

Floor Statement of Rep. Earl Blumenauer
Safe Climate Caucus
September 19, 2013

As the House Republicans prepare to shut down the government and threaten the global economy with debt ceiling blackmail, it's ironic that they refuse to allow their members to vote on their own spending bills. They even refuse to allow a conference committee with the Senate to resolve the budget impasse. I suppose it should be no surprise that their denial extends to climate change and the future of the planet. But Americans don't have that luxury. Between this summer's wildfires in the West, last year's drought, Super-storm Sandy, and the recent horrific flooding in Colorado, Americans are seeing the impact of climate change.

Tuesday, Matt Russell, a fifth generation Iowa farmer, gave a quick history of what climate change looks like in Iowa. In 2008, they suffered a 500 year flood. In 2010, there was another series of hundred year floods. The next year, the Missouri River wiped out thousands of acres of farmland, some of which will never be farmed again. And in 2012 was the catastrophic drought. In half a decade, Iowa saw the worst flooding and the worst drought in over a century of record keeping. This is what climate change will look like; and it will get worse, and more extreme.

Which is exactly what's happening this year. May 4th, a foot of heavy, wet snow. The most snow ever recorded in Iowa in May. Then it began raining. The most rain ever recorded in the month of May in Iowa. Then it was drought. Last month was the driest August on record; even dryer than last year's epic drought. And in between, July was one of the coldest on record, with temperatures in the thirties. And now they're experiencing one of the hottest Septembers on record. The hottest days in 2013 came after Labor Day: multiple days of over 100 degree temperature. This is what climate change means: "the wrong weather at the wrong time."

Their joke is that February came in May, along with all the rain for the summer; and September came in July, and July came in September. And now they wonder what month is going to show up in October. But it's not a joke for the people who are trying to farm. It's not a joke for the taxpayers who are picking up the cost of crop insurance, which totaled almost two billion dollars last year. Now, farmers in Iowa and elsewhere are working to be part of the solution. But, you know, what they can't afford is for Congress to continue wasting time with debate, ignoring science, and spending billions of dollars on disaster relief. They want us to spend money up front: not just to save money in the long run, but the lives, and indeed the environment for all our families to enjoy.

Listening to America's farmers, or just looking out of the window and paying close attention to the news, tells Americans all they need to know. The science is real, and the time for action is now. Farmers, small business, utilities, insurance companies, universities: we all should insist that Congress stop playing games with the budget, threatening the global economy with debt ceiling blackmail, and the future of the planet.