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House of Representatives

The House met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. DUNCAN of Tennessee).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
December 11, 2013.

I hereby appoint the Honorable JOHN J. DUNCAN, Jr. to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

JOHN A. BOEHNER,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 3, 2013, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to 1 hour and each Member other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip limited to 5 minutes, but in no event shall debate continue beyond 11:50 a.m.

NOTICE

If the 113th Congress, 1st Session, adjourns sine die on or before December 24, 2013, a final issue of the *Congressional Record* for the 113th Congress, 1st Session, will be published on Tuesday, December 31, 2013, to permit Members to insert statements.

All material for insertion must be signed by the Member and delivered to the respective offices of the Official Reporters of Debates (Room HT–59 or S–123 of the Capitol), Monday through Friday, between the hours of 10:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. through Monday, December 30. The final issue will be dated Tuesday, December 31, 2013, and will be delivered on Thursday, January 2, 2014.

None of the material printed in the final issue of the *Congressional Record* may contain subject matter, or relate to any event, that occurred after the sine die date.

Senators' statements should also be formatted according to the instructions at http://webster/secretary/cong__record.pdf, and submitted electronically, either on a disk to accompany the signed statement, or by e-mail to the Official Reporters of Debates at "Record@Sec.Senate.gov".

Members of the House of Representatives' statements may also be submitted electronically by e-mail, to accompany the signed statement, and formatted according to the instructions for the Extensions of Remarks template at http://clerk.house.gov/forms. The Official Reporters will transmit to GPO the template formatted electronic file only after receipt of, and authentication with, the hard copy, and signed manuscript. Deliver statements to the Official Reporters in Room HT–59.

Members of Congress desiring to purchase reprints of material submitted for inclusion in the *Congressional Record* may do so by contacting the Office of Congressional Publishing Services, at the Government Printing Office, on 512–0224, between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. daily.

By order of the Joint Committee on Printing.

CHARLES E. SCHUMER, *Chairman.*

AMENDMENT TO FERS ANNUITY FOR MEMBERS OF CONGRESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. COBLE) for 5 minutes.

Mr. COBLE. Mr. Speaker, on the June 13 of this year, I introduced a bill, H.R. 2357, to provide that Members must complete 12 years of credible service to become vested into the retirement system. I have not professed to be an expert on pensions, Mr. Speaker, but 5 years appear to be very generous. So in my bill I had extended that from the 5-year timeframe to 12 years.

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Taxpayers subsidize this plan. I believe by increasing the minimum timeframe, I think it would, obviously, result in considerable savings. I have conducted no survey to support that, but commonsense tells me that. In fact, this is a commonsense proposal.

For example, Mr. Speaker, a Member of Congress now must complete only 5 years of credible service to become vested. I know of no plan, other than this one, that would vest at 5 years. Such a Member would be required, if my bill is enacted, to complete at least 12 years of service prior to becoming vested.

I figured after 4 or 5 weeks I would have attracted at least 20 to 25 cosponsors. Today, I have no cosponsors. So, to walk you through how it would work if my plan is adopted, a Member of the Congress must complete not 5 years, but 12 years of service. That can be done through six 2-year House terms or two 6-year Senate terms or a combination thereof.

It is a commonsense proposal. Meanwhile, Mr. Speaker, I will anxiously await the knock on the door for cosponsors willing to sign up. The welcome mat is out. It is a good proposal.

GIVE DIPLOMACY A CHANCE TO SUCCEED

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, in the rush to wrap up and go home, there is too much unfinished business, including leaving 2.15 million long-term unemployed in the lurch.

But one item should not be on the agenda: an attempt to undermine the diplomatic breakthrough with Iran, the most encouraging development with that country in 34 years. We would give the hardliners in Iran who really hate the preliminary agreement an excuse to walk away. It would be a continuation of 60 years of mismanagement by the United States with our relationship with that proud nation with deep ties to America.

The worst thing we did was team with the British to overthrow their democratically elected government in 1953 and replace most of that with the Shah, who for 25 years, was a repressive dictator.

Few remember, if they ever knew, that the Iranians helped stabilize Afghanistan after we drove the Taliban from power. They don't know that the people in Tehran had candlelight vigils in sympathy to the United States after 9/11 where some of the supposed allies of the United States were celebrating our loss in the streets. For that, the Iranians were rewarded with the label of being part of the Axis of Evil.

We must make diplomacy the key. We are not going to be able to bomb away the knowledge of how to develop nuclear weapons. Experts I have talked to say they could have made a nuclear bomb years ago if they had really been bent on that creation.

Torpedoing the agreement will be counterproductive. It risks collapse of sanctions which depend on the Chinese, the Indians, and the Japanese not buying Iranian oil. If we appear unreasonable, we lose international support, and we can lose ground.

It would undercut President Hassan Rouhani, elected by the Iranians who want change and a more moderate approach to the world. Iranians—people who have been there and testify—actually like Americans. They don't much like the repressive government. But that support can help reach more than just a nuclear deal.

Iran is key to solving the nightmare that is Syria, prying them back from supporting the insurgents in support for a long-term solution. Iran is key to holding Iraq together and not having it spin off into civil war and to defeat or at least contain the Taliban resurgents in Afghanistan.

A recent poll showed 57 percent of the American public supports the agreement. When they are given greater detail about what it entails, that support increases to 63 percent.

Don't undercut the best chance to reorder the Middle East in a third of a century. I think we ought to give diplomacy a chance to succeed for a change.

THE NEW YEAR OF OBAMACARE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. MCCLINTOCK) for 5 minutes.

Mr. MCCLINTOCK. Mr. Speaker, a great tragedy is now unfolding across America as we prepare for the new year.

Millions of Americans are losing their health plans. Millions more are facing staggering price increases. Millions more are having their hours cut back at work or seeing their salaries pared back because of ObamaCare.

Sadly, this is just the beginning. In coming days, millions of employer-provided plans face cancelation, multiplying this disaster many fold.

The administration recently held a contest for videos to promote ObamaCare. Its grand prize winner featured this message: Don't worry about the price tag. Don't worry about the price tag? Isn't that helpful and compassionate advice to the millions of Americans who are struggling through the fifth year of Obamanomics and who are now also facing the reality of seeing their premiums doubling or tripling.

Just don't worry about the price tag, skip the House payment, and cough up the extra cash. That is the best that this administration can offer? Many millions of Americans who had health coverage on New Year's Eve will not have it on New Year's Day because of ObamaCare.

What awaits those who actually can sign up? According to the government's own numbers, about two-thirds of exchange applicants have been forced into Medicaid. That includes many on limited incomes who have maintained bare-bones policies because they are desperately trying to stay out of Medicaid. Some have found that nearly by looking at prices they have ended up trapped in this dreaded welfare program.

A major study documents that Medicaid patients have worse health outcomes than those without any insurance. If you doubt that, just see how long it will take you to see a Medicaid doctor, if you can find one, for a bad cold.

If you are a part of the one in three exchange visitors who escaped this fate, the next problem will be to find a doctor—any doctor. The president of the California Medical Association reports that 70 percent of California doctors will not accept ObamaCare patients. That means the remaining 30 percent will be overwhelmed, resulting in life-threatening waiting lines.

As patients desperately seek doctors in emergency rooms, actual emergencies will go waiting. Top-flight specialized doctors and facilities will become increasingly inaccessible as they opt out of the system.

Those patients who actually can get an appointment may then discover that there is no record of their policy because the government hasn't been able to connect patients with their new insurers. Patients will next face the cold reality of sky-high deductibles and copayments that many will be unable to pay. Many hospitals that serve large populations of the poor can only do so because of supplemental payments, but ObamaCare is phasing those out. Some may be forced to close their doors.

Those ObamaCare patients fortunate enough to stay well in this brave new world can expect a highly elevated risk of identity theft in what the founder of McAfee Security Software calls a ''hacker's dream.'' And there is no need to wait for hackers. In some cases, the government has already accidentally released patients' private financial and medical information.

Since so many people—particularly the young—are choosing not to pay inflated prices to subsidize others, we can expect another major round of rate increases next fall on those remaining in the system in order to make up the shortfalls.

That is what the new year will bring to our country. Many of us in the House warned of this coming train wreck, and we tried at least to delay it. For this, we were called arsonists, terrorists, jihadists, and demagogues; but now those warnings have proven chillingly and entirely accurate.

This program has devastated the lives of millions of Americans. This damage now cannot be undone by delaying it or tinkering with it. It must be repealed and replaced with the patient-centered plan proposed by House

Republicans, a plan guided by individual freedom of choice and open competition.

This will only happen if there is a massive change of heart by the congressional Democrats who imposed this nightmare on our country. Now is the time for all Americans whose lives have been upended by their folly to share their stories with their Representatives and to pray that they actually can touch some hearts and change some minds during this holiday season. Otherwise, I am afraid that New Year's Day will be nothing to celebrate.

CLOSING GUANTANAMO BAY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. SCHIFF) for 5 minutes.

Mr. SCHIFF. Mr. Speaker, when it was first opened in the immediate aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, the Guantanamo Bay prison may have seemed a reasonable stopgap measure as a shocked Nation marshaled its resources and figured out how to dispose of detainees taken in Afghanistan and elsewhere.

But even in those early days, the problems we were creating with Guantanamo's patchwork of military rules and commissions were readily apparent. Since 2002, I have introduced numerous bills and amendments to try to bring Guantanamo into conformity with American and international law and to stop it from becoming a jihadi recruiting tool.

But reform of this prison system has been elusive and progress towards bringing its detainees to justice almost nonexistent, as U.S. courts have taken strong issue with its improvised legal process.

In one of his first acts as President, Barack Obama ordered the closing of Guantanamo, but the Congress almost immediately stepped in and erected a series of statutory barriers that have prevented the transfer of detainees to the United States and made transfer to third countries extremely difficult.

Today, there is a renewed push by the administration to shutter Guantanamo for good. Doing so will not be easy, but the cost of keeping the prison open—to our values, to our pocketbook, to our reputation, and to our security—have become too great to bear.

There are now 164 detainees at Guantanamo, 84 of whom have been cleared for transfer to their home country or another country willing to accept them. These detainees should be processed and transferred as soon as security considerations will allow.

This would leave 80 remaining detainees, who are roughly split into two groups. The first group, which includes Khalid Sheikh Mohamed and other key 9/11 plotters, consists of detainees slated for trial under the military commissions that were established by the Bush administration.

These proceedings have been mired in pre-trial wrangling; and the longer they drag on, the less legitimate the overall system appears. Meanwhile, our civilian judicial system, which many congressional critics have derided as not up to the task of handling terrorism cases, has disposed of a long line of defendants—from Richard Reid, the Shoe Bomber, to Omar Farouk Abdulmutallab, the Underwear Bomber, and Faisal Shaizhad, the Times Square Bomber—all successfully prosecuted in America's civilian courts, and none will ever be released again.

□ 1015

By lifting its restriction on transferring these detainees to the United States for trial, Congress could give the administration the flexibility to transfer many of those now in the military commission system to Article III courts for prosecution. These civilian courts can be more expeditious, more effective, and, in the eyes of the world, more just than military tribunals.

The remaining detainees—some 46 men—will be the most difficult cases. These are detainees considered too dangerous to release or transfer, but who cannot be prosecuted. For some, evidence cannot be presented without revealing critical sources of intelligence and methods. Others were tortured, or evidence against them was collected through torture or some other unlawful means. For still others, the evidence of past acts and future dangerousness, while not sufficient to prosecute, argues compellingly against any release or transfer.

The administration announced over the summer that it would begin a review of these cases, and as a result, others may be cleared for transfer or prosecution. It is likely that many, if not most, of the detainees in this final category will remain in American custody. But where?

Even if we ultimately decide to maintain these detainees in custody, that does not justify continued operation of Guantanamo Bay. Instead, they should be transferred to civilian or military confinement in the United States, an option currently blocked by Congress.

Every day that it remains open, Guantanamo Bay damages the United States. Because there are other, better options for prosecution and detention of these inmates, we are not safer for Guantanamo's existence. In fact, it makes us more vulnerable by drawing new generations to the jihad.

The Congress, the administration, and the military can work together to find a solution that protects our people even as we maintain our principles and devotion to the rule of law. The President has indicated that he would like to work with Congress to end the Guantanamo era. We should take him up on that important challenge.

SUPPORTING CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. THOMPSON) for 5 minutes.

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, the Food Network recently broadcast an episode of their hit reality-based cooking television series, ''Chopped.'' Aspiring teen chefs highlighted their culinary skills and competed for a scholarship that would be put towards a leading culinary school. Competition aside, these young chefs are ambassadors of career and technical education programs. They amazed professional judges and made the viewing public second-guess mom's cooking.

As cochair of the bipartisan Career and Technical Education Caucus, which I am proud to lead with my good friend, the gentleman from Rhode Island (Mr. LANGEVIN), I congratulate the Food Network and ''Chopped'' for promoting these young culinary professionals.

Mr. Speaker, inspiration is like lightning; it doesn't strike in the same place twice. With 2014 quickly approaching, we should do everything in our power in order to support the culinary arts and the entire range of other career and technical education programs and fields that offer aspiring young minds and transitioning adults a gateway to success in a rapidly evolving and dynamic job market. The future of America deserves as much.

RECOGNIZING LAWRENCE LIVERMORE NATIONAL LABORATORY FOR OUTSTANDING WORK

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. SWALWELL) for 5 minutes.

Mr. SWALWELL of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory for its outstanding scientific work and the dedicated scientists who played a role in the effort that was recently awarded the 2013 Nobel Peace Prize.

Yesterday, in Oslo, Norway, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, OPCW, received the 2013 Nobel Peace Prize for its work enforcing the global ban on chemical weapons. The OPCW received this prestigious award in part because of the contributions from over 21 scientific laboratories around the world. That work, in different capacities, led to identifying and destroying chemical weapons across the world. One of these laboratories is from the 15th Congressional District, Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory.

Over the past 13 years, Lawrence Livermore Forensic Science Center has worked closely with the OPCW to analyze samples and test for the possible presence of chemical weapons. The OPCW and Lawrence Livermore Laboratory were recognized specifically for actions that OPCW has recently taken in Syria—to identify, destroy, and dismantle the Assad regime's chemical weapons that they most recently used back in August on their own people.

I have been a sharp critic of proposed military action in Syria. I believed all along that there was a third way, that it was not a false choice between isolationism, not doing anything, and taking military action in Syria. The actions of OPCW and the United Nations have shown, in working in collaboration with the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, that diplomacy can work. We can go into Syria and identify these dangerous chemical weapons; we can dismantle them and make sure that a ruthless dictator never again can use them on his own people.

Together, the work of OPCW and Lawrence Livermore Laboratory has created a safer world. But they recognize that their work will not be complete until the world is free of chemical weapons.

I have been a tireless advocate for funding of both Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory and the other laboratory that is in my district, Sandia National Laboratory. The work that is being done right now with OPCW shows that the work being done at our national laboratories has value and that we cannot continue to chip away at Federal funding for our national laboratories.

Congratulations again to OPCW for receiving the Nobel Peace Prize, and I am very proud of the scientific community, the engineers at Lawrence Livermore for your work in support of OPCW and their efforts.

ADDRESSING CHALLENGING FISCAL ISSUES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York (Mr. REED) for 5 minutes.

Mr. REED. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to highlight a framework I have designed which will begin to address the challenging fiscal issues we face as a Nation. This proposal is to deal with the impending debt ceiling crisis that will be coming upon us in February or shortly thereafter.

I am pleased to hear recent news today of a budget agreement dealing with a potential government shutdown resolution that avoids governing by crisis, but we have the debt ceiling issue right behind. What I have put forth, Mr. Speaker, is an honest, sincere proposal consisting of three steps to reduce our spending on the Federal level, address our Nation's broken Tax Code, and ensure the solvency of Social Security and Medicare.

Mr. Speaker, I outlined the proposal in a letter sent to the President on November 15 of this year, and that letter reads:

Dear Mr. President,

It is time. As I have expressed before in writing to you and members of your administration, I am very interested in working with you in a bipartisan manner to implement long-term solutions to America's debt problems. Our impending debt crisis and threats to the solvency of Social Security and Medicare must be solved now before they reach catastrophic levels. I urge you to work with Congress to achieve a long-term solution. As such, I would like to take you up on your public offer to discuss ideas and implement solutions that will no longer force us to govern through crises, cliffs, or shutdown deadlines.

On October 16, 2013, you stated you are ''Willing to work with anybody . . . Democrat or Republican, House or Senate Members on any idea that will grow our economy, create new jobs, strengthen the middle class, and get our fiscal house in order for the long term.'' To that end, I submit the following honest proposal which I truly believe will take a small but significant step forward toward more responsible governance. Also, I hope it might change the culture of Washington, D.C., to an environment where good policy triumphs over politics.

As you can see, the honest proposal is a multistep vision and plan summarized as follows:

Step 1, raise the February 7, 2014, debt ceiling limit in an amount equal to the total CBO score of spending reductions, reforms, and removal of waste, fraud, and abuse within government operations that have already been identified and supported on a bipartisan basis. Attached, please find a list of $573 billion of such government reforms and spending reductions already identified to date.

Step 2a, upon completion of step 1, we will then move to step 2. In step 2, what we would propose is votes in the House and Senate on their respective visions for comprehensive tax reform and also for reform of our entitlement programs to ensure their solvency for another generation would occur. If those votes occur in the House and Senate, there would be automatic relief of the debt ceiling cap for an additional year.

And then we would move to step 3, Mr. President. Step 3 would essentially say, if in the House or the Senate we enact either one of those long-term solutions through our Tax Code or through our entitlement crisis with our Social Security and Medicare insolvency coming down on us, we would immediately, in step 3, relieve the debt ceiling for an additional 2-year period of time. This would mean, Mr. President, the debt ceiling restraint would no longer impact your administration as it would be automatically extended beyond the end of your administration's term.

I kindly request you review this proposal and then meet to discuss how it can be improved and implemented. To me, this is an honest proposal which will put Americans first and begin to address the pressing issues of our day. We have major debt issues that cannot wait any longer. Our arcane Tax Code stifles economic growth, and the fiscal health of Social Security and Medicare is worsening beyond control. If we solve these two challenges, we will place our children and grandchildren and our Nation's finances in a far better position than where they are now projected to be. To me, this adheres to a fundamental rule that we must pass America on to our next generation in a better condition than which we found her.

I look forward to hearing your thoughts and working with you to prevent the dire consequences of failing to address these challenges.

Mr. Speaker, I have yet to receive a response from the President, not even a courtesy response so I know it was received and not lost in the mail between my office in the Longworth Building and the White House, less than 2 miles away.

So I take to the floor of the House today to have my proposal officially recorded and to lay out this framework to get our Nation on a path of fiscal sustainability, to get our American fellow citizens back to work by fixing our Tax Code, and solving the entitlement crisis that is impending upon us.

With that, I ask us to join in this proposal and ask the President to join us in a bipartisan manner to address these concerns.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Members are reminded to address their remarks to the Chair and not to a perceived viewing audience.

FOOD INSECURITY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MCGOVERN) for 5 minutes.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, on Friday, the Republican leadership has decided we will adjourn for the holidays. Notwithstanding the fact that we haven't done immigration reform, we haven't passed a jobs bill, we haven't extended unemployment insurance, they have all decided it is time to go home and enjoy the holidays. So on Friday, we will all leave and go back to our districts.

The one thing we will all have in common, Democrats and Republicans, is we will go back and we will enjoy the holidays, and we will partake in many celebrations. And the one thing that we will not have to worry about is whether or not we will have enough to eat. Our concern, quite frankly, will be overeating.

But the fact is, for millions of our fellow citizens, close to 50 million Americans, they will have to worry about whether they will have enough to eat for them and their families. Fifty million people in this country, the richest country in the history of the world, are hungry; 17 million are kids. All kinds of people fall in that category. Sadly, close to 1 million of our veterans rely on food assistance programs because they don't have enough to eat.

Mr. Speaker, the fact that so many people in the United States of America are hungry is a national disgrace. We should be outraged. There should be outrage in this Chamber. There should be a sense of urgency that we need to solve this problem. Yet what we see is indifference and, in some cases, outright hostility toward those Americans who happen to be poor.

The House of Representatives recently passed a farm bill that cut the SNAP program, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, which is designed to ensure people have enough to eat. They cut that program by $40 billion. In the Senate version, they cut it by about $4.5 billion. There is now a conference committee going on, and press reports say that maybe they will decide on an $8 billion cut.

Eight billion dollars, what does that mean? That means that 850,000 families in this country will be impacted in a negative way by that cut; 1.7 million people.

□ 1030

For those people who would be impacted by that $8 billion cut, it is about a $90 cut per month in the benefit that they get. Every single person on the SNAP program received a cut. That cut that happened on November 1 for an average family of three would be about a $30 cut. So you add the $30 plus the $90 that we are now talking about, that is now a $120 cut per month for these families. That is a lot of money.

The fact of the matter is the SNAP benefit, as it stands, is not overly generous. In fact, I would say it is too stingy. It doesn't provide enough for people to be able to afford food, never mind nutritious food. A lot of the people who show up at our food banks and our food pantries are on the SNAP program. But to cut an average family of three's benefits by about $120 per month is outrageous. We don't have to worry. No one in this Chamber has to worry about whether or not they can afford to put food on the table for their families. Why aren't we more concerned with the fact that there are so many people in this country who are food insecure and who are outright hungry? We need to do something about this.

Mr. Speaker, I have heard my colleagues say, Well, we are not really trying to cut people's benefits; all we are trying to do is reform the program. We are trying to combat a culture of dependency. When you cut this program that provides food to poor people, what you do is you don't deal with an issue of a culture of dependency. What you do is make their lives more miserable. The fact of the matter is the majority of people on SNAP are children, senior citizens, and disabled people. Of those who can work, a majority of them work. There are people who work full time and still are so poor they qualify for SNAP assistance.

And the response of this Congress is going to be to make their lives more miserable? I ask my colleagues who support these cuts, is that what you came here for, to make the lives of the most vulnerable in this country more miserable? Is that what you are here for? Is that the purpose of your service in the United States Congress? Give me a break. We need to solve these problems.

The fact of the matter is that increasing hunger in America costs us a great deal. Hungry kids don't learn in school. Senior citizens who can't afford their food and their medication and take their medication on an empty stomach end up in our emergency rooms. There is a cost to hunger. In fact, it is more expensive to tolerate the hunger in America than it is to solve the problem. We were elected to solve problems, to lift people up, and not put people down.

I would just finally close, Mr. Speaker, by saying I urge the White House to get more involved in this issue, to get involved in this fight. There are some things worth fighting for. Ending poverty and ending hunger in America is worth fighting for.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all my colleagues to reject cuts in the SNAP program that will increase hunger in America.

COMPUTER SCIENCE EDUCATION WEEK

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New Mexico (Mr. BEN RAY LUJÁN) for 5 minutes.

Mr. BEN RAY LUJÁN of New Mexico. Mr. Speaker, to kick off this year's annual Computer Science Education Week taking place from December 9 to December 15, I had the pleasure of visiting with students at Capital High School in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

We took part in the global Hour of Code campaign organized by Computing in the Core and code.org that offers introductory coding activities and tutorials.

I also engaged with students about the importance of computer science by hosting a panel of industry professionals to highlight how diverse and exciting a career in computer science can truly be.

It is conversations like these that can be useful in helping young people navigate toward careers in computer science and STEM. In today's world, a degree in computer science translates into high-paying, in-demand jobs.

At a time when people are struggling to find work in our recovering economy, the computer science industry is growing, and New Mexico is predicted to add 15,360 computing jobs by 2018.

It has become increasingly essential for students to learn the language of code, the same way that they learn reading, writing, and mathematics. If we are to remain economically competitive and have a highly skilled workforce, access to computer science curricula and coding instruction must be a priority.

However, nationwide, only one in 10 schools offers computer science, and there is a great lack of diversity in those that do. Just 4 percent of students enrolled are female and 3 percent are students of color. In New Mexico, only 57 students took the computer science AP exam in 2012. This is a result, in part, of the fact that New Mexico does not offer computer science teacher certifications for middle and high school teachers and is one of the 36 States that does not count computer science courses toward high school graduation requirements for math and science.

Computer science provides students with the 21st-century skills necessary for innovation by teaching design, logical reasoning, and problem-solving. Yet, too few students have access to this rigorous coursework. That is why I cosponsored H.R. 2536, the Computer Science Education Act, that will help ensure that more students have access to computer science education by making it a core academic subject and including computer science teachers in professional development.

I urge my colleagues to join me in support of the Computer Science Education Week and Computer Science Education Act. It is critically important that every student have the opportunity to learn computer science at an early age.

When we show them that they have the power to create the next great app, not just use it, I believe we will capture their hearts and minds and foster the next generation of innovators.

IN MEMORY OF JOHN REDNOUR

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. ENYART) for 5 minutes.

Mr. ENYART. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor the memory of one of my constituents, Mr. John Rednour of Du Quoin, Illinois.

John passed away on December 1, and I had the privilege of attending his funeral service last week. All of us came to honor a man who did so much for southern Illinois. John had many titles, and most of us knew him as the mayor of Du Quoin, a position he held for 24 years. He was a businessman, a banker, and an ironworker. He served for many years on the Illinois State Police Merit Board. But none of those titles do the man justice. He was one of the foremost civic leaders in Illinois, and he worked tirelessly to improve southern Illinois and to create opportunity and jobs for its people.

John was a self-made man who rose from humble beginnings, but never forgot where he came from. His passing is a loss to our region. Most of all, it is a loss for his family; and today I ask my colleagues to remember the Rednour family, especially John's wife of 61 years, Wanda, who was his true partner.

Southern Illinois is a better place because of John Rednour, and today I am proud to honor my friend's memory.

URGING UKRAINE TO SETTLE ITS INTERNAL DISAGREEMENTS PEACEFULLY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR) for 5 minutes.

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, the political turmoil in Ukraine demands the world's attention.

It is now 5 p.m. in Kiev where protesters in Independence Square are regrouping after a night of violent crashes with Ukrainian security forces. As of now, the security forces have begun to pull back from the crackdown; and despite intimidation and threats of violence, the opposition has retained control of Euromaiden, the name given to Independence Square in a clear sign of solidarity with Europe.

The United States has sided unequivocally with those Ukrainians who are demonstrating for an independent Ukraine, for their rights to free assembly and free speech under provisions of

international law, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Our Secretary of State has called upon the Government of Ukraine to respect the rights of all people and expressed the disgust of the United States with the use of force against peaceful protesters as unbefitting a democracy.

As Secretary Kerry noted, the right to free assembly is ''a universal value, not just an American one.''

The House Ukrainian Caucus, which I cochair with Mr. LEVIN and Mr. GERLACH, has expressed its support for the rights of the Ukrainian people to exercise their rights to political speech and free assembly.

Yes, these are difficult, yet hopeful, times for Ukraine, which is trying to find its rightful place among the community of nations despite daunting domestic challenges. The country is gripped by uncertainty, which is exacerbating an already difficult economic situation.

The current crisis was triggered by the decision of the current political leadership to pursue free trade with Ukraine's eastern neighbor, Russia, rather than neighbors to the west, the European Union.

Regardless of the political discord in Ukraine, this Congress should urge all parties to settle their internal disagreements peacefully and without violence.

Ukraine's soils historically have been showered with the precious blood of their country men and women at a higher rate than most human beings could even imagine. The brilliantly recounted ''Bloodlands,'' written by Yale scholar Dr. Timothy Snyder, tells their story. Yes, though Ukraine's very name means borderland, she too often has been a bloodland. May this not happen now.

Ukraine must adapt to embrace a world in which her own independence from interference surpasses any other priority. She should be free to engage all directions, east, west, south, and north, without fear of retaliation. She is a bridge to all nations, and therein will lie her prosperity.

As Zbigniew Brzezinski, national security adviser to President Carter writes in today's Financial Times:

> Two decades of independence, of growing pride in rediscovering Ukrainian history, and of observing the country's western neighbors economically benefiting from their European connections is creating a new mindset. That mindset is not embracing anti-Russianism, but it is asserting Ukraine's own historic identity as culturally an authentic part of a larger Europe.

Mr. Brzezinski believes the current political change in Ukraine is part of an historically significant, yet inevitable, political transformation. He believes Ukraine and Russia, too, will eventually orient to the west. I have ultimate respect in his opinion and pray he is correct.

Those of us who love Ukraine have longed for the day when it is no longer a prisoner of geography, hemmed in between Germany and Russia, but a free and willing member of the community of democratic nations.

Perhaps one day Ukraine will break free of the shackles of domination of the past. Perhaps one day Ukraine's geographic location will be an asset, not a liability, a day when Ukraine looks both east and west and, in fact, in all four directions.

But as we can see from the images coming to us from Kiev, the road will not be smooth. We know the future lies with freedom and with democracy and with opportunity, not repression in isolation; but that is cold comfort in the streets of Ukraine today.

The United States Congress must stand forthrightly with the liberty-loving people of Ukraine during this difficult hour. At this time of testing, the people of Ukraine and the people of the United States should be inspired by the words of Ukraine's most famous poet, Taras Shevchenko:

> Then in your own house you will see true justice, strength and liberty. There is no other such Ukraine.''

[From the Financial Times, Dec. 10, 2013]

RUSSIA, LIKE UKRAINE, WILL BECOME A REAL DEMOCRACY

(By Zbigniew Brzezinski)

Come what may, the events in Ukraine are historically irreversible and geopolitically transformatory. Sooner rather than later, Ukraine will be truly a part of democratic Europe; later rather than sooner, Russia will follow unless it isolates itself and becomes a semi-stagnant imperialistic relic.

The spontaneous outburst of distinctive Ukrainian patriotism—sparked by the mendacity of a corrupt and self-enriching leadership ready to seek Moscow's protection—signals that commitment to national independence is becoming the dominant political reality. This is especially the case among the younger Ukrainians who no longer feel that they are linguistically or historically just a slightly deviant part of ''Mother Russia''.

Yes, linguistic divisions persist and some parts of Ukraine still feel closer to Russia. But it is striking that even some of the most outspoken espousers of a European vocation have only recently embraced the Ukrainian language as their own. Two decades of independence, of growing pride in rediscovering Ukrainian history, and of observing the country's western neighbours economically benefiting from their European connections is creating a new mindset. That mindset is not embracing anti-Russianism but it is asserting Ukraine's own historic identity as culturally an authentic part of a larger Europe.

That is why, one way or another, Ukraine will unavoidably come closer to Europe. It is striking that even in neighbouring Belarus, ruled by the authoritarian Lukashenko regime, a similar western orientation is beginning to surface. Neither country is motivated by hostility towards Russia, but each senses that its independence as well as its cultural identity points increasingly in a westward direction.

In the next months some sort of a deal between the EU and Ukraine can still be contrived. To facilitate it, the EU must be more receptive to Kiev's need for economic and financial support. Ukrainians have to realise that European taxpayers are not enchanted by the prospect of paying for the misdeeds and corruption of the current Kiev elite. Belt-tightening will be the necessary precondition for an agreement as well as a test of Ukraine's resolve in asserting its European aspirations. Kiev will also need to show that the outcome of elections is not determined by the imprisonment of political rivals.

The impact of this on Russia will be felt over the longer run. Moscow's current geopolitical goal, shaped by President Vladimir Putin's nostalgic obsession with the country's imperial past, is to recreate in a new guise something akin to the old Russian empire or the more recent Soviet ''union''.

Mr. Putin seems to harbour the naive notion that the leaders of the post-Soviet states will genuinely accept a subordinate role in a Kremlin-led entity. Some of the leaders do pay occasional lip service to that formula—but out of necessity, not conviction. All prefer independence: it is more pleasant to be presidents, prime ministers, generals, ambassadors and economic moneymakers at home rather than to be the provincial equivalents thereof in a larger Russian empire. The historically proven fact is that national statehood, once attained, is infectious and almost impossible to undo except through massive external force.

Today's Russia is in no position to assert a violent restoration of its old empire. It is too weak, too backward and too poor. Its demographic crisis makes matters worse. The fact that the newly independent Central Asian states favour increasingly comprehensive arrangements with China is another concern for Russia, reawakening long lingering territorial nightmares.

It is only a question of time before it becomes evident to Russia's social elites that Mr. Putin's heavy-handed efforts have very limited prospects of success. Sooner or later, he will no longer be president. And not long thereafter Russia—and especially its emerging new middle class—will conclude that the only path that makes sense is to become also a truly modern, democratic, and maybe even a leading European state.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until noon today.

Accordingly (at 10 o'clock and 43 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1200

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker at noon.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, the Reverend Patrick J. Conroy, offered the following prayer:

Gracious God, we give You thanks for giving us another day.

You have blessed us with all good gifts, and with thankful hearts, we express our gratitude. You have created us with opportunities to serve other people in their need, to share together in respect and affection, and to be faithful in the responsibilities we have been given.

In this moment of prayer, please grant to the Members of this people's House the gifts of wisdom and discernment that in their words and actions

they will do justice, love with mercy, and walk humbly with You.

May all that is done this day be for Your greater honor and glory.

Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to clause 1, rule I, I demand a vote on agreeing to the Speaker's approval of the Journal.

The SPEAKER. The question is on the Speaker's approval of the Journal.

The question was taken; and the Speaker announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I object to the vote on the ground that a quorum is not present and make the point of order that a quorum is not present.

The SPEAKER. Pursuant to clause 8, rule XX, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

The point of no quorum is considered withdrawn.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER. Will the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. HULTGREN) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. HULTGREN led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

> I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

The SPEAKER. The Chair will entertain up to 15 requests for 1-minute speeches on each side of the aisle.

RECOGNIZING COMPUTER SCIENCE EDUCATION WEEK

(Mr. HULTGREN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. HULTGREN. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize Computer Science Education Week.

On Monday, I participated in an international ''Hour of Code.'' PJ, a 12-year-old programming genius, helped me write basic computer code for the game Angry Birds.

Elgin Technology Center staff, along with local robotics team mentor Carol McKellar, organized an important educational event for students eager about coding. If these kids can accomplish what we did in just an hour, imagine how far students could go if computer science were more accessible at a younger age.

Currently, software jobs outnumber students 3 to 1. Teaching coding can help fill employers' growing needs for graduates in computing fields. Coding is not just for computer scientists. Fields such as advanced manufacturing require workers skilled in computer science.

If I can learn, it shows anyone can learn to code.

EXTEND UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

(Ms. BONAMICI asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. BONAMICI. Mr. Speaker, in this holiday season of compassion and giving, we must not forget those who are still suffering from the effects of the worst recession to hit our country since the Great Depression.

Although the recent news about job creation is cause for optimism and the budget negotiations look promising, there are still too many trying every day to find work to allow them to put food on the table and keep a roof over their heads.

We must pass an extension of unemployment insurance. Unless we take action, millions of Americans, thousands of them Oregonians, will see unemployment benefits end in a few short weeks. Remember, benefits are contingent on continued job search. Our constituents are searching, but if they are still out of work, they are about to lose a lifeline. We can't let that happen.

I encourage House leadership to bring a resolution to the floor that will continue unemployment insurance for another year. We must act now. This is no time to end assistance to millions of Americans who are out of work through no fault of their own.

CONSTITUENTS ARE HURTING BECAUSE OF OBAMACARE

(Mr. WILSON of South Carolina asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, people across America are hurting because ObamaCare is destroying jobs. Thousands of residents from North Augusta to Blythewood in South Carolina's Second Congressional District have appealed for answers to the difficulties they are facing because of the government health care takeover. Kathleen Sebelius has failed.

Over the weekend, I heard from constituents who were applying for a second or third job because their current income will not cover the increased costs of health care. Others have shared stories of sticker shock because they pay three times more for the same coverage.

Concerns have been vindicated by the projections of job losses by the National Federation of Independent Business because of the health care takeover.

We must repeal and replace ObamaCare with a patient-centered plan that creates jobs, which has been long proposed by Congressman Dr. TOM PRICE, and puts personal health care decisions back into the people's hands.

In conclusion, God bless our troops, and we will never forget September the 11th in the global war on terrorism.

Congratulations to First Lieutenant Hunter Wilson for completing his service this year in Afghanistan.

EXTEND UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE BENEFITS

(Ms. KELLY of Illinois asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. KELLY of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of over 1 million Americans to urge my colleagues to extend unemployment insurance benefits so they can continue to meet their basic needs while searching for work.

Last week, we were encouraged by the labor report that showed the economy was adding jobs, the unemployment rate is shrinking, and companies are again investing. But there is still work to be done. For the 11 million Americans without a job, the economy is still in a state of emergency. When a mom in Chicago or a dad in Kankakee loses their job, the whole family feels it.

I have met with many people from Illinois with impressive qualifications who are weary from the job search. They want what we all want: a good job, a livable wage, and a Congress that will work to create new economic opportunities. But until that is achieved, they are asking for a hand up, not a handout, in these tough times.

It is for these Americans I urge my colleagues to extend unemployment insurance benefits now, because every citizen deserves support in their pursuit of the American Dream.

WHAT IS THE PRESIDENT'S PLAN?

(Ms. FOXX asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, what we know is this: on January 1, millions of Americans are scheduled to lose the health insurance plans they liked and wanted to keep. Nowhere near that many have managed to enroll in ObamaCare. Because Washington said those plans would be illegal on January 1, health care providers followed the law and took steps to cancel millions of plans on schedule.

But President Obama and Secretary Sebelius haven't been ready with a functional alternative, and certainly not an affordable alternative for the millions of Americans who will be without coverage on January 1 because of ObamaCare.

No one wants to see a situation where fewer Americans have coverage, but forcing an unready law and unwanted alternatives on the American

people might just have unintended consequences.

So what's the President's plan?

The American people are tired of waiting for clarity from an administration that keeps waiting until the last minute to change its mind and announce the next big delay.

RENEW SPECIAL DIABETES PROGRAM

(Ms. BROWNLEY of California asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. BROWNLEY of California. Mr. Speaker, last year diabetes cost the U.S. economy $245 billion. That number will only continue to climb unless Congress supports critical medical research and treatment initiatives like the Special Diabetes Program.

The Special Diabetes Program contributes to groundbreaking research at the National Institutes of Health. Continued investment in this program will bring hope for a cure and a better life to the 26 million Americans living with diabetes. The Special Diabetes Program also funds treatment, education, and prevention programs for American Indian and Alaska Native families who are disproportionately affected by diabetes.

We must continue our commitment to fighting this deadly disease. Without a timely, multiyear renewal, work that could save hundreds of thousands of lives is put at risk. I urge my colleagues to support legislation to renew the Special Diabetes Program.

REPUBLICAN SOLUTIONS

(Mrs. BROOKS of Indiana asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mrs. BROOKS of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, we still have a lot of improving to do. While last week's job report showed some encouraging signs, there is more work to be done.

What are House Republicans doing to help?

Well, for one, we want to get government out of the way of economic growth. We want to curb the excessive regulations coming out of Washington, D.C. We want to protect Americans from the harmful effects of ObamaCare.

And with so many Americans still struggling to make ends meet, it is not fair that Washington Democrats want to force people to pay more for their own health care. What is more, policy cancelations and technical problems have left many Americans unsure if they are even covered at all.

That is not going to help our economy. We need real pro-growth solutions that will create more jobs and give all Americans a shot.

AIRLINE FEE INCREASE

(Ms. GABBARD asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. GABBARD. Mr. Speaker, I want to commend the work that has been done by Senator MURRAY and Congressman RYAN as we work towards passing a budget deal before the end of this year. I think the end result is not perfect in anyone's eyes, but what they have done is something that symbolized what can be achieved when two sides come together in the best interests for our country.

However, there is one element of the agreement that I am raising with concern because my State of Hawaii has a very unique circumstance. We have six major islands where people live with no interisland railway, no highway or ferry system that connects each of these islands; and people who commute back and forth, people who look for access to health care, have no option other than to fly. In some cases, this air route is an essential lifeline in each of these areas.

In the past, Congress has recognized Hawaii's unique situation and exclusive reliance on air travel. We are concerned about the disparate impact of increased taxes and fees on this air travel in our State.

Again, the budget deal is a solid step in the right direction, but we must ensure that the people of Hawaii, who have no options available to them other than to fly, are not unduly burdened with the fee increase. I look forward to being able to address this issue.

ALICIA DAWN KOEHL RESPECT FOR NATIONAL CEMETERIES ACT

(Mr. STUTZMAN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. STUTZMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of S. 1471, the Alicia Dawn Koehl Respect for National Cemeteries Act. I thank my Indiana colleagues, Senator DAN COATS and Congresswoman SUSAN BROOKS, for their hard work.

The namesake of this bill is Alicia Dawn Koehl. She was the wife of Fort Wayne native Paul Koehl from my district and the mother of two children. She was also the daughter-in-law of Frank and Carol Koehl.

Last year, Alicia was tragically murdered, and after her killer, an Army veteran, committed suicide, he was buried in a national cemetery with military honors despite laws prohibiting such distinction.

This bill provides the Department of Veterans Affairs the authority to right such wrongs, ensuring our national cemeteries are reserved for our country's most deserving heroes.

Mr. Speaker, my sympathies go out to the family and friends of Ms. Koehl. It is impossible for any of us here today to fully grasp the hardship they have needlessly endured.

I respectfully ask my colleagues to support this legislation.

EMERGENCY UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION EXTENSION ACT

(Ms. TITUS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. TITUS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the nearly 40,000 unemployed Nevadans at risk of losing their benefits if Congress fails to act before the end of the year.

While our economy has slowly begun to recover from the recession and housing crisis, there are still 1.3 million fewer jobs today than when the recession started 6 years ago. Nearly 4 million jobless Americans have been unemployed for more than 27 weeks. And while a newly unemployed worker has a 20 to 30 percent chance of getting hired, a long-term unemployed worker has only a 1 in 10 chance of finding a new job in any given month.

Cutting off a critical lifeline to those already struggling to make ends meet would be irresponsible and reckless, causing significant damage to our economic growth and costing our economy nearly 310,000 jobs, including 3,000 in Nevada.

I am proud to cosponsor the Emergency Unemployment Compensation Extension Act that would extend this vital program and related provisions for another year.

So before Congress pats itself on the back about a budget deal, let's think about those families truly in need during these holidays and beyond.

□ 1215

JOBS AND THE ECONOMY

(Mr. VEASEY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. VEASEY. Mr. Speaker, as our Nation's economy continues to improve, we still need to have a serious discussion about jobs in this country.

As Congress will soon debate whether to extend unemployment benefits for needy Americans, we must remember that there are young people that are graduating from high schools in our country that are not ready to take jobs that are in high demand.

For instance, from an article I read in The Wall Street Journal last year, an estimated 600,000 skilled middle class manufacturing jobs went unfilled in this country. That is absolutely unacceptable. Much of that can be attributed to kids who are simply unprepared.

Mr. Speaker, improved education must be included if we are serious about rebuilding the middle class in this country. And if we are really serious about looking out for the middle class, we have to do something about raising the minimum wage in this country. Any serious discussion about raising the standard of living in our country without addressing these two areas of education and raising the low minimum wage that we have is simply not addressing the issue seriously.

Mr. Speaker, I am trying to address these issues by having a job fair in my district on Friday, January 24, in Fort Worth at the Resource Connection. It is efforts like these and many others that will help get the middle class back on track in this country.

GABRIELLA MILLER KIDS FIRST RESEARCH ACT OF 2013

(Ms. JENKINS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. JENKINS. Mr. Speaker, ''Stop talking; start doing.'' That is what Gabriella Miller, a passionate childhood cancer advocate asks of our Nation's leaders.

As an original cosponsor of the Gabriella Miller Kids First Research Act, I encourage my colleagues to honor her request and support this piece of legislation. The bill directs $126 million to fund a new pediatric research initiative at the National Institutes of Health. These dollars will fund research, clinical trials, and medical advancement aimed at discovering better treatments to help kids fight their battles against childhood diseases.

In my State, the University of Kansas Medical Center is making great strides in the fight against pediatric illnesses, including plans for a pediatric blood cancer program, research to prevent severe behavior disorders in children, and efforts to establish an institute for children's health and development.

Although Gabriella lost her battle to brain cancer in October, this bill supports programs that will find cures for brave kids like her.

NELSON MANDELA

(Mr. MORAN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. MORAN. Mr. Speaker, our lives will go on, but the life of the world community was forever changed by the life of Nelson Mandela, who passed away this week.

He chose the principles of truth and reconciliation and democracy and peace through justice to guide his life, and he was willing to give his life for those principles.

It is unfortunate that the United States didn't support world sanctions against South Africa. I would hope if we had the opportunity to oppose apartheid wherever it exists throughout the world again that we would follow the lead of Nelson Mandela.

Treating people differently because of their race or their class or their religion is simply wrong. The way that we honor Nelson Mandela best is to follow his principles. He transformed this world. We have the opportunity now to learn from his life and to follow his principles.

COMPUTER SCIENCE EDUCATION WEEK

(Mr. POLIS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. POLIS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of Computer Science Education Week, a time in which educators, businesses, policymakers, and communities can come together to celebrate the important role of computer science.

In the next 10 years, there will be more than 1 million more computer science jobs than we have students studying computer science. We need to address that gap. That is why Representative BROOKS and I introduced the Computer Science Education Act, H.R. 2536. Without creating any new Federal programs or requiring any new spending, our bill would allow existing Federal funding to support computer science programs across our schools.

This week, students across the country can try out computer science by participating in the ''Hour of Code.'' On Monday in my district, St. Vrain Valley School District students worked with Oracle to develop apps to help get K–8 students excited about computer science. At CU-Boulder, college students designed their own video games that allow people with no coding experience to create their own 3–D worlds. Through the National Center for Women and Information Technology in my district, more than 300 companies are working to increase the participation of girls and women in computing.

I hope you join me in supporting Computer Science Education Week either by participating in the ''Hour of Code'' or supporting the Computer Science Education Act.

NATIONAL INDUSTRIES FOR THE BLIND

(Mr. LANKFORD asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to wish a happy anniversary to an organization that is actually helping people.

Seventy-five years ago, the Wagner-O'Day Act was signed here in the United States Congress. It is now known as the AbilityOne Program. It honors each individual person across our country with unique disabilities to be able to say as a Nation we are going to stand with you on that.

I believe firmly that every individual evaluates success in a different way, but I think part of how they evaluate success is do they have a great family experience, do they have a great community of friends around them, are they deep in their own personal faith, and do they have work that is meaningful.

The AbilityOne Program—and what is happening specifically in my State with an organization connected to them called NewView Oklahoma—they are helping people have great value and understanding that people that are blind and visually impaired can have great success in life and can contribute to society.

They are producing products that are sold commercially and to governments that are all over the world. In fact, 2 years ago I was in Afghanistan; and when we landed, as we got off the back of the aircraft there, there was one of the bright yellow chalks that is uniquely made in Oklahoma by people that are blind and visually impaired.

This is a great gift that we are doing, and I wish them happy anniversary.

IMMIGRATION REFORM

(Mr. SCHIFF asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SCHIFF. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to call on Speaker BOEHNER to allow passage of the comprehensive immigration reform legislation. It is vital that we approach the issue of immigration with a sense of urgency, a spirit of compassion, and a commitment to security. Most important, reform must provide a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants and allow them to emerge from the shadows.

My congressional office has one of the highest volumes of immigration cases in California, and the stories that are shared with me are heartbreaking. I receive calls from constituents every day describing the hardships that our broken immigration system has placed on their families, and I have heard their pleas for help.

The current wait time for many family members to reunite in the United States can be 10 years or more. DREAMers who came to the United States as young children and are pursuing a college degree or serving in the military have limited or no career opportunities and are stuck in endless limbo.

Our broken immigration system takes a terrible toll on innocent families, local law enforcement, and our economy. We must not further delay action. The time to fix it is now.

IMMIGRATION REFORM

(Mr. GRIJALVA asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. GRIJALVA. Mr. Speaker, as Members of the House reach their conclusions on the budget deal announced by Congressman RYAN and Senator MURRAY, I might add it is a deal devoid of any support for the unemployed, real investment in jobs and education, and tax reform that produces fairness, pushing additional cost burdens on Federal employees. But it does avoid cuts to Social Security and Medicare and the Republican-inspired government shutdown and near default.

I want to remind my colleagues in the House that that same kind of effort, attention, and risk is needed on the issue of comprehensive immigration reform. If we can produce a budget deal through the crisis that we have been through, then it is time for the House of Representatives and the Republican leadership to step up and produce the same kind of effort, the same kind of attention to one of the most critical domestic issues affecting so many families and communities in this country, and that is the question of comprehensive immigration reform.

If we have the fortitude, the risk to compromise on a budget, we should certainly be able to do that for immigration reform.

NIH FUNDING

(Ms. KUSTER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. KUSTER. Mr. Speaker, the National Institutes of Health has helped make America one of the great engines of biomedical discovery.

NIH funding is critical for NIH to sustain its mission of improving health through scientific breakthroughs and maintain our international leadership.

I am proud that some of the world's best scientific research is taking place right here in New Hampshire. In New Hampshire, lifesaving research at Dartmouth College and UNH is made possible by NIH grants.

Unfortunately, the first year of sequestration required NIH to cut 5 percent of its budget. Many of America's young scientists are leaving the U.S. to pursue their research abroad for more stable positions.

If the sequestration were to continue for the full 10 years, NIH would lose a staggering $19 billion, and our Nation would lose precious time in its race against Alzheimer's disease, cancer, autism, HIV/AIDS, and countless other diseases that cause pain and suffering.

I urge congressional leaders to approve robust funding for NIH and to reverse the damaging impact of sequestration on research programs.

AFFORDABLE CARE ACT

(Mrs. NEGRETE McLEOD asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mrs. NEGRETE McLEOD. Mr. Speaker, the Affordable Care Act is moving in the right direction and delivering what the law was intended to do: delivering a wider range of medical services to all Americans, including improved access to mental health services.

The administration announced that $100 million of additional funding would be made available to expand and improve the way Americans receive mental health services.

According to the California HealthCare Foundation, nearly one in six Californian adults has a mental health need and approximately one in 20 suffers from a serious mental illness that makes it difficult to carry out major life activities. The rate among children is higher where one in 13 suffers from a mental illness that limits participation in daily activities.

While most mental illnesses are treatable, those with mental illness often struggle to get needed treatment if they do not have health insurance that covers mental health services. Starting next year, insurers would not be able to deny coverage or charge an individual more due to preexisting health conditions, including mental illnesses. The health care law would also require most health plans to cover recommended preventive services like depression screening for adults and behavior assessment for children.

RESIGNATION AS MEMBER OF COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY, COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES, AND COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. POE of Texas) laid before the House the following resignation as a member of the Committee on the Judiciary, the Committee on Natural Resources, and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs:

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, December 9, 2013.

Hon. JOHN BOEHNER,
Speaker, House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR SPEAKER BOEHNER: I wish to resign from my assignments to the House Committee on the Judiciary, the House Committee on Natural Resources, and the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs effective the week of December 9th, 2013. My resignation is in order to facilitate my appointment to the House Committee on Appropriations. Thank you for the opportunity.

Sincerely,

MARK E. AMODEI.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the resignations are accepted.

There was no objection.

RESIGNATION AS MEMBER OF COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES, AND COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND THE WORKFORCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following resignation as a member of the Committee on Agriculture, the Committee on Armed Services, and the Committee on Education and the Workforce:

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, December 11, 2013.

Hon. JOHN BOEHNER,
Speaker of the House,
Washington, DC.

DEAR SPEAKER BOEHNER: Please accept this letter as resignation from my seats on the House Committee on Agriculture, the House Committee on Armed Services, and the House Committee on Education and the Workforce.

I thank you for the opportunity to serve on these important Committees. I remain committed to supporting my district's unique military, agriculture, and educational interests in my new capacity on the House Committee on Appropriations.

Sincerely,

MARTHA ROBY,
Member of Congress.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the resignations are accepted.

There was no objection.

RESIGNATION AS MEMBER OF COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE, SPACE, AND TECHNOLOGY, COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY, AND COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following resignation as a member of the Committee on Science, Space, and Technology, the Committee on Homeland Security, and the Committee on Natural Resources:

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, December 9, 2013.

OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER,
House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR SPEAKER BOEHNER: As you are aware, the Steering Committee acted last week on my request to join the Appropriations Committee. In order to move on to the Appropriations Committee, I am writing to resign from my current committee assignments, including all subcommittees on:

The Science, Space, and Technology Committee;

The Homeland Security Committee; and

The Natural Resources Committee.

I have truly enjoyed my service on these committees. I similarly look forward to serving on the Appropriations Committee.

Sincerely,

CHRIS STEWART.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the resignations are accepted.

There was no objection.

□ 1230

ELECTING CERTAIN MEMBERS TO CERTAIN STANDING COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Ms. JENKINS. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the House Republican Conference, I send to the desk a privileged resolution and ask for its immediate consideration in the House.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 437

Resolved, That the following named Members be, and are hereby, elected to the following standing committees of the House of Representatives:

COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE—Mr. McAllister.

COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS—Mrs. Roby, Mr. Amodei, and Mr. Stewart.

COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES—Mr. McAllister.

Ms. JENKINS (during the reading). Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to dispense with the reading.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Kansas?

There was no objection.

The resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the Chair will postpone further proceedings today on motions to suspend the rules on which a recorded vote or the yeas and nays are ordered, or on which the vote incurs objection under clause 6 of rule XX.

Record votes on postponed questions will be taken later.

NATIVE AMERICAN VETERANS' MEMORIAL AMENDMENTS ACT OF 2013

Mr. MULLIN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 2319) to clarify certain provisions of the Native American Veterans' Memorial Establishment Act of 1994, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 2319

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the ''Native American Veterans' Memorial Amendments Act of 2013''.

SEC. 2. NATIVE AMERICAN VETERANS' MEMORIAL.

(a) AUTHORITY TO ESTABLISH MEMORIAL.—Section 3 of the Native American Veterans' Memorial Establishment Act of 1994 (20 U.S.C. 80q–5 note; 108 Stat. 4067) is amended—

(1) in subsection (b), by striking ''within the interior structure of the facility provided for by'' and inserting ''on property under the jurisdiction of the Museum on the site described in''; and

(2) in subsection (c)(1), by striking '', in consultation with the Museum, is'' and inserting ''and the National Museum of the American Indian are''.

(b) PAYMENT OF EXPENSES.—Section 4(a) of the Native American Veterans' Memorial Establishment Act of 1994 (20 U.S.C. 80q–5 note; 108 Stat. 4067) is amended—

(1) in the heading, by inserting ''AND NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAN INDIAN'' after ''AMERICAN INDIANS''; and

(2) in the first sentence, by striking ''shall be solely'' and inserting ''and the National Museum of the American Indian shall be''.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. MULLIN) and the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. GRIJALVA) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Oklahoma.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. MULLIN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous materials on the bill under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Oklahoma?

There was no objection.

Mr. MULLIN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

H.R. 2319 is a bill that would continue to recognize the efforts of all Native American, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian veterans across the Nation. These brave soldiers, including my own grandfather, Kenneth Morris, sacrificed much for the country they love. It is important that we properly honor these brave soldiers and tell their story for generations to come.

As many of my colleagues know, last month Congress awarded Congressional Gold Medals to Native American code talkers from all over the country, a long overdue recognition for their bravery and valor. These men saved countless lives during World Wars I and II by using their native languages.

My bill amends a 1994 law that allows the National Museum of the American Indian more flexibility to design and raise funds for the building of a memorial. The memorial is currently authorized to be constructed inside the confines of the museum, but with the limited space within the museum itself, this bill provides for a more appropriate tribute.

This bipartisan bill has received overwhelming support from the National Congress of American Indians and the National Museum of the American Indian. As one of only two Native Americans in Congress, it has been my privilege to work to make this memorial a reality.

I ask for your support of this legislation which was reported by unanimous consent from the Committee on Natural Resources just last week and will require no cost to the American taxpayers.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself as much time as I may consume.

(Mr. GRIJALVA asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GRIJALVA. Mr. Speaker, H.R. 2319 authorizes the construction of a Native American Veterans Memorial on the grounds of the National Museum of the American Indian. The memorial is already authorized to be built within the museum, but planning efforts have identified the needs for more space. This bill simply allows the memorial to be built outside.

Native Americans have a long and proud tradition of military service. Navajo code talkers were involved in every assault the U.S. Marines conducted in the Pacific from 1942 to 1945. Their heroics even inspired a Hollywood movie, but the proud tradition of Native American service goes all the way back to the Revolutionary War. Since then, the Nation's first Americans have fought in every U.S. engagement, and it is about time that we recognize their service with a national memorial. I cannot think of a better place to commemorate that tradition than on the grounds of the National Museum.

I also want to take time to thank Congressman MULLIN for his leadership and sponsorship of this legislation, overdue, and very, very appropriate and historically necessary.

We support H.R. 2319 and urge its passage.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. MULLIN. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the bipartisan support from my colleague from Arizona and definitely the support from the other side of the aisle that so often is needed inside this House.

Mr. Speaker, at this time, I yield as much time as he may consume to the gentleman from North Dakota (Mr. CRAMER).

Mr. CRAMER. Mr. Speaker, I certainly want to thank my friend and colleague from Oklahoma. He is a colleague on the Natural Resources Committee with me, as well as the Indian and Alaska Native Affairs Subcommittee, and Mr. MULLIN has demonstrated great leadership on this important legislation.

In my State of North Dakota, our citizens enlist in the military at a rate four times the national average. Much of the credit for this impressive statistic really belongs to the thousands of our native citizens who have enlisted at very, very high rates, citizens from the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa, from the Fort Berthold Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara Nation, from our Sioux Nations at Fort Yates and Fort Totten, from the Standing Rock and Spirit Lake Nations as well as Sisseton-Wahpeton Sioux Nation who have demonstrated exemplary patriotism in their enlistment. And furthermore, they carry out this patriotism with incredible pride, understandable and appropriate pride in the way they participate with their honor and color guards at veterans' events throughout our State.

This memorial and these amendments are really a very appropriate and important recognition of their sacrifice and their service and their unique contribution to our society, especially given the history of our Nation's birth.

So, Mr. Speaker, I encourage all of our colleagues to honor our native veterans by voting ''yes'' on this important legislation.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Mr. Speaker, I yield as much time as she may consume to the gentlewoman from Minnesota (Ms. MCCOLLUM), cochair of the Native American Caucus in the House.

Ms. MCCOLLUM. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of the Native American Veterans' Memorial Amendment Act.

Native Americans have served in our Armed Forces at higher rates than any other ethnic group, even while being denied the right to vote and full citizenship in this country.

Their contributions include 27 recipients of the Medal of Honor and code talkers, whose native languages became the unbreakable code, keeping

America safe, keeping America strong. A permanent memorial for these brave men and women will ensure all Americans are able to honor and remember their sacrifice.

While construction of such a memorial has been authorized since 1994, this bill offers critical amendments to make it a reality. It allows the National Museum of the American Indian to build the memorial on its grounds and permits the museum to work with the National Congress of American Indians in raising funding.

This honor is past due for the thousands of Native American veterans and servicemembers and their families, and I urge my colleagues to join me, to join all of us in giving thanks for their service by supporting this bill.

Mr. MULLIN. Mr. Speaker, I yield as much time as he may consume to the gentleman from Montana (Mr. DAINES).

Mr. DAINES. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank Congressman MULLIN for the work he has done in leading this important bill and bringing it to the floor, as well as the bipartisan support from my distinguished friend and Member from Arizona (Mr. GRIJALVA), as we are bringing something together here that is bipartisan in nature for a very important reason.

Montana is the proud home of seven federally recognized tribes, along with the State-recognized tribe the Little Shell. Montana's tribes not only represent an important part of Montana's history and our heritage, in fact, more than 2,500 Montana tribal members are veterans who serve as true examples of service, of bravery, of patriotism.

Last month, I was blessed with the opportunity to meet with some of those Montana veterans, their families, and other tribal members in Washington, D.C., for a Congressional Gold Medal ceremony honoring the Native American code talkers who served in both World Wars. In fact, it was a special moment.

I brought several of those members of the Crow Tribe, descendants of these Crow code talkers, to the House floor for a tour after Congress had adjourned. And here we were, in this great Chamber, as these members of the Crow Tribe presented a blessing in their native language that was helpful in allowing us to win the World Wars.

This recognition was long overdue and well-deserved for these brave and selfless men and women. I think it is important that all of our Native American veterans receive the honor they deserve.

This bill would help a memorial commemorating our Native American veterans to be constructed on the National American Indian Museum grounds here in Washington, D.C. This memorial will serve as an important symbol of gratitude for the thousands of native men and women who have fought to keep us free.

I hope all Members will join me today in supporting this effort to show our Native American veterans the appreciation and honor that is most deserved.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Mr. Speaker, I have no further speakers.

I just want to conclude by again thanking the sponsor of the legislation and, I think, to point out the obvious: this legislation is important, its timing is important, and the fact that this recognition, per capita, for contributions to our Nation in military service for Native American peoples and tribes across this country is a very important one. It speaks to real loyalty, real love of the land, and real love of this Nation. I am proud to be here and to lend my support to this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. MULLIN. Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Arizona for his support on this very important piece of legislation.

We have no further speakers, so I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. MULLIN) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 2319, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. MULLIN. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

ALICIA DAWN KOEHL RESPECT FOR NATIONAL CEMETERIES ACT

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (S. 1471) to authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs and the Secretary of the Army to reconsider decisions to inter or honor the memory of a person in a national cemetery, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

S. 1471

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the ''Alicia Dawn Koehl Respect for National Cemeteries Act''.

SEC. 2. AUTHORITY TO RECONSIDER DECISIONS OF SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS OR SECRETARY OF THE ARMY TO INTER THE REMAINS OR HONOR THE MEMORY OF A PERSON IN A NATIONAL CEMETERY.

(a) AUTHORITY TO RECONSIDER PRIOR DECISIONS.—Section 2411 of title 38, United States Code, is amended—

(1) by redesignating subsection (d) as subsection (f); and

(2) by inserting after subsection (c) the following new subsections:

''(d)(1) In a case described in subsection (e), the appropriate Federal official may reconsider a decision to—

''(A) inter the remains of a person in a cemetery in the National Cemetery Administration or in Arlington National Cemetery; or

''(B) honor the memory of a person in a memorial area in a cemetery in the National Cemetery Administration (described in section 2403(a) of this title) or in such an area in Arlington National Cemetery (described in section 2409(a) of this title).

''(2)(A)(i) In a case described in subsection (e)(1)(A), the appropriate Federal official shall provide notice to the deceased person's next of kin or other person authorized to arrange burial or memorialization of the deceased person of the decision of the appropriate Federal official to disinter the remains of the deceased person or to remove a memorial headstone or marker memorializing the deceased person.

''(ii) In a case described in subsection (e)(1)(B), if the appropriate Federal official finds, based upon a showing of clear and convincing evidence and after an opportunity for a hearing in a manner prescribed by the appropriate Federal official, that the person had committed a Federal capital crime or a State capital crime but had not been convicted of such crime by reason of such person not being available for trial due to death or flight to avoid prosecution, the appropriate Federal official shall provide notice to the deceased person's next of kin or other person authorized to arrange burial or memorialization of the deceased person of the decision of the appropriate Federal official to disinter the remains of the deceased person or to remove a memorial headstone or marker memorializing the deceased person.

''(B) Notice under subparagraph (A) shall be provided by the appropriate Federal official as follows:

''(i) By the Secretary in accordance with section 5104 of this title.

''(ii) By the Secretary of Defense in accordance with such regulations as the Secretary of Defense shall prescribe for purposes of this subsection.

''(3)(A) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the next of kin or other person authorized to arrange burial or memorialization of the deceased person shall be allowed a period of 60 days from the date of the notice required by paragraph (2) to file a notice of disagreement with the Federal official that provided the notice.

''(B)(i) A notice of disagreement filed with the Secretary under subparagraph (A) shall be treated as a notice of disagreement filed under section 7105 of this title and shall initiate appellate review in accordance with the provisions of chapter 71 of this title.

''(ii) A notice of disagreement filed with the Secretary of Defense under subparagraph (A) shall be decided in accordance with such regulations as the Secretary of Defense shall prescribe for purposes of this subsection.

''(4) When the decision of the appropriate Federal official to disinter the remains or remove a memorial headstone or marker of the deceased person becomes final either by failure to appeal the decision in accordance with paragraph (3)(A) or by final disposition of the appeal pursuant to paragraph (3)(B), the appropriate Federal official may take any of the following actions:

''(A) Disinter the remains of the person from the cemetery in the National Cemetery Administration or in Arlington National Cemetery and provide for the reburial or other appropriate disposition of the disinterred remains in a place other than a cemetery in the National Cemetery Administration or in Arlington National Cemetery.

''(B) Remove from a memorial area in a cemetery in the National Cemetery Administration or in Arlington National Cemetery any memorial headstone or marker placed to honor the memory of the person.

''(e)(1) A case described in this subsection is a case in which the appropriate federal official receives—

''(A) written notice of a conviction referred to in subsection (b)(1), (b)(2), or (b)(4) of a person described in paragraph (2); or

''(B) information that a person described in paragraph (2) may have committed a Federal capital crime or a State capital crime but was not convicted of such crime by reason of such person not being available for trial due to death or flight to avoid prosecution.

''(2) A person described in this paragraph is a person—

''(A) whose remains have been interred in a cemetery in the National Cemetery Administration or in Arlington National Cemetery; or

''(B) whose memory has been honored in a memorial area in a cemetery in the National Cemetery Administration or in such an area in Arlington National Cemetery.''.

(b) MODIFICATION OF EXCEPTION TO INTERMENT OR MEMORIALIZATION PROHIBITION.—Subsection (a)(2) of such section is amended by striking ''such official approves an application for''.

(c) APPLICABILITY.—The amendments made by this section shall apply with respect to any interment or memorialization conducted by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs or the Secretary of the Army in a cemetery in the National Cemetery Administration or in Arlington National Cemetery after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 3. DISINTERMENT OF REMAINS OF MICHAEL LASHAWN ANDERSON FROM FORT CUSTER NATIONAL CEMETERY.

(a) DISINTERMENT OF REMAINS.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall disinter the remains of Michael LaShawn Anderson from Fort Custer National Cemetery.

(b) NOTIFICATION OF NEXT-OF-KIN.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall—

(1) notify the next-of-kin of record for Michael LaShawn Anderson of the impending disinterment of his remains; and

(2) upon disinterment, relinquish the remains to the next-of-kin of record for Michael LaShawn Anderson or, if the next-of-kin of record for Michael LaShawn Anderson is unavailable, arrange for an appropriate disposition of the remains.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MILLER) and the gentleman from Maine (Mr. MICHAUD) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and add any extraneous material and include that material on S. 1471.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Florida?

