link to atmospheric warmth. The case of Yuma is pretty obvious: Temperatures in the Southwest have been increasing for 100 years, and this winter was no different. According to the National Weather Service, February’s average temperature was two degrees warmer than the recorded average in recent decades.

In Salinas, the situation is a bit more complex, Overpeck said. The region has seen an unusual number of storms called “atmospheric rivers” -- you might know them by the name Pineapple Express - which push heavy precipitation to the Pacific coast from around the Hawaiian islands. It’s unclear whether climate change has a role in the increased incidence of atmospheric rivers, Overpeck said. While some early research suggests that is the case, more data is needed to confirm it.

That said, it’s “a basic concept of physics” that when the atmosphere is warmer, it holds more moisture, Overpeck explained. That means that, when storm clouds form, you tend to see more snow and rain.

According to the 2012 Census of Agriculture, Yuma County boasts nearly 70,000 acres of planted lettuce, while Monterey County, the home of the Salinas Valley, has 134,000. The 2015 Salinas harvest was valued at more than $1.65 billion.

Both regions primarily grow iceberg and leaf lettuce, followed by spinach and baby greens.

Incidentally, these sorts of cascading disruptions aren’t just limited to lettuce - or even to the United States. Britain recently suffered a widely publicized shortage of iceberg lettuce, zucchini, broccoli and cabbage, brought on by extreme weather in Europe’s “salad bowl,” Spain.

Closer to home, fruit growers across the Northeast and Midwest have expressed concern that unusually high and fluctuating temperatures could cause crops like apples, cherries, plums and grapes to develop too early and expose them to spring freezes. The Progressive Farmer recently warned that “almost off the charts” temperatures in Kansas and Oklahoma could put early-growing winter wheat at similar risk, plus expose it to warm-weather pests and diseases.

In 2012, high winter temperatures cost Michigan $220 million in cherry harvests. That same year, unusually hot nighttime temperatures also cut into Corn Belt yields.

The National Climate Assessment estimated that California and Arizona will have gained 70 extra hot nights per year and 12 to 15 additional consecutive days without rain by the end of the century, because of warming.

“Climate change impacts on agriculture,” the report concludes, “will have consequences for food security both in the U.S. and globally.”

Compared with that dire prediction, of course, a few weeks without lettuce probably doesn’t sound so bad. Frisvold cautions that any price spikes resulting from a shortage would probably be short term and that none have materialized just yet.

But in the sense that the looming salad scenario signals things to come, it’s worth paying attention.

“Every grower is noting warming,” Overpeck said. “And while we can’t say what percentage is due to humans, we can say humans are putting their foot on the accelerator.”

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Document 8

**Letter: U.S. must lead on climate change**

Jan 20, 2017

John Ward, Greenwood

Those evangelicals who prayed for the election of President-Elect Donald Trump and now declare his victory to be God’s answer to their prayers should now begin praying Trump was correct when he called climate change a hoax invented by the Chinese.

Trump wants to exit the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. America’s leadership in this agreement is crucial for other nations maintaining their commitments to CO2 emission reduction. He wants to increase the usage of heavy CO2-producing oil and coal. He wants to roll back President Obama’s Clean Power Plan with its steps to reduce carbon emissions 26 to 28 percent by 2025. Trump has picked Oklahoma Attorney General Scott Pruitt, an oil industry shill, to head the Environmental Protection Agency.

Some very reliable research indicates the Earth is racing toward an apocalyptic future because of climate change if CO2 emissions are not dramatically reduced. According to a University of Hawaii study, major cities such as New York and London could become uninhabitable because of irreversible man-made climate change. Humanitarian crises could unfold as hundreds of millions of refugees pour illegally across borders fleeing regions increasingly incapable of sustaining life. The study has concluded these things could occur within 45 years. This means the children and grandchildren of the 81 percent of white evangelicals who voted for Donald Trump will watch these catastrophes unfold.

Those evangelicals declaring the election of Donald Trump to be the answer to their prayers have made a huge bet: They have essentially wagered the Christian faith of their descendants on these claims. Their children and grandchildren could very well see these declarations as an argument for atheism.

Document 9

**In break with Trump, EPA pick Pruitt says climate change isn’t hoax**

Jan 18, 2017

MICHAEL BIESECKER and MATTHEW DALY, Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Donald Trump’s choice to head the Environmental Protection Agency said Wednesday that climate change is real, breaking with both the president-elect and his own past statements.

In response to questions from Democrats during his Senate confirmation hearing, Oklahoma Attorney General Scott Pruitt said he disagreed with Trump’s earlier claims that global warming is a hoax created by the Chinese to harm the economic competitiveness of the United States.

“I do not believe climate change is a hoax,” Pruitt said.

The 48-year-old Republican has previously cast doubt on the extensive body of scientific evidence showing that the planet is warming and man-made carbon emissions are to blame. In a 2016 opinion article, Pruitt suggested that the debate over global warming “is far from settled” and he claimed that “scientists continue to disagree about the degree and extent of global warming and its connection to the actions of mankind.”

At the hearing before the Senate Energy and Public Works Committee, Pruitt conceded that human activity contributes “in some manner” to climate change. He continued, however, to question whether the burning of fossil fuels is the primary reason, and refused to say whether sea levels are rising.

Pruitt’s testimony came shortly after NASA and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration issued a joint statement affirming that 2016 was officially the hottest year in recorded history. Studies show the Greenland and Antarctic ice sheets have decreased in mass, while the world’s oceans have risen on average nearly 7 inches in the last century.

Pressed by Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., to answer in detail about his beliefs about climate change, Pruitt responded that his personal opinion was “immaterial” to how he would enforce environmental laws.

In his current post, Pruitt joined a multistate lawsuit opposing the Obama administration’s plan to limit planet-warming carbon emissions from coal-fired power plants. Pruitt also sued over the EPA’s recent expansion of water bodies regulated under the Clean Water Act. It has been opposed by industries that would be forced to clean up polluted wastewater.

Pruitt said that if were confirmed by the GOP-run Senate, he would work with states and industry to return the federal watchdog to what he described as its proper role.

“Environmental regulations should not occur in an economic vacuum,” Pruitt said. “We can simultaneously pursue the mutual goals of environmental protection and economic growth.”

Pruitt has a history of criticizing and suing the agency he is in line to lead. Environmentalists opposing his nomination cite his cozy relationships with oil and gas industry executives who have donated to his political campaigns.

As the hearing got underway, shouting could be heard from people who were not allowed in. The room accommodated fewer than 100 people; most seats were taken by congressional staff, reporters and others who were allowed in early. Only a few seats remained for the public.

One woman was quickly wrestled out of the room by three police officers as she pulled out a roll of yellow crime scene tape and shouted “We don’t want EPA gutted!”

Later, a group of coal miners wearing hard hats were allowed in to show support for Pruitt. Trump has pledged to bring back tens of thousands of lost coal mining jobs once inaugurated, though he has not yet detailed how.

Senate Republicans uniformly praised Pruitt what they described as his robust record of enforcing environmental laws “when appropriate.” Court records show scant evidence of Pruitt acting to protect the environment in years as a state regulator.

Shortly after Pruitt took office in Oklahoma in 2011, he disbanded the unit responsible for protecting the state’s natural resources. He reassigned his staff to file more than a dozen lawsuits challenging EPA regulations.

Senate Democrats focused on Pruitt’s record of siding with polluters in court as he collected campaign contributions from them.

Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse, D-R.I., pressed Pruitt on money he raised from energy companies such as Exxon Mobil and Devon Energy, as well as the corporate “dark money” raised by groups with which he is involved that are not required to disclose their donors.

Earlier this month, Pruitt resigned from the board of the Rule of Law Defense Fund, a Washington-based group supporting the legal agendas of GOP attorney generals that Whitehouse described the group as “a complete black hole into which at least $1 million goes.” In his response, Pruitt declined to disclose whether the group’s donors included fossil fuel companies or utilities with regulatory issues before EPA.

Though Pruitt ran unopposed for a second term in 2014, public campaign finance reports show he raised more than $700,000, much of it from people in the energy and utility industries.

Pruitt has also faced criticism from environmentalists for failing to take any action to help curb a dramatic spike in earthquake activity in Oklahoma that scientists have linked to the underground disposal of oil and gas wastewater.

Pruitt said his support for legal positions advocated by oil and gas companies was in the best interest of Oklahoma, which is economically dependent on the fossil fuel industry.

*Associated Press writer Sean Murphy in Oklahoma City contributed to this report.*

Document 10

**Sen. Inhofe, Denier Of Human Role In Climate Change, Likely To Lead Environment Committee**

Nov 6, 2014

NA

WASHINGTON — Sen. James M. Inhofe, an the Oklahoma Republican who once compared the Environmental Protection Agency to the gestapo, is likely to lead the Environment and Public Works Committee when the GOP takes control of the Senate next year.

If approved, Inhofe would replace Chairman Barbara Boxer, D-Calif., an avowed environmentalist, producing one of the most stark post-election changes in the Capitol. Committee assignments will not be made until Senate party caucuses meet in Washington after the election recess.

Inhofe, who has served in the Senate for two decades, is an iconic figure to both environmental and energy lobbyists. He chaired the committee from 2003 to 2008, when Republicans controlled the Senate. Inhofe, a former congressman and mayor of Tulsa, came to Washington to do battle with federal bureaucrats, particularly those at the EPA whom he said threatened the energy industry in his home state.

In his 2012 book, “The Greatest Hoax: How the Global Warming Conspiracy Threatens Your Future,” Inhofe describes himself as a lonely crusader against an environmental-liberal conspiracy. “First I stood alone in saying that anthropogenic [manmade] catastrophic global warming is a hoax,” he wrote.

Shortly after becoming chairman of the committee in 2003, Inhofe took issue with the theory that increasing carbon dioxide emissions causes catastrophic disasters. “Actually,” he said, “global warming can be beneficial to mankind,” leading to improvements in the environment and the economy.

The book lays out his belief that the EPA needed to be constrained. Its regulations, he wrote, have long threatened the U.S. economy, a situation that has only grown more severe in recent years, as the Obama administration and its allies on the left perpetuate the myth of manmade climate change — and propose an executive branch initiative to address the problem.

“The Obama EPA is set to implement the most aggressive regulatory regime in history,” he wrote, criticizing the agency’s plan to regulate carbon emissions. “Global warming alarmists,” he wrote, “are set to destroy hundreds of thousands of jobs and significantly raise energy prices for families, businesses and farmers, basically anyone who drives a car, uses heavy machinery, or flips a switch.

Many Republicans, including the chairman of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, share his skepticism of the EPA and its plan to address carbon emissions, which became apparent in 2009. That year, the agency issued a finding that greenhouse gas emissions linked to global warming endanger the public’s health and welfare. Subsequently, the agency told industrial facilities — such as power plants and oil refineries that require permits to emit sulfur dioxide and nitrous oxide — to account for greenhouse gas emissions if they expand or add construction that significantly increases greenhouse gas pollution.

Republican lawmakers, with energy sector allies, argued that the rules would damage U.S. manufacturers’ ability to compete against companies operating in countries with less stringent standards.

Inhofe was among the most aggressive of the critics, warning that the U.S. economy would be placed at risk.

In addition to attacking the EPA regulatory scheme, he has been among the most outspoken critics of climate scientists, calling attention in 2010 to the disclosure of emails and documents at the Climate Research Unit at Britain’s East Anglia University that discussed the alleged twisting of some data and conclusions.

Inhofe has called for congressional action to limit EPA regulations on clean water, saying the agency exceeded its authority and tramples on the rights of states.

His reelection, and the arrival of several new Republicans, will increase the number of Senate critics of environmental regulation, including those who have been urging approval of the Keystone XL oil pipeline. For example, in Colorado, Republican Rep. Cory Gardner defeated Democratic Sen. Mark Udall, who had voted against the project.

Scott Segal, an energy lobbyist at Bracewell & Giuliani law firm in Washington, said of the potential committee assignment: “While activists are not happy about it, they have to admit that Senator Inhofe ran a fair committee with open hearings and respect for minority viewpoints... . Inhofe will put the administration through its paces. But he will do it with respect.”

Document 11

**Robinson: Trump will be in for climate change fight**

Dec 16, 2016

Eugene Robinson/Washington Post

WASHINGTON -- The incoming Trump administration will face passionate and hostile resistance if it tries to deny the reality of human-induced climate change. We can already hear the drums of war.

-- The Department of Energy flatly denied a demand from the Trump transition team to supply the names of employees or contractors who have participated in international climate change negotiations in the last five years. Also rejected was a request for names of staff who helped calculate the “social cost” of carbon emissions. The obvious concern is that these workers would be labeled as unreliable, and perhaps shoved aside, by political appointees determined to pretend that climate change does not exist.

-- Scientists have begun a frantic effort to archive decades’ worth of climate data, copying it onto servers that are beyond the U.S. government’s reach. The voluminous data sets, compiled by agencies including NASA and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, help form the basis for the consensus view that the atmosphere and the oceans are rapidly warming due to heat-trapping carbon dioxide emissions. There has been no threat from the Trump camp to do anything untoward regarding the data, but the researchers are taking no chances.

-- California Gov. Jerry Brown said Wednesday that if President-elect Donald Trump tries to impede his state’s vigorous efforts against climate change, “We’ve got the scientists, we’ve got the lawyers and we’re ready to fight. We’re ready to defend.” Speaking in San Francisco at a meeting of the American Geophysical Union, Brown warned that rumored budget cuts might end a NASA program that uses satellites to take measurements of the earth, including temperature. “If Trump turns off the satellites,” Brown declared, “California will launch its own damn satellite.”

All of this is just the beginning. Trump, who has repeatedly described climate change as a “hoax,” will try to reverse the Obama administration’s progress in limiting carbon emissions. Assuming he follows through, he’ll have a real fight on his hands.

At one of his strongman-style victory rallies this past Tuesday night, Trump said that “we will cancel the restrictions on the production of American energy, including shale, oil, natural gas, and clean, beautiful coal.”

Apparently, Trump never met a fossil fuel he didn’t like. And he has announced his intention to appoint the most prominent oil man he could find -- Rex Tillerson, chief executive of Exxon Mobil, the largest non-government oil company in the world -- as secretary of state.

Trump may renounce the historic Paris agreement, in which the world’s biggest carbon emitters -- China, the United States and India -- all pledged curbs. He can also eliminate regulations limiting carbon emissions by power plants; encourage more drilling for oil and natural gas; and try his best to revive the moribund coal mining industry, though its decline is due more to market forces than to anything the government has done.

These threatened actions come near the end of what will almost surely be the warmest year on record. Continuing what scientists see as an indisputable trend, 2016 was an absolute scorcher. And yes, I realize that right now it’s cold outside in much of the country; some scientists believe that rapid warming at the North Pole has destabilized air flow patterns and perhaps made these “polar vortex” cold snaps more common. In any event, the key measurement is the global temperature average, not the local wind chill.

Trump is being advised by a number of vocal climate-change deniers. The data that scientists are rushing to preserve clearly refutes those who say there is no warming -- hence the urgency to protect the information. Some deniers acknowledge the fact of warming but say it is due to some unfathomable natural cycle. But Occam’s razor argues persuasively for the simpler explanation: Since the Industrial Revolution, we have increased the atmosphere’s concentration of carbon dioxide -- known to trap heat -- by an incredible 40 percent.

Much of the rest of the world understands the need to move toward clean energy. The technology isn’t quite there yet, so some breakthroughs will be required. Smart government policy would be to invest in research to make it more likely that these advances are made in Berkeley rather than Bangalore or Beijing.

Dumb policy would be to fire up the smokestacks, stop collecting all that annoying climate data and marginalize federal employees who best understand global warming. This is the direction Trump appears to be headed.

The president-elect threatens to make the United States a second-rate player in the coming clean-energy economy. I guess that’s his idea of greatness, but it’s not mine.

Document 12

**Energy Department rejects Trump request for climate-change names**

**By Todd Shields and Jennifer A. Dlouhy / Bloomberg News**

Posted Dec 13, 2016 at 2:06 PM

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Energy Department rejected a request from President-elect Donald J. Trump’s transition team for the names of workers who played a role in implementing President Barack Obama’s climate agenda.

“We are going to respect the professional and scientific integrity and independence of our employees,” Energy Department spokesman Eben Burnham-Snyder said in an email Tuesday. “We will not be providing any individual names to the transition team.”

The transition team asked the agency to list employees and contractors who attended United Nations climate meetings, along with those who helped develop methods to estimate and justify the benefits of new rules, according to an internal document obtained by Bloomberg News.

Trump has questioned the science of climate change, and named to his transition team a number of people who either deny that man-made global warming is happening or are skeptical of the link between the burning of fossil fuels and the climate. Democrats and outside advocacy groups said the questions were an attempt to intimidate workers.

“Some of the questions asked left many in our workforce unsettled,” Burnham-Snyder said. The department would provide “publicly available information.”

Under Obama, the Energy Department played a major role advancing clean-energy technology through loan guarantees and incubators, while writing efficiency rules for appliances. The department leans heavily on tens of thousands of contractors, who supplement the work of its roughly 13,000 direct employees.

“It’s great that the Department of Energy is taking the independence of its employees seriously and will do what it can to protect their ability to do their jobs,” said Michael Halpern, deputy director of the Center for Science and Democracy at the Union of Concerned Scientists.

Thomas Pyle, who leads the energy-focused transition team for Trump, didn’t immediately respond to an emailed request for comment.

Trump has chosen Rick Perry, a former Texas governor, to lead the agency, according to four people familiar with the president-elect’s selection process. Perry, a former presidential candidate, once vowed to abolish the department but forgot its name during a debate. He’s at least the third Cabinet pick considered friendly to the oil industry.

*Distributed by Tribune Content Agency.*

Document 13

**John Kerry talks climate change but not Trump in Antarctica**

Nov 11, 2016

The Associated Press

MCMURDO STATION, Antarctica — U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry didn’t comment on President-elect Donald Trump’s election victory on Friday while visiting Antarctica, but did say that citizens who care about limiting emissions might have to march in the streets to push for more aggressive action.

Kerry became the highest-ranking American official to visit Antarctica when he landed for a two-day trip. He’s been hearing from scientists about the impact of climate change on the frozen continent.

Trump has called climate change a hoax and said he would “cancel” U.S. involvement in the landmark Paris Agreement on global warming.

“We need to get more of a movement going,” Kerry said when addressing several hundred scientists and staff at an evening event at McMurdo Station, the large base which is the hub for U.S. operations. “We need to get more people to engage.”

Kerry said there was a risk that much of Antarctica’s ice will eventually flow into the ocean, raising sea levels worldwide.

Despite the Paris agreement to cut the fossil-fuel emissions causing the planet to warm, “we haven’t won the battle yet,” Kerry said to the audience that included many young people involved in climate research.

Earlier, a planned visit to the South Pole was scrapped because of bad weather. Instead, Kerry and members of his entourage were taken on a helicopter tour of the McMurdo Dry Valleys, one of the few parts of Antarctica that are largely free of ice year-round.

Kerry left from New Zealand early Friday aboard a C-17 Globemaster military cargo plane after being held up for about a day by bad weather. An experienced pilot, Kerry spent much of the flight in the cockpit of the huge jet, chatting with the pilots.

After a smooth trip of about five hours, the group landed on the Pegasus Ice Runway, the strip of ice that serves McMurdo.

Kerry’s aides described the trip as a learning opportunity for the secretary of state. He has been receiving briefings from scientists working to understand the effects of climate change on Antarctica.

Kerry has made climate change an intensive focus of American diplomacy during his term, and had previously spent decades working on the issue as a U.S. senator.

He planned to return to New Zealand on Saturday for a meeting with Prime Minister John Key. Kerry plans to fly next week to the Middle East for talks, and then onward to a global climate conference in Morocco, where he will give a major speech.

Document 14

**Paris climate change deal becomes international law**

Nov 4, 2016

Michael Astor / The Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS — The Paris Agreement to combat climate change became international law on Friday — a landmark deal about tackling global warming amid growing fears that the world is becoming hotter even faster than scientists expected.

So far, 96 countries, accounting for just over two-thirds of the world’s greenhouse gas emissions, have formally joined the accord, which seeks to limit global warming to 3.6 degrees Fahrenheit. More countries are expected to come aboard in the coming weeks and months.

Secretary General Ban-Ki moon commemorated the event, talking with civil society groups at U.N. headquarters in New York to hear their concerns and visions for the future.

“Today we make history in humankind’s efforts to combat climate change,” Ban said before opening the meeting.

He praised the civil groups for mobilizing hundreds of millions of people to back fighting climate change, but warned the outcome remained uncertain.

“We are still in a race against time. We need to transition to a low-emissions and climate-resilient future,” Ban said. “Now is the time to strengthen global resolve, do what science demands and seize the opportunity to build a safer more sustainable world for all.”

Scientists praised the speed at which the agreement, signed by over 190 parties last December in Paris, has come into force, saying it underscores a new commitment by the international community to address the problem which is melting polar ice caps, sending sea levels rising and transforming vast swaths of arable land into desert.

But environmentalists say the agreement is just the first step of a much longer and complicated process of transitioning away from fossil fuels, which currently supply the bulk of the planet’s energy needs and also are the primary drivers of global warming.

Naomi Ages, climate liability project lead at Greenpeace, said that it was up to civil society groups to hold governments and corporations responsible.

“We know that existing fossil fuel projects will push us past 2 degrees, so we’re mobilizing around the world to keep it in the ground and stop development of new fossil fuel projects,” Ages said.

While the Paris agreement is legally binding, the emissions reductions that each country has committed to are not. Instead, the agreement seeks to create a transparent system that will allow the public to monitor how well each country is doing in meeting its goals in hopes that this will motivate them to transition more quickly to clean, renewable energy like wind, solar and hydropower.

The agreement also requires governments to develop climate action plans that will be periodically revised and replaced with new, even more ambitious, plans. Many of these details will begin to be addressed at the COP22 climate change meeting that begins next week in Marrakech, Morocco.

Document 15

**Google Cuts Ties With Conservative Group Over Climate-Change Stance**

Sep 24, 2014

NA

WASHINGTON — Google’s effort to build strong alliances with Republican politicians and conservative advocacy groups is paying dividends on Capitol Hill, but has created a growing marketing and public relations headache for the firm.

Climate-change activists have shown up at shareholder meetings demanding that executives explain how the firm can, in good conscience, support lawmakers who deny that global warming is a threat.

A fundraiser that the company held for Sen. James M. Inhofe, R-Okla., one of the most vocal climate-change skeptics in Congress, touched off a mini-rebellion among staff, along with unwelcome media attention.

And the Sierra Club and major unions, including the SEIU and the AFL-CIO, joined 50 other groups this month in demanding that Google end its membership in the American Legislative Exchange Council, a conservative network of state politicians that, among other projects, works to roll back laws that promote solar and wind power.

Google bowed to that demand Monday, announcing that it would sever ties with ALEC because of the group’s stand on climate change.

“The consensus within the company was that that was some sort of mistake,” Google Executive Chairman Eric Schmidt said of the decision to join the group.

“Everyone understands climate change is occurring, and the people who oppose it are really hurting our children and our grandchildren and making the world a much worse place. And so we should not be aligned with such people — they’re just, they’re just literally lying,” Schmidt said in an interview with NPR’s Diane Rehm on Monday.

Environmental activists praised the decision but said they would continue to press Google to change other aspects of its political strategy.

The company is “going in the right direction” by abandoning ALEC, “but it is still funding the campaigns of climate deniers in Congress and on K Street,” said Brant Olson, campaign director for Forecast the Facts, an activist group that had played a major role in organizing the anti-ALEC campaign. “It is still shooting itself in the foot in terms of its climate goals.”

Lisa Nelson, ALEC’s chief executive, attributed Google’s move to “public pressure from left-leaning individuals and organizations who intentionally confuse free-market policy perspectives for climate-change denial.”

Microsoft, which had come under similar pressure, recently abandoned its ALEC membership.

Like other firms in the tech industry, Google in recent years has become more active in trying to lobby Washington. At a time when the GOP controls the House and may soon control the Senate, the firm is looking to build as many relationships as possible with prominent conservatives.

But playing both sides of the street and hedging political bets fit badly with the Mountain View, Calif., company’s carefully honed public image. Google has increasingly found it hard to reconcile its progressive Bay Area corporate persona with hundreds of thousands of dollars in campaign contributions to people and causes the progressive base detests.

Google’s politics are complicated. The company receives accolades from green activists for $1.5 billion it has invested in clean-energy technology. It bankrolls some of the most ambitious solar projects on the planet. The company’s passions for creativity, innovation and free expression play well with liberals.