There was no objection.

□ 1245

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I rise today in support of S. 1471, the Alicia Dawn Koehl Respect for National Cemeteries Act. This bill would grant authority to the Department of Veterans Affairs to reconsider the decision to inter or memorialize an individual within a national cemetery in situations where it is later discovered that the deceased committed a capital crime.

Currently, section 2411 of title 38, United States Code, prohibits the interment or memorialization of persons who committed a Federal or State capital crime. Nonetheless, situations have arisen where the entity, such as a funeral home, or the individual who is charged with scheduling the interment or memorialization of a decedent either does not know of the decedent's crime or does not truthfully report such crime to Federal cemetery officials.

In situations where a funeral home had no knowledge that a decedent was involved in a capital crime at the time of the burial request, VA actually lacks the statutory authority to reconsider interment or memorialization decisions. Simply put, individuals who are buried or memorialized within national cemeteries cannot be disinterred on the basis of subsequently received information.

Mr. Speaker, S. 1471 would provide this authority to VA, as well as to the Department of Defense, in the case of Arlington National Cemetery.

VA supports this bill, as it would provide the Department with the ability to redress interment cases where eligibility is invalidated by information that is learned after a burial.

This bill would also specifically direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to disinter the remains of Michael Lashawn Anderson from Fort Custer National Cemetery, as it was Mr. Anderson who murdered Alicia Dawn Koehl prior to taking his own life. In that case, the funeral home charged with Mr. Anderson's burial was unaware of the incident. Thus they did not properly report the crime, and Fort Custer National Cemetery provided the military funeral.

The interment of Mr. Anderson was brought to the attention of the Indiana congressional delegation; and I want to thank my colleague from Indiana (Mrs. BROOKS) for highlighting this tragic incident and for offering companion legislation to S. 1471. I also want to thank our colleagues in the Senate for addressing this need and for passing S. 1471. I encourage all of my colleagues to support this legislation.

At this time, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. MICHAUD. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I support this legislation to allow the VA or the Secretary of the Army to reconsider their decisions to inter individuals at our Veterans National Cemeteries, to include Arlington National Cemetery. With this legislation, individuals who may have committed a Federal or State capital crime, but were not convicted by reason of unavailability for trial due to death or flight to avoid prosecution, may be considered for disinterment.

Being buried in our national cemeteries is one of the highest honors our Nation bestows upon veterans and their dependents for their service and sacrifice.

This legislation also closes a loophole in the current law. Currently, veterans and their dependents who have been convicted of capital crimes may not be buried in Arlington National Cemetery or any national cemetery. If there is a mistake and they are inappropriately buried in one of these cemeteries, the Army and/or VA cannot correct the mistake. This legislation would correct this issue and allow the Secretaries of the Army and the VA to reconsider the original interment and exhume the body for interment elsewhere.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this legislation, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, at this time, I yield such time as she may consume to the gentlewoman from Indiana (Mrs. BROOKS), the Member who brought this matter to the committee's attention.

Mrs. BROOKS of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the distinguished gentleman from Florida, Chairman MILLER, and Subcommittee Chairman RUNYAN for bringing up this important piece of legislation today, S. 1471.

Mr. Speaker, during this season of Christmas, we seek to surround ourselves with our family and friends to give thanks for the blessings in our lives. But unfortunately, one family from my district will be spending yet another Christmas season without their wife, without their mother, without their daughter-in-law because of a senseless act of violence that took place at an apartment complex in Indianapolis, Indiana, on May 30, 2012.

On that date, Michael Anderson, a deranged Army veteran, went on a shooting rampage that took the life of Alicia Koehl, who was an apartment complex manager. After taking her life, he also severely injured three others. Mr. Anderson shot Alicia 13 times before taking his own life.

Alicia's killing left a hole in communities throughout Indiana. She was not only a mother to two young children and a loving wife but she was also a Girl Scout leader, the Volunteer of the Year at Spring Mill Elementary School, and an active member of her church.

Paul Koehl, Alicia's husband, provided testimony to the House Veterans' Affairs Committee that Alicia was the ''glue that held our family together.'' He continued that her motto in life was ''live, laugh, love'' and that the saying could be found in almost every room of their home. He finally relayed her contagious optimism by telling that her smile and gentle nature never failed to light up a room.

So it is no wonder that her passing triggered an outpouring of sympathy throughout the State, with candlelight vigils being held and the Indianapolis City Council formally memorializing her as someone ''whose very presence

in the community is a stabilizing influence which lends a sense of purpose and direction.''

Mr. Speaker, you can only imagine the indignation when, in the midst of their grief, family and friends found out that the killer of Alicia was allowed burial in a national cemetery with full military honors. This is in spite of a Federal law explicitly forbidding the Department of Veterans Affairs from interring anyone who has committed a capital crime, including those never formally convicted.

At the request of Alicia's family and friends, Senator COATS and I began working on this case to rectify the mistake made by the National Cemeteries Association. The NCA informed us that they lacked the authority to disinter Michael Anderson or the ability to rectify their horrific mistake if something like this should ever happen again.

Mr. Speaker, this is unacceptable. I am outraged not only that the Koehl family has had to endure yet another injustice after Alicia's life was needlessly cut short but also that our brave servicemen and -women who, in some cases, have given the ultimate sacrifice to their Nation are buried next to a murderous criminal.

The legislation before the House today will simply give the Department of Veterans Affairs the ability to reconsider interment of veterans who lost their privilege of interment in our national cemeteries by committing a capital offense. Our Nation's cemeteries shouldn't be tarnished because of a legislative technicality, and the bill before us will close this loophole. Our bravest men and women should be buried next to fellow heroes, and today we can make sure they always are.

So I am proud to be a sponsor of the House version of this bill that garnered the support of all Hoosier Representatives, and I want to thank them for coming together in a bicameral and bipartisan way to get behind this meaningful and important piece of legislation.

I want to encourage all of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to come together to help give closure to the Koehl family, restore a sense of honor to our national cemeteries, and improve protocol so that an injustice like this will never happen again.

Mr. MICHAUD. Mr. Speaker, today we can take a meaningful step to ensure the sanctity of our national cemeteries. These grounds are hallowed for the men and women who fought selflessly on our behalf.

With that, I encourage my colleagues to support this legislation and yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I, too, encourage our colleagues to join in support of S. 1471.

I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MILLER) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, S. 1471.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

SEAN AND DAVID GOLDMAN INTERNATIONAL CHILD ABDUCTION PREVENTION AND RETURN ACT OF 2013

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 3212) to ensure compliance with the 1980 Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction by countries with which the United States enjoys reciprocal obligations, to establish procedures for the prompt return of children abducted to other countries, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 3212

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE AND TABLE OF CONTENTS.

(a) SHORT TITLE.—This Act may be cited as the ''Sean and David Goldman International Child Abduction Prevention and Return Act of 2013''.

(b) TABLE OF CONTENTS.—The table of contents for this Act is as follows:

Sec. 1. Short title and table of contents.
Sec. 2. Findings; sense of Congress; purposes.
Sec. 3. Definitions.

TITLE I—DEPARTMENT OF STATE ACTIONS

Sec. 101. Annual report.
Sec. 102. Standards and assistance.
Sec. 103. Memorandum of understanding.
Sec. 104. Notification of congressional representatives.

TITLE II—PRESIDENTIAL ACTIONS

Sec. 201. Presidential actions in response to unresolved cases.
Sec. 202. Presidential actions in response to patterns of noncooperation in cases of international child abductions.
Sec. 203. Consultations with foreign governments.
Sec. 204. Report to Congress.
Sec. 205. Presidential actions.
Sec. 206. Presidential waiver.
Sec. 207. Publication in Federal Register.
Sec. 208. Termination of Presidential actions.

SEC. 2. FINDINGS; SENSE OF CONGRESS; PURPOSES.

(a) FINDINGS.—Congress finds the following:

(1) Sean Goldman, a United States citizen and resident of New Jersey, was abducted from the United States in 2004 and separated from his father, David Goldman, who spent nearly six years battling for the return of his son from Brazil before Sean was finally returned to Mr. Goldman's custody on December 24, 2009.

(2) The Department of State's Office of Children's Issues, which serves as the Central Authority of the United States for the purposes of the 1980 Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction, has received thousands of requests since 2007 for assistance in the return to the United States of children who have been abducted by a parent or other legal guardian to another country. For a variety of reasons reflecting the significant obstacles to the recovery of abducted children, as well as the legal and factual complexity involving such cases, not all cases are reported to the Central Authority of the United States.

(3) More than one thousand outgoing international child abductions are reported to the Central Authority of the United States every year.

(4) Only about half of the children abducted from the United States to countries with which the United States enjoys reciprocal obligations under the Hague Abduction Convention are returned to the United States.

(5) The United States and Convention countries have expressed their desire, through the Hague Abduction Convention, ''to protect children internationally from the harmful effects of their wrongful removal or retention and to establish procedures to ensure their prompt return to the State of their habitual residence, as well as to secure protection for rights of access.''.

(6) Compliance by the United States and Convention countries depends on the actions of their designated central authorities, the performance of their judiciaries as reflected in the legal process and decisions rendered to enforce or effectuate the Hague Abduction Convention, and the ability and willingness of their law enforcement to insure the swift enforcement of orders rendered pursuant to the Hague Abduction Convention.

(7) According to data compiled by the Central Authority of the United States, approximately 40 percent of abduction cases and access cases involve children taken from the United States to countries with which the United States does not have Hague Abduction Convention obligations or other agreements relating to the resolution of abduction cases and access cases.

(8) According to the Department of State's April 2010 Report on Compliance with the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction, ''parental child abduction jeopardizes the child and has substantial long-term consequences for both the child and the left-behind parent.''.

(9) Abducted children are at risk of serious emotional and psychological problems and have been found to experience anxiety, eating problems, nightmares, mood swings, sleep disturbances, aggressive behavior, resentment, guilt and fearfulness, and as adults may struggle with identity issues, personal relationships, and parenting.

(10) Left-behind parents may encounter substantial psychological and emotional problems, and few have the extraordinary financial resources necessary to pursue individual civil or criminal remedies in both the United States and a foreign country, even where available, or to engage in repeated foreign travel to attempt to procure the return of their children by evoking diplomatic and humanitarian remedies.

(11) Left-behind parents who are military parents may be unable to leave their military duties to pursue multinational litigation or take leave to attend multiple court proceedings, and foreign authorities may not schedule proceedings to accommodate such duties.

(b) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of Congress that the United States should set a strong example for Convention countries in the timely location and return of abducted

children in the United States whose habitual residence is not the United States.

(c) PURPOSES.—The purposes of this Act are to—

(1) protect children whose habitual residence is the United States from the harmful effects of abduction and to assist left-behind parents to have access to their abducted child in a safe and predictable manner, wherever the child is located, while an abduction case is pending;

(2) provide left-behind parents, including military parents, their advocates, and judges the information they need to enhance the resolution of abduction cases and access cases through established legal procedures, risk assessment tools, and the practical means for overcoming obstacles to recovering an abducted child;

(3) establish measured, effective, and predictable actions to be undertaken by the President on behalf of abducted children whose habitual residence is the United States at the time of the abduction;

(4) promote an international consensus that it is in the interest of children to have any issues related to their care and custody determined in the country of their habitual residence;

(5) provide the necessary training for officials of the United States Armed Forces and the Department of Defense to establish policies and provide services to military parents that address the unique circumstances of abductions and violations of rights of access that may occur with regard to military dependent children; and

(6) encourage the effective implementation of international mechanisms, particularly those established pursuant to the Hague Abduction Convention, to achieve reciprocity in the resolution of abductions and to protect children from the harmful effects of an abduction.

SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act:

(1) ABDUCTED CHILD.—The term ''abducted child'' means a child who is the victim of an abduction.

(2) ABDUCTION.—The term ''abduction'' means—

(A) the alleged wrongful removal of a child from the child's country of habitual residence;

(B) the alleged wrongful retention of a child outside the child's country of habitual residence; or

(C) the alleged wrongful removal or retention of a military dependent child from the exercise of rights of custody of a military parent.

(3) ABDUCTION CASE.—The term ''abduction case'' means a case involving an application filed with the Central Authority of the United States by a left-behind parent for the resolution of an abduction.

(4) ACCESS CASE.—The term ''access case'' means a case involving an application filed with the Central Authority of the United States by a left-behind parent for the establishment of rights of access.

(5) ANNUAL REPORT.—The term ''Annual Report'' means the Annual Report on International Child Abduction required under section 101.

(6) APPLICATION.—The term ''application'' means—

(A) in the case of a Convention country, the application required pursuant to article 8 of the Hague Abduction Convention;

(B) in the case of an MOU country, the formal document required pursuant to the provisions of the applicable MOU to request the return of an abducted child or to request rights of access, as applicable; and

(C) in the case of a nonparty country, the formal request by the Central Authority of the United States to the Central Authority of such country requesting the return of an abducted child or for rights of access to an abducted child.

(7) APPROPRIATE CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES.—The term ''appropriate congressional committees'' means the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate.

(8) CENTRAL AUTHORITY.—The term ''Central Authority'' means—

(A) in the case of a Convention country, the meaning given such term in article 6 of the Hague Abduction Convention;

(B) in the case of an MOU country, the official entity designated by the government of the MOU country within the applicable MOU pursuant to section 103(b)(1) to discharge the duties imposed on the entity in such MOU; and

(C) in the case of a nonparty country, the foreign ministry of such country.

(9) CHILD.—The term ''child'' means an individual who has not attained the age of 16.

(10) CONVENTION COUNTRY.—The term ''Convention country'' means a country other than the United States that has ratified, acceded, or succeeded to the Hague Abduction Convention and with respect to which the United States has entered into a reciprocal agreement pursuant to the Hague Abduction Convention.

(11) HAGUE ABDUCTION CONVENTION.—The term ''Hague Abduction Convention'' means the Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction, done at The Hague on October 25, 1980.

(12) LEFT-BEHIND PARENT.—The term ''left-behind parent'' means an individual or entity, either individually or jointly, who alleges that an abduction has occurred that is in breach of rights of custody—

(A) attributed to such individual or entity, as applicable; and

(B) exercised at the time of the abduction or that would have been exercised but for the abduction.

(13) LEGAL RESIDENCE.—The term ''legal residence'' means the congressional district and State in which an individual either is residing, or if an individual is residing temporarily outside the United States, the congressional district and State to which the individual intends to return.

(14) MILITARY DEPENDENT CHILD.—The term ''military dependent child'' means a child whose habitual residence is the United States according to United States law even though the child is residing outside the United States with a military parent.

(15) MILITARY PARENT.—The term ''military parent'' means an individual who has rights of custody over a child and who is serving outside the United States as a member of the United States Armed Forces.

(16) MOU.—The term ''MOU'' means a memorandum of understanding between the United States and a country that is not a Convention country to resolve abduction cases and access cases.

(17) MOU COUNTRY.—The term ''MOU country'' means a country with respect to which the United States has entered into an MOU.

(18) NONPARTY COUNTRY.—The term ''nonparty country'' means a country that is neither a Convention country nor an MOU country.

(19) PATTERN OF NONCOOPERATION.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—The term ''pattern of noncooperation'' means the persistent failure—

(i) of a Convention country to implement and abide by the provisions of the Hague Abduction Convention; and

(ii) of an MOU country to implement and abide by the provisions of the applicable MOU.

(B) CRITERIA.—Such persistent failure may be evidenced by one or more of the following criteria:

(i) The existence of 10 or more unresolved abduction cases.

(ii) The failure of the Central Authority of the country to fulfill its responsibilities pursuant to the Hague Abduction Convention or the MOU, as applicable.

(iii) The failure of the judicial or administrative branch, as applicable, of the national government of the country to implement and comply with the provisions of the Hague Abduction Convention or the MOU, as applicable.

(iv) The failure of law enforcement to locate abducted children or to enforce return orders or determinations of rights of access rendered by the judicial or administrative authorities of the national government of the country in abduction cases or access cases.

(20) RIGHTS OF ACCESS.—The term ''rights of access'' means the rights of contact between a child and a left-behind parent provided as a provisional measure while an abduction case is pending, by operation of law or by reason of judicial or administrative determination or by agreement having legal effect, under the law of the country in which the child is located.

(21) RIGHTS OF CUSTODY.—The term ''rights of custody'' means rights of care and custody of an abducted child, including the right to determine the place of residence of an abducted child—

(A) attributed to an individual or entity, either individually or jointly, and

(B) arising by operation of law or by reason of a judicial or administrative decision, or by reason of an agreement having legal effect,

under the law of the country in which the child was an habitual resident immediately before the abduction.

(22) UNRESOLVED ABDUCTION CASE.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—Subject to subparagraph (B), the term ''unresolved abduction case'' means an abduction case that remains unresolved for a period that exceeds 180 days after the date on which the completed application for return of the child is submitted for determination to the judicial or administrative authority, as applicable, in the country in which the child is located.

(B) RESOLUTION OF CASE.—An abduction case shall be considered to be resolved if—

(i) the child is returned to the country of habitual residence, pursuant to the Hague Abduction Convention or MOU, if applicable;

(ii) the judicial or administrative branch, as applicable, of the national government of the country in which the child is located has implemented and is complying with the provisions of the Hague Abduction Convention or the MOU, as applicable, and a final determination is made by such judicial or administrative branch that the child will not be returned to the country of habitual residence; or

(iii) the child attains the age of 16.

TITLE I—DEPARTMENT OF STATE ACTIONS

SEC. 101. ANNUAL REPORT.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than March 31 of each year, the Secretary of State shall submit to the appropriate congressional committees an Annual Report on International Child Abduction.

(b) CONTENTS.—Each Annual Report shall include the following:

(1) A list of all countries with respect to which there were one or more abduction cases during the preceding year that identifies whether each such country is a Convention country, an MOU country, or a nonparty country.

(2) For each country with respect to which there were 5 or more abduction cases during the preceding year:

(A) The number of abduction cases and the number of access cases, respectively, reported during the preceding year.

(B) The number of abduction cases and the number of access cases, respectively, that are pending as of March 1 of the year in which such Annual Report is submitted.

(C)(i) For Convention and MOU countries, the number of abduction cases and the number of access cases, respectively, that were pending at any point for more than 180 days after the date on which the Central Authority of the United States transmitted the complete application for each such case to the Central Authority of such country, and were not submitted by the Central Authority to the judicial or administrative authority, as applicable, of such country within the 180-day period.

(ii) The reason for the delay in submission of each case identified in clause (i) by the Central Authority of such country to the judicial or administrative authority.

(D) The number of unresolved abduction cases, and the length of time each case has been pending.

(E) The number of unresolved abduction cases in which a completed application has been filed and law enforcement has failed to locate the abducted child or to enforce a return order rendered by the judicial or administrative authorities of such country.

(F) The median time required for resolution of abduction cases during the preceding year, to be measured from the date on which the application with respect to the abduction case is transmitted by the Central Authority of the United States to the Central Authority of such country to the date on which the abduction case is resolved.

(G) The total number and the percentage of the total number of abduction cases and access cases, respectively, resolved during the preceding year.

(H) Detailed information about each unresolved abduction case described in subparagraph (E) and on actions taken by the Department of State to resolve such case, including the specific actions taken by the United States chief of mission in such country.

(I) Recommendations to improve resolution of abduction cases and access cases.

(3) The number of abducted children from the United States who were returned to the United States from Convention countries, MOU countries, and nonparty countries, respectively.

(4) A list of Convention countries and MOU countries that have failed to comply with any of their obligations under the Hague Abduction Convention or the MOU, as applicable, with respect to the resolution of abduction cases and access cases.

(5) A list of countries demonstrating a pattern of noncooperation, and a summary of the criteria on which the determination of a pattern of noncooperation for each country is based.

(6)(A) Information on efforts by the Secretary of State to encourage other countries to become signatories to the Hague Abduction Convention or to enter into an MOU.

(B) The efforts referred to in subparagraph (A) shall include efforts to address pending abduction cases and access cases in such countries.

(7) A description of the efforts of the Secretary of State to encourage Convention countries and MOU countries to facilitate the work of nongovernmental organizations within their respective countries that assist left-behind parents.

(8) The number of cases which were successfully resolved without abducted children being returned to the United States from Convention countries, MOU countries, and nonparty countries, respectively.

(c) EXCEPTION.—The Annual Report shall not include—

(1) the names of left-behind parents or children involved in abduction cases or access cases; or

(2) information that may identify a party involved in an abduction case or access case unless the party stipulates in writing to the Central Authority of the United States that such information may be included in the Annual Report.

(d) ADDITIONAL THEMATIC SECTIONS.—Each Annual Report shall also include—

(1) information on the number of unresolved abduction cases affecting left-behind parents who are military parents and a summary of assistance offered to such left-behind parents;

(2) information on the use of airlines in abductions, voluntary airline practices to prevent abductions, and recommendations for best airline practices to prevent abductions;

(3) information on actions taken by the Central Authority of the United States to train domestic judges in application of the Hague Abduction Convention; and

(4) information on actions taken by the Central Authority of the United States to train United States Armed Forces legal assistance personnel, military chaplains, and military family support center personnel about abductions, the risk of loss of access to children, and the legal frameworks available to resolve such cases.

(e) REPEAL OF THE HAGUE CONVENTION COMPLIANCE REPORT.—Section 2803 of the Foreign Affairs Reform and Restructuring Act of 1998 (42 U.S.C. 11611) is repealed.

SEC. 102. STANDARDS AND ASSISTANCE.

The Secretary of State shall ensure that United States diplomatic and consular missions abroad—

(1) maintain a consistent reporting standard with respect to abduction cases and access cases involving abducted children in the country in which such mission is located for purposes of the Annual Report;

(2) designate at least one official in each such mission to assist left-behind parents from the United States who are visiting such country to resolve cases involving an abduction or rights of access; and

(3) monitor developments in cases involving abducted children in the country in which such mission is located.

SEC. 103. MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of State should seek to enter into an MOU with every country that is not a Convention country and is unlikely to become a Convention country in the forseeable future, that includes—

(1) identification of the Central Authority;

(2) a protocol to identify, locate, and effectuate the return of an abducted child identified in an abduction case not later than 6 weeks after the application with respect to the abduction case has been submitted to the judicial or administrative authority, as applicable, of the country in which the abducted child is located;

(3) a protocol for the establishment and protection of the rights of access;

(4) identification of the judicial or administrative authority that will promptly adjudicate abduction cases and access cases;

(5) identification of a law enforcement agency and available law enforcement mechanisms and procedures to ensure the immediate enforcement of an order issued by the authority identified pursuant to paragraph (4) to return an abducted child to a left-behind parent, including by—

(A) conducting an investigation to ascertain the location of the abducted child;

(B) providing protection to the abducted child after such child is located; and

(C) retrieving the abducted child and making the appropriate arrangements for such child to be returned to the country of habitual residence;

(6) a protocol to establish periodic visits between a United States embassy or consular official and an abducted child to allow the official to ascertain the child's location and welfare; and

(7) such other provisions as determined to be appropriate by the Secretary of State.

(b) RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Nothing in this Act shall be construed to prohibit the United States from proposing and entering into a memorandum of understanding with a Convention country to further clarify the reciprocal obligations of the United States and the Convention country under the Hague Abduction Convention.

(2) TREATMENT OF OBLIGATIONS OF CONVENTION COUNTRY.—In those instances in which there is a memorandum of understanding as described in paragraph (1), the obligations of the Convention country under such memorandum shall be considered to be obligations of such country under the Hague Abduction Convention for purposes of this Act.

SEC. 104. NOTIFICATION OF CONGRESSIONAL REPRESENTATIVES.

(a) NOTIFICATION.—Except as provided in subsection (b), the Secretary of State shall notify in writing the Member of Congress and Senators representing the legal residence of a left-behind parent when such parent reports an abduction to the Central Authority of the United States.

(b) EXCEPTION.—The notification requirement under subsection (a) shall not apply if the left-behind parent does not consent to the notification described in such subsection.

(c) TIMING.—At the request of any person who is a left-behind parent, including a left-behind parent who previously reported an abduction to the Central Authority of the United States before the date of the enactment of this Act, notification of a Member of Congress, in accordance with subsections (a) and (b), shall be provided as soon as is practicable.

(d) MEMBER OF CONGRESS DEFINED.—In this section, the term ''Member of Congress'' means a Representative in, or Delegate or Resident Commissioner to, the Congress.

TITLE II—PRESIDENTIAL ACTIONS

SEC. 201. PRESIDENTIAL ACTIONS IN RESPONSE TO UNRESOLVED CASES.

(a) RESPONSE TO INTERNATIONAL CHILD ABDUCTIONS.—

(1) UNITED STATES POLICY.—It shall be the policy of the United States to—

(A) promote the best interest of children abducted from the United States by establishing legal rights and procedures for their prompt return and by promoting such rights and procedures through actions that ensure the enforcement of reciprocal international obligations; and

(B) recognize the international character of the Hague Abduction Convention, and the need for reciprocity pursuant to and the uniform international interpretation of the Hague Abduction Convention, by promoting the timely resolution of abduction cases through one or more of the actions described in section 205.

(2) REQUIREMENT OF PRESIDENTIAL ACTION.—Whenever the President determines that the government of a foreign country has failed to resolve an unresolved abduction case, the President shall oppose such failure through one or more of the actions described in subsection (b).

(b) PRESIDENTIAL ACTIONS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Subject to paragraphs (2) and (3), the President, in consultation with

the Secretary of State, shall, as expeditiously as practicable in response to the failure described in subsection (a) by the government of a foreign country, take one or more of the actions described in paragraphs (1) through (13) of section 205(a) (or commensurate action as provided in section 205(b)) with respect to such country.

(2) DEADLINE FOR ACTIONS.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in subparagraph (B), not later than March 31 of each year, the President shall take one or more of the actions described in paragraphs (1) through (13) of section 205(a) (or commensurate action as provided in section 205(b)) with respect to each foreign country the government of which has failed to resolve an unresolved abduction case that is pending as of such date.

(B) EXCEPTION.—In the case of an action under any of paragraphs (10) through (13) of section 205(a) (or commensurate action as provided in section 205(b))—

(i) the action may only be taken after the requirements of sections 203 and 204 have been satisfied; and

(ii) the March 31 deadline to take the action shall not apply.

(3) AUTHORITY FOR DELAY OF PRESIDENTIAL ACTIONS.—The President may delay action described in any of the paragraphs (10) through (13) of section 205(a) (or commensurate action as provided in section 205(b)), as required under paragraph (2), if the President determines and certifies to the appropriate congressional committees that an additional, specified period of time is necessary for a continuation of negotiations that have been commenced with the country to resolve the unresolved case.

(c) IMPLEMENTATION.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—In carrying out subsection (b), the President shall—

(A) take one or more actions that most appropriately respond to the nature and severity of the failure to resolve the unresolved abduction cases; and

(B) seek to the fullest extent possible to target action as narrowly as practicable with respect to the agencies or instrumentalities of the foreign government that are responsible for such failures, in ways that respect the separation of powers and independence of the judiciary in foreign countries.

(2) GUIDELINES FOR PRESIDENTIAL ACTIONS.—In addition to the guidelines under paragraph (1), the President, in determining whether to take one or more actions under paragraphs (10) through (13) of section 205(a) (or commensurate action as provided in section 205(b)), shall seek to minimize any adverse impact on—

(A) the population of the country whose government is targeted by the action or actions; and

(B) the humanitarian activities of United States and foreign nongovernmental organizations in the country.

SEC. 202. PRESIDENTIAL ACTIONS IN RESPONSE TO PATTERNS OF NONCOOPERATION IN CASES OF INTERNATIONAL CHILD ABDUCTIONS.

(a) RESPONSE TO A PATTERN OF NONCOOPERATION.—

(1) UNITED STATES POLICY.—It shall be the policy of the United States to—

(A) oppose institutional or other systemic failures of foreign governments to fulfill their obligations pursuant to the Hague Abduction Convention or MOU, as applicable, to resolve abduction cases and access cases; and

(B) promote reciprocity pursuant to and compliance with the Hague Abduction Convention by Convention countries and compliance with the applicable MOU by MOU countries.

(2) REQUIREMENT OF PRESIDENTIAL ACTION.—Whenever the President determines that the government of a foreign country has engaged in a pattern of noncooperation, the President shall promote the resolution of the unresolved abduction cases through one or more of the actions described in subsection (c).

(b) DESIGNATIONS OF COUNTRIES WITH PATTERNS OF NONCOOPERATION IN CASES OF INTERNATIONAL CHILD ABDUCTION.—

(1) ANNUAL REVIEW.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—Not later than March 31 of each year, the President shall review the status of abduction cases and access cases in each foreign country to determine whether the government of such country has engaged in a pattern of noncooperation during the preceding 12 months or since the date of the last review of such country under this subparagraph, whichever period is longer. The President shall designate each country the government of which has engaged in a pattern of noncooperation as a Country With a Pattern of Noncooperation.

(B) BASIS OF REVIEW.—Each review conducted under subparagraph (A) shall be based upon information contained in the latest Annual Report and on any other evidence available.

(2) DETERMINATIONS OF RESPONSIBLE PARTIES.—For the government of each country designated as a Country With a Pattern of Noncooperation under paragraph (1)(A), the President shall seek to determine the agencies or instrumentalities of such government that are responsible for the pattern of noncooperation by such government in order to appropriately target actions under this section in response.

(3) CONGRESSIONAL NOTIFICATION.—Whenever the President designates a country as a Country With a Pattern of Noncooperation under paragraph (1)(A), the President shall, as soon as practicable after such designation is made, transmit to the appropriate congressional committees—

(A) the designation of the country, signed by the President; and

(B) the identification, if any, of responsible agencies or instrumentalities determined under paragraph (2).

(c) PRESIDENTIAL ACTIONS WITH RESPECT TO A COUNTRY WITH A PATTERN OF NONCOOPERATION.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Subject to paragraphs (2) and (3) with respect to each Country With a Pattern of Noncooperation designated under subsection (b)(1)(A), the President shall, after the requirements of sections 203 and 204 have been satisfied, but not later than 90 days (or 180 days in case of a delay under paragraph (2)) after the date of such designation of the country under such subsection, take one or more of the actions under paragraphs (10) through (13) of section 205(a) (or commensurate action as provided in section 205(b)).

(2) AUTHORITY FOR DELAY OF PRESIDENTIAL ACTIONS.—If, on or before the date that the President is required to take action under paragraph (1), the President determines and certifies to the appropriate congressional committees that a single, additional period of time not to exceed 90 days is necessary—

(A) for a continuation of negotiations that have been commenced with the government of a country described in such paragraph to bring about a cessation of the pattern of noncooperation by such country, or

(B) for a review of corrective action taken by such country after designation of such country as a Country With a Pattern of Noncooperation under subsection (b)(1)(A) or in anticipation that corrective action will be taken by such country during such 90-day period,

the President shall not be required to take such action until the expiration of such period of time.

(3) EXCEPTION FOR ONGOING PRESIDENTIAL ACTION.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—The President shall not be required to take action under paragraph (1) with respect to a Country With a Pattern of Noncooperation if—

(i) the President has taken action pursuant to paragraph (1) with respect to such country in a preceding year, such action is in effect at the time such country is designated as a Country with a Pattern of Noncooperation under subsection (b)(1)(A), and the President submits to the appropriate congressional committees the information described in section 204 regarding the actions in effect with respect to such country; or

(ii) subject to subparagraph (B), the President determines that such country is subject to multiple, broad-based sanctions imposed in significant part in response to human rights abuses and that such sanctions also satisfy the requirements of this subsection.

(B) ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS.—If the President makes a determination under subparagraph (A)(ii)—

(i) the report under section 204 and, as applicable, the publication in the Federal Register under section 208, shall specify the specific sanction or sanctions that the President has determined satisfy the requirements of this subsection; and

(ii) such sanctions shall remain in effect subject to section 209.

(d) RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.—A determination under this section that a foreign country has engaged in a pattern of noncooperation shall not be construed to require the termination of assistance or other activities with respect to such country under any other provision of law, including section 116 or 502B of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 (22 U.S.C. 2151(n) or 2304).

SEC. 203. CONSULTATIONS WITH FOREIGN GOVERNMENTS.

As soon as practicable after the President makes a determination under section 201 in response to failures to resolve unresolved abduction cases and the President decides to take action under paragraphs (10) through (13) of section 205(a) (or commensurate action as provided in section 205(b)) with respect to that country, or not later than 90 days after the President designates a country as a country with a pattern of noncooperation pursuant to section 202(b)(1)(a), the President shall—

(1) request consultation with the government of such country regarding the failures giving rise to designation of that country as a Country With a Pattern of Noncooperation regarding the pattern of noncooperation or to action under section 201; and

(2) if agreed to, enter into such consultations with such country, privately or publicly.

SEC. 204. REPORT TO CONGRESS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Subject to subsection (b), not later than 90 days after the President makes a determination under section 201 in response to failures to resolve unresolved abduction cases and the President decides to take action under paragraphs (10) through (13) of section 205(a) (or commensurate action as provided in section 205(b)) with respect to that country, or not later than 90 days after the President designates a country as a Country With a Pattern of Noncooperation pursuant to section 202(b)(1)(A), the President shall transmit to the appropriate congressional committees a report on the following:

(1) IDENTIFICATION OF PRESIDENTIAL ACTIONS.—An identification of the action or actions described in section 205(a) (or commensurate action as provided in section 205(b)) to be taken with respect to such country.

(2) DESCRIPTION OF VIOLATIONS.—A description of the failure to resolve an unresolved case or the pattern of noncooperation, as applicable, giving rise to the action or actions to be taken by the President.

(3) PURPOSE OF PRESIDENTIAL ACTIONS.—A description of the purpose of the action or actions.

(4) EVALUATION.—

(A) DESCRIPTION.—An evaluation, in consultation with the Secretary of State, the parties described in section 203(b), and other parties the President determines appropriate, of the anticipated impact of the Presidential action upon—

(i) pending abduction cases in such country;

(ii) the government of such country;

(iii) the population of such country;

(iv) the United States economy;

(v) other interested parties; and

(vi) if such country is a Convention country or an MOU country, the reciprocal fulfillment of obligations pursuant to such Convention or applicable MOU, as applicable.

(B) FORM.—The evaluation under subparagraph (A) shall be transmitted in unclassified form, but may contain a classified annex if necessary.

(5) STATEMENT OF POLICY OPTIONS.—A statement that noneconomic policy options designed to resolve the unresolved case or bring about the cessation of the pattern of noncooperation have reasonably been exhausted, including the consultations required in section 203.

(b) DELAY IN TRANSMITTAL OF REPORT.—If, on or before the date that the President is required to submit a report under subsection (a) to the appropriate congressional committees, the President determines and certifies to such committees that a single, additional period of time not to exceed 90 days is necessary pursuant to section 202(c)(2), the President shall not be required to submit the report to such committees until the expiration of such period of time.

SEC. 205. PRESIDENTIAL ACTIONS.

(a) DESCRIPTION OF PRESIDENTIAL ACTIONS.—Except as provided in subsection (c), the Presidential actions referred to in this subsection are the following:

(1) A private demarche.

(2) An official public demarche.

(3) A public condemnation.

(4) A public condemnation within one or more multilateral fora.

(5) The delay or cancellation of one or more scientific exchanges.

(6) The delay or cancellation of one or more cultural exchanges.

(7) The denial of one or more working, official, or state visits.

(8) The delay or cancellation of one or more working, official, or state visits.

(9) A formal request to the foreign country concerned to extradite an individual who is engaged in abduction and who has been formally accused of, charged with, or convicted of an extraditable offense.

(10) The withdrawal, limitation, or suspension of United States development assistance in accordance with section 116 of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 (22 U.S.C. 2151n).

(11) The withdrawal, limitation, or suspension of United States security assistance in accordance with section 502B of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 (22 U.S.C. 2304).

(12) The withdrawal, limitation, or suspension of assistance to the central government of a country pursuant to chapter 4 of part II of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 (22 U.S.C. 2346 et seq.; relating to the Economic Support Fund).

(13) Ordering the heads of the appropriate United States agencies not to issue any (or a specified number of) specific licenses, and not to grant any other specific authority (or a specified number of authorities), to export any goods or technology to such government or to the agency or instrumentality of such government determined by the President to be responsible for such unresolved case or pattern of noncooperation, as applicable, under—

(A) the Export Administration Act of 1979 (as continued in effect under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act);

(B) the Arms Export Control Act;

(C) the Atomic Energy Act of 1954; or

(D) any other statute that requires the prior review and approval of the United States Government as a condition for the export or re-export of goods or services.

(b) COMMENSURATE ACTION.—Except as provided in subsection (c), the President may substitute any other action authorized by law for any action described in subsection (a) if such action is commensurate in effect to the action substituted and if such action would further the purposes of this Act as specified in section 2(c). The President shall seek to take all appropriate and feasible actions authorized by law to resolve the unresolved case or to obtain the cessation of such pattern of noncooperation, as applicable. If commensurate action is taken under this subsection, the President shall transmit to the appropriate congressional committees a report on such action, together with an explanation for taking such action.

(c) EXCEPTIONS.—

(1) HUMANITARIAN EXCEPTION.—Any action taken pursuant to subsection (a) or (b) may not prohibit or restrict the provision of medicine, medical equipment or supplies, food, or other life-saving humanitarian assistance.

(2) DEFENSE AND NATIONAL SECURITY EXCEPTION.—The President shall not be required to apply or maintain any action under section 205—

(A) in the case of procurement of defense articles or defense services—

(i) under existing contracts or subcontracts, including the exercise of options for production quantities, to satisfy requirements essential to the national security of the United States;

(ii) if the President determines in writing and transmits to the appropriate congressional committees a report that the government or the agency or instrumentality of such government to which such action would otherwise be applied is a sole source supplier of such defense articles or services, that such defense articles or services are essential, and that alternative sources are not readily or reasonably available; or

(iii) if the President determines in writing and transmits to the appropriate congressional committees a report that such defense articles or services are essential to the national security of the United States under defense co-production agreements; or

(B) to products or services provided under contracts entered into before the date on which the President publishes in the Federal Register notice of such action in accordance with section 208.

SEC. 206. PRESIDENTIAL WAIVER.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Subject to subsection (b), the President may waive the application of any of the actions described in paragraphs (10) through (13) of section 205(a) (or commensurate action as provided in section 205(b)) with respect to a country, if the President determines and so reports to the appropriate congressional committees that—

(1) the government of such country has satisfactorily resolved any abduction case giving rise to the application of any of such actions and—

(A) if such country is a Convention country, such country has taken measures to ensure future compliance with the provisions of the Hague Abduction Convention;

(B) if such country is an MOU country, such country has taken measures to ensure future compliance with the provisions of the MOU at issue; or

(C) if such country was a nonparty country at the time the abductions or denials of rights of access resulting in the abduction cases or access cases occurred, such country has become a Convention country or an MOU country;

(2) the exercise of such waiver authority would further the purposes of this Act; or

(3) the important national interest of the United States requires the exercise of such waiver authority.

(b) CONGRESSIONAL NOTIFICATION.—Not later than the date of the exercise of a waiver under subsection (a), the President shall notify the appropriate congressional committees of such waiver or the intention to exercise such waiver, together with a detailed justification thereof.

SEC. 207. PUBLICATION IN FEDERAL REGISTER.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Subject to subsection (b), the President shall ensure publication in the Federal Register of the following:

(1) DETERMINATIONS OF GOVERNMENTS, AGENCIES, INSTRUMENTALITIES OF COUNTRIES WITH PATTERNS OF NONCOOPERATION.—Any designation of a country that the President has designated as a Country With a Pattern of Noncooperation under section 202(b)(1)(A), together with, when applicable and to the extent practicable, the identities of agencies or instrumentalities determined to be responsible for such pattern of noncooperation.

(2) PRESIDENTIAL ACTIONS.—A description of any action under paragraphs (10) through (13) of section 205(a) (or commensurate action as provided in section 205(b)) and the effective date of such action.

(3) DELAYS IN TRANSMITTAL OF PRESIDENTIAL ACTION REPORTS.—Any delay in transmittal of a report required under section 204.

(4) WAIVERS.—Any waiver issued under section 206.

(b) LIMITED DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION.—The President may limit publication of information under this section in the same manner and to the same extent as the President may limit the publication of findings and determinations described in section 654(c) of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 (22 U.S.C. 2414(c)), if the President determines that the publication of such information—

(1) would be harmful to the national security of the United States; or

(2) would not further the purposes of this Act.

SEC. 208. TERMINATION OF PRESIDENTIAL ACTIONS.

Any action taken under this Act or any amendment made by this Act with respect to a foreign country shall terminate on the earlier of the following two dates:

(1) Not later than two years after the effective date of such action unless expressly reauthorized by law.

(2) The date on which the President transmits to Congress a certification containing a determination of the President that the government of such country has resolved any unresolved abduction case or has taken substantial and verifiable steps to correct the pattern of noncooperation at issue, as applicable, that gave rise to such action.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from

California (Mr. ROYCE) and the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. SCHNEIDER) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous materials in the RECORD.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, every year more than 1,000 American families are confronted with the nightmare of their child being abducted to a foreign country by one parent in violation of legal custody and access rights, beyond the reach of U.S. courts, beyond the court of law enforcement. This illegal break in the tie between the child and the left-behind American mother or father is a tragedy, and many of us personally have constituents facing these wrenching separations in the family.

More than 30 years ago, the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction was created to provide a simplified mechanism for returning children to their countries of habitual residence so that parental rights are determined by applicable laws rather than by the act of abduction of that child.

Today, the United States has agreements with more than 75 Hague partner countries, and that has helped to return many American children safely home. But unfortunately, agreeing to the Hague Convention and complying with it are not the same thing, and countries sometimes do not abide by their obligations under the Hague Convention. In those countries, there is a heightened risk that a child could be kept there with impunity. American parents need to know about this situation; and they need to know especially, before planning or permitting travel to such destinations, that this, in fact, could happen.

This bill will strengthen the incentives and the tools that the Department of State has to address these unresolved abduction cases. It will also require the United States to identify and take action concerning countries that demonstrate a pattern of noncompliance with the obligations to return American children; and its enhanced annual reporting will provide American parents and judges with a clearer picture of actual Hague compliance and the risks of nonreturn associated with travel to certain countries.

I want to thank the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH) for his tireless work on behalf of left-behind American parents over the last several years. His efforts have kept hope alive for hundreds of other American parents who only want to be reunited with their children.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I rise in strong support of H.R. 3212, the Sean and David Goldman International Child Abduction Prevention and Return Act. I would like to begin by thanking my colleague on the Foreign Affairs Committee, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH), for his dedicated and tireless efforts on this critical issue, making a difference for families.

There are few crimes more heartwrenching than child abduction. As a parent myself, I can't imagine the anguish a mother or father goes through when their child is abducted by their partner and taken to another country. These left-behind parents currently have little leverage to have their children returned home. They are often at the mercy of foreign courts with different cultural conceptions of custody and what is or is not in the child's best interest.

Unfortunately, there is an increasing number of international parental child abductions. The State Department reported that in 2012 there were 1,144 children abducted from a parent in the United States and taken abroad.

□ 1300

The most effective tool the United States has to help return abducted children is the 1980 Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction. This treaty creates a global standard and requires signatories to return abducted children to the country of the child's habitual residence for a custody hearing.

Regrettably, there are significant gaps in the Hague treaty framework. The treaty has no enforcement mechanism, and 40 percent of abducted children are taken to non-Hague-compliant countries. This leaves far too many parents with no viable options. The purpose of this legislation before us today is to fill those gaps—providing pained parents with the appropriate tools to bring their children home.

Specifically, H.R. 3212 encourages the State Department to enter into MOUs with countries to bring them in line with accepted standards and return these children home. In addition, this bill gives the President the power to sanction countries that demonstrate persistent failure in returning abducted children. The legislation will also help us monitor progress in achieving greater compliance worldwide with the Hague standards by requiring reports on child abduction cases and on U.S. Government efforts to encourage their compliance.

Sadly, international parental child abduction is an underreported and often overlooked crime which dramatically and traumatically impacts the lives of the children and the parents involved. We need to send a message to the world that we take Hague compliance in returning abducted children back to the United States seriously. This bill represents an important step forward in empowering the President and the State Department to enforce the Hague Convention and to bring more countries in line with its standards.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage all of my colleagues to support this important legislation, and I reserve the balance of my time

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH), the chairman of the Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Thank you, Chairman ROYCE, for your total support of this legislation and the initiative behind it. You have been a great friend of all of the left-behind parents and abducted children. I want to thank you very sincerely, and I also thank ELIOT ENGEL, our ranking member.

At a time when there are very few bipartisan initiatives, you, as leader of our committee, have ensured that the committee is a bipartisan committee where we work on a global basis for all people on human rights and humanitarian issues. It really has made a difference. Thank you for your support in getting this legislation here today. I appreciate that very much.

Mr. Speaker, David Goldman spent over 5 agonizing years trying to legally rescue his son, Sean, from an abduction to Brazil, which is a signatory nation, like the United States, to the Hague Abduction Convention.

Despite Mr. Goldman's airtight case that demonstrated an egregious example of both child abduction and wrongful retention, the Hague treaty was unavailing, and the outcomes in the Brazilian courts largely proved infuriating, infirm, and ineffective.

David Goldman had extraordinary legal counsel both in Brazil and in the United States. Patricia Apy, his American attorney, is a world-class expert in child abduction cases. He waged his case by the book and won judgments in the New Jersey courts. Yet both Sean and David were made to suffer emotional pain for over half a decade as one delaying ploy after another was employed by the abducting parties. In the end, Mr. Speaker, because of the father's abiding love for his son and an indomitable will, the Goldmans today are united and happy.

But the Goldmans are an exception in an ever worsening injustice that harms thousands of American children and many more kids worldwide. Most cases of parental abduction and wrongful retention have a bad ending. The child or children never return, and the left-behind parent often never sees them again. Even if left-behind parents are allowed access, the conditions are tightly supervised and of excruciatingly short duration.

Over the years, I have had the privilege of meeting many absolutely amazing, dedicated, yet heartbroken left-behind parents. Some of them are here today in this Chamber, Mr. Speaker, up in the gallery, as they wage an effort on behalf of their abducted children. Out of deep love and a commitment to justice, they, too, like David Goldman, adamantly refuse to quit.

Tragically, Mr. Speaker, their stories are often eerily the same. In the beginning days and weeks post-abduction, they thought the Hague treaty, their government, and the rule of law would ensure a swift, just, and durable remedy. As the months and then years go by, however, the journey of the left-behind parent is filled with unbearable pain. The heartache they endure is severely compounded by the fact that child abductions and wrongful retentions significantly harm children in many ways, especially psychologically.

Mr. Speaker, more than 1,000 international child abductions are reported to the State Department's Office of Children's Issues, also known as Central Authority of the United States, each and every year. That is just those that are reported. There are many that are not. Between 2008 and 2012, 7,000 American children were abducted, according to the Department of State.

According to the State Department as well, only about half of those children abducted from the U.S. to countries with which this country has reciprocal obligations under the Hague Convention are ever returned. In other words, the other half are not. And when there is no treaty obligation, less than 40 percent of abduction and access cases are resolved. It is an awful record that Congress today can help change.

The purpose of H.R. 3212, as amended, the Sean and David Goldman International Child Abduction Prevention Act of 2013, is to protect children from the harmful effects of abduction and wrongful retention and to assist left-behind parents to not only have access to their children, but to significantly enhance the prospects of resolution.

My biggest policy takeaway from working on the Goldman case, Mr. Speaker, was the absence of incentives for nations to prioritize resolving parental abduction cases and the complete lack of penalty for callous governmental indifference or complicity.

The Goldman Act is based on two human rights laws: the Trafficking Victims Protection Act, or TVPA, which I authored in 2000, and the International Religious Freedom Act, or IRFA, which was authored by our distinguished colleague, FRANK WOLF.

The Goldman legislation seeks to hold countries to account by meticulously monitoring their performance in adjudicating parental child abduction and wrongful retention. After a vigorous analysis, if a country at its administrative, judicial, or law enforcement levels demonstrates what we call a pattern of noncooperation, that is to say, persistent failure to fulfill its Hague Abduction Convention responsibilities, or failure of a non-Hague nation to abide by a memorandum of understanding with the United States, the President is empowered to take any number of escalating Presidential actions against that nation.

Again, patterned after both the TVPA and IRFA, the message to all nations and all past, present, and future abductors is that the United States is very serious about preventing or resolving child abduction cases. In order to ensure that the administration has maximum flexibility in advancing solutions, the President is given generous waiver authorities.

The bill also encourages the Secretary of State to seek opportunities to enter into an MOU with non-Hague Convention countries—and, obviously those that are not non-Hague can also become a part of it even when they do become one—and to establish protocols to identify, locate, and effectuate the return of an abducted child as well as access issues.

Finally, in order to ensure more robust accountability and the potential of successful interventions, the bill significantly beefs up reporting.

Finally, let me just say also, Mr. Speaker, the bill has been endorsed by the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. I will include in the RECORD a letter from that very august organization in support.

I have a letter from Robert Wallace, the executive director of the VFW, who has also endorsed the bill and made it very clear their concern, which is reflected in the text of the bill, about our servicemembers deployed abroad who find themselves in the unbelievably horrific position of having a child abducted while they are deployed and then not only not having access to but certainly not getting their children back.

And there are a number of cases. I have had four hearings so far where they have testified. In the case of Commander Toland, who was stationed in Japan, his daughter was abducted by his now-deceased wife, and he has not had access to his daughter in a decade, Mr. Speaker. She is now 11, and he has desperately, through the rule of law and by using the process, tried to have access to and to reclaim his precious daughter as the only surviving parent.

He is like so many others. Both children of Michael Elias, a combat-injured Iraqi war veteran, were abducted. He cannot even have access to them. I actually traveled to Japan, Mr. Speaker, with the grandparents. We could not even get to see those two wonderful children. That has got to change.

This legislation seeks to use the civil aspects of the Hague Convention to empower that treaty, which is very well-intentioned but lacks enforcement capability. This legislation gives the President the tool. It adds to those tools in the toolbox to make return and access a reality rather than a dream and a hope.

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS,
OF THE UNITED STATES,
December 11, 2013.

Hon. CHRIS SMITH,
Chairman, Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations, House Foreign Affairs Committee, Ford House Office Building, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN SMITH: I am writing today to express the strong support of The Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States (VFW) for H.R. 3212, the Sean and David Goldman International Child Abduction Prevention and Return Act of 2013 (Goldman Act), as it is sorely needed to protect members of the armed services from the tragedy of international parental child abduction.

As you know, members of the armed services, by virtue of their deployments abroad, are particularly vulnerable to having their children abducted off base and into the jurisdiction of a foreign country, or in the case of marriage to foreign spouses, the flight of that spouse with the child to the country of origin. In both cases, our service members' pleas for help are too often met with bad legal advice, misinformation, or indifference. They are told that the abduction is a simple custody case, and that they should litigate in the foreign court system. The result is financial and emotional disaster for our soldiers and their children. In most cases, they are never reunited with the children. Japan, in particular, has been a ''black hole'' for the abduction of our service members' children—and yet the United States still has not covered abduction in the Status of Forces Agreement with Japan, or any other country.

It is time for the U.S. government to take concrete action to protect our service members from the dangers of international parental child abduction. The Goldman Act would require the President to take one or more specified actions, or a commensurate action, in response to a failure to resolve a child abduction case or a ''pattern of noncooperation.'' It would authorize the Secretary of State to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding where no legal framework exists for the return of abducted children. It would also strengthen reporting requirements on abductions, so that the DOD can make better decisions about how to educate and protect our service members from the dangers of international parental child abduction.

Thank you again for your work on this much needed bill. The Veterans of Foreign Wars offers our full I support, and we look forward to working with you on this issue.

Sincerely,

ROBERT E. WALLACE,
Executive Director, VFW Washington Office.

NATIONAL CENTER FOR MISSING & EXPLOITED CHILDREN; CHARLES B. WANG INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S BUILDING,
Alexandria, VA, October 10, 2013.

Hon. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH,
Chairman, Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights and International Organizations, Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN SMITH: On behalf of the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, and the searching parents we serve, I commend you for introducing H.R. 3212, the Sean and David Goldman International Child Abduction Prevention and Return Act of 2013. This legislation is a critical step toward addressing the problem of U.S. children taken to and kept in foreign countries in violation of parental rights.

As you know, NCMEC is the nation's congressionally-designated resource center on

missing and exploited children. We have a unit within our Missing Children Division dedicated to international child abductions. From 1995 through 2008, per a cooperative agreement with the Departments of State and Justice, NCMEC handled cases in which a child was wrongfully brought into the United States and subject to the Hague Convention. While NCMEC no longer serves this role, we continue to provide legal technical assistance to attorneys and judges handling international child abduction cases as well as technical assistance and resources to parents, law enforcement and professionals involved in these matters. We are currently working cases involving more than 1,300 children believed to have been removed from the United States to a foreign country by a parent or family member.

Child abduction by a parent is a crime under both federal and state law. These children suffer extreme emotional abuse, including lack of identity and grief over the loss of a parent. Often the abductor gives the child a false explanation for the abduction, indicates that the left-behind-parent no longer wants the child, or worse. Abductors who move the child between cities, or between countries, amplify the child's lost sense of security and stability as well as making it difficult for law enforcement and the searching parent to locate and recover the child.

It is of the utmost importance that we hold all signatory countries to the standards and obligations of the Hague Convention. In addition, we must continue to encourage countries that have not yet done so to ratify the Convention. We must engage with countries to urge the adoption of policies consistent with those outlined in the Convention. And the U.S. must act as a role model by promptly returning children abducted into the U.S. This will foster good relationships with countries who will reciprocate with the return of American children.

This significant piece of legislation will strengthen our ability to bring our children home to their searching parents. Thank you, Chairman, for your unwavering commitment to America's children.

Sincerely,

JOHN D. RYAN,
Chief Executive Officer.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. KENNEDY), my friend and colleague and a member of the Foreign Affairs Committee.

Mr. KENNEDY. I want to thank my colleague from Illinois (Mr. SCHNEIDER) for his important work and leadership on this issue.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 3212. I want to thank and recognize my colleagues on the Foreign Affairs Committee, the chairman of the subcommittee, CHRIS SMITH, and the chairman of the full committee, Mr. ROYCE, for their important leadership and hard work on this bill.

Mr. Speaker, as a cosponsor of this bill, I speak on behalf of all left-behind parents and, in particular, on behalf of a constituent of mine from Newton, Massachusetts, Colin Bower. Colin was granted full custody of his children, Noor and Ramsey, in 2008. In 2009, the boys' mother unexpectedly took them out of school, boarded a plane, fled to Egypt, and has never since returned. Through all that time, she has refused to return the children.

It has been nearly 2 years since Colin has seen or spoken with his sons. Despite the custody ruling of a U.S. court and a subsequent Egyptian court order granting him the right to visit with his children, Colin has been denied the opportunity to see his children time and time again.

I just got off the phone with Colin a few moments ago. He recapped the details of his ordeal yet again to me, but I guess, in the words that he said most poignantly: No parent should ever have to go through this.

Between the years of 2008 and 2012, Mr. Speaker, parents reported more than 4,800 cases of abduction involving more than 7,000 children, according to the State Department. Currently, 89 countries are party to a Hague treaty that provides a legal framework for children who are victims of international abduction.

This bill would require the Secretary of State to enter into a memorandum of understanding with those countries that have not signed the Hague agreement, creating a mechanism where none exists to bring children home safely. Additionally, it would provide better reporting to parents and to Congress.

No parent should have to suffer the unbelievable heartbreak that Colin has experienced over the past 5 years. No child should be torn away from a safe home and loving family because their country didn't have the proper protections in place to protect them.

We can do more to ensure that these children find a way home. I ask my colleagues to support this bill.

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlelady from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN), chairman emeritus of the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

□ 1315

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. I thank the chairman for the time.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of the Sean and David Goldman International Child Abduction Prevention and Return Act, authored by my good friend and colleague, Mr. CHRIS SMITH of New Jersey.

Mr. SMITH has been a stalwart supporter of the rights of children and for the left-behind parents, who all too often feel as though they have been abandoned by their government and have no place to turn.

According to our State Department, hundreds of parental transnational child abduction cases occur each year. In most of the cases, the left-behind parents here in the United States face a tremendous uphill battle with the foreign country's government to return their child. To make matters worse, they have no recourse, no legal basis to turn to, that would compel that foreign government to cooperate with them and return their abducted child to the United States. The effects that this has on both the child and the parents are significant and, in many cases, have unshakable, lifelong consequences.

Mr. SMITH's bill gives hope where there previously was none. It represents a new approach to resolving this issue by giving our government and the President the avenues needed to press the countries that are found to be habitually noncooperative and noncompliant to work with the United States in order to resolve these cases. For some countries that refuse to cooperate, it is clear that words are not enough—they must be convinced by action to do the right thing—and this bill sends that very message, which is that the United States will not rest until we bring every wrongfully abducted American child home.

Too many parents have been separated from their children for far too long and with little to no recourse, and we must change that now, Mr. Speaker. I would like to urge that we also not overlook that, in many instances, a parent will flee with his child or children internationally in order to escape domestic violence.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentlewoman has expired.

Mr. ROYCE. I yield the gentlelady an additional 30 seconds.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Speaker, too often, current U.S. law addressing international child abduction actually facilitates domestic violence and child abuse by forcing the return of a child despite a recognized risk to the child or parent.

It is my sincere hope that, with Mr. SMITH's bill and my bill and with the further corrective measures to international child abduction laws that I plan to soon introduce that can help strengthen this measure, we will be able to resolve these issues so that the interests of all involved can be addressed and so that the children's rights can be protected.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Mr. Speaker, having no further requests for time, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, in closing, let me note again that the tragedy of international abduction affects thousands of children every year here in the United States.

When the Committee on Foreign Affairs considered this bill back on October 10, we heard from multiple members whose constituents were dealing with the nightmare of being illegally separated from their children, and our human rights subcommittee heard directly from several left-behind American parents in a May 9 hearing. H.R. 3212, by Mr. SMITH, is a measured response to this pressing problem.

I want to again thank the gentleman from New Jersey for the vision and for the perseverance, frankly, reflected in his bill.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. HOLT. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this legislation.

For many years, David Goldman was my constituent, so I am intimately familiar with both the case and the incredible pain and heartbreak David endured after the kidnapping of his son, Sean, by David's estranged, Brazilian-born wife who illegally took Sean back to

Brazil. I will not recount now all of the details of the five-year long ordeal David endured to secure the return of his son. What I will say is that my experience in helping him bring Sean home helped me understand that the issue of parental child abduction needs greater attention from our government.

In his efforts to get his son returned to him, Mr. Goldman at least benefited from the fact that both Brazil (where the boy was being held illegally) and the United States are parties to the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction. The Hague Convention creates an international legal framework for resolving such parental kidnappings. The treaty is anything but perfect; it lacks any genuine enforcement mechanism, which means that many of these cases drag on for years, just as the Goldman case did. However, the situation is far worse for parents whose spouse kidnaps their child and returns to their country of origin when that country is not a party to the Hague Convention. In those cases, the remaining parent has virtually no recourse to secure the return of their abducted child. The bill before us seeks to change that situation.

I especially support the language in the bill that directs the Secretary of State to engage in negotiations with non-Hague signatory nations where large numbers of American children remain illegally held by the offending parent to secure their release. Seeking the creation of a bilateral memorandum of understanding to help resolve these cases is an important interim step on the road to a larger, more enduring solution. I do have concerns about the language in this bill requiring the President to impose an escalating series of sanctions against nations who refuse to address parental kidnappings of American children. In my view, the language as written could potentially interfere with the President's ability to conduct effective diplomacy on this issue. However, once this bill reaches the Senate I am sure there will be opportunities to amend it in such a fashion that it will be able to accomplish the intended goal (the return of abducted children) without permanently damaging diplomatic relations with other nations.

One thing is clear: existing American parental child abduction cases are not being resolved expeditiously, and I agree with those who argue that the United States needs to send a clear message that the status quo on this issue cannot stand. Accordingly I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this bill.

Mr. PASCRELL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express my strong support for H.R. 3212—the Sean and David Goldman International Child Abduction Prevention and Return Act of 2013, which would help prevent additional child abductions to foreign countries in the future.

Recently, I was able to meet with a constituent of mine—Michael Elias. Michael has worked in the Bergen County Sheriffs Department and honorably served our country in the Iraq War. Upon his return from his service to our country, Michael and his wife, a citizen of Japan, agreed to separate.

In 2008, a Bergen County judge ordered joint custody of their two children—Jade and Michael, Jr. The judge also ordered that the children's passports be surrendered and they were. After a few months, on a day like any other, Michael was expecting his ex-wife to drop off Jade and Michael, Jr. to his house after spending the day with her. They never showed up. Somehow, his ex-wife was able to obtain new passports for Jade and Michael, Jr. and had fled to Japan, which is not a party to the Hague Convention on Abduction.

Despite Michael's years of inquiries and toil, The Government of Japan has produced no answers on how his ex-wife was able to obtain the new visas for Jade and Michael, Jr. And nearly five years later, Michael has not been able see his own children.

This bill will help countless families across the country that face the same heartbreaking situation that Michael Elias is still dealing with today. Our State Department must be on the frontlines for people like Michael, who have literally put their life on the line for this country. H.R. 1951 will empower the State Department to advocate for the victims of these tragic abductions.

And that is why I urge my colleagues to join me in passing H.R. 3212, for people like Michael Elias and the countless families that have been wrongfully torn apart.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. ROYCE) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 3212, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

ISRAEL QME ENHANCEMENT ACT

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1992) to amend the requirements relating to assessment of Israel's qualitative military edge over military threats, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 1992

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the ''Israel QME Enhancement Act''.

SEC. 2. AMENDMENTS TO REQUIREMENTS RELATING TO ASSESSMENT OF ISRAEL'S QUALITATIVE MILITARY EDGE OVER MILITARY THREATS.

(a) ASSESSMENT REQUIRED; REPORTS.—Section 201 of Public Law 110–429 (122 Stat. 4843; 22 U.S.C. 2776 note) is amended—

(1) in subsection (a), by striking ''an ongoing basis'' and inserting ''a biennial basis''; and

(2) in subsection (c)(2)—

(A) in the heading, by striking ''QUADRENNIAL'' and inserting ''BIENNIAL''; and

(B) in the text, by striking ''Not later than four years after the date on which the President transmits the initial report under paragraph (1), and every four years thereafter,'' and inserting ''Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of the Israel QME Enhancement Act, and biennially thereafter,''.

(b) REPORT.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of State shall submit to the appropriate congressional committees a report on—

(A) the range of cyber and asymmetric threats posed to Israel by state and nonstate actors; and

(B) the joint efforts of the United States and Israel to address the threats identified in subparagraph (A).

(2) FORM.—The report required under paragraph (1) shall be submitted in unclassified form, but may contain a classified annex.

(3) APPROPRIATE CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES DEFINED.—In this subsection, the term ''appropriate congressional committees'' means the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from California (Mr. ROYCE) and the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. SCHNEIDER) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Chairman, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and to add any extraneous material to the RECORD.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Let me begin by thanking both the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. COLLINS) and the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. SCHNEIDER) for their leadership and for their foresight in authoring this very important measure.

In shepherding this legislation through the committee, I was again reminded of the shared commitment of Members of both parties to come together to promote Israel's security. It is an example of bipartisanship at its best.

The United States' commitment to Israel rests on the assurance that the U.S., through a combination of Foreign Military Financing, the joint cooperative development of weapons systems and other measures, will ensure that Israel upholds its qualitative military edge. The standard definition of that is ensuring Israel's ability to counter and defeat credible military threats from any individual state or coalition of states or nonstate actors, and with the growing threat to Israel throughout the region—from the prospect of a nuclear Iran to an ascendant Hezbollah and widespread regional instability—Israel's retention of its QME is critical to its existence.

I had a chance to see this firsthand in 2006 during the second Lebanon war, which I, frankly, think should be called the ''Hezbollah war.'' Hezbollah was raining down rockets manufactured originally in Iran and Syria on a daily basis on Haifa. When I was in Haifa, I watched those rockets come in, and

they were being aimed at civilian neighborhoods. They were also being aimed at the hospital there. On one trip, I went down to the hospital to see the results.

Haifa is a very cosmopolitan city as one-third of Haifa is Israeli Jews, another third is Arab Israelis, another third is Druze and other minorities. The people in that city faced a constant bombardment for 30 days. While we were there, we had an opportunity to talk to some of the families, to some of the survivors—600 civilian victims from that attack in that trauma hospital. They told us how those missiles manufactured in Iran—this was before the invention of the Iron Dome, so there was no defense to this—would come into the civilian neighborhoods—90,000 ball bearings—and they would just go through the walls, through cars, through a shop. This is what led, basically, to a siege-like setting in which families were underground; but as they would try to come up at some point, they would be spotted from the other side, from the border, and once again, Hezbollah would try to hit that family, to hit that township.

This is what Haifa was going through. It is a reminder of the threat that Israel needs the best technology to combat these and other terrorist attacks. It is a relief that now Israel does have the Iron Dome, that there is warning, that there is the ability of some type of response other than the type of counterbattery work that we saw as they were trying to silence those rockets, which were never silenced, which came in for 30 days.

In 2008, Congress required the President to assess on an ongoing basis the extent to which Israel possesses a qualitative military edge over the threats that are arrayed against it. Those threats are all too real. Currently, the assessment is done every 4 years. Currently, it focuses only on the conventional military threats to Israel. This bill would require that Congress receive that assessment on a timely basis, at least every 2 years. It would also require the administration to specify a separate onetime report integrating cyber and asymmetric threats to Israel into this overall security assistance framework. This is very important given the new types of terror—suicide bombings and the rest of it and cyber warfare—that are being developed on either side of the border from Hamas to Hezbollah.

These provisions will provide Congress critical information that it requires in a timely manner to assess Israel's security requirements as Israel tries to deal with everything from the threat in Iran to all of the other terrorist organizations that are proxies for Iran. It also sends the right message at the right time to our mutual friends and foes alike that the United States and Israel stand together.

So I strongly support the immediate passage. I thank, again, Mr. SCHNEIDER and Mr. COLLINS for their good work.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I rise in strong support of H.R. 1992, the Israel Qualitative Military Edge Enhancement Act.

I want to thank the chairman and the ranking member for working so diligently with my office, and I want to thank Congressman DOUG COLLINS for bringing this important legislation before the House floor. I want to personally thank my friend and colleague Mr. COLLINS for all of the work he has done and that we have done together to make sure this bill becomes a reality.