But the tech behemoth’s agenda in Washington is broad. Many of the issues on which it lobbies, including patent reform, digital privacy and net neutrality, do not fall neatly along partisan lines. As Google cultivates Republican allies on such issues, the progressive blowback intensifies.

“We should not be electing climate deniers into office, and we should not be supporting them in the marketplace,” said Michael Brune, executive director of the Sierra Club.

“Et tu Google?” was a headline on a report published this month by Forecast the Facts and the Sum of Us, two networks of liberal activists that boast a combined membership of more than 5.2 million.

The groups challenged Google’s nearly $700,000 in cumulative corporate and employee donations to lawmakers who have publicly doubted the threat of climate change.

The list of climate skeptics was compiled by another liberal advocacy group, the Washington-based Center for American Progress, which has close ties to the Obama administration. The center, ironically, gets funding from Google.

The latest pressure came after 17 of Google’s own science fellows, outraged by the Inhofe fundraiser, questioned the company’s moral leadership in a letter last year to its top executives.

Anger over the ALEC ties had prompted several activists to journey to Google’s shareholder meeting in May, including Jim Wilke, owner of a rooftop solar business in Oklahoma. He says ALEC-inspired legislation passed in his state is undermining the rooftop solar industry there.

“You continue to fund a group that is actively and successfully destroying renewable-energy markets,” he said at the meeting.

David Drummond, Google’s chief legal officer, thanked Wilke for raising the issue, noting that he was not the first to do so.

“We’ll continue to review it,” Drummond said at the time.

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*Distributed by MCT Information Services*

Document 16

**Reports: Climate change ‘significant and direct’ threat to U.S. military**

Sep 14, 2016

Idrees Ali / Reuters

WASHINGTON — The effects of climate change endanger U.S. military operations and could increase the danger of international conflict, according to three new documents endorsed by retired top U.S. military officers and former national security officials.

“There are few easy answers, but one thing is clear: the current trajectory of climatic change presents a strategically-significant risk to U.S. national security, and inaction is not a viable option,” said a statement published on Wednesday by the Center for Climate and Security, a Washington-based think tank.

It was signed by more than a dozen former senior military and national security officials, including retired General Anthony Zinni, former commander of the U.S. Central Command, and retired Admiral Samuel Locklear, head of the Pacific Command until last year.

They called on the next U.S. president to create a cabinet level position to deal with climate change and its impact on national security.

A separate report by a panel of retired military officials, also published on Wednesday by the Center for Climate and Security, said more frequent extreme weather is a threat to U.S. coastal military installations.

“The complex relationship between sea level rise, storm surge and global readiness and responsiveness must be explored down to the operational level, across the Services and Joint forces, and up to a strategic level as well,” the report said.

Earlier this year, another report said faster sea level rises in the second half of this century could make tidal flooding a daily occurrence for some installations.

Francesco Femia, co-founder and president of the Center for Climate and Security, said the reports show bipartisan national security and military officials think the existing U.S. response to climate change “is not commensurate to the threat”.

The fact that a large and bipartisan number of former officials signed the reports could increase pressure on future U.S. administrations to place greater emphasis and dedicate more resources to combat climate change.

Addressing climate change has not been a top priority in a 2016 campaign dominated by the U.S. economy, trade and foreign policy.

Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump has said that global warming is a concept “created by the and for the Chinese” to hurt U.S. business.

Democrat Hillary Clinton, meanwhile, has advocated shifting the country to 50 percent clean energy by 2030 and promised heavy regulation of fracking.

Document 17

**Village in Alaska votes to relocate due to climate change**

Aug 18, 2016

Sebastien Malo / Thomson Reuters Foundation

NEW YORK — A Native American village in the U.S. state of Alaska has voted to relocate its entire population of some 600 people due to the threat of rising seas, officials said on Thursday.

Shishmaref, located on a tiny island north of the Bering Strait that separates the United States and Russia, is losing up to 10 feet of shoreline each year, according to research by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Alabama-based Auburn University.

Shishmaref is one of dozens of indigenous villages in Alaska that face growing threats of flooding and erosion due to global warming, according to a report by the U.S. Government Accountability Office.

Shishmaref residents, who are members of the Inupiat tribe, voted 89 to 78 to relocate, said Donna Barr, secretary of the Shishmaref Council. Voting took place earlier this week, but the official count has not yet been formally certified and a handful of absentee ballots remain unopened.

This is not the first time Shishmaref residents have made such a decision. They voted in 2002 to relocate but that effort stalled.

A few other U.S. communities in Alaska, Washington and Louisiana have decided recently to relocate as well due to climate change and shoreline erosion, according to the Washington, D.C.-based Arctic Institute.

Several others are likely weighing options to move, said Christina DeConcini, a spokeswoman for the Washington, D.C.-based World Resources Institute.

“It’s not going to be the last time that the United States has to deal with communities severely threatened by climate change and impacts and whether or not they can stay there,” she said.

In Shishmaref, Tommy Richter, pastor of the Lutheran Church, the island’s only church, said the community was torn over leaving its heritage behind.

“There are people here who have been here for generations and don’t want to leave at all,” he told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

The cost of relocation has been estimated at some $180 million, and authorities are seeking state and federal funding, according to local media.

Where to relocate remains to be decided, the clerk said. Two vacant sites on the mainland are being considered.

Relocation could take more than ten years, according to a private feasibility study conducted for Shishmaref and published in February.

The island, which is seven square miles, lies five miles off the mainland. Its economy is based largely on fishing and hunting.

Scientists attribute coastal erosion in Shishmaref to global warming that has thawed sea ice that once shielded the island from storm surges. Its permafrost, the layer of permanently frozen soil on which it is built, is melting as well.

The village already has moved several homes and a National Guard Armory away from its coastline and built sea walls that have had limited success, according to Alaska authorities.

In March, the U.S. Department of the Interior announced $6.5 million in funding to help Native American communities find ways to deal with climate change.

Since 2014, more than 140 tribes and tribal organizations have gotten government funding to help address the impacts of global warming, it said.

Document 18

**White House directs federal agencies to consider climate change impacts**

Aug 2, 2016

Reuters

WASHINGTON -- U.S. federal agencies will be required to disclose whether their actions and decisions will have an impact on climate change, the White House announced Tuesday.

The White House Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) finalized an update after nearly six years of consultations of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), a Nixon-era statute that called on officials to weigh the environmental effects of projects such as highways, dams or oil drilling.

The update takes NEPA a step further by requiring agencies such as the Interior Department to the Army Corps of Engineers to quantify greenhouse gas emissions in NEPA project reviews and to describe the potential climate change impacts.

“This increased predictability and certainty will allow decision makers and the public to more fully understand the potential climate impacts of all proposed federal actions,” the CEQ said in a statement.

This would prompt agencies to consider alternatives or propose measures to mitigate the climate impacts of a project, it said.

Since the CEQ first proposed to modify NEPA in 2010 to include weighing climate change impacts, Republican lawmakers have discouraged the move saying it would be a way for the Obama administration to regulate carbon emissions without congressional approval.

President Barack Obama has used executive authority to use the federal Clean Air Act to regulate greenhouse gas emissions from power plants, oil and gas infrastructure and energy development on public lands.

Rhea Suh, president of the Natural Resources Defense Council, said the CEQ’s announcement is “a game-changer” that would ensure that federal agencies do not “approve mines that will destroy the climate, or bridges that will get washed away.”

Conservation group The Wilderness Society said the CEQ guidance will ensure that decisions about whether to allow energy exploration or development on federal land do not contribute to climate change.

“Federal land management agencies should implement this guidance without delay, and use cutting-edge science to make climate-smart decisions,” the group said.

Document 19

**Study: Global cloud coverage shifting in ominous sign of climate change**

Jul 12, 2016

NA

NEW YORK -- When politicians talk of climate “uncertainty,” they’re often casting doubt on things that are well understood: Warming is happening, and humans are responsible.

When scientists talk about climate uncertainty, they’re usually talking about the clouds.

Clouds are tricky because they do two things at once. All that puffy whiteness blocks solar energy from reaching the ground, bouncing it back to space, which provides a net cooling effect. But clouds also act like a blanket, capping and trapping heat in the lower troposphere, which is where people who aren’t on the International Space Station live. That ambiguity makes it difficult to simulate with desirable precision how much and how fast the planet is warming, leaving a big mystery floating lazily over our heads.

Some of that uncertainty was lifted Monday, and the news isn’t good. A new study in Nature analyzes almost 30 years of weather observations to show that clouds and cloudiness are changing in the way scientists would expect in a warming world. Continental storm tracks -- think jet stream -- are shifting poleward, leaving populous subtropical latitudes uncovered. And the clouds that are forming more often aren’t the low-lying, reflective ones that cool the planet -- they’re the huge cottony anvils that rise high in the sky, trapping more heat.

“Cloud changes most consistently predicted by global climate models are currently occurring in nature,” the authors write. “As cloud tops rise, their greenhouse effect becomes stronger.”

Also, as the poleward shift continues, heat from the tropics expands further away from the equator, an unsettling development for already arid cities in places like the U.S. southwest. Less light is reflected away from the hot middle of the Earth, and increased cloud cover toward the poles creates a thickening blanket that warms the world.

A couple of things make clouds such a conundrum to climate scientists. They form through processes too small to observe, and their layering blocks satellite views of lower clouds and ground views of higher clouds. Satellite coverage goes back only to the late 1970s, with technologies designed for weather monitoring. The new study corrects the weather record to make sense for climate analysis.

“We don’t have a climate monitoring system,” said Joel Norris, a climatologist at Scripps Institution of Oceanography and the lead author of the new paper. “It’s hard to sustain a long-term climate monitoring program.” Political priorities change, budgets drop, technology evolves, and climate scientists are left having to extract consistent, long-term data from measurements taken without the long term in mind.

The corrected data should help improve their confidence in cloud studies, which currently isn’t very high.

The 2013 science overview put out by the authoritative Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change concluded that although independent sets of cloud observations are similar, “substantial ambiguity and therefore low confidence (remain) in the observations of global-scale cloud variability and trends.”

“This is an exciting and comprehensive study,” said Kate Marvel, a scientist at NASA’s Goddard Institute for Space Studies. “But other studies have found that these things are happening, and this work provides more evidence of these effects.”

Next up for the study’s authors is to untangle further how natural events, such as volcanoes, and greenhouse-led warming contribute to the cloud changes. Ultimately, greater understanding of how clouds behave will help strengthen projections of the rate and trajectory of global warming.

*Distributed by Tribune Content Agency.*

Document 20

**White House Announces New Climate Change Data Website**

Mar 19, 2014

NA

WASHINGTON — As part of its campaign to step up efforts to address climate change, the White House on Wednesday announced the creation of a new website to serve as a one-stop location for the enormous amount of climate data housed at different federal agencies.

The initiative to make the information more accessible to communities, researchers and industries trying to adapt to global warming is the latest move by the White House to deliver on a pledge that President Barack Obama made last June to use his executive authority to address the causes and effects of climate change in light of congressional inaction on the issue.

In the administration’s most high-profile effort, the Environmental Protection Agency in September proposed rules to cut greenhouse gas emissions from new power plants.

NASA and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration are spearheading the new Climate Data Initiative, the White House said in a statement. The beta version of climate.data.gov will provide data sets of sea-level rise and coastal flooding. The White House also said the site would eventually provide information about the effects of climate change on the food supply, public health and energy sources.

The initiative also includes projects being launched in the private sector to provide the data about climate change through apps, “cloud” computing and Web tools.

“By taking the enormous data sets regularly collected by NASA, NOAA, and other agencies and applying the ingenuity, creativity, and expertise of technologists and entrepreneurs, the Climate Data Initiative will help create easy-to-use tools for regional planners, farmers, hospitals, and businesses across the country — and empower America’s communities to prepare themselves for the future,” John Podesta, a counselor to the president, and John P. Holdren, director of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy, said in a joint statement.

Over the last few weeks, the White House has rolled out climate change initiatives at a rapid clip. In February, the administration created so-called climate hubs under the Agriculture Department to connect farmers and ranchers with universities, industry groups and federal agencies to help prepare for disasters worsened by climate change, such as wildfires, pests, flooding and drought.

Obama has also directed the Environmental Protection Agency and the Transportation Department to develop a new generation of tougher fuel economy standards for heavy-duty long-haul trucks. The draft rules are due by March 2015 and the final version a year later.

The president also plans to ask Congress for $1 billion in his 2015 budget to establish a “climate resiliency fund” that would finance research, preparation and infrastructure to adapt to extreme weather driven by global warming.