Israel stands at an historic juncture. In a very dangerous neighborhood, Israel must have the capabilities to deal with a broad spectrum of potential conventional and asymmetric threats. With the United States negotiating with Iran over its nuclear weapons program, it is vitally important that we continue to give Israel all of the tools necessary to address a growing list of threats. That is why Representative COLLINS and I have introduced this important and timely bill—to help further safeguard the technological edge Israel has in defending herself and in safeguarding human life for all of her citizens.

This bill expands upon existing requirements that the United States aid Israel in developing defense-capable systems for safeguarding the Israeli homeland against conventional and asymmetrical threats. Previously, this cooperation has resulted in the highly successful Iron Dome system along with the continued development of the Arrow and the David's Sling series of military hardware.

Despite this capability, Israel now faces the threat of regional insecurity with a virtual failed state on its border with Syria, hundreds of thousands of rockets and mortars being stockpiled by Hezbollah in Lebanon, ongoing rocket fire from Hamas on the Gaza Strip, increasing terrorist activity in the Sinai, and, most importantly, the continued existential threat of Iran and its accelerating nuclear program. The U.S. can and must do more to aid Israel in addressing all of these threats in a comprehensive way.

The bill before us would specifically encourage greater cooperation between Israel and the United States in developing new weapons, tactics and procedures that will safeguard them from the growing threats Of cyber warfare and asymmetrical military threats such as terrorist activity. Increased reporting and coordination will allow the United States and Israel to continue their mutually beneficial research and intelligence programs to create a more secure and prosperous region—one that can safeguard human life to the maximum extent possible. By increasing the frequency of assessment from 4 years to 2, the Israel Qualitative Military Edge Enhancement Act will help ensure Israel is always prepared to confront constantly evolving conventional and asymmetrical threats.

I again want to thank the chairman and ranking member for their support of this legislation. I also want to thank the other cosponsors of this bill, including Representative COLLINS, for their hard work to hone this bill over the last few months. I would especially like to thank Vernon Robinson, Jr., who worked so diligently with my staff to shepherd this bill to the House floor today.

I strongly ask my colleagues to join me in support of this important bill, and I reserve the balance of my time.

□ 1330

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. COLLINS), a member of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, the author of this bill, and we want to thank him for being such an active member of our committee.

Mr. COLLINS of Georgia. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I do appreciate that. I do appreciate what your staff and others have done, the ranking member, in moving this legislation through. And also my good friend from Illinois (Mr. SCHNEIDER) in where we have been able to work together. I would be remiss also if I did not recognize Vernon Robinson from my staff as well, who is with me today, who has kept this going while we have worked. So I appreciate his work and the rest of our staff in doing so.

I introduced H.R. 1992, the Israel QME Enhancement Act, to ensure our commitment to Israel's qualitative military edge remains substantial and meaningful.

This legislation allows Congress to conduct oversight of weapon sales in the Middle East with increased frequency. Due to the instability in the region, it is vitally important that the qualitative military edge review process be updated to reflect the needs of Israel. H.R. 1992 accomplishes this goal by directing the President to report to Congress every 2 years regarding the assessment of Israel's qualitative military edge over military threats to Israel and related weapon sales in the Middle East.

This is a marked improvement over our current law, which only requires such a report to be issued every 4 years.

H.R. 1992 also requires the President to issue a report to Congress on the criteria issued to include cyber and asymmetric threats in the QME report.

Large conventional armies are less likely to mobilize against Israel, but terrorist organizations such as Hezbollah and Hamas are a constant threat. I am very concerned by the cyber attacks that have been launched against Israel, as well as the continued onslaught of terrorist attacks that threaten the security and stability of this peace-loving nation.

The QME doctrine originated during the Johnson administration, but came

into practice during the Yom Kippur War in 1973 when the United States conducted one of the largest military airlifts in history to resupply Israel with military hardware. Since Israel's victory in the conflict, the United States has sworn to ensure Israel's qualitative military edge remains strong, as surrounding Middle Eastern countries often possess a quantitative advantage.

The benefits of the Israeli-American relationship are undeniable. Our alliance has been vital for each nation's intelligence efforts. Both nations have provided valuable information that has saved the lives of civilians, as well as military personnel.

I have recognized the value of America's partnership for many years, and I am humbled and grateful to now be in a position where I can support this alliance on the floor of the House.

America's support for Israel should be strong and responsive to the changing threats facing our ally. Their military threat is a vital component to promoting stability and peace in the Middle East. I am pleased by the steadfast commitment this body and our leadership have shown in maintaining a vibrant partnership with Israel.

As the vice chair of the Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa, I am committed to promoting policy decisions that ensure Israel will be equipped to maintain the only stable democracy in the Middle East.

In recent weeks, there have been rounds of negotiations concerning Iran's nuclear capabilities. As a result of these negotiations, an agreement was reached with Iran, the details of which put Israel in a very difficult position.

Many questions remain about Iran's continued ability to enrich uranium and the billions of dollars they will gain in sanctions relief, questions such as: Where will these be used and how will the money be used for other attacks such as Hezbollah or others in this area?

One thing I am certain of, however, is the savings will not be spent on any effort advantageous to U.S. or Israel. Now more than ever, Congress must demonstrate its unwavering commitment to strengthening the U.S.-Israel relations during such an unpredictable time in the Middle East. This is something that is needed. It is something for our friend Israel. It protects our interests and protects Israel's interests.

With that, I would urge support of H.R. 1992.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlelady from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN), chairman of the Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman again for the time.

I rise today in strong support of H.R. 1992, the Israel Qualitative Military Edge Enhancement Act, authored by my colleague and the vice chair of our Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa, Mr. COLLINS.

There is no better time than now, Mr. Speaker, to pass this bill and send our closest friend and ally, the democratic Jewish State of Israel, and the rest of the world a strong message that the United States Congress stands resolutely with Israel and her right to defend herself.

The U.S. and other world leaders lamentably acquiesced and relented on the Iran nuclear deal and offered concessions to the regime in Tehran that do nothing to dismantle its nuclear program. Even as the negotiations carried on, Iran was busy making advancements to its nuclear weapons program. Shortly after the deal, Iran announced that it had made significant progress on its ballistic missile program. And just this last weekend, Mr. Speaker, the regime announced that it was moving ahead with testing on more efficient and sophisticated centrifuges.

There can be no mistaking these actions. They all add up to Iran continuing down its path of achieving a full nuclear weapons program. Mr. Speaker, we have heard this rhetoric that has been coming out of Iran for years now. The regime does not recognize Israel's right to exist. It denies the Holocaust. It repeats its calls to wipe Israel off the map, and ''death to Israel'' is chanted throughout the country.

Iran is an existential threat to Israel's very existence; and now more than ever, we need to ensure that Israel remains not just one step ahead of those who seek to do her harm, but light years ahead.

In conclusion, there is no room for error as Iran inches closer and closer to having nuclear breakout capability. I urge all of my colleagues to support this bipartisan measure, expressing our strong support for Israel to have a qualitative military edge.

I thank my chairman, as well as Mr. COLLINS, the author of the bill.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Mr. Speaker, I continue to reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. ROSKAM), a member of the Committee on Ways and Means.

Mr. ROSKAM. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the time.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to congratulate my colleagues from Georgia and Illinois for their work on this matter. It is incredibly important; and, as Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN mentioned a minute ago, the challenges that Israel are facing are incredibly significant.

The challenges are moving very, very quickly, Mr. Speaker. There is a storm cloud that is brewing; and rather than waiting to recalibrate, this bill says let's evaluate how Israel is doing in terms of a qualitative military advantage and edge more frequently.

As we know, if Israel is strong in the Middle East, good things happen. If Israel is weak in the Middle East, good things don't happen.

We have an opportunity now for the House to stand with Israel. As mentioned before by Mr. COLLINS a minute ago, it is not just for Israel's sake; but it is clearly in the best interest of the United States.

There is one democratic ally in the Middle East, and that is the State of Israel. It is incumbent upon us as a coequal branch of government to encourage the administration to do the right thing, not just from Israel's point of view but from the long-term strategic interest of the United States.

I am a cosponsor of this legislation. I am pleased that it is being brought under the leadership of Chairman ROYCE and his committee to the House floor. I urge its passage.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Mr. Speaker, I continue to reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Texas, Judge POE, chairman of the Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade.

Mr. POE of Texas. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, all around Israel things are in tremendous turmoil.

To Israel's south, Egypt is experiencing its worst period of unrest in 50 years. There is no elected government, and there won't be until next year. The economy is on a ventilator in Egypt. It is propped up only by billions of dollars of aid from Gulf countries.

The Muslim Brotherhood is openly fighting the interim government with armed mobs. Terrorists and vagabonds in the always lawless Sinai Peninsula are only encouraged by the weakened state of Cairo.

To Israel's north, Syria has become the world's hotspot for terrorists. Terrorists like al Qaeda and Hezbollah are streaming in, with no end in sight. Out-of-town criminals have come into the country to wreak havoc.

To Israel's east, already fragile Jordan is being overrun with Syrian refugees and infiltrated by terrorists as well.

A little further east, al Qaeda is wreaking havoc in Iraq. There is more violence there than at any point since 2008.

And to the far east, mischief regime of the desert, Iran is closer than ever to obtaining a nuclear weapon that can enable it to fulfill its threat to wipe Israel off the map.

When I met with Prime Minister Netanyahu 2 weeks ago, he was clear that Israel cannot accept Iran as a nuclear threshold power if Israel wants to continue to exist as a people. He called our interim deal with Iran the worst deal of the century. I agree with him. It seems that we not only gave away the farm; we gave away the mineral rights as well. We took our best diplomatic tool, sanctions, off the table. The biggest problem with the deal was that it made a peaceful solution more unlikely.

With all of these threats surrounding it, we need to stand side by side and let the world know—our enemies and our friends—that we are allies of Israel. They are the U.S.'s strongest ally.

Israel is the only democracy in the region and the only one that respects human rights. It is in their national security interest and our national security interest to ensure Israel can defend itself from the ever-changing military threats. The enemies they have in the neighborhood are enemies to us as well.

I support H.R. 1992. The bill will make sure, too, that Israel's enemies do not gain a military advantage over the State of Israel. I urge its passage.

And that's just the way it is.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, the United States has no more important relationship, not just in the region but in the world, than the strategic, unbreakable alliance with the democratic Jewish State of Israel.

Israel's security is our security. Israel's security must not in any way be compromised.

As has been noted here already, Israel lives in a most dangerous neighborhood. Her security is dependent on a clearly demonstrated permanently sustained qualitative military edge. This bill, H.R. 1992, improves and enhances our relationship with Israel to guarantee her qualitative military edge in a very dangerous neighborhood.

I strongly urge all of my colleagues to support H.R. 1992 and to protect Israel's security.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

In closing, let me again stress the importance of the relationship with our ally Israel.

Let me thank Mr. COLLINS for his leadership in authoring this important measure and thank Mr. SCHNEIDER. I am a cosponsor of this bill as well, and let me say we have many common threats, especially Iran's nuclear program.

This measure, H.R. 1992, is a testament to the American people's enduring commitment to the security of Israel. I hope to see it passed today.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. GINGREY of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 1992—the Israel QME Enhancement Act. I would like to commend the author of this legislation and colleague from Georgia, Mr. COLLINS, for his leadership on this issue. I would also like to thank the Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman ROYCE of California and Ranking Member ENGEL of New York on quickly moving this bill through the Committee.

Mr. Speaker, it goes without saying that our strongest ally in the Middle East is the State of Israel. It is, therefore, incumbent upon us to provide them with our unwavering support. In order to uphold this commitment, we must understand the ongoing security threats to Israel. H.R. 1992 helps achieve this goal by increasing the frequency by which the Secretary of State must report to Congress on Israel's qualitative military edge (QME).

Unfortunately, Israel is constantly on alert from various threats to its existence, particularly cyber and asymmetric ones. In fact, regional, Iran has stated that its desire to "wipe Israel off of the map." Therefore, despite the interim agreement between the P5+1 that was adopted on November 24, 2013, I still believe that it is critically important that we prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapons capability.

Congress took an important step during 2012 by implementing economic sanctions on Iran through the Iran Threat Reduction and Syria Human Rights Act of 2012. This important legislation punishes individuals who knowingly sell more than 1,000,000 barrels of refined product, or individuals that sell, lease, or provide Iran with goods, services, technology, or information.

However, despite these sanctions, Iran's nuclear program has continued to grow. Earlier this year in June, the International Atomic Energy Agency stated that Tehran was violating international regulations by increasing the number of centrifuges. Although the November 24th interim agreement caps Iran's proliferation at 5%, I remain skeptical of Iran's motive for continued nuclear activity.

Mr. Speaker, that is why the bill we have before today is absolutely essential in assisting Israel. By increasing the QME reports delivered to Congress, we can oversee the potential emerging threats that Israel will face in the future. I urge all of my colleague to join me in supporting H.R. 1992.

Mr. PERRY. Mr. Speaker, given the geopolitical history of the region, the U.S. fully understands Israel's need to be better armed than its neighbors.

Potentially threatening Arab countries surrounding Israel have superior numbers, which is the reason why Israel needs to maintain a qualitative edge.

As Iran creeps ever closer to obtaining a nuclear weapon, this qualitative edge has become all the more important

As our closest ally in the region, we should do all we can to prevent Israel from being put in harm's way.

I believe the legislation before us today does precisely that and I thank the gentleman from Georgia and my colleague on the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Mr. COLLINS, for authoring this bill.

This legislation improves our policy of ensuring Israel's safety by better reflecting the security environment of its potential adversaries.

Israel is mostly attacked by unconventional weapons and those weapons should be considered into the QME.

As cyber-attacks are increasingly being used as a means of warfare, Israel needs to maintain a competitive edge, while countries such as Iran attempt to increase their cyber capabilities.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. FORTENBERRY). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. ROYCE) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1992, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

Accordingly (at 1 o'clock and 43 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1436

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. FORTENBERRY) at 2 o'clock and 36 minutes p.m.

GABRIELLA MILLER KIDS FIRST RESEARCH ACT

Mr. UPTON. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 2019) to eliminate taxpayer financing of presidential campaigns and party conventions and reprogram savings to provide for a 10-year pediatric research initiative through the Common Fund administered by the National Institutes of Health, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 2019

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Gabriella Miller Kids First Research Act".

SEC. 2. TERMINATION OF TAXPAYER FINANCING OF POLITICAL PARTY CONVENTIONS; USE OF FUNDS FOR PEDIATRIC RESEARCH INITIATIVE.

(a) TERMINATION OF PAYMENTS FOR CONVENTIONS; USE OF FUNDS FOR PEDIATRIC RESEARCH.—Section 9008 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

"(i) TERMINATION OF PAYMENTS FOR CONVENTIONS; USE OF AMOUNTS FOR PEDIATRIC RESEARCH INITIATIVE.—Effective on the date of the enactment of the Gabriella Miller Kids First Research Act—

"(1) the entitlement of any major party or minor party to a payment under this section shall terminate; and

"(2) all amounts in each account maintained for the national committee of a major party or minor party under this section shall be transferred to a fund in the Treasury to be known as the '10-Year Pediatric Research Initiative Fund', which shall be available only for the purpose provided in section 402A(a)(2) of the Public Health Service Act, and only to the extent and in such amounts as are provided in advance in appropriation Acts.".

(b) CONTINUATION OF PRIORITY OF PAYMENTS FROM ACCOUNTS OVER PAYMENTS TO CANDIDATES.—

(1) AVAILABILITY OF PAYMENTS TO CANDIDATES.—The third sentence of section 9006(c) of such Code is amended by striking "section 9008(b)(3)," and inserting "section 9008(i)(2),".

(2) AVAILABILITY OF PAYMENTS FROM PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARY MATCHING PAYMENT ACCOUNT.—The second sentence of section 9037(a) of such Code is amended by striking ''section 9008(b)(3)'' and inserting ''section 9008(i)(2)''.

(c) CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—

(1) ELIMINATION OF REPORTS BY FEDERAL ELECTION COMMISSION.—Section 9009(a) of such Code is amended—

(A) by adding ''and'' at the end of paragraph (2);

(B) by striking the semicolon at the end of paragraph (3) and inserting a period; and

(C) by striking paragraphs (4), (5), and (6).

(2) ELIMINATION OF PENALTIES.—Section 9012 of such Code is amended—

(A) in subsection (a)(1), by striking the second sentence;

(B) in subsection (c), by striking paragraph (2) and redesignating paragraph (3) as paragraph (2);

(C) in subsection (e)(1), by striking the second sentence; and

(D) in subsection (e)(3), by striking '', or in connection with any expense incurred by the national committee of a major party or minor party with respect to a presidential nominating convention''.

SEC. 3. 10–YEAR PEDIATRIC RESEARCH INITIATIVE.

(a) ALLOCATION OF NIH FUNDS IN COMMON FUND FOR PEDIATRIC RESEARCH.—Paragraph (7) of section 402(b) of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C. 282(b)) is amended to read as follows:

''(7)(A) shall, through the Division of Program Coordination, Planning, and Strategic Initiatives—

''(i) identify research that represents important areas of emerging scientific opportunities, rising public health challenges, or knowledge gaps that deserve special emphasis and would benefit from conducting or supporting additional research that involves collaboration between 2 or more national research institutes or national centers, or would otherwise benefit from strategic coordination and planning;

''(ii) include information on such research in reports under section 403; and

''(iii) in the case of such research supported with funds referred to in subparagraph (B)—

''(I) require as appropriate that proposals include milestones and goals for the research;

''(II) require that the proposals include timeframes for funding of the research; and

''(III) ensure appropriate consideration of proposals for which the principal investigator is an individual who has not previously served as the principal investigator of research conducted or supported by the National Institutes of Health;

''(B)(i) may, with respect to funds reserved under section 402A(c)(1) for the Common Fund, allocate such funds to the national research institutes and national centers for conducting and supporting research that is identified under subparagraph (A); and

''(ii) shall, with respect to funds appropriated to the Common Fund pursuant to section 402A(a)(2), allocate such funds to the national research institutes and national centers for making grants for pediatric research that is identified under subparagraph (A); and

''(C) may assign additional functions to the Division in support of responsibilities identified in subparagraph (A), as determined appropriate by the Director;''.

(b) FUNDING FOR 10-YEAR PEDIATRIC RESEARCH INITIATIVE.—Section 402A of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C. 282a) is amended—

(1) in subsection (a)—

(A) by redesignating paragraphs (1) through (3) as subparagraphs (A) through (C), respectively, and moving the indentation of each such subparagraph 2 ems to the right;

(B) by striking ''For purposes of carrying out this title'' and inserting the following:

''(1) THIS TITLE.—For purposes of carrying out this title''; and

(C) by adding at the end the following:

''(2) FUNDING FOR 10-YEAR PEDIATRIC RESEARCH INITIATIVE THROUGH COMMON FUND.—For the purpose of carrying out section 402(b)(7)(B)(ii), there is authorized to be appropriated to the Common Fund, out of the 10-Year Pediatric Research Initiative Fund described in section 9008 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, and in addition to amounts otherwise made available under paragraph (1) of this subsection and reserved under subsection (c)(1)(B)(i) of this section, $12,600,000 for each of fiscal years 2014 through 2023.''; and

(2) in subsections (c)(1)(B), (c)(1)(D), and (d), by striking ''subsection (a)'' each place it appears and inserting ''subsection (a)(1)''.

(c) SUPPLEMENT, NOT SUPPLANT; PROHIBITION AGAINST TRANSFER.—Funds appropriated pursuant to section 402A(a)(2) of the Public Health Service Act, as added by subsection (b)—

(1) shall be used to supplement, not supplant, the funds otherwise allocated by the National Institutes of Health for pediatric research; and

(2) notwithstanding any transfer authority in any appropriation Act, shall not be used for any purpose other than allocating funds for making grants as described in section 402(b)(7)(B)(ii) of the Public Health Service Act, as added by subsection (a).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. UPTON) and the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Michigan.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. UPTON. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and insert extraneous materials in the RECORD on the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Michigan?

There was no objection.

Mr. UPTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 3 minutes.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the Gabriella Miller Kids First Research Act of 2013. H.R. 2019, authored by my colleague, GREGG HARPER, is a bill that will help countless kids and families across the country.

The Gabriella Miller Kids First Research Act would prioritize funding for the research of pediatric diseases and disorders such as cancer, autism, and Fragile X. It would eliminate taxpayer financings of party conventions, political money, and use these funds instead to expand pediatric research at the NIH Common Fund through their common fund. This bill certainly does put kids first.

You know, Gabriella Miller was a little warrior in the battle against childhood cancer. At only 10 years of age, she had the courage miles beyond her years. A frying pan and a walnut is all you need to understand her brave outlook on life.

When she was diagnosed with brain cancer, she was told that the size of that tumor was about like a walnut; and from then on, Gabriella traveled with her trusty frying pan squashing countless walnuts along the way all over the world.

That is the kind of courage and outlook on life that she had. Advancing health research for millions of young patients who suffer from rare and genetic diseases has got to be a priority. While we have made great strides in the country in finding cures and treatments, we certainly have a great amount of work to do. Included in the work is pushing for research that is going to help uncover cures for pediatric diseases.

In order for clinical trials and other advancements to meet their full potential, adequate resources have got to be directed for pediatric research. The legislation is an example of how much can be accomplished by ending wasteful spending and redirecting those funds towards national priorities like pediatric research.

This effort is going to help families like the Kennedys in Mattawan, Michigan, my constituents. Eric and Sarah have two wonderful little girls, Brooke and Brielle, who have the rare disease called spinal muscular atrophy. Those two little angels, who are fighting SMA with the same vigor and sunny outlook exhibited by Gabriella, are decorated little generals in the effort to boost research for rare diseases and serve as inspiration for every one of us.

The sad reality is that it is often difficult to conduct research into rare diseases due to the small number of individuals with those diseases; but we are working to change that—yes, we are—and provide families with greater hope for a cure and in advances of treatment.

This bill has over 150 cosponsors and is supported by a long list of patient advocacy groups including Autism Speaks, Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation, Leukemia and Lymphoma Society, and FightSMA.

I wholeheartedly agree with the bill's Democrat sponsor, PETER WELCH from Vermont, who recently said last night on CNN:

> Can we just put the battle axes down for a while and take a step forward?

He thinks we can. We need to.

With all of us today with so many diseases, we need to pass this bill.

I reserve the balance of my time.

ANGELMAN SYNDROME FOUNDATION,
Aurora, IL, July 5, 2013.

Hon. ERIC CANTOR,
Majority Leader, House of Representatives,United States Capitol, Washington, DC.

Hon. GREGG HARPER,
House of Representatives, Cannon House Office Building, Washington, DC.

DEAR LEADER CANTOR AND CONGRESSMAN HARPER: On behalf of the Angelman Syndrome Foundation, ASF, I write in strong support for H.R. 2019, the Kids First Research Act. This important legislation will

expand pediatric medical research activities at the National Institutes of Health, NIH, by approximately $130 million. Pediatric research should be a national priority, and ASF applauds Congressman Harper for his leadership on this issue. This legislation has the potential to develop treatments and unlock the cure for thousands of impacted children, including those with Angelman Syndrome.

Angelman syndrome is a single-gene neurodevelopmental disorder that is related to autism. Continued research for pediatric neurodevelopmental disorders, such as Angelman syndrome, will lead to effective treatments that will help combat the autism epidemic in the U.S. The Angelman Syndrome Foundation's mission is to advance the awareness and treatment of Angelman syndrome through education and information, research, and support for individuals with Angelman syndrome, their families and other concerned parties. We exist to give all of them a reason to smile, with the ultimate goal of finding a cure.

On behalf of ASF, thank you again for your leadership and for supporting the Kids First Research Act.

Sincerely,

EILEEN BRAUN,
Executive Director.

ASCO, *July 10, 2013.*

Hon. GREGG HARPER,
House of Representatives,Cannon House Office Building, Washington, DC.

DEAR REPRESENTATIVE HARPER: On behalf of the American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO), thank you for the introduction of The Kids First Research Act of 2013 (H.R. 2019). In this difficult budget environment, we are pleased to see any amount of available funds transferred to vital medical research and offer our endorsement of the legislation. We commend this bipartisan effort in acknowledging that medical research should be a priority for federal spending.

ASCO is the national organization representing more than 30,000 physicians and other health care professionals specializing in the treatment and research of both pediatric and adult cancers. Through its support of research leading to breakthrough improvements in cancer treatment, the NIH consistently provides a dramatic return on investment, both in the form of lives saved and economic growth. Our members witness first hand on a daily basis the high risk, high reward research that begins with NIH funding and results in safer, more effective treatment options for cancer patients.

Given its track record of unmatched successes, we are truly alarmed by the impact of recent budget cuts to the NIH and the National Cancer Institute (NCI). Budget stagnation in the last few fiscal years now compounded by cuts due to sequestration has led to the lowest number of new grants being funded at NIH since 1998. This is a devastating blow to the pace of medical research progress especially since it is occurring at a time of unprecedented basic and clinical science discoveries that point to rapid progress against many cancers. It has put life-saving discoveries on hold, stalled the careers of the young medical scientists who would be developing cures, and slowed one of our nation's areas of historical technology leadership that is also a key economic driver. Given the human and economic costs of these cuts, ASCO calls on Congress to repeal sequestration and return to regular order in budget negotiations. It is urgent that we prevent the $19 billion in sequestration cuts to the NIH expected over the next ten years and return the NIH to a priority position in federal budget negotiations.

The Kids First Research Act is a great step in the right direction to put the NIH back on a plan for reasonable growth and can make a difference. Through NIH's time-tested peer review process, this infusion of $130 million over the next ten years will turn available dollars into new hope for the health of America's children and all of our citizens. But it is important to note that it will not compensate for the larger cuts in this area of investment that have already happened and are on track to worsen.

ASCO stands ready to help in your efforts to support medical research at the NIH. If you have any questions or would like assistance from ASCO on any issue involving cancer research, please do not hesitate to contact Amanda Schwartz at Amanda.schwartz@asco.org or 571–483–1647.

Sincerely,

CLIFFORD A. HUDIS, MD, FACP,
President, American Society of Clinical Oncology.

BEAR NECESSITIES,
PEDIATRIC CANCER FOUNDATION,
Chicago, IL, July 3, 2013.

Re: Kids First Research Act of 2013 (H.R. 2019)

Hon. GREGG HARPER,
House of Representatives, Cannon House Office Building, Washington, DC.

DEAR CONGRESSMAN HARPER: On behalf of the countless children waging their courageous battle against pediatric cancer, we strongly and respectfully urge you to support the Kids First Research Act of 2013 (H.R. 2019).

This measure will provide much needed additional federal support to complement ongoing research supported by substantial private funding from national non-profit childhood cancer organizations, as well as by the National Institute of Health and National Cancer Institute. Passage of this bill will ensure that the investments of both public and private resources reach their fullest potential by enabling a critical mass of research and discovery required to culminate into promising medical treatments that are ''safe and effective'' for many childhood diseases, including childhood cancer.

As you may know, one in every 330 children in the United States develops cancer before the age of nineteen. The incidence of cancer among children is increasing. Each school day, enough children are diagnosed with cancer to empty two classrooms. Depending on the type of cancer and the development upon diagnosis, approximately 2,300 children will die from cancer in any given year. The number of children diagnosed with cancer in the U.S. each year puts more potential years of life at risk than any single type of adult cancer. Cancer remains the number one disease killer of America's children.

There are more than 360,000 childhood cancer survivors of all ages in the United States. Unfortunately, 74% of childhood cancer survivors have chronic illnesses, and some 40% of childhood cancer survivors have severe illnesses or die from such illnesses. Survivors are at significant risk for secondary cancers later in life. Current cancer treatments can affect a child's growth, fertility, and endocrine system. Child survivors may be permanently immunologically suppressed. Radiation therapy to a child's brain can significantly damage cognitive function, especially if given at a very young age. While currently there is very little in terms of ''safe and effective'' cures for any particular type of childhood cancer, the underlying genetics of the disease and recent research breakthroughs make such treatments foreseeable.

Bear Necessities Pediatric Cancer Foundation thanks you for sponsoring the Kids First Research Act of 2013 (H.R. 2019) and we applaud your ongoing commitment to improving the lives of thousands of children diagnosed with life-threatening diseases and sparing families from the devastation that these types of diagnoses cause. We look forward to working with you to pass this important bill to help ensure a brighter future for America's children.

Sincerely,

KATHLEEN A. CASEY,
CEO and Founder.

MARCH OF DIMES FOUNDATION,
OFFICE OF GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS,
Washington, DC, July 17, 2013.

Hon. GREGG HARPER,
House of Representatives, Washington, DC.
Hon. TOM COLE,
House of Representatives, Washington, DC.
Hon. PETER WELCH,
House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR REPRESENTATIVES HARPER, COLE AND WELCH: On behalf of the March of Dimes, a unique collaboration of over 3 million volunteers affiliated with 51 chapters representing every state, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico, I would like to express our support for H.R. 2019, the Kids First Research Act. This legislation would provide a welcome infusion of resources directed to pediatric research at the National Institutes of Health, NIH.

Our nation must commit to a sustained investment in pediatric research to build our future by improving the health of the next generation of children. As one example, over 500,000 infants are born preterm in the U.S. each year. Among those who survive, one in five faces health problems that persist for life such as cerebral palsy, intellectual disabilities, chronic lung disease, and deafness. Research breakthroughs that allow us to reduce the rates of preterm birth would lead to significant declines in infant mortality and save millions in healthcare and special education costs.

The March of Dimes takes no position on H.R. 2019's elimination of the Presidential Election Campaign Fund, but if this step is pursued, we strongly support directing the resultant funds to pediatric research. In addition, we urge Congress and the Administration to work together to find a balanced approach to deficit reduction that ensures the necessary resources are available to fund lifesaving research across the federal health agencies.

Thank you again for your leadership in introducing the Kids First Research Act. We look forward to working with you to make pediatric research a national priority.

Sincerely,

DR. JENNIFER L. HOWSE,
President.

BROOKE'S BLOSSOMING HOPE
FOR CHILDHOOD CANCER FOUNDATION,
December 10, 2013.

Hon. BLAKE FARENTHOLD,
House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. FARENTHOLD: As a medical research organization working to accelerate the development of promising medical discoveries or cures for cancers common to children, adolescents, and young adults, we write to express our strong support for your legislation, the Kids First Research Act of 2013 (H.R. 2019).

This measure provides much needed additional federal support to complement ongoing research supported by substantial private funding from national non-profit childhood cancer organizations, as well as by the National Institute of Health and National Cancer Institute. Passage of this bill will ensure that the investments of both public and private resources reach their fullest potential by enabling a critical mass of research

and discovery required to culminate into promising medical treatments that are ''safe and effective'' for many childhood diseases, including childhood cancer.

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Brooke's Blossoming Hope for Childhood Cancer Foundation thanks you for sponsoring the Kids First Research Act of 2013 (H.R. 2019) and we applaud your ongoing commitment to improving the lives of thousands of children diagnosed with life-threatening diseases and sparing families from the devastation that it causes. We look forward to working with you to pass this important bill to help ensure a brighter future for America's children.

Sincerely,

JESSICA HESTER, M.A. Ed.,
Chief Executive Officer and Founder.

RALLY FOUNDATION,
Sandy Springs, GA, December 10, 2013.

Hon. GREGG HARPER,
House of Representatives, Cannon House Office Building, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. HARPER: As a non-profit organization that exists to fund childhood cancer research, the Rally Foundation for Childhood Cancer Research, we write to express our strong support for your legislation, the Kids First Research Act of 2013 (H.R. 2019).

This measure provides much needed additional federal support to complement ongoing research supported by substantial private funding from national non-profit childhood cancer organizations, as well as by the National Institute of Health and National Cancer Institute. Passage of this bill will ensure that the investments of both public and private resources reach their fullest potential by enabling a critical mass of research and discovery required to culminate into promising medical treatments that are ''safe and effective'' for many childhood diseases, including childhood cancer.

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The Rally Foundation thanks you for sponsoring the Kids First Research Act of 2013 (H.R. 2019) and we applaud your ongoing commitment to improving the lives of thousands of children diagnosed with life-threatening diseases and sparing families from the devastation that it causes. We look forward to working with you to pass this important bill to help ensure a brighter future for America's children.

Sincerely,

DEAN CROWE,
Founder and CEO.

SOLVING KIDS' CANCER,
December 10, 2013.

Hon. GREGG HARPER,
House of Representatives, Cannon House Office Building, Washington, DC.

DEAR REPRESENTATIVE HARPER: On behalf of Solving Kids' Cancer, I am writing to express our strong support for your legislation, the Kids First Research Act of 2013 (H.R. 2019), which would supply critical funds to the National Institutes of Health for pediatric medical research.

As you know, cancer kills more kids in the U.S. than any other disease. Each school day, enough children are diagnosed with cancer to empty two classrooms. We at Solving Kids' Cancer believe that Every Kid Deserves to Grow Up. For kids with the deadliest childhood cancers, including neuroblastoma, sarcomas and brain tumors, their chances of ever living long enough to be able to cast their first ballot are less than 50 percent. This is unacceptable.

Children with cancer need new treatment options today. As we enter a new era in cancer research with advances in immunotherapy, innovative clinical trials that harness a child's own immune system to fight cancer will help change the future of childhood cancer. But without the necessary funding, children battling cancer will be left behind, with limited treatment options.

Solving Kids' Cancer is proud to lend our support of the Kids First Research Act of 2013 (H.R. 2019). On behalf of the families and children with cancer, thank you for turning awareness into action and for helping to change the world for children.

Sincerely,

SCOTT KENNEDY, MBA,
Co-founder and Executive Director.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to the bill before us today because it is a disingenuous and empty attempt by the Republicans to divert attention from the fact that they have voted to cut research time and time again. So instead, they will stand before the American public with words that they have no action to back up.

The National Institutes of Health serve a vital mission of supporting biomedical research so that we may better understand and better treat diseases that burden American families; and I stand firmly in favor of supporting NIH research funding, especially as it relates to pediatric research.

Let me be very clear for the record here today. H.R. 2019 does not achieve this purpose. Had this bill, which had been introduced back in May, gone through regular order and come to the Committee on Energy and Commerce for hearings and markup, we would have had the opportunity to discuss and debate the merits of the legislation.

This bill claims to support research on childhood diseases by authorizing—and I note not appropriating, but only authorizing—$12.6 million for NIH pediatric research grants through savings from ending the public contribution to the cost of political party nominating conventions.

I emphasize that the bill only authorizes funding because I would like to point out that the appropriations needed to actually make these funds available to NIH would still be subject to discretionary spending caps of the Budget Control Act and sequestration cuts.

Now, the sequester alone has cut $1.5 billion out of NIH'S funding in fiscal year 2013. Even worse, through the Ryan budget, the Republicans adopted spending allocations for fiscal year 2014 that would make additional cuts to NIH, which could result in $6.7 billion in cuts in total.

For pediatric research, the proportional cut would amount to $800 million, which is 60 times more than the increase that this bill claims to provide. That's why I think the Republicans are not making a sincere effort to support NIH research. This is a joke.

The best thing, Mr. Speaker, we can do to support NIH and research on pediatric diseases is to pass a balanced and constructive budget package and to provide the Appropriations Committee with a reasonable and realistic amount of funding to work with.

Until then, I would urge my colleagues to oppose this bill that is nothing but a guise. It is a ruse. It does nothing to ensure that we are increasing pediatric cancer research dollars.

Mr. UPTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to my friend from Virginia (Mr. WOLF), a member of the Appropriations Committee.

Mr. WOLF. I thank the chair.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of legislation I have cosponsored, the Gabriella Miller Kids First Research Act. I particularly want to thank the bill sponsors, GREGG HARPER, ERIC CANTOR, and Mr. WELCH of Vermont, for honoring the memory of my constituent, Gabriella Miller, Loudoun County's volunteer of the year.

Gabriella was a 10-year-old straight A student at Loudoun County Day School, who died on October 26 after a courageous 1-year battle with an inoperable brain cancer tumor. In a short amount of time, they achieved many goals. She started the Smashing Walnuts Foundation—which refers to the walnut-sized tumor in her brain—a childhood cancer foundation; she co-wrote a children's book and received an honorary degree from Shenandoah University out in Winchester, Virginia.

Last December at her request I wrote to Macy's as part of the massive 250,000 letter campaign she organized to benefit the Make-a-Wish Foundation. Gabriella raised a lot of money, and more importantly she touched a lot of lives; and I am sure she touched a lot of lives of Members who are in this body.

The bill before us today will help supplement existing NIH research efforts for childhood cancers and disorders by creating a 10-year pediatric research initiative fund, paid for with the remaining Presidential Election Campaign Fund.

I know her parents, Mark and Ellyn, who are with us here today. Her younger brother Jake and her family and friends know of the remarkable impact she has had on our community, on our country, and on families that are facing this nationwide.

I urge, hopefully, a unanimous vote on this.

□ 1445

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. WAXMAN), ranking member of the Energy and Commerce Committee.

Mr. WAXMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise, reluctantly, to oppose this bill.

First of all, I want to express to Gabriella Miller's family my sincere sympathies.

We all want to fund more research to fight pediatric disease. Nothing could be a more worthy objective. If we could only reverse the cuts that this House has adopted under Republican leadership, the National Institutes of Health could make an even greater amount of progress in understanding and treating so many different devastating diseases for children and others.

This bill was never heard in committee. We never had a chance to have witnesses come forward and talk about it or debate how best to achieve the bill's stated goals. That is why many of us think it is more a statement than a credible proposal, especially when you look at the Republican House majority's record on biomedical research funding. It is a dismal one.

They wrote and passed a bill which would have significantly cut NIH. They supported sequestration, which similarly reduced the NIH budget by nearly $2 billion in 2013 alone. And now this bill comes along, where they claim to provide NIH with about $13 million a year for pediatric research. That is a miniscule amount compared to the funding for pediatric research NIH lost due to Republican budget cuts and sequestration.

The way we usually handle NIH is the Appropriations Committee issues a bill appropriating money for NIH. They can do that. If we increase the money for NIH, they can do that. They don't need this bill to increase funding for pediatric research. What they need is a higher spending cap. This bill doesn't bring about a higher spending cap.

And then I have concerns I want to express about the way they structure the investments in pediatric research by funding it through the NIH Director's Common Fund. By design, that fund is not disease or population specific, giving NIH flexibility to determine funding priorities each year. It also doesn't take into consideration the existing pediatric research initiative, which we strengthened with the recent enactment of pediatric research network legislation.

Researchers all across the country have echoed the importance of sustained NIH funding for our Nation's health, our economic growth, and our global leadership on biomedical research.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentleman has expired.

Mr. PALLONE. I yield the gentleman an additional 1 minute.

Mr. WAXMAN. Regrettably, this legislation before us does nothing to truly advance research at NIH. If we really had a sincere commitment to strengthen research at NIH, let's work together on a bipartisan basis. Let's have hearings on the legislation. Let's make sure that we have funding for all the research activities.

I think that we need to find a solution to restore NIH funding rather than purely symbolic legislation.

This reminds me of the time when the Republicans closed the government. They refused to pass an appropriations bill for the government to function. And then people said, Well, what about the parks? They said, Well, we'll have a bill just to open the parks. What about NIH research? Well, we'll do NIH research, but not the Centers for Disease Control and not other things.

If you are going to do the job, do it right, and don't pretend, especially to a family that is grieving, that you are really doing more for pediatric research when the overall NIH funds are not increased.

Mr. UPTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 30 seconds.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to remind my friends that this is bipartisan legislation. I congratulate Mr. WELCH for being the lead Democratic sponsor.

I just want to say, too, in terms of looking at the money, the bill itself says:

> All amounts in each account maintained for the national committee of a major party or minor party under this section shall be transferred to a fund in the Treasury to be known as the ''10–Year Pediatric Research Initiative Fund,'' which shall be available only for the purpose provided in section 402A(a)2 of the Public Health Service Act, and only to the extent and in such amounts as are provided in advance in appropriations Acts.

Tell me how to write it tougher. We did it.

I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from California, (Mr. MCCARTHY), the majority whip.

Mr. MCCARTHY of California. I thank Chairman UPTON.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 2019, named in the memory of a remarkable young lady, Gabriella Miller.

The Gabriella Miller Kids First Research Act gives pediatric research a shot in the arm through additional targeted funding, funding that is fully offset by reining in taxpayer funding of political conventions.

The National Institutes of Health works admirably in distributing important Federal funding on basic medical research, but more can be done for childhood illness. In 2012, only 2 percent of NIH funding was spent on pediatric cases.

Today's bill provides additional funding for the NIH to help address the need for coordinated research on various childhood diseases, including cancer, autism, and juvenile diabetes. It helps provide a down payment to the promise that we have to our next generation by helping our scientists and researchers find the cures today to childhood illnesses.

There is no Republican or Democrat form of childhood illness, and there is no Republican or Democrat way to fight it. By working together on this bipartisan bill, we can put our children above the Presidential politics of every 4 years.

I want to thank my good friends Congressman GREGG HARPER and Congressman PETER WELCH for their work on this legislation. I also want to thank Majority Leader CANTOR for his continued leadership on these issues affecting America's families across the country.

Vote ''yes'' on H.R. 2019.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Vermont (Mr. WELCH).

Mr. WELCH. Mr. Speaker, I support this legislation, but I want to go through the controversy.

First of all, the argument about campaign finance reform, this is about taking money away from political conventions. The majority on both sides of the aisle have supported that.

Number two, there is an argument that this does not restore NIH funding. That is absolutely true, and we should restore full funding for the National Institutes of Health. Passing this bill doesn't stop us from doing that. It may even put us a step forward.

Third, there is an argument that the money will not get to the intended target because of the way it is designed. But if there is any expression of good faith, it is that the appropriators have made a very clear indication that they

are willing to do everything they possibly can in order to make this happen.

Fourth, it is limited in its scope and in its funds. That is true. But the fact is it does do something. It takes a step forward.

We are having an argument here about whether this is bipartisan or not. We are having an argument about bipartisan or not. We are having an argument about process. But I think if we are candid, we have to acknowledge that, as an institution, both sides have failed when it comes to an overall comprehensive budget, including for the NIH.

On August 12, 2011, this Congress voted 269–161 to implement the sequester, and in the I-told-you-so brand of argument, I voted against that. I voted against it because, in my view, the consequences of that sequester were predictable and foreseeable. These across-the-board cuts from the NIH to the Pentagon made no sense, but that is the box this institution, this House of Representatives, has put itself in.

What we have with this bill, in my view, is an opportunity to lay down the battle axes for just a moment and take a step forward. No one is here—least of all, me, where I am being used, to some extent, as a bipartisan face—to suggest that this does more than it does. But what it does do is something good, and it can begin a process, which is my hope, where we restore full funding to the National Institutes of Health.

Mr. UPTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. CANTOR), majority leader of the House.

Mr. CANTOR. Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman, the gentleman from Michigan.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of the Gabriella Miller Kids First Research Act. I also would like to thank my colleague, the gentleman from Vermont, for his courage in providing bipartisan support, along with some other colleagues in support of this bill, as well as the Republican cosponsors, GREGG HARPER from Mississippi and TOM COLE, my colleague from Oklahoma who is here in this Chamber.

For those colleagues who are here in the Chamber, we are joined by Gabriella Miller's parents, Ellyn and Mark Miller, who are in the gallery. I want to thank them for their courage in being here and for their understanding of what goes on on this floor and to not take it in any other way other than we are trying to do what is right in terms of delivering on the legacy of their daughter.

Mr. Speaker, Gabriella Miller, a young girl from Virginia, was only 9 years old when she found out she had an inoperable brain tumor the size of a walnut and wasn't given long to live. Despite her diagnosis, Gabriella and her family chose to fight and share her dream with others of overcoming childhood disease.

Gabriella was so determined that she captivated people's hearts at rallies, through online videos, and raised hundreds of thousands of dollars for the Make-a-Wish Foundation. She even wrote a book for other children about understanding cancer. She poured every remaining ounce of her life into raising awareness for pediatric research for other children, with the hope that they would not have to suffer the same fate. In her last few months, Gabriella left a mark on the world that will never be forgotten.

Mr. Speaker, there is no question that Washington has a spending problem. The problem is not only that we spend too much, but that we are spending taxpayer dollars on the wrong priorities. Medical research for children should be a national priority.

The first NIH bill I scheduled as majority leader was a bipartisan bill authored by Representative CATHY MCMORRIS RODGERS and Representative LOIS CAPPS to strengthen pediatric research networks. The President signed the bill into law last month.

The bill before us today builds on that legislation by providing resources through the NIH Common Fund for high-risk, high-reward research that has the potential to transform pediatric research for children suffering from many different diseases and disorders. For the first time, Congress will establish a Pediatric Research Initiative Fund that will serve as an accountability mechanism to help ensure that dollars are reaching their intended target.

While all of us support the NIH, this bill is an opportunity to push the agency to make big discoveries that will improve and ultimately save so many lives. We don't have to accept the status quo as the best we can achieve. Yes, the NIH needs taxpayer resources, but it also matters how we invest and apply those dollars.

□ 1500

Now, Mr. Speaker, some of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle say this is just a drop in the bucket compared to the sequester cuts. I agree. The sequester cuts were, unfortunately, indiscriminate, and I and my colleagues have proposed alternatives to them, but let's not let Washington politics get in the way of any effort to help these kids. This is one step of many that we should take together.

How many times do we meet parents and families who share their stories and ask for help? I recently had the privilege of meeting Gabriella's parents, Ellyn and Mark, and they personally shared with me Gabriella's fighting spirit. In fact, in one of her last interviews—and you can view this online—when asked what Gabriella would like to tell our political leaders, she said, ''Stop talking. Start doing. We need action.''

This, Mr. Speaker, is our opportunity to act.

Outside of this building, this legislation has tremendous support. The leading children's research hospitals, United for Medical Research, and over 100 patient advocacy groups support this bill. Currently, it leads all other bills on cosponsor.gov with over 2,500 citizen cosponsors. This kind of support is great, but what matters now are the Members of this House and how they vote. The question before the Members today is simple: What is more important—finding cures for our children or balloons for party conventions and catering for politicians?

The bottom line is that this bill is a choice between allocating moneys for political conventions or pediatric medical research. That is the choice. The bill isn't just about a government agency or taxpayer dollars. It is not about Democratic issues or Republican issues. It is about a cause, frankly, that should unite each and every one of us.

Yes, I would say to my colleague from California that this is a serious first step—it is not everything—but to not sit here and impugn anyone's motives, much less say something that is somehow a commentary that this isn't constructive towards the plight of the parents like the Millers who are around this country and who are searching for some indication that we can break the political gridlock on an issue like this. I align myself with the comments of my colleague from Vermont, who says, Can't we just put down the battle axes for something like this? Can't we all do that for somebody like Gabriella?

Now, Gabriella may no longer be with us, but her fight lives on. I ask, Mr. Speaker, that all of us stand united today and join in this fight.

Again, I want to thank Congressman GREGG HARPER, and I want to thank Congressman PETER WELCH for introducing this bill as well as to thank Congressman COLE from Oklahoma. Earlier this year, they began the effort to join with so many who have come before in order to raise awareness of the need for medical research and, yes, this time, of the need for us to prioritize the funding for pediatric research.

I would like to thank Gabriella's parents, the Millers, who are so brave in their commitment to this effort and who realize this is just a first step—being here with us today and joining us in this fight.

I strongly urge my colleagues to support this bill.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. All Members are reminded that it is not in order to introduce or to bring to the attention of the House occupants of the gallery.

The Chair will remind all persons in the gallery that they are here as guests of the House and that any manifestation of approval or disapproval of proceedings is in violation of the rules of the House.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I now yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. COHEN).

Mr. COHEN. Mr. Speaker, I oppose this legislation because it is window dressing, and it is not the big picture.

Thirteen million dollars is less than 1 percent of the $1.5 billion sequester cut. It is less than 1 percent. The NIH is our research institution. It is our Department of Defense. It defends us from cancer and heart disease and Alzheimer's and AIDS and diabetes, but it is not being prioritized. It should be the number one priority of this House—keeping Americans safe and alive. Now, the $13 million was picked because that is the amount of money we put into political conventions. It just so happened to fit. We could have picked the F–35 bomber and saved billions of dollars and taken that out, which we don't need, and put in that money, which would have made a real difference in research.

As for Kids First Research, I live in the city that has the best pediatric cancer facility in the world, St. Jude Children's Research Hospital. It needs more than this. Kids later will get Alzheimer's and AIDS and heart disease and cancer, and they need to be protected. In the long run, they can only be protected with the full funding for the NIH. I urge the full funding for the NIH and not smoke and mirrors.

Mr. UPTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. HARPER), the sponsor of the bill.

Mr. HARPER. First of all, I want to thank Congressman PETER WELCH for his hard work on this bill, and I certainly thank Leader ERIC CANTOR and Congressman TOM COLE.

Mr. Speaker, creating a lifetime of hope and opportunity for our most vulnerable kids is more important than subsidizing weeklong political pep rallies for the Democratic and Republican parties. This is why the House must advance H.R. 2019, the Gabriella Miller Kids First Research Act, a bill that pays for children's medical research with the $126 million that the Federal Government currently sets aside for political conventions.

On November 14, 2013, I had the privilege to meet in Leader CANTOR's office with Ellyn and Mark Miller. I watched them struggle to come up with the words to express their grief, which I saw become steadfast determination to do something special for Gabriella by allowing this bill to be named after their precious daughter. I am wearing the yellow ''Smashing Walnuts'' bracelet that they gave me that day. I have watched numerous videos of Gabriella in which she has made moving and profound statements, such as, ''Once you get cancer, you kinda gotta be all grown up,'' and ''Sometimes you have to stop talking and start doing.''

As the father of a 24-year-old son who is living with Fragile X syndrome, I understand the challenges families face in raising children with special needs, but I also recognize the value of expanded and improved medical research. While raising a child with a genetic disorder can be very difficult, for my family, it has been a blessing, especially knowing that my son, Livingston, is here today.

Mr. Speaker, Evie Horton and her cousin, Reese McDonald, who are kids from Mississippi who fight with all of their strength to overcome the struggles of spinal muscular atrophy, are two more reasons that I introduced this bill. Recent scientific research breakthroughs have also given hope to so many families, but in order for clinical trials and other advancements to meet their full potential, additional Federal research must be directed to pediatric research.

Mr. Speaker, Members of both parties have an opportunity to demonstrate the priorities of this body. Will it be research for our most vulnerable kids or will lawmakers vote to continue funding political party conventions at the taxpayers' expense?

I have listened to how this has been described by the other side. It has been called a joke, a ruse, a fraud, not credible, window dressing, smoke and mirrors, and their referring to Republicans supporting sequestration, I guess, means that it has been forgotten by our friends on the other side of the aisle that 95 Members of the Democratic Party voted in favor of sequestration.

Mr. Speaker, let's get our priorities straight. Let's vote ''yes'' on the Gabriella Miller Kids First Research Act.

NATIONAL FRAGILE X FOUNDATION,
Walnut Creek, CA, June 12, 2013

ATTN: Scot Malvaney, Policy Director.

Representative GREGG HARPER,
Cannon Building, Washington, DC.

DEAR REPRESENTATIVE HARPER: Confirming our earlier conversations with your office, the National Fragile X Foundation indeed agrees that additional research is needed to find the cures for fragile x syndrome, autism spectrum disorder, childhood cancer, and many other diseases impacting children.

We are therefore pleased to add our support to The Kids First Research Act (H.R. 2019) that you recently introduced with Representative Tom Cole.

As you well know, Fragile x syndrome is one of the conditions for which a cure (or targeted treatments) exist right around the corner.

We wholeheartedly support this critical research initiative which seeks both to identify much needed additional funding for the NIH and to promote collaborations and collaborative spending across related conditions like fragile x syndrome and autism.

Thank you for your leadership on this important issue.

JEFFREY COHEN, JD,
Director, Government Affairs.

GLOBAL GENES, RARE PROJECT,
Aliso Viejo, CA.

Hon. GREGG HARPER,
House of Representatives, Cannon House Office Building, Washington, DC.

DEAR CONGRESSMAN HARPER, Global Genes/RARE Project is one of the leading rare and genetic disease patient advocacy organizations in the world. What began as a grassroots movement in 2009 with a few rare disease parent advocates and foundations has grown to over 800 global organizations. Our mission is centered on increasing rare disease awareness, public and physician education, building community through social media and supporting research initiatives to find treatments and cures for rare and genetic diseases.

We, along with the organizations listed below, are writing to support The Kids First Research Act of 2013 (H.R. 2019). This bipartisan bill would eliminate taxpayer financing of presidential campaigns and party conventions and reprogram those savings to provide for a 10-year pediatric research initiative through the Common Fund administered by the National Institutes of Health.

During these trying fiscal times, we are pleased to see efforts that would increase funds for pediatric research.

Unfortunately, pediatric research is terribly underfunded and largely overlooked, as medicines and devices are often untested in children. Children are usually prescribed medications that have only been tested in adults, which is unacceptable. Children are not adults. More efforts must be made to properly research drugs and devices in the pediatric population, and this is an important step in that process.

We are pleased to express our strong support for H.R. 2019, and believe this legislation will help to bring increased funding and awareness to pediatric medical research. We look forward to working with you and your staff to ensure this bill is enacted into law.

Sincerely,

Global Genes/RARE Project, Alstrom Angels, Cure AHC, Dravet Syndrome Foundation, FMDSA, Gavin R Stevens Foundation, GT23 Foundation, Gwendolyn Strong Foundation, Hannah's Hope Fund for GAN, Hereditary Disease Circle, I Have IIH Foundation, In Need of a Diagnosis, INOD, Jonah's Just Begun, Joshua Hellmann Foundation for Orphan Disease Klippel-Feil Syndrome Alliance.

Little Miss Hannah Foundation, MPS Society, National Gaucher Foundation, Inc., National Tay-Sachs & Allied Diseases Association, Inc., Noah's Hope, Noonan Syndrome Foundation, Peace, Love, and Trevor Foundation, Rasopathies Foundation, Sanfilippo Foundation for Children, Sarcoma Foundation of America, Stop ALD Foundation, Team Sanfilippo, United Leukodystrophy Foundation, U.R. Our Hope.

NATIONAL DOWN SYNDROME SOCIETY,
New York, NY, May 9, 2013.

Hon. GREGG HARPER,
House of Representatives, Cannon HOB, Washington, DC.

DEAR CONGRESSMEN GREGG HARPER: On behalf of the National Down Syndrome Society (NDSS), I am pleased to offer this letter of support for your legislation H.R. 1724, the Kids First Research Act. This legislation will expand pediatric research at the National Institutes of Health by prioritizing resources for research for children with Down syndrome which are currently underrepresented in the NIH budget process.

NDSS supports over 400,000 Americans with Down syndrome along with their families, friends, teachers, coworkers and others who make people with Down syndrome a priority. Our mission is to be the national advocate for the value, acceptance and inclusion of people with Down syndrome.

The re-directing of federal dollars that are currently spent on presidential campaigns and party conventions will expand pediatric research at NIH through the NIH Common Fund. This funding will be used for research that is critical to improve the quality of life for individuals with Down syndrome other pediatric conditions.

NDSS is the largest nonprofit dedicated to advocating for people with Down syndrome

and their families at the federal, state and local levels of government. At NDSS, we envision a world in which all people with Down syndrome have the opportunity to enhance their quality of life, realize their life aspirations, and become valued members of welcoming communities. Your legislation aligns directly with our mission, and we are proud to support your efforts.

Our organization applauds your work on behalf of people with Down syndrome and other pediatric conditions, and looks forward to working with you. On behalf of all individuals and families from the Down syndrome community, I thank you for your leadership on this legislation and offer our enthusiastic endorsement.

Sincerely,

SARA HART WEIR,
Vice President,
Advocacy & Affiliate Relations.

JDRF,
New York, NY, May 10, 2013.

Hon. GREGG HARPER,
House of Representatives, Cannon House Office Building, Washington, DC.

DEAR REPRESENTATIVE HARPER: On behalf of JDRF and its volunteers, I write to share JDRF's support for your legislation, the Kids First Research Act of 2013, which would provide additional funds to the National Institutes of Health (NIH) for research on pediatric diseases and disorders.

Type 1 diabetes (T1D) is a costly and burdensome autoimmune disease for which there is no cure. The disease usually strikes in childhood, adolescence, or young adulthood, and lasts a lifetime. People with T1D must closely monitor their blood sugar levels and inject or infuse insulin in order to live. Even with the best of efforts and latest technology, blood sugar levels in patients still fluctuate widely and over the long-term can result in devastating complications, such as kidney disease.

Unfortunately, the incidence of type 1 diabetes (T1D) is rising at an alarming rate. From 2001 to 2009, T1D among youth increased 23 percent. If unabated, the prevalence of T1D in youth would double every generation.

JDRF is doing its part to advance research to better treat, prevent and ultimately cure T1D. Last year, JDRF spent $110 million on T1D research. Our work complements the research being done at NIH. The additional funding provided to NIH by the Kids First Research Act of 2013 could help us realize new therapies and research breakthroughs, that could improve the quality of life for people with T1D and help reduce the associated costs of the disease, sooner rather than later.

Your leadership on this issue and strong support of other issues that affect the T1D community are greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

JEFFREY BREWER,
President & Chief Executive Officer.

AUTISM SPEAKS,
New York, NY, May 14, 2013.

Hon. GREG HARPER,
House of Representatives, Cannon House Office Building, Washington, DC.

DEAR CONGRESSMAN HARPER: I am writing to thank you for your leadership on behalf of America's autism community, as demonstrated by your commitment to prioritize autism and pediatric research through the Kids First Research Act. As you know, recent CDC data suggests the prevalence of autism is closer to 1 in 50 children. As you also know, many of these individuals also have Fragile X Syndrome and your commitment to this community has made a real difference during your time in Washington, DC. It is critical to the autism community that we have national leadership to address the epidemic growth of this disorder.

I am grateful that you and your colleagues recognize this crisis and are striving to address it in several policy areas, including research, disability savings accounts and improved services for our military families affected by autism. I am particularly encouraged by your desire to see autism and pediatric research elevated as a priority at the National Institutes of Health through the Kids First Research Act.

I look forward to working with you in the days and weeks ahead in addressing America's autism crisis.

Sincerely,

LIZ FELD,
President.

THE COALITION FOR
PEDIATRIC MEDICAL RESEARCH,
June 6, 2013.

Hon. FRED UPTON,
Chairman Committee on Energy & Commerce, U.S. Congress, Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, DC.

Hon. JOE PITTS,
Chairman, Committee on Energy & Commerce, Subcommittee on Health, Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, DC.

Hon. HENRY WAXMAN,
Ranking Member, Committee on Energy & Commerce, U.S. Congress, Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, DC.

Hon. FRANK PALLONE,
Ranking Member, Committee on Energy & Commerce, Subcommittee on Health, Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMEN UPTON AND PITTS & RANKING MEMBERS WAXMAN AND PALLONE: On behalf of the Coalition for Pediatric Medical Research (CPMR), a group of more than 20 of our nation's leading children's research hospitals, I am writing to offer our support for H.R. 2019, the Kids First Research Act of 2013.

For too long, our nation has underinvested in pediatric research as a proportion of the overall population. Healthy living begins with a healthy infancy and childhood, and inadequate support for pediatric research negatively affects our nation's children, particularly those suffering from devastating diseases and disorders. It also hinders our ability to prevent and/or treat adult-onset disorders, such as diabetes and heart disease, whose causes are rooted in the childhood years.

H.R. 2019 is a much-needed step forward to address this imbalance. This legislation will help make clear that the health and well-being of our children is a national priority by reallocating scarce public resources to support pediatric research sponsored by the National Institutes of Health (NIH). This infusion of funds would provide a much-needed boost to our pediatric research community, enabling it to expand research efforts to identify causes of and treatments for many of the most devastating diseases and disorders that affect children. The Coalition is particularly pleased that the legislation would fund multi-institute research activities under the Common Fund, helping drive coordination and collaboration.

The Coalition strongly believes that if enacted into law, a portion of this funding should be used to provide competitive awards to support the research infrastructure and resources necessary to conduct a comprehensive 21st Century pediatric research agenda. Such support should focus on shared and core resources such as biobanks, data warehouses, bioinformatics infrastructure, and the advanced computing technologies needed to process increasingly large data sets. It should also help expedite clinical trials in patients with rare diseases, helping link sites and enabling researchers to recruit a critical mass of kids with any one condition. In addition to the Kids First Research Act, the Coalition continues to strongly support H.R. 225 and S. 424, the National Pediatric Research Network Act, which would authorize NIH to establish a National Pediatric Research Network. We see these two proposals as highly synergistic and complementary and applaud your committees and the full house for quickly passing this bill—for the fourth time—earlier this year.

On behalf of the Coalition, I thank you for your attention to this. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 202.312.7499 or via nicholas.manetto@faegrebd.com.

Sincerely,

NICK MANETTO,
Coalition Advisor.

LEUKEMIA & LYMPHOMA SOCIETY,
Washington, DC, June 6, 2013.

Hon. GREGG HARPER,
House of Representatives, Cannon HOB, Washington, DC.

Hon. PETER WELCH,
House of Representatives, Rayburn HOB, Washington, DC.

Hon. TOM COLE,
House of Representatives, Rayburn HOB, Washington, DC.

DEAR REPRESENTATIVES HARPER, COLE AND WELCH: The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society (LLS) is the world's largest voluntary health agency dedicated to blood cancer. Each year, over 140,000 Americans are newly diagnosed with blood cancers, accounting for nearly 10 percent of all newly diagnosed cancers in the United States. LLS funds lifesaving blood cancer research around the world and provides free information and support services. The mission of LLS is to cure leukemia, lymphoma, Hodgkin's disease and myeloma and provide our patients with affordable, sustainable access to quality healthcare.

LLS is writing to support H.R. 2019, the Kids First Research Act, which will increase funding for pediatric medical research activities administered through the Common Fund at National Institutes of Health (NIH). H.R. 2019 provides much needed funding for crucial research projects, at a critical time in our nation's progress in medical research. In cancer research in particular, we are yielding unprecedented examples of precision based medicine that are fundamentally altering the way in which we will categorize and treat cancers going forward. These funds will help advance the important projects funded by the NIH in areas of high unmet medical need.

LLS understands and appreciates the tremendous challenges and fiscal constraints Congress currently faces and the need to identify a balanced approach to funding necessary national priorities. We appreciate the bi-partisan support that this legislation has received, and look forward to serving as a resource for your offices.

Best,

EMILY SHETTY,
Senior Director,
Federal Legislative Affairs.

CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION,
Alexandria, VA, Overland Park, KS, June 8, 2013.

Hon. FRED UPTON,
Chairman, Committee on Energy & Commerce, Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, DC.

Hon. HENRY WAXMAN,
Ranking Member, Committee on Energy & Commerce, Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN UPTON AND RANKING MEMBER WAXMAN, On behalf of over 220 of the nation's children's hospitals, I am writing in support of H.R. 2019, the Kids First Research Act of 2013.

As you know, children are not just ''small adults.'' Children require highly-specialized care and equally specialized research. Despite children accounting for nearly 20 percent of our nation's population, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) has historically invested a far smaller percentage of research dollars—between five and 10 percent—in pediatric biomedical research. Healthy living begins with a healthy infancy and childhood, and inadequate support for pediatric research does a disservice to our nation's children.

The Kids First Research Act of 2013 would enhance our nation's commitment to pediatric research and help make clear that the health and well-being of our children is a national priority. The legislation would provide a much-needed boost to the pediatric research community, supporting expanded research efforts to identify causes of and treatments for many of the most devastating diseases and disorders that affect children.

In addition to the Kids First Research Act, the Association continues to strongly support the National Pediatric Research Network Act, H.R. 225, and its companion bill in the Senate, S. 424. This legislation would authorize the NIH to establish a National Pediatric Research Network. The Association views these two proposals as collaborative and applauds the committee and the House for quickly passing H.R. 225 earlier this year.

IA On behalf of the Children's Hospital Association, thank you for your support on this important issue.

Sincerely,

JIM KAUFMAN,
Vice President, Public Policy.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I now yield 2½ minutes to the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. PRICE).

Mr. PRICE of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, this is a sad and, indeed, depressing debate because there is such a transparent effort underway to weaken our Nation's campaign finance laws even further by the perfectly legitimate, compelling case for sick children in our country. This represents the worst of Republican cynicism—I have just got to say it—and since this measure stands no chance of passing in the Senate, it is a fitting end to the least productive session of Congress in modern history.

The passage of this bill will do nothing to increase the Federal funding of pediatric disease research. That is why it is so cynical. Simply authorizing a new program will not translate into additional funding in the current appropriations environment. If the majority were really serious, it wouldn't have passed a budget that makes adequate funding for medical research impossible or, perhaps, it would actually try to negotiate a comprehensive budget agreement that lifts sequestration once and for all from pediatric research and many other priorities. To make matters worse, this bill would make it more difficult to modernize and reinvigorate one of the most successful examples of campaign finance reform in our Nation's history—the Presidential public financing program—which has given candidates a viable alternative to private and corporate fund-raising for more than three decades.

Now, I agree with my colleagues from both parties in that paying for Presidential nominating conventions is not a wise use of taxpayer dollars, but if the House majority is truly concerned about this issue, I would encourage it to schedule a vote on my bill, the Empowering Citizens Act, which not only would prevent taxpayer dollars from being used for conventions, but it would also include important ''soft money'' provisions to prevent high-dollar special interests from funding conventions. The Empowering Citizens Act would mend, not end, the Presidential public financing system, bringing it up to date with campaign realities. It would also establish a voluntary small donor public funding program for congressional campaigns as well as strong rules forbidding the coordination between super-PACs and political parties or campaigns.

I believe we are at a tipping point in the short history of campaign finance reform in our country. We can either choose to stand by the commonsense reforms that restored America's faith in elections after the Watergate scandal or we can choose to cede the control of political campaigns entirely to wealthy corporations and interest groups.

The responsible choice is clear, so I strongly urge my colleagues to oppose this measure in the hope that the Republican majority will both get serious about medical research funding and will get serious about the oversized influence of millionaires and billionaires and super-PACs in our democracy.

Mr. UPTON. Mr. Speaker, at this point, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. LANCE), a cosponsor of the bill and a member of the Energy and Commerce Committee.

Mr. LANCE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of the Gabriella Miller Kids First Research Act.

My colleagues have told the story of Gabriella Miller. She was one of the many young people every year who leaves this world too early due to disease. Too many families share this grief.

Today, we take a step in making a difference in the lives of those who are struggling with pediatric diseases and disorders, such as cancer and autism. Today, Congress, in working together, will target taxpayer funding for scientific research and lifesaving treatments that can lead to better outcomes and, I hope, someday, to a cure.

Especially during the holiday season, we should be thankful for our many blessings. I am thankful, in part, for the families and advocates whose challenges we may never understand but whose commitment and love for their children is unyielding and inspiring. Today, we take action in their name.