NOAA, NASA and other federal agencies provide detailed regular reports about long-term climate trends. NOAA routinely distributes short-term seasonal reports for the country that focus on the outlook for extreme weather events. The Climate Data Initiative aims to host the information in one place where it could be used to create long-term outlooks for towns or regions about the potential effects of climate change, such as the estimates for sea level rises that could affect coastal construction.

The White House also announced more than a dozen private sector initiatives that would try to build tools and create new ways to disseminate the data. Google, for instance, is working with the Desert Research Institute, the University of Idaho and the University of Nebraska “to provide drought mapping and monitoring for the entire continental United States in near real-time.”

The nonprofit Climate Central, which reports on climate change, will offer a free Web tool that would provide “local projections, maps, and assessments of exposure to sea level rise and coastal flooding tabulated for every coastal ZIP Code, municipality, county, and state in the U.S.” The assessments would “cover more than 100 demographic, economic, infrastructure and environmental variables using data drawn mainly from federal sources.”

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*Distributed by MCT Information Services.*

Document 21

**Trump resists releasing taxes, turns to climate change skeptic**

May 13, 2016

NA

WASHINGTON -- Donald Trump on Friday pushed back against renewed calls that the presumptive Republican presidential nominee release his income tax returns before the election, and picked a prominent climate change skeptic to help him formulate his energy policy.

American presidential candidates have voluntarily released their tax returns for decades. Democratic presidential front-runner Hillary Clinton and her rival, Senator Bernie Sanders of Vermont, have both released their returns.

Trump, who has all but locked up the Republican Party’s nomination for the Nov. 8 presidential election, has said the Internal Revenue Service was auditing his returns and he wanted to wait until the review was over before making them public.

“It should be, and I hope it’s before the election,” Trump told ABC’s “Good Morning America.”

Trump is building out his policy proposals as he pivots to the general election, including tapping experts in various fields.

Among those he has asked for help is U.S. Republican Representative Kevin Cramer of North Dakota, one of the country’s most ardent oil and gas drilling advocates and climate change skeptics.

North Dakota has been at the forefront of the U.S. shale oil and gas boom. Cramer endorsed Trump earlier this year.

Trump has asked Cramer to write a white paper, or detailed report, on energy policy, according to Cramer and sources familiar with the matter told Reuters.

Cramer was also among a group of Trump advisers who recently met with lawmakers from Western energy states, who hope Trump will open more federal land for drilling, a lawmaker who took part in the meeting said.

Cramer said in an interview that his paper would emphasize the dangers of foreign ownership of U.S. energy assets, burdensome taxes, and over-regulation. Trump will have an opportunity to float some of the ideas at an energy summit in Bismarck, North Dakota on May 26, Cramer said.

A spokeswoman for Trump’s campaign did not comment.

Trump has been light on details of his energy policy so far, though he recently told supporters in West Virginia that the coal industry would thrive if he were president. He has also claimed global warming is a concept “created by and for the Chinese” to hurt U.S. business.

Clinton has advocated shifting the country to 50 percent clean energy by 2030, promised heavy regulation of fracking, and said her prospective administration would put coal companies “out of business.”

But the ins and outs of campaigning continue to be a major topic with Trump, who has never held elected office.

On Friday, the billionaire real estate developer, who has often boasted of his wealth, was asked why he had been willing in the past to release his tax information to Pennsylvania and New Jersey officials when seeking casino licenses, even though he was being audited by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS).

“At the time it didn’t make any difference to me. Now it does,” Trump said.

Pressed on what tax rate he pays, Trump refused to say. “It’s none of your business,” he said.

“Before 1976, people didn’t do it,” he added. “It used to be a secret thing.” Trump has said there is nothing voters can learn from his tax filings.

The IRS declined to comment on whether he or any other presidential candidates were being audited.

However, the Trump campaign earlier this year released a letter from his attorneys saying his personal tax returns have been under “continuous examination” from the IRS.

This week, Clinton began calling on her probable Republican rival to release his returns, as she has. Last August, the former U.S. secretary of state posted the past eight years of tax returns for her and her husband, former President Bill Clinton, on her website.

Sanders released his 2014 return in April.

Presidential candidates have a long history in the modern era of releasing their tax returns.

“In 1976, Gerald Ford did not release his returns, but he did release some information about his taxes,” said Joseph Thorndike, director of the Tax History Project at Tax Analysts, a nonprofit, nonpartisan group that provides tax news and analysis.

“That was the last time that a major party nominee hasn’t done it,” he said.

Tax filings show sources of income, both from within the United States and other countries, as well as charitable giving, investments, deductions and other financial information.

Trump said his company was “clean.”

“I don’t have Swiss bank accounts, I don’t have offshore accounts,” he said.

Document 22

**A campaign to criminalize debate about climate science**

Apr 24, 2016

GEORGE WILL

WASHINGTON -- Authoritarianism, always latent in progressivism, is becoming explicit. Progressivism’s determination to regulate thought by regulating speech is apparent in the campaign by 20 state attorneys general, none Republican, to criminalize skepticism about the supposedly “settled” conclusions of climate science. Four core tenets of progressivism are: First, history has a destination. Second, progressives uniquely discern it. (Barack Obama frequently declares things to be on or opposed to “the right side of history.”) Third, politics should be democratic but peripheral to governance, which is the responsibility of experts scientifically administering the regulatory state. Fourth, enlightened progressives should enforce limits on speech (witness IRS suppression of conservative advocacy groups) in order to prevent thinking unhelpful to history’s progressive unfolding. Progressivism is already enforced on campuses by restrictions on speech that might produce what progressives consider retrograde intellectual diversity. Now, from the so-called party of science, aka Democrats, comes a campaign to criminalize debate about science. “The debate is settled,” says Obama. “Climate change is a fact.” Indeed. The epithet “climate change deniers,” obviously coined to stigmatize skeptics as akin to Holocaust deniers, is designed to obscure something obvious: *Of course* the climate is changing; it never is not changing -- neither before nor after the Medieval Warm Period (end of the 9th century to the 13th) and the Little Ice Age (1640s to 1690s), neither of which was caused by fossil fuels. Today, debatable questions include: To what extent is human activity contributing to climate change? Are climate change models, many of which have generated projections refuted by events, suddenly reliable enough to predict the trajectory of change? Is change necessarily ominous because today’s climate is necessarily optimum? Are the costs, in money expended and freedom curtailed, of combating climate change less than the cost of adapting to it? But these questions may not forever be debatable. The initial target of Democratic “scientific” silencers is ExxonMobil, which they hope to demonstrate misled investors and the public about climate change. There is, however, no limiting principle to restrain unprincipled people from punishing research entities, advocacy groups and individuals. But it is difficult to establish what constitutes culpable “misleading” about climate science, of which a 2001 National Academy of Sciences report says: “Because there is considerable uncertainty in current understanding of how the climate system varies naturally and reacts to emissions of greenhouse gases and aerosols, current estimates of the magnitude of future warming should be regarded as tentative and subject to future adjustments (either upward or downward).” Did Al Gore “mislead” when he said seven years ago that computer modeling projected the Arctic to be ice-free during the summer in as few as five years? A 21st attorney general, of the Virgin Islands (where ExxonMobil has no business operations or assets), accuses the company with criminal misrepresentation regarding climate change. This, even though before the U.S. government in 2009 first issued an endangerment finding regarding greenhouse gases, ExxonMobil favored a carbon tax to mitigate climate consequences of those gases. This grandstanding attorney general’s contribution to today’s gangster government is the use of law enforcement tools to pursue political goals -- wielding prosecutorial weapons to chill debate, including subpoenaing private donor information from the Competitive Enterprise Institute, a Washington think tank. The party of science, busy protecting science from scrutiny, has forgotten Karl Popper (1902-1994), the philosopher whose “The Open Society and Its Enemies” warned against people incapable of distinguishing between certainty and certitude. In his essay “Science as Falsification,” Popper explains why “the criterion of a scientific status of a theory is its falsifiability, or refutability, or testability.” America’s party of science seems eager to insulate its scientific theories from the possibility of refutation. The leader of the attorneys general, New York’s Eric Schneiderman, dismisses those who disagree with him as “morally vacant.” His moral content is apparent in his campaign to ban fantasy sports gambling because it competes with the gambling (state lottery, casinos, off-track betting) that enriches his government. Then there is Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse, D-R.I., who suggests using the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act, written to fight organized crime, to criminalize what he calls the fossil fuel industry’s “climate denial apparatus.” The Justice Department, which has abetted the IRS cover-up of its criminal activity, has referred this idea to the FBI. These garden-variety authoritarians are eager to regulate us into conformity with the “settled” consensus du jour, whatever it is. But they are progressives, so it is for our own good. *George Will’s email address is [georgewill@washpost.com](mailto:georgewill@washpost.com).*

Document 23

**Probe of Exxon climate change disclosures expands**

Mar 29, 2016

NA

WASHINGTON — The attorneys general of Massachusetts and the U.S. Virgin Islands said on Tuesday they will investigate whether Exxon Mobil Corp. misled investors and the public about the risks of climate change, joining counterparts in New York and California.

The announcements come just a few months after New York Attorney General Eric Schneiderman subpoenaed Exxon to demand extensive financial records and emails in connection with its climate change disclosures.

California Attorney General Kamala Harris followed suit in January, when she confirmed she was also investigating Exxon over the issue.

Exxon Mobil did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Massachusetts’ and the Virgin Islands’ top attorneys joined Schneiderman in New York to announce they will collaborate with 15 other attorneys general on investigations of whether fossil fuel companies have misled investors on climate change risks, as well as other climate-related initiatives.

Massachusetts Attorney General Maura Healey said fossil fuel companies that have deceived investors about the risk climate change poses to the planet and to their bottom line “must be held accountable.”

Virgin Islands Attorney General Claude Earl Walker said he wants to ensure there is transparency so consumers can make informed choices about what they purchase.

“If Exxon Mobil has tried to cloud their judgment, we are determined to hold the company accountable,” he said.

The attorneys general are also members of a coalition of over 20 states that have filed an amicus brief in support of the Environmental Protection Agency’s Clean Power Plan, a rule to crack down on carbon emissions that has been challenged by industry and 25 states in a federal appeals court.

The probes of Exxon were triggered by investigative reports last year by Inside Climate News and the Los Angeles Times that showed the company’s in-house scientists had flagged concerns about climate change decades ago, which the company ignored or contradicted.

Investors also have started to target Exxon over the climate issue. Last week, the Securities and Exchange Commission ruled that Exxon must include a climate change resolution on its annual shareholder proxy.

The Rockefeller Family Fund said last week it will divest from fossil fuels as quickly as possible and “eliminate holdings” of Exxon.

Former U.S. Vice President Al Gore, an active climate policy advocate, joined the attorneys general at the announcement, calling it a “turning point” in a broader effort to hold fossil fuel companies to account for their efforts to slow the response to climate change.

Gore compared fossil fuel companies’ failure to disclose or downplaying the risks of climate change to the tobacco industry’s efforts to promote smoking in spite of health warnings.

The Massachusetts and Virgin Islands attorneys general did not elaborate on what legal tools they will rely on to guide their investigations of Exxon.

However, legal experts have said that states generally have a few options at their disposal, including various consumer protection laws and “blue sky” securities laws.

The New York probe, for instance, is hinging on the state’s powerful Martin Act, an anti-fraud law, as well as its consumer protection statutes.

Some experts say the issues at the heart of the Exxon probes could potentially trigger federal racketeering and organized crime (RICO) laws that were used by the Justice Department in its landmark case against the big tobacco companies.

Document 24

**Rockefeller Family Fund Hits Exxon On Climate Change, Divests From Fossil Fuels**

Mar 23, 2016

NA

HOUSTON/NEW YORK — The Rockefeller Family Fund said on Wednesday it will divest from fossil fuels as quickly as possible and “eliminate holdings” of Exxon Mobil Corp., saying the oil company associated with the family fortune has misled the public about climate change risks.

The U.S.-based charity will also divest its coal and Canadian oil sands holdings. Though the endowment has a modest $130 million in total assets, the move is notable because a century ago John D. Rockefeller Sr. made a fortune running Standard Oil, a precursor to Exxon Mobil.

Given the threat posed to the survival of human and natural ecosystems, “there is no sane rationale for companies to continue to explore for new sources of hydrocarbons,” the fund said.

Exxon did not immediately comment. Many oil industry leaders have argued that millions of people in the developing world would be condemned to darkness and poverty if society halted the burning of fossil fuels anytime in the next several decades, before there is an ample supply of cleaner energy sources.