□ 1515

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, can I ask how much time is remaining on both sides.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Michigan (Mr. UPTON) has 8 minutes remaining, and the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) has 8 minutes remaining.

Mr. PALLONE. Thank you.

I yield 1½ minutes to the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. LOWEY), the ranking member of the Appropriations Committee.

Mrs. LOWEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor the memory of Gabriella Miller and her courage and the courage of her parents, but I oppose this hypocritical bill.

I have spent my career fighting to ensure that our researchers have every resource to find lifesaving treatments and cures. This bill would do nothing to increase investments in medical research.

It is unfathomable to me that those who championed the cuts of $1.55 billion to the NIH now try to authorize with no promise to fund. That cut of $1.55 billion led to a cut of $255 billion to the National Cancer Institute and $66 million to the Child Health Institute that funds pediatric research.

My heart is with the family of Gabriella Miller and my dear friends who lost a little girl of about 6 years old from a childhood cancer, and I will never forget it. Let's work together to truly fund, to appropriate money, not pretend by authorizing. It is a nice thing to do, but we have to vote ''no'' on this cynical bill.

I ask today that we join together to increase investments, to increase funding for pediatric research, not support cuts to the National Cancer Institute, cuts to the National Institutes of Health.

Mr. UPTON. Mr. Speaker, at this point, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. COLE), a member of the Appropriations Committee and a cosponsor of the bill.

Mr. COLE. I thank my friend for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by praising my friend GREGG HARPER and my friend PETER WELCH, who come to this floor with a very worthy purpose, and that is to redirect government funding toward something that is not particularly important toward something that is very important—medical research for children.

The question when you have a worthy goal is always: How do you pay for it? Where will you actually get the resources?

For many years, I have brought to this floor legislation that would eliminate public funding for political party

conventions and Presidential campaigns. I could go into debate ad infinitum. The President has never used any public funding—didn't feel the need for it—in either of his two campaigns. Neither did Mr. Romney. On the political conventions, both political parties this year actually did take the money.

I can tell you as a former chief of staff on the Republican National Committee who put on the convention in 2000, they do not need it. They absolutely do not need it. They can raise all the money they need from private sources, just as their nominees raised money from private sources.

That bill has actually passed this House on multiple occasions with a bipartisan vote. I was prepared to do that again and I got a call from Leader CANTOR. He said: TOM, I know you have been working on this problem for a long time. I know you are concerned about it. What if we redirected that money towards something that is a better purpose, a better use of public dollars? And he mentioned GREGG's bill. I couldn't agree with him more.

So for those of you that are looking for something sinister or trying to link this to something it is not connected to, like the sequester, it is simply a modest step in the right direction. It takes money that we know is wasted and puts it to good use.

For those of you that say it can't pass the other body, the other body in the last Congress on amendment voted 95–5 to take away public funding of political conventions. We still have a disagreement on Presidential campaigns. But funding political conventions really is more important than directing this money to a more worthy purpose? We are not even trying to take it out of the Federal budget. I just think that kind of logic defies imagination.

This is a good-faith effort to do something that ought to bring us together instead of pull us apart. It is a modest step. I would be the first to admit that. But let's take the modest step in the right direction, take public dollars that we are now wasting on political conventions, give them to researchers, and let them do their work. That is just simply a better use of the public purse in a time of limited means.

So I urge support for my friends' bill, H.R. 2019, Mr. HARPER and Mr. WELCH. I want to thank Leader CANTOR. This was his idea of bringing two ideas together. I think it is a good one. I hope this House embraces it in a bipartisan fashion.

I want to thank my friend, the chairman of Energy and Commerce, for his effort to bring this forward and advance it.

EVERYLIFE FOUNDATION FOR RARE DISEASE,
Novato, CA, June 10, 2013.

Hon. Gregg Harper,
House of Representatives, Cannon House Office Building, Washington, DC.

DEAR CONGRESSMAN HARPER: The EveryLife Foundation for Rare Diseases is dedicated to accelerating biotech innovation for rare disease treatments through science-driven public policy.

We are writing to support the Kids First Research Act of 2013 (H.R. 2019). This bipartisan bill would eliminate taxpayer financing of presidential campaigns and party conventions and reprogram those savings to provide for a 10–year pediatric research initiative through the Common Fund administered by the National Institutes of Health.

During these trying fiscal times, we are pleased to see efforts that would increase funds for pediatric research. Unfortunately, pediatric rare diseases and cancer is terribly underfunded and largely overlooked by drug companies and research institutions. Public funding is essential to help spur the development of treatments for these children.

We are pleased to express our strong support for H.R. 2019, and believe this legislation will help to bring increased funding and awareness to pediatric medical research. We look forward to working with you and your staff to ensure this bill is enacted into law.

Sincerely,

EMIL D. KAKKIS, M.D., PH.D.,
President.

JUNE 27, 2013.

Hon. GREGG HARPER,
House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR REP. HARPER: On behalf of United for Medical Research (UMR), a coalition of leading research institutions, patient and health advocates, and private industry joined together in support of medical research funded by the National Institutes of Health (NIH), we write to thank you for the introduction of the Kids First Research Act (H.R. 2019). We strongly support increased funding for NIH, and appreciate your identification of medical research as a priority in a time of deficit reduction and fiscal austerity.

The lifesaving research funded by NIH has already yielded extraordinary benefits to human health and serves as a beacon of hope for those still suffering from disease or disability, including the families of children afflicted with heartbreaking conditions. NM also plays a role in sustaining the U.S. economy, supporting over 400,000 jobs and generating nearly $60 billion in nationwide economic output in 2012 alone. Unfortunately, recent cuts to the NIH budget threaten both our ability to improve human health and our worldwide leadership in medical research. UMR believes it is critical to renew our commitment to funding NIH, and we are grateful for your effort to find creative solutions to support medical research.

To ensure continued success in our quest for treatments and cures to our most devastating childhood and adult diseases, as well as continuing to reap the substantial return on investment to our economy, it is imperative that funding for NIH be sustained through regular, annual increases in appropriations. The Kids First Research Act is an important step in mitigating the loss of funding caused by a decade of reduced budgets, we thank you for it, and we look forward to working with you to reinvigorate our investment in the life sciences.

Sincerely,

United for Medical Research.

JUST-IN-TIME NEUROBLASTOMA FOUNDATION, INC.,
Greenwood Village, CO, June 28, 2013.

Hon. GREGG HARPER,
House of Representatives, Cannon House Office Building, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. HARPER: As a non-profit organization working to promote awareness of childhood cancer, we write to express our strong support for your legislation, the Kids First Research Act of 2013 (H.R. 2019).

This measure provides much needed additional federal support to complement ongoing research supported by substantial private funding from national non-profit childhood cancer organizations, as well as by the National Institute of Health and National Cancer Institute. Passage of this bill will ensure that the investments of both public and private resources reach their fullest potential by enabling a critical mass of research and discovery required to culminate into promising medical treatments that are ''safe and effective'' for many childhood diseases, including childhood cancer.

As you know, one in every 330 children in the United States develops cancer before the age of nineteen. The incidence of cancer among children is increasing. Each school day, enough children are diagnosed with cancer to empty two classrooms. Depending on the type of cancer and the development upon diagnosis, approximately 2,300 children will die from cancer in any given year. The number of children diagnosed with cancer in the U.S. each year puts more potential years of life at risk than any single type of adult cancer. Cancer remains the number one disease killer of America's children.

There are more than 360,000 childhood cancer survivors of all ages in the United States. Unfortunately, 74% of childhood cancer survivors have chronic illnesses, and some 40% of childhood cancer survivors have severe illnesses or die from such illnesses. Survivors are at significant risk for secondary cancers later in life. Current cancer treatments can affect a child's growth, fertility, and endocrine system. Child survivors may be permanently immunologically suppressed. Radiation therapy to a child's brain can significantly damage cognitive function, especially if given at a very young age. While currently there is very little in terms of ''safe and effective'' cures for any particular type of childhood cancer, the underlying genetics of the disease and recent research breakthroughs make such treatments foreseeable.

The Just-In-Time Neuorblastoma Foundation thanks you for sponsoring the Kids First Research Act of 2013 (H.R. 2019) and we applaud your ongoing commitment to improving the lives of thousands children diagnosed with life-threatening diseases and spearing families from the devastation that it causes. We look forward to working with you to pass this important bill to help ensure a brighter future for America's children.

Sincerely,

KATRINA M. BROHMAN,
Co-Founder & Vice President.

THE NICHOLAS CONOR INSTITUTE,
San Diego, CA, June 17, 2013.

Hon. GREGG HARPER,
House of Representatives, Cannon House Office Building, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. HARPER: As a medical research organization working to accelerate the development of promising medical discoveries or cures for cancers common to children, adolescents, and young adults, we write to express our strong support for your legislation, the Kids First Research Act of 2013 (H.R. 1724).

This measure provides much needed additional federal support to complement ongoing research supported by substantial private funding from national non-profit childhood cancer organizations, as well as by the National Institute of Health and National Cancer Institute. Passage of this bill will ensure that the investments of both public and private resources reach their fullest potential by enabling a critical mass of research and discovery required to culminate into promising medical treatments that are ''safe and effective'' for many childhood diseases, including childhood cancer.

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The Nicholas Conor Institute for Pediatric Cancer Research thanks you for sponsoring the Kids First Research Act of 2013 (H.R. 1724) and we applaud your ongoing commitment to improving the lives of thousands children diagnosed with life-threatening diseases and spearing families from the devastation that is causes. We look forward to working with you to pass this important bill to help ensure a brighter future for America's children.

Sincerely,

BETH ANNE BABER, PH.D., M.B.A.,
Chief Executive Officer and Co-founder.

PULMONARY HYPERTENSION ASSOCIATION,
Silver Spring, MD, June 21, 2013.

Hon. JOE PITTS,
Chairmen, Subcommittee on Health Energy & Commerce Committee, Cannon House Building.
Hon. KEVIN BRADY,
Chairmen, Subcommittee on Health Ways & Means Committee, Cannon House Building.
Hon. FRANK PALLONE,
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Health Energy & Commerce Committee, Cannon House Building.
Hon. JIM MCDERMOTT,
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Health Ways & Means Committee, Longworth House Building.

DEAR CHAIRMEN AND RANKING MEMBERS: I write you today on behalf of the Pulmonary Hypertension Association (PHA) to ask for your support of the public health goals of the Kids First Research Act (H.R. 2019). Please work to advance this legislation through the legislative process so that its provisions establishing a new pediatric research initiative at the National Institutes of Health (N111) might be enacted.

The pulmonary hypertension (PH) community understands the value of investing in critical pediatric medical research. PH is a disabling and often fatal progressive condition where the blood pressure in the lungs rises to dangerously high levels. In PH patients, blood flow between the heart and lungs is blocked or constricted. As a result, the heart must pump harder causing it to enlarge and ultimately fail. PH can be idiopathic, and occur without a known cause, or be secondary to other conditions, such as, scleroderma, lupus, blood clots, and sickle cell. PH impacts individuals of all races and ages, including children. Similar to other disease states, pediatric research into PH lags behind adult research. While there are nine FDA-approved treatments available for adults with PH, none are approved for children.

PHA supports a pediatric research program to improve the lives of children impacted by PH and we are pleased that Congress is interested in supporting pediatric research at NIH. In the interest of improving care for PH patients, PHA also engages in advocacy activity, including advocating for the Pulmonary Hypertension Research and Diagnosis Act (H.R. 2073), budget neutral legislation designed to improve diagnosis of PH before the condition reaches an advanced stage. We hope you will continue to support and advance legislative efforts focused on bolstering research activities and improving care for patients with PH, such as H.R. 2019 and H.R. 2073.

Sincerely,

RINO ALDRIGHETTI,
President & CEO.

FOUNDATION FOR ANGELMAN SYNDROME THERAPEUTICS,

Hon. ERIC CANTOR,
Majority Leader, House of Representatives, United States Capitol, Washington, DC.
Hon. GREGG HARPER,
Member of Congress, House of Representatives, Cannon House Office Building, Washington, DC.

DEAR LEADER CANTOR AND CONGRESSMEN HARPER: On behalf of the Foundation for Angelman Syndrome Therapeutics (FAST), I am pleased to offer this letter of support for H.R. 2019, the Kids First Research Act. This legislation will expand pediatric medical research activities administered through the Common Fund at the National Institutes of Health. By prioritizing resources for pediatric research, this bill will provide much needed funding to bolster FAST's commitment to find treatments, and eventually a cure for Angelman Syndrome.

The Foundation for Angelman Syndrome Therapeutics (or FAST) is an organization of families and professionals dedicated to finding a cure for Angelman Syndrome and related disorders through the funding of an aggressive research agenda, education, and advocacy. Angelman Syndrome (or AS) is a neurodevelopmental disorder affecting approximately 1 in 15,000 live births. Although the cause of AS is known, there are currently no treatments available for this disorder. FAST is committed to assisting individuals living with Angelman Syndrome realize their full potential and quality of life.

On behalf of FAST, I thank you for your leadership and for supporting this important legislation. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

PAULA EVANS,
Chairperson.

BRAIN INJURY ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA,
Vienna, VA, June 26, 2013.

Hon. JOSEPH R. PITTS,
Committee on Energy and Commerce, Subcommittee on Health, Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN PITTS: The Brain Injury Association of America (BIAA) is the nation's oldest and largest brain injury patient advocacy organization. BIAA supports H.R. 2019, the Kids First Research Act. Thank you for introducing this very important legislation. The Kids First Research Act will ensure important pediatric research is funded at the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

Traumatic brain injury (TBI) is a misdiagnosed, misunderstood, under-funded neurological disease affecting at least 1.7 million children and adults in the U.S. each year. Depending on type and severity, brain injuries can lead to physical, cognitive, and psychosocial or behavioral impairments ranging from balance and coordination problems to loss of hearing, vision or speech. Fatigue, memory loss, concentration difficulty, anxiety, depression, impulsivity and impaired judgment are also common after brain injury. Even so-called ''mild'' injuries can have devastating consequences that require intensive treatment and long-term care. Often called the ''silent epidemic,'' brain injury affects people in ways that are invisible. The injury can lower performance at school and at work, interfere with personal relationships and bring financial ruin.

Thank you for supporting pediatric research at NIH. Please contact Amy Colberg, BIAA's Director of Government Affairs with any questions.

Sincerely,

SUSAN H. CONNORS,
President/CEO.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from Connecticut (Ms. DELAURO), who is the ranking member of the Labor-HHS Appropriations Subcommittee.

Ms. DELAURO. Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to the so-called Kids First Research Act, which despite its name does absolutely nothing to support kids or pediatric research.

This bill does not include a single additional dollar for pediatric research. It just ends another program. It merely suggests this money should be used to fund NIH if, and only if, a later appropriations bill calls for it. The money does not automatically go for pediatric research.

This is a feel-good messaging bill that plays a bait-and-switch on American families hoping and praying for research dollars to save their children. This majority wants to pretend that they are supporting medical research when, in fact, they have continually cut this fundamental priority since 2011.

Consider the very first bill passed in this House in 2011, H.R. 1. That bill was supported by all but three Republicans. Almost every single Member of this majority voted to cut $1.6 billion from the National Institutes of Health. Most of those who have spoken this morning were those who voted to make that cut.

That cut is 100 times larger than the $12.6 million increase that this legislation pretends to provide. Because of the deep and reckless sequestration cuts, NIH has been cut by $1.5 billion more. We don't know whether the budget deal that is being discussed today will put that money back.

Because of these misguided policies, the National Cancer Institute has been slashed by $255 million and the Child Health Institute by $66 million.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentlewoman has expired.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I yield an additional minute to the gentlewoman from Connecticut.

Ms. DELAURO. I strongly support investing in medical research. My heart goes out to the Miller family. I am a

cancer survivor. One of my proudest accomplishments in this body is working in a bipartisan fashion to double the NIH budget between 1998 and 2003. We did it then, and it is something that we need to do again; but this bill, this bill is a sham.

If the majority believes, as I do, that we should increase funding for pediatric research, then let us increase funding for pediatric research. Let us not waste time playing games and misleading the American people.

I urge my colleagues to oppose this bill.

Mr. UPTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. COLLINS), a cosponsor of the bill.

Mr. COLLINS of Georgia. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Speaker, I am honored today to add my name to the list of those who support this legislation. H.R. 2019 bears the name of a child whose bravery and wisdom should inspire us all.

Gabriella Miller reminds us that government has the ability and the obligation to strive for the greater good—to protect the innocent, to preserve their futures. If we lose sight of that goal, we have failed.

In the year that I have been in Congress, most of my time has been spent fighting against bad policies and bad politics, but today is different. Today, I stand before this body and proclaim we can do something and we can help. The Gabriella Miller Kids First Research Act prioritizes pediatric research to help children with autism, cancer, and other diseases.

If you were to ask me what defines DOUG COLLINS, I would tell you three things: I am a man of faith; I am a husband; and a father, a father to a daughter who has spina bifida, but also inspires me to be the type of person that I would want to be.

She is a lot like Gabriella Miller. Gabriella Miller really won her fight. My daughter continues. It reminds us that you can help and when you can help, you should. When you can make a difference, no matter how small, it still matters. It is still worth doing.

I am a freshman here, but what amazes me is when you take a step forward in putting something productive on the floor which makes at least a small statement—and Congressman HARPER brings forth that with others—when you take a small step forward and bring something down to this floor and are ridiculed and it is said it is window dressing, I am sorry, this is not window dressing. It is a step to being the government we are called to be, and that is prioritizing, that is putting faith back into a system in which people have lost faith.

On the floor today, it is no wonder that they have lost faith. When a good-faith effort is put forward and it is criticized in light of children and research to make other political points, that is what is truly appalling today; that is what is bad.

This is a simple step that was brought forth in good faith. All I am saying is let's prioritize. I agree with my friends across the aisle: it is time we prioritize our mission; it is time we prioritize our battles here. This is one step forward.

I would encourage all Members to support something that actually does make a difference.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. HOYER), our Democratic whip.

Mr. HOYER. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, the gentleman who preceded me said he is a freshman. I have been here for 33 years. For 23 of those years I served on the Labor, Health and Human Services Appropriations Subcommittee. I served under some extraordinary Republicans and some extraordinary Democrats who chaired that committee. The ones I served under made sure that the NIH got the resources it needed to investigate, research, and try to come up with the cures that will ameliorate the afflictions of mankind from a health perspective.

Of the sponsors of this bill, 134 of them voted for the Ryan budget. The Ryan budget—had it been adopted, had it been implemented—would have cut the National Institutes of Health by $6 billion.

The budget that we are going to consider will still require reductions in NIH funding by perhaps as much as 80 times to 100 times the money that is theoretically in this bill. By the way, there is no money in this bill. This is an authorization. As I am sure Ms. DELAURO, who is the ranking member, has pointed out it provides no money.

Many of you, perhaps, are going to vote for a budget that will cut NIH; but you are going to pass a bill, and that is what Mr. COLLINS apparently is concerned about, because we are saying that this is a facade, a pretense of support. Paper will not help pediatric research. Money will, investment will.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentleman has expired.

Mr. PALLONE. I yield an additional minute to the gentleman from Maryland.

Mr. HOYER. To that extent, this is not real. It is a message. Everybody on this floor, I presume, is for children's health, is for pediatric research, is for trying to make sure that our children are healthy and saved from disease and affliction. I presume all of us are for it, but talk is cheap.

The Ryan budget would have cut $800 million from pediatric research alone; 134 of the sponsors of this bill voted for the Ryan budget. In other words, on one hand you are given—theoretically, if there was money available to do this—$11 million for pediatric research with this hand—that is 113 over 10—and $800 million being taken away with this hand.

Who do you think you are fooling?

□ 1530

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentleman has expired.

Mr. PALLONE. I yield the balance of my time to the gentleman from Maryland.

Mr. HOYER. So let's not fool the public that we are doing something for pediatric research. I know my friend, Mr. UPTON, has been a supporter of NIH in years past. And he is my dear friend and a good Member, but I tell my friend, this bill does not do anything for pediatric research.

You will have an opportunity to vote for pediatric research; vote to get rid of the sequester. Vote to invest in the National Institutes of Health, not to cut it. That will make a difference for pediatric research.

I urge the defeat of this bill.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. UPTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, I did appreciate the nice words that were directed to me by my friend, Mr. HOYER, in support of the NIH. And I will remind those that don't know that I was the Republican lead a number of years ago with Mr. WAXMAN and Mr. MCCAIN and Mr. Wellstone to double the money for the NIH, one of the most significant things that this Congress, I think, has ever done.

But I have got to say, I simply don't understand the opposition to this bill. Yes, I am absolutely supportive of the NIH bill, and will continue to do that, and more money. The Ryan-Murray budget agreement which we will be voting on tomorrow, I will be supporting it. It includes programs like the NIH, which I am told will be increased about $23 billion, or 2 percent over the current levels.

In today's ''The Hill,'' there is a full-page ad offered by First Focus Campaign for Children. It says, ''Thank you for making children your First Focus,'' and it lists maybe as many as 80 to 100 Members, including many of those who spoke today against the bill, but it says, ''Thank you for making children your First Focus.'' That is what this bill is about.

It is not just a simple authorization. Yes, we do pass those from time to time. This actually directs. The language of the bill says, ''shall be transferred.'' Shall. It doesn't use the word ''may,'' ''may be,'' whatever. ''Shall be transferred to a fund in the Treasury to be known as the '10-Year Pediatric Research Initiative Fund' which shall''—not may—''which shall be available only for the purpose provided in . . . the Public Health Service Act, and only to the extent and in such amounts as are provided in advance in appropriation Acts.''

We made it pretty tight. The authors of this bill made it pretty tight. Tell me how we can make it tighter.

Mr. HOYER. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. UPTON. I yield to the gentleman from Maryland.

Mr. HOYER. I will be glad to make a suggestion on how you could do that.

Mr. UPTON. Well, to me, we use ''shall'' a number of different times.

Mr. HOYER. You have got to have money.

Mr. UPTON. Well, that is what we do. We take money.

Mr. HOYER. If you don't have any money, you can't spend it.

Mr. UPTON. The money comes from the political conventions. I mean, that is the direct offset that is used.

All of us cry for these families that lose these beautiful little kids. This bill, if it passes and gets enacted, will provide money to help families like Gabriella's, who lost a beautiful little girl, who really used the last year of her life to promote a fund like this and work with the NIH. That is what this should be all about, and I commend Mr. CANTOR and others.

The rule that we hear is you have to find an offset when you increase spending. That is what this bill does. And it finds an offset that I think many of us could accept to actually fund the program and direct the dollars to a fund within the NIH to make sure that it works. That is what we want to have happen.

I would urge my colleagues to vote for this bill. Yes, it is under suspension, no amendments. We need a two-thirds vote, so I ask my colleagues to support this bill.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. DINGELL. Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to H.R. 2019, the Kids First Research Act. This among the most hypocritical bills I have seen during my time in Congress, and it should be rejected. My friends on the other side of the aisle say this bill will increase pediatric research funding at the National Institutes of Health, when in fact it does nothing of the sort. Furthermore, their record demonstrates that they have little interest in actually funding life-saving medical research for children.

This legislation does not give NIH a single dollar to spend on pediatric research. Instead, it only provides an authorization for future funding to be provided by the Appropriations Committee. The unfortunate fact is this funding is still subject to sequestration which has resulted in $1.55 billion being cut from NIH during fiscal year 2013. Therefore, this bill does not increase spending at NIH at all. It seems this is nothing more than a distraction to confuse people about the terrible record the GOP has on this issue.

Since my friends on the other side of the aisle have been in the majority, NIH funding has decreased by $4.2 billion, or 13 percent. Furthermore, the funding allocation provided to the Labor-HHS-Education Subcommittee for fiscal year 2014 is 22 percent below the enacted level, meaning more cuts are coming. The small, $16 million authorization that this bill provides will do nothing to reverse the damage that these policies have had on medical research across our country.

If my Republican colleagues are serious about helping children and, promoting medical research, they should work with Democrats in a bipartisan manner to repeal sequestration and replace it with sensible spending cuts, rather than allowing these damaging cuts to NIH to continue. NIH does not need another meaningless authorization that goes unfunded, they need actual dollars that go to research. I find it hard to believe that my friends on the other side of the aisle truly care about funding pediatric research when their record demonstrates just the opposite. I urge my colleagues to join me in opposing this cynical legislation.

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in opposition to the ''Gabriella Miller Kids First Research Act.'' H.R. 2019 purports to end the public's contribution to political party conventions and redirect the savings into research on childhood diseases at the National Institutes of Health. In fact, the bill does no such thing.

While I strongly support efforts to increase funding for pediatric research and other research at NIH, I do not believe H.R. 2019 does anything to advance this goal. This bill claims to make available to NIH, the $12.6 million per year raised as public support for the expenses of party conventions. In actuality, that bill would not do anything to restore the funding cuts that Republicans have strongly supported over the last few years, because it does not actually provide any additional funds to NIH. It only directs the money to be made available in appropriations.

These funds will still have to go through the regular appropriations process, fully subject to the Budget Control Act caps—as reduced by sequestration—and will have to comply with the spending allocations of the Appropriations Committee. It is this exact process, caps, and especially sequestration that cut $1.55 billion from NIH last year alone, dramatically reduced NIH funding for cancer and other research capabilities.

This bill only authorizes $12.6 million per year, which is four-tenths of one percent of the roughly $3.6 billion that NIH spent on pediatric research last year. Adding one more unfunded authorization will not interrupt the destructive downward trend this country is experiencing in research funding. It is not even an honest attempt to do this. NIH is already authorized to spend well beyond the $12.6 million a year this legislation allows.

Republicans aim to show that pediatric research is a priority, but you only have to look at H.R. 1, the House Republican spending proposal from the 112th Congress, to see what their true priorities are. That proposal, which the vast majority of Republicans supported, slashed total funding for the Labor-HHS-Education Subcommittee by 22 percent, which would have cost NIH $6.7 billion. The reality is that few Republicans are genuinely interested in providing adequate funding for the NIH.

Mr. Speaker, if my Republican colleagues truly want to support pediatric research, they should restore the $4.2 billion that has been cut from NIH's funding since they took the majority, and they could support my bill, H.R. 900, which fully repeals sequestration.

Mr. FITZPATRICK. Mr. Speaker, I rise to commend this chamber for coming together to pass The Gabrielle Miller Kids First Research Act. Ask any parent, our kids always come first, so when it comes to utilizing taxpayer dollars; it only makes sense that Washington places the children of our nation ahead of partisan politics.

This bill prioritizes allocations for scientific research of pediatric diseases and disorders such as cancer and autism. By eliminating taxpayer funding for the Republican and Democratic national conventions, and applying these funds to critically needed research for cures to childhood disorders, we are truly doing important and lasting work for our constituents—including the most precious and vulnerable.

As a member of the Autism Caucus, the chance to prioritize federal dollars for critical research on Autism, and those families living with it, is a great opportunity. Ensuring the best for our children, especially those with pediatric disorders, is vital for the continued success of our nation. It is heartening that this Congress was able to come together and work on their behalf.

I am proud to have the opportunity to work with Autism groups in my community, in Pennsylvania's 8th District, that are ready to work with the us in putting an end to Autism and all other pediatric diseases.

Mr. Speaker, I urge the Senate to quickly take up this bill and show that Washington is ready to put our kids first.

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in opposition to H.R. 2019, The Gabriella Miller Kids First Research Act. This bill completely bypassed procedure in the House, skipping any committee action prior to a full House vote and leaving no opportunity for discussion as to what could be the best way to fund pediatric research.

While my colleagues and I fully support increased funding to the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and pediatric research, the ''Kids First Research Act'' would not provide any additional funds to the NIH for this purpose. The bill merely authorizes that the Presidential Election Campaign Fund be available to a certain extent. These funds would still be subject to the Budget Control Act caps and the normal Appropriations Committee process.

H.R. 2019 is merely a messaging tactic for House Republicans to appear to be supportive of biomedical research funding. House Republicans attempted to cut $1.6 billion from NIH funding in 2011. This year, sequestration cut the NIH budget by $1.55 billion and took an additional $255 million from the cancer institute and $66 million from the child health institute within the NIH.

If House Republicans intend to increase funding for NIH research, they should do so by replacing sequestration with a more balanced approach. This bill not only restricts funding for the NIH, it represents Congressional micromanagement of research. Overall, HR. 2019 does nothing to advance the goals of biomedical research. I urge my colleagues to support the work of our scientists and researchers and oppose the Kids First Research Act.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Mr. Speaker, today House Republicans forced a vote on the cynically misnamed ''Kids First Research Act.'' The bill purports to increase funding for pediatric research by transferring $12.6 million from the public financing for party nominating conventions. That might sound substantial if it weren't designed to mask the fact that House Republicans have slashed NIH funding by $4.2 billion in the last three years. In fact, their most recent budget proposal would have cut NIH funding by another 20%. It's one of the most cynical acts I've seen in a Congress and reminds me of what my friend, humorist Jim Boren, used to say, ''If you're going to be a phony, at least be sincere about it.''

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by

the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. UPTON) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 2019, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, this 15-minute vote on suspending the rules and passing H.R. 2019 will be followed by 5-minute votes on suspending the rules and passing H.R. 2319, S. 1471, H.R. 3212, and H.R. 1992.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 295, nays 103, not voting 33, as follows:

[Roll No. 632]

YEAS—295

Aderholt
Amash
Amodei
Bachmann
Bachus
Barber
Barletta
Barr
Barrow (GA)
Barton
Benishek
Bentivolio
Bera (CA)
Bilirakis
Bishop (NY)
Bishop (UT)
Black
Blackburn
Bonamici
Boustany
Brady (TX)
Braley (IA)
Bridenstine
Brooks (AL)
Brooks (IN)
Brownley (CA)
Buchanan
Bucshon
Burgess
Bustos
Calvert
Camp
Campbell
Cantor
Capito
Capuano
Carney
Carter
Cartwright
Cassidy
Castor (FL)
Chabot
Chaffetz
Coble
Coffman
Cole
Collins (GA)
Collins (NY)
Conaway
Cook
Cooper
Costa
Cotton
Courtney
Cramer
Crawford
Crenshaw
Cuellar
Daines
Davis, Rodney
DeFazio
Delaney
DelBene
Denham
Dent
DeSantis
DesJarlais
Deutch
Diaz-Balart
Duckworth
Duffy
Duncan (SC)
Duncan (TN)
Ellmers
Enyart
Esty
Farenthold
Fattah
Fincher
Fitzpatrick
Fleischmann
Fleming
Flores
Forbes
Fortenberry
Foster
Foxx
Frelinghuysen
Gabbard
Gallego
Garamendi
Garcia
Gardner
Garrett
Gerlach
Gibbs
Gibson
Gingrey (GA)
Gohmert
Goodlatte
Gosar
Gowdy
Granger
Graves (GA)
Graves (MO)
Grayson
Green, Gene
Griffin (AR)
Griffith (VA)
Grimm
Guthrie
Hall
Hanabusa
Hanna
Harper
Harris
Hartzler
Hastings (FL)
Hastings (WA)
Heck (NV)
Heck (WA)
Hensarling
Himes
Holding
Horsford
Hudson
Huelskamp
Huizenga (MI)
Hultgren
Hunter
Hurt
Issa
Jenkins
Johnson (OH)
Johnson, Sam
Jones
Jordan
Joyce
Keating
Kelly (PA)
Kilmer
Kind
King (IA)
King (NY)
Kingston
Kinzinger (IL)
Kirkpatrick
Kline
Kuster
Labrador
LaMalfa
Lamborn
Lance
Lankford
Latham
Latta
Lipinski
LoBiondo
Loebsack
Long
Lucas
Luetkemeyer
Lujan Grisham (NM)
Lummis
Lynch
Maffei
Maloney, Sean
Marchant
Marino
Massie
Matheson
McAllister
McCarthy (CA)
McCaul
McClintock
McHenry
McIntyre
McKeon
McKinley
McNerney
Meadows
Meehan
Meng
Messer
Mica
Miller (FL)
Miller (MI)
Miller, Gary
Mullin
Mulvaney
Murphy (FL)
Murphy (PA)
Neal
Neugebauer
Noem
Nugent
Nunes
Olson
Owens
Palazzo
Paulsen
Pearce
Perry
Peters (CA)
Peters (MI)
Peterson
Petri
Pittenger
Pitts
Poe (TX)
Pompeo
Posey
Price (GA)
Rahall
Reed
Reichert
Renacci
Ribble
Rice (SC)
Rigell
Roby
Roe (TN)
Rogers (AL)
Rogers (KY)
Rogers (MI)
Rohrabacher
Rokita
Rooney
Ros-Lehtinen
Roskam
Ross
Rothfus
Royce
Ruiz
Runyan
Ryan (OH)
Ryan (WI)
Salmon
Sanford
Scalise
Schiff
Schneider
Schrader
Schweikert
Scott, Austin
Sensenbrenner
Sessions
Shea-Porter
Sherman
Shimkus
Shuster
Simpson
Sinema
Smith (MO)
Smith (NE)
Smith (NJ)
Smith (TX)
Smith (WA)
Southerland
Stewart
Stivers
Stockman
Stutzman
Terry
Thompson (PA)
Thornberry
Tiberi
Tipton
Tsongas
Turner
Upton
Valadao
Veasey
Wagner
Walberg
Walden
Walorski
Walz
Weber (TX)
Webster (FL)
Welch
Wenstrup
Westmoreland
Whitfield
Williams
Wilson (SC)
Wittman
Wolf
Womack
Woodall
Yarmuth
Yoder
Yoho
Young (AK)
Young (IN)

NAYS—103

Andrews
Becerra
Blumenauer
Brady (PA)
Broun (GA)
Brown (FL)
Capps
Cárdenas
Carson (IN)
Chu
Cicilline
Clay
Cleaver
Clyburn
Cohen
Connolly
Crowley
Davis (CA)
Davis, Danny
DeGette
DeLauro
Dingell
Doggett
Edwards
Ellison
Engel
Eshoo
Farr
Frankel (FL)
Grijalva
Gutiérrez
Hahn
Higgins
Hinojosa
Holt
Honda
Hoyer
Huffman
Israel
Jeffries
Johnson (GA)
Johnson, E. B.
Kaptur
Kelly (IL)
Kennedy
Kildee
Langevin
Larsen (WA)
Larson (CT)
Levin
Lofgren
Lowenthal
Lowey
Luján, Ben Ray (NM)
Maloney, Carolyn
Matsui
McCollum
McGovern
Michaud
Miller, George
Moran
Nadler
Napolitano
Negrete McLeod
Nolan
O'Rourke
Pallone
Pascrell
Payne
Pelosi
Perlmutter
Pingree (ME)
Pocan
Polis
Price (NC)
Quigley
Richmond
Roybal-Allard
Rush
Sánchez, Linda T.
Sanchez, Loretta
Sarbanes
Schakowsky
Scott, David
Serrano
Sires
Slaughter
Speier
Swalwell (CA)
Takano
Thompson (CA)
Thompson (MS)
Tierney
Titus
Tonko
Van Hollen
Vargas
Vela
Velázquez
Visclosky
Wasserman Schultz
Waxman
Wilson (FL)

NOT VOTING—33

Bass
Beatty
Bishop (GA)
Butterfield
Castro (TX)
Clarke
Conyers
Culberson
Cummings
Doyle
Franks (AZ)
Fudge
Green, Al
Herrera Beutler
Jackson Lee
Lee (CA)
Lewis
McCarthy (NY)
McDermott
McMorris Rodgers
Meeks
Moore
Nunnelee
Pastor (AZ)
Radel
Rangel
Ruppersberger
Schock
Schwartz
Scott (VA)
Sewell (AL)
Waters
Watt

□ 1600

Ms. BROWN of Florida, Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi, Ms. ROYBAL-ALLARD, and Mr. TIERNEY changed their vote from ''yea'' to ''nay.''

Messrs. KINGSTON, CARNEY, DEUTCH, Ms. GABBARD, Messrs. GARAMENDI, YARMUTH, PETERSON of Minnesota, and Ms. HANABUSA changed their vote from ''nay'' to ''yea.''

So (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

The title of the bill was amended so as to read: ''A bill to eliminate taxpayer financing of political party conventions and reprogram savings to provide for a 10-year pediatric research initiative through the Common Fund administered by the National Institutes of Health, and for other purposes.''.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

Stated for:

Mr. NUNNELEE. Mr. Speaker, on rollcall No. 632, I was unavoidably detained. Had I been present, I would have voted "yes."

Stated against:

Mr. RUPPERSBERGER. Mr. Speaker, on rollcall No. 632 I was at a medical appointment in Baltimore, MD and therefore unable to vote. Had I been present, I would have voted "no."

NATIVE AMERICAN VETERANS' MEMORIAL AMENDMENTS ACT OF 2013

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. HOLDING). The unfinished business is the vote on the motion to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 2319) to clarify certain provisions of the Native American Veterans' Memorial Establishment Act of 1994, as amended, on which the yeas and nays were ordered.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. MULLIN) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, as amended.

This is a 5-minute vote.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 398, nays 0, not voting 33, as follows:

[Roll No. 633]

YEAS—398

Aderholt
Amash
Amodei
Andrews
Bachmann
Bachus
Barber
Barletta
Barr
Barrow (GA)
Barton
Becerra
Benishek
Bentivolio
Bera (CA)
Bilirakis
Bishop (NY)
Bishop (UT)
Black
Blackburn
Blumenauer
Bonamici
Boustany
Brady (PA)
Brady (TX)
Braley (IA)
Bridenstine
Brooks (AL)
Brooks (IN)
Broun (GA)
Brown (FL)
Brownley (CA)
Buchanan
Bucshon
Burgess
Bustos
Calvert
Camp
Campbell
Cantor
Capito
Capps
Capuano
Cárdenas
Carney
Carson (IN)
Carter
Cartwright
Cassidy
Castor (FL)
Chabot
Chaffetz
Chu
Cicilline
Clay
Cleaver
Clyburn
Coble
Coffman
Cohen
Cole
Collins (GA)
Collins (NY)
Conaway
Connolly
Cook
Cooper
Costa
Cotton
Courtney
Cramer
Crawford
Crenshaw
Crowley
Cuellar
Daines
Davis (CA)
Davis, Danny
Davis, Rodney
DeFazio
DeGette
Delaney
DeLauro
DelBene
Denham
Dent
DeSantis
DesJarlais
Deutch
Diaz-Balart
Dingell
Doggett
Duckworth
Duffy
Duncan (SC)
Duncan (TN)
Edwards
Ellison
Ellmers

Engel
Enyart
Eshoo
Esty
Farenthold
Farr
Fattah
Fincher
Fitzpatrick
Fleischmann
Fleming
Flores
Forbes
Fortenberry
Foster
Foxx
Frankel (FL)
Franks (AZ)
Frelinghuysen
Gabbard
Gallego
Garamendi
Garcia
Gardner
Garrett
Gerlach
Gibbs
Gibson
Gingrey (GA)
Gohmert
Goodlatte
Gosar
Gowdy
Granger
Graves (GA)
Graves (MO)
Grayson
Green, Gene
Griffin (AR)
Griffith (VA)
Grimm
Guthrie
Gutiérrez
Hahn
Hall
Hanabusa
Hanna
Harper
Harris
Hartzler
Hastings (FL)
Hastings (WA)
Heck (NV)
Heck (WA)
Hensarling
Higgins
Himes
Hinojosa
Holding
Holt
Honda
Horsford
Hoyer
Hudson
Huelskamp
Huffman
Huizenga (MI)
Hultgren
Hunter
Hurt
Israel
Issa
Jeffries
Jenkins
Johnson (GA)
Johnson (OH)
Johnson, E. B.
Johnson, Sam
Jones
Jordan
Joyce
Kaptur
Keating
Kelly (IL)
Kelly (PA)
Kennedy
Kildee
Kilmer
Kind
King (IA)
King (NY)
Kingston
Kinzinger (IL)
Kirkpatrick
Kline
Kuster
Labrador
LaMalfa
Lamborn
Lance
Langevin
Lankford
Larsen (WA)
Larson (CT)
Latham
Latta
Levin
Lipinski
LoBiondo
Loebsack
Lofgren
Long
Lowenthal
Lowey
Lucas
Luetkemeyer
Lujan Grisham (NM)
Luján, Ben Ray (NM)
Lummis
Lynch
Maffei
Maloney, Carolyn
Maloney, Sean
Marchant
Marino
Massie
Matheson
Matsui
McAllister
McCarthy (CA)
McCaul
McClintock
McCollum
McGovern
McHenry
McIntyre
McKeon
McKinley
McNerney
Meadows
Meehan
Meng
Messer
Mica
Michaud
Miller (FL)
Miller (MI)
Miller, Gary
Miller, George
Moran
Mullin
Mulvaney
Murphy (FL)
Murphy (PA)
Nadler
Napolitano
Neal
Negrete McLeod
Neugebauer
Noem
Nolan
Nugent
Nunes
Nunnelee
O'Rourke
Olson
Owens
Pallone
Pascrell
Paulsen
Payne
Pearce
Pelosi
Perlmutter
Perry
Peters (CA)
Peters (MI)
Peterson
Petri
Pingree (ME)
Pittenger
Pitts
Pocan
Poe (TX)
Polis
Pompeo
Posey
Price (GA)
Price (NC)
Quigley
Rahall
Reed
Reichert
Renacci
Ribble
Rice (SC)
Richmond
Rigell
Roby
Roe (TN)
Rogers (AL)
Rogers (KY)
Rogers (MI)
Rohrabacher
Rokita
Rooney
Ros-Lehtinen
Roskam
Ross
Rothfus
Roybal-Allard
Royce
Ruiz
Runyan
Rush
Ryan (OH)
Ryan (WI)
Salmon
Sánchez, Linda T.
Sanchez, Loretta
Sanford
Sarbanes
Scalise
Schakowsky
Schiff
Schneider
Schrader
Schweikert
Scott, Austin
Scott, David
Sensenbrenner
Serrano
Sessions
Shea-Porter
Sherman
Shimkus
Shuster
Simpson
Sinema
Sires
Slaughter
Smith (MO)
Smith (NE)
Smith (NJ)
Smith (TX)
Smith (WA)
Southerland
Speier
Stewart
Stivers
Stockman
Stutzman
Swalwell (CA)
Takano
Terry
Thompson (CA)
Thompson (MS)
Thompson (PA)
Thornberry
Tiberi
Tierney
Tipton
Titus
Tonko
Tsongas
Turner
Upton
Valadao
Van Hollen
Vargas
Veasey
Vela
Velázquez
Visclosky
Wagner
Walberg
Walden
Walorski
Walz
Wasserman Schultz
Waxman
Weber (TX)
Webster (FL)
Welch
Wenstrup
Westmoreland
Whitfield
Williams
Wilson (FL)
Wilson (SC)
Wittman
Wolf
Womack
Woodall
Yarmuth
Yoder
Yoho
Young (AK)
Young (IN)

NOT VOTING—33

Bass
Beatty
Bishop (GA)
Butterfield
Castro (TX)
Clarke
Conyers
Culberson
Cummings
Doyle
Fudge
Green, Al
Grijalva
Herrera Beutler
Jackson Lee
Lee (CA)
Lewis
McCarthy (NY)
McDermott
McMorris Rodgers
Meeks
Moore
Palazzo
Pastor (AZ)
Radel
Rangel
Ruppersberger
Schock
Schwartz
Scott (VA)
Sewell (AL)
Waters
Watt

□ 1608

So (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

Stated for:

Mr. RUPPERSBERGER. Mr. Speaker, on rollcall No. 633 I was at a medical appointment in Baltimore, MD and unable to vote. Had I been present, I would have voted "yes."

ALICIA DAWN KOEHL RESPECT FOR NATIONAL CEMETERIES ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The unfinished business is the vote on the motion to suspend the rules and pass the bill (S. 1471) to authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs and the Secretary of the Army to reconsider decisions to inter or honor the memory of a person in a national cemetery, and for other purposes, on which the yeas and nays were ordered.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MILLER) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill.

This is a 5-minute vote.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 398, nays 1, not voting 32, as follows:

[Roll No. 634]

YEAS—398

Aderholt
Amodei
Andrews
Bachmann
Bachus
Barber
Barletta
Barr
Barrow (GA)
Barton
Becerra
Benishek
Bentivolio
Bera (CA)
Bilirakis
Bishop (NY)
Bishop (UT)
Black
Blackburn
Blumenauer
Bonamici
Boustany
Brady (PA)
Brady (TX)
Braley (IA)
Bridenstine
Brooks (AL)
Brooks (IN)
Broun (GA)
Brown (FL)
Brownley (CA)
Buchanan
Bucshon
Burgess
Bustos
Calvert
Camp
Campbell
Cantor
Capito
Capps
Capuano
Cárdenas
Carney
Carson (IN)
Carter
Cartwright
Cassidy
Castor (FL)
Chabot
Chaffetz
Chu
Cicilline
Clay
Cleaver
Clyburn
Coble
Coffman
Cohen
Cole
Collins (GA)
Collins (NY)
Conaway
Connolly
Cook
Cooper
Costa
Cotton
Courtney
Cramer
Crawford
Crenshaw
Crowley
Cuellar
Daines
Davis (CA)
Davis, Danny
Davis, Rodney
DeFazio
DeGette
Delaney
DeLauro
DelBene
Denham
Dent
DeSantis
DesJarlais
Deutch
Diaz-Balart
Dingell
Doggett
Duckworth
Duffy
Duncan (SC)
Duncan (TN)
Edwards
Ellison
Ellmers
Engel
Enyart
Eshoo
Esty
Farenthold
Farr
Fattah
Fincher
Fitzpatrick
Fleischmann
Fleming
Flores
Forbes
Fortenberry
Foster
Foxx
Frankel (FL)
Franks (AZ)
Frelinghuysen
Gabbard
Gallego
Garamendi
Garcia
Gardner
Garrett
Gerlach
Gibbs
Gibson
Gingrey (GA)
Gohmert
Goodlatte
Gosar
Gowdy
Granger
Graves (GA)
Graves (MO)
Grayson
Green, Gene
Griffin (AR)
Griffith (VA)
Grijalva
Grimm
Guthrie
Gutiérrez
Hahn
Hall
Hanabusa
Hanna
Harper
Harris
Hartzler
Hastings (FL)
Hastings (WA)
Heck (NV)
Heck (WA)
Hensarling
Higgins
Himes
Hinojosa
Holding
Holt
Honda
Horsford
Hoyer
Hudson
Huelskamp
Huffman
Huizenga (MI)
Hultgren
Hunter
Hurt
Israel
Issa
Jeffries
Jenkins
Johnson (GA)
Johnson (OH)
Johnson, E. B.
Johnson, Sam
Jones
Jordan
Joyce
Kaptur
Keating
Kelly (IL)
Kelly (PA)
Kennedy
Kildee
Kilmer
Kind
King (IA)
King (NY)
Kingston
Kinzinger (IL)
Kirkpatrick
Kline
Kuster
Labrador
LaMalfa
Lamborn
Lance
Langevin
Lankford
Larsen (WA)
Larson (CT)
Latham
Latta
Levin
Lipinski
LoBiondo
Loebsack
Lofgren
Long
Lowenthal
Lowey
Lucas
Luetkemeyer
Lujan Grisham (NM)
Luján, Ben Ray (NM)
Lummis
Lynch
Maffei
Maloney, Carolyn
Maloney, Sean
Marchant
Marino
Massie
Matheson
Matsui
McAllister
McCarthy (CA)
McCaul
McClintock
McCollum
McGovern
McHenry
McIntyre
McKeon
McKinley
McNerney
Meadows
Meehan
Meng
Messer
Mica
Michaud
Miller (FL)
Miller (MI)
Miller, Gary
Miller, George
Moran
Mullin
Mulvaney
Murphy (FL)
Murphy (PA)
Nadler
Napolitano
Neal
Negrete McLeod
Neugebauer
Noem
Nolan
Nugent
Nunes
Nunnelee
O'Rourke
Olson
Owens
Palazzo
Pallone
Pascrell
Paulsen
Payne
Pearce
Pelosi
Perlmutter
Perry
Peters (CA)
Peters (MI)
Peterson
Petri
Pingree (ME)
Pittenger
Pitts
Pocan
Poe (TX)
Polis
Pompeo
Posey
Price (GA)
Price (NC)
Quigley
Rahall
Reed
Reichert
Renacci
Ribble
Rice (SC)
Richmond
Rigell
Roby
Roe (TN)
Rogers (AL)
Rogers (KY)
Rogers (MI)
Rohrabacher
Rokita
Rooney
Ros-Lehtinen
Roskam
Ross
Rothfus
Roybal-Allard
Royce
Ruiz
Runyan
Rush
Ryan (OH)
Ryan (WI)
Salmon
Sánchez, Linda T.
Sanchez, Loretta
Sanford
Sarbanes
Scalise
Schakowsky
Schiff
Schneider
Schrader
Schweikert
Scott, Austin
Sensenbrenner
Serrano
Sessions
Shea-Porter
Sherman
Shimkus
Shuster
Simpson
Sinema
Sires
Slaughter
Smith (MO)
Smith (NE)
Smith (NJ)
Smith (TX)
Smith (WA)
Southerland
Speier
Stewart
Stivers
Stockman
Stutzman
Swalwell (CA)
Takano
Terry
Thompson (CA)
Thompson (MS)
Thompson (PA)
Thornberry
Tiberi
Tierney
Tipton
Titus
Tonko
Tsongas
Turner
Upton
Valadao
Van Hollen
Vargas
Veasey
Vela
Velázquez
Visclosky
Wagner
Walberg
Walden
Walorski
Walz
Wasserman Schultz
Waxman
Weber (TX)
Webster (FL)

Welch
Wenstrup
Westmoreland
Whitfield
Williams
Wilson (FL)
Wilson (SC)
Wittman
Wolf
Womack
Woodall
Yarmuth
Yoder
Yoho
Young (AK)
Young (IN)

NAYS—1

Amash

NOT VOTING—32

Bass
Beatty
Bishop (GA)
Butterfield
Castro (TX)
Clarke
Conyers
Culberson
Cummings
Doyle
Fudge
Green, Al
Herrera Beutler
Jackson Lee
Lee (CA)
Lewis
McCarthy (NY)
McDermott
McMorris Rodgers
Meeks
Moore
Pastor (AZ)
Radel
Rangel
Ruppersberger
Schock
Schwartz
Scott (VA)
Scott, David
Sewell (AL)
Waters
Watt

□ 1615

So (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

Stated for:

Mr. RUPPERSBERGER. Mr. Speaker, on rollcall No. 634 I was at a medical appointment in Baltimore, MD and therefore unable to vote. Had I been present, I would have voted "yes."

SEAN AND DAVID GOLDMAN INTERNATIONAL CHILD ABDUCTION PREVENTION AND RETURN ACT OF 2013

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The unfinished business is the vote on the motion to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 3212) to ensure compliance with the 1980 Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction by countries with which the United States enjoys reciprocal obligations, to establish procedures for the prompt return of children abducted to other countries, and for other purposes, as amended, on which the yeas and nays were ordered.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. ROYCE) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, as amended.

This is a 5-minute vote.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 398, nays 0, not voting 33, as follows:

[Roll No. 635]

YEAS—398

Aderholt
Amash
Amodei
Andrews
Bachmann
Bachus
Barber
Barletta
Barr
Barrow (GA)
Barton
Becerra
Benishek
Bentivolio
Bera (CA)
Bilirakis
Bishop (NY)
Bishop (UT)
Black
Blackburn
Blumenauer
Bonamici
Boustany
Brady (PA)
Brady (TX)
Braley (IA)
Bridenstine
Brooks (AL)
Brooks (IN)
Broun (GA)
Brown (FL)
Brownley (CA)
Buchanan
Bucshon
Burgess
Bustos
Calvert
Camp
Campbell
Cantor
Capito
Capps
Capuano
Cárdenas
Carney
Carson (IN)
Carter
Cartwright
Cassidy
Castor (FL)
Chabot
Chaffetz
Chu
Cicilline
Clay
Cleaver
Clyburn
Coble
Coffman
Cohen
Cole
Collins (GA)
Collins (NY)
Conaway
Connolly
Cook
Cooper
Costa
Cotton
Courtney
Cramer
Crawford
Crenshaw
Crowley
Cuellar
Daines
Davis (CA)
Davis, Danny
Davis, Rodney
DeFazio
DeGette
Delaney
DeLauro
DelBene
Denham
Dent
DeSantis
DesJarlais
Deutch
Diaz-Balart
Dingell
Doggett
Duckworth
Duffy
Duncan (SC)
Duncan (TN)
Edwards
Ellison
Ellmers
Engel
Enyart
Eshoo
Esty
Farenthold
Farr
Fattah
Fincher
Fitzpatrick
Fleischmann
Fleming
Flores
Forbes
Fortenberry
Foster
Foxx
Frankel (FL)
Franks (AZ)
Frelinghuysen
Gabbard
Gallego
Garamendi
Garcia
Gardner
Garrett
Gerlach
Gibbs
Gibson
Gingrey (GA)
Gohmert
Goodlatte
Gosar
Gowdy
Granger
Graves (GA)
Graves (MO)
Grayson
Green, Gene
Griffin (AR)
Griffith (VA)
Grijalva
Grimm
Guthrie
Hahn
Hall
Hanabusa
Hanna
Harper
Harris
Hartzler
Hastings (FL)
Hastings (WA)
Heck (NV)
Heck (WA)
Hensarling
Higgins
Himes
Hinojosa
Holding
Holt
Honda
Horsford
Hoyer
Hudson
Huelskamp
Huffman
Huizenga (MI)
Hultgren
Hunter
Hurt
Israel
Issa
Jeffries
Jenkins
Johnson (GA)
Johnson (OH)
Johnson, E. B.
Johnson, Sam
Jones
Jordan
Joyce
Kaptur
Keating
Kelly (IL)
Kelly (PA)
Kennedy
Kildee
Kilmer
Kind
King (IA)
King (NY)
Kingston
Kinzinger (IL)
Kirkpatrick
Kline
Kuster
Labrador
LaMalfa
Lamborn
Lance
Langevin
Lankford
Larsen (WA)
Larson (CT)
Latham
Latta
Levin
Lipinski
LoBiondo
Loebsack
Lofgren
Long
Lowenthal
Lowey
Lucas
Luetkemeyer
Lujan Grisham (NM)
Luján, Ben Ray (NM)
Lummis
Lynch
Maffei
Maloney, Carolyn
Maloney, Sean
Marchant
Marino
Massie
Matheson
Matsui
McAllister
McCarthy (CA)
McCaul
McClintock
McCollum
McGovern
McHenry
McIntyre
McKeon
McKinley
McNerney
Meadows
Meehan
Meng
Messer
Mica
Michaud
Miller (FL)
Miller (MI)
Miller, Gary
Miller, George
Moran
Mullin
Mulvaney
Murphy (FL)
Murphy (PA)
Nadler
Napolitano
Neal
Negrete McLeod
Neugebauer
Noem
Nolan
Nugent
Nunes
Nunnelee
O'Rourke
Olson
Owens
Palazzo
Pallone
Pascrell
Paulsen
Payne
Pearce
Pelosi
Perlmutter
Perry
Peters (CA)
Peters (MI)
Peterson
Petri
Pingree (ME)
Pittenger
Pitts
Pocan
Poe (TX)
Polis
Pompeo
Posey
Price (GA)
Price (NC)
Quigley
Rahall
Reed
Reichert
Renacci
Ribble
Rice (SC)
Richmond
Rigell
Roby
Roe (TN)
Rogers (AL)
Rogers (KY)
Rogers (MI)
Rohrabacher
Rokita
Rooney
Ros-Lehtinen
Roskam
Ross
Rothfus
Roybal-Allard
Royce
Ruiz
Runyan
Rush
Ryan (OH)
Ryan (WI)
Salmon
Sánchez, Linda T.
Sanchez, Loretta
Sanford
Sarbanes
Scalise
Schakowsky
Schiff
Schneider
Schrader
Schweikert
Scott, Austin
Scott, David
Sensenbrenner
Serrano
Sessions
Shea-Porter
Sherman
Shimkus
Shuster
Simpson
Sinema
Sires
Slaughter
Smith (MO)
Smith (NE)
Smith (NJ)
Smith (TX)
Smith (WA)
Southerland
Speier
Stewart
Stivers
Stockman
Stutzman
Swalwell (CA)
Takano
Thompson (CA)
Thompson (MS)
Thompson (PA)
Thornberry
Tiberi
Tierney
Tipton
Titus
Tonko
Tsongas
Turner
Upton
Valadao
Van Hollen
Vargas
Veasey
Vela
Velázquez
Visclosky
Wagner
Walberg
Walden
Walorski
Walz
Wasserman Schultz
Waxman
Weber (TX)
Webster (FL)
Welch
Wenstrup
Westmoreland
Whitfield
Williams
Wilson (FL)
Wilson (SC)
Wittman
Wolf
Womack
Woodall
Yarmuth
Yoder
Yoho
Young (AK)
Young (IN)

NOT VOTING—33

Bass
Beatty
Bishop (GA)
Butterfield
Castro (TX)
Clarke
Conyers
Culberson
Cummings
Doyle
Fudge
Green, Al
Gutiérrez
Herrera Beutler
Jackson Lee
Lee (CA)
Lewis
McCarthy (NY)
McDermott
McMorris Rodgers
Meeks
Moore
Pastor (AZ)
Radel
Rangel
Ruppersberger
Schock
Schwartz
Scott (VA)
Sewell (AL)
Terry
Waters
Watt

□ 1622

So (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

Stated for:

Mr. RUPPERSBERGER. Mr. Speaker, on rollcall No. 635, I was at a medical appointment in Baltimore, MD and therefore unable to vote. Had I been present, I would have voted "yes."

ISRAEL QME ENHANCEMENT ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The unfinished business is the vote on the motion to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1992) to amend the requirements relating to assessment of Israel's qualitative military edge over military threats, and for other purposes, as amended, on which the yeas and nays were ordered.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. ROYCE) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, as amended.

This is a 5-minute vote.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 399, nays 0, not voting 32, as follows:

[Roll No. 636]

YEAS—399

Aderholt
Amash
Amodei
Andrews
Bachmann
Bachus
Barber
Barletta
Barr
Barrow (GA)
Barton
Becerra
Benishek
Bentivolio
Bera (CA)
Bilirakis
Bishop (NY)
Bishop (UT)
Black
Blackburn
Blumenauer
Bonamici
Boustany
Brady (PA)
Brady (TX)
Braley (IA)
Bridenstine
Brooks (AL)
Brooks (IN)
Broun (GA)
Brown (FL)
Brownley (CA)
Buchanan
Bucshon
Burgess
Bustos
Calvert
Camp
Campbell
Cantor
Capito
Capps

Capuano
Cárdenas
Carney
Carson (IN)
Carter
Cartwright
Cassidy
Castor (FL)
Chabot
Chaffetz
Chu
Cicilline
Clay
Cleaver
Clyburn
Coble
Coffman
Cohen
Cole
Collins (GA)
Collins (NY)
Conaway
Connolly
Cook
Cooper
Costa
Cotton
Courtney
Cramer
Crawford
Crenshaw
Crowley
Cuellar
Daines
Davis (CA)
Davis, Danny
Davis, Rodney
DeFazio
DeGette
Delaney
DeLauro
DelBene
Denham
Dent
DeSantis
DesJarlais
Deutch
Diaz-Balart
Dingell
Doggett
Duckworth
Duffy
Duncan (SC)
Duncan (TN)
Edwards
Ellison
Ellmers
Engel
Enyart
Eshoo
Esty
Farenthold
Farr
Fattah
Fincher
Fitzpatrick
Fleischmann
Fleming
Flores
Forbes
Fortenberry
Foster
Foxx
Frankel (FL)
Franks (AZ)
Frelinghuysen
Gabbard
Gallego
Garamendi
Garcia
Gardner
Garrett
Gerlach
Gibbs
Gibson
Gingrey (GA)
Gohmert
Goodlatte
Gosar
Gowdy
Granger
Graves (GA)
Graves (MO)
Grayson
Green, Gene
Griffin (AR)
Griffith (VA)
Grijalva
Grimm
Guthrie
Gutiérrez
Hahn
Hall
Hanabusa
Hanna
Harper
Harris
Hastings (FL)
Hastings (WA)
Heck (NV)
Heck (WA)
Hensarling
Higgins
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Hinojosa
Holding
Holt
Honda
Horsford
Hoyer
Hudson
Huelskamp
Huffman
Huizenga (MI)
Hultgren
Hunter
Hurt
Israel
Issa
Jeffries
Jenkins
Johnson (GA)
Johnson (OH)
Johnson, E. B.
Johnson, Sam
Jones
Jordan
Joyce
Kaptur
Keating
Kelly (IL)
Kelly (PA)
Kennedy
Kildee
Kilmer
Kind
King (IA)
King (NY)
Kingston
Kinzinger (IL)
Kirkpatrick
Kline
Kuster
Labrador
LaMalfa
Lamborn
Lance
Langevin
Lankford
Larsen (WA)
Larson (CT)
Latham
Latta
Levin
Lipinski
LoBiondo
Loebsack
Lofgren
Long
Lowenthal
Lowey
Lucas
Luetkemeyer
Lujan Grisham (NM)
Luján, Ben Ray (NM)
Lummis
Lynch
Maffei
Maloney, Carolyn
Maloney, Sean
Marchant
Marino
Massie
Matheson
Matsui
McAllister
McCarthy (CA)
McCaul
McClintock
McCollum
McGovern
McHenry
McIntyre
McKeon
McKinley
McNerney
Meadows
Meehan
Meng
Messer
Mica
Michaud
Miller (FL)
Miller (MI)
Miller, Gary
Miller, George
Moran
Mullin
Mulvaney
Murphy (FL)
Murphy (PA)
Nadler
Napolitano
Neal
Negrete McLeod
Neugebauer
Noem
Nolan
Nugent
Nunes
Nunnelee
O'Rourke
Olson
Owens
Palazzo
Pallone
Pascrell
Paulsen
Payne
Pearce
Pelosi
Perlmutter
Perry
Peters (CA)
Peters (MI)
Peterson
Petri
Pingree (ME)
Pittenger
Pitts
Pocan
Poe (TX)
Polis
Pompeo
Posey
Price (GA)
Price (NC)
Quigley
Rahall
Reed
Reichert
Renacci
Ribble
Rice (SC)
Richmond
Rigell
Roby
Roe (TN)
Rogers (AL)
Rogers (KY)
Rogers (MI)
Rohrabacher
Rokita
Rooney
Ros-Lehtinen
Roskam
Ross
Rothfus
Roybal-Allard
Royce
Ruiz
Runyan
Rush
Ryan (OH)
Ryan (WI)
Salmon
Sánchez, Linda T.
Sanchez, Loretta
Sanford
Sarbanes
Scalise
Schakowsky
Schiff
Schneider
Schrader
Schweikert
Scott, Austin
Scott, David
Sensenbrenner
Serrano
Sessions
Shea-Porter
Sherman
Shimkus
Shuster
Simpson
Sinema
Sires
Slaughter
Smith (MO)
Smith (NE)
Smith (NJ)
Smith (TX)
Smith (WA)
Southerland
Speier
Stewart
Stivers
Stockman
Stutzman
Swalwell (CA)
Takano
Terry
Thompson (CA)
Thompson (MS)
Thompson (PA)
Thornberry
Tiberi
Tierney
Tipton
Titus
Tonko
Tsongas
Turner
Upton
Valadao
Van Hollen
Vargas
Veasey
Vela
Velázquez
Visclosky
Wagner
Walberg
Walden
Walorski
Walz
Wasserman Schultz
Waxman
Weber (TX)
Webster (FL)
Welch
Wenstrup
Westmoreland
Whitfield
Williams
Wilson (FL)
Wilson (SC)
Wittman
Wolf
Womack
Woodall
Yarmuth
Yoder
Yoho
Young (AK)
Young (IN)

NOT VOTING—32

Bass
Beatty
Bishop (GA)
Butterfield
Castro (TX)
Clarke
Conyers
Culberson
Cummings
Doyle
Fudge
Green, Al
Hartzler
Herrera Beutler
Jackson Lee
Lee (CA)
Lewis
McCarthy (NY)
McDermott
McMorris Rodgers
Meeks
Moore
Pastor (AZ)
Radel
Rangel
Ruppersberger
Schock
Schwartz
Scott (VA)
Sewell (AL)
Waters
Watt

□ 1628

So (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

Stated for:

Mr. RUPPERSBERGER. Mr. Speaker, on rollcall No. 636, I was at a medical appointment in Baltimore, MD and therefore unable to vote. Had I been present, I would have voted "yes."

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, on December 10 and 11, 2013, I was a part of an official congressional delegation to South Africa. I regret that I was not present to vote on H.R. 3521, H.R. 1402, H.R. 2019, H.R. 2319, S. 1471, H.R. 3212, H.R. 1992, and the Journal Vote.

Had I been present, I would have voted "yea" on H.R. 3521, H.R. 1402, H.R. 2319, S. 1471, H.R. 1992, and the Journal Vote.

Had I been present, I would have voted "nay" on H.R. 2019, and H.R. 3212.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mrs. McMORRIS RODGERS. Mr. Speaker, on rollcall No. 632 on H.R. 2019, on Motion to Suspend the Rules and Pass, "Gabriella Miller Kids First Research Act of 2013, as amended", I am not recorded becaue I was absent due to the birth of my daughter. Had I been present, I would have voted "yea."

Mr. Speaker, on rollcall No. 633 on H.R. 2319, on Motion to Suspend the Rules and Pass, "Native American Veterans' Memorial Amendments Act of 2013", I am not recorded because I was absent due to the birth of my daughter. Had I been present, I would have voted "yea."

Mr. Speaker, on rollcall No. 634 on S. 1471, on Motion to Suspend the Rules and Pass, "Alicia Dawn Koehl Respect for National Cemeteries Act", I am not recorded because I was absent due to the birth of my daughter. Had I been present, I would have voted "yea."

Mr. Speaker, on rollcall No. 635 on H.R. 3212, on Motion to Suspend the Rules and Pass, "Sean and David Goldman International Child Abduction Prevention and Return Act of 2013, as amended", I am not recorded because I was absent due to the birth of my daughter. Had I been present, I would have voted "yea."

Mr. Speaker, on rollcall No. 636 on H.R. 1992, on Motion to Suspend the Rules and Pass, "Israel QME Enhancement Act, as amended", I am not recorded because I was absent due to the birth of my daughter. Had I been present, I would have voted "yea."

□ 1630

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the unfinished business is the question on agreeing to the Speaker's approval of the Journal, which the Chair will put de novo.

The question is on the Speaker's approval of the Journal.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Ms. Curtis, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has passed without amendment bills of the House of the following titles:

H.R. 2871. An act to amend title 28, United States Code, to modify the composition of the southern judicial district of Mississippi to improve judicial efficiency, and for other purposes.

H.R. 2922. An act to extend the authority of the Supreme Court Police to protect court officials away from the Supreme Court grounds.

HONORING AMORY HOUGHTON, JR.

(Mr. UPTON asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. UPTON. Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I rise today to honor Amo Houghton for his 16 years of service on the board of directors of The Faith & Politics Institute.

Amo, my good friend and our former colleague, a tireless advocate for civil rights, is stepping down as cochair of the board of Faith & Politics, just this week. He and our esteemed colleague, Congressman JOHN LEWIS, started the bipartisan Congressional Civil Rights Pilgrimage to Alabama, which in March of next year will celebrate its 14th year. This important trip brings to life the values The Faith & Politics Institute is determined to instill, as it indeed shows the attendees how to ''rise above narrow partisanship and respond to the quiet call of conscience.''

My wife, Amey, and I traveled to Selma on this pilgrimage, and we feel that it was one of the most moving and humbling experiences of our lives.

Amo was also responsible for organizing a Faith & Politics congressional visit to South Africa, which resulted in a relationship that has lasted for over a decade and is still strong. As said by the great Nelson Mandela:

A good head and a good heart are always a formidable combination.

My friend Amo Houghton is a formidable force.

Although The Faith & Politics Institute will miss his spirit and wisdom that he brought to the board of directors, his legacy and inspiration will always live on, as the Honorable Amory Houghton, Jr.'s status is now elevated to cochair emeritus for life.

OBAMACARE IS A FAILURE

(Mr. KINGSTON asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. KINGSTON. Mr. Speaker, does anyone across the fruited plain think that ObamaCare has been a success?

Two of its major objectives were to bring down the costs of health care and increase the accessibility. Well, I ask you: Does anybody know anyone whose premium has decreased? My own 30-year-old daughter's premium went from $160 to $270. Indeed, our office is besieged with people whose premiums have skyrocketed.

And then let's talk about accessibility. We hear 5.9 million policies have been canceled. And what do we hear from the Obama folks about the enrollment? 200,000 people or so. Of course, they keep the numbers kind of fuzzy. It is kind of like the unemployment numbers. You can't quite tell what they really are. But the reality is the cancelations are going about 100 miles an hour and enrollment is going at about a 20-mile-an-hour pace.

ObamaCare has been a failure. We need to defund it. We need to start all over again. We need to have health care that is patient-centered and market-based that does in fact bring down the cost of medicine and make it more affordable and more accessible to the American people.

AN OBAMACARE SUCCESS

(Ms. KAPTUR asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, I would like to respond to the gentleman and say that I walked into the Kiwanis pancake breakfast in Berea, Ohio, the other day and out of a crowd of probably a thousand people, a gentleman said, Congresswoman, Congresswoman, and came up to me and threw his arms around me. He said:

> Thank you so much for voting for the Affordable Care Act. I just got a plan 10 times better than I ever had—ten times better. My wife had a $5,000 deductible and I had a $5,000 deductible. I am a small business person. I now have a $1,000 deductible. I have much better coverage. Preventive health care is covered. I cannot believe how much better my plan is than what I had before.

It made me feel so good.

We had breakfast together. The pancakes and sausage were great, by the way.

It made me feel so good because I knew that in his business as a shoemaker and his wife as an alterations person in that same business, they would be protected as they grow older before they go onto Medicare. They have worked so very hard in their lives.

They went to the Web site, and guess what? It worked.

And so across America there are small business people saying thank you to those in Congress who voted for an Affordable Care Act that is working.

PROTECTING VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS AND EMERGENCY RESPONDERS ACT

(Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to support volunteer fire and emergency services organizations by cosponsoring a bill introduced today by Pennsylvania Congressman LOU BARLETTA, H.R. 3685, the Protecting Volunteer Firefighters and Emergency Responders Act.

This bill ensures that emergency services volunteers are not counted as full-time employees under the employer mandate in the Affordable Care Act. Because of the nominal fees that at times are given to volunteers and the rate at which the new definition of ''full-time'' is calculated, many volunteer companies are concerned about having to provide health coverage for firefighters or face a penalty. The IRS has been asked to rule on this determination, yet Congress has not received a response.

Having served as a firefighter and EMS volunteer since 1983, I know as well as anyone just how crushing this impact would be for these volunteer organizations. Fire department and municipality support for fire and EMS volunteers is important; however, incentives given to these community volunteers do not change the fact that these are volunteers serving their neighbors.

I encourage my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to join in support of the commonsense effort by cosponsoring H.R. 3685.

THE TRAIN WRECK CONTINUES

(Mr. HARRIS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. HARRIS. Mr. Speaker, the gentleman from Georgia was absolutely right; the train wreck of ObamaCare continues.

This week, we have three pieces of news. First of all, people going to the exchanges that were told they qualify for Medicaid really aren't. In fact, they won't find out until months past January 1 that they won't have insurance.

In the State of Maryland, 25,000 people got cancelation notices and 3,700 have signed up so far on the ObamaCare exchange, leaving tens of thousands of Marylanders without insurance on January 1.

As the gentleman from Pennsylvania just mentioned, volunteer firefighters are now given a mandate that their volunteer fire companies have to buy insurance for them because now, under strange definitions, they are considered employed. Mr. Speaker, my volunteer firefighters aren't employees. We are going to drive volunteer fire companies out of business.

This train wreck continues.

Mr. Speaker, Americans deserve better.

A LESSON IN HOW FAR THIS COUNTRY HAS MOVED

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. STEWART). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2013, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GOHMERT) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. GOHMERT. Mr. Speaker, I was grateful to hear from my dear friend—and I do mean dear friend. I think greatly of Ms. KAPTUR. I was glad to hear somebody has gotten a good report on the so-called Affordable Care Act.

We are continuing to hear sad story after sad story of people continuing to be laid off, people continuing to be cut from full-time to part-time and people being forced onto food stamps because they just can't make it with the loss of income going from full-time to part-time, the loss of their insurance.

And as people have now realized across the country, though we were told there were 30 million without insurance, it looks like by next fall, November of next year, there will probably be many more than that that lost their insurance even though they liked it and wanted to keep it. Because, as we know, if you like your insurance, there is a good chance you won't be able to keep it.

There is a story from December 11, ''Four in Ten Would Rather Pay Fine Than Buy Insurance.''

I am sure there are people like me. You take a look at how much the insurance is going to cost, how much it has skyrocketed several times more than what I have been paying if I were going to keep insurance with the deductible now skyrocketing and dramatically increasing under the potential policies, higher than what I have now, and when I look at the costs several times higher than what I have now, and since I am not accepting the subsidy and I am not paying into the attending physician for that care, I will be going without insurance.

It has been amazing to me how many in the liberal media—and I say ''media'' loosely, because they are really in the business of trying to protect this administration and twist stories any way they can to make anyone who objects to something this administration has done look bad, so I will loosely

refer to them as ''media''—how they have been aghast that anyone would even consider going without insurance. And it really is a lesson in how far this country has moved, in so many ways.

□ 1645

I know, in the early sixties, there was no such thing as Aid to Dependent Children, that program born out of the best of intentions because deadbeat dads were not a small minority of Americans. Different races, different backgrounds—some even well-off—were just not assisting financially the children they had fathered, and so the government wanted to help.

So, in the mid-sixties, here came the Great Society. We want to help these people—these poor moms—who had to deal with deadbeat dads who wouldn't help. They said, We will help. We will give them a check for every child they can have out of wedlock. As people who study governments and government assistance, it is well documented: when you pay for an activity, you get more of that activity. We went from 6 to 7 percent of children in America being born without a father in the home to now over 40 percent, and it still seems to be heading upwards toward 50 percent. The United States Government in the 1960s, not by what it said but by where it put its money, decided we would be a lot better off with more fatherless homes. Nobody was saying that, and I don't believe anybody intended that result, but it is what they got. In the act of paying people for an activity, you get more of that activity. So we had more children growing up in fatherless homes.

Also, back in those days, health care was so much cheaper. It wasn't at the extraordinary level that it is now. It wasn't nearly as expensive. Even though I was a small child, I didn't know people who had health insurance because, for so long, nobody had health insurance. If you had a problem, you went to the doctor, and they assessed you a charge after your visit, after they saw what the doctor did. He would write something down on your chart. We went to a few different doctors there in my small hometown of Mount Pleasant—a great town. I still love it. There are still great doctors there—but back in those days, people in my hometown in east Texas knew what doctors were charging what for what. I mean, you could actually compare apples and apples when it came to health care. If you found out some doctor said he was going up on his prices and another doctor had not gone up on his prices, then you went to the doctor who was cheaper unless you felt like he wasn't as good, but we had a number of really excellent doctors, and they cared about their patients.

Then, eventually, you heard of somebody having health insurance, and it was true insurance. A small premium was paid either monthly, quarterly, semiannually or annually, but it was a small premium to insure against a catastrophe—a dramatic illness, a car wreck—something that you could not foresee. You paid a small premium to insure against this unforeseen event just in case it happened down the road because, during those days, Americans were very independent. Americans did not want to go on welfare. Most Americans did not want to receive government handouts—they felt like it was a matter of pride—and they certainly did not want an insurance company telling them what doctor they could go to, what hospitals they could go to or which hospitals they couldn't go to, which doctors they couldn't go to, which medicines they could not get if the doctor prescribed them. They didn't want an insurance company telling them, if they needed to go to this doctor because he was an expert on this type of treatment, that you couldn't go there because it wasn't in your plan. What plan? I am the only one who is planning for my life. No insurance company is going to tell me where I can or can't go. I mean, that was the type of independent thought that there was in America.

There were a lot of problems in those days, and I thank God for Martin Luther King, Jr., because, through his actions and his life and his efforts, through peaceful protest—some around him got upset and didn't always abide by peace, but the man proclaimed everything needed to be done in peace because he was an ordained Christian minister, and he knew those were the teachings of Jesus. Because he did what he did, some people say that what he did for America was he allowed African Americans to be treated as equals. I would submit to you, since I was very young, what he did was allow me to grow up and mature in an America in which as a young, white Christian I could treat brothers and sisters like they were brothers and sisters. It didn't have to matter what color anybody's skin was. They could be judged by the content of their character and not by the color of their skin. That was a great thing for America.

As we progressed toward making America a greater place with more liberties, more equality, more freedom, at the same time—really unrelated—there was this effort of let's start giving money from the government to individuals or to individual programs that, though unintended, would make them more dependent upon the government for their lives and their livelihoods. People quit thinking as independently. Oh, well. The government is giving me money, so maybe they would do good to tell me what I can or can't do with a few things. Then, eventually, more and more employers had employees saying, Hey, I know this other company. Their employer is buying health insurance for their employees. That would be helpful because then I wouldn't have to ever worry about having a terrible accident or some cancer or some terrible disease that would bankrupt my family. So more employers started adding health insurance to their benefits. Unfortunately, it created a system in which the employer owned the insurance policy instead of the employee. The employer was paying for it, so the employer owned it.

One of the reforms that many of us were proposing, instead of the catastrophe known as the so-called Affordable Care Act, was that we wanted employees to own their insurance policies. Fine and dandy if an employer wanted to pay for insurance, but the employees should own them so that, if the employees go somewhere else, they are still their policies. They are portable, and they go with them. They still pay the same rates, and they aren't jacked up through a COBRA plan or something like that. Somehow, along the way, we grew more and more dependent on insurance companies to manage our own health care, and at the same time, as things like Medicare were created to help those seniors who needed help, more and more dependence grew upon the government, itself. The problem with an insurance company or with a government managing someone's health care is that they get to say what you get and what you don't get in the way of treatment.

So it has been quite an evolution to the point at which we are now where your religious beliefs, under the United States Constitution, have been so weakened and so nullified that now the United States Government can pass a law like the so-called Affordable Care Act—it is hard for me to just call it the ''Affordable Care Act'' because it is so disastrously expensive and unaffordable for so many people, including for me now.

The government could say, You may believe with all of your heart because of your religious conviction that abortion is the murder of a life and being, but we, the government, now control your health care, and you don't have that religious choice anymore. Oh, it may be a matter of conscience. It may be that, without regard for religion, you believe that killing a life and being that could live on its own outside the womb would be murder, but we, the government, now say you have to help pay for that type of murder. Even 20 years ago, nobody would have believed that we would get to the point where the government could order an American to pay for the killing of another, albeit an unborn child.

I guess it really comes home to me because of our first child being born 8 to 10 weeks prematurely and holding her in two hands. I could have held her in one hand, and I kind of did from time to time, but usually, in those early days, I used two just because she was so fragile, and I just did not want to risk someone I loved so much being harmed. The doctor there at the hospital in Shreveport, where our child was taken—she was very fragile—said, Look, talk to your child. She knows your voice. Her eyes don't work very well, but she knows your voice because

she could hear your voice when she was in the womb. It is very comforting, and it really gives her a feeling of security to hear your voice. If you just caress her little arm or her little forehead while you talk to her, it is such a comfort. She knows you. She can't see you, and she doesn't know what you look like, but this child has known you from long before she was born, so talk to her and touch her.

I put my finger down by her hand. So many people have had this happen, but when it happens to you, it is so special. This tiny, little hand would wrap around the end of my finger and just hang on and not let go. She wanted to live. She knew me, as the doctor said, before she was ever born. The doctor pointed out later as he came by—as we noticed on the monitors—her breathing was still extremely shallow as her lungs were not quite developed, and her heart rate was still escalated, but they stabilized as long as she was holding on. He said, She draws security. She draws life. She draws your love. So, in my heart, in my mind, in my soul, I know that child knew me before she was born, and I was a comfort to her. My wife had to stay in the hospital in Tyler for a few days. It was really emotionally difficult, as well as physically, what she had been through.

But now the government would say, Though it may absolutely devastate you and break your heart to know of some young girl who wants an abortion, you are going to have to help pay for it—pay for the abortion.

□ 1700

Even 20 years ago, that would have seemed inconceivable that anybody in the United States, any governmental entity—whether it is executive, legislative or judicial—would say even though they support abortion they are going to make somebody who had religious beliefs fervently against it pay for it. But under ObamaCare, under the so-called Affordable Care Act, that has happened.

Some of us told the President we have solutions; we have sent word to the White House many times we have solutions. We have been told—and we heard the President say it again here recently in the last few days—that they don't have any solutions. I remember him saying those same things back 4 years ago when, obviously, it was spoken out of ignorance. I know he didn't intend to deceive anybody. He apparently did not know that there were people who had great alternatives.

For my part, the bill I proposed, the solution I proposed, would return control of people's health care to themselves. If you like Medicare and you are a senior, great, stay on Medicare; but if you would like a Cadillac policy, not a bronze but a gold-plated, platinum-plated policy, then we will pay for that. Say $5,000 now might be an appropriate—of course, some of the policies I was looking at, a $5,000–$6,000 deductible, policies like that makes them a lot cheaper for seniors—and then give the seniors the cash for the whole deductible so they wouldn't be out a dime.

I proposed that to representatives of the AARP. They were so gracious, came to my office, I explained it: this would be so awesome for seniors because it means they will never have to buy another supplemental policy; they will never have to buy another wrap-around insurance policy. And seniors' money is so tight on Social Security. It is really tight. I know a family that struggled, but they bought the supplemental policy.

Now, won't that be great? I know AARP cares so much about seniors. This would be great. Well, we will have to look at it, look at it closely, give us some more information and we will look at it. Stupid me, I was just too naive. I didn't know AARP made many more times off selling supplemental insurance than they did off membership dues or anything like that, that it was just a cash cow for AARP to sell supplemental insurance.

So, of course, they couldn't afford to say that a policy that just really was a wonderful thing for seniors—no more out-of-pocket for deductible, co-pay, this just took care of them, and they made their own choices, and they had a debit card to pay for their health care all the way through their deductible amount. How could I expect AARP when they are making hundreds of millions of dollars clear profit off of supplemental policies say, oh, let's forego the supplemental policies for the good of seniors. So, obviously, they didn't.

But we can and do have alternatives for health care reforms that are true reforms that get competition back in health care. How can you have a free market system working in health care if nobody knows what any procedure, anything really costs? If it is medicine, they know their co-pay.

We have got to get back to the point where people know what things cost and they have more direct control. If we get to a place where we are truly helping those who cannot help themselves and we make it advantageous for those to put in a health savings account money so that they can take care of their own deductible if they are under 65, they are not on Medicare and bill to that point, and then it becomes very clear that most people when they start at an early age will have so much money in their health savings account built up that they hadn't spent over the years that they not only will not want the government telling them what kind of health care they can have, they won't need it.

And then for those who are young and chronically ill that will never build up an HSA, those who are actually unable to help themselves, we help them. There is a very small percentage that would be; but under the Affordable Care Act, as it is called, unjustly, the government gets control. As I have said, it is all about the GRE, the government running everything. They get to run your lives because when they can control health care, they can control everything.

They control not only what is in your bedroom—I have heard so many folks on the other side of the aisle say, we don't want the government in the bedroom. Well, I don't either; but now by the bill they passed, ObamaCare basically puts the government in every room in your house. They tell you—well, it is just so invasive.

But if we can get back to the day where insurance companies and the government did not tell people what they could or couldn't have for their well-being, if we restored the independence to Americans by helping the economy just bring about a new economic renaissance—I have talked to so many people. They are in business and they are so afraid. They are afraid to hire anybody because of ObamaCare. They are afraid because of the EPA or the intrusiveness of the Justice Department, OSHA, all of these governmental agencies that come out of nowhere when you are trying to stay in business and keep your employees paid.

If they didn't have to worry so much about a government that is so invasive, this economy would take off. People would be making so many times more than what they are in so many places. We would end up being energy independent. What we thought we never could be 9 years ago when I first got here, we can be that. We use natural gas that we have got hundreds of years of. Just what we know, for goodness sake. Then we could be not only energy independent; that would mean we were not funding any country's terrorism where some of their energy money goes for terrorism. We would see an economic renaissance; we would see the economy explode, and people would have enough money.

With all the money they would be getting paid, they would be able to say, look, Doctor, I want to know how much you are charging and how much you are charging because you are both very good doctors. But if one of you is charging $6,000 for an MRI and one of you is charging $400 for an MRI—and I have been challenged on that and actually I am familiar with what some insurance companies have paid for MRIs over the years, because as an attorney when you help somebody who has been in a car wreck or been injured by the negligence of another, if you have a settlement or you win a court case, then you are required under Texas law to put that money in an escrow account and you cannot distribute it until such time as the medical has been paid. So you had to make sure everybody had been paid.

When they were paid in full, then you checked if there was a health insurance company. Okay, everybody says they have been paid in full; I have got documentation from all the health care providers you have paid them in full under

their agreement with you. So now all I need to know is how much you paid for these charges, and then I reimburse you, and then I can disburse what is in escrow.

There were companies that had paid less than $400 for an MRI, much less. So anyway, our CAT scans, it is amazing how little—and I have seen bills recently $6,000 being charged for an MRI. Well, they are not getting paid $6,000. But then, on the other hand, if you come in and say, I need an MRI, but I don't have insurance, then normally they will cut you a deal. Okay, you are paying cash, we may cut you a deal. Say they had a 50 percent off sale: we will only charge you $3,000. Well, for heaven's sake, why couldn't you just pay what Blue Cross paid? Why couldn't you pay what Aetna paid?

That is the kind of thing a real reform would get us back to. You don't get a bill for $6,000 or nobody goes to them anymore. You have to know what is being charged, and we have got to get control back to the individual.

Anyway, when you are looking at how much things cost, I can identify with people in America. We have three daughters; they finished their college. We had set money aside years ago when I was in private practice making more money—actually, in municipal bonds, and when they got in college it was going to more than take care of each year. But after I had a huge cut in pay to go become a State district judge—I felt like it was something of a calling, something to help my community, a way to give back, even though you really put a lid on what you can make financially—we ended up going through that money.

I was determined that my three girls would not have to pay college loans that they wouldn't have had to pay if their father had not gone into public service. This was my contribution to the community, to Texas, to the country. I shouldn't force a contribution onto my children when their college should have been taken care of. So my wife and I are paying the college loans for our children.

So when you start adding up the expenses and you see the amount of the loans and what has to be paid and then you see you have health insurance here that is now skyrocketing, deductible going dramatically up, wow. I know some have written, gee, what if you are in the hospital for a few days and run up $180,000 or so in health care costs? Well, the answer is easy. If I or my wife ran up $180,000 in health care costs and I don't have insurance, then I would go to the health care providers—as I have done back in the days when I was an attorney—what kind of deal can we cut here, because I pretty well know what the insurance companies are paying you and I expect to get the same kind of deal or we will go to another hospital that will do this kind of cash deal for us? Maybe you take out a note for $18,000 and pay everybody off.

I have been surprised, even conservatives in the media have not really been aware of how little health care actually costs. They see a bill, like one in the media that said, hey, my father had heart surgery, he could never have paid that $150,000 in expenses, but Medicare took care of it. And as I told him, if you think that costs $150,000, you are not near as smart as I used to think you were. But you negotiate and you work it out and you take out a note and you pay that off.

I know that there are people running around the country saying, oh, no, oh, no, what if you don't have insurance? Well, nobody in America had insurance at all not that long ago. I don't want to go back to those days. We have made so much progress. But why not build to the point where those who can build a health savings account do that?

I am encouraging our leadership: let's don't wait until ObamaCare comes crashing down and the world gets so angry that they demand a repeal and it does get repealed. Let's go ahead and start having hearings now on how good real reform would be, where we have competition, where people get to make their decisions, where people are encouraged to, and do, build a health savings account where they get to decide who they see, that there is no doctor that is out of the plan.

We need to restore liberty to Americans while giving them a safety net, not a trap net from which you can never arise. It ought to be a safety net where you can come out of; but it is more like we are capturing Americans with a net thrown over them and the government now has that net over you and you can never get out from under. We control everything about you.

And now we have added 18,000, or we are in the process of adding 18,000 IRS agents. If you think a proctologist looks closely into your situation, wait until the IRS agents get hold of you.

□ 1715

I mean it should not be that way. We have got to restore freedom in America. This article says, ''4 in 10, we would rather pay the fine than buy insurance.'' People in the media are freaking out, how stupid, how crazy. Well, actually, it doesn't help the survival of ObamaCare or the Affordable Care Act, as it is improperly named.

My staff has given me this. We just had someone else report that here is another constituent whose policy expires July 2014, but they stand to lose $40,000 if they try to keep it. They can't get definitive information, but they had to make a decision by December 7, and they don't know what to do. And they are sure not getting that help from the Web site.

Here is an article, ''Oregon signs up just 44 people for ObamaCare despite spending $300 million.'' Well, there was a great investment. Well, probably as good as investing it in Solyndra and all the other solar companies. ''Paper Application Missing From Healthcare .gov,'' another great article, Jeryl Bier from the Weekly Standard. ''ObamaCare sign-ups rise, but 800,000 short of their goal.'' All of these are really harbingers of the complete failure of ObamaCare.

I don't mean anything derogatory by using the term ''ObamaCare.'' I am sure that President Obama didn't mean anything derogatory by calling health care in Massachusetts ''RomneyCare.'' So just as I am absolutely certain the President never meant—and Democrats never meant—anything offensive by using the term ''RomneyCare,'' we don't mean anything offensive or derogatory by using the term ''ObamaCare.'' The President embraced it one time.

Anyway, it requires looking at more closely the reforms that need to be made. I would rather have insurance. I wasn't crazy about my insurance, but I liked it okay. We had health savings accounts. We have got to work out what do we do with the money we built up in our health savings account. Hopefully, Aetna is not going to screw us over and not let us have the money we built up.

There were certainly some reforms that needed to be made to the health savings account law so that we do have more flexibility. You could put unlimited amounts in there, but once it is in there, it has to be used for health care. You can't pay a penalty and fine and take some out. So that you build some up, you could give some of your HSA out to, say, a Salvation Army HSA.

I know there is not one out there right now, but those kind of things. You could gift some of your HSA to your children without tax implications. You have money in your HSA when you pass away, then you could leave it to your heirs or to a charity HSA. I mean, there are all kinds of great things that we could do if we passed proper laws to make this work better.

But the goal would ultimately be to have health care affordable. The President and so many keep saying, you know, interchangeably, health care and health insurance. They are not the same thing. You can get health care without having any health insurance. I know that because I have waited hours behind people in the emergency room with children or with family, seniors. I have known that people ahead of us, that didn't have any money, didn't have any insurance, they got health care just like I did, at the emergency room. That was when I had insurance and my in-laws had insurance, Medicare, but everybody was getting the same kind of care.

So health insurance and health care for my liberal friends in the media, Mr. Speaker, they are not the same thing. They are not the same thing at all.

SYRIA

Mr. GOHMERT. Mr. Speaker, I also want to comment before we're done here today about what is going on in Syria, because there is so much false information going on. There are many really fine people, including friends in

the Senate who are smart people but are just actually ignorant of the facts on the ground there.

This administration had decided that we should support the Syrian rebels. There are indications that this administration, because Congress has not specifically appropriated in so long, the administration figuratively has got sacks of money and so they decided, Oh, we will support the rebels in Syria.

Now, 2 to 3 years ago, it might well have been Syrians who were not radical Islamists, who wanted freedom, but this government didn't step in until the rebels were infused with and really governed by more radical Islamists.

The stories that are going on in Syria, just like others in the Middle East, the horrors of what the Muslim Brotherhood, the radical Islamists were doing in Egypt, especially after Morsi got arrested—this administration blamed the military when actually, as the Egyptian pope told me, this was not a coup. This was the Egyptian people rising up, wanting to be free of radical Islamists leading.

These were moderate Muslims, secularists, Christians, hand in hand, arm in arm, protesting, demanding Morsi be forced out by the military. It was an uprising of greater numbers than participated in the American Revolution. The Egyptians rose up in greater numbers than they ever have in the world. They were seeking both moderate Muslims, Christians, Jews, secularists, other religions. They were just wanting not to be ruled by radical Islam.

Instead, this administration and some Senators, including from my party, felt like we ought to be helping the rebels that were just really infused and overtaken by radical Islamists.

As moderate Muslims told a few of us in Congress back in September: What do you guys not understand? I mean, it was the Muslim Brotherhood that really was behind the attack on 9/11/2001. It was technically the Taliban, but basically it is Muslim Brotherhood you were at war with in Afghanistan. It is Muslim Brotherhood that you have now helped in Libya, helped in Egypt, now helping in Syria. What do you not understand? These are the guys that have been at war with you. We are moderate Muslims. We don't want them taking over things.

For some reason, it sure seems to be because of the advice this administration is getting from people that Egyptian media had indicated were Muslim brothers at the highest levels of advice that this administration gets. But as a result, this administration thinks we need to keep helping these radical Islamist-infused rebels that are absolute terrorists. They are doing the most unthinkable, unimaginable acts to Christians, especially Christians. And as a report in Britain has indicated recently, Christians are the most persecuted group in the world right now. This administration is choosing to help the people over and over, help the people, help the groups that are most radically brutalizing Christians.

Here is an article from The New York Times, ''Brutality of Syrian Rebels, Posing Dilemma in West.'' It talks about just the horror and the disgusting nature of the killings that were going on against unarmed civilians, and yet we are supporting the rebels?

Here is one, ''Media urge Syrian rebels to stop kidnappings.'' Hmm, well, fortunately that was written a long time ago.

Here is one, ''2 Bishops, Priest, 12 Nuns Still Missing After Being Kidnapped By Syrian Rebels,'' by Lee Keath of the AP. It talks about the horrible nature of those kidnappings.

I had the honor of having a visit today by Mother Agnes.

Some in the left-wing media who were so overwhelmed with trying to protect this administration, they don't want to look facts in the face. They want to try to destroy the reputation of anyone with whom they disagree. They have taken Voltaire's attributed line, ''I disagree with what you say, but will defend to the death your right to say that,'' and kind of disintegrated it into ''I disagree with what you say, and I want to destroy you for doing so.''

I have read a number of terrible things about Mother Agnes in the last couple of days, but I met with her. Some had written that she is just the basic primary defender of the Assad regime. She told me she is not defending Assad; he is a bad man. But, as she said with a little twinkle in her eye, the media is getting out in the open everything that seems to be done wrong by the Assad regime. Anything brutal, anything inappropriate the media is getting that out there. I am just trying to get the full story out.

Yes, Assad is not a good man, but the people that are trying to take over now are worse. She knew these nuns who had been kidnapped. She knew these people who had been persecuted and brutalized. She knew of people personally of having unthinkable acts done to them by these Syrian rebels that this administration has been choosing to help.

Well, we get finally to a story that says that the administration was going to cut off—I thought I had it here—but a story about the administration would suspend assistance to the rebels because of the horrors and the brutality of what they were doing. That is nice, but these stories have been coming out for years, for at least a couple of years. Stories even here from The New York Times, ''Brutality of Syrian Rebels Posing Dilemma in West,'' that story was September 5. And around those same times there were stories about this administration sending hundreds of tons of weapons to these people who were brutalizing Christians.

How long does it take? I realize there are all kinds of things that demand people's time when you are a leader of a great Nation like the United States. You have to stop and do a selfie from time to time. There are all kinds of things that disrupt your time. But at some point, somebody should have gotten information and said, Look, you know, you want to help the radicalist Islamist rebels in Syria. Really, some of the brutality on Christians has really gotten kind of rough even for us. Maybe we ought to suspend that. That should have gone on months ago. And yet this administration was determined to help.

''Syrian Rebels Attack Christian Village, Behead Priest,'' Katie Pavlich. Whew, man.

□ 1730

Rebels have attacked a Christian village in the war-torn country of Syria, beheading priests, brutally killing others. Not surprisingly, the rebels have ties to al Qaeda.

This is from townhall.com:

The rebels launched the assault on the ancient Christian village of Maaloula—which is on a UNESCO list of tentative World Heritage sites. The village, about 40 miles, 60 kilometers, northeast of Damascus, is home to about 2,000 residents, some of whom still speak a version of Aramaic, the ancient language of biblical times believed to have been spoken by Jesus.

Heavy clashes between President Bashar Assad's troops and Nusra Front fighters persisted in surrounding mountains Thursday, according to the Observatory, which collects information from a network of anti-regime activists.

Speaking by phone from a convent in the village, a nun told The Associated Press that the rebels left a mountaintop hotel Thursday after capturing it a day earlier. The nun said the frightened residents expect the Islamic militants to return to the Safir hotel and resume shelling of the community.

''It's their home now,'' the nun said.

Al Qaeda-led rebel force groups have also reportedly vowed to continue their attacks on Christians as soon as the United States ''liberates'' the country from its President Bashir al-Assad.

Yesterday, Republican Senator John McCain inserted an amendment into a resolution approving military force in Syria with a goal of shifting the power on the battlefield from the Assad regime and to rebel forces.

On September 4, 2013, JOHN MCCAIN said:

My amendment calling for changing momentum on the battlefield in Syria passed SFRC by voice vote, a significant measure.

Meanwhile in Egypt, Coptic Christians continue to be slaughtered and nearly 100 churches have been burned to the ground.

President Obama and Secretary of State John Kerry haven't commented on the brutality against Christians in Syria and have done very little to protect Christians living in Egypt from violence being waged by the Muslim Brotherhood.

An objective look at what happened in Egypt is very clear. After the masses, the millions of Egyptians rose up and said, Enough. President Morsi has been usurping powers that don't belong to him under our Constitution. And under the Egyptian Constitution, there is no power of impeachment. So we demand that the military remove this unconstitutionally acting leader so that we can set up new elections.

I am urging the people in Egypt to go ahead and get those elections done so you get back to having a more democratic process, having a more republican form of government. I don't mean republican like the Republican Party. I am talking about Republic as Ben Franklin when the lady asked what have you given us, and he said, ''A Republic, Madam, if you can keep it.''

It was clear that Morsi was not going to allow the Egyptian people to keep their republic. The people rose up and demanded that they be able to keep their republic by having the military remove Morsi. They did remove him. I still can't find anyone in the media that is reporting what General al-Sisi said to me in the presence of our acting U.S. Ambassador to Egypt, in the presence of Democrat and Republican Members of Congress that, yes, they had evidence that Morsi was trying to contract to have General al-Sisi murdered before he was arrested.

Yet this administration, not only was very supportive of Muslim Brother Morsi, but when he was removed, they threatened to cut off aid if they didn't get him back. And after they refused to get him back, then this President cuts off all aid to Egypt. It is amazing because, as this article points out, it was not until Morsi was arrested that the Muslim Brotherhood started staging these violent acts—burning churches, killing Christians. They were persecuting anyone who disagreed with them. The military did a very good thing. They cracked down on the Muslim Brotherhood, they stopped the burning of churches, they stopped the killing of Christians. As the Egyptian Pope has told me:

> They did a good thing. We are not threatened like we were before they stopped it all. Please, tell your government that the military has stopped the burning of churches and killing of people. It is a good thing.

How did this administration respond to the Egyptian people ensuring that the burning of churches and the killing of Christians stopped? It rewarded those noble efforts by cutting off aid.

As we keep hearing from allies in the Middle East, Muslim, other religious beliefs, you guys keep helping the wrong people. How can you not understand you are helping the people that hate you. Now they are cutting a deal with Iran, led by Wendy Sherman, who was the policy director for North Korea when President Clinton and Madeleine Albright made that atrocious deal to give them nuclear power plants, nuclear help, and in return all they had to do was promise not to develop nuclear weapons, which they readily did. In return, the Clinton administration agreed not to inspect their nuclear facilities for what amounted to about 5 years. It gave them plenty of time to develop nukes.

If someone is evil enough to behead, to brutalize, to persecute innocent people, to somehow think it is a noble thing to terrorize and kill innocent people, how do you not understand that they are also capable of lying, as well? You want to trust people that want to kill you and have said so many times? I think it is time we wake up. The world is less safe because of some of the actions that we have taken. We need to be wise about what we do because just as Jesus said, To whom much is given, of him much will be required.

We have been given much. We have been blessed more than any nation in the world. We have more freedoms. We have more assets. We have been blessed more than any nation in history. Much is required, and part of that requirement is that we use wisdom and discernment in choosing those whom we wish to help; and we should not be helping people who choose to kill or brutalize, persecute people because of their religious beliefs, because of their tribe, because of their skin color, because of their national origin. That is un-American, and it is time we stopped helping people who are acting in ways contrary to what we hold dear.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

THE DECLINE IN U.S. RESEARCH

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2013, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. SPEIER) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Ms. SPEIER. Mr. Speaker, tonight we are going to discuss the National Institutes of Health.

In many respects, the National Institutes of Health is the goose that keeps laying the golden eggs, the golden eggs that help cure many of the maladies that many Americans suffer from, the goose that lays the golden eggs that create jobs, the goose that lays the golden eggs that help us bring down the cost of health care. But we are at the brink, we are at the tipping point of killing the goose that lays the golden eggs.

Let's put it in perspective. Not so long ago, then-President George Bush was part of a bipartisan effort to double the funding for the National Institutes of Health. It was $21 billion. Doubling of the resources for the NIH was extraordinary and received with great fanfare and appreciation because there was so much that the researchers were ready to do with that money.

What have we done since then? Since then, in 2003 dollars, we have seen a gross decline in the money to fund the National Institutes of Health. Now it is down to the equivalent of $17 billion. So for the next hour, we are going to talk about what that means to every American who is suffering from a cancer, for every American that is suffering with a chronic disease like diabetes, for every American who is suffering from Alzheimer's and whose family is trying to cope with it.

Former Republican Senator and Majority Leader Bill Frist recently wrote:

> When Alzheimer's is cured, when HIV is cured, when MS is cured, I want it to be America that discovers the breakthroughs and shares it with the world.

I agree with Dr. Frist. I want to see that happen too. I would like to think that every Member in this House wants to see that too, but it is not going to happen if we keep starving the goose that lays the golden eggs.

Let me read you another quote:

> Whenever you hear about a research breakthrough in anything to do with cancer, diabetes, heart disease, HIV/AIDS, influenza, whatever, in the United States, it's extremely likely that NIH supported that effort.

That was Dr. Francis Collins, head of the National Institutes of Health who made that statement. He also doesn't mince words. Recently, in response to sequester cuts to the NIH budget, he said:

> I think we'll no longer be the world leader in the production of science, technology, and innovation. You can't look at the curves and say, Oh, well, it'll be fine, if we stay on this track. It will not be. China is coming up so fast, they are so convinced that this is their pathway towards world leadership; they're not going to slow down.

He recently recounted a trip that he took to China in 2011 where he was taken on a tour of a former shoe factory. You need to know a little bit about the history of Dr. Francis Collins. He is called the ''father of the human genome project.'' He and a number of other scientists are responsible for absolutely unlocking DNA sequencing. So he was invited to China to see what they were doing.

He was taken to this old shoe factory, except it is not a shoe factory anymore. Inside that factory were 3,000 scientists who were focused on sequencing the human genome and the medical and economic potential of this technology. In fact, the capacity at that one factory is more than all of the genome sequencing centers in the United States.

Dr. Collins said to me with great sadness, Within 3 to 5 years, China will eclipse us.

Mind you, we have invested billions and billions of dollars in unlocking the human genome with the intent of seeing great strides made; but we are on the verge, we are at the tipping point of seeing this all come to a screeching halt if we continue to ignore the fact that we are starving the NIH.

Here is an interesting chart. This shows how much R&D spending is going on around the world. China from 2012 to 2013 had an increase of 15 percent.

□ 1745

Germany, up 5 percent, Japan up 5 percent, South Korea up 5 percent, Canada down 3 percent, the United States down 5 percent.

This says it all. If we don't want to see the outsourcing of medicine in this country, the outsourcing of science in this country, we have got a huge wake-up call that we must listen to.

I am joined this evening by my good friend from San Diego, SCOTT PETERS, who I want to engage with him and have him speak a little bit to this issue as well. I yield to the gentleman from California (Mr. PETERS).

Mr. PETERS of California. Thank you, Ms. SPEIER. I would like to thank you, my colleague from California, for organizing this discussion and for your continued efforts to end the assault on NIH funding.

Mr. Speaker, for decades, our country has been at the forefront of scientific discovery. We have had the friendliest atmosphere for scientists to do their work, for innovators to start their new ventures, and for universities to invest in research laboratories.

We are in danger of losing that competitive advantage, and the across-the-board sequester cuts, which I adamantly opposed during my time here, is only amplifying the decline.

Now, instead of supporting and promoting our country's robust backing for scientific and health research, we are undercutting it through congressional gridlock and government shutdowns.

This inability to find bipartisan agreement has undoubtedly harmed our national reputation and limits our ability to bring the best and brightest here from around the world.

Earlier this year, I toured the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda to visit some of their labs, to meet with patients and hear from its director, Dr. Francis Collins, about the work that NIH does and how the sequester has affected them.

Dr. Collins, as Ms. SPEIER said, has been a constant voice against the sequester and has vocalized the impact it has had on the ability of NIH to invest in necessary research and grants. Just this year, more than 700 grants were cut and the agency was forced to pare down its operations by $1.5 billion.

Dr. Collins told Sam Stein of the Huffington Post on the 10-year outlook, should sequester not end, and I quote, I think we may have just heard this quote:

> I think we will no longer be the world leader in the production of science, technology, and innovation.

As the largest funder of biomedical research in the world, the NIH is not only a significant driver of research and innovation, leading to improvements in quality of life and better patient care, but it also drives job creation in related fields.

In 2011, more than 400,000 jobs and $62 billion of economic activity came from NIH research funding. And on a health level, advances from NIH research can have enormous economic benefit for the global economy.

A 1 percent reduction in cancer deaths has $500 billion in economic value. Imagine what the power would be of delaying the onset of chronic diseases or finding cures to various types of cancer.

Importantly, NIH is also a significant funder of research universities across the country through its competitive grants. According to NIH documents, more than 80 percent of their budget is awarded to our country's universities and institutes, including $884 million in grants to San Diego institutions just in 2012.

In the last fiscal year, institutions in my district received more than 1,300 NIH grants. UC San Diego received almost $400 million through 802 grants in 2012 alone, supporting thousands of jobs in the San Diego region, and advancing our local innovation economy.

San Diego, depending on how you calculate it, is either the second or third largest life science cluster in the country. These companies and research institutions make up approximately one-third of San Diego's regional economy, generating more than 200,000 jobs.

Nationwide, life sciences companies support more than 7 million jobs, adding $69 billion in activity to our national economy.

Locally, Amplyx Pharmaceuticals received more than $1.5 million in NIH grants to research and develop new drugs to fight functional infections, and Digital Proteomics received a grant to research antibodies that target specific antigens, leading to better treatments for numerous diseases.

Other examples are the La Jolla Institute for Allergy and Immunology, where they are researching breakthrough vaccines to some of the world's most damaging immune diseases, including type 1 diabetes and various types of cancer, and the Veterans Medical Research Foundation, where studies on PTSD and brain imaging are underway to better understand the impact of violence and conflict on the body and brain. These institutions have received numerous grants this year, totaling more than $30 million.

As the last local example, in 2011, the Sanford-Burnham Medical Research Institute received more than $70 million in NIH funding as part of its research in metabolic rates and obesity. And Scripps Research, also in San Diego, was awarded more than $200 million, part of which went to their research on determining the structure of H1N1, also known as the swine flu.

Mr. Speaker, there are countless examples across San Diego and the country like the ones I just named where researchers are doing groundbreaking research that has the potential to improve and extend lives. That is good for our economy, for the American people, and for the health of people across the world.

Clearly, not all scientific research can or should be funded by the Federal Government or NIH. I wouldn't advocate that, nor my colleagues, but I can't stand for continuing down the path of sequester, where we cut support for the hardworking scientists and researchers who have brought the United States to the front of the pack.

Later this week, I will be introducing a bill to extend the research and development tax credit and lower the barrier to collaborative research by encouraging collaboration and consortia. That is just one piece of a larger discussion we have to have as we look to reform the Tax Code so we incentivize innovators, entrepreneurs, and researchers to start their endeavors here in the United States.

Sam Stein also reported in the Huffington Post in August that nearly 20 percent of scientists were contemplating moving their operations overseas in part due to the sequester.

Other countries, China, Brazil, Germany, South Korea, Japan, Israel, they are making investments in science and in research and development that will threaten to leave us in the dust. Brain drain will be a reality if we do not act quickly, a phenomena that would affect many communities across the country in a very negative way, including my own.

On first read, the budget deal proposed last night by Senator MURRAY and Congressman RYAN, if it passes Congress later this week, would allow the NIH more flexibility. It would potentially bring back some funding to NIH and NSF over the next 2 years.

But let's be clear. Scientists, universities, and institutions are still looking at unstable long-term budgets where sequester looms over their head. And as lawmakers, we can't rest on this foolish sequester cut until these cuts are fully reversed.

Again, I want to thank Ms. SPEIER for organizing this Special Order. NIH funding and our Nation's overall support for basic scientific research funding and the innovation economy are central to the economic future of San Diego, of California, and of the entire country.

So I appreciate the opportunity to speak about ending the sequester, about promoting and increasing funding for basic scientific research, especially at NIH, and to a continued discussion here in Congress.

Ms. SPEIER. I thank the gentleman from California for his articulation of what profound impacts it has certainly to the economy of California, but also to the country. And the point he made about having some kind of continuity and some certainty is critical to the future of science in this country.

All we have to do is look back to what then-President George Bush did when he and a bipartisan group of Members of Congress supported doubling the budget for the NIH. That was a plan conceived of where it was going to take place over 5 years. So there was continuity and there was a sense of certainty that funding would be there for the near and the long term.

So what does a moderate investment in NIH have as a catalyst, so to speak, for economic growth?

Well, it is similar to what happened when the government invested in the Internet and spurred dramatic growth in the previous decades. Where would we be today if the government had not funded the research that created the Internet?

Before ''google'' became a verb and we actually had to write and mail letters to our friends and families and call the doctor to find out about medical symptoms, before there was the Internet, there was, in fact, the U.S. Government standing behind sound science and research. So let's talk about what the NIH-funded research has meant for our economy and for our lives.

The U.S. medical innovation sector employs 1 million Americans, generates $84 billion in salaries annually, and exports $90 billion in goods and services. The economic value of gains in the U.S. life expectancy has been estimated at roughly $95 trillion from 1970 to 2000.

Now, that is looking at it from dollars and cents. But think about it in terms of people's lives, extending their lives. That is what is truly significant about this.

Now, since 1990, our Nation has gained about 1 year of longevity every 6 years with the help of NIH research. Medical research, the most advanced of which is often done here in the U.S., has saved millions of lives over the last few decades. Death rates for heart disease have dropped 65 percent over the last 60 years. That is a phenomenal number. Deaths from heart disease have dropped 65 percent over the last 60 years, in part, in a great part, due to NIH funding.

The stent that we use so commonly now with heart disease, discovered, created at NIH. Death rates from cancer down 12 percent, and death rates from strokes down 34 percent, all because of medical research going on right here in the United States, spurred by the help of NIH funding.

I yield to my colleague from California, ERIC SWALWELL, to speak about issues from his perspective.

Mr. SWALWELL of California. Thank you. And I do wish to thank Ms. SPEIER, my neighbor across the San Mateo Bridge, for hosting this Special Order hour on NIH funding.

This is not the first time I have had the opportunity to work with Ms. SPEIER on these issues. In fact, in my short year in Congress, Ms. SPEIER has hosted a number of different roundtables, informal and formal, on the importance of NIH funding, and it is appropriate for her district, having the birthplace of the United States' biotechnology research.

But it is also important that we want the biotech research to stay in the South San Francisco area, to stay in the East Bay area. And the folks in the district who are making advances that will hopefully bend the health care cost curves are counting on the United States Congress to keep NIH funding from being cut. And actually, it is my hope that we can increase it.

The cuts to the NIH mean that there are fewer opportunities right now for biomedical research in the United States. It means that the decline in funding is meaning that there are more promising paths outside the United States for the promising minds who are putting their careers into this research.

Faculty at top universities across the country are reporting cutting labor spending by 7 percent and operating with skeleton staffs, severely limiting job opportunities for any researcher that would want to go into this field. Over 50 percent of university scientists surveyed by the American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology said that they had a colleague who had lost their job or expects to soon because of sequester cuts to NIH funding.

Also, in the United States, while we have been cutting funding, even before the sequester, other countries are increasing and expanding up their biomedical engineering sectors. A study this year found that nearly 20 percent of scientists are considering moving their careers abroad.

I have worked in my first year in Congress to support the NIH, signing on to a letter circulated by Representative ROYBAL-ALLARD from southern California supporting the NIH behavioral and social science research.

I also signed on to a letter supported by Representatives JAN SCHAKOWSKY and BILL YOUNG supporting research at NIH, including through the BRAIN Initiative and, finally, signed on to a letter to the Appropriations Committee asking for support for funding of NIH.

This afternoon, I distributed a letter to my colleagues in the bipartisan United Solutions Caucus, a freshman group of 30 Republican and Democratic freshmen Members, and we are asking them to support this new compromise budget, not because it does what we want, because I would like to see NIH funding go up, but because it will roll back some of the sequester cuts and restore some of the funding at NIH.

□ 1800

In my district, Ms. SPEIER's district, and across California, scientists are counting on us to restore the NIH funding, to actually increase it with the long-term goal of using NIH funding—the technology and the research that we can put in to bend the health care cost curves. If we don't do that, we are going to continue to see the discretionary spending in the United States continue to contract, and nondiscretionary spending for Medicare costs and Medicaid costs will continue to rise and balloon unless we get a hold by putting funding and research dollars into what can control these diseases and ailments that people in our districts are suffering from. And that only happens by putting research dollars into NIH.

So, again, I want to thank the gentlelady across the San Mateo bridge for her leadership on this issue.

Ms. SPEIER. I thank the gentleman from California. And I thank him for recognizing so early in his career here in Congress the critical need we have not only to support NIH but also the biotechnology companies that are part and parcel of what California has become.

I am now joined by my distinguished colleague from California as well, from the San Diego area, SUSAN DAVIS, who has much more to tell us from her perspective and from her neck of the woods.

Mrs. DAVIS of California. I thank Congresswoman SPEIER for having this Special Order today because the focus on NIH—you know, for so many families, it actually comes down to care for their loved one. That is what they know can happen as a result of proper granting at appropriate levels for the NIH. Simply put, it is really vital to the Nation's health. Without NIH funding, we will not see the breakthroughs that we have seen in the past. NIH funding has led to cures. It has led to treatments and preventions for truly some of the most horrific diseases of our day afflicting everyone.

You know, diseases don't pick and choose between infants and seniors, lower, middle and, we might say, upper class. They don't distinguish. It is kind of equal opportunity for all, and that is why they have to be targeted.

I have been a consistent coleader of the annual NIH appropriations letter, requesting that the House appropriate full funding for the NIH, and the return to full funding is absolutely essential.

NIH is unique in its function. We know that we have an active private sector in our country. That is wonderful. And we certainly see that in my community of San Diego, and my colleague Congressman PETERS talked about this earlier.

But the private sector simply does not have the ability to replace public investment in the NIH. They don't have it. That kind of basic research in science has to come from the United States Government. That is where it has always come from. It has come from there when we even look at the advancements that we have had in technology. And it certainly makes a difference when we think about what we are doing and what our friends, our allies around the world, and even some who are not allies, are doing in this area. So we have got to be competitive. It doesn't make any sense not to be.

We know that the NIH conducts and funds research that is just too expensive—too expensive and too risky for private industry to undertake a loan; and it has led us to major advancements in the understanding of diseases like Alzheimer's, cancer, and Parkinson's.

The research coming out of and the grants coming from NIH are a huge driver of our biotechnology industry; and that, in turn, contributes heavily to our economy. Particularly in San Diego, we see that every single day because that is where the hundreds of jobs, good-paying jobs that allow people to really reach their potential and be purposeful about their work, that is where that comes from.

NIH funding keeps researchers and graduate students employed doing

what they do best, investigating answers to our most complex medical mysteries: cancer, premature birth, heart disease, and so on. I have had these young scientists in my office talking about the fact that they may not stay with the field, a field that they love, because they can't get the grants. As we cut back, only the most experienced scientists get those grants, and they are good. But our young people may be even better, but we have got to give them a chance. We have got to give them a chance to move forward and do that.

More than 80 percent of the NIH budget goes to over 300,000 research personnel at more than 2,500 universities and research institutions throughout the United States. So that is affecting a lot more than California. It is affecting our colleagues around the country, and maybe they don't even realize what an impact that has.

In San Diego, we are fortunate. We have got a lot of researchers, a lot of scientists working hard; and they received $1.13 billion in NIH funding in 2012. It has sparked major breakthroughs, brings jobs to the region, and creates potential breakthroughs for millions around the country.

So we are doing our part; but, tragically, the sequestration requires NIH to cut 5 percent, or $1.55 billion, of its fiscal year 2013 budget. NIH must apply the cut evenly across the board, the way things are today. That is why we have to change that. I hope we will be able to do that. NIH must apply the cut evenly across all programs, projects, and activities which are primarily NIH institutes and centers. This means that every area of medical research will be affected by that. Every area. Not just the few that maybe we think don't need the help, but every area. This is an irrational, backwards-thinking policy that will harm millions of Americans—current patients and future ones—and cost us millions in economic output.

As a result of the sequester and the slashing of NIH funding, already approximately 640 fewer competitive research project grants will be issued from what we have already done; approximately 750 fewer new patients admitted to the NIH Clinical Center; no increase in stipends for National Research Service Award recipients in 2013; and a delay in medical progress.

You know, these medical breakthroughs that we have that benefit many of our patients, many of our constituents—and I know I have friends who have been the beneficiaries of some of those breakthroughs—they just don't happen overnight. In almost all instances, those discoveries result from years of incremental research to understand how diseases start and progress. Even after the cause and the potential drug target of disease is discovered, it takes an average of 13 years and $1 billion to develop a treatment for that target.

And what is difficult is that we know that a lot of people are waiting for some of those clinical trials because you have to be careful how that is done, and that takes time. It takes enough patience, enough people willing to take that risk so that we can see what happens over time. That is so important. And when we start breaking this up, the whole process doesn't work.

Cuts to research are delaying progress in medical breakthroughs, including development of better cancer drugs that zero in on a tumor with fewer side effects; research on a universal flu vaccine that could fight every strain of influenza without even needing a yearly shot; and the prevention of debilitating chronic conditions that are costly to society and delay development of more effective treatments for common and rare diseases affecting millions of Americans.

And, as I mentioned earlier, we lose the promising, accomplished scientists and researchers who are leaving the industry because of the loss or inability to get grants.

We see that faculty at top universities across the country are reporting cutting labor spending by 7 percent and operating with skeleton staffs, severely limiting job opportunities for new researchers. Over 50 percent of scientists surveyed by the American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology said they had a colleague who has lost his job or expects to soon. Some of the scientists are not coming back. They are going elsewhere. They are going to those areas where we are competing because they can take a more stable position outside of the research sector here in the United States.

Do we want that? I don't think so. Quite simply, we are inflicting decades of damage with the sequester policy that we have, and I hope that that is going to change. It is not rational to do that. It is cruel. It is backwards. It is insanity.

Let's join together and undo—what we can agree on in a bipartisan basis—a foolish policy with an untold number of victims from every State and every city and town in this country. Let us work together to restore NIH funding immediately.

I thank my colleague.

Ms. SPEIER. Would the gentlelady entertain a question?

You were here when then-President Bush worked in a bipartisan fashion with the House and the Senate, the Republicans and the Democrats, to double the funding for NIH; and all we have seen since then is just an absolute cliff decline in funding.

What happened then that isn't happening now? How can we reinstate that kind of bipartisan sentiment?

Mrs. DAVIS of California. Well, I think we saw the leadership coming from President Bush at that time. And because we also had—those of us here on this side of the aisle, I think, in support, it was a bipartisan effort. We saw that leadership coming from the top; and that is what made a difference, because it was written into the budget.

Now, I must say, we weren't able to sustain some of that because of a number of reasons. And we were fighting two wars and then had a number of other issues that we needed to look at. But the reality is that that was maybe unique in some ways because it really came from leadership at the top. It was here, on our side of the House, and the House was supportive. The Senate was supportive, and the President was supportive. So it was really altogether. We don't see that leadership right now from the other side of the aisle.

Ms. SPEIER. Well, I thank the gentlelady for her passionate and clear-minded commentary on how critical this is for the entire country and to all the lives that are at risk, should we not fund NIH at a level that is going to come up with the next cure, the next blockbuster drug that is going to save lives and create longevity for so many Americans.

Mrs. DAVIS of California. I thank my colleague.

Ms. SPEIER. We are joined by the Congressman from northern California, my colleague for many years, Congressman JOHN GARAMENDI, who is no stranger to this floor for Special Orders, I might add.

Mr. GARAMENDI. Representative SPEIER, thank you so very much. It is good to be on the floor. I noticed thus far it has been Californians, but this is far more than California. I see Chicago, Illinois, just arrived, and we will pick up on that.

This is an issue that touches every single American. It is not a California issue. I represent northern California, not far from the Bay Area. The University of California/Davis campus is in my area. There are major, major programs in research, not just with the National Institutes of Health and the health issues that we are talking about here, but agriculture, energy research, and on and on.

It turns out that that powerful engine of research is found in every part of America. So listen out there, those of you that are watching. This is not just a California issue. This is an American issue, and it is an international issue because this particular National Institutes of Health is dealing with the health of this entire world. Every person in the world is, in one way or another, affected by the research done by the National Institutes of Health, the funding that they, then, provide to the 250 universities all around this Nation to deal with illnesses, to deal with the human body and beyond.

For example, Davis, which was originally known as an agricultural research institution and continues to do that, has discovered that, interestingly enough, with the mad cow issue, there is a virus that can be identified specifically with that illness so that for the cattle industry, if some cow goes a little weird, you can find out whether it has mad cow disease or it is just weird. And the very same thing applies to the

human body. So this virus can be identified both in a cow—is it mad or not? Well, it may just be angry but not crazed—and in a human.

Dealing with a very, very serious human issue and also a serious economic issue for those of us in the cattle business. This is a big thing. And what has happened—I love charts.

Ms. SPEIER. As do I.

Mr. GARAMENDI. I noticed, Representative SPEIER, that you love charts too. So I borrowed this. I think you used it earlier today. This is instructive.

You were just talking with the Representative, our friend from San Diego, about the enormous increase that took place for the National Institutes of Health during the George W. Bush conservative period of time. It is right there, $21 billion; and then over the years, it began to lose a little bit of its, I guess, interest. And then, as we went into the late years of the George Bush administration, it dropped down there. And then, of course, the great crash. A little bump here, which I think is the stimulus bill, pushing more money into research at the National Institutes of Health. And then we have seen, beginning in 2010, what has got to be one of the stupidest policies this Nation has engaged in.

□ 1815

It happened to be in 2011, when the House changed from Democratic control to Republican control. We have seen a very steep decline—a $1.5 billion reduction and annual decline in the National Institutes of Health.

This same decline in the last 3 years is what is the result of the austerity budgets that have been imposed upon us by the Republicans trying to solve the national deficit by cutting Federal expenditures. The entire European community has come to the conclusion that doesn't work. Austerity budgeting does not increase economic growth. It has caused stagnation. Certainly, in Europe we are beginning to see, I think, a large part of the slow growth in the United States caused by austerity budgets.

But specifically to the health care of Americans—our health, our well-being—this is really serious. This means people are going to have additional illnesses. You spoke earlier about some of those, like diabetes. Diabetic research funding is cut through the National Institutes of Health.

This one I really find frightening. I find this frightening because this is very personal. My mother-in-law spent the last 2 years of her life with a very, very serious case of Alzheimer's disease. She died in a hospice program in our home. We, I suppose, were a very small part of this because we took care of her. But right now we are spending $200 billion a year dealing with Alzheimer's.

We know that the population is going to increase and the elderly population is going to skyrocket as the baby boomers move into their later years. By 2050, it will be $1.2 trillion for Alzheimer's.

Is there anybody in America, any family in America, that is not concerned about Alzheimer's? I don't know who they are. I know my family is concerned about it. Every family that I know—and I know many because I have been in public life for a long time and met perhaps thousands, or hundreds of thousands, of people—and every single one of them is concerned about Alzheimer's.

This is the financial side of it. The human side of it, I can tell you, is serious. I can tell you the effect it has.

Ms. SPEIER. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. GARAMENDI. I would.

Ms. SPEIER. To your point, this $1.2 trillion in the year 2050 is coming from all the taxpayers in this country. Because these are Medicare patients. These are Medicaid patients. What would be really stunning is to understand that if we were able to delay the onset or progression of Alzheimer's by 6 years, it could produce an annual savings of $51 billion in 2015, $126 billion in 2025, and a whopping $444 billion—almost half a trillion dollars—in the year 2050, when that cost is going to skyrocket to $1.2 trillion.

Mr. GARAMENDI. I am so glad you interrupted because that is an extremely important fact.

Let's go back and look at that. In 2015, the savings are how much?

Ms. SPEIER. They are $51 billion.

Mr. GARAMENDI. They are $51 billion. We are going through this budget exercise where, by the way, the sequestration cut continues, although the across-the-board is eliminated. Half of the sequestration cut will continue because of this budget, but we will be able to try to balance out the prioritization.

But the total savings in 2015 is less than the $50 billion that you have suggested could be saved if we could extend the onset and the severity of Alzheimer's. We watched this very closely in my family. The fact of the matter is that the National Institutes of Health's funding for Alzheimer's is coming to understand the nature of Alzheimer's and, therefore, how to deal with it.

Mr. WAXMAN. I thank you for yielding. Both of you are absolutely right. It is so shortsighted to have us cut back on funding for the National Institutes of Health and their research agenda. When you make a cut in this area one year, it isn't like you can make it up the next year. Researchers go on to other fields.

It is shortsighted to make these kinds of cuts.

I also wanted to comment on the fact that every day members of the Safe Climate Caucus have come to this House floor and talked about the shortsightedness of the leadership of the House of Representatives in ignoring the science on climate change. And so every day we have had speakers—the gentleman from California has been one of them—to just use a minute to talk about this pressing issue.

Yesterday, The Wall Street Journal reported that China has released a national blueprint for adapting to climate change. This follows the International Energy Agency's recent prediction that China will install more renewable energy over the next two decades than the U.S. and Europe combined. And China has recently implemented a series of regional cap-and-trade programs which are putting a price on carbon in China.

According to the Chinese Government—and I thank the gentleman for giving me this opportunity—climate change has already cost its people tens of billions of dollars and potentially thousands of lives. These developments in China are important because China is the world's largest emitter of carbon pollution, and we are the second largest. Our two countries need to play a leading role in addressing this global threat.

President Obama is committed to global leadership. His climate action plan calls for working with China and other nations to bend the post-2020 emissions trajectory. He is bringing in John Podesta, an experienced leader with a deep understanding of climate issues, to help him succeed.

We in the House need to stop being part of the problem and start being part of the solution. We need to start taking the climate threat seriously and work to find solutions. If China can take action on climate change, so can the U.S. If we don't, we will lose the race to develop the clean energy technologies that will power the future.

Let's not be shortsighted. Let's invest in research—research to protect our health and research to protect our planet.

I thank the gentleman.

Mr. GARAMENDI. Thank you, Mr. WAXMAN, for bringing up the leadership that China has.

I notice that the leader of our hour talked about China's leadership in another field.

Let me turn back to our leader, Representative SPEIER.

Ms. SPEIER. I just point out that China is eating our lunch, so to speak.

This is just the funding from 2012 and 2013. We referenced this earlier. And Congressman WAXMAN was talking about what they are doing relative to climate change. Look what they are doing in R&D spending in the last 2 years. It is up 15 percent. Germany, Japan, and South Korea are up 5 percent. Where is the United States, Mr. GARAMENDI?

Mr. GARAMENDI. In the red, going down.

Ms. SPEIER. That is right: a cut of 5 percent. So another example of how China is going to eclipse us in more ways than one. And those young researchers that we have been talking about are going to be going to China to do their research.

Mr. GARAMENDI. If I might just add to that, it is my understanding—and I get this from the University of California-Davis—that they are losing their new Ph.D.s to other countries, particularly to China and to India, because those countries are not only increasing their total research but they are also providing these very bright, innovative, forward-thinking Ph.D.s with a full laboratory and all of the support that they might need to continue to conduct their research not only on the issue of health care but also in all of the sciences and technologies, from high technology, energy, and so forth.

So we really need to get on it.

My final point is here twofold. First of all, if we are going to build this economy, there are five things we have to do consistently through time. And they require public investment.

First of all, education. You have got to have the best educated workforce in the world.

Secondly, you have to have the best, most advanced research because that is where the future is. That is where the future economic growth will come from.

You need to make the things that come from that. You need to have the infrastructure, and you need to think globally. We are not doing that.

The budgets that have been put forth by our colleagues on the Republican side go exactly the other direction. They cut educational funding, beginning with early childhood education. They cut the funding for research. You see it here.

Tomorrow, we are going to take up the new budget. It continues to cut research across the board, the National Institutes of Health probably included. It goes on and on. Transportation, infrastructure—forget it, there is no money for it.

We have got to turn that around. These are the fundamental investments of economic growth and, more important, social justice.

Congresswoman SPEIER, thank you so much. You have been at this, beating this drum. Don't stop. You stay with this. This is a message that the American public has to understand. These are the investments about our own personal health, our children's health, and our future economic growth, as well as addressing worldwide problems.

Thank you so very much for what you are doing here and for loaning me your charts.

Ms. SPEIER. I thank the gentleman from California for lending his support and his articulation of this issue.

To his point about the jobs being lost, this year's sequester cuts were estimated to result in the loss of more than 20,000 jobs and $3 billion in economic activity.

The three scientists who won the Nobel Prize for medicine this year for their research on how cells swap proteins all received NIH funding at some time during their careers. Nobel Prize winner Rothman said he probably would not have started his research had NIH funding not been available.

So that, I think, speaks volumes about how important NIH funding is to young scientists.

I am now joined by my great friend, a great, passionate leader on so many issues before this House, my colleague from Illinois (Ms. SCHAKOWSKY).

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Thank you. I want to thank Congresswoman SPEIER for leading this really important debate.

We have been talking lately about how we are not going to be able to compete for the economic development in research and biotechnology and all the things that we do at the NIH. But I also want to show how economically—with one of your charts—it really doesn't work for us here at home as well.

Pretty much all you can see are the red lines, which are the costs every year in the United States of common diseases.

As my colleague, Congressman GARAMENDI, pointed out, we have $203 billion a year that Alzheimer's costs our society as a whole. This is cancer, $158 billion. We have hypertension, $131 billion; diabetes, $116 billion; obesity, $109 billion; heart disease, $95.6 billion; stroke, $18.8 billion, Parkinson's disease, $6 billion.

So it is really easy to see these red lines.

Teeny, tiny, and I think maybe the only one you can see here well is the amount of money that we are spending to address these diseases. NIH research funding and annual cost of care for major diseases in the U.S. is what this chart is about.

We spend $5.5 billion on cancer research. On Alzheimer's disease it has not even been a billion dollars. It is half a billion dollars for a disease that costs $200 billion to our economy. And on and on.

The teeny, tiny blue lines are barely very visible of how much we are actually investing in trying to deal with these diseases and diminish the tremendous costs to families and costs to government through our public health programs.

And so if we are smart investors, wise investors in how we can save ourselves money, we would put money into this kind of research.

I just want to give an example from my district of lack of being penny wise and pound foolish.

Northwestern University is developing one of the first major studies to look at the impact of contaminants from superfund sites—those are the most polluted sites in our country—on our reproductive health.

So Northwestern, which is in Evanston, Illinois, and I am proud to say in my district—a constituent of mine—proposed a study to examine the reproductive health impacts of exposure to metals, including zinc and lead, that are present in the DePue superfund site in Illinois—a very dirty site.

□ 1830

Initially, in the fall of 2012, the Northwestern University Superfund Research program, led by Dr. Teresa Woodruff, was awarded a positive score with a good chance of receiving funding in response to the NIH research application. Mind you, if we had been able to research this particular Superfund contaminated site, it would have helped all over the country where we have these kinds of contaminations.

Due to limited funding—due to the sequestration—in March of 2013, Dr. Woodruff and her colleague were informally given the option to receive a reduced amount for a reduced period of time since their application was deemed, in fact, meritorious. After electing to accept the reduced funding, the NIH informed the Northwestern University Superfund Research program that, due to the sequester cuts, their project would not be funded.

This lack of funding means Dr. Woodruff and her team are unable to perform this critical research which would be helpful all over the country to help us gain a better understanding of the reproductive health risks of Superfund sites and to help us determine the best practices for the future disposal of those toxic chemicals.

We are absolutely putting hands behind our backs in order to address critical health issues that are facing our country. We are hamstringing our ability to compete globally. We are hurting the health of Americans and of future Americans in not funding the study of reproductive health. It just makes no sense. It makes absolutely no sense to cut the funding from the National Institutes of Health. It is hard to figure out what that argument would be. You certainly can't say this is frivolous spending, excessive spending.

So I really thank you for calling attention to the one of many ways that the sequester has hurt our country, but it is a very significant one. I appreciate your leadership.

Ms. SPEIER. You, too, were here in Congress during the Bush administration when there was an extraordinary increase in the budget for the NIH. The Republicans at that time recognized the value of keeping the NIH robust in the funds that it had in order for it to do cutting-edge research and move us forward.

What is it going to take? What was it like then that we don't have today that might be able to enlighten us?

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. There was some common sense on both sides of the aisle of things that were essential investments for our country, that it made sense from every angle at which you looked at this to make those kinds of investments in the National Institutes of Health.

I think, right now, we are dealing with some of our colleagues across the aisle who believe that government spending, regardless, is not a smart investment, that the sequester cuts, which are meat-ax cuts across the

board, do not distinguish in any way among the programs and that that is a smart way to go.

The chairman of the Appropriations Committee, Congressman ROGERS, doesn't agree with that—the sequestration, he agrees, hurts us—but, unfortunately, we don't have the same kind of bipartisan consensus. I think Democrats see the wisdom of this and that we need help from our colleagues. We had it then. We don't now.

Ms. SPEIER. I thank the gentlelady for her support and for her involvement in this very critical issue.

I am really very grateful for the conversation we have had this hour on the National Institutes of Health, but I am also anxious for the millions of Americans across this country who are suffering with some diabolical disease—some cancer—some disease that has no cure, whether it is heart disease or glioblastomas or breast cancer. There are millions of Americans right now who are dealing with stage 4 cancers, who are holding on by just their fingernails, hoping against hope that there will be some cure, some breakthrough drug, some clinical trial they can participate in.

I think, for each and every one of us in this House, we have to think about those people in our districts, and there are thousands of them in each of our districts. If they knew that we were tying the hands of the National Institutes of Health in doing that kind of cutting-edge research, I think they would be so disappointed—more than disappointed. They would be so angry that the lives of their loved ones were in the offing.

I would like to continue with a brief discussion on our academic health centers in the United States. They are, really, the pulse of so much of the research that goes on when it comes to advanced medical research. Many of them are funded through the NIH, as was mentioned earlier—thousands of them across this country. I am going to tell you about one such researcher. Her name is Dr. Valerie Weaver. She is a professor in the UCSF Departments of Surgery, Anatomy and Bioengineering and Therapeutic Sciences.

She does think outside the box. Her lab is investigating not only tumors, themselves, found in patients afflicted with breast cancer, pancreatic cancer, or brain cancer, but the neighborhood of tissues and cells where those tumors take up residence. Unfortunately, her quest for cutting-edge solutions to rapidly improve cancer treatments is threatened by the sequestration of the NIH budget. Because of reduced funding on her existing grants, Dr. Weaver has had to lay off three existing personnel and has had to cancel three new hires. ''The only people I can take are those with their own funding. Each year, you get less and less, and you are asked to do more and more,'' she said, ''and you try to get more creative, but wonder what you are supposed to do.''

As a scientist, she finds herself spending less time thinking about how to battle cancer in the lab and more time struggling against funding cuts. ''I spend way too much time writing grants. My grant writing time has doubled,'' Weaver said, but added she still pushes to move her research forward. ''I have to do some type of science every day, at least once a day, even if it's only an hour. It should be the other way around—1 hour of administration and 12 hours of science—but it's not. That breaks my heart,'' she says.

For those suffering from the forms of cancer that Dr. Weaver hopes to treat, she points out that time is of the essence. Patients with brain tumors and pancreatic cancer, in particular, frequently live only a short time after diagnosis. ''Some of the studies we're doing in the next 4 to 5 years will have a direct impact on the clinic,'' she said. ''This could have huge implications for saving patients.''

Weaver also worries about the impact that sequestration is having on the next generation of talented researchers. ''You think: you can't let these people go under. If they go under, you lose them, because they don't come back,'' she stated soberly.

In truth, there is so much at stake that we must recognize that the sequestration of the NIH is killing the goose that lays the golden egg—that saves American lives, that creates opportunities for great trade, that provides us with, yet again, more and more and more research that leads to more and more cures. Alzheimer's alone will choke us—will choke the Medicare system—if we don't do more research in that area.

So I want to close by saying that the funding of the NIH is not a political issue. It is an economic and a medical imperative. Medical research makes Americans and the rest of the world healthier. It grows our economy, and it produces valuable jobs here at home. It is time for us to take the shackles off the NIH, to restore the funding that was there when George Bush was President and to regain the position that we have had for so long in terms of fine medical research.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

COMPREHENSIVE IMMIGRATION REFORM

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. COTTON). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2013, the Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida (Mr. GARCIA) for 30 minutes.

Mr. GARCIA. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman from Colorado, who has been having these sessions now for all the month of November. We began at the end of October and then have gone through the session in December. He has been an ardent champion of this issue. He has been a leader in our caucus. He has been doing the right thing, and I am very thankful for his efforts on our behalf.

I want to mention that, last week, when we were doing this, the Speaker made a ruling of something that I probably did incorrectly in my speech; but I want to now yield to the gentleman from Colorado because he spoke for millions of those who have no voice, who cannot come to this floor and claim something that is so American—a system that works, a system that makes sense, a system that is fair to all its citizens, in fact, to all of its people.

Mr. POLIS. I thank the gentleman from Florida. I will speak briefly, and then I will have more later.

Mr. Speaker, there are so many activists in our country who are fasting, who are sitting in offices, who are writing their Congresspeople, who are demanding action—action to unite their families, action to stop the deportations of family members—and answers to emerge from this indefinite state of limbo that has frozen the lives of so many would-be Americans that H.R. 15 and comprehensive immigration reform would address.

Today, I am disappointed that our Republican friends didn't show up to discuss and to debate the most pressing issue of our time—immigration reform. We extended an invitation to our friends on the other side of the aisle to join us today and have a discussion. Sadly, there is no one here to yield to. There are no solutions from the empty Chamber on the right. Some responded that they were double booked. Others responded that they had other engagements. Some simply didn't respond at all. The American people, Mr. Speaker, are demanding a response.

Just as House Speaker BOEHNER plans to close for business on Friday while hundreds of millions of Americans continue to have to work another week before Christmas, we have Reverend Samuel Rodriguez, who will mark the 40th day of his fast for immigration reform. He is chair of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference. He will be 40 days and nights—approaching fast—without solid food.

As the reverend said recently:

> There are 11 million people here right now who require intervention. We looked the other way when they came in. We use them on our farms; we use them in our hotels; and we use them in our restaurants. Then we have the audacity to deport them. It is morally reprehensible to play politics with 11 million people.

So said Reverend Samuel Rodriguez in his nearing his 40th day in fast.

Yet, in the entire first part of the 113th Congress—in the entire first session, in the entire year of 2013—there was only one vote on the floor on any measure relating to immigration. Was it a bill that would address even part of the immigration problem or any piece of the meal that was being promised? No. It was a bill to defund DACA, to defund the Deferred Action program, subjecting hundreds of thousands of DREAMers to deportation—a bill that Republicans voted for and that passed in this body.

Thankfully, it didn't become law. The Deferred Action program continues. Thank goodness that it provides at least a temporary reprieve for hundreds of thousands of aspiring Americans, but we owe to all Americans the restoring of the rule of law, allowing people to get on with their lives.

I yield to my colleague from Miami (Mr. GARCIA), the chief author of H.R. 15, the comprehensive immigration reform bill in the House.

Mr. GARCIA. I would like to thank my colleagues for joining me here tonight.

Mr. Speaker, we are here to discuss a vitally important issue. We need to pass comprehensive, commonsense immigration reform.

□ 1845

We feel the consequences of our broken immigration system every day. We may not agree on the best way to go about fixing it, but disagreement is no excuse for inaction.

With every day that passes, millions continue to live in the shadows and jobs continue slipping away overseas. This is not simply just an issue of fairness. It is about ensuring America's economic prosperity.

In Florida alone, legalizing those currently unauthorized to live would generate $1.3 billion in new tax revenue and create 97,000 new jobs. Fixing our broken immigration system will help small businesses expand, foster innovation, increase productivity, raise wages, and help create thousands of jobs. Comprehensive immigration reform makes all Americans better, makes our country richer, and creates opportunity for all.

We must work together to find a solution that secures our borders, builds our economy, and provides a way forward for millions of undocumented individuals living in the United States.

This week, a group of children dropped by my office. They were dropping by to express their wish for the new year. Their families have been ripped apart by our immigration system, and they came to deliver letters from a thousand children facing the same struggle. I would like to share one of those letters with you:

Dear Congress,

My name is Charlie Hoz-Pena and I am Anthony's brother. I'm 11 and I'm in fifth grade.

I'm writing to tell you my worst nightmare became real. Last year our dad was taken away from us and was sent to Mexico. We fought really hard to get him out of jail. I went to church and prayed, we did protests, vigils, wrote letters, petitions and I behaved well in school. But Immigration did not listen. They don't care about us.

I even thought about killing myself because I is sad when bad things happen to good people and because I love my dad very much. I am very angry at Congress and Obama.

It's really hard on me and Anthony and my mom. I love my mom too and she keeps us safe and comfortable but it's really hard for her too. Every time I hear her crying I feel sad, she cries because she misses him. She has to find a lot of jobs cleaning houses to support us.

So Congress, please get your act together. I want immigration reform please. You can do it. Do your job.

Obama, you have the power to stop deporting people. Congress, you are breaking families apart every day until you pass immigration reform. You have a chance to help families. So please do it now.

What if immigration broke up your family? Would you like it? Now just close your eyes and imagine your family destroyed. It is not a happy thought. It is a horrible feeling. It is like when somebody you care about dies. It is sad because you may never see them again. I don't know how long I am gonna have to wait to see my dad back. No child and family should suffer like we did.

Congress, we belong together. I hope you can understand what that means.

Sincerely,

Charlie

Charlie is right: we can't wait any longer. The time is now to pass comprehensive immigration reform.

Although the Senate has acted in a bipartisan way to pass comprehensive immigration reform, the House of Representatives has not passed an immigration reform bill in this Congress. It is unacceptable.

Ultimately, all of us, Democrat and Republican alike, should want the same things: a secure border, a stronger economy, and more jobs for the middle class.

We should have a vigorous debate about this important issue, but a sensible one also that moves us forward. Unfortunately, that has not always been the case.

Just this week, my colleague from Iowa compared allowing the undocumented to earn their citizenship as letting bank robbers walk away with the loot. This type of rhetoric has no place in this debate.

We can do better. Our country demands we do better. Let's get this done. The time is now for comprehensive immigration reform.

I yield to the gentleman from Colorado.

Mr. POLIS. I thank the gentleman from Florida.

Mr. Speaker, what is particularly frustrating is that Congress is going home on December 13, not to work for the remaining 2½ weeks of the year. I think most Americans would love to get off a week early for Christmas. They don't have the opportunity to set their own schedule at work. So it is not like there is not time to do this, Mr. Speaker. We can stay here next week.

It is not like there is not support on the floor to pass immigration reform, Mr. Speaker. There is. There is support today to pass H.R. 15, comprehensive immigration reform, brought to the floor. We could then send it to President Obama's desk. What a Christmas gift to our country that would make, a Christmas gift in the form of reducing our deficit by over $200 billion, creating over 6 million jobs for American citizens, restoring real security, and finally gaining operational control over our southern border and stemming the tide of people who are immigrating here illegally, requiring workplace authentication to make sure that employers no longer hire people under the table for cash outside of our system, strengthening Social Security and Medicare by making sure that people working here pay into our important programs that retirees stand to benefit from.

Immigration reform is not only demanded, but widely popular. Six in 10 Republicans support a path to citizenship for immigrants currently living in the United States; and a vast majority of every group—age, gender, ethnicity—here in this country knows that our immigration system is broken.

When we look at ourselves in the mirror at night, Mr. Speaker, how can we be proud of a system that betrays our values as a Nation of laws and a Nation of immigrants, a system that rewards lawbreaking, a system that encourages illegal activity, a system that, as my good friend and colleague Ms. LOFGREN from California likes to say, effectively places two signs at our southern border: one says ''help wanted'' and the other says ''keep out''?

That is the state of our current immigration system: confusing, expensive, job destroying, companies can't acquire the men and women they need to remain competitive so they are forced to expand overseas in other countries in offshore jobs rather than expand here in the United States.

Thankfully, Mr. Speaker, the answer is simple. Groups from across the spectrum—faith-based groups including evangelical and Catholic Americans, businesses including small family farms to large international companies that employ hundreds of thousands of people, law enforcement—all support H.R. 15. Based on the Senate bipartisan comprehensive immigration reform bill, that would solve all of these issues that we have before us, create jobs for American citizens, and reduce our deficit.

And as we talk about the budget, at least frankly, Mr. Speaker, this week we are debating something very important for our country. In other weeks, my colleague, Mr. GARCIA, and I have taken to the floor when there has been nothing that has even been done that entire time that had any consequence to anybody. At least this week, Mr. Speaker, we are discussing something important. I don't bemoan that. I think it is legitimate to discuss the budget of our country this week. That is why I think we should stay here another week and discuss immigration next week.

This is an important discussion. But as we look for what we call ''pay-fors''—how do we pay for making sure the Medicare reimbursement rate doesn't go down as scheduled at the end of the year, how do we pay for reducing the sequester, how do we pay for the investments that we want to make—guess what, comprehensive immigration reform would fill our coffers

with over $200 billion of revenue. Now, how about that as a pay-for for what we call the ''doc-fix'' and making sure we don't reduce Medicare reimbursement rates or any of the other items that are on the budget table this week?

That is the kind of contribution that H.R. 15 and immigration reform can make.

Mr. GARCIA. Mr. Speaker, I agree with the gentleman from Colorado. By the way, I love the fact you refer to me as the gentleman from Miami. I always thought we should have our own State.

Let me just mention that there is a very good article that was written last year in July by Jennifer Rubin in The Washington Post. It sort of listed all these phoney arguments that we have.

The first: the Senate bill is dead on arrival. We have heard this from the Speaker before. We have heard no agreements, no comprises. We heard that VAWA, the Violence Against Women Act, was going to be dead or, as they said, they were going to write their own. Well, of course, nothing came and we passed the Violence Against Women Act, which we should have passed earlier on.

The second argument: the Senate bill isn't strong enough on border security. Well, the Senate bill spends more money on border security, almost an insane amount. That is why we took it out of our bill, because we didn't think that this House would look at such an expensive bill. But the question is: Is what we have better than what we are looking at? Of course, the answer is, no, we are not moving forward.

This one is the one I love, but it is more of a Herman Cain type argument: the bill is long. This is a very complex issue and, of course, it is long because we are trying to solve worker issues, we are trying to solve innovation issues, we are trying to solve a lot of important things that affect us all.

The fourth argument: the Obama administration won't enforce it. Well, here I have to say that Obama must be one of anti-immigration's favorite Presidents because he has deported more people than any President before. In October, I think we reached 2 million people being deported. That is thousands upon thousands of families destroyed; that is workers being taken out of the economy. That is what the President did.

Mr. POLIS. Will the gentleman yield for a moment?

Mr. GARCIA. Yes, of course, I will yield to the gentleman.

Mr. POLIS. Each of those deportations, Mr. Speaker, cost you and I, cost American taxpayers, approximately $15,000. So guess who is paying for the 2 million deportations? Guess what is one of the growing causes of our deficit spending? Our broken immigration system.

Mr. GARCIA. That is exactly right.

Another argument: you can't bring in low-skilled workers. Well, the bracero program proved that when you had a functioning program illegal immigration went down, not up. We know that for a fact. Here is what we also know. When President Reagan had an immigration bill, we know that the salaries for the middle class and working class went up for 5 years in a row because it worked.

The seventh argument: there aren't enough high-skilled workers being allowed in. All right, so let's write legislation that increases the high-skilled labor.

''Republicans don't need to pass immigration reform to keep their House seats.'' Well, if it doesn't affect their House seats, then why are they opposed to it? And, more importantly, this is, of course, the silliest of arguments when you understand the demographics. I know I have spoken to this with the gentleman from Colorado. When you look at the high water mark of a Republican Presidential race, it was achieved by George Bush, a pro-immigrant President; but when you look behind those numbers, and you look at the 44 percent that he achieved nationally, what you realize is he didn't receive those numbers from second- and third-generation Americans. He received it from first-generation Americans voting, and voting over 50 percent for George Bush for President. This is something that is a commonsense thing and makes sense for it.

The ninth argument: it was passed too quickly in the Senate. Well, unlike the House, they have had long debates on this. They had weeks of hearings, they had bipartisan meetings for over a year before, they had the commitment of the President of the Senate, the majority leader of the Senate to get this done.

Look, I could go on and on; but I think what is clear is that we can make a lot of silly arguments, but the time has come to act. We were promised by the Speaker that this would be taken up and it hasn't. The time has come to move forward. This is the time for immigration reform. It is good for the country, it is good for these folks, it is good for everyone.

I yield to the gentleman from Colorado.

□ 1900

Mr. POLIS. I would like to point out that my friend from Miami, Florida, placed out some of the arguments that we hear our friends making as to why immigration reform is not happening. We did not present those as a straw man. We invited our friends from the other side of the aisle to come make the arguments themselves. There is no one here in this Chamber, despite our invitation, to represent why we are not staying here next week to vote on immigration reform. So we are guessing why. We are guessing, saying maybe it is because they don't like long bills. I don't know. A short bill can be pretty bad, too, if it is a bad bill. You can have a good short bill or a bad short bill, a good long bill or a bad long bill. I mean, you know, when you want to address border security, you need to make sure that you devote enough of the bill to border security to do it.

So we are here guessing at their reasons because our friends on the Republican side of the aisle are not here to explain, despite our invitation, why they are not bringing immigration reform up. And if they are not ready for H.R. 15 or comprehensive, why at least we are not making some kind of down payment on it next week, why we are not doing something, for instance, for the DREAMers, the kids that are currently in a deferred action program so that they can have some degree of certainty to get on with their lives. Why we are not making sure that we have working permits for the people who are already here and already have jobs and are an important part of our economy. We could be doing any of that next week. But instead, Mr. Speaker, the House is being sent home on vacation while most Americans have a full additional week to work before Christmas.

Mr. GARCIA. Mr. Speaker, I would like to yield to the gentleman from California (Mr. CÁRDENAS), who is a hard fighter for these issues.

I want to first relate a story. I was debating, the other day, a friend on this issue. He made what he thought was a commonsense argument. He said, Joe, if somebody broke into your house, you would like them to be arrested, right?

I said: Well, the truth is, if somebody broke into my House and filled my refrigerator with fresh fruit and vegetables, if they took care of my mom and got my kid to school, if they then went outside and cut the lawn and painted the house, worked on the roof, I think I might owe them money.

The reality is these folks are an essential part of our country. They make us work and they make us better.

With that, I yield to the gentleman from California.

Mr. CÁRDENAS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

I just wanted to say a few words on this floor that I am so blessed to be a part of this great Congress of the United States of America. Yet at the same time, we are a country that talks about how we believe in the big picture, yet at the same time we focus on the little things. We focus on the plight of a child. We focus on the plight of a family. We focus on the ability of people to pull themselves up by their own bootstraps. That is what we are proud of in this great country.

But what I am not proud of is being a part of a Congress where the Speaker, Speaker BOEHNER, is not allowing comprehensive immigration reform to be voted for on this floor. I believe that today, if we had the opportunity to vote on comprehensive immigration reform in this Chamber, I think we have the votes to pass it. And I think if we did so, it would be much more consistent for us to do that than to do nothing, and that is what this House has been doing. We have been doing

nothing on comprehensive immigration reform.

And if we did pass comprehensive immigration reform, it would be the biggest economic boom that our country has seen in over 60 years. There are too many Americans out of work. But if we pass comprehensive immigration reform, what we are going to see is, for every 100,000 people in this country who are legalized, it is very likely that we will have 262,000 jobs occur. Do the math, ladies and gentlemen. If 100,000 people are legalized, a certain percentage of them are going to create businesses, and in those businesses they are going to hire American citizens. Americans will go to work. That makes sense. That sounds like the American Dream for Americans, not just for immigrants who come to our country.

One of the things that I would like to point out is, if comprehensive immigration reform were passed, then what would happen is the Federal deficit would go down by $200 billion just over the next 10 years; and over the subsequent 10 years, it would go down by another $700 billion. I think that is good for America. I think that any American, when you look at those numbers, would say why don't we pass that law, because when the economy improves, more Americans go to work.

As was mentioned earlier by my colleague, when you have a young boy who is an American citizen who writes a letter to his Congressperson, who writes a letter to the President of the United States as an American citizen who is in tears by telling us, exclaiming, I miss my mother, I miss my father, and they have been deported, that is not an America that we can feel proud of. That is an America that doesn't live its values.

What I say is, you know what, if in 2014 we don't vote on comprehensive immigration reform, why don't we just go ahead and dismantle the Statue of Liberty, because that is something I think, as your average American, we are very proud of. Bring me your huddled masses, your poor.

You know what is great about this country, whether you are Italian, whether you are Russian, whether you are Mexican, whether you are English, whether you are Irish, Canadian, when you come to the United States of America, you make dreams come true, not just your dream, but you employ Americans. You create jobs for American citizens, American-born people.

Comprehensive immigration reform, if you try to couch it as ''those people,'' comprehensive immigration reform is not about ''those people.'' Comprehensive immigration reform is about us, Americans. It is about us improving our economy. It is about us doing the right thing. It is about us welcoming the men, women, and children who come to this country and work as hard as any human being will dare to do, and that makes our economy stronger. That makes America great.

Ladies and gentlemen, I don't speak to you as though comprehensive immigration reform is an emotional issue. I speak of comprehensive immigration reform as an American values issue. As my colleague said earlier about that silly analogy, what if somebody broke into your house, then what would you do. I think he actually put it very well. If somebody painted your house, they cut your grass and took care of your children and your grandmother, don't you think that you owe them something? Don't you think you should extend your hand and say, Welcome. Thank you. I like what you're doing for me.

And that is what immigrants do for our United States of America. They make our country stronger. This country was built on immigrants. Why in the world would we, as Americans, want to support the idea that they are ''those people'' and they are not part of who we are?

I am only one generation away from being an immigrant myself. My parents came from another country. I was born in this country, and I do live a better life than my parents were raised in, and so do my children. I am proud to be an American-born citizen. And I think as Americans, we should be proud and expect our United States Congress to have a vote on comprehensive immigration reform and to give that opportunity to the people that you have elected to do our job. And our job is to make our economy stronger. Our job is to make laws that make this country better. Our job is to be making laws that are true to our values.

Mr. GARCIA. I thank the gentleman from California for those wonderful words.

I yield to the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. POLIS).

Mr. POLIS. We have the chair of my committee to file a rule here on the floor the House. Sadly, it is not a rule for comprehensive immigration reform, but it is a rule for something very important, the budget, which hopefully we will be able to agree on in the next 2 days. And as we discussed earlier before the chair of the Rules Committee joined us, I think we all agree that passing the budget is a very good use of our time here on the floor.

Some of us, Mr. Speaker, in this hour, have talked about the need for immigration reform. We have in the past criticized the apparent urgency with which asbestos bills were somehow rushed out of committee and brought immediately to the floor when we weren't able to move forward on immigration, but this week we are working on something more important.

We need to continue our work to bring up immigration reform. I am speaking from the side of the Chamber traditionally used by Republicans. I had hoped to give this spot up to a member of the majority party, a Republican, who we hope to continue to extend this invitation to debate immigration reform and bring forward an immigration reform bill.

Mr. GARCIA. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

REPORT ON RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF SENATE AMENDMENT TO H.J. Res. 59, CONTINUING APPROPRIATIONS RESOLUTION, 2014; PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF MOTIONS TO SUSPEND THE RULES; PROVIDING FOR PROCEEDINGS DURING THE PERIOD FROM DECEMBER 14, 2013, THROUGH JANUARY 6, 2014; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Mr. WOODALL, from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 113–290) on the resolution (H. Res. 438) providing for consideration of the Senate amendment to the joint resolution (H.J. Res. 59) making continuing appropriations for fiscal year 2014, and for other purposes; providing for consideration of motions to suspend the rules; providing for proceedings during the period from December 14, 2013, through January 6, 2014; and for other purposes, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mr. CULBERSON (at the request of Mr. CANTOR) for today on account of illness.

BILL PRESENTED TO THE PRESIDENT

Karen L. Haas, Clerk of the House, reported that on December 9, 2013, she presented to the President of the United States, for his approval, the following bill:

H.R. 3626. To extend the Undetectable Firearms Act of 1988 for 10 years.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. WOODALL. Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

The motion was agreed to; accordingly (at 7 o'clock and 12 minutes p.m.), under its previous order, the House adjourned until tomorrow, Thursday, December 12, 2013, at 10 a.m. for morning-hour debate.

EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS, ETC.

Under clause 2 of rule XIV, executive communications were taken from the Speaker's table and referred as follows:

4062. A letter from the Secretary, Commodity Futures Trading Commission, transmitting the Commission's final rule — Derivatives Clearing Organizations and International Standards (RIN: 3038-AE06) received November 22, 2013, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Agriculture.

4063. A letter from the Secretary, Department of Defense, transmitting a report and

certification pursuant to subsection (c) of section 1022 of the National Defense Authorization Act for FY 2004, as amended; to the Committee on Armed Services.

4064. A letter from the Acting Senior Procurement Executive, Department of Defense, transmitting the Department's final rule — Federal Acquisition Regulation; Federal Acquisition Circular 2005-71; Small Entity Compliance Guide [Docket No.: FAR 2013-0078, Sequence No.7] received December 9, 2013, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Armed Services.

4065. A letter from the Counsel, Legal Division, Bureau of Consumer Financial Protection, transmitting the Bureau's final rule — Amendments to the 2013 Mortgage Rules Under the Real Estate Settlement Procedures Act (Regulation X) and the Truth in Lending Act (Regulation Z) [Docket No.: CFPB-2013-0031] (RIN: 3170-AA37) received December 3, 2013, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Financial Services.

4066. A letter from the Acting General Counsel, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, transmitting the Commission's final rule — Version 5 Critical Infrastructure Protection Reliability Standards [Docket No.: RM13-5-000] received December 10, 2013, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

4067. A letter from the Acting General Counsel, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, transmitting the Commission's final rule — Small Generator Interconnection Agreements and Procedures [RM13-2-000; Order No. 792] received December 9, 2013, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

4068. A letter from the Acting General Counsel, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, transmitting the Commission's final rule — Regional Reliability Standard BAL-002-WECC-2 Contingency Reserve [Docket No.: RM13-13-000; Order No. 789] received December 10, 2013, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

4069. A letter from the Director, Defense Security Cooperation Agency, transmitting Transmittal No. 13-25, Notice of Proposed Issuance of Letter of Offer and Acceptance, pursuant to Section 36(b)(1) of the Arms Export Control Act, as amended; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

4070. A letter from the Director, Defense Security Cooperation Agency, transmitting Transmittal No. 13-32, Notice of Proposed Issuance of Letter of Offer and Acceptance, pursuant to Section 36(b)(1) of the Arms Export Control Act, as amended; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

4071. A letter from the Director, Defense Security Cooperation Agency, transmitting Transmittal No. 13-27, Notice of Proposed Issuance of Letter of Offer and Acceptance, pursuant to Section 36(b)(1) of the Arms Export Control Act, as amended; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

4072. A letter from the Director, Defense Security Cooperation Agency, transmitting Transmittal No. 13-26, Notice of Proposed Issuance of Letter of Offer and Acceptance, pursuant to Section 36(b)(1) of the Arms Export Control Act, as amended; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

4073. A letter from the Director, Defense Security Cooperation Agency, transmitting Transmittal No. 13-58, Notice of Proposed Issuance of Letter of Offer and Acceptance, pursuant to Section 36(b)(1) of the Arms Export Control Act, as amended; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

4074. A letter from the Director, Defense Security Cooperation Agency, transmitting Transmittal No. 13-53, Notice of Proposed Issuance of Letter of Offer and Acceptance, pursuant to Section 36(b)(1) of the Arms Export Control Act, as amended; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

4075. A letter from the Director, Defense Security Cooperation Agency, transmitting Transmittal No. 13-49, Notice of Proposed Issuance of Letter of Offer and Acceptance, pursuant to Section 36(b)(1) of the Arms Export Control Act, as amended; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

4076. A letter from the Director, Defense Security Cooperation Agency, transmitting Transmittal No. 12-67, Notice of Proposed Issuance of Letter of Offer and Acceptance, pursuant to Section 36(b)(1) of the Arms Export Control Act, as amended; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

4077. A letter from the Director, Defense Security Cooperation Agency, transmitting Transmittal No. 13-21, Notice of Proposed Issuance of Letter of Offer and Acceptance, pursuant to Section 36(b)(1) of the Arms Export Control Act, as amended; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

4078. A letter from the Director, Defense Security Cooperation Agency, transmitting Transmittal No. 13-57, Notice of Proposed Issuance of Letter of Offer and Acceptance, pursuant to Section 36(b)(1) of the Arms Export Control Act, as amended; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

4079. A letter from the Director, Defense Security Cooperation Agency, transmitting Transmittal No. 13-48, Notice of Proposed Issuance of Letter of Offer and Acceptance, pursuant to Section 36(b)(1) of the Arms Export Control Act, as amended; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

4080. A letter from the Director, Defense Security Cooperation Agency, transmitting Transmittal No. 13-52, Notice of Proposed Issuance of Letter of Offer and Acceptance, pursuant to Section 36(b)(1) of the Arms Export Control Act, as amended; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

4081. A letter from the Director, Defense Security Cooperation Agency, transmitting Transmittal No. 13-38, Notice of Proposed Issuance of Letter of Offer and Acceptance, pursuant to Section 36(b)(1) of the Arms Export Control Act, as amended; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

4082. A letter from the Director, Defense Security Cooperation Agency, transmitting Transmittal No. 13-0B, pursuant to the reporting requirements of Section 36(b)(5)(C) of the Arms Export Control Act, as amended; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

4083. A letter from the Director, Defense Security Cooperation Agency, transmitting a report submitted in accordance with section 36(b) of the Arms Export Control Act; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

4084. A letter from the Director, Defense Security Cooperation Agency, transmitting a report submitted in accordance with Section 36(b) of the Arms Export Control Act; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

4085. A letter from the Assistant Secretary For Export Administration, Department of Commerce, transmitting the Department's final rule — Amendments to Existing Validated End-User Authorizations in the People's Republic of China [Docket No.: 130927853-3853-01] (RIN: 0694-AF99) received December 2, 2013, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

4086. A letter from the Secretary, Department of Defense, transmitting a report in accordance with section 1028(a)(1) of the National Defense Authorization Act for FY 2013; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

4087. A letter from the Under Secretary, Department of Defense, transmitting a report pursuant to 10 U.S.C. section 2432; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

4088. A letter from the Assistant Secretary, Department of Defense, transmitting a letter regarding Cooperative Threat Reduction; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

4089. A letter from the Secretary, Department of Defense, transmitting a report submitted in accordance with section 8110(a)(1) of the Department of Defense Appropriations Act, 2013; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

4090. A letter from the Assistant Secretary, Department of Defense, transmitting a report submitted in accordance with section 1308 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2004; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

4091. A letter from the Acting Assistant Secretary, Department of State, transmitting an addendum to a certification, transmittal number: DDTC 13-104; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

4092. A letter from the Acting Assistant Secretary, Department of State, transmitting an addendum to a certification, transmittal number: DDTC 13-131; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

4093. A letter from the Acting Assistant Secretary, Department of State, transmitting an addendum to a certification, transmittal number: DDTC 13-141; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

4094. A letter from the Acting Assistant Secretary, Department of State, transmitting an addendum to a certification, transmittal number: DDTC 13-101; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

4095. A letter from the Assistant Secretary for Political-Military Affairs, Department of State, transmitting an addendum to a certification, transmittal number: DDTC 12-007; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

4096. A letter from the Assistant Secretary for Political-Military Affairs, Department of State, transmitting an addendum to a certification, transmittal number: DDTC 12-023; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

4097. A letter from the Assistant Secretary for Political-Military Affairs, Department of State, transmitting an addendum to a certification, transmittal number: DDTC 12-019; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

4098. A letter from the Acting Assistant Secretary, Department of State, transmitting an addendum to a certification, transmittal number: DDTC 13-126; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

4099. A letter from the Acting Assistant Secretary, Department of State, transmitting an addendum to a certification, transmittal number: DDTC 13-079; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

4100. A letter from the Acting Assistant Secretary, Department of State, transmitting an addendum to a certification, transmittal number: DDTC 13-089; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

4101. A letter from the Acting Assistant Secretary, Department of State, transmitting an addendum to a certification, transmittal number: DDTC 13-105; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

4102. A letter from the Acting Assistant Secretary, Department of State, transmitting an addendum to a certification, transmittal number: DDTC 13-092; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

4103. A letter from the Acting Assistant Secretary, Department of State, transmitting an addendum to a certification, transmittal number: DDTC 13-067; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

4104. A letter from the Acting Assistant Secretary, Department of State, transmitting an addendum to a certification, transmittal number: DDTC 13-099; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

4105. A letter from the Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting a Memorandum of Justification; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

4106. A letter from the Acting Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting a waiver under section 7046(c)(1)(B) of the Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Act; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

4107. A letter from the Acting Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting decisions pursuant to the Iran Sanctions Act of 1996; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

4108. A letter from the Acting Assistant Secretary, Department of State, transmitting a letter regarding section 3 of the Arms Export Control Act; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

4109. A letter from the Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting a determination pursuant to 22 U.S.C. Section 5963; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

4110. A letter from the Acting Assistant Secretary, Department of State, transmitting a report pursuant to Section 102(a)(2) of the Arms Export Control Act; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

4111. A letter from the Acting Senior Procurement Executive, Department of Defense, transmitting the Department's final rule — Federal Acquisition Regulation; Accelerated Payments to Small Business Subcontractors [FAC 2005-71; FAR Case 2012-031; Item I; Docket No. 2012-0031, Sequence No. 1] (RIN: 9000-AM37) received December 9, 2013, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

4112. A letter from the Acting General Counsel, Department of the Interior, transmitting the Department's final rule — Fees received December 5, 2013, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Natural Resources.

4113. A letter from the Acting General Counsel, Department of the Interior, transmitting the Department's final rule — Minimum Internal Control Standards (RIN: 3141-AA27) received December 5, 2013, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Natural Resources.

4114. A letter from the Acting General Counsel, Department of the Interior, transmitting the Department's final rule — Tribal Background Investigations and Licensing (RIN: 3141-AA15) received December 5, 2013, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Natural Resources.

4115. A letter from the Acting General Counsel, Department of the Interior, transmitting the Department's final rule — Tribal Background Investigations and Licensing (RIN: 3141-AA15) received December 5, 2013, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Natural Resources.

4116. A letter from the Acting General Counsel, Department of the Interior, transmitting the Department's final rule — Appeal Proceedings Before the Commission (RIN: 3414-AA47) received December 5, 2013, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Natural Resources.

4117. A letter from the Acting General Counsel, Department of the Interior, transmitting the Department's final rule — Self-Regulation of Class II Gaming (RIN: 3141-AA44) received December 5, 2013, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Natural Resources.

4118. A letter from the Acting General Counsel, Department of the Interior, transmitting the Department's final rule — Minimum Technical Standards for Class II Gaming Systems and Equipment (RIN: 3141-AA27) received December 5, 2013, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Natural Resources.

4119. A letter from the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks, Department of the Interior, transmitting the Department's final rule — Special Regulations, Areas of the National park System, Curecanti National Recreation Area, Snowmobiles and Off-Road Motor Vehicles [NPS-CURE-13810] (RIN: 1024-AD76) received December 2, 2013, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Natural Resources.

4120. A letter from the Director, Office of Regulatory Affairs & Collaborative Action, Department of the Interior, transmitting the Department's final rule — Land Acquisitions: Appeals of Land Acquisition Decisions [K00103 12/13 A3A10; 134D0102DR-DS5A300000 DR.5A311.IA000113, Docket ID: BIA-2013-0005] (RIN: 1076-AF15) received December 3, 2013, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Natural Resources.

4121. A letter from the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks, Department of the Interior, transmitting the Department's final rule — Special Regulations; Areas of the National Park System, New River Gorge National River, Bicycling [NPS-NERI-14336; PPNENERIP0,PPMPRLE1Z.Y00000] (RIN: 1024-AD95) received December 2, 2013, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Natural Resources.

4122. A letter from the Acting General Counsel, National Indian Gaming Commission, transmitting the Commission's final rule — Compliance and Enforcement received December 9, 2013, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Natural Resources.

4123. A letter from the Deputy Assistant Administrator for Regulatory Programs, NMFS, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, transmitting the Administration's final rule — Atlantic Highly Migratory Species; 2014 Atlantic Shark Commercial Fishing Seasons [Docket No.: 130402317-3966-02] (RIN: 0648-XC611) received December 9, 2013, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Natural Resources.

4124. A letter from the Acting Deputy Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, NMFS, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, transmitting the Administration's final rule — Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Reallocation of Pacific Cod in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Management Area [Docket No.: 121018563-3148-02] (RIN: 0648-XC971) received December 9, 2013, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Natural Resources.

4125. A letter from the Deputy Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, NMFS, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, transmitting the Administration's final rule — International Fisheries; Pacific Tuna Fisheries; 2013 Bigeye Tuna Longline Fishery Closure in the Eastern Pacific Ocean; Correction [Docket No.: 110620342-1659-03] (RIN: 0648-XC922) received December 9, 2013, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Natural Resources.

4126. A letter from the Acting Deputy Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, NMFS, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, transmitting the Administration's final rule — Fisheries of the Northeastern United States; Summer Flounder Fishery; Quota Transfer [Docket No.: 121009528-2729-02] (RIN: 0648-XC932) received December 9, 2013, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Natural Resources.

4127. A letter from the Acting Deputy Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, NMFS, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, transmitting the Administration's final rule — Fisheries of the Caribbean, Gulf of Mexico, and South Atlantic; 2013 Commercial Accountability Measure and Closure for South Atlantic Gag [Docket No.: 120924488-3671-02] (RIN: 0648-XC966) received December 9, 2013, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Natural Resources.

4128. A letter from the Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, NMFS, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, transmitting the Administration's final rule — Atlantic Highly Migratory Species; Vessel Monitoring Systems [Docket No.: 130426413-3934-02] (RIN: 0648-BD24) received December 9, 2013, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Natural Resources.

4129. A letter from the Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting a letter pursuant to Section 219 of the Immigration and Nationality Act; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

4130. A letter from the Director, Regulation Policy and Management, Department of Veterans Affairs, transmitting the Department's final rule — Criteria for a Catastrophically Disabled Detemination for Purposes of Enrollment (RIN: 2900-A021) received December 3, 2013, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

4131. A letter from the Director, Regulation Policy and Management, Department of Veterans Affairs, transmitting the Department's final rule — Specially Adapted Housing Eligibility for Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis Beneficiaries (RIN: 2900-A084) received December 3, 2013, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

4132. A letter from the Director, Regulation Policy and Management, Department of Veterans Affairs, transmitting the Department's final rule — Grants to States for Construction or Acquisiton of State Homes (RIN: 2900-A060) received December 5, 2013, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

4133. A letter from the Chief, Publications and Regulations Branch, Internal Revenue Service, transmitting the Service's final rule — Inclusion in Income of Section 9010 Fee Collected from Customers (Revenue ruling 2013-27) received December 3, 2013, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Ways and Means.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES ON PUBLIC BILLS AND RESOLUTIONS

Under clause 2 of rule XIII, reports of committees were delivered to the Clerk for printing and reference to the proper calendar, as follows:

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington: Committee on Natural Resources. H.R. 2319. A bill to clarify certain provisions of the Native American Veterans' Memorial Establishment Act of 1994; with an amendment (Rept. 113–287). Referred to the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union.

Mr. GOODLATTE: Committee on the Judiciary. H.R. 2542. A bill to amend chapter 6 of title 5, United States Code (commonly known as the Regulatory Flexibility Act), to ensure complete analysis of potential impacts on small entities of rules, and for other purposes; with an amendment (Rept. 113–288, Pt. 1). Referred to the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union.

Mr. GRAVES of Missouri: Committee on Small Business. H.R. 2542. A bill to amend chapter 6 of title 5, United States Code (commonly known as the Regulator Flexibility Act), to ensure complete analysis of potential impacts on small entities of rules, and for other purposes; with an amendment (Rept. 113–288, Pt. 2). Referred to the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union.

Mr. BRADY of Texas: Report of the Joint Economic Committee on the 2013 Economic Report of the President. (Rept. 113–289). Referred to the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union.

Mr. WOODALL: Committee on Rules. House Resolution 438. Resolution providing for consideration of the Senate amendment to the joint resolution (H.J. Res. 59) making continuing appropriations for fiscal year 2014, and for other purposes; providing for consideration of motions to suspend the rules; providing for proceeding during the period from December 14, 2013, through January 6, 2014; and for other purposes (Rept. 113–290). Referred to the House Calendar.

PUBLIC BILLS AND RESOLUTIONS

Under clause 2 of rule XII, public bills and resolutions of the following titles were introduced and severally referred, as follows:

By Mr. CASSIDY (for himself, Mr. BUCHANAN, Mr. HASTINGS of Florida, Mr. PALAZZO, Mr. SCALISE, Mr. ROGERS of Alabama, Mr. ROSS, Mr. JOHNSON of Ohio, Mr. NUGENT, Mr. MARINO, Ms. CASTOR of Florida, Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN, Mr. BILIRAKIS, Mr. CRENSHAW, and Mr. SOUTHERLAND):

H.R. 3693. A bill to clarify the application of the Biggert-Waters Flood Insurance Reform Act of 2012 to premium rates for certain properties, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Financial Services.

By Mr. CUMMINGS (for himself, Mr. ISSA, and Mr. HINOJOSA):

H.R. 3694. A bill to amend the Higher Education Act of 1965 to make technical improvements to the Net Price Calculator system so that prospective students may have a more accurate understanding of the true cost of college; to the Committee on Education and the Workforce.

By Mr. LUCAS:

H.R. 3695. A bill to provide a temporary extension of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 and amendments made by that Act, as previously extended and amended and with certain additional modifications and exceptions, to suspend permanent price support authorities, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Agriculture.

By Mr. MCCAUL (for himself, Mr. MEEHAN, Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi, and Ms. CLARKE):

H.R. 3696. A bill to amend the Homeland Security Act of 2002 to make certain improvements regarding cybersecurity and critical infrastructure protection, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Homeland Security, and in addition to the Committees on Science, Space, and Technology, and Oversight and Government Reform, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Mr. HINOJOSA:

H.R. 3697. A bill to increase access to adult education to provide for economic growth; to the Committee on Education and the Workforce, and in addition to the Committee on Ways and Means, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Mr. GERLACH (for himself, Mr. CROWLEY, Mr. REED, Mr. ROSKAM, and Mr. KIND):

H.R. 3698. A bill to delay the enforcement of the Medicare two-midnight rule for short inpatient hospital stays until the implementation of a new Medicare payment methodology for short inpatient hospital stays, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Ways and Means.

By Mr. HIGGINS (for himself, Mr. CARTWRIGHT, Mr. BRALEY of Iowa, and Mr. RICHMOND):

H.R. 3699. A bill to amend title 28, United States Code, to protect the right of a claimant in a civil action before a Federal court to retain a structured settlement broker to negotiate the terms of payment of an award, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. HINOJOSA (for himself, Ms. SHEA-PORTER, and Mr. VELA):

H.R. 3700. A bill to instruct the Secretary of the Treasury to use 25 percent of civil fines collected for violations of the Bank Secrecy Act to make grants to community financial institutions to improve compliance with the provisions of that Act, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Financial Services.

By Mr. KING of New York (for himself, Mr. HUIZENGA of Michigan, Mr. GRIMM, and Mr. GARY G. MILLER of California):

H.R. 3701. A bill to make improvements to provisions of the Bank Holding Company Act of 1956 relating to proprietary trading by banking entities; to the Committee on Financial Services.

By Mr. KINGSTON:

H.R. 3702. A bill to delay the effective date of certain rules of the Environmental Protection Agency until a report is submitted and a law is enacted setting the rule's effective date; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

By Mr. KINGSTON:

H.R. 3703. A bill to provide for the expedited approval of the construction, operation, and maintenance of the Keystone XL pipeline, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, and in addition to the Committees on Foreign Affairs, Energy and Commerce, and Natural Resources, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Mrs. KIRKPATRICK:

H.R. 3704. A bill to establish the Sedona-Red Rock National Scenic Area in the Coconino National Forest, Arizona, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Natural Resources.

By Mr. PAULSEN (for himself and Mr. MATHESON):

H.R. 3705. A bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to establish appropriateness requirements for certain advanced diagnostic imaging services, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce, and in addition to the Committee on Ways and Means, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Mr. POE of Texas (for himself, Mr. COSTA, and Mr. FITZPATRICK):

H.R. 3706. A bill to reauthorize subtitle A of the Victims of Child Abuse Act of 1990; to the Committee on the Judiciary, and in addition to the Committee on Education and the Workforce, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Mr. ROHRABACHER (for himself, Mr. CLAY, Mr. CLEAVER, Mr. COHEN, Mr. COOK, Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA, Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas, Mr. HIGGINS, Mr. ISSA, Ms. JACKSON LEE, Mr. LEWIS, Mr. MCCLINTOCK, Mr. POE of Texas, Mr. RUIZ, Ms. LORETTA SANCHEZ of California, Mr. WEBER of Texas, and Mr. WESTMORELAND):

H.R. 3707. A bill to ensure the emergency protection of Iranian dissidents living in Camp Liberty/Hurriya and to provide for their admission as refugees to the United States; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs, and in addition to the Committee on the Judiciary, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Mr. ROKITA (for himself, Mr. GRAVES of Missouri, Mr. FLORES, Mr. PETERSON, Mr. HANNA, and Mr. POMPEO):

H.R. 3708. A bill to direct the Administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration to issue or revise regulations with respect to the medical certification of certain small aircraft pilots, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

By Mr. RUSH (for himself, Mr. VAN HOLLEN, and Mr. WAXMAN):

H.R. 3709. A bill to prohibit brand name drug companies from compensating generic drug companies to delay the entry of a generic drug into the market, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce, and in addition to the Committee on the Judiciary, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Ms. SHEA-PORTER:

H.R. 3710. A bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to provide for coverage of continuous glucose monitoring systems (CGMS) as durable medical equipment under Medicare, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce, and in addition to the Committee on Ways and Means, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Mr. TIERNEY (for himself and Mr. JONES):

H.R. 3711. A bill to reduce risks to the financial system by limiting banks' ability to engage in certain risky activities and limiting conflicts of interest, to reinstate certain Glass-Steagall Act protections that were repealed by the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Financial Services, and in addition to the Committee on the Judiciary, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Ms. JENKINS:

H. Res. 437. A resolution electing certain Members to certain standing committees of the House of Representatives; considered and agreed to.

By Mr. ELLISON:

H. Res. 439. A resolution expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that a Global Marshall Plan holds the potential to demonstrate the commitment of the United States to peace and prosperity through poverty reduction in the United States and abroad; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

By Mr. LARSON of Connecticut:

H. Res. 440. A resolution congratulating Pope Francis on his election and recognizing his inspirational statements and actions; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

CONSTITUTIONAL AUTHORITY STATEMENT

Pursuant to clause 7 of rule XII of the Rules of the House of Representatives, the following statements are submitted regarding the specific powers granted to Congress in the Constitution to enact the accompanying bill or joint resolution.

By Mr. CASSIDY:

H.R. 3693.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

This bill is introduced pursuant to the powers granted to Congress under the General Welfare Clause (Art. 1 Sec. 8 Cl. 1), the Commerce Clause (Art. 1 Sec. 8 Cl. 3), and the Necessary and Proper Clause (Art. 1 Sec. 8 Cl. 18).

By Mr. CUMMINGS:

H.R. 3694.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Article I, Section 8, Clause 18

By Mr. LUCAS:

H.R. 3695.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

The ability to regulate interstate commerce and with foreign Nations pursuant to Article 1, Section 8, Clause 3 includes the power to regulate commodity prices, practices affecting them and the trading or donation of the commodities to impoverished nations. In addition, the Congress has the power to provide for the general Welfare of the United States under Article 1, Section 8, Clause lwhich includes the power to promote the development of Rural America through research and extension of credit.

By Mr. MCCAUL:

H.R. 3696.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

The Constitutional authority on which this bill rests is the power of Congress to make all laws necessary and proper for executing powers vested by the Constitution, as enumerated in Article I, Section 8, Clause 18 of the United States Constitution.

By Mr. HINOJOSA:

H.R. 3697.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

This bill is enacted pursuant to the power granted to Congress under Article I, Section 8, Clause 1 and 3 of the United States Constitution.

By Mr. GERLACH:

H.R. 3698.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

The Congress enacts this bill pursuant to Clause 18 of Section 8 of Article I of the United States Constitution.

By Mr. HIGGINS:

H.R. 3699.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Fourteenth Amendment, Section 5

By Mr. HINOJOSA:

H.R. 3700.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Article I, Section 8, Clause 18

By Mr. KING of New York:

H.R. 3701.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Article I, Section 8, Clause 3:

The Congress shall have Power . . . To regulate Commerce with foreign Nations, and among the several States, and with the Indian Tribes.

By Mr. KINGSTON:

H.R. 3702.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

This bill is enacted pursuant to the power granted to Congress under Article I, Section 8, Clause 18.

By Mr. KINGSTON:

H.R. 3703.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Article I, Section 8, Clause 3

By Mrs. KIRKPATRICK:

H.R. 3704.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Article IV, section 3 of the Constitution of the United States grants Congress the authority to enact this bill.

By Mr. PAULSEN:

H.R. 3705.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Article 1, Section 8

By Mr. POE of Texas:

H.R. 3706.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Article I, Section 8

By Mr. ROHRABACHER:

H.R. 3707.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Article I, Section 8, Clause 4 of the United States Constitution.

By Mr. ROKITA:

H.R. 3708.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Article I, Section 8, clause 3 of the United States Constitution, which reads ''The Congress shall have Power . . . To regulate Commerce with foreign Nations, and among the several States, and with the Indian Tribes.''

By Mr. RUSH:

H.R. 3709.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Article I, Section 8, Clause 3: ''To regulate commerce . . . among the several states . . .''

Article I, Section 8, Clause 8: ''To promote the progress of science . . . by securing for limited times to authors and inventors the exclusive right to their respective writings and discoveries.''

Article I, Section 8, Clause 18: ''To make all laws which shall be necessary and proper. . .''

By Ms. SHEA-PORTER:

H.R. 3710.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Article 1, Section 8

By Mr. TIERNEY:

H.R. 3711.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Article 1, Section 8.

ADDITIONAL SPONSORS

Under clause 7 of rule XII, sponsors were added to public bills and resolutions as follows:

H.R. 183: Mr. STIVERS.

H.R. 184: Mr. TIERNEY.

H.R. 292: Mr. TONKO.

H.R. 366: Mr. BERA of California.

H.R. 419: Mr. STIVERS.

H.R. 503: Mr. COBLE, Mr. LAMBORN, Mr. AUSTIN SCOTT of Georgia, Mr. YARMUTH, Mrs. WALORSKI, Mr. PAYNE, and Mr. HOLT.

H.R. 533: Mr. JONES and Mr. FINCHER.

H.R. 543: Mr. JOYCE, Mr. SCHIFF, and Mr. CARNEY.

H.R. 564: Ms. HANABUSA.

H.R. 685: Mr. GARY G. MILLER of California.

H.R. 705: Mrs. HARTZLER.

H.R. 750: Ms. DEGETTE.

H.R. 792: Mr. ROTHFUS, Mr. CRAMER, Mr. FLORES, Mr. FARENTHOLD, and Mr. WALDEN.

H.R. 809: Mr. BLUMENAUER.

H.R. 1000: Ms. BASS.

H.R. 1020: Mr. HORSFORD.

H.R. 1074: Mr. FARENTHOLD, Ms. EDWARDS, Ms. JACKSON LEE, Mr. KILDEE, Mr. HIMES, Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas, Mr. COHEN, Mr. JOHNSON of Ohio, and Mr. FATTAH.

H.R. 1179: Ms. LINDA T. SÁNCHEZ of California, Mr. PASCRELL, Mr. SARBANES, and Mr. HIMES.

H.R. 1201: Mr. RUSH.

H.R. 1209: Mr. BACHUS, Mr. BLUMENAUER, Mrs. CAROLYN B. MALONEY of New York, Mr. LANGEVIN, Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia, and Mr. RUIZ.

H.R. 1226: Mr. ROE of Tennessee, Mr. BENISHEK, Mr. NUNES, and Mr. PEARCE.

H.R. 1263: Mr. DEUTCH.

H.R. 1281: Mr. LANCE, Mr. ELLISON, and Mr. HONDA.

H.R. 1339: Mr. SERRANO and Mr. DENT.

H.R. 1349: Mrs. KIRKPATRICK.

H.R. 1351: Mr. PRICE of North Carolina.

H.R. 1354: Mr. LUETKEMEYER.

H.R. 1428: Mrs. ELLMERS.

H.R. 1518: Mr. GUTIÉRREZ, Mr. BUCSHON, and Mr. DENT.

H.R. 1528: Mrs. NOEM, Mr. PETERS of California, Mr. BISHOP of New York, Mr. POSEY, and Mr. SCHOCK.

H.R. 1563: Mr. MCHENRY, Mr. HUDSON, and Mr. ROSS.

H.R. 1588: Mr. HUFFMAN.

H.R. 1629: Mr. COHEN.

H.R. 1666: Mr. SCHNEIDER and Mr. SERRANO.

H.R. 1701: Mr. SESSIONS.

H.R. 1726: Mr. MICHAUD, Mr. WOODALL, and Mr. ISSA.

H.R. 1763: Mr. CAPUANO, Ms. ESTY, Mr. LYNCH, and Mr. COHEN.

H.R. 1795: Mr. COHEN and Mr. LYNCH.

H.R. 1814: Mr. TURNER, Mr. MCNERNEY, Mrs. BUSTOS, Ms. DUCKWORTH, Mr. DESANTIS, and Mr. FARENTHOLD.

H.R. 1830: Mrs. KIRKPATRICK.

H.R. 1837: Ms. DEGETTE and Ms. BROWNLEY of California.

H.R. 1852: Mr. CUMMINGS.

H.R. 1869: Mr. CARNEY, Mr. JORDAN, Mr. DESANTIS, and Mr. CHAFFETZ.

H.R. 1918: Mr. RODNEY DAVIS of Illinois.

H.R. 1985: Mr. BISHOP of New York.

H.R. 2000: Ms. MATSUI, Ms. HANABUSA, and Mr. RYAN of Ohio.

H.R. 2012: Mr. JOHNSON of Ohio.

H.R. 2068: Ms. DEGETTE.

H.R. 2195: Mr. COHEN and Mr. RICHMOND.

H.R. 2288: Mr. MEEKS.

H.R. 2298: Mr. QUIGLEY.

H.R. 2309: Mr. NOLAN, Mr. PASCRELL, Mr. DAVID SCOTT of Georgia, Mr. RAHALL, Mr. TIERNEY, and Mr. ANDREWS.

H.R. 2319: Mr. COOK.

H.R. 2366: Mr. PETERS of Michigan.

H.R. 2368: Mr. PETERS of California.

H.R. 2376: Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania, Mr. CARTWRIGHT, and Mr. DENT.

H.R. 2415: Mr. FARENTHOLD and Mr. GARDNER.

H.R. 2453: Mr. SCHOCK.

H.R. 2529: Mr. COHEN.

H.R. 2591: Mr. DIAZ-BALART.

H.R. 2663: Mr. COHEN and Mr. PRICE of North Carolina.

H.R. 2692: Mr. ISRAEL.

H.R. 2801: Mr. JOHNSON of Ohio.

H.R. 2866: Mr. WALBERG, Mr. LATTA, Mr. CAPUANO, Mr. LUCAS, Mrs. BROOKS of Indiana, Mr. COTTON, Mr. COLLINS of Georgia, Mr. NUNNELEE, Mr. MCCAUL, Mr. SIMPSON, Mr. MULVANEY, Mr. DUFFY, Mr. KELLY of Pennsylvania, Mr. RENACCI, Mr. GRAVES of Missouri, Mr. ROKITA, Mr. ELLISON, Mr. WOMACK,

Mr. LIPINSKI, Mr. CLEAVER, Mr. WALZ, Mr. PALLONE, Mr. THORNBERRY, Ms. SCHAKOWSKY, Mr. HULTGREN, Mr. YOUNG of Indiana, Mr. LYNCH, Mr. CONAWAY, Mr. ROGERS of Kentucky, Mr. MULLIN, Mrs. ROBY, Mr. PALAZZO, Mr. COOPER, Mr. SARBANES, Mr. BEN RAY LUJÁN of New Mexico, Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia, Mr. RUSH, Mr. QUIGLEY, Mr. LANGEVIN, Mr. YOHO, Mr. GRAVES of Georgia, and Mr. HURT.

H.R. 2868: Mr. JONES and Mr. POCAN.

H.R. 2920: Ms. FUDGE.

H.R. 2939: Mr. COHEN and Mr. SERRANO.

H.R. 2962: Mr. FRELINGHUYSEN.

H.R. 2974: Mrs. KIRKPATRICK.

H.R. 2988: Mr. DENT.

H.R. 2996: Mr. LIPINSKI and Mr. COLLINS of New York.

H.R. 2997: Mr. POSEY.

H.R. 3040: Ms. MOORE.

H.R. 3077: Mr. WALBERG, Mr. DENT, and Mr. VALADAO.

H.R. 3132: Mr. BARTON, Mr. BURGESS, and Mr. KINZINGER of Illinois.

H.R. 3172: Mr. CONYERS and Mr. LOWENTHAL.

H.R. 3179: Mr. MEEKS.

H.R. 3310: Mr. TIERNEY.

H.R. 3318: Mr. CICILLINE and Mr. KILDEE.

H.R. 3323: Mr. BISHOP of New York.

H.R. 3327: Mr. COHEN and Mr. MATHESON.

H.R. 3334: Mr. COHEN and Mr. RUIZ.

H.R. 3344: Mr. MCGOVERN, Ms. WILSON of Florida, and Mr. ROSKAM.

H.R. 3361: Mr. MCDERMOTT, Mr. STOCKMAN, Ms. SCHAKOWSKY, Mr. GRIJALVA, and Mr. CICILLINE.

H.R. 3370: Mr. HORSFORD, Ms. KELLY of Illinois, Mr. CALVERT, Mr. PAYNE, Mr. RYAN of Ohio, and Mr. OWENS.

H.R. 3384: Mr. LATTA.

H.R. 3401: Mr. PAYNE.

H.R. 3431: Mr. COSTA.

H.R. 3449: Mr. CONNOLLY and Mr. COHEN.

H.R. 3462: Mr. PETRI.

H.R. 3472: Mr. SEAN PATRICK MALONEY of New York, Mr. GRIMM, Mr. CROWLEY, Mr. NADLER, Mr. TONKO, Mrs. LOWEY, Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York, and Ms. CLARKE.

H.R. 3474: Mr. GOODLATTE.

H.R. 3482: Mr. NUNNELEE.

H.R. 3494: Mr. MCKINLEY, Mrs. BUSTOS, Mr. VAN HOLLEN, Mr. OWENS, and Ms. LOFGREN.

H.R. 3529: Mr. LOWENTHAL and Mr. HUDSON.

H.R. 3530: Mr. JOHNSON of Ohio and Mr. SCHOCK.

H.R. 3538: Mr. BECERRA, Mr. CASTRO of Texas, Mr. GUTIÉRREZ, Mr. COSTA, Ms. CLARKE, Mr. RUIZ, Mr. PASTOR of Arizona, Ms. LINDA T. SÁNCHEZ of California, and Mr. SABLAN.

H.R. 3590: Mr. BOUSTANY, Mr. KLINE, Mr. COOK, Mr. COLE, Mr. MARCHANT, Mrs. HARTZLER, Mr. BUCSHON, and Mr. JOHNSON of Ohio.

H.R. 3610: Mr. ROSKAM.

H.R. 3637: Mr. DESANTIS and Mr. HARRIS.

H.R. 3644: Mrs. CAPITO.

H.R. 3650: Mr. COHEN.

H.R. 3657: Mr. BISHOP of Utah.

H.R. 3660: Mr. MEADOWS.

H.R. 3666: Mr. CONYERS.

H.R. 3676: Mr. DEFAZIO, Mr. PETRI, Mr. MICHAUD, Mr. DUNCAN of Tennessee, Mr. COHEN, Mrs. CAPITO, Mrs. MILLER of Michigan, Mr. BUCSHON, Mr. MEEHAN, Mr. RODNEY DAVIS of Illinois, Mr. COOPER, Ms. ESHOO, Mr. FARR, Ms. GRANGER, Mr. GRIMM, Mr. JOYCE, Mr. MARCHANT, Mr. MCKINLEY, Ms. SCHWARTZ, Mr. WILLIAMS, and Mr. NEAL.

H.R. 3685: Mr. SHIMKUS, Mr. ROTHFUS, Mr. YOUNG of Indiana, Ms. JENKINS, Mr. MURPHY of Pennsylvania, Mr. STIVERS, Mr. KING of New York, Mr. DENT, Mr. REED, and Mr. KELLY of Pennsylvania.

H. J. Res. 25: Mr. HONDA.

H. Con. Res. 29: Mr. STIVERS.

H. Con. Res. 52: Mr. COHEN.

H. Con. Res. 55: Mr. STIVERS.

H. Res. 30: Mr. JOHNSON of Ohio.

H. Res. 72: Mr. MORAN.

H. Res. 112: Mr. MCNERNEY.

H. Res. 147: Mr. REED.

H. Res. 247: Mr. DEUTCH.

H. Res. 254: Ms. GRANGER and Mr. TIERNEY.

H. Res. 281: Mr. VAN HOLLEN.

H. Res. 417: Mr. WALZ, Mr. FRANKS of Arizona, Mr. BRIDENSTINE, and Mr. RIBBLE.

H. Res. 418: Ms. BONAMICI.

H. Res. 424: Mr. KIND.

H. Res. 425: Mr. HULTGREN, Mr. HARRIS, Mr. POSEY, Mr. GINGREY of Georgia, and Mr. SANFORD.

H. Res. 431: Mr. DESANTIS, Mr. SESSIONS, Mr. BRADY of Texas, Mr. JOHNSON of Ohio, Mr. RODNEY DAVIS of Illinois, Mr. BENTIVOLIO, Mr. PEARCE, Mr. GARDNER, Mr. ROKITA, Mr. NEUGEBAUER, Mr. FLEMING, Mr. DAINES, Mr. CONAWAY, Mr. ROTHFUS, Mr. HUIZENGA of Michigan, Mr. GRAVES of Georgia, Mr. KELLY of Pennsylvania, and Mr. COLLINS of New York.

H. Res. 434: Mr. ANDREWS, Mr. BACHUS, Mrs. BACHMANN, Mrs. BEATTY, Mr. BECERRA, Mr. BERA of California, Mr. BENTIVOLIO, Mr. BISHOP of Georgia, Mr. BISHOP of New York, Mr. BLUMENAUER, Ms. BONAMICI, Ms. BORDALLO, Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania, Mr. BRALEY of Iowa, Ms. BROWN of Florida, Ms. BROWNLEY of California, Mrs. BUSTOS, Mr. BUTTERFIELD, Mr. CALVERT, Mrs. CAPPS, Mr. CAPUANO, Mr. CARDENAS, Mr. CARNEY, Mr. CARSON of Indiana, Mr. CARTWRIGHT, Ms. CASTOR of Florida, Mr. CASTRO of Texas, Mr. CHABOT, Mrs. CHRISTENSEN, Ms. CHU, Mr. CICILLINE, Ms. CLARKE, Mr. CLAY, Mr. CLEAVER, Mr. CLYBURN, Mr. COBLE, Mr. COHEN, Mr. COLE, Mr. CONNOLLY, Mr. CONYERS, Mr. COOK, Mr. COOPER, Mr. COSTA, Mr. COURTNEY, Mr. CRAMER, Mr. CROWLEY, Mr. CUELLAR, Mr. CUMMINGS, Mr. DANNY K. DAVIS of Illinois, Mr. RODNEY DAVIS of Illinois, Mrs. DAVIS of California, Mr. DEFAZIO, Ms. DEGETTE, Mr. DELANEY, Ms. DELAURO, Ms. DELBENE, Mr. DENHAM, Mr. DEUTCH, Mr. DINGELL, Mr. DOGGETT, Mr. DOYLE, Ms. DUCKWORTH, Mr. DUFFY, Ms. EDWARDS, Mr. ELLISON, Mrs. ELLMERS, Mr. ENYART, Ms. ESHOO, Ms. ESTY, Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA, Mr. FARR, Mr. FATTAH, Ms. FRANKEL of Florida, Mr. FRANKS of Arizona, Mr. FRELINGHUYSEN, Ms. GABBARD, Mr. GALLEGO, Mr. GARAMENDI, Mr. GOWDY, Ms. GRANGER, Mr. GRAYSON, Mr. AL GREEN of Texas, Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas, Mr. GRIFFIN of Arkansas, Mr. GRIJALVA, Mr. GRIMM, Mr. GUTHRIE, Mr. GUTIERREZ, Ms. HAHN, Ms. HANABUSA, Mr. HASTINGS of Florida, Mr. HECK of Washington, Mr. HIGGINS, Mr. HIMES, Mr. HINOJOSA, Mr. HOLT, Mr. HONDA, Mr. HORSFORD, Mr. HOYER, Mr. HUFFMAN, Mr. HUIZENGA of Michigan, Mr. ISRAEL, Ms. JACKSON LEE, Mr. JEFFRIES, Mr. JOHNSON of Ohio, Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas, Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia, Mr. JOYCE, Ms. KAPTUR, Mr. KEATING, Ms. KELLY of Illinois, Mr. KENNEDY, Mr. KILMER, Mr. KIND, Mr. KINZINGER of Illinois, Mrs. KIRKPATRICK, Mr. LANGEVIN, Mr. LARSEN of Washington, Mr. LARSON of Connecticut, Ms. LEE of California, Mr. LEVIN, Mr. LEWIS, Mr. LIPINSKI, Mr. LOEBSACK, Ms. LOFGREN, Mr. LOWENTHAL, Mrs. LOWEY, Ms. MICHELLE LUJAN GRISHAM of New Mexico, Mr. LYNCH, Mrs. CAROLYN B. MALONEY of New York, Mr. MARINO, Ms. MATSUI, Ms. MCCOLLUM, Mr. MCDERMOTT, Mr. MCGOVERN, Mr. MCINTYRE, Mr. MCNERNEY, Mr. MEEKS, Ms. MENG, Mr. MICHAUD, Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California, Mr. MILLER of Florida, Ms. MOORE, Mr. MORAN, Mr. MURPHY of Florida, Mr. NADLER, Mrs. NAPOLITANO, Mr. NEAL, Mrs. NEGRETE MCLEOD, Mr. NOLAN, Ms. NORTON, Mr. O'ROURKE, Mr. OWENS, Mr. PALLONE, Mr. PAYNE, Mr. PETERS of Michigan, Mr. PETERS of California, Mr. PERLMUTTER, Mr. PETERSON, Mr. PETRI, Mr. PIERLUISI, Ms. PINGREE of Maine, Mr. PITTENGER, Mr. PITTS, Mr. POCAN, Mr. POLLS, Mr. PRICE of North Carolina, Mr. QUIGLEY, Mr. RANGEL, Mr. REED, Mr. REICHERT, Mr. RENACCI, Mr. RIBBLE, Mr. RICHMOND, Mr. ROSKAM, Ms. ROYBAL-ALLARD, Mr. RUIZ, Mr. RUPPERSBERGER, Mr. RUSH, Mr. RYAN of Ohio, Mr. SABLAN, Ms. LINDA T. SÁNCHEZ of California, Ms. LORETTA SANCHEZ of California, Mr. SARBANES, Ms. SCHAKOWSKY, Mr. SCHIFF, Mr. SCHNEIDER, Mr. SCHOCK, Mr. SCHRADER, Ms. SCHWARTZ, Mr. DAVID SCOTT of Georgia, Mr. SCOTT of Virginia, Mr. SERRANO, Ms. SEWELL of Alabama, Ms. SHEA-PORTER, Mr. SHERMAN, Mr. SHIMKUS, Ms. SINEMA, Mr. SIRES, Ms. SLAUGHTER, Mr. SMITH of Washington, Ms. SPEIER, Mr. STIVERS, Mr. SWALWELL of California, Mr. TAKANO, Mr. TERRY, Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi, Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania, Mr. THOMPSON of California, Mr. TONKO, Ms. TSONGAS, Mr. VAN HOLLEN, Mr. VARGAS, Mr. VEASEY, Mr. VELA, Mr. WALZ, Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, Mr. WATT, Mr. WAXMAN, Mr. WEBER of Texas, Mr. WELCH, Mr. WENSTRUP, Ms. WILSON of Florida, Mr. WILSON of South Carolina, Mr. WOLF, Mr. WOMACK, Mr. YARMUTH, Mr. YODER, and Ms. PELOSI.

CONGRESSIONAL EARMARKS, LIMITED TAX BENEFITS, OR LIMITED TARIFF BENEFITS

Under clause 9 of rule XXI, lists or statements on congressional earmarks, limited tax benefits, or limited tariff benefits were submitted as follows:

OFFERED BY MR. LUCAS

Mr. Speaker, the provisions that warranted a referral to the Committee on Agricultural in H.R. 3695 do not contain any congressional earmarks, limited tax benefits, or limited tariff benefits as defined in clause 9 or rule XXI of the Rules of the House of Representatives.

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Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 113th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 159 WASHINGTON, WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2013 No. 175

Senate

The Senate met at 2 p.m. and was called to order by the Honorable MARTIN HEINRICH, a Senator from the State of New Mexico.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Eternal God, Your kingdom will never end. Abide with our Senators and may they find favor with You. Lord, remind them that because of Your omnipotence, nothing is impossible for You. May their reverence for You provide them this day with a foundation of wisdom that will enable people everywhere to live in peace, untroubled by fear of harm. Teach our lawmakers to treasure Your commands, to walk with integrity, and to do what is right, just, and fair. May their relationship with You be like the first light of dawn, which shines even brighter until the full light of day.

We pray in Your sacred Name. Amen.

NOTICE

If the 113th Congress, 1st Session, adjourns sine die on or before December 24, 2013, a final issue of the *Congressional Record* for the 113th Congress, 1st Session, will be published on Tuesday, December 31, 2013, to permit Members to insert statements.

All material for insertion must be signed by the Member and delivered to the respective offices of the Official Reporters of Debates (Room HT–59 or S–123 of the Capitol), Monday through Friday, between the hours of 10:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. through Monday, December 30. The final issue will be dated Tuesday, December 31, 2013, and will be delivered on Thursday, January 2, 2014.

None of the material printed in the final issue of the *Congressional Record* may contain subject matter, or relate to any event, that occurred after the sine die date.

Senators' statements should also be formatted according to the instructions at http://webster/secretary/cong_record.pdf, and submitted electronically, either on a disk to accompany the signed statement, or by e-mail to the Official Reporters of Debates at "Record@Sec.Senate.gov".

Members of the House of Representatives' statements may also be submitted electronically by e-mail, to accompany the signed statement, and formatted according to the instructions for the Extensions of Remarks template at http://clerk.house.gov/forms. The Official Reporters will transmit to GPO the template formatted electronic file only after receipt of, and authentication with, the hard copy, and signed manuscript. Deliver statements to the Official Reporters in Room HT–59.

Members of Congress desiring to purchase reprints of material submitted for inclusion in the *Congressional Record* may do so by contacting the Office of Congressional Publishing Services, at the Government Printing Office, on 512–0224, between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. daily.

By order of the Joint Committee on Printing.

CHARLES E. SCHUMER, *Chairman.*

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Presiding Officer led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. LEAHY).

The bill clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, December 11, 2013.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable MARTIN HEINRICH, a

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.

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Senator from the State of New Mexico, to perform the duties of the Chair.

PATRICK J. LEAHY,
President pro tempore.

Mr. HEINRICH thereupon assumed the chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACT OF 2013—MOTION TO PROCEED

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I now move to proceed to Calendar No. 243, S. 1356.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report the motion.

The bill clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 243, S. 1356, a bill to amend the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 to strengthen the United States workforce development system through innovation in, and alignment and improvement of, employment, training, and education programs in the United States, and to promote individual and national economic growth, and for other purposes.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, following my remarks and those of the Republican leader, the Senate will resume consideration of the nomination of Nina Pillard to be U.S. circuit judge for the DC Circuit, postcloture.

MEASURE PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—S. 1797

Mr. President, I am told S. 1797 is due for a second reading. Is that valid?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will read the bill by title for the second time.

The bill clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 1797) to provide for the extension of certain unemployment benefits, and for other purposes.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I object to any further proceedings with respect to this bill at this time.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Objection is heard.

The bill will be placed on the calendar under rule XIV.

SENATE AGENDA

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I congratulate the budget negotiators on reaching an agreement last night to roll back the painful and arbitrary cuts of sequestration and prevent another dangerous government shutdown in the new year. Their bargain also protects Medicare and Social Security benefits and reduces the deficit. That is a good package.

I commend Budget Chairman MURRAY and her House Republican counterpart Congressman PAUL RYAN for their diligence and cooperative spirit which made this agreement possible.

The process that led to this accord was long and very difficult. The Republican government shutdown—the first in 17 years—took a toll on our economy, on American families, and on our reputation around the world. It was also costly for the Federal Government in many different ways.

So when Congress reached a temporary settlement that ended the shortsighted shutdown, Democrats were committed to ending the terrible cycle of lurching from crisis to crisis. But understand this: When this measure went to the House of Representatives—it passed here to keep open the government, after 16 days; to stop the government from defaulting on its debt for the first time in history—about 75 percent of the Republicans in the House voted to keep the government closed and to default on the debt. Think about that. So this agreement is really a breath of fresh air—as we have been committed to setting sound fiscal policy through the regular order of the budget process and not through hostage taking or crisis making.

In this new agreement neither side got everything it wanted, but that is how it used to work around here. That is how it worked. Each side would move forward on what they wanted, and they would recognize—sometimes it was soon; sometimes it was not so soon—that the only way to work something out was to work together. That is what happened here.

So this is, I repeat, a breath of fresh air for the country. But I also hope it is a view of the future. I hope it is a view of the future. For example, I believe, as many Democrats do, that an extension of emergency unemployment insurance should be included in this package. I am very disappointed that the bills posted by the House last night do not include that. About 20,000 Nevadans who have been unemployed for more than 6 months—and more than a million people nationwide—will lose their earned unemployment benefits at the end of this year unless Congress acts.

I will stand for those Americans who want to get back to work as soon as possible but face a market where there is only one job opening for every three unemployed workers. That is why we are going to push here, after the first of the year, for an extension of unemployment insurance when the Senate convenes after the New Year, as I will also work very hard to raise the minimum wage.

It was stunning, Mr. President, the reports all over the national media today—radio, television, all the print media—that the vast majority of Americans believe the minimum wage should be raised to $10 an hour. The American people believe that if someone works for 40 hours, they should not be on the rating as being poor. They should be able to support themselves and their family. But that is not the way it is now. We need to raise the minimum wage, and there will be a sustained effort to do that when we come back.

Democrats, led by Senator MURRAY, stood for our party's priorities—protecting the middle class and growing the economy—but we were also ready and willing to compromise with our Republican counterparts. I admire Senator MURRAY for having proceeded forward along this line.

But while both sides made concessions and sacrifices, I repeat, that is the nature of negotiation and the point of a conference committee: to work together to work out our differences. So to their credit, members of the conference committee considered every option, no matter how painful to their own political party. They rejected many. They rejected most. They were able to come together on enough revenue and enough cuts to come up with this pact that they have.

Under the leadership of Chairman MURRAY, the committee crafted a 2-year bargain that charts a course for economic growth, maintains fiscal responsibility, and, perhaps most importantly, averts another manufactured crisis that would undercut the economic progress we have made these last 4 years.

So I look forward to working with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle and both sides of the Capitol to pass this agreement.

Last night, we also filed—I should not say ''we''—last night, the House filed a bill to ensure physicians are fairly compensated so Medicare patients can continue to see their doctors. It would be a shame if Medicare patients did not have the ability to have a doctor. But unless we did this agreement—short term as it is—physicians would receive a 27-percent cut in pay. So again in the new year we are going to work very hard to get rid of this so-called doc fix once and for all. We need to fix it once and for all.

Unfortunately, instead of beginning work on either of these things I have talked about, the two agreements—that is, the fix for doctors for Medicare patients, the budget; and the Defense bill, which I have not talked about, which also was posted last night in the House—Republicans are not facing reality. They are not. You are seeing, the American people are seeing before their eyes the face of obstruction. That is what is going on right now. We are eating up days of time—wasting hours, weeks, and days.

We could be voting on all this stuff now, all these nominations that are appearing before this body now, and move on to the substantive issues. This is why the rules were changed, Mr. President. You can see it right now. We are wasting hour after hour doing nothing.

The filibuster rule was established to get legislation passed. As it relates to nominations, the same thing applied: to get nominations processed. Our predecessors in the Senate set some rules saying that if cloture is invoked, the parties are entitled to some time to make their case before final passage or final vote on the nomination.

So now we have a number of nominations we are processing. To show how shallow the Republicans' obstructionism is, they have no objections to

any of these nominations. Nobody comes and gives these fire-and-brimstone speeches about how bad these people are. Why? Because they are not. They have just been stalling and stalling. I repeat, this is the face of obstruction which we have been facing for 5 years during the Obama administration. Is it any wonder that the rule was changed that relates to nominations? We were spending all of our time trying to get the President to have a team rather than doing work on substantive legislation.

So we will see how late we have to work tonight. Whatever it is, we are going to do it. We are going to finish these nominations this week. If it goes into Friday, if it goes into Saturday, that is what we are going to do. We have to get this done.

Christmas is approaching, and I understand that. We all understand that. But this session of Congress does not end at Christmastime. We have work to do. We have to pass this budget. We have to do something for those Medicare patients. We have to do something for the military of this country with this Defense agreement that has been reached between the leaders of those two important committees—Armed Services and their counterpart in the House, whatever it is called.

So why waste this time? There is no reason to do this. Republicans are stalling. For what? To stop these nominations from going forward? They are going to go forward with a simple majority vote. I understand one of them may not go forward because some Democrats do not like the nominee, but that is the way it should be.

So we could confirm Nina Pillard right now. No one is saying a single word contrary to her being the quality candidate that we have said she is. She is nominated to sit on the District of Columbia Appeals Court, I repeat, some say the most important court in America; most say second only to the Supreme Court.

But instead, Republicans are insisting that we vote on her nomination many hours from now, after they have frittered away 30 hours of the Senate's time. There are no objections to her qualifications. The outcome of her vote is a foregone conclusion. So when people around here complain that they are not home with their families at Christmastime, here is the reason: Republicans' obstruction.

It is hard to imagine a more pointless exercise than spending hour after hour waiting for a vote on an outcome we already know. Republicans insist on wasting time simply for the sake of wasting time. Is it any wonder, I repeat, that the rule was changed? Here is why. It is no wonder Americans overwhelmingly support the changes made to the rules last month in order to make the Senate work again.

The Republican's partisan sideshow is another example of the kind of blatant obstruction that has ground the Senate to a halt. The work of the Senate has come to a standstill over the last 5 years. Members should be aware if Republicans stop squandering the Senate's precious time, rollcall votes are possible at any time this afternoon or this evening. It does not have to be like this.

With just a little bit of cooperation, we could hold votes in a timely manner so we can move on with the business before us. Unfortunately, we can not schedule votes without cooperation; that is part of the Senate rules. Cooperation is in short supply at the moment.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

NOMINATION OF CORNELIA T. L. PILLARD TO BE UNITED STATES CIRCUIT JUDGE FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA CIRCUIT

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination which the clerk will report.

The bill clerk read the nomination of Cornelia T. L. Pillard, of the District of Columbia, to be United States Circuit Judge for the District of Columbia Circuit.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

SENATE RULES AND HEALTH CARE

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I just listened to the majority leader complaining about what we are doing this week. He is the one in charge of the schedule. He has spent a week here on nonessential nominations, none of which are emergencies, all of which could be handled later. It was his choice to spend the week on nominations that are not emergencies as opposed to doing things like passing a DOD authorization bill or things like taking up a budget resolution or things like doing a farm bill. So the majority leader has a choice as to what we are going to spend time on. He has chosen to spend this week on 10 nominations.

Yesterday I talked about the left's ''ends justify the means'' quest for power and the lengths to which they are willing to go to satisfy it. The Obama administration and its allies have done just about everything to get what they want one way or the other, even fundamentally altering the contours of our democracy when they could not get their way by playing by the rules.

We saw the culmination of that with the majority leader's power grab in the Senate last month. The real world consequences of that power grab are most sharply illustrated by the very nominee before us, which I believe I heard the majority leader commenting on what a stellar nominee this person is.

Professor Pillard may be a fine person, but she is not someone who should receive a lifetime position on the second highest court in the land. She will be confirmed, however, because of the Democratic majority's power grab a couple of weeks ago. So let's take a look at her legal views. They certainly make one thing clear: The nominee before us is a liberal ideologue; in other words, just the kind of person this administration is looking for to rubberstamp its most radical regulatory proposals on the DC Circuit.

Let's take the so-called Hosanna-Tabor case. Last year the Supreme Court reinforced a core First Amendment principle when it ruled unanimously that churches, rather than the government, could select their own leaders.

Every single justice sided with the church's argument in that case. Every single one. It makes sense. Freedom of religion is a bedrock foundation of our democracy. I think every member of this body would surely agree that the government does not have any business picking a group's religious leaders for them. But Professor Pillard seemed to have a very different view. Prior to the Court's unanimous decision, she said the notion that ''the Constitution requires deference to church decisions about who qualifies as a minister'' in the case before the Court seemed ''like a real stretch.''

This is the nominee, after the power grab, the Senate is about to confirm, who said that, ''It is a real stretch that a church would be able to pick its own leaders.'' This is an astonishing judgment from somebody who is about to end up on what we believe is the second most important court in the land.

But she went on from that. The position of the church in the Hosanna-Tabor case represented a ''substantial threat to the American rule of law.'' How do you like that, Mr. President? It is a substantial threat to the American rule of law that a church should be able to pick its own leaders. A substantial threat to the American rule of law.

This was a case decided the other way from Professor Pillard's position, 9 to 0. Talk about radical. Talk about extreme. No wonder they wanted a simple majority to be available to confirm a nominee like this. I mean, even the Court's most liberal justices, as I mentioned, disagreed with Professor Pillard on this one.

One of them characterized that kind of position as ''amazing.'' This is a member of the Supreme Court in the 9-to-0 decision, characterizing Professor Pillard's view as ''amazing.'' In other words, Professor Pillard must think that even the furthest left Supreme Court Justice is not far enough left for her. So you get the drift of where she is.

We rightly expect justices on our nation's highest courts to evaluate cases

before them with a judge's even-handed mindset, not the absolutism of an ideologue. But just listen. Listen to the kinds of things Professor Pillard has said.

She has expressed sympathy with the idea that the rights of our Constitution—the same Constitution she would be charged with upholding—have ''just about run out,'' and that this necessitates a shift toward international law—a shift toward international law. Apparently, she feels the U.S. Constitution is no longer adequate, and we need to rely on foreign law to determine what we do here in this country.

She has said that abortion, essentially without limits, is necessary to avoid ''conscription into maternity;'' That even commonsense laws many American men and women support serve to ''enforce incubation.''

She has referred to the types of ultrasound images that are now available to so many proud moms and dads to be as ''deceptive images.''

Ultrasound is a ''deceptive image,'' according to Professor Pillard, perpetrated by the ''anti-choice movement.'' In other words, she appears to think that proud moms and dads should not believe their own eyes when they look at the images science has made increasingly available to us over the past few years.

It is an understatement to say that these sorts of views are worrying for someone the President wants on one of our Nation's top courts. In short, Professor Pillard does not seem like a person with the mindset or the temperament of a judge. She seems like a person with the attitude and disposition of a leftwing academic, someone who seems to come to conclusions based on how well they support her own theories.

Judges are charged with fairly evaluating the law that is actually before them, not the law as they wish it to be. So I will be voting against the Pillard nomination. It is important to keep this in mind as well. Nearly every single Democratic Senator voted to enable the majority leader's power grab last month. Those Senators are responsible for its consequences. That includes the confirmation of Ms. Pillard, regardless of how they vote on her nomination.

So I would urge Democrats to rethink the kind of nominees brought to the floor moving forward because now they are all yours. You are going to own every one of them. A simple majority. You own them. Extremist nominees like Professor Pillard are the reason the President and Senate Democrats took the unprecedented step of going nuclear 2 weeks ago. They unilaterally changed more than two centuries of history and tradition and violated their own prior statements and commitments so nominees like this could rubberstamp the President's most leftwing agenda items.

This is the playbook. Forget the rules. Forget checks and balances. Certainly forget the will of the American people. Do whatever it takes—whatever it takes—to get the President's agenda through. The other side of this, of course, is that Democrats are determined to change the subject from ObamaCare—anything to change the subject.

We now know that this President engaged in a serial deception in order to get his signature health care bill enacted into law. The White House debated whether to tell the truth or not on whether folks would be able to keep the plans they have. They decided not to tell the truth, a conscious decision to mislead the American people going back to 2009.

Their view was that the talking point was just too useful. They needed it in order to get what they wanted. So I would probably be looking to change the topic too if I were our friends on the other side of the aisle. Change the subject to Senate rules or nominees or anything else for that matter.

The last thing the majority wants to talk about is ObamaCare, because they own it 100 percent. Not a single Republican in the House or Senate voted for it. Every single Senate Democrat did. The problem is what Senate Democrats have done by going nuclear here in the Senate is really no different from what they did on ObamaCare. Once again they said one thing and did another.

The majority leader said publicly and repeatedly he would not break the rules, and then he did. He said he would not break the rules, and then he did. As I said a couple of weeks back, he might as well have said: If you like your Senate rules, you can keep them.

Here we are today. Here we are today ready to watch Senate Democrats rubberstamp an extremely liberal nominee to a lifetime position on a vote threshold the majority leader, back when he was in the minority and supported minority rights in the Senate, said would be disastrous for our democracy.

Anything it takes. Anything it takes to get this President's agenda around the checks that have been established to restrain power. Anything it takes to get around anybody who disagrees with them, whether it is ObamaCare or the judges they expect to defend it. Anything it takes, they are willing to do.

Let me say again that nobody who supported this rules change can walk away from nominees like Professor Pillard or their rulings. They own them.

Let's get back to ObamaCare for a few minutes because that is the issue the American people are most concerned about now. That is the issue the Democrats want to distract us from.

The American people should know what the liberal playbook is. The left believes the President's agenda runs straight through the DC Circuit Court. That is why they pressured Democrats to change the rules of the Senate to pack this court with folks like Professor Pillard.

The goal here is actually twofold: First, grease the skids for an agenda that can't get through the Congress. Then build a firewall around it by packing this court with your ideological allies. That way Democrats can keep telling folks what they think they want to hear about ObamaCare and anything else, but they can also rest assured that nobody is going to tamper with it.

All of this is in the context in which the national debate over ObamaCare and its failures should be viewed. None of it should distract us from what ObamaCare is doing to our health care system or to the millions of ordinary Americans who have been suffering under its effects.

Over the past couple of months the American people have been witness to one of the most breathtaking indictments of big-government liberalism in memory. I am not only talking about the Web site—the subject of late-night comedy—I am talking about the way in which ObamaCare was forced on the public by an administration and a Democrat-led Congress that we now know is willing to do and say anything to pass the law. They are willing to do or say anything.

In the Senate we had the ''Cornhusker kickback,'' we had the ''Gator aid,'' we had the ''Louisiana Purchase,'' and they finally got up to the 60 votes they needed. They had to get every single Democrat, and they got them any way it took. This is coupled with the grossly misleading statement: If you have your policy and you like it, you can keep it. If you have your doctor and you like him or her, you can keep them. The President and his Democratic allies were so determined to force their vision of health care on the public that they assured them they wouldn't lose the plans they had, that they would save money instead of losing it, and that they would be able to keep using the doctors and hospitals they were already using. The stories we are hearing now on a near-daily basis range from heartbreaking to comic.

Americans are very upset. Finally, the big-government crowd messed with an issue that affects every single American. In my State they have shut down the coal industry. That has had a big impact by creating a depression in Central Appalachia. One could argue they can go after the coal industry because it is confined to certain areas of the country. But on health care they are messing with everybody. The one issue every single American is affected by and cares about is their own health care.

The attention-getting stunts the President has engaged in—we can have those until we are blue in the face, but they don't change anything. All they do is remind folks of the way Democrats continue to set up one set of rules for themselves and another for everybody else. There is one set of rules for us and another set for everybody else.

Whether it is ObamaCare or the IRS or the NLRB or pushing the button on the nuclear option, it is all basically the same debate: We are going to do what we are going to do. We don't care what the rules are; we will break the rules. We will do whatever it takes to get what we want. It is a party that is clearly willing to do and say just about anything to get its way.

Millions of Americans are hurting because of a law Washington Democrats forced upon them. What do they do about it? They cook up a fight over judges on a court that doesn't even have enough work to do. This is a court that they were arguing a few years ago shouldn't have any additional members because they had a light workload, and now the court has an even lighter workload.

We know what this is about. As I indicated, I would want to be talking about something else too if I had to defend dogs getting insurance while millions of Americans lost theirs. It isn't going to work. The parallels between the latest move and the original ObamaCare push are all too obvious to ignore.

The majority leader promised over and over that he wouldn't break the rules of the Senate in order to change them. On July 14 he went on ''Meet the Press'' and said: ''We're not touching judges.'' This was on July 14 of this year. That echoed the promise he made in January of this year. It sounds very similar to ''If you like your policy, you can keep it.''

Then there are the double standards. When the Democrats were in the minority, they argued strenuously against changing the rules. And let's not forget about the raw power at play. The American people decided not to give Democrats the House or to restore the filibuster-proof majority they had in the Senate in the last two elections—an inconvenient truth for our friends on the other side.

They don't own the place anymore. They did in the first 2 years, with 60 votes in the Senate and a 40-seat majority in the House, but not anymore. The American people took a look at that first 2 years and issued a national restraining order in November of 2010. Our friends don't want to be deterred by that. They are going to pursue their agenda through the courts and through the regulatory schemes the administration propounds. They changed the rules of the game to get their way. It is pretty clear that if one can write the rules of the game, they ought to be able to win.

Earlier this year the senior Senator from New York said Senate Democrats intended to ''fill up the DC Circuit one way or another.'' It couldn't be any more clear than that. We will do it one way or the other. We break the rules, change the rules, and do what we want to do. The arrogance of power is on full display by an arrogant majority. It is on full display in the Senate.

Our colleagues evidently would rather live for the moment and try to establish a storyline that Republicans—I just heard it here from the majority leader—Republicans are intent on obstructing President Obama's judicial nominees. It is a storyline that is patently ridiculous. One can keep saying things over and over, but it doesn't make it true. It doesn't make it true to keep saying the wrong thing over and over.

Here are the facts. Before this current Democratic gambit to ''fill up the DC Circuit one way or another,'' as the senior Senator from New York said, the Senate had confirmed 215 judges and rejected 2—some provocation for breaking your word and breaking the rules of the Senate in order to change the rules of the Senate. That is a confirmation rate of 99 percent. Republicans have been clearly willing to confirm the President's judicial nominees. And on the DC Circuit, we recently confirmed one of the President's recent nominees by a vote of 97 to 0.

The Democratic strategy of distract, distract, distract is getting old. It is not working. The American people are not listening to this ridiculous argument. They are worried about their health care and are angry at the people who caused them to lose their policies. In my State 280,000 people have lost their policies, and on the exchange 26,000 have been able to get private policies. The rest of them are all Medicaid recipients.

The Democratic playbook of broken promises, double standards and raw power—the same playbook that got us ObamaCare—has to end. With the help of the American people, we will end it in 1 year. Meanwhile, Republicans are going to keep pushing to get back on the drawing board on health care—to replace ObamaCare with real reforms that help rather than punish the middle class.

At this point I am going to refer to some constituent letters I have received related to ObamaCare that the Senate would find noteworthy.

This is a letter from a constituent in Bowling Green:

> I am a 35-year-old college graduate and represent many hardworking middle-class Kentuckians who are being directly impacted by . . . ObamaCare. I am a married father of 2 young children. We are, by most accounts, an average American family. Before [ObamaCare] was passed, my family was insured through a health insurance policy purchased on the open market. We shopped several different policies and chose the one that was the best fit for our needs.
>
> Recently, we received a notice from our insurer that our plan didn't meet the requirements of the [new health care law]. According to the letter, we were required by law to be transitioned into a plan that did meet these new requirements. Also included in the letter was our new premium. That is what shocked us. According to the letter, our premiums would be increasing by 124%, more than double what we had budgeted for this expense.
>
> According to a speech by the Vice President on September 27th [of this year], a family of four earning $50,000 a year could get coverage for as little as $106 a month. Should I have to pay 8 times that amount because my wife and I both work hard to provide for our family and earn more than the Vice President's limit of $50,000 a year? Why should the price of a product be based on my ability to pay?

That is a very good question: ''Why should the price of a product be based on my ability to pay?''

He continues:

> Would that work at the gas station? Should the price of a gallon of gas be decided by my income tax return? Or at the grocery store? Should the price of a gallon of milk be determined by my income tax return? Or in shopping for a home loan? Should the interest rate on my mortgage be higher if I earn more than $50,000 a year? This predatory pricing structure runs contrary to the basic American foundational principles of Free Enterprise and is illegal in every other marketplace. It should be illegal in health care too.

Larry Thompson from Lexington:

> My health plan that I have had for 10 years just got canceled, and the least expensive plan on the exchange is a 246 percent increase—that means hundreds of extra dollars per month we don't have. Obama lied and made a promise he couldn't keep when he said repeatedly if we wanted to keep our current health care policy we could.

That is what Mr. Thompson from Lexington said. And he continues:

> He has really affected our lives for the worse—much worse. I'm so mad. We must stop insurance companies from canceling policies—now.

And of course the reason they are having to cancel policies is because the law makes them.

Sherry Harris from Nicholasville in my State:

> Did you know the Lake Cumberland Hospital in Somerset is not on the Anthem network? Which means anybody in Pulaski and surrounding counties that qualify for a subsidy and want to use it will have to drive to London, Corbin or Lexington to get care?

Harriet White from Rockfield, which is in Warren County, near Bolling Green:

> Dear Senator MCCONNELL: I am deeply upset because of the effect this health care act has had on our family's health insurance. It has negatively impacted our finances and our quality of care. The President promised that if you had health care, you would not be impacted. The sad truth is that, like my coworkers, my deductible has doubled, along with my premiums. The only way to be able to adjust is for us to either reduce or stop our 401(k) contributions. This is hardly affordable health care. I don't understand why such a blatant lie has been allowed to go this far. Do we not as American citizens have the right to choose basic services? I don't think the government should make choices for the people that impact us in such a negative way. Thank you for your time, and please keep fighting this gross abuse of power.

Aaron McLemore from Louisville:

> Seeing as I'm a single male (31, policy being cancelled) with no kids or dependents, and I'm paying for pediatric dental care and maternity care, it doesn't make a whole lot of sense to me.

This is a single male, age 31, having to pay for pediatric dental care and maternity care, and he says it ''doesn't make a whole lot of sense to me.'' He makes more than $100,000 a year and doesn't qualify for a subsidy on the

Obama exchange. So the current policy of this 31-year-old is being canceled. A new policy from the exchange will more than double his monthly premium and nearly double his yearly out-of-pocket maximum. His higher costs aren't subsidizing lower income policyholders whose subsidies have already been paid by the government, but he is providing a subsidy in another way: The new act requires him to buy a policy with features he doesn't need.

What ObamaCare is doing is moving McLemore out of the individual market, where people are sorted by age and health history and scope of coverage, to a market more like the traditional employer-based group policy in which young and old workers get the same coverage and pay the same premium.

Mr. and Mrs. Spears from Louisville:

I think you should know what is going on here in Kentucky with Kynect—

That is the Kentucky Web site—

I had to sign my wife up since our governor canceled all of the KyAccess policies effective January 1, 2014. I signed up through the benefits firm, advising them that I wanted no subsidies since we have always paid our way in 42 years of marriage. He told me the full pay option of $517 per month and advised no income verification was necessary since no subsidies were involved. So I chose the Kentucky Co Op plan, as I felt the monies would stay in Kentucky with this plan.

He went on to say:

And then I received four mailings from Kynect. One stating she was declined coverage unless I sent income verifications; also one stating I have to fill out a voter registration and return as they have no information on my voting record.

So what does whether you are registered to vote have to do with signing up for ObamaCare?

The letter continues:

I called Kynect today and advised them I am receiving no subsidies and do not feel I should be required to send this information to them. And if they wanted this information, I file taxes every year and would be easily accessed. In regards to voter registration, I advised this has nothing to do with health registration, and I strongly objected to the language linking the two in the letter. Any clear thinking person would be upset at our State government trying to bring voter registration into this mess, not to mention personal information they should not need since no subsidies are involved.

These stories go on and on.

Lana Lynch from Brandenburg:

My out-of-pocket expenses for my family of five went from $1,500 a year to $7,000 a year. The best policy that is available by my employer has a $7,000 out-of-pocket a year [provision].

And she works for a very large health care provider.

Jeannine Gentry from Ekron:

We are covered under my husband's policy through his employer. We have not found out exactly how much the premium is going to rise but have been told to expect between 150 to 300 percent increase per paycheck. We do know for certain that our deductible will rise from $5,000 annually to $8,500.

Ann Knauer from Sheperdsville:

I received my insurance papers from United Healthcare and found that my premiums had risen from $214 to $480 a month. I only get $1,181 in Social Security a month. That's after my Medicare payment. So I went online to see if I could get my husband signed up for this ACA insurance. I filled out the information, but was told that what I stated for our income was incorrect and that I needed to send in proof of my income. Then they insisted we fill out this form about voter registration. We are already registered to vote and felt this was completely unnecessary. The form did have a spot that stated that we were already registered, but I just don't trust the Web site, so we declined. We got forms in the mail anyway. I'm just going to stick with my old insurance and pay the higher premiums because I know what it covers. I have Medicare and United Healthcare. I have kept this insurance because of my husband, who is also retired but not covered under any other insurance. My insurance came from my job that I had before I retired, as part of the retirement package.

Mike Conn from Prestonsburg. And I might say that Prestonsburg is in eastern Kentucky, in the heart of Appalachia, which is also suffering a depression as a result of this administration's war on coal. So this person who corresponded with me is also living in the middle of a depression-riddled part of my State also created by the Obama administration.

Here is what he said:

A policy that has similar coverage to what we had would cost us around $1,100 a month. This is a 100 percent increase for me and my wife. I was informed by the individual that was helping me find coverage that it was because we live in eastern Kentucky.

Apparently their insurance company is not available there.

Finally, he says:

We will not pay that.

Giselle Martino from Prospect:

My premium health care, at premium cost to me, is being canceled. I paid a very high premium to have a major medical plan. I am now forced into the exchange for a lesser plan with more exclusions and higher deductibles. I will most likely never reach these deductibles. How does this help me? I'm basically paying into the plan for the others. If I must pay for my higher tier heart drugs anyway, why should I bother with the health plan? What a disappointment this administration has caused.

Cheryl Russell from Owensboro:

We got a letter from our insurance company saying our current policy will not meet the Affordable Care Act, which means it will go away. According to our insurance company, we will have to take pediatric dental and vision insurance. We don't have kids. They said it was because of ObamaCare. They are allowing us to keep our plan until December 2014, for an additional $38 more a month, so we can find another plan. Another plan through this company that we had our whole life will cost us at least $900 to $1,000 a month. It will cost us over $150 more a month plus our deductible goes up to $5,700. I sent you a message last week. I am sending this again. Please keep taking a stand against ObamaCare. Our President lied to us. Not only are we going to lose our insurance, but when we go to a different policy we have to pay more. We will never be able to retire. We are 58 and 56 years old. We will have to work the rest of our lives just to pay for our own insurance. The company we work for doesn't provide it. This isn't fair and it isn't right. Thanks for taking a stand for all those who are in Kentucky.

So, Mr. President, in wrapping up my remarks, here is the situation. On Christmas Eve 2009, on a straight party-line vote—60 Democrats voting for and 40 Republicans voting against—the administration jammed through a 2,700-page rewrite of 16 percent of our economy. The goal, one could argue, was a noble goal—that of trying to reduce the number of uninsured in America from an estimated group of about 45 million Americans.

The first problem with this particular solution is that CRS—the Congressional Research Service, which doesn't work for either Republicans or Democrats—says when all is said and done we are still going to have 30 million uninsured. So what is the cost-benefit ratio of taking $1 trillion out of the providers of health care—roughly $750 billion in reductions; cuts to hospitals, home health care, nursing homes and the like, hospice; billions of dollars in taxes on medical devices; taxes on health insurance premiums kicking in the first of a year; a $1 trillion impact on the providers of health care—and over on the consumer side I have just given a series of stories about how it impacts the consumers of health care: higher premiums, higher deductibles, lost jobs, a record number of part-time employees, and wreaking havoc on the American economy, the consumers of health care, and on the providers of health care—all to reduce the number of uninsured from 45 to 30 million.

This has to be the worst cost-benefit ratio in the history of American government, all of this disruption—this catastrophic impact on 16 percent of our economy—in order to make a marginal reduction in the number of uninsured. This has to be the biggest mistake in modern times. In fact, I am hard-pressed to think of a single bigger mistake the Federal Government has made, and it has made some whoppers over the years. I am hard-pressed to think of a single example that comes anywhere close to this, a gargantuan, massive mistake, which has had a lot to do with the fact that we have had such a tepid recovery in our country after a deep recession.

The pattern since World War II has been that the deeper the recession, the quicker the bounce-back—until this one: a deep recession, a tepid recovery. The government itself is the reason for that: massive overregulation, an army of regulators who will now have their work sped through the DC Circuit Court who believe if you are making a profit you are up to no good; you are obviously cheating your customers and mistreating your employees. They are here to help you. This massive bureaucratic overreach has definitely slowed our recovery.

So I hope the American people will give us an opportunity in the not too distant future to pull this thing out root and branch and start over and do this right.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. BALDWIN). The Senator from West Virginia.

A NUCLEAR-ARMED IRAN

Mr. ROCKEFELLER. Madam President, I wish to speak about an issue of great importance to the national security of the United States and to all of our allies—which is, preventing Iran from ever having a nuclear weapon. There is no doubt in my mind that we will in fact do that, but certain things have to happen. The question is how, not whether, we prevent a nuclear-armed Iran.

For the first time in years, there is a real opportunity to take a good step to verifiably eliminate Iran's nuclear weapons capability through tough negotiations rather than the alternative—which is, inevitably, acts of war.

The initial interim agreement between the P5+1 and Iran is an encouraging first step, and I urge my colleagues not to put it at risk. How would they do that? By passing new sanctions right now. There is a lot of talk about that, and it is easy to look tough. I am kind of amazed, to be honest with you, that, I don't think, anybody from our side has gotten up and made a speech about this subject on the Senate floor. I meant to yesterday but I couldn't. I thank Senator JOHNSON, chairman of the banking committee, who has come to the rescue of all of us. He is not going to allow it to happen, and I totally congratulate him for that act of quiet and strong courage.

Instead, we should simply state the obvious: If Iran reneges or plays games, there is no question in anybody's mind in this Senate that we will quickly pass new sanctions the very moment the need arises. To me, this is a clear-cut case. Again, I frankly do not understand why more of us, at least on this side, have not gotten up to make this case. I think I have some ideas, but I do wonder.

There is still a long way to go, no question. But this diplomatic opportunity is real. Why? Because Iran wants and needs to find a way out of the financial isolation that our crippling sanctions have inflicted on its government, its business, and its people. It is devastating what our sanctions have done.

Iran's people elected a president who proposed a different path. Ayatollah Khamenei, Iran's Supreme Leader, has given President Rouhani some flexibility to try and find an agreement. That is unprecedented, and most people think it is for real. We shall see. They did in fact agree to the initial deal. So already, one step has been taken with a good result. I don't think it is a coincidence.

The immense power of U.S.-led global financial sanctions, backed up by our allies, has created the opportunity to resolve this issue diplomatically, with verifiable agreements and skeptical inspectors, rather than with bombs or boots on the ground.

I have spent much of my tenure on the Intelligence Committee, going back before 9/11, with the Director of National Intelligence, the CIA, the NSA, the FBI, and the Treasury Department to build our tools to exploit and to freeze the international web of financial networks that enable terrorist and proliferation programs—particularly Iran's nuclear programs. I have staunchly supported the powerful multilateral sanctions regime that is currently suffocating the Iranian economy and forced the current Iranian regime to the negotiating table. They would not have been there otherwise. The effect of inflation and devastation of economic production and all the rest is devastating.

This initial agreement is the first concrete result of those sanctions. It stops progress on Iran's nuclear program. It neutralizes Iran's most dangerous stockpile of nuclear material—that is, 20 percent of enriched uranium—and it establishes strong monitoring mechanisms that enable inspectors to verify that Iran is in compliance with its commitments.

The first step maintains the powerful sanctions regime that has forced Iran to the table. The agreement maintains that. The very small amount of targeted and reversible financial relief that it provides—roughly $7 billion out of $100 billion in sanctions that the agreement leaves fully in place—only underscores the grip that we and our allies have on Iran's financial position. The grip will not loosen during this 6-month agreement as we try to go to a next step. We will continue to control and limit Iran's access to money during the 6-month agreement. If Iran in fact reneges on the terms of the interim deal, Iran will not even get all of the small relief that we have agreed to. They will, however, get more sanctions, and over the next 6 months, the small amount of financial relief that Iran can gain in the deal will be dwarfed by the amount of their loss in oil revenue that our continuing sanctions will deny Iran. That was in place; that is in place. Iran will be in worse shape financially 6 months from now than it is today. That is a fact. The pressure does not relent. It just keeps going. So it is a good situation—tough, agreed to, and in place.

That is why Iran needs to complete a final comprehensive agreement to eliminate its nuclear weapons capabilities. Does that guarantee it? No, it doesn't. But we are a step further than we were before because this interim agreement does not give Iran what it needs to escape financial ruin—which counts.

I appreciate the concerns of colleagues who want more now. But we must give this opportunity a chance. However you see the first step, whatever your view of it is, the fact is that today Iran is further from a nuclear weapon than it would have been without this deal that we have just completed. We have accomplished this first step through diplomatic strength, without a shot fired. I think we can agree that is pretty good.

We all want to put pressure on Iran to comply with the commitments it has made to the interim agreement—and we will—and to agree to a long-term comprehensive deal—and we hope—that will prevent it from ever developing a weapon. But we have taken the first step.

My colleagues, the pressure already exists for Iran to continue on this diplomatic path. Again, if Iran reneges on the commitments it has made in this agreement or balks at a final deal that verifiably ends its nuclear weapons capabilities, we will go right to, without doubt, the Congress imposing new and ever more powerful sanctions on Iran. But we don't have to do that now. In fact, it is a terrible mistake to do that now.

Given the indisputable credibility of that threat, I urge my colleagues to consider how unnecessary and how risky it would be to preemptively introduce new sanctions right now. New sanctions now could be criticized as a violation of the interim agreement. It could be blown up that way. Such a move would separate us from our negotiating partners in the P5+1 and it could complicate the already difficult negotiations of a final agreement which we all pray for.

I know some Senators doubt these risks. But I ask my colleagues this: If there is any chance at all that new sanctions right now might disrupt the agreement or jeopardize a future agreement, why on earth would we risk that? Why would we risk that? We know where we stand. We know where we are going. We can't be sure that we are going to get there, but we know that we always have the power to increase sanctions if they try to avoid certain things. But they haven't. So why pile on now and threaten to blow the whole thing up? Why would we risk an opportunity that may very well be the only chance we have to resolve this enormous problem without the use of military force? I do not know of an alternative to that.

If we lose this diplomatic opportunity, then the use of force will be the only option to stop Iran's path to a nuclear bomb. All of us have lived with war for the past 12 years. Intimately, painfully, horrifically, we have all seen close up the incalculable financial and human cost that has come with these wars and the burden that the wars now put on our troops, their families, our economy, and, therefore, our people. This has only hardened my resolve to ensure that this immense sacrifice never happens unnecessarily—that we take great care to exhaust every possible avenue to diplomatic resolution.

Colleagues, we have now an opportunity to eliminate Iran's nuclear weapons capabilities. We can do it peacefully. Let's not put that at risk.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.

Mr. BAUCUS. Madam President, President Lincoln once said:

> Character is like a tree and reputation like its shadow. The shadow is what we think of it; the tree is the real thing.

It is my distinct privilege to rise today to speak on two nominees that are indeed the real thing—Justice Brian Morris and Judge Susan Watters. The Senate will soon take up both Justice Morris's and Judge Watters's nominations for United States District Judge for the District of Montana.

One of the most important responsibilities I have is providing advice and consent to the President on nominations to the Federal bench. I approach each vacancy with the same criteria—I want the best, regardless of whether they are Republican or Democrat, liberal or conservative. Justice Morris and Judge Watters are the best. Their quality of character and breadth of experience are remarkable.

Montana Supreme Court Justice Brian Morris is one of the brightest legal minds to ever come out of Montana. Justice Morris was born and raised in Butte, MT, and graduated from Butte Central High School. He earned bachelors and masters degrees in economics from Stanford University and received his law degree with distinction from Stanford University Law School in 1992.

Justice Morris's experience after law school is as varied as it is noteworthy. He clerked for Judge John Noonan, Jr., of the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals and Chief Justice William Rehnquist of the United States Supreme Court. He spent time working abroad as a legal assistant at the Iran-U.S. Claims Tribunal in The Hague and as a legal officer at the United Nations Compensation Commission in Geneva, Switzerland. He also spent time in private practice, handling criminal and commercial litigation with the Bozeman, MT, firm of Goetz, Madden, & Dunn.

Justice Morris also served for years as the State's Solicitor General. He was elected to his current position on the Montana Supreme Court in 2004, and has demonstrated integrity, fairness, a steady disposition, and superb analytical skills on Montana's highest court. Justice Morris is known for his approachability, even-handedness, and down-to-earth manner. After all, he is from Butte. He can often be found reading to students at Smith Elementary School in Helena.

Justice Morris has commanded the respect of his colleagues at the highest levels of the law. For more than 8 years, he has served the people of Montana on the bench and in the community. His nomination is an extraordinary cap on an already remarkable career, and I have no doubt that he will continue to serve at the highest level. I congratulate Justice Morris, his wife Cherche, and their children Max, Mekdi, Aiden, and William, on this achievement.

In 1916, Montanans elected Jeanette Rankin to be the first woman to serve in Congress 4 years before women had the right to vote. We are especially proud of this fact. Judge Susan Watters, our second nominee, is another trailblazer we can be proud of. Not only is Judge Watters a respected jurist and dedicated public servant, but once confirmed, she will be the first woman to serve as a United States District Court Judge for the State of Montana.

Judge Watters was born and raised in Billings, MT, and graduated with honors from Eastern Montana College. Judge Watters raised 2 young daughters while attending the University of Montana Law School, receiving her law degree in 1988. Since then, Judge Watters has cemented her reputation as a skilled trial lawyer and judge.

After law school, Judge Watters served as Deputy County Attorney for Yellowstone County, handling civil and criminal cases. In 1995, Judge Watters entered private practice, taking hundreds of cases to final judgment in State and Federal court. In 1999, Governor Marc Racicot appointed her to sit as a State district court judge for Montana's 13th judicial district in Billings. Since her appointment, Judge Watters has been reelected 3 times, most recently with over 80 percent of the vote.

Judge Watters has tried hundreds of cases during her 14-plus years on the bench. She has heard civil, criminal, probate, juvenile, and family law cases. Her trial court experience is remarkable.

She further served her community by establishing the Yellowstone County Family Drug Treatment Court in 2001, the first of its kind in Montana. Its overwhelming success has made it a national model.

Judge Watters is known for being fair, hard-working, possessing strong analytical skills and an excellent judicial temperament. Her extensive trial experience as a practicing lawyer and trial judge will be an invaluable addition to Montana's Federal bench.

Judge Watters embodies the qualities that service on the Federal bench requires. She has served the people of Yellowstone County for over a decade, and I am absolutely confident that she will bring the same professionalism and dignity to the Federal bench. I want to congratulate Judge Watters, her husband Ernie, and their daughters Jessica and Maggie on this outstanding achievement.

Justice Morris and Judge Watters are supremely qualified. Their service is sorely needed. We have two vacancies in our State. We have three Federal district court judgeships. The vacancies that Judge Watters and Justice Morris will fill are both considered judicial emergencies. Chief Judge Dana Christensen, our lone active judge, travels over 300 miles round trip to hear cases. In fact, I just spoke to him yesterday, telling him we would be filling these positions in Montana. He said, Max, I am getting in the car right now to drive. What's the distance? I won't say the distance. It is a 4-hour drive to Great Falls, MT, from Missoula, so he could sit and hear some cases in Great Falls. Judge Don Molloy travels over 340 miles one way. That is greater than the distance between Washington, DC and Hartford, CT. He does that to hear cases. We need our replacements.

Justice Morris and Judge Watters embody the qualities Montanans demand of their Federal judges—their intellect, their experience, and integrity above reproach. I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting their nominations.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kansas.

Mr. ROBERTS. Madam President, I rise to address the nomination of Cornelia Pillard for the DC Circuit. It appears to me the environment in which we are discussing these nominations is a good example of the new rules of the Senate. We are already getting a taste of the new world order around here. It did not take long. It has only been a few weeks but we are already experiencing life in the new Senate. Those in the majority who wanted to change the rules are now certainly getting their wish.

It should have been obvious that the rule change would impact the Senate in many unforeseen ways. We in the minority have had to find other ways to make our voices heard. As we watch the majority use its new power to move whomever it wants through this body, we should realize that we have started down a course from which we will never return. Indeed, we should expect more changes in the future. The majority changed the rules because it did not like how they were operating to frustrate their ambitions and agenda. If other things come about that frustrate the majority, we may have new changes to get rid of those frustrations too. The invocation of the nuclear option has set us on an irreversible course.

A few weeks ago I came to this floor and quoted our former Parliamentarian Bob Dove. He and Richard Arenberg, one-time aide to former majority leader George Mitchell, wrote a book called ''Defending the Filibuster.'' This is what they said, and it bears repeating:

> If a 51-vote majority is empowered to rewrite the Senate's rules, the day will come, as it did in the House of Representatives, when a majority will construct rules that give it near absolute control over amendments and debate. And there is no going back from that. No majority in the House of Representatives has or ever will voluntarily relinquish that power in order to give the minority greater voice in crafting legislation.

Unfortunately, the majority didn't seem to care about the concern these wise men raised and went ahead with their rule change anyway. Now we are feeling the effect.

This power grab is having other consequences too. Today I attended a hearing in the rules committee as the ranking member, for nominees to an agency called the Election Assistance Commission. You probably never heard of it. Madam President, I doubt if you have ever heard of it. It is a small agency with 4 commissioners—2 Democrats and 2 Republicans. Nominations to bipartisan commissions have traditionally been paired and moved jointly. This practice ensured each party has a voice in such bodies.

Before the rules were changed, the minority could be assured that their consent would be needed for appointments. That assurance is now gone. Will the majority just make its own appointments to commissions such as this now? I hope not. That is under discussion in the rules committee. But what motivation do they have to ever confirm any Republican nominee, if they so choose to even consider minority views in this regard? We are going down a dangerous path, and no one knows where it will lead.

The same is true in regard to the atmosphere that we find with the affordable health care act. For some reason, the executive has decided to make any changes to the law without really considering coming back to the Senate or the House or the Congress to make these changes. So in part I come to the floor to speak about an issue that continues to keep me up every night—and every Kansan as well—that is the implementation of this affordable health care act, the health reform law.

This is, indeed, the President's legacy legislation. Based on what I am hearing from Kansans at home, I would think the President would want to be remembered for something else entirely. Unfortunately, since the implementation of ObamaCare began, the stories and reports have only confirmed the many warnings that I and my colleagues have made during the debate for the last 3 years.

People cannot keep their coverage. Despite the many, even hundreds of promises made by this President and the supporters of this law, people are losing their coverage. Premiums are increasing, even though the President and supporters of this law said premiums would decrease by $2,500 for all Americans. Most of the stories I hear, and especially from Kansans, involve many hundreds of dollars in increases in monthly premiums.

Even more recently, folks are realizing that what they had to pay in out-of-pocket costs are going to skyrocket. Deductibles are higher and the products, drugs, and services Kansans have to pay to reach their deductible has virtually exploded. This doesn't even count the increases to copays and other costs that patients are seeing, especially with regard to prescription drugs.

This is being done in a way so that patients are getting the full information they need. So much for being the most transparent government in history.

Along these lines I believe it is my responsibility to come to the floor and remind Kansans about several other provisions of ObamaCare that patients may not be aware will put the government between the patient and the doctor—their doctor. During the health care reform debate, I spoke at length in the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee and in the Finance Committee, and on the Senate floor about something called rationing, a subject that is very controversial. Specifically, I want people to know about the four rationers—boards, commissions, whatever you want to talk about—the four rationers included in ObamaCare.

First is the CMS Innovation Center, the Center for Medicaid Services Innovation Center, which was given an enormous budget to find a way to reform payments and delivery models. What this really means is CMS can now use taxpayer dollars in ways to reduce patient access to care. It gives CMS new powers to cut payments to Medicare beneficiaries with a goal to reduce program expenditures, but the reality being that they will reduce patient access.

There are new authorities also granted to the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force. The USPSTF used to be a body that was scientific and academic, that reviewed treatment, testing, and preventive health data and made recommendations for primary care practitioners and health care systems.

I guess many would agree that is still what they do today. However, the weight of their recommendations holds significantly more weight as of today, due to the Affordable Care Act or ObamaCare. Because of this law, the health care law, the USPSTF, can now decide what should and, more importantly, should not be covered by health care plans. If the USPSTF doesn't recommend it, then it will not be covered by your health plan and you will bear the cost of the procedure. We are already seeing this with prostate exams, mammograms for breast cancer, which many people say have saved their lives. You reach a certain age and they will not do a PSA test. The same kind of criteria—with some degree—to mammograms.

Rationale No. 3, the Patient Centered Outcomes Research Institute or PCORI. This outfit was given millions and millions of dollars to do comparative effectiveness research, also known as CER. I am not opposed—I don't know of any Member in this body who is opposed—to research, especially when it is used to inform the conversation between a doctor and their patients.

But there is a reason this was formerly called cost-effective research. There is a very fine line between providing information to doctors and patients to help them make the right decision that works the best for them and then using that information to decide whether the care or treatment is worth paying for. I have long been concerned that this research will be abused to arbitrarily deny access to treatments or services in order to save the government money by Federal Government decree.

Finally, there is my personal nemesis IPAB, which stands for the Independent Payment Advisory Board, and is just now making news as various people within the media are finally recognizing IPAB. This is a board made up of 15 unelected bureaucrats who will decide what gets to stay and what gets to go in Medicare coverage. They will decide what treatments and services will be covered and which will not, all to allegedly save money with no accountability. There is no accountability whatsoever.

When proposed—I remember it well both in the HELP Committee and the Finance Committee—supporters of the health care law told me we are too close to our constituents. Really? We are too close to our constituents. It makes it too difficult to make the hard decisions. Let's have somebody else do it. It will be more fair. We know them too much. We trust them too much.

I could not believe it. I believe I am elected to make the hard decisions—I and others in this body—and take the hard votes. I believe that is the way Kansans and every other State constituency also wants it.

Even worse is the fine print of IPAB. Get this. If Kansans determine they do not like the direction the IPAB is taking and call my office, and every other office in the Senate, to ask us to do something about it—to ask me to do something about it—we in Congress can overturn their decision, but it has to be by a certain margin. On the surface this sounds OK until you realize the President will never support Congress overturning the recommendation of this Board, so he will veto it. Overriding a veto takes a two-thirds vote, which is 66 votes to overturn a decision by IPAB.

My colleagues have been changing the rules around here because they think 60 votes is too high a threshold. What are the chances of reaching 66 if a decision is made by IPAB with regard to Medicare?

But wait. There is more. If the Secretary appoints a board unable to make recommendations for cuts to Medicare, then she gets the authority to make the decision of what to cut. This President has already cut one-half trillion dollars from Medicare to pay for ObamaCare, and he gave himself the ability to go after even more Medicare dollars and have no accountability with IPAB. This is egregious, if not ridiculous, but it is not new.

I have been talking about the four rationers for a long time and what it means to patients. I will have more to say about it when the opportunity presents itself.

What scares me, as I watch all the other warnings and broken promises

come true, is what is going to happen to Kansans—and I know other Senators have this same fear—when the warnings about the four rationers do come true.

We need to protect the all-important relationship between the doctor and the patient, which I believe the four rationers put at risk. In order to do that, we need to repeal—and most important—and replace ObamaCare with real reforms that work for Kansans.

THE FARM BILL

In this atmosphere of uncertainty and new Senate order, I would like to talk about another subject that is related, for the lack of any progress we might have.

This is becoming an all too familiar situation for Kansas farmers and ranchers and all of American agriculture. In some respects we are closer to signing a farm bill into law than 1 year ago, but we still have not yet completed this important task. As 1 of the 41 Members named at the conference committee in October, I was able to give a quick opening statement outlining my biggest priorities for the farm bill, including addressing regulations that protect crop insurance and reforming SNAP; i.e., food stamps.

Unfortunately, that was the one and only time the full conference committee has met to date. With time in short supply, the four principals of the agriculture committee both in the House and the Senate—the ranking member, the chairwoman, the chairman, and the ranking member in the House—are trying to make the majority of decisions as best they can among themselves and behind closed doors.

Sometimes you can get things done behind closed doors without 37 people offering their opinion. I understand that. But with all due respect to those Members, we have real policy differences that deserve to be debated publicly, particularly in the commodity and the nutrition titles. The other 37 of us have been ready and willing to be put to work. Yet the conference committee has only met once with no future meeting scheduled.

I am very disappointed that an agreement on the farm bill may be close and yet some of our ideas and suggestions and concerns will go unheard or unanswered, such as the new environment we live in, in the Senate.

As I said during the agriculture committee markup and our only conference meeting, I have real concerns with the direction of the farm programs in this year's bill. We have what are called target prices—we might as well just say subsidies or countercyclical payments or adverse market payments—which have proven to be trade and market distorting.

For some commodities these prices are set so high that they may cover a producer's cost of production. That is right. We have a government subsidy over the producer's cost of production. That will essentially guarantee that a farmer profits if yields are average or above average.

In this budget environment, and at a time when we are looking to make smart cuts, I simply don't know how to justify this subsidy program that can pay producers more than the cost of production and essentially becomes nothing more than an income transfer program, not a risk management tool.

After the committee markup, I had hopes we could improve the farm bill to more resemble the risk-oriented and the market-based approach the Senate had previously taken, working with the distinguished chairwoman from Michigan and myself as ranking member.

Last year I worked with the Senate leadership from both parties to consider the farm bill through, of all things, regular order. Everybody had a chance to offer an amendment. The first amendment that was offered had nothing to do with the farm bill. That amendment was by Senator PAUL. Regular order gave all Senators the chance to improve the bill or make their concerns known.

However, this year we considered a mere 15 amendments. The last time around it was 73 with 300 offered. Although 250 amendments were offered this time, we only had 15 amendments. All amendments regarding the new target price program were blocked from consideration and votes on the Senate floor—all of them. Senator THUNE had amendments, Senator GRASSLEY had amendments, Senator JOHANNS had amendments, and I had amendments. We all serve on the agriculture committee.

Of course, the real problem with farmers planting for a government program and not for the market is that these programs only serve to extend the period of low prices due to overproduction.

Besides high target prices for all commodities, the House wants to recouple payments with current production for the first time since 1996. The Chamber of Commerce has warned that if we go down this road, we will quickly invite other Nations to initiate dispute settlements against the United States and do so with a good chance of success.

I also have longstanding WTO, World Trade Organization, concerns, and the United States lost—and I mean really lost—in a case to Brazil in part because of the decoupled price program. We are still paying for that.

I am hopeful we will come to some agreement that works without further setting us up for a further trade dispute not ruled in our favor.

Another sticking point seems to be SNAP, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. I think everybody is aware of that. It is important to note that at least 80 percent of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's budget goes to nutrition programs. SNAP was exempted from across-the-board cuts known as sequestration.

The Senate bill only trims $4 billion out of a nearly $800 billion program in a 10-year budget. That is less than 1 percent of a reduction. It doesn't cut anybody's benefits. It looks at eligibility and other problems that are within SNAP.

We have the responsibility to do more to restore integrity to SNAP, eliminate fraud and abuse, while providing benefits to those truly in need.

I offered an amendment during the committee markup and on the floor that would have saved an additional $31 billion for SNAP. I thought it was a smart and responsible way which would not take away food from needy families.

The House took a similar approach and also included work requirements for food stamps and found a total of $39 billion in savings. That is about a 5-percent reduction over 10 years.

It has also been mentioned that SNAP has already been cut by $11 billion this year. However, the end of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 stimulus boost for food stamps was a temporary increase in benefits to assist individuals and families hurt by the recession. The end of this temporary increase is in no way related to the farm bill, and the Congressional Budget Office agrees that no budgetary savings are achieved. Reconciling the difference between $4 billion and $40 billion in savings has proven very tough so far, if not impossible. However, unlike the majority of the programs in the farm bill, if we don't have a bill signed into law, the Food Stamp Program or SNAP will go unchanged and there will be no savings or reform to the program.

Last week I spoke with the Kansas Farm Bureau—800 members of the farm bureau and their families—and once again the No. 1 priority for virtually every producer was crop insurance. Even after the devastating drought over the last few years, crop insurance has proven to work. Producers from Kansas to Illinois and all over the country are still in business helping our rural families and our communities.

In 2013, producers across the country insured a record number of acres, covering nearly 295 million acres and over $123 billion in liabilities. The takeaway message is clear: More farmers are purchasing crop insurance policies to protect their crops than ever before. In both versions of the farm bill, we are able to strengthen and preserve crop insurance. We need to keep that commitment through the final legislation.

The farm bill is the appropriate time and place to also address regulatory overreaches by the Environmental Protection Agency and the rest of the administration that impacts farmers and livestock producers. In that respect, I appreciate the House addressing several burdensome regulations that I worked on in the Senate, including pesticides, farm fuels, tank storage, the lesser prairie chicken—bless their heart—GIPSA, mandatory country-of-origin labeling, also called COOL.

Overall, I am disappointed that it looks as though we will not finish the

farm bill before the end of this year, despite the need for certainty and predictability all throughout farm country, not to mention the Department of Agriculture. Our folks back home have to make business decisions regardless of the status of negotiations.

Just one example. Kansas wheat growers have already planted their 2014 wheat crop and have been required to certify their acres; they just don't know what programs will be available to them. While we all want to provide long-term certainty to farmers, ranchers, their families, and American consumers, we have already let one extension expire in September, and the House may pursue extending the 2008 bill yet again. However, our Senate majority leader, HARRY REID, said yesterday that even if the House passes a short-term extension of the farm bill, the Senate will not pass it.

A year ago in August I went to the floor, upset with the leader for failing to consider a bill the House passed to reinstate the livestock disaster programs from the 2008 farm bill in response to the devastating drought in the Midwest. It went on for 3 years. At the time, I called it shameful and an abdication of our duty to the cattlemen and women who feed the world and warned of the costs of inaction. We were able at that time to finalize a farm bill—still the same farm bill a year later—and our livestock producers are continuing to work to rebuild their herds after multiple years of drought. Yet livestock disaster programs remain on hold. Then the devastating blizzard hit the Dakotas and Nebraska this year, and those producers were left with little Federal support—a problem we could have addressed a year ago.

All of us on the conference committee and every Member throughout Congress should be equally troubled if we leave this year without addressing the farm bill. I am committed to resolving these difficult differences in order to provide certainty and a forward-thinking farm bill that is responsible to Kansans and farmers and ranchers and consumers as well as taxpayers.

We have to end this environment here where this so-called nuclear option has really gotten us into a hole that we keep digging, whether we are trying to get a farm bill done, whether we are striving to improve the affordable health care act or repeal it, or whether we have a commission that nobody has heard of in the rules committee that is sitting doing something, but we know not really what or what to do with it.

I see the distinguished Senator from Louisiana, who I think would like to be recognized at this time, so I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 1610

Ms. LANDRIEU. Madam President, I see my good friend the Senator from North Dakota on the floor today, and I wish to yield to her to begin this very important discussion on the importance of flood insurance relief for the country. She has been an outstanding spokesperson and a true advocate to help us get this right, this Flood Insurance Program that can help sustain the program itself for the benefit of the taxpayers as well as for the people in North Dakota, Louisiana, Pennsylvania, New York, and New Jersey who depend on it so much. So let me turn to our leader, Senator HEITKAMP.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

Ms. HEITKAMP. Madam President, we are here today to talk about something that is critically important to very many middle-class families who enjoy home ownership across the country, and business ownership, and it is the truly bipartisan Homeowner Flood Insurance Affordability Act, which seeks to address the recent flood insurance rate escalations across the country.

This bill is measured, it is reasonable, and it allows for FEMA to complete a study on flood insurance affordability and provides Congress with assurance about FEMA's ability to accurately determine flood risk before implementing pieces of the Biggert-Waters Flood Insurance Reform Act. I think it is true in many cases that the Congress has good intentions. They passed the Biggert-Waters provisions, they passed the act, but implementation has been a nightmare. I don't think we are exaggerating in saying it has been a nightmare for very many of our community members, especially across the coastal areas. I think it is important that I speak as someone from a Plains State who has told people repeatedly that flood insurance is a huge impediment to success and to home ownership in North Dakota, in very many of my communities.

I wish to mention some of the provisions of the bill. The bill would delay a rate increase for the following properties: primary, non-repetitive loss residences that were grandfathered; all properties sold after July 6, 2012; and all property that purchased a new policy after that date. It is important that the folks out there who have already gotten these tremendous flood insurance bills understand that our effort is to make this bill retroactive to October 1 of this year so that those rate increases that were mandated by that date don't take effect.

The basement provision is something we have spent a lot of time educating other Members about. It is a provision that affects very many communities across the country, including 14 in North Dakota, where some of our largest communities have flood-proof basements. They have lived by the rules and they have done all that they should do, so they have been granted an exemption from flood insurance, taking a look at where the foundation is as opposed to where the basement floor is when they determine vulnerability. That basement exemption is in danger of being repealed by FEMA, and we want to make sure that whatever we do recognizes that when those homeowners have played by the rules, have done what is right and flood-proofed their basements, it is recognized in a flood insurance program.

Generally speaking, I came to the Senate to fight for North Dakotans. I have to imagine most of the Senators are here because they want to fight for the people of their States. A major way to do that is to protect American families and their homes and stop putting undue pressure on them. It is a simple idea, but it is proving much harder to implement than I would like.

Flooding is a reality far too often in North Dakota, and there are many other communities across the country that see the same kind of plains flooding. Just in the past few years we have seen communities such as Fargo, Minot, Grafton, and others impacted by severe flooding that has destroyed homes and businesses.

This fall flood insurance rates went up for millions of families. This puts families at risk. So many of them have to struggle to pay for flood insurance or they have to walk away, literally walk away from their investment in their home.

Biggert-Waters is having an immediate impact on homeowners in my State. I will give one example. There is a woman I know from Grafton, ND, named Alison Skari who, with her husband Kyle, purchased a home in that small community about a year ago. At the time, the flood insurance rate was $901 for $100,000 worth of coverage. But when the policy recently came up for renewal, their flood insurance skyrocketed to more than $4,200 a year. Let me repeat those statistics. Their flood insurance cost when they bought their home was at $901. Today their bill is $4,200—a 375-percent increase for the same amount of coverage. In an email to me, Allison expressed a desire to raise her children in Grafton, but unfortunately they no longer can afford their home—not with these new rates. She said had she and her husband known about these rates when they bought their home, they would never have purchased their home.

This story reinforces that we need to take a new look. We need to take a new look at this Flood Insurance Program. We need to take a new look at affordability of home ownership.

Everybody knows that in the last—certainly since 2008 we have seen a slow recovery in home ownership. We have tried to make sure people can realize the American dream, and a big part of that is, in fact, the owning of their own home. Yet here we are in the Congress making it virtually impossible for middle-class families to buy and live in and enjoy their homes. That was never the intention of the Biggert-Waters provision. The intention was to bring the Flood Insurance Program to a more reasonable, market-based evaluation.

But I don't think anyone in this body anticipated these dramatic and very devastating increases.

I believe we absolutely need to do something to send a message that we in this body are listening to the middle class. We are listening to the middle class. When every person who runs for office—in their campaign, I bet there isn't one person in this body who didn't say: I am there to help protect the middle class. This is our opportunity, in a bipartisan way, to step up and protect the middle class and to tell people that grasp of home ownership, that piece of the American dream is within their reach, and it is within their reach because we aren't doing devastating things here in Washington, DC.

I thank my great friend from Louisiana. As a new Member, I preside frequently on the floor of the Senate, and I think that if there has been a canary on this issue, that early bellwether whom we look to and who said we are going to have problems, it was Senator MARY LANDRIEU, who alerted this body from the very beginning, who knew these increases were coming and so ably advanced her leadership on this issue. I applaud her for that. I applaud Senator MENENDEZ and Senator SCHUMER and so many people on the other side who have worked with us to try to develop a bill that truly has bipartisan support. I urge this body to send a very important holiday present, a Christmas present to the middle class of America by passing this reform bill, by delaying these increases and making that dream of home ownership possible in the future.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

Ms. LANDRIEU. Madam President, I thank the Senator from North Dakota for her very kind and very generous comments. She underestimates her own tremendous leadership skills. Arriving here as a new Member, she jumped right into this issue. She didn't need a lot of prep work. She understands her State. She understands basements, which we don't have in Louisiana because if we dig down even a few inches, we will hit water. So I had to become very well educated by my good friends, the Senators from New York, New Jersey, and North Dakota, about true basements. It just goes to show that when we work together, we can come up with good legislation that can really help our people, give them relief, being in partnership with them, helping them to keep and strengthen the equity in their homes and businesses as well as do right by the taxpayer. So I thank the Senator very much for her kind comments.

I wish to through the Chair recognize the Senator from New York, who has been an absolutely outstanding advocate for the people of the east coast—particularly New York but the entire east coast in the aftermath of Sandy. It was so helpful to that region to bring them the relief they needed, which has worked, and I understand it is still going on and we have to do more. But if we don't fix this flood insurance issue, which, in fact, was a manmade disaster, it is going to make the natural disaster of Sandy that much worse.

I wish to ask Senator SCHUMER if he has any comments to add to what has already been said.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New York.

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, first, I wish to assure my colleagues that they don't have to be wearing a blue jacket to be supportive of this legislation, as the Senator from North Dakota, the Senator from Louisiana, and I happen to be wearing this afternoon.

Second, I thank my friend and colleague from Louisiana. What my friend from North Dakota said is exactly right. She has been the Paul Revere of this issue, running up and down the aisles of the Senate, if you will, letting people know—''flood insurance increases are coming; flood insurance increases are coming''—because she saw it in her home State. She has been a great leader, and I hope we will pass the measure she has helped so importantly to craft when it is offered a little later by my colleague from New Jersey.

I wish to say to her that she is exactly right about Sandy. We have families who were devastated by Sandy. They struggled to rebuild their homes. Then, all of a sudden, because of remapping and because of changes in the flood insurance law, they are hit with a flood insurance bill of $800, $900, $1,000. Let's make no mistake about it. These are not wealthy people. Lots of people in New York State who live along the water in Long Island and Queens and Brooklyn and Staten Island are working-class and middle-class people. Their homes are modest. Their jobs are modest. They can't afford $9,000 a year. For those who were told: Yours isn't going to rise, but when you sell your home it will, now they can't sell their homes.

There are some things that make the rest of the Nation scratch their heads in wonderment, saying: What the heck is going on in Washington, DC? There are too many things, and one of them is flood insurance. How can we demand that average, middle-class people pay up to, in some cases, $25,000 or $30,000 a year for a policy that is capped at $250,000? How can we have so many homeowners have to pay $5,000, $8,000, $10,000 when they can ill afford it? We cannot do that. That is why this legislation is so important. It is just wrong.

When we wrote the original Sandy bill, we put in an affordability provision, and there was supposed to be a study about how people could afford the insurance before any increases were put into effect. That did not happen.

I have to say, the people at FEMA are good people, but they do not understand affordability. They are not measuring affordability. They are not paying attention to affordability.

What is the job of Congress? One of our jobs—when an agency does not do what it is supposed to do—is for us to correct it and oversee it, and that is what has happened with FEMA and flood insurance.

So we call for a delay until an affordability study is done, until we can figure out a new way to avoid average folks, middle-class folks, from being forced to either not have flood insurance, abandon their homes, or not sell their homes when they desperately need to do so.

FEMA is saying: If we do not charge these people, the program will not be solvent. I will tell you something. If they continue to charge these rates, no one is going to buy flood insurance. People will drop out of the flood insurance program, and it will be even less solvent. So we have to come to a reasonable, thoughtful, and careful solution.

As the first two of us who have spoken have shown—and my colleagues from Louisiana, New Jersey, Florida, New Hampshire, who are all here to discuss this issue—this affects every part of the Nation. It does not just affect Florida, although they have hurricanes. It does not just affect Louisiana, although they have hurricanes and floods. It affects our great river basins—the Missouri and Mississippi River basins. It affects the west coast, where flash floods can be very, very dangerous. It affects any place that is near water, which is most of America.

We have so many issues. The maps that are drawn are way off base. I have areas in my State that are 5 miles from water and have never been flooded and are included in flood insurance. FEMA actually did not even measure the flood plains in Nassau County and imposed Suffolk County's flood plain. We had to force them to go back and start over.

There is so much wrong with the way the program is now existing that it must be put on hold so we can come up with something better than FEMA is doing.

So I hope my colleagues will support us. We have bipartisan support. The Senator from Georgia has been a great advocate. Others have been great advocates on the other side of the aisle. If you say to yourself: I am going to object because this is not affecting my State, believe me, it will. As FEMA draws maps in State after State across the country, the very same thing that is now afflicting North Dakota, Louisiana, New York, Florida, and New Jersey will afflict your State. You will be coming back to us 2 years from now saying: Hey, let's move that legislation.

Let's avoid that problem. Let's do what we have to do. Put this on hold, go back to the drawing board, and create a FEMA program that both works and is affordable. I believe we can, if this Senate and this House will give us the chance.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BROWN). The senior Senator from Florida is recognized.

Mr. NELSON. Mr. President, before the Senator from New York departs, I want to say this is a real-life example. In Pinellas County, FL, which is the county that houses Saint Petersburg and Clearwater, a current flood insurance premium for a homeowner: $4,000. A new flood insurance premium—10 times as much—$44,000.

Do you think that homeowner can afford that? Do you think that homeowner can now sell their house since that is the flood insurance premium that is facing a potential buyer? And, of course, the real estate market dries up.

So it is a question of affordability, and I merely underscore what the Senator has already said and what the great Senator from Louisiana is going to talk about; that is, that you have a pause, you get FEMA to do an affordability study, and then you phase this in over time.

It just so happens that 40 percent of these policies are in my State of Florida. We have more coastline than any other State, save for Alaska, and they are not afflicted by the same things we are, and they do not have a population of 20 million people. Lo and behold, our people are hurting, and we have to give them relief.

So I beg anybody in the Senate: Please, when this unanimous consent request comes up, we have to have this relief for our homeowners and for the real estate market.

The maps are a different question, and eventually we need to address the issue of the maps because they are obviously drawing some areas that are not flood prone. They are well above the flood stage, and somehow these maps have gotten misaligned. We can address that. But right now we have to address the affordability question.

This is no fooling time, and I beg the Senate to let this legislation go by unanimous consent. I am anxious to have my colleagues make their statements.

Mr. President, I am chairing the Aging Committee hearing right now. I look forward to the Senator from Massachusetts joining us after her statement.

So with that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The senior Senator from New Jersey is recognized.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, in deference to my colleague, who I understand may object—and although I have a statement—let me first precede it by making this request. As in legislative session, I ask unanimous consent that at a time to be determined by the majority leader, after consultation with the Republican leader, the banking committee be discharged from further consideration of S. 1610, the Homeowner Flood Insurance Affordability Act of 2013, and the Senate proceed to its consideration; that an amendment, which is at the desk, making technical changes to the bill, be agreed to; that no other amendments be in order to the bill; that there be up to 2 hours of debate equally divided between proponents and opponents of the bill; that upon the use or yielding back of time, the bill be read a third time and the Senate proceed to vote on passage of the bill; finally, the vote on passage be subject to a 60-affirmative-vote threshold.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Kansas.

Mr. ROBERTS. Mr. President, I object on behalf of the ranking member of the banking committee. This bill has not been through the committee process and would undo the important rate reforms to the National Flood Insurance Program that were put in place in the most recent flood reform bill to address the program's $25 billion debt to the taxpayer. We must ensure that all Members have the opportunity to understand and weigh in on the changes being made by this action. This unanimous consent request would bypass this important step in the legislative process, and I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I have to say, I am disappointed to hear an objection because this is a bipartisan effort that is being pursued in the Senate and the majority leader has been very gracious to offer us time to debate and vote on an important proposal. I am sure we will be back here again to try to achieve that. This is not a Republican bill or a Democratic bill. It is not a Republican or Democratic priority. It is a commonsense measure that has broad bipartisan support—exactly the type of support and cooperation the American people are yearning to see from their elected officials. More importantly, this legislation is critical to the lives of hundreds of thousands homeowners, and we should not simply let Senate procedure get in the way of finding solutions.

Let me just briefly speak in support of S. 1610, which is the Homeowners Flood Insurance Affordability Act that we just asked consent to bring to the floor. It is a bipartisan, bicameral piece of legislation that would help people afford flood insurance so they can stay in their homes and businesses can stay open—all the while preventing property values from plummeting.

At a time when there is far too little bipartisan cooperation, this bill stands as a notable exception. It currently is cosponsored by 23 of my colleagues, including 7 Republicans, representing States from all corners of the country.

It is supported by the National Association of Realtors, the National Association of Homebuilders, the American Bankers Association, and the Independent Community Bankers Association.

You have heard from several of my colleagues who have spoken to this issue—and there are others, such as Senator WARREN and my fellow colleague from New Jersey, Senator BOOKER, who I am proud to say has chosen this bill as the first piece of legislation to cosponsor in what I am sure will be a long and illustrious career in the Senate.

The reason for that broad support is because flood insurance is not just a coastal or Northeast issue, it is an issue that affects the entire country. Every State in the Nation has properties covered by the National Flood Insurance Program, and every State in the Nation will see premiums on some of these properties increase as a result of Biggert-Waters.

Some of these increases will be modest. Others are going to be prohibitively expensive and act as a de facto eviction notice for homeowners who have lived in their homes and played by the rules their entire lives. We certainly know this because we are already hearing from our constituents, and many more of our colleagues are hearing the same desperate cries from across the country, and many more will hear them as flood insurance maps get outlined by FEMA under the legislation, as renewals come up, and all of a sudden they are going to hear an outcry from their homeowners, who are going to say: This ultimately creates a set of circumstances for me where I am going to lose my home.

The value of their homes will be dramatically reduced. Their ability to sell it will be dramatically altered, and they will, in essence, have taken what they have worked a lifetime to achieve and have it become a human catastrophe—made by the Congress.

This is going to drive property values down. The housing market is still struggling to recover, and we all know that declining property values have a domino effect, causing neighborhood properties to decline in value, which, in turn, hurts the broader economy.

We need to understand the impact that these dramatic changes in Biggert-Waters will have on the housing market before it is too late. We need to understand the impact these rate reforms will have on program participation, which is already dismally low. In fact, recent reports suggest that only about 18 percent of properties in flood zones participate in the program. If rates are raised too high and too quickly, people will simply opt to drop their insurance, decreasing participation, and the risk pool in the National Flood Insurance Program will ultimately feel the consequences.

One study has shown that for every 10-percent increase in premiums, program participation decreases by approximately 2.6 percent; and the sharper the increases, the higher the proportion of dropouts.

As with any flood insurance fund, the smaller the risk pool, the greater the risk. So increasing rates could have the

unintended consequences of actually making the program less solvent.

Reduced program participation would also increase the amount taxpayers are on the hook for in disaster assistance payments. Since FEMA grants, SBA loans, and other disaster assistance are reserved for unmet needs, more uninsured homeowners mean more disaster assistance payouts.

We should be incentivizing people to purchase insurance so they have skin in the game and they will be motivated to take proactive mitigation measures—not pricing them out of insurance so they are forced to rely on taxpayer-funded disaster assistance.

There is no question that we need to reform the National Flood Insurance Program in order to put it on a long-term path towards solvency and sustainability. But, unfortunately, Biggert-Waters forces changes that are far too large and far too fast. It requires FEMA to increase rates dramatically, even before FEMA knows the scope of these changes or how they will impact program participation.

Think about that for a second. We are making dramatic changes in policy which could impact more than 5.5 million policyholders and have ripple effects throughout the housing market in our entire economy before we even know the extent of these changes or their impact.

I have heard from countless New Jerseyans, many who have come to me in tears, who are facing this predicament. These are hardworking middle-class families who played by the rules, purchased flood insurance responsibly, and are now being priced out of their home.

That is why we collectively introduced the Homeowners Flood Insurance Affordability Act that would impose a moratorium on the phaseout of subsidies and grandfathers included in Biggert-Waters for most primary residences until FEMA completes the study—that I offered as an amendment that was included in the legislation—completes the affordability study that was mandated in the law and proposes a regulatory framework to address the issues found in the study.

So we are going ahead with all of these actions and all of these increases without—without—knowing the consequences of that study.

It would also require FEMA to certify in writing that it has implemented a flood mapping approach that utilizes sound scientific and engineering methodologies before certain rate reforms are implemented. We saw this in New Jersey where, in fact, large swaths of communities were put in what we call the V zone, which is the most consequential zone in the opening maps. But when we pressed FEMA and brought information to them, those universes were dramatically reduced.

The difference between being in that V zone and not can mean the difference between being able to continue to own your home or not. So we believe that this legislation is critical.

Why do we come and ask unanimous consent? Why do we ask unanimous consent? Why did we ask unanimous consent? Why will we continue to ask unanimous consent? Because there is an urgency of ''now.'' If we do not act, and we go out of session and we come back next year, unless we get to this early on and make it retroactive, we are going to see the consequences of this take place across the landscape of this country. That is why we have Members from coast to coast; that is why we have Members from the South; that is why we have Members from the Midwest who all understand the consequences of not acting. That is why we have taken the unusual step, on a bipartisan basis, to ask for that unanimous consent request.

For any property sales that occur during this period, the homebuyer would continue to receive the same treatment as the previous owner of the property unless they trigger another provision in Biggert-Waters not covered by my bill.

For prospective homebuyers, the certainty that they will not see their rate dramatically increase simply because they purchased a home is critically important to maintaining property values.

Also, this new legislation would give FEMA more flexibility to complete the affordability study.

It would reimburse qualifying homeowners for successful appeals of erroneous flood map determinations.

It would give communities fair credit for locally funded flood protection systems.

It would continue the fair treatment afforded to communities with floodproof basement exemptions.

It would provide for a FEMA ombudsman to advocate for and provide information to policyholders.

Just as important as what this bill would do, it is also important to note what this bill would not do.

This legislation would not stop the phase out of taxpayer funded subsidies for vacation homes and properties that have been repetitively flooded. It would not encourage new construction in environmentally sensitive or flood-prone areas. And it would not stop most of the important reforms included in Biggert-Waters.

This legislation simply provides temporary relief to a targeted group of property owners who played by the rules and are now poised to see their most valuable asset become worthless, all through no fault of their own.

This bill does not include everything I wanted and I know there were many other ideas that other cosponsors wanted to include. But in order to reach a true consensus, we limited the provisions in this bill to those that had broad, bipartisan support. That is why we are here today—Democrats and Republicans—calling for debate and a vote on this vital piece of legislation.

I must say I am very disappointed to hear objection from the other side of the aisle.

My friend the majority leader has been very gracious to offer us time to debate and vote on this important proposal and we will be back here day after day to try to do that.

Because as I said before, this is not a Republican bill or a Democrat bill—it is not a Republican priority or a Democrat priority. It is a commonsense measure that has broad bipartisan support, exactly the type of support and cooperation the American people are yearning to see from their elected officials.

More importantly, this legislation is critical to the lives of hundreds of thousands of homeowners. We should not let arguments about Senate procedure get in the way of finding solutions to their problems.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, there are several other Members. Senator MENENDEZ is the leader of our efforts. He and Senator ISAKSON have joined and have put together an extraordinary coalition. I would like to read the names into the RECORD because it is a testimony. In a place that cannot get three Members to agree on anything, we have over 20 Members who agree to change the Biggert-Waters law. I want to read this into the RECORD and then ask through the Chair for the Senator from Massachusetts—both Senators are here—the senior Senator to be recognized for just a moment and then the junior Senator to speak on this issue.

But Senator MENENDEZ and Senator ISAKSON are our leads—again, New Jersey and Georgia. They are two very different States but have very similar challenges. They have people—middle-class families, small business owners—who have poured their life savings into homes and businesses, only to be destroyed by a piece of legislation that had great intentions but disastrous results. We do not have a lot of time to fix this. We need to do this before this body leaves, which is next week.

Myself, Senator COCHRAN, Senator MERKLEY, Senator VITTER, Senator HOEVEN, Senator SCOTT from South Carolina, Senator WICKER, Senator HEITKAMP from North Dakota, Senator SCHUMER, Senator GILLIBRAND, Senator MARKEY, Senator WARREN, Senator NELSON from Florida, Senator BEGICH from Alaska, Senator MANCHIN from West Virginia.

There is no ocean anywhere near West Virginia, but they have many middle-class families who are getting caught up in a quagmire here. This bill is the only bill that can release them and save taxpayers money. Senator CASEY from Pennsylvania, Senator KLOBUCHAR, Senator BOOKER, Senator GRAHAM—who is also on the floor—and our newest cosponsor today, Senator LISA MURKOWSKI from Alaska.

This is a very unusual coalition. I have been here a long time now. I have hardly seen a coalition this broad and diverse. So clearly we have something meaningful to say that needs change.

Please let us not let procedures and pride, bad tempers, keep us from doing what we know we need to do for our people.

I thank Senator WARREN who has been a tremendous help to us in putting this bill together, and might I add that it costs nothing. There is no score on this bill. So to anyone that could object because it costs the taxpayers: Nada. It does not cost anything. It is a zero score. We have done it that way to be respectful of all of the different opinions. But it will help to give us relief.

Through the Chair I would like to ask Senator WARREN to add her terrific voice and perspective on how it is affecting Massachusetts, one of our most important States.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The senior Senator from Massachusetts is recognized.

Ms. WARREN. Mr. President, I rise to join my colleagues in urging support for S. 1610, the Homeowner Flood Insurance Affordability Act of 2013. This is a bipartisan bill that will help homeowners across our country who are getting hit with the newly revised flood maps and increased flood insurance premiums.

I am very pleased to join colleagues on both sides of the aisle to call for this commonsense delay which gives FEMA time to get this right. I thank Senator MENENDEZ who has been a tremendous leader, Senator ISAKSON, Senator LANDRIEU, who has gotten in there and gotten us all mobilized, Senator COCHRAN, many others of the cosponsors of this bill for their leadership and their commitment to work on this important issue.

I also thank my partner in all things, Senator MARKEY, for the work he has done on this bill and for giving me the chance to speak first here so we could get going. Families purchase flood insurance to prevent the loss of their homes. But now many families fear that the price of flood insurance could be just as devastating as any storm. You cannot protect someone's home by pricing them out of it. Yet that is exactly what is taking place around the country. Congress changed the National Flood Insurance Program to move toward a more market-based system that more accurately reflected the true cost and risks of flood damage.

This is a well-intentioned bill, but, unfortunately, homeowners are being blindsided by high rate increases and new flood zone maps. Many families are learning for the first time from news reports and letters that their mortgage companies are sending that they must purchase flood insurance. This is simply not an acceptable way of informing the public that flood insurance bills are skyrocketing.

When FEMA released these flood maps this year and last, they knew they were placing hundreds of thousands of homeowners into a flood zone for the very first time. It is critical that these maps be spot on and correct. But many people do not trust many of the new changes, and their concerns are growing by the day. In fact, a recent independent review conducted by coastal scientists at the behest of my colleague, Congressman BILL KEATING, concluded that FEMA used outdated wave methodology better suited for the Pacific coast when they drafted new flood maps for Massachusetts.

They believe this resulted in FEMA overpredicting the flooding that could occur from once-in-a-century storms for much of our State. We need to pass this bill to give the government the time it needs to make sure that the maps are accurate, reliable, and reflect the best available scientific data.

We also need to make sure that hard-working families who play by the rules can afford these policies. The Homeowners Flood Insurance Affordability Act that I have proudly cosponsored will provide relief to homeowners who built to code and were later remapped into a higher risk area.

Furthermore, this critical bill will delay rate increases until FEMA completes the affordability study that was mandated by the Biggert-Waters Flood Insurance Reform Act, and until subsequent affordability guidelines are enacted.

Homeowners are facing flood insurance premium increases that can cost $500, $1,000, even more per month. Most hard-working families and seniors do not have that kind of extra money on hand to spend on flood insurance premiums they never knew they were going to need.

FEMA has a lot of work to do.

In the meantime, these families should not be hit with high costs when they challenge the flood map and win their appeal. Our bill will help address this injustice and will allow FEMA to utilize the National Flood Insurance Fund to reimburse people who successfully appeal a map determination. It also gives FEMA the added financial incentive to get those maps right the first time.

I am pleased to join colleagues on both sides of the aisle in this call for a commonsense delay which will give FEMA time to get this right. I urge my Senate colleagues to support this much needed relief for homeowners. I thank Senator MARKEY for his leadership. I thank Senator LANDRIEU for her amazing leadership, and I thank all of my colleagues who are ready to move on something that is common sense and very much needed by families across this country.

I yield for my colleague from Massachusetts, Senator MARKEY.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts.

Mr. MARKEY. I thank the Senator for her leadership. She and I have met with people all across the State of Massachusetts who are fearful of the impact that this can have upon their ability to live in their own homes, to sell their homes, to continue to operate their businesses, to sell their businesses.

This is a fundamental issue for our State. Senator WARREN and I bring this concern to the floor even as we know that it is a concern that is felt all across the country. It is Louisiana. It is New Jersey. It is South Carolina. It is West Virginia. It is the coastlines of our country. Yes, it is.

The warmer the climate becomes, the warmer the oceans become; the warmer the oceans, the higher the tides; the more devastating the storms, the more changes that take place in terms of the impact on the homes, the businesses, all along the coastline.

But climate change does not only affect the coastal areas. It is affecting our whole country—the whole planet. There is a huge change which is taking place. That is why we are out here. We are out here because of climate change. The storm that hit New Jersey, Hurricane Sandy, was devastating. We saw the courage of the people of New Jersey and New York in responding to that storm. But just with a couple of changes in the direction of that storm, it could have wiped out everywhere from Cape Cod up to Newburyport, Maine, and New Hampshire.

But for a small change in that storm, it could have been down in Delaware, Virginia, wiping out that coastline. But for the grace of God go the States that we represent. The same thing is true all across the country.

We know that the pollution we pump into the sky heats the water and the air. It gives storms more power. We know this scientifically. With more powerful and more frequent storms, we realize that this tragedy is lapping right at the doors of every citizen. We have to do something to prevent it from becoming worse.

But at the same time, we also have to realize that these families are innocent victims. They did not have anything to do with the policies that did not deal with climate change for a generation, that ignored the science. They are now dealing with the consequences of a failure to deal with that issue. We cannot allow the failure to act to be borne by those who are the least able to afford it.

That is what is happening. It is going to be innocent Americans who now have to suffer because we did not have the political will to deal with this issue of climate change.

I have heard, along with Senator WARREN, from people all over my State. I have one business that relocated several years ago thinking that was going to satisfy the need to protect against climate change, against the change in the flood plain. Now, under the new plan, they will have to move the business again.

It is unsustainable long term for any businesses, any family to think about living in these kinds of areas unless we begin to think through how we are going to adjust to this law that is on the books which will have an almost immediate impact upon families all over our country.

We need to fix the flood insurance provisions that would have devastating economic impacts on our coastal communities. That is why I am proud to support the legislation of the Senator from Louisiana, the Senator from Georgia, Senator ISAKSON, Senator MENENDEZ, Senator MERKLEY, and everyone who has worked on this issue.

We have to ensure that we address the issue of affordability for these homeowners, affordability for these businesses in terms of the increase of the flood insurance rate caused by the new flood maps and ensure that we put that before any crippling flood insurance rate increases.

We have to deal with affordability first. If affordability is not going to be dealt with, then there is going to be a devastation that is felt by millions of homeowners and businesses across this country.

Climate change is real. It is here. It is dangerous, but the fear of rising floodwaters should not be compounded by the fear of an unaffordable spike in insurance premiums for homeowners and businesses across this country.

I thank my colleagues for all their work on this issue. It is an indispensable part of the business of this Congress this year to pass this legislation. We must find a way to work together before we leave in order to pass this legislation.

I call upon all of my colleagues to work together with us. This is as bipartisan as it gets in the Senate. We have to find a way.

I congratulate the Senator from Louisiana for all of her great work.

I yield back.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

Ms. LANDRIEU. I see the Senator from South Carolina on the floor to speak, but I wish to give some concluding remarks in this very important hour about this very important issue. We are down to the wire, and we do not have any time left to provide relief to homeowners and business owners all over this country.

About 1 hour ago there was an objection registered from the Republican ranking member of the banking committee. I have a great deal of respect for that particular Member. I hope he will consider the tragic ramifications of his objection for millions of homeowners and businesses around the country and work with us over the next few days to mitigate any of his objections so we can move this bill to the floor and provide 2 hours of debate. We will accept, those of us in our coalition, a 60-vote threshold.

Let me remind colleagues that a hearing was held in the banking committee by Senator MERKLEY, who chairs the subcommittee. This bill has been discussed for hours and hours in committee, in public. There are hundreds of stakeholder groups led by, I am very proud to say, GNO, Inc., Greater New Orleans, Inc., a very broad coalition of business owners and parish residents. They reached out across the country, down the coast, the gulf coast, to the east coast, to the west coast, North Carolina, to the good Senator on the floor from South Carolina, reaching out in areas in the Midwest and up in the Northwest.

The reason they did that is because there are new flood maps going into effect in all of these places. I call attention to the diagram of flood maps in the United States. In purple, these were the flood maps that were in effect as of July 2012. In the green, these are proposed flood maps that have been introduced. We can see how many green designations there are.

In the gold color, there are new flood maps possible. There is no State that is going to escape these new flood maps. As Senator ELIZABETH WARREN said, they are inaccurate. They don't have the capability, the finances, the resources to produce—or the technology, in some cases—accurate flood maps. There have been a record number of mistakes made that we have provided for from the public testimony.

In addition, I wish to show a map of where levees are. There are many levees. I was surprised, myself, having become an expert on levees, I thought. No, I am not the expert I thought I was because I did not realize how many levees there were in other States. I have been so focused on mine that broke in 52 places and almost destroyed a great international American city, New Orleans. We are on the mouth of the Mississippi River, and I am well aware of the levee system that was one of the great engineering feats ever in the world, on the planet. It keeps the Mississippi River in its channel so we can have the great commerce we have had that helped build this great Nation. I am well aware of the great story about that.

I was not aware of the tremendous flooding risk in California, in Arizona, in New Mexico, and in Montana, of all places. I knew about Arkansas, Illinois, and St. Louis because of the Mississippi River up to Minneapolis.

Look at Pennsylvania. I was shocked to see so many flooding areas in the State of Pennsylvania.

I wish to say it is not only a coastal issue, it is a national issue. We are the national Congress. These rates are going up now and it needs to be fixed now.

I hope the Republican opposition will think clearly about their objection, the ramifications it will have, and find a way to say yes—find a way to say yes.

The bill that Senator MENENDEZ and Senator ISAKSON are offering costs zero. It helps millions of people and ultimately will make the program fiscally sound.

As the Senator from New York said so eloquently and so accurately: If you price people out of the program, there will be no one to support the program. The program will default, taxpayers will still have to pick up the debt associated with that program, and then we will also have millions of people losing their homes and their businesses. It makes no sense. It makes no financial sense.

I am not going to speak too much longer, but I do wish to state I am very happy, as an American, there are many newspapers we can read. There are many blogs, a lot of radio shows, and all sorts of different opinions. We have to read a lot, think a lot, and get different views to find the truth.

I am going to read the first paragraph of the Wall Street Journal because they need to listen to a couple of other bloggers or writers because they are way off base. The Wall Street Journal said last week: ''Federal flood insurance is a classic example of powerful government aiding the powerful, encouraging the affluent to build mansions near the shore.''

That statement is so inaccurate it is laughable.

The people I represent in Louisiana—we hardly have a beach. I don't know if anyone has visited Louisiana. We don't have beaches. We have marshes. No one I know who lives in New Orleans or Baton Rouge is anywhere near a beach. I am going to read a letter from a very affluent and powerful person:

> I am a 66-year-old woman and have lived in the same house in Broadmoor since 1974.

I knew this neighborhood when the letter arrived at my desk because that is the neighborhood where I grew up and still reside. There is not a beach within miles of Broadmoor.

She continues:

> I lived there with my family, raised a son who also lives and owns a house in Broadmoor—

It is a very middle-class neighborhood that we come from.

Continuing:

> —and plan to stay in my home for the remainder of my life. I live on a very strict budget and have just this month received my first Social Security payment. If something is not done to change the law that will potentially raise my flood insurance by the thousands, it will not be possible for me to keep my home nor sell it.

I wish to have the Wall Street Journal editorial board hear this. This is not a millionaire mansion on a beach. This is a 66-year-old woman who just received her first Social Security check. If this law is not changed by the 100 Members of this body in the next few days, she can either stay in her house or sell her house.

Please do not lecture to us from some high place in some big corporate office about Senators on the floor of the Senate trying to fight for powerful interests for people in mansions who live on fancy beaches. That is not what this bill is about.

I have hundreds of pictures. If the Wall Street Journal or any newspaper wants to editorialize about this, please check my Web site, ''My Home Story.'' I have hundreds of pictures and other Senators have hundreds of pictures. I don't see a mansion.

All I see are cries of people who say: Wait a minute. My house has never

flooded. I live in a simple neighborhood. I am a simple person. I am an American who works hard, and you are running me out of my home.

The bill that passed, Biggert-Waters, was well intentioned but drafted inappropriately and has some very pernicious guidelines or rules in it that can only be changed by Congress. Some people wish to think that FEMA can wave a magic wand and make it work. FEMA cannot wave a magic wand. We have to do our job as Senators. I hope the Senate will do its job.

We cannot agree on everything that needs to be fixed, I understand. There are many arguments about other things that some people think need to be fixed and others don't. But I don't know of anyone nor have I heard anyone on the floor give us one good, solid reason that the Menendez bill shouldn't pass, such as: I don't like section 1, I don't like section 2, I don't like section 10, maybe section 5—not one. It is all posturing.

Please let us get over the posturing and help people who live nowhere near a beach, who are going to lose their homes and need us to act. I believe we can do it. As I said, we have great Republican leadership and great Democratic leadership.

In closing, the Senator on the floor has my great respect. Also, Senator ISAKSON, who is the lead Republican Senator, is known in this body as an expert on real estate and finance. He is very clear in his appreciation and understanding that the real estate market is going to be shaken to its core, as well as homebuilders and community bankers who are holding mortgages on these 5 million properties.

We have come too far. We have come too far in restoring this housing market. This bill was well intentioned but poorly drafted, stuck into a conference committee report at the last minute, not with as much oversight as we should have given. We can fix it. Let's do this.

I thank the Senator for being so generous. It is a very important issue. I am prepared to stay here for as long as it takes before Christmas—even, I hate to say, up to Christmas Eve, as I wish to get home for a little bit of time, but this needs to be fixed before we leave for Christmas.

The House can come back in January, take up this bill, and we can send it to the President's desk early in February, make it retroactive, and give people relief. This is not about helping out powerful interests and millionaires on the beach. This is about helping many Americans who have done nothing wrong and everything right. They have been in their homes since the 1960s, 1950s, in some cases from the 1800s, and are going to be priced out of their home. Their equity will be stolen from them by a poorly drafted piece of legislation.

We can do better and we should.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BLUMENTHAL). The Senator from South Carolina.

Mr. GRAHAM. Mr. President, I rise today to address the nomination of Cornelia Pillard for the DC Circuit.

My colleagues, I have enjoyed my time in the Senate very much, although we live in a very difficult time. Politically, there are a lot of influences on individual Senators and parties and the body as a whole, so these are very difficult times. I can only imagine writing the Constitution today. I always thought that would be a good ''Saturday Night Live'' skit: Go back to Philadelphia hall and have all the satellite trucks parked outside and the bloggers and talk radio, moveon.org—fill in the blank—all putting pressure on our Founding Fathers not to do this or that. We live in different times.

It is absolutely good that people have a voice and influence and create organizations to advocate their cause. There seems to be an organization for almost every aspect of the economy. So lobbying the government, having a say about legislation, trying to push your representatives to do something you think is good for the country is very much a part of democracy, but eventually we have to govern.

Democracy is a journey, sort of like when you are on vacation or you are driving to a place with your kids and they always ask: Are we there yet? But democracy is not an end state, it is a process. Democracy is really about protecting losers, not so much winners. Winners tend to do well in any system. Democracy protects the loser by having a rule of law, a process that says: If you lose the election or you are in the minority in a body, there will be rules there to give you a voice.

One of the problems in the Mideast and throughout the world is that people are afraid to lose. In the Mideast it is a winner-take-all environment. The reason there are so many militias is that people don't trust the police or the government to be fair to their sect or their tribe, so they arm themselves, believing that if they don't take care of themselves, nobody else will. But that just leads to an endless state of conflict.

So democracy is really a process, and it is designed to ensure that losers in a democratic process will still have basic rights. You can lose the election and not get fired. It is illegal to fire somebody because they are in the opposite party, unless it is a political job where one expects that to happen. You don't lose your right to speak up because you lost the election.

When you find yourself in the minority in politics, it is important that you have a say. It is also important that the majority has the ability, having won the election, to do certain things—to run the place, for lack of better words.

The Senate is an unusual body in traditional democracy. Parliamentarian systems are different from what we have set up. You have two houses in most places, such as the House of Lords. I don't know what power it has, but it is not too great. The parliamentary system is where you have to form coalitions. At the end of the day it is a completely different setup than we have here, where the party in charge, if they can form a big enough coalition, can basically just run the place.

The House is a winner-take-all body. If you are in the majority in the House, you can decide what bills to bring to the floor, what amendments will be allowed on those bills, and how long to debate those bills. You have an almost absolute dictatorial ability to run the House. You determine everything. The minority has some say but not a whole lot. The House is sort of gang warfare. I have been there and love the institution. You will find that majorities will be fighting among themselves a lot in the House because that is where the action is in the House.

I have been in the House, and I have been in the Senate. I loved being in the House, and I understood the way the rules worked—that if you were in the minority, what came to the floor was determined by the majority, what amendments were in order was determined by the majority, and that is just the way it was.

When I was in the House, we would pass one measure after another that would go to the Senate and never be heard from again, and that was frustrating. But the older you get, you sort of realize maybe some of the things you wanted were not in the best interest of the country as a whole. And the fact that you knew that if it went to the Senate there would be a filtering process, unlike in the House, became somewhat reassuring over time.

House majorities are more partisan, generally speaking. They are influenced by 2-year election cycles. It is a more passionate body because you are always up for election and the winner takes all. And when you win in the House, the people who got you there expect you to do things consistent with your party's agenda. Nothing wrong with that.

In the Senate there has been a conscious effort to put some brakes on that kind of governing. When you send a bill to the Senate, you still, to this day, have to get 60 votes to bring the legislation to the floor and to get cloture, and the minority has the ability to say not only whether they want the bill to come to the floor, with a certain amount of amendments, but then they can negotiate with our friends in the majority to get the amendments we want and to allow the legislation to come forward. There are probably a lot of times when Republicans in the House voted understanding that this idea wouldn't make it through the Senate and that was probably OK.

Here is what I feel. A lot of my colleagues have talked about Ms. Pillard, the nominee, being a radical judge and

being out of the mainstream. I don't want to get into that. All I can say is that my view of a Presidential appointment is for the Senate to provide advice and consent—constitutionally required—but to recognize that the President won the election and the Senate has the advise and consent powers, not the House.

I have found myself in all kinds of judge fights since I have been here. I was a lawyer before I was a politician. I love the law. What I love about the law is that, in theory, it is a place where the poorest guy, the most unpopular person can still get a fair shake. Of course, that wouldn't happen in a political environment. It is a place where the richest guy or gal in town doesn't have to pay because they can afford to, only because they have a legal responsibility to. I love the idea of an independent judiciary, a jury of one's peers, protecting people's interests in a way politics never could.

I would argue that the strength of the rule of law in this country has been our great saving grace. Elections happen all over the Mideast. Saddam Hussein got 90-some percent. We haven't been able to get there yet. I would argue that electing Saddam Hussein was a joke, that it is the institutions of government that really do provide freedom for people. An independent judiciary has been a Godsend to our country. It is not perfect by any means, but it was the courts that basically broke the stronghold of segregation because politically it would have taken far longer to get there.

At the end of the day, in Bush v. Gore, maybe one of Vice President Gore's finest moments contributing to democracy was his acceptance of the ruling of the court. He fought like crazy, he lost a national election by a few hundred votes, all of his supporters are telling him they did this here and they did that there, and the next thing you know the Supreme Court rules 5 to 4, and he graciously accepted the decision.

What has happened here is that the rules of the Senate have been changed in a very dramatic way for the first time really in 200-some years. Our colleagues on the other side decided that we would no longer require 60 votes to get a nomination to the floor or to approve a judge. Now it is majority rule—majority rule on judicial nominations, except Supreme Court and executive appointments.

A lot of average people might say: Well, they won the election; why isn't 51 enough? My response is this: I think we all understand the benefits of being able to slow things down that come out of the House. And having to pick up some votes from the other side to get the 60 to pass legislation has probably saved the country a lot of heartache in terms of emotional legislation coming through the House to the Senate that would never make it into law. A lot of things I wanted have been killed in the Senate, and a lot of things I hoped never would see the light of day have died in the Senate. So it kind of works out.

When it comes to judges, I have tried very hard to make sure that Republican and Democratic Presidents are treated fairly. I do not believe it is my job as a Senator from South Carolina to vote or block an appointment because I wouldn't have chosen that judge.

I remember during the Bush Presidency there was a wholesale filibuster of Bush's judicial nominations, and we were thinking about doing the nuclear option. But seven Democrats and seven Republicans said: Wait a minute. Unless there is an extraordinary circumstance, we shouldn't filibuster judges. An extraordinary circumstance really is about qualifications or something unusual.

I can say to my Democratic colleagues that we have denied two judicial picks by not allowing cloture. If advise and consent means anything, it means that, on occasion, you can say no. So there have been only two.

As to the DC Circuit Court, this dispute about how many judges there should be on the DC Circuit Court has been going on at least for a decade—ever since I have been here. The Bush administration wanted to add judges to the DC Circuit because that is the circuit all appeals go to when government regulation is challenged by somebody in the private sector, an individual or a business. If you want to sue about ObamaCare regulations or the detention policy or the NSA's programs, it goes to the DC Circuit. So every President, quite frankly, would like to have an advantage there because it protects their administration's policies.

I guess what I would say is that changing the rules because we have said no to two picks—outside of the DC Circuit—was, quite frankly, irresponsible, and it is going to change the Senate forever.

As to the DC Circuit, no one can say this debate hasn't been going on before we all got here. Senator GRASSLEY has been the most consistent guy in the world about the DC Circuit, even when Republicans were in charge. There are more needs out there. These judges are fine people. They could be put in the other spots where the need is greater.

But we are where we are. So our colleagues decided, after two—I don't know how many have been approved, but two have been denied—enough is enough on the judge side, along with the attempt to grow the court in the DC Circuit.

We have had disputes about executive nominations. I remember Ambassador Bolton. And MEL WATT—really, honest to God, I like Mel. He is a great guy. I just don't think he is the right choice for Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. And to my colleagues here, you are all wonderful people, but there is not one person in the Senate whom I would pick for that job because it has a very technical requirement to it.

So here we are.

Very quickly—and then I will turn it over to Senator GRASSLEY—what does this matter in the long term? I think the first casualty of this rules change is going to be the judiciary itself, and here is what I mean by that. Now that we don't have to cross the aisle to pick up a few votes to get to 60 when there is a disagreement—and these are very rare; we don't filibuster everybody; they are fairly rare—we are going to have more ideological-driven picks on judicial nominations because once the filtering device of having to at least talk to the other side is removed, once that no longer exists, the pressure in the conference to pick the most ideologically pure, hardnosed, fire-breathing liberal or conservative is going to be immense.

So what my colleagues have done is they have changed the face of the judiciary probably forever. And shame on you. I think that is going to be your legacy that will stand out long after all of us have gone because I don't see how you go back and put this genie in the bottle.

I think we are going to find that judicial selections in the future are going to be those whom the most rabid partisans are going to pick—the most faithful to the cause, not the most faithful to the law.

I don't know what it is like on the Democratic side, but I can tell you what it will be like on the Republican side.

There are a lot of people out there who have a list of judges they want to see on the court—yesterday. Some of these people are going to be tough for you to swallow, and I am sure you will do the same to us.

What you are doing is making the majority self-regulated. There is no longer the excuse, for lack of a better word: I can't ''push'' this person through because I have to get somebody in. Those who want to make sure they are picking the best person who is not an ideologue, you are going to have a hard time of it.

I think the judiciary is the biggest casualty over time, only equal to the Senate itself. It will not be long—and I don't know how long it will be—before the rules change for Supreme Court picks, because there will be replacements of several members of the Supreme Court in the next decade. That is just the way the life is. There will be opposition from the party out of power. There will be frustration. Somebody will be blocked that makes the party in power mad and they are going to change the rules. That is just going to happen. We are now about outcomes. We are not about process.

The Senate is slowly but surely becoming the House, where winner takes all and ends justify the means: Anything you can do over there, we will do over here. That is just the way it is going to be.

It will not be much longer until we have a Senate and a House and a White

House in one party—as happens every now and then—and there is going to be a centerpiece of legislation that has been the Holy Grail to that party that is an absolute nightmare to the other side; it is going to pass the House on a party-line vote, it is going to come to the Senate, and somebody is going to get frustrated and say: I have 51-plus votes. I may have 57 votes. I don't have 60. And they are going to change the rule on legislation because the pressure to do it, now that we have gone down this road, is going to be immense. I am by no means perfect. But when this happened on our watch, I tried to find a way to avoid it. But we are where we are.

Finally, about ObamaCare. Let me tell you from a Member of Congress point of view something you should consider. All of us are Federal employees and we get a subsidy for our health care premiums similar to every other fellow employee. It is not a unique deal to Congress. If you are a member of the Federal Government, you get up to 72 percent of your premium subsidized. Other employers do that, but it is a darned good deal that is available to all Federal employees.

Again, I compliment Senator GRASSLEY. He said: If we are going to have ObamaCare, we ought to be in it. We, the Congress, and our staffs. Under the law that was passed—I think Senator GRASSLEY was the originator of this idea—Members of Congress and our staffs have to go into the exchanges. But we have the ability to go into the District of Columbia exchange, and the law is written such—and every Member of Congress who takes this subsidy is entitled to do it. I don't blame them one bit. You have to go into the exchange, and your premiums are going to go up, but the subsidy will continue.

Senator VITTER believes, and so do I, that because we are leaders we should take the road less traveled and experience more pain than those who follow. So I have been of the opinion that if you are going to change this law, the Congress should not only go into the exchange, we shouldn't get a subsidy any longer. Why? Because most Americans are going to lose their employer-sponsored health care as it exists today—maybe not in total but their premiums are going to go up dramatically because employers cannot afford to pay the increased premium under the old system. So they will either lose employer-sponsored health care and become an individual or they are going to have to pay more because their employer is in a bind and they can't afford the subsidies that once existed—because premiums for employers, similar to individuals, are going to go through the roof.

I wish to give an example about what I have chosen to do. I have chosen not to go into the DC exchange but to enroll in South Carolina because that is where I live. Enrolling in the South Carolina exchange, I will not get a subsidy. That was my choice. I accept that choice. Why am I doing this? To try to lead by example what I think is coming to a lot of Americans in some form or another.

So here is what happens with me: Under the old system, I was paying $186 a month. If I went into the DC exchange, my premiums would go up but not a huge amount. But now that I am enrolling as a 58-year-old short White guy in South Carolina, my premiums are based on the county I live in and my age, with no subsidy, because I make too much money to get a subsidy. People at my income level don't deserve a subsidy because it would bankrupt the Nation more than we are already doing if we did that.

Under ObamaCare in South Carolina, I chose the Bronze plan. Why? It is the cheapest one I could find. I am not independently wealthy. I make a very good living as a Member of the Senate, almost $180,000, but at the end of the day here is what is coming my way:

My premium goes up to $572 a month from $186. That is $400 a month, almost, a 200-percent increase.

Under my old health plan if I went to the doctor, I paid a $20 copay. Under the new Bronze plan, I pay $50.

Under the old plan if I saw a specialist, it was $30. Under the new plan, it is $100.

My old deductible was $350 a year. My new deductible is $6,350—a $6,000 increase.

My old plan had a $5,000 out-of-pocket limit. The new one is $6,350.

You also get rated not just on your age but where you live. I am paying $70 a month more than a county that is 40 miles away.

The bottom line is that what I am experiencing a lot of other people are going to experience. I am paying a lot more for a lot less. How can that be?

When you are told that you get more and you pay less and a politician tells you that, you ought to be very leery. That hasn't worked out in my life: You are going to get a lot more, but you are going to pay less.

The reason these premiums are going up is that all the uninsured—and I want to provide coverage to the uninsured as much as anybody else—get insurance coverage with a subsidy. Who is paying those subsidies? The rest of us.

So we are going to see next year employers having to back out of employer-sponsored health care either in total or in part. What we are going to find throughout this country is that people who had employer-sponsored health care, just like the individual markets, their premiums are going to skyrocket—maybe not as much as mine, maybe not 200 percent. The deductibles are going to go up—maybe not as much as mine at $6,000, but everybody in the country doesn't make $176,000.

So every Member of Congress should look at what would your life be like if you didn't have a Federal Government subsidy, if you didn't enroll in the DC exchange, if you went back home and had to pick a plan similar to everybody else in your State? You ought to sit down and look at what your individual life would be like. If you just look, you will be shocked. I sure was.

This is not about me, even though I am giving you an example about myself. It is about an idea called ObamaCare that is going to destroy health care as we know it in the name of saving it and making it better.

I think we all agree we need to reform health care. But I think most Americans believe their old health care system was working pretty good for them, but it could always be made better.

So I would ask every Member of Congress, whether you go into your State exchange, if one exists, or not, do the math. You are going to be shocked at how it would affect you. Let me tell you, it is going to affect people you represent in similar fashion.

So what do you do? Why don't we just try to sit down and start over and see if we can do better before it is too late?

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

UNEMPLOYMENT

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, there is a reason why the favorability rating of the Congress is somewhere, on a good day, around 10 percent. The reason I think is pretty simple: The American people are hurting. They look to their elected officials to try to do something to address the problems they have and the crises facing our country. Time after time, they see the Congress not only not responding to the needs they face but in many cases doing exactly the opposite. In poll after poll, the American people tell us the most pressing issue they face deals with the economy and high unemployment.

When we look in the newspapers, we are told the official unemployment rate is 7 percent. By the way, that is a rate which has in recent months gone down, and that is a good thing. But the truth is, if you include people who have given up looking for work and people who are working part time when they want to work full time, real unemployment in this country is 13.2 percent. That is enormously high.

The unemployment rate for our young people is close to 20 percent, and there are parts of the country where it is higher than that. African-American youth unemployment is close to 40 percent.

So what we are looking at all over this country are millions and millions of people who want jobs, who want to work, and who can't find those jobs. We are looking at a younger generation of workers who cannot get into the economy. If you are a young person and you leave high school, for example, and you can't get a job in your first year out there or your second year, if you think

this does not have a cataclysmic impact on your confidence, on your self-esteem, you are very mistaken.

I fear very much and worry very much about the millions of young people out there who are not in school, who are not working. Tragically, many of those young people will end up on drugs. Some of them are going to end up in jail. These are issues we have to consider.

What the American people tell us over and over is: Yes, the deficit is a serious problem. I believe it is. Everybody in the Congress believes it is. But what the American people also say is: High unemployment is an even more serious issue.

According to a March 2013 Gallup poll, 75 percent of the American people, including 56 percent of Republicans, 74 percent of Independents, and 93 percent of Democrats, support ''a Federal job creation law that would spend government money for a program designed to create more than 1 million new jobs.''

What the American people are saying is, yes, we have made progress in the last 4 years. We have cut the deficit in half. We have to do more. But what the American people are saying loudly and clearly is that we need to create jobs.

What they also understand, and poll after poll indicates this, is that when we have an infrastructure that is crumbling—roads, bridges, water systems, wastewater plants, our rail system—when we have an infrastructure that is crumbling, we need to invest in rebuilding that infrastructure. When we do that, we create significant numbers of jobs. That is what the American people want us to do. When is the last time you even heard that debate here on the floor of the Senate?

The unemployment crisis, the need to create jobs—that is what the American people want us to do, and we are not even talking about that issue.

There is a second issue about which the American people are very clear. It is a funny thing—sometimes the media writes about how partisan the Congress is, how divisive the Congress is. Senator GRASSLEY and I supposedly hate each other, we do not talk to each other, and all that nonsense. That is not the reality. The truth is that among the American people, surprisingly enough, there is a lot of consensus. I mentioned a moment ago that the American people very strongly believe that we should invest in our infrastructure and create jobs. Unfortunately, that is not what we are doing.

Here is another issue about which the American people are loud and clear. They understand that—tragically in today's economy—most of the new jobs that are being created are not good-paying jobs. That is the sad reality. Most of the new jobs that are being created in today's economy are low wage jobs and many of them are part-time jobs. If you are making $8 or $9 an hour and you are working 30 hours a week, you are going to have a very hard time supporting yourself, let alone a family.

What do the American people say? They say raise the minimum wage. Raise the minimum wage.

Let me quote from today's Wall Street Journal:

> Americans strongly favor boosting the Federal minimum wage to $10.10 an hour but oppose raising it above that, a Wall Street Journal/NBC News poll finds. In the survey, 63 percent supported a rise to $10.10 an hour from the current $7.25 rate.

Sixty-three percent of the American people support that. Democrats strongly support it, Independents support it, and many Republicans support it. One would think, therefore, when the vast majority of the American people understand that $7.25 an hour is a starvation wage and that we need to raise the minimum wage to at least $10.10 an hour, we would be moving on it. Maybe we would get a UC on it, a unanimous consent. Let's get it done. I fear very much that right here in the Senate we are going to have a very difficult time gaining 60 votes. I hope I am wrong, I sincerely do, but I am not aware at this point that there are any Republicans prepared to support an increase of the minimum wage to $10 an hour. I believe in the Republican-controlled House it would be extremely difficult to get legislation widely supported by the American people through that body.

But not only will my Republican colleagues not do what the American people want in terms of raising the minimum wage, quite incredibly, I have to tell you that many of my Republican colleagues do not believe in the concept of the minimum wage. Many of them believe we should abolish the concept of the minimum wage, so that if you are in a situation in a high-unemployment area where workers are desperate for work and an employer says: Here is $4 an hour; take it or leave it, that is OK for some of my Republican colleagues.

Again, we are in a situation where the vast majority of the American people want to do something about low wages. They want to raise the minimum wage, and we are going to have a very difficult time getting that legislation through. I hope I am wrong, but I do know that unless the American people stand up, get on the phone, start calling their Senators and Members of Congress, we probably will not succeed in doing what the American people want.

Interestingly enough, what the American people also understand is that raising the minimum wage will help us with the Federal deficit in a variety of ways. It may be a surprise to some Americans to know that the largest welfare recipient in the United States of America happens, coincidentally, to be the wealthiest family in America. The Walton family, which owns Walmart, is worth about $100 billion. They are the wealthiest family in America. They own more wealth as one family than the bottom 40 percent of the American people—extraordinary wealth. One of the reasons they are so wealthy is the American taxpayer subsidizes Walmart because Walmart pays low wages, provides minimal benefits, and many of their workers end up on Medicaid, they end up on food stamps, and they end up in government-subsidized housing. I am not quite sure why the middle-class working families of this country have to subsidize the Walton family because they pay wages that are inadequate for their workers to live a dignified life.

My hope is that when the American people are loud and clear about the need to raise the minimum wage, their Congress will respond, but I have to tell you that I have my doubts.

What we also hear—and most recently from Pope Francis—is an understanding that there is something profoundly wrong about a nation and increasingly a world in which so few have so much and so many have so little. In the United States of America today we have more wealth and income inequality than at any time since the late 1920s, and we have more wealth and income inequality than any other major country on Earth. Today the top 1 percent of our population owns 38 percent of the wealth of America, financial wealth of this country, and the bottom 60 percent owns 2.3 percent. The top 1 percent owns 38 percent of the wealth of America, and the bottom 60 percent owns 2.3 percent. Is that really what America is supposed to be about? I think not. I think Pope Francis recently talked about that issue. He talked about the moral aspects of that issue. He is exactly right.

Those are some of the issues we have to talk about.

Another issue out there that I think we have to be very clear about—and again the American people are extraordinarily clear about this—the American people understand that Social Security has been probably the most successful Federal program in the modern history of this country. For the last 70-plus years it has kept seniors out of poverty. In fact, before Social Security 50 percent of seniors in this country lived in poverty. Today that number, while too high, is about 9.5 percent. That is a significant improvement. And Social Security, despite what is going on in the economy—in good times and bad times—has never once failed to pay all of the benefits owed to every eligible American.

Today Social Security has a $2.7 trillion surplus. It can pay every benefit owed to every eligible American for the next 20 years. Do you know what the American people say about Social Security? They say it loudly and clearly. Republicans say it, Independents say it, and Democrats say it. Do not cut Social Security. Do not cut Social Security. Yet I have to tell you that virtually all Republicans think we should cut Social Security. Some Democrats believe we should cut Social Security. The President of the United States has talked about a chained CPI—a very bad idea—about cutting Social Security.

Maybe we should listen to the American people and make it very clear: No, we are not going to cut Social Security. In fact, we are going to take a new look at Social Security and see how we can make it solvent not just for 20 years but for 50 years and in addition to that increase benefits. There are pretty easy ways to do that, including lifting the cap on taxable income that goes into the Social Security trust fund. As you know, today, if somebody makes $100 million and somebody makes $113,000, they both contribute the same amount into the Social Security trust fund. Lift that cap. You can start at $250,000, and you will solve the Social Security solvency issue for the next 50 or 60 years. That is exactly what we should do, and that is what the American people want us to do.

In terms of Medicare, people say Medicare has financial problems, and it does. The issue—and interestingly enough, it gets back to what Senator GRAHAM was talking about. He was talking about his health care plan in South Carolina. It sounds like a pretty bad plan to me, I agree with him. What is the issue there? The issue we have to look at, which we don't for obvious issues, is how does it happen that in the United States of America—before the Affordable Care Act; things will change a little bit—before the Affordable Care Act, we have 48 million people who are uninsured, we have tens of millions more people who have high deductibles, like Senator GRAHAM—a $6,000 deductible is incomprehensible—and high copayments. At the end of the day, 48 million people uninsured, high deductibles, high copayments, health outcomes that are not particularly good—better than some countries, worse than other countries—infant mortality worse, longevity worse, life expectancy worse, yet we end up spending twice as much per person on health care as any other nation. How does that happen? How do we spend so much and get so little value? Is that an issue we are prepared to discuss? I guess not because the private insure companies say: Don't talk about that. We are making a whole lot of money out of the current health care system, including the Affordable Care Act. We make a lot of money, our CEOs do. Yes, we are spending 30 cents of every dollar on administrative costs, on bureaucracy, on advertising. Don't touch that because that is the American health care system. I suggest we have to take a hard look at what goes on in the rest of the world.

People have said we have the best health care system in the world. That is not what the American people say. The polls I have seen show that there is less satisfaction with our system than exists in other countries around the world, for obvious reasons. We spend a lot. We get relatively little.

Are we prepared as a Congress to stand up to the insurance companies? Are we prepared to stand up to the drug companies that charge us far higher prices for prescription drugs than any other country on Earth? Are we prepared to stand up to the medical equipment suppliers?

I don't think so because that gets us into the issue of campaign finance, where people get their money to run for office, because these guys contribute a whole lot of money.

Are we prepared to stand up to Wall Street? We have six financial institutions on Wall Street that have assets of over $9 trillion—equivalent to two-thirds of the GDP of the United States of America. They write half of the mortgages in this country, two-thirds of the credit cards. Do you think maybe it is time to break up these guys or are we going to march down the path of too big to fail and have to bail them out again? Do you hear a whole lot of discussion about that, Mr. President? No, not too often.

Let me conclude. We had the president of the World Bank here yesterday talking about global warming. As I think most people know, the entire—well, virtually the entire scientific community, people who study the issue of global warming, understands that the planet is warming significantly, that it is already causing devastating problems, that the issue is manmade, and that if we do not address this crisis by cutting greenhouse gas emissions and moving away from fossil fuels, the habitability of this planet for our kids and our grandchildren will be very much in question. That is what the scientific community says. Have you heard any debate on this floor about how we are going to aggressively transform our energy system? We do not do it.

Let me conclude by saying this. There is a reason the Congress has a favorability rating of about 10 percent, and that is that the American people are hurting and we are not responding to that pain. We are not addressing the many crises facing this country, and the American people are saying to Congress: What world do you live in? How about joining our world? How about changing your attention to our needs?

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, we are in postcloture debate on the nominee for the Circuit Court for the District of Columbia. I want to speak on that nomination, but I am also going to take time to speak on issues dealing with the Defense Department, the farm bill, and the new nominee for the Department of Homeland Security.

I will take a few minutes to discuss the President's ongoing scheme to stack the DC Circuit with committed ideologues so that the President's regulatory agenda doesn't run into judicial roadblocks.

Yesterday, the Senate confirmed the first of three nominees to the DC Circuit that the court does not need. Let me emphasize that: Does not need. Of course, the Senate denied its consent on these nominees just a few short weeks ago.

Some may ask: What has changed during that time? The vote count certainly has not changed. It is not as if Democrats persuaded some of their Republicans colleagues to change their minds.

That is what you would expect in a body that operates based upon rules that guarantee the minority a voice. That is what you would expect in what is supposed to be the greatest deliberative body on Earth. That is what you would expect under normal circumstances, but as I explained in an earlier speech this week on another nominee for the same court, these are not normal circumstances.

No, today's circumstances are different.

Today the President's legislative agenda cannot get traction in Congress. And, no, it is not because Republicans will not negotiate with the President. It is because the President of the United States is out of step with the American people.

Today the President's signature health care law, which was passed without a single Republican vote, is becoming more and more unpopular with each passing day. And no, it is not because the administration has not done a good job of ''messaging'' ObamaCare. It is precisely because of that message.

Today, the President can't get climate change legislation passed by Congress, and, no, it is not simply because of Republican opposition. It is because the President's agenda is too extreme even for some Senate Democrats.

The President and his agenda are out of step with the American people, and as a result, he cannot get his agenda adopted in this Congress. But that doesn't seem to matter to the radical liberal interest groups who support these policy initiatives. They want results—no matter what.

These liberal interest groups are not satisfied with constitutional separation of powers. They want the President and his allies in the Senate to do whatever it takes to get the same results they would get if there were 535 Members of Congress just as liberal as the President.

Those interest groups want the President to legislate by executive order and by administrative action. They want the President to suspend the law when it suits his purposes, just as the English kings used to do. In fact, the reason our Constitution requires—and let me emphasize requires—the President to ''faithfully'' execute the law is because the English kings would unilaterally—and selectively—suspend laws passed by the parliament. But none of this matters to the liberal interest groups. They want results—no matter what.

In fact, the President has made such a practice of legislating by Executive Order and administrative action, that he has created the expectation among

his most faithful supporters that there is nothing he cannot do unilaterally.

Just a week or two ago, the President was delivering a speech in California when one of his own supporters interrupted and heckled him for not issuing an executive order to stop all deportations.

The heckler shouted:

> Use your executive order to halt deportations of 11.5 million undocumented immigrants in this country. You have the power to stop deportations right now.

The President responded:

> Actually, I don't. We are a nation of laws.

I must say, I understand the confusion. The most extreme elements of the President's supporters have witnessed him pick and choose which laws he will faithfully execute and which he will suspend, or as the President likes to say, ''waive.'' So, it is no wonder that those supporters would say: Just issue an executive order. We want results.

It is just like King George III.

It is no wonder that those supporters would say: We don't care that there isn't support in the Congress to pass legislation imposing cap-and-trade fee increases. We want results

Just like King George III.

It is no wonder that those supporters would say: We don't care if Democrats block judges to the DC Circuit based on the standards the Republicans are applying today. That was then, this is now. We want results.

Just like King George III.

It is no wonder that those supporters would say: We don't care about two centuries of Senate history and tradition that has been passed down faithfully from one majority leader to the next. We want results.

Just like King George III.

Climate change regulations are too important. Salvaging ObamaCare is too important.

So as we all know, the majority buckled to the pressure from these extreme liberal interest groups and broke the rules of the Senate to change the rules. They tossed aside two centuries of Senate history and tradition. This history and tradition—until 2 weeks ago—had been carefully guarded and preserved by each succeeding majority leader.

Those leaders remembered the history of King George III.

They did all of this just so they could install the President's hand-picked judges, so they could hear challenges to his signature health care law and to the rest of his regulatory agenda, such as climate change regulation.

But when a President selects a nominee for the specific purpose of rubberstamping his agenda—an agenda that has proven too extreme for even Members of his own party—he needs a judge who can be counted upon to follow through.

Given that it is inappropriate to ask prospective nominees how they would rule on particular cases, how would this White House make certain that their nominees would follow through and rubberstamp the President's agenda?

Based upon Professor Pillard's record—and that is the nominee we will be voting on tomorrow—apparently the White House looked out over academia and selected the most liberal nominee they could find.

Because Professor Pillard fits that bill to a T.

I have heard my colleagues come to the floor and argue that these nominees to the DC Circuit are mainstream. Professor Pillard may be a fine person, but make no mistake about it, she is not mainstream. She is the furthest thing from it.

I am sure that the White House is confident she can be counted upon to rubberstamp its agenda, but don't confuse her views with the mainstream of American legal tradition. I have a sampling of things she has written and said. I will read some of what she has written, and I then ask you to determine if she is mainstream.

She has written this about abortion:

> Casting reproductive rights in terms of equality holds promise to recenter the debate towards the real stakes for women (and men) of unwanted pregnancy and away from the deceptive images of fetus-as-autonomous-being that the anti-choice movement has popularized.

Think of ''deceptive images of fetus-as-autonomous-being.'' Is that mainstream?

She argued this about motherhood:

> Reproductive rights, including the rights to contraception and abortion, play a central role in freeing women from historically routine conscription into maternity.

Now, think about that: ''historically routine constriction into maternity.'' Is that mainstream?

She has also argued this about motherhood:

> Antiabortion laws and other restraints on reproductive freedom not only enforce women's incubation of unwanted pregnancies, but also prescribe a ''vision of the woman's role'' as mother and caretaker of children in a way that is at odds with equal protection.

Is that in the mainstream?

What about her views on religious freedom? This really ought to shock you. She argued that the Supreme Court case of Hosanna-Tabor Evangelical Lutheran Church, which challenged the so-called ''ministerial exception'' to employment discrimination represented a ''substantial threat to the American rule of law.''

The Supreme Court rejected her view 9 to 0. Nine to zero. And the Court held that ''it is impermissible for the government to contradict a church's determination of who can act as its ministers.''

Do my colleagues honestly believe that it is within the mainstream to argue that churches shouldn't be allowed to choose their own ministers? I don't think so.

I asked Professor Pillard about Hosanna-Tabor and religious freedom at her hearing. She testified this way:

> And I have to admit, Senator GRASSLEY . . . I really called it wrong on that case. I did not predict that the Court would rule as it did.

In other words, she tried to dodge the question by leaving the committee members with the impression that she had merely taken a stab at predicting the case's outcome and that she had gotten it wrong.

Of course, I wasn't troubled that Professor Pillard had wrongly predicted the outcome. I was troubled because she actually argued that a ruling in favor of the church would represent a ''substantial threat to the American rule of law.''

I don't believe that there is a single Member of this body on either side of the aisle who would subscribe to that argument anymore than the nine justices of the Supreme Court did. If I am wrong about that, then I would like to hear the Senator explain how it is mainstream to argue that granting our churches the latitude to choose their own ministers represents a ''substantial threat to the American rule of law.''

These are the so-called ''mainstream views'' the President wants to install on a court that will hear challenges to his most important priorities. Is it any wonder that the President apparently has high confidence will Professor Pillard rubberstamp his agenda?

Before I close, let me make one final point.

Given the circumstances surrounding how these nominees were selected and nominated;

Given all three were nominated simultaneously for the purpose of changing judicial outcomes and rubberstamping the President's agenda;

Given they were nominated and rammed through the process, without regard to the fact that there is not even enough work for them to do;

Given the President was originally denied consent under the Rules of the Senate;

Given that the President and certain far-left liberal interest groups successfully persuaded the majority of the Senate to cast aside two centuries of Senate history and tradition in order to get them confirmed;

And given the extremely liberal record I discussed;

If you were a litigant challenging the President, or one of his administrative actions and you drew a panel comprised of Professor Pillard, Millett, and Judge Wilkins, can you honestly say that you would be confident you would get a fair shake?

Of course not.

And that, my colleagues, is a sad commentary on the damage the President and the Senate majority have inflicted not only on the Senate but also on our judiciary and fundamental notions of the rule of law.

I urge my colleagues to oppose the Pillard nomination.

HOW THE AUDIT PROCESS WAS COMPROMISED

For several years, I have been trying to get the Defense Department inspector general to do its job, and I have had

several investigations, a lot of them implemented because of information that comes to me from whistleblowers. I will speak to that point now and talk about two important audits bungled by the Department of Defense inspector general's office.

There is something very important I need to say right upfront. A brandnew inspector general, Mr. Jon Rymer, is now in place. The events I am about to describe happened a few years ago, but none reflect on his leadership which I hope will bring about a big change in the inspector general's office at the Department of Defense