Shares of Exxon were down 0.47 percent at $83.74 each on a day when oil prices were slipping and U.S. stock indexes were also down slightly.

The Rockefeller fund did not detail the size of its fossil fuel holdings or holdings of Exxon stock.

In a letter posted on its website, the Rockefeller Family Fund said Exxon’s conduct on climate issues appears to be “morally reprehensible.”

In November, New York State Attorney General Eric Schneiderman launched an investigation into whether Exxon misled the public and shareholders about the risks of climate change.

At the time, the company said it has included information about the business risk of climate change for many years in its quarterly filings, corporate citizenship report and in other reports to shareholders.

Exxon Chief Executive Officer Rex Tillerson has openly talked about the reality of climate change. The company has said it has constructively contributed to climate research for years.

As early as 2008, members of the Rockefeller family called on Exxon to make governance changes and increase spending on alternative fuels.

In late 2014, another fund associated with the family, the Rockefeller Brothers Fund (RBF), and several other philanthropies and non-governmental organizations said they would divest from fossil fuel-related investments.

Document 25

**USDA Chief Says Climate Change Already Hurting Farmers**

Feb 5, 2014

NA

WASHINGTON — Climate change is already hurting American farmers and rural residents, Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack said Wednesday, warning that the U.S. would regret any failure to adapt and prepare for shifting weather realities.

Unveiling a new effort to coordinate the government’s response, Vilsack said extreme weather events have already taken the U.S. by surprise, putting ranchers and others out of business. He pointed to the intensity and frequency of recent storms, long droughts, snowstorms and subzero weather as evidence that climate change is no longer hypothetical or in the future.

“The combination of all those factors convinces me that the climate is changing, and it’s going to have its impact, and will have its impact, and is having its impact on agriculture and forestry,” Vilsack said.

Pine bark beetle that in years past were killed off during harsh winters have now infected about 45 million trees in western states, leading to more severe forest fires, posing flood risks and threatening the timber industry, Vilsack said. In the absence of adequate forecasting and disaster assistance, he said, an October snowstorm wiped out entire cattle operations in the Dakotas.

“When that snowstorm hit, it didn’t wipe out just a few animals. It wiped out the entire operation,” Vilsack said. “Nobody anticipated and expected that severe a storm, that early.”

To that end, the Obama administration said seven new “climate hubs” will open in regions across the U.S., acting as clearinghouses for data and research about effects of climate change. Based out of existing Agriculture Department facilities, the hubs will assess local climate risks, such as drought and wildfire, then develop plans for dealing with them, such as improved irrigation techniques.

The goal is to synchronize the federal government’s preparation and resources with what other entities, such as universities, tribal communities and state governments, are doing to prepare for shifting temperatures.

“It’s taking existing avenues, research service or forest service, and charging them with a new responsibility to basically take a look at precisely what risks are currently being recognized and what’s the vulnerability to agriculture and to forestry in each region of the country,” Vilsack said.

Vilsack disclosed the locations for the new hubs, which were announced last year and included in Obama’s broader climate change plan. The seven regional hubs will be housed in forest service stations or government research labs in Ames, Iowa; Durham, N.H.; Raleigh, N.C.; Fort Collins, Colo.; El Reno, Okla.; Corvallis, Ore.; and Las Cruces, N.M. Three smaller “sub-hubs” will be created in Houghton, Mich.; Davis, Calif.; and Rio Piedras, Puerto Rico.

Document 26

**Why Climate Change Is Really, Really Unfair**

Feb 5, 2016

NA

With his 2015 encyclical “Laudato Si,” Pope Frances went further than perhaps anyone has before to reframe the entire debate around climate change by focusing on the world’s poor and the duty to protect them from environmental harms that they did not cause themselves.

Now, new research in the journal Scientific Reports has underscored the pope’s message by showing that when it comes to climate change, it is indeed the countries with the most to lose that tend to contribute to the problem least — and also the other way round. The countries that contribute most to the problem — such as China and the United States, the current top two emitters — tend to show less relative vulnerability to the impact compared with nations that have quite low levels of emissions, the research finds.

“The general rule is, at a global scale, if you’re a nation that is going to suffer from climate change, you’re very likely not contributing to the problem,” says James Watson, a professor in the school of geography at the University of Queensland in Australia who also works with the Wildlife Conservation Society on climate change. Watson conducted the study with two colleagues from the University of Queensland.

“That’s the general rule that we found,” Watson continues. “But it’s completely inequitable.”

Many have observed this — including small island nations, which successfully lobbied to have the extra-protective climate target of 1.5 degrees Celsius included in the Paris climate agreement in December — but the new research has done something else: quantified it.

To do so, Watson and his colleagues compared two datasets. The first is a dataset kept by the World Resources Institute of the present-day emissions of countries around the world. Clearly, the relative contributions to the problem are quite unbalanced. The study notes that just 10 countries currently contribute more than 60 percent of all emissions, and a single one, China, contributes more than 20 percent (or did in 2010, which was the year used for the study).

The second dataset is a “Climate Vulnerability Monitor” kept by the humanitarian group DARA, which ranks countries according to vulnerability based on measures such as exposure to sea-level rise and drought, health hazards, risks of extremes or disasters, and more. Here, 17 countries were rated as “acutely vulnerable,” and they tended to be either island nations such as Vanuatu or African nations such as Gambia.

And the result? Sure enough, the research found — based on 2010 emissions and 2010 vulnerability levels — widespread inequity. The study noted, “20 of the 36 highest emitting countries are among the least vulnerable to negative impacts of future climate change... . Conversely, 11 of the 17 countries with low or moderate GHG emissions, are acutely vulnerable to negative impacts of climate change.”

The research also looked toward the future, when the number of climate-vulnerable countries grows as climate change itself becomes worse. In 2030, there are expected to be 62 “acutely” vulnerable countries, rather than 17. Again, small island nations and African nations lead the way. And inequity, the study found, is expected to be even worse.

Climate equity concerns were a key factor in the decision in Paris late last year to include the 1.5 degrees Celsius temperature target in a historic climate accord. The idea of limiting warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels has long been championed by small island nations, as well as a growing body of climate-vulnerable nations, and for understandable reasons; it limits their impacts.

However, it is generally agreed upon that the world is well off course if we want to hold warming below 1.5 degrees Celsius. (We are currently at about 1 degree warmer than the late 19th century.) Indeed, many scientists say it won’t be possible without overshooting the goal and then coming back down again thanks to future technologies that will be capable of removing carbon dioxide from the air on a vast scale.

Granted, although the effects of climate change may be very disproportionate, it’s also becoming clear that the major emitters are also going to see their share of problems. Recent research, for instance, points to a major warming of waters off the U.S. East Coast that could have large implications for fisheries, storms, and sea-level rise.

So it’s not that the major emitters won’t suffer any impacts — but that those impacts aren’t likely to be distributed across the globe in proportion to emissions. Watson likens the current research on climate inequity to prior findings about secondhand smoke: “The people suffering from the impacts of smoking aren’t the smokers themselves, it’s the people next door,” he says.

Document 27

**Letter: Climate Change Facts Not New**

Nov 5, 2015

NA

On the Oct. 24 opinion page, there was an editorial from the Dallas Morning News about Exxon scientists, in 1977, expressing concerns about carbon emissions affecting the Earth’s climate, research that was, for Exxon’s convenience, kept “under it’s hat.” The point of the editorial, besides that Big Oil chose to ignore the data, was that concerns about man-made climate change are nothing new.

On the Oct. 24 opinion page, there was an editorial from the Dallas Morning News about Exxon scientists, in 1977, expressing concerns about carbon emissions affecting the Earth’s climate, research that was, for Exxon’s convenience, kept “under it’s hat.” The point of the editorial, besides that Big Oil chose to ignore the data, was that concerns about man-made climate change are nothing new.

It is, in fact, even less new than the 1970s. Way back in February 1861, John Tyndall of Ireland delivered an address at Britain’s scientific Royal Society expressing the same concerns. Tyndall’s experiments showed that carbon dioxide in the atmosphere absorbed heat, as from sunlight, over 100 times more than oxygen and nitrogen (the primary components of a “normal” atmosphere). The implications were clear. The more carbon dioxide in the skies, the warmer would be the air.

As has been said, facts is facts. Other normal cyclical changes may be in play, but whether you are an oil company executive, a politician with voters in a nearby oil producing state, or the average man on the street, to ignore the facts of this human push toward warming with a head-in-the-sand mentality is not showing intelligent understanding. Agreeing there is a problem is the first step toward solving it.

Doug Kelley

Pocola

Document 28

**Pope Calls On U.S. To Fight Climate Change**

Sep 23, 2015

NA

WASHINGTON, Sept 23 (Reuters) — Pope Francis on Wednesday urged the United States to help tackle climate change and called on Americans to build a truly tolerant and inclusive society, as he struck a political tone on his first visit to the world’s richest nation.

In a speech on the White House South Lawn, the Argentine pontiff lauded President Barack Obama’s efforts to reduce air pollution, months after Francis made the environment one of his top issues by issuing a landmark “encyclical” letter.

“It seems clear to me also that climate change is a problem which can no longer be left to a future generation. When it comes to the care of our common home, we are living at a critical moment of history,” the pope said at a welcoming ceremony.

Apart from the environment, Francis touched on several issues on the U.S. political agenda in the run up to the November 2016 presidential election, such as immigration, inequality and religious freedom.

In an era of renewed racial tensions in the country, he invoked America’s best known civil rights leader, the late Rev. Martin Luther King, to make points about the environment and equality.

As Washington streets were closed and federal workers stayed home, about 15,000 people gathered in bright sunshine on the South Lawn. They heard the 78-year-old pope depart from his usual practice and give a speech in English.

He again made a gesture of simplicity, pulling up beside the South Lawn in the small black Fiat car he used for his arrival in the U.S. capital on Tuesday.

Francis is a frequent critic of the damage caused to the world’s poor and the environment by capitalism’s excesses.

Obama, whose plans for a climate change bill were thwarted in Congress early in his presidency, said he shared the pope’s concerns about the environment.

“Holy Father, you remind us that we have a sacred obligation to protect our planet - God’s magnificent gift to us. We support your call to all world leaders to support the communities most vulnerable to a changing climate and to come together to preserve our precious world for future generations,” Obama said.

Francis and Obama headed into the White House for talks. Both men see eye-to-eye on climate change and defense of the poor but hold different views on abortion rights and gay marriage.

Francis gave his support to traditional marriage, pointing out that he will travel to Philadelphia later in his six-day visit to the United States for a meeting of Catholics “to celebrate and support the institutions of marriage and the family.”

ADORING CROWDS

The leader of the world’s 1.2 billion Roman Catholics, Francis sprinkled some stardust in a city that is not unduly impressed with important foreign visitors.

“We love you Pope Francis!” one person shouted as the White House ceremony ended. The crowd of invited guests erupted in cheers.

“No words can describe it. It’s just awesome,” said Maria Manzo, 79, of New Jersey who attended the event.

Adoring schoolchildren cheered the pontiff when he left the Vatican Embassy on Wednesday morning. Thousands of the faithful gathered ten deep at places to greet him on a parade through the streets of downtown Washington later in the day.

The first Latin American pope, Francis has electrified liberal-leaning U.S. Catholics, Democrats and many non-Catholics with a shift in emphasis toward concern for the poor and immigrants and his appeals to combat climate change. But his criticism of unbridled capitalism has unsettled U.S. conservatives.

In an apparent nod to the fierce debate in the United States about illegal immigration, Francis described himself as the son of an immigrant Italian family in Argentina. “I am happy to be a guest in this country, which was largely built by such families,” he said at the White House.

Francis said on Tuesday that his teachings on economic fairness and climate change are “all in the social doctrine of the Church.”

In his White House speech, he paraphrased King’s 1963 “I Have A Dream” speech, saying that the world has “defaulted on a promissory note” to the planet and millions of marginalized people.

Francis will give the first speech by any pope to the U.S. Congress on Thursday, an address to the U.N. General Assembly in New York on Friday and an open-air Mass in Philadelphia where 1.5 million people are expected to attend.

The pope speaks to U.S. bishops on Wednesday then celebrates Mass at the one of the most important Roman Catholic churches in the United States, the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington.

There, he will canonize 18th century Spanish missionary Friar Junipero Serra over the objections of critics who say that Serra suppressed Native American cultures in what is now California.

(Additional reporting by Scott Malone, Julia Edwards, Susan Cornwell, Ian Simpson and Roberta Rampton; Writing by Alistair Bell; Editing by Mary Milliken and Grant McCool)

Document 29

**Pope Francis’ First-Day Agenda: Climate Change, Sex Abuse, Immigration**

Sep 23, 2015

NA

WASHINGTON — In his first full day in the United States, Pope Francis has already touched on a wide range of controversies, including the long-running sexual abuse scandal that continues to shake the Roman Catholic Church at its core.

Speaking to hundreds of bishops at St. Matthew’s Cathedral in downtown Washington, he acknowledged the damage of the scandal had caused — both to victims and the clergy.

“I realize how much the pain of recent years has weighed upon you and I have supported your generous commitment to bring healing to victims — in the knowledge that in healing we too are healed — and to work to ensure that such crimes will never be repeated,” he said.

For all of his popularity as a humble servant of the poor and dispossessed, Francis has faced criticism from sexual abuse victims that he has done too little to make amends or prevent more abuse.

Soon after taking over the leadership of the church in 2013, Francis created a commission to develop policies for protecting children from pedophile priests. He also pledged to create a Vatican tribunal to investigate bishops who covered up abuse.

But the church has continued to fight sexual abuse lawsuits and refused to open its records naming thousands of priests who have been accused. It has also continued to oppose efforts to reform statute of limitations laws that have shielded priests from prosecution.

Earlier Wednesday, the pontiff appeared with President Barack Obama before a crowd of 11,000 gathered on the South Lawn of the White House, where Francis spent most of his opening speech to America talking about one of the country’s most divisive political issues: global warming.

“It seems clear to me also that climate change is a problem which can no longer be left to a future generation,” he said. “When it comes to the care of our ‘common home,’ we are living at a critical moment of history.”

His remarks followed an introduction by Obama, who hailed the pontiff’s humble style and powerful advocacy for the poor.

“From the busy streets of Buenos Aires to remote villages in Kenya, Catholic organizations serve the poor, minister to prisoners, build schools and homes, and operate orphanages and hospitals,” Obama said. “And just as the church has stood with those struggling to break the chains of poverty, it has given voice and hope to those seeking to break the chains of violence and oppression.”

Obama noted how Francis’ personal touch has earned him admiration throughout the world. In his groundbreaking papacy — the first non-European and first Jesuit pope, and also the first “to share an encyclical through a Twitter account” — Obama said Francis had set a “profound moral example” in challenging people of all faiths to follow God’s call.

“In these gentle but firm reminders of our obligations to God and to one another, you are shaking us out of complacency,” the president said. “All of us may, at times, experience discomfort when we contemplate the distance between how we lead our daily lives and what we know to be true and right. But I believe such discomfort is a blessing, for it points to something better. You shake our conscience from slumber; you call on us to rejoice in Good News, and give us confidence that we can come together, in humility and service, and pursue a world that is more loving, more just, and more free.”

“We love you, Pope Francis!” somebody shouted as the pontiff and the president walked into the White House. They soon emerged on the balcony with first lady Michelle Obama, waving to the crowd below.

The ceremony marked the beginning of Francis’ first full day in the United States, a journey that will include visits to soaring cathedrals as well as a gritty part of East Harlem, and feature speeches sure to touch upon hot-button political issues that have defined his leadership of the church.

He wasted no time Wednesday, alluding to his support for gentler immigration policies by introducing himself as “the son of an immigrant family” and as a “guest of this country, which was largely built by such families.”

But his speech quickly shifted to climate change. While praising Obama for efforts to reduce air pollution, he said much more action is needed to protect the Earth for those who will inherit it.

Invoking Martin Luther King Jr., he said: “We can say that we have defaulted on a promissory note and now is the time to honor it.”

It is one of several positions that have endeared him to the political left. He has also been a forceful critic of economic inequality and the excesses of capitalism.

Still, in tenor and tone, Francis has pushed back against efforts to place him in a liberal or conservative category of American politics.

He spoke Wednesday of the importance of “safeguarding the rights of individuals and communities,” including “their rights to religious liberty” — keywords that clearly acknowledge the concerns of religious and conservative Americans.

Francis also touched on his support for marriage as between a man and a woman, saying he will travel to Philadelphia to “support the institutions of marriage and the family at this, a critical moment in the history of our civilization.”

From the White House, he proceeded in a parade route past President’s Park and the National Mall, finally making his way to St. Matthew’s Cathedral for a midday prayer with U.S. bishops.

Massive crowds lined the route, with long lines waiting at security checkpoints.

“This is a once in a lifetime opportunity,” said Nick Fontana of Washington, who came with his wife, Wanda, and 7-year-old daughter, Virginia, a Catholic school student allowed to miss class Wednesday.

Peru native Mimaribel Guillen, 50, of Paterson, N.J., came with her friend Max Rodriguez, 51, of Mexico. Holding American and papal flags, she said having a pope from Latin America is special.

“We think he is going to think more about our problems,” she said. “He cannot do everything but maybe he can make a little change.”

In the afternoon, the pope was to visit the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception to celebrate the canonization Mass for Junipero Serra, the Spanish friar who came to Mexico in 1749 to convert Native Americans and established nine Catholic missions in what is now California. A controversial figure to this day, Serra will become the first Latino saint in the U.S.

This is the first time the pope, 78, has ever been to the United States. He was born and grew up in Argentina, where he spent the early part of his career in the clergy.

Francis is the first pope from Latin America, and his selection by cardinals in March 2013 is widely seen as a nod to the growing importance of the continent in the future of the church.

He was selected after the resignation of Pope Benedict XVI amid declining membership, a long-running sexual abuse scandal, and corruption and infighting among Vatican officials. His popularity soared nearly overnight, thanks to a humble style and an emphasis on serving the poor and the dispossessed.

He eschewed the papal apartment and traditional velvet red footwear in favor of simple living quarters in the Vatican and basic black shoes. He blessed a beggar by kissing his feet.

Francis remains committed to church doctrine, with its prohibitions on abortion and birth control, gay marriage and women serving in the priesthood.

Still, even on those issues, he has changed the tone of the church, preaching a spirit of forgiveness over condemnation. “Who am I to judge?” he famously said in 2013 while talking to reporters about gay priests.

The last pope to come to the United States was Benedict in 2008. Pope Paul VI visited once in 1965, while Pope John Paul II visited seven times in the 1980s and 1990s.

Francis will also travel to New York and Philadelphia and return to Rome on Sunday. (Times staff writer Alan Zarembo contributed to this report from Los Angeles.)

Document 30

**Obama Commits To Tough Push On Climate Change**

Jun 20, 2013

NA

WASHINGTON -- President Barack Obama is planning a major push using executive powers to tackle the pollution blamed for global warming in an effort to make good on promises he made at the start of his second term. “We know we have to do more -- and we will do more,” Obama said Wednesday in Berlin.

Obama’s senior energy and climate adviser, Heather Zichal, said the plan would boost energy efficiency of appliances and buildings, plus expand renewable energy. She also said the Environmental Protection Agency was preparing to use its authority under the Clean Air Act to regulate heat-trapping pollution from coal-fired power plants.

“The EPA has been working very hard on rules that focus specifically on greenhouse gases from the coal sector,” Zichal said.

Zichal, speaking at a forum hosted by The New Republic in Washington, said that none of the proposals would require new funding or action from Congress. It has shown no appetite for legislation that would put a price on carbon dioxide after a White House-backed bill to set up a market-based system died in Obama’s first term with Democrats in charge.

The plan, with details expected to be made public in coming weeks, comes as Obama has been under increasing pressure from environmental groups and lawmakers from states harmed by Superstorm Sandy to cut pollution from existing power plants, the largest source of climate-altering gases. Several major environmental groups and states have threatened to sue the administration to force cuts to power plant emissions. And just last week, former Vice President Al Gore, a prominent climate activist and fellow Democrat, pointedly called on Obama to go beyond “great words” to “great actions.”

It was unclear whether the White House’s plans would include controls on existing power plants. An administration official, who wasn’t authorized to comment on the plan by name, said the White House was still weighing it. But since the administration has already proposed action on future power plants, the law would likely compel it to eventually tackle the remaining plants, or it would be forced to through litigation.

Obama’s remarks in Berlin echoed comments he made in his State of the Union and inaugural speeches this year.

“This is the global threat of our time,” Obama said Wednesday. “And for the sake of future generations, our generation must move toward a global compact to confront a changing climate before it is too late. That is our job. That is our task. We have to get to work.”

Some environmentalists who cheered those remarks when they were made months ago, criticized them Wednesday.

“President Obama deserves praise for including climate change among the long-term threats facing us all,” said Ned Helme, president of the Center for Clear Air Policy, an environmentally friendly think tank. “But he should do more than talk about the problem. The president needs to put the full force of his office behind new regulations that will truly curb greenhouse gas emissions. For too long now, he has produced little action. I’m encouraged that he will finally act and not just ask.”

Meanwhile, the environmental community is growing impatient.

“I really can’t understand why they haven’t moved forward on this more quickly, and we hope that turns around,” said Nathan Wilcox of Environment America.

An orchestrated and well-publicized campaign to persuade Obama to reject the Keystone XL oil pipeline, which would carry oil extracted from tar sands in western Canada to refineries along the Texas Gulf Coast, appears to be an uphill battle.

Opponents call the $7 billion project a “carbon bomb” that would carry “dirty oil” and exacerbate global warming. But the State Department in an environmental evaluation concluded that other means of transporting the oil would be worse from a climate perspective.

*Associated Press writer Matthew Daly contributed to this report.*

Document 31

**Clinton Vows To Boost U.S. Clean Energy Use In Response To Climate Change**

Jul 27, 2015

NA

DES MOINES, Iowa — U.S. presidential candidate Hillary Clinton on Monday described climate change as “one of most urgent threats of our time” and vowed to meet the challenge with a plan to generate enough clean energy to power every U.S. home by 2027.

The Democratic front-runner compared fighting climate change to the race to put an American on the moon by the end of the 1960s.

“The next decade will be as decisive for climate change as the decade for getting to the moon was for space exploration,” Clinton said at a campaign stop in Iowa, which will hold the first presidential nominating contest in February.

“Sea levels are rising, ice caps are melting, storms, wildfires and extreme weather are wreaking havoc. This is one of most urgent threats of our time and we have no choice but to rise and meet it,” said Clinton, the front-runner for the Democratic nomination in the November 2016 election.

Clinton promised to have more than half a billion solar

panels installed nationwide within four years if she makes it to the White House.

The former secretary of state has been under pressure from Democratic presidential rival Senator Bernie Sanders, a self-described socialist who has called for swift action on climate change, and environmental activists anxious to see her spell out details of a climate plan.

She vowed to “stop the giveaways to big oil companies” and to defend President Barack Obama’s plan to reduce emissions from power plants, which is hitting the coal industry.

More details of Clinton’s climate change agenda will be released over the next few months.

The Republican National Committee said Clinton’s energy policies were vague and aimed at distracting attention from the controversy of her use of a private email account while she ran the State Department.

“Hillary Clinton’s energy ‘plan’ is to raise more taxes and double down on President Obama’s EPA overreach, which held down wages and cost American jobs. Clinton avoided specifics and refused to take a position on important job-creating energy projects like the Keystone pipeline, reminding voters why they think she’s untrustworthy,” said RNC spokesman Michael Short.

Document 32

**Obama Warns Of Threat That Climate Change Poses To National Security**

May 20, 2015

NA

NEW LONDON, Conn. — President Barack Obama warned Wednesday that climate change poses an “immediate risk to our national security” so significant that U.S. military forces will have to adjust how they train and operate.

In a speech to the graduating class of cadets at the Coast Guard Academy here, Obama noted the dangers of rising sea levels that threaten health and safety in coastal areas and pointed to volatile new storm systems, droughts and wildfires that endanger the rest of the world.

“This is not just a problem for countries on the coast or for certain regions of the world,” he said. “Climate change constitutes a serious threat to global security, an immediate risk to our national security, and make no mistake: It will impact how our military defends our country.

“We need to act,” Obama said, “and we need to act now.”

The call to action comes as Obama pursues a global agreement to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The White House hopes to close an ambitious deal with sweeping goals at a December summit in Paris.

Crucial to that push is a good-faith display by the U.S. to cut its own emissions. Obama wants the country to cut greenhouse gases dramatically over the next decade.

In his address to the new class of Coast Guard officers, Obama made a sales pitch for his climate agenda: that national and global security depend on it.

It’s a strategy that he has employed recently in an effort to sell his trade and economic policies, as he argues that U.S. security depends in part on building new and strong commercial and financial ties to the rest of the world.

The argument is based on the world’s common problem of climate change and related security concerns.

Drought and famine have made basic resources like food and water scarce, leading to instability around the world, he said. Violent storms force people from their homes.

The stakes, Obama argued Wednesday, are high.

Denying climate change or refusing to deal with it undermines American readiness, he said.

“We cannot and must not ignore a peril that can affect generations,” Obama said, noting that some in Washington don’t believe in taking action to deal with climate change.

Scientists know it’s happening, Obama said, and “the Coast Guard knows it’s happening.”

Climate change poses a threat to the readiness of American forces, he said, ticking off floods at bases in Norfolk, Va., damage from thawing permafrost at military facilities in Alaska and the possibility of extensive droughts and wildfires threatening training areas in the West.

For its part, the Pentagon is assessing the vulnerability of more than 7,000 military bases, installations and other facilities around the world as a result of climate change.

The departments of Defense and Homeland Security have been studying how to deal with the security implications of melting sea ice in the Arctic.

If the military is taking steps to deal with climate change, said one member of Congress, it should inspire others to do the same.

“Our military takes the world as it is, not as ideologues would hope it to be,” said Rep. Ted W. Lieu, D-Calif., a veteran. “Our nonpartisan military is telling the American public that climate change is real, it is happening, and we must act.”

Obama urged the officers to embrace the challenge before them.

“You are part of the first generation of officers to begin your service in a world where the effects of climate change are so clearly upon us,” he told the graduating cadets. “Climate change will shape how every one of our services plan, operate, train, equip, and protect their infrastructure, today and for the long term.”

*Distributed by Tribune Content Agency*.

Document 33

**Oklahoma Attorney General Vows To Fight Climate Change Rules**

May 6, 2015

NA

WASHINGTON — Oklahoma Attorney General Scott Pruitt vowed Tuesday to continue fighting proposed climate change rules in court, as he and other conservatives accused the Obama administration of pushing environmental requirements on states far beyond traditional boundaries.

Testifying before a Senate subcommittee, Pruitt said the Environmental Protection Agency is using an “obscure” section of law to tell states what mix of sources they should use to generate electricity.

“No state should comply with the Clean Power Plan if it means surrendering decision-making authority to the EPA,” Pruitt said. “States should be left to make decisions on fuel diversity that best meet their power generation needs.”

A prominent environmental law attorney said Pruitt and other opponents of the proposed rules to reduce carbon dioxide were making “novel legal arguments” that didn’t square with the facts or history.

“Under EPA’s proposal, states have a choice,” said Lisa Heinzerling, who has won major Clean Air Act cases before the U.S. Supreme Court.

“They may devise their own plan to meet the state’s specific targets EPA will set, or they may let EPA devise a plan for them. This is the very same choice states have had for 45 years under the air quality standards program of the Clean Air Act. It is not an unconstitutional choice.”

The EPA is expected to finalize standards this summer for how states can best reduce carbon emissions by 30 percent in the next 15 years. Pruitt and more than a dozen other states already are suing the EPA over the proposal, but a federal appeals court here may decide the case is premature.

States are expected to be given a year to devise a plan for meeting the carbon reduction targets. Pruitt complained at the hearing that Oklahoma already is generating 15 percent of its electricity from wind, making it more difficult to reduce emissions by another 30 percent.

Gov. Mary Fallin issued an executive order last week prohibiting executive agencies from working on a state plan. She then vetoed a bill that Pruitt supported that would have allowed the state to submit a plan that met the attorney general’s approval.

Whether the state submits a plan or not, Pruitt said, the EPA will be challenged in court by Oklahoma and other states if it moves forward with its plan.

**Taking Sides**

At the hearing, the main opponents of the proposed rule were from energy-producing states — Oklahoma, West Virginia and Wyoming. Those defending the proposed rules were from East Coast states that produce little of their own energy.

Sen. Jim Inhofe, R-Tulsa, the chairman of the Environment and Public Works Committee, said Congress had repeatedly rejected legislative efforts to reduce carbon emissions. Now, he said, the administration is trying to accomplish the same goals through regulations that would have little impact on worldwide carbon levels.

Sen. Tom Carper, D-Del., said carbon reduction was essential for states like his that were already being affected by climate change.

“The longer we wait to reduce our carbon output, the more severe, and perhaps irreversible, the effects of climate change will become,” Carper said.

Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse, D-R.I., tried to get Pruitt and the attorney general from West Virginia to say whether climate change was a problem. Neither answered the direct question but instead told Whitehouse that the EPA shouldn’t be able to address climate change outside of a legal framework.

“I think the process matters that the EPA engages in ...,” Pruitt said.

“I didn’t ask you a process question,” Whitehouse said. “I asked you a question about whether climate change is a real problem anywhere in the world.”

“I think the question about climate action ... is something that’s a policy consideration of this Congress,” Pruitt said. “If you want EPA to address that in a direct way, you can amend the Clean Air Act to provide that authority and the statutory power to do so ... so that the states can know how to conduct themselves in a way that is consistent with statutory construction.”

“So to be clear, neither of the attorneys general present will concede that climate change is a real problem anywhere in the world,” Whitehouse said.

“Senator, I think it’s immaterial to discussions about the legal framework of the Clean Air Act,” Pruitt said.

“Immaterial or not, I get to ask questions. So, it’s material to my question,” Whitehouse said.

Neither Pruitt nor the West Virginia attorney general responded.

*Distributed by Tribune Content Agency.*

Document 34

**Study: 75 Percent Of Extreme Weather Due To Climate Change**

Apr 27, 2015

NA

NEW YORK — Blame global warming for about 75 percent of the world’s unusually hot days and 18 percent of its extreme snow or rain, according to a new paper in the journal Nature Climate Change.

Heat waves and heavy storms are occurring at least four times more often than they did before carbon pollution started driving up thermometers. Global average temperatures are now about 0.85 degrees Celsius (1.4 Fahrenheit) higher than before industrialization.

Additional heat and precipitation are expensive. Severe weather costs the U.S. economy as much as $33 billion a year, according to a U.S. Energy Department report released April 21.

And those figures will increase as the planet continues to warm, as climate change may not be smooth or gradual, according to the new paper. At 2 degrees Celsius — United Nations climate negotiators’ avowed upper limit — extremely hot days may be twice as likely as at 1.5 degrees Celsius of warming. After 2 degrees Celsius, the odds of high-heat days may be five times greater than today.

“What used to be a one-in-a-thousand day, a one-in-three year event, actually occurs four times in three years,” Erich Fischer, a researcher at the Institute for Atmospheric & Climate Science in Zurich and one of the study’s authors, said in a telephone interview. “Weather extremes have always been occurring, before any human influence, but that doesn’t mean that there can’t be human influence on the extremes.”

There is widespread scientific consensus that human activity is causing climate change, which President Barack Obama said “can no longer be denied” while visiting the Florida Everglades last week.

Fischer and colleague Reto Knutti examined more than a century’s worth of data using more than two dozen climate models, running simulations that account for rising greenhouse- gas emission levels through the year 2100. Fischer was quick to emphasize the global nature of their results. The study is confined to heat and precipitation. How might evolving conditions affect meteorological events like tornadoes or hail? “We do not agree how they change,” he said.

Global warming’s responsibility for the world’s heavy rainfall may increase from 18 percent today to 40 percent if temperatures rise by 2 degrees Celsius.

The authors said that their results may be of use to policy makers, by sharpening their understanding of risk as climate change worsens. “With every degree of warming,” they wrote, “it is the rarest and the most extreme events — and thereby the ones with typically the highest socioeconomic impacts — for which the largest fraction is due to human-induced greenhouse gas emissions.”

Translation: The worse things get, the more we’re bringing it on ourselves.

Document 35

**White House To Explore How Climate Change Makes You Sick**

Apr 7, 2015

NA

WASHINGTON — President Barack Obama is launching an initiative Tuesday aimed at highlighting the connections between climate change and public health, bringing both medical and data experts to the White House this week.

As part of the effort, the White House is to hold a Climate Change and Health Summit later this spring, featuring Surgeon General Vivek Murthy. The administration is expanding its Climate Data Initiative, which it launched a year ago, to include more than 150 health-relevant data sets.

“Climate change is posing a threat to more people, in more places, to their public health,” said White House senior adviser Brian Deese in a phone call with reporters Tuesday.

White House officials also announced Tuesday that a coalition of deans from 30 medical, public health and nursing schools has pledged to train their students to address climate change’s health impacts. Those universities include Johns Hopkins, the University of Maryland, Harvard University and the University of Nebraska.

There is a clear political component to Tuesday’s announcement: In a roundtable event at Howard University, Obama will meet with not just public experts and senior administration officials but the mother of a child suffering from asthma. Asthma is exacerbated by warmer temperatures that contribute to the formation of smog, and Deese cited a recent study by the American Thoracic Society that found that seven out of 10 doctors reported climate change is contributing to more health problems among their patients.

“One thing that we know is the most salient arguments around climate change are the ones around health impacts and involve meeting people where they are,” Deese said.

As part of that effort, the interagency U.S. Global Change Research Program is releasing a draft Climate and Health Assessment report that will detail how public health is influenced by changes in weather extremes, air quality and vector-borne diseases.

The new initiative will also call on private sector firms to devise solutions to health-related climate problems. Microsoft researcher Ethan Jackson told reporters that his company is launching a pilot program to see if it can use autonomous equipment to monitor the density of mosquitoes in a given areas as a way of detecting a potential disease outbreak before it happens.

Jackson noted that there is clear evidence that climate change contributes to “the movement of pathogens and vector-borne diseases. But it is still difficult to predict the time and place where disease will occur.”

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention will also release an “Adaptation in Action Report” Tuesday to highlight actions that state and local leaders have taken to minimize the health impacts of global warming in New York, San Francisco, Maine, Minnesota, Arizona, Michigan, California and New York state.

Document 36

**Oklahoma wind farms help Google build on renewable energy goal**

Dec 11, 2016

Adam Wilmoth / The Oklahoman

PRYOR, Okla. — Two new Oklahoma wind farms expected online early next year will help Google meet its goal of providing 100 percent of its energy needs from renewable resources.

The new Oklahoma wind farms are among nearly 1,700 megawatts of new renewable power the company has agreed to buy when it comes online next year. The projects will allow Google to supply 100 percent of its energy needs with power from wind and solar projects.

Google already buys power from the 101-megawatt Minco II wind farm near Minco and 48 megawatts from the 298-megawatt Canadian Hills project. The new 198-megawatt Bluestem project in Beaver County and the 225-megawatt

Great Western project near Woodward are scheduled online early next year. Together, Google will buy 572 megawatts of Oklahoma wind, more than 10 percent of the state’s wind capacity.

Google buys electricity from local power grids, which include power generated from several sources. But the company has partnered with wind and solar energy companies to develop renewable energy projects throughout the world.

“We buy power from new generation, new projects,” said Neha Palmer, Google’s head of energy strategy and global infrastructure. “This ensures the project is displacing brown power on the grid. We buy renewable energy above and beyond what is required by legislation to ensure the energy we’re buying is new renewable energy.”

Google has 20 power purchase agreements totaling 2.6 gigawatts of clean energy from renewable projects. Using renewable energy also has a financial benefit to the company, Palmer said.

“Electricity costs are one of the biggest costs for data centers,” she said.

That is especially true in developing countries. In Chile, electricity costs can range from $30 to several hundred dollars a megawatt hour. Google recently signed a deal for an 80-megawatt solar project in the country.

“Having fixed costs for power in Chile is an important part of our business,” Naha said.

Google has spent $3.5 billion on capital investment as part of its renewable energy effort, including $850 million in Oklahoma.

“With the way the pricing of renewable energy has gone over the past few years, it’s gotten cost competitive,” Kava said. “With the construction of these large power purchase agreements for renewables, we’re making contracts for longer periods of time, 10 to 20 years.

“That gives you good predictability of what your power costs are going to be in the future. When you have that predictability from a business perspective, it makes sense. You know what your operations costs for power will be for many years.”

**Growing in Pryor**

Google’s data center in Pryor is one of the largest of the company’s 13 data centers worldwide. It’s also the first of Google’s data centers to reach the company’s goal of producing zero landfill waste.

In 2013, Google paid PepsiCo Inc. $24.5 million for an idled Gatorade plant next to its Mayes County industrial plant.

The 1.4 million-square-foot former Gatorade plant is one of the largest industrial buildings in the state.

Google has since expanded its Oklahoma data center to include a complex of four buildings, including a new four-story data center the company celebrated in September as part of a $2 billion investment Google is making in the area by 2018.

Google has about 115 full-time Google employees in Pryor. Including contractors and part timers, the number balloons to about 500.

“I remember when we converted the existing building on the property,” Kava said. “It was a warehouse, and we converted it to a data center. At the time, I was thinking we’d probably build a couple more of these. Now it’s way, way, way larger than that. It’s turned out to be one of our larger campuses. It’s certainly exceeded what I thought we were going to build there.”

Google has plans to soon add another building.

“It comes down to economics on everything,” Kava said. “We’re going to continue to expand. The last few years there was rapid expansion. I would expect the expansion won’t be as rapid in the future, but it will continue to expand. Just like all our sites, it’s a key node in our global computer and it’s a very important site to us.”

Google receives a five year property tax exemption under the ad valorem tax incentive. The state has reimbursed local schools and counties $26.6 million over the past four years, according to Oklahoma Tax Commission records.

**Improving energy efficiency**

Besides buying renewable energy, Google also has worked to reduce its overall energy needs.

“Using renewable energy is only one side of the coin,” Kava said. “We’ve also built the world’s most efficient data centers. The more efficient our data centers are, the more benefits we can pass on to our customers and our platform users.”

The company has built its data centers and other buildings to maximize efficiency, using chilled water systems to cool parts of the data center and developing a computer system to take advantage of wind direction and other weather factors to heat and cool the buildings efficiently.

“Over the past five years, we’ve achieved three and a half times more performance for every watt of power we consume,” said Chris Malone, distinguished engineer of Google’s data center research and development. “We’ve dramatically increased the performance per watt we’re getting out of our system. We’ve achieved that by owning and operating all aspects of our data centers. It gives us unique insight about how to squeeze more performance from each watt.”

Efficiencies include improved battery backup and charging systems and using fans specially designed for Google’s data systems.

“We’ve developed solutions based on the local conditions at each of our 13 campuses around the world,” Malone said.

“One size fits all does not apply to data center design. We’ve taken advantage of local opportunities to get the most out of each facility.”

*Distributed by Tribune Content Agency LLC.*

Document 37

**Letter: There’s Much We Can Do In Fight Against Climate Change**

Oct 10, 2014

NA

Last Sunday, hundreds of thousands marched throughout the world demanding action on climate change; 120 world leaders gathered in New York for the United Nations Summit on Climate Change.

What can we do? A 2006 U.N. report estimated that meat production accounts for 18 percent of man-made greenhouse gases. A 2009 article in the respected World Watch magazine suggested that the contribution may be closer to 50 percent. The meat industry generates carbon dioxide by burning forests to create animal pastures and by combustion of fossil fuels to confine, feed, transport and slaughter animals.

The much more damaging methane and nitrous oxide are discharged from digestive tracts of cattle and from animal waste cesspools, respectively. In an environmentally sustainable world, wind, solar, and other pollution-free energy sources must gradually replace polluting fossil fuels. Similarly, vegetables, fruits, nuts, and grains must replace polluting meat and dairy products. The large variety of widely available plant-based entrees, lunch meats, veggie burgers, cheeses and ice creams can certainly help. Our next trip to the supermarket is a great opportunity to start the transition to a sustainable world. Our favorite Internet search engine offers ample product lists, recipes and dietary tips.

Sincerely,

Frank Shawnee

Fort Smith

Document 38

**Report: Florida Agency Banned From Using Phrase ‘Climate Change’**

Mar 9, 2015

NA

ORLANDO, Fla. — Climate change activists blasted Florida Gov. Rick Scott on Monday for leading an “Orwellian” campaign to ban employees of the state’s lead environmental agency from using such terms as “global warming” and “climate change.”

Despite coastal Florida’s vulnerability to storm surges and rising sea levels, the state’s Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) was directed in 2011 not to use the phrases in official communications, according to a report by the Florida Center for Investigative Reporting.

“This is embarrassing, but worse than that, it’s very worrying,” said David Hastings, a marine science professor from Eckerd College in St. Petersburg, on Florida’s west coast.

“To have this authoritarian word control is very Orwellian, a page right out of ‘Nineteen Eighty-Four,’” he said, referring to George Orwell’s dystopian novel about widespread government surveillance.

Former employees of the DEP detailed the unwritten policy in interviews with the nonprofit news agency, which reported the ban on Sunday.

Employees were told not to use the phrases ‘climate change,’ ‘global warming,’ ‘sea level rise,’ or ‘sustainability,’ attorney Christopher Byrd, who worked with the DEP’s Office of General Counsel from 2008 to 2013, confirmed to Reuters.

“Nobody questioned it. There was just a lot of snickers and internal chuckling,” Byrd said.

The euphemism suggested to DEP employees for “sea level rise” was “coastal resiliency,” he said.

The prohibition began after the election of Scott, a Republican, who had disputed the human impact on climate change during his 2010 campaign, according to the report.

Concerns about climate change are widely voiced by research scientists, but questioned by conservative Republicans who oppose controls on carbon emissions blamed for causing environmental damage.

The governor’s office and the DEP did not respond to requests for comment by Reuters. They had no official policy on the phrases, according to the FCIR report.

Hastings was one of five climate scientists who were granted a half-hour meeting with Scott in August 2014 warning him of the threat posed by a steadily rising ocean.

Harvey Ruvin, who chaired a sea level rise task force in Miami that delivered its findings last year, told Reuters that it was important for Florida, with about 1,000 miles of coastline, to put politics aside on the climate change issue.

“It would be very nice if we could resolve problems simply by eliminating their titles from the dictionary,” he said.

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**Obama Stakes Final Two Years On Climate Change**

Nov 18, 2014

NA

WASHINGTON — With limited time still in power, President Barack Obama is staking his final two years on climate change, pushing the issue to the front of his agenda as he seeks to leave an imprint on the world that will endure after he’s gone.

It’s a strategy rooted not only in Obama’s long-stated concern about global warming, but also in political reality.

Two weeks ago, Obama watched his prospects for realizing his goals on education, wages and immigration all but evaporate as voters handed his party a stinging rebuke in the midterms, putting Republicans in full control of Congress for the remainder of his presidency. But on a trip last week to Asia and Australia, Obama sought — and found — fruitful opportunities to make a lasting difference on global warming.

In China, traditionally a U.S. adversary on environmental issues, Obama set an ambitious new target for cutting future U.S. emissions as part of a landmark deal in which China will also rein in pollution. In Australia, he pledged $3 billion to help poorer nations address changing temperatures while prodding Australia’s prime minister to stop questioning the science of climate change.

“We’re showing there’s no excuse for other nations not to come together,” Obama said in Brisbane, where he also pressed the issue with leaders of the world’s 20 largest economies.

The emphasis on climate isn’t all by choice.

Although Obama has long sought to rally action against climate change, White House aides say the issue has become even more attractive after the election because it’s one where Obama has considerable leverage to act without Congress. Foreign policy is largely the domain of presidents, and at home, Obama has aggressively used his regulatory power to curb greenhouse gas emissions over fierce objections from Republicans and the energy industry.

“President Obama has made no secret that his climate crusade will proceed irrespective of what the American people want or what other global leaders caution,” said Laura Sheehan of the American Coalition for Clean Coal Electricity, which represents the coal industry.

Sheehan said Australia, whose prime minister rose to power promising to gut a hated carbon tax, is a “prime example” of lessons that some have learned but Obama has ignored. She warned the deal with Beijing, which allows China’s emissions to keep increasing until 2030, will stall America’s economy while China’s continues to grow “thanks to affordable, reliable power.”

Climate change advocates said the deal with China is paving the way for a successful global climate treaty that nations are aiming to finalize next year, because it ups the pressure on reluctant, developing nations like India. They argue a successful treaty is the world’s best chance to avert the worst effects of global warming. Facing dim prospects for Senate ratification for a new treaty, the administration is considering strategies where the agreement could be labeled a voluntary expansion of a 1992 climate treaty, relying on joint political pressure to ensure countries comply with certain parts.

Yet on the domestic front, it’s unclear how much more Obama can do alone.

Obama said his administration shaped its new goal to cut emissions at least 26 percent by 2025 based on existing legal authorities, rather than relying on future action from Congress. But Obama has already picked the low-hanging fruit: pollution limits on U.S. power plants and emissions standards for cars and trucks, to name the big ones.

Still, White House aides said Obama has enlisted his Cabinet secretaries to hunt for further steps he can take before the clock runs out on his presidency in early 2017. They pointed to increasing renewable fuels as one example. And on Monday, the White House launched a website— toolkit.climate.gov — to give state and local officials access to federal resources to combat the impact of global warming.

As Obama competed for a second term in the White House in 2012, he told his top aides he considered climate change to be a key piece of unfinished business, said Stephanie Cutter, his deputy campaign manager. If he won re-election, he told them, he would take on climate head-on.

“He sees climate policy as good economic and health policy, but also a moral obligation to future generations — including his own daughters,” Cutter said.

Yet even some of Obama’s existing steps could well be repealed by ascendant Republicans in Congress, who also have plans to stop the president from going any further. Republicans are finding common cause with many Democrats in trying to force Obama to approve Keystone XL, a proposed pipeline that would carry tar sands oil from Canada to the Texas Gulf Coast. And with the GOP set to take over the Senate in January, Republicans are already pursuing a concerted effort to gut his Environmental Protection Agency’s rules on power plants, although Obama counselor John Podesta predicted they won’t succeed.

“The president will complete action. It’s a top priority of his,” Podesta said Monday. “And I don’t believe they can stop us from doing that.”

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**Report: Climate Change Imperils Nation’s Historical, Cultural Landmarks**

May 20, 2014

NA

WASHINGTON — Saying there’s a “race against time,” an advocacy group reported this week that climate change — leading to sea level rise and worsening wildfires — is putting some of the nation’s most significant historical sites at risk.

Highlighting archaeological and other historical sites in several states, a report released Tuesday by the Union of Concerned Scientists said that rising waters and raging flames could endanger some of the nation’s most-cherished locations.

“You can almost trace the history of the United States through these sites,” Adam Markham, director of climate impacts at the Union of Concerned Scientists and a co-author of the report, said in a statement. “The imminent risks to these sites and the artifacts they contain threaten to pull apart the quilt that tells the story of the nation’s heritage and history.”

Among the 30 sites at risk, according to the report:

* The huge prehistoric mounds of oyster and clam shells that dot Florida’s Gulf and Atlantic coasts. The report says Florida is one of the only places on Earth where coastal hunter-gatherers built shell structures as large and complicated as they are along Florida’s southwest coast. Across the state in Canaveral National Seashore, Turtle Mound is a massive shell structure that dates back at least 1,200 years. In both places, rising seas and worsening storm surge are endangering the shell structures.
* In St. Augustine, Fla., sea level rise, erosion and worsening storm surge threaten landmarks in the oldest city in the nation. The city, on the Atlantic coast, was the seat of Spanish rule in North America for 200 years. Without major engineering feats, the Castillo de San Marcos fort likely will become inaccessible if sea levels rise 3 feet; a major report earlier this month about climate change projected that sea levels could rise 1 to 4 feet by 2100.
* In California, Groveland and other Gold Rush-era towns are imperiled by wildfires. Citing a marked increase in giant wildfires, the report says climate change has driven up temperatures, caused earlier melting of winter snowpack and made forests drier for longer periods — making them ripe for fire. The report singles out Groveland, a town near Yosemite National Park that was imperiled by the devastating Rim fire in 2013.

Other locations highlighted by the group include the Cape Hatteras Lighthouse in North Carolina; the Statue of Liberty in New York; and the Old and Historic District of Charleston, S.C. At Cape Hatteras and the Statue of Liberty, steps already have been taken to make the sites more resilient to climate change.

Headquartered in Cambridge, Mass., the Union of Concerned Scientists is a nonprofit research and advocacy organization that seeks to “create innovative, practical solutions for a healthy, safe, and sustainable future,” according to its website.

The report in many ways echoes the U.S. National Climate Assessment, a major assessment released to a blizzard of attention earlier this month. That report was overseen by federal officials and represented the views of more than 300 experts and top Obama administration officials; it was instantly attacked by climate change skeptics, who accused the report of overreach.

In it, scientists detailed how climate change already has affected many parts of the country. The new report this week zeroed in on the current or potential impact on historical sites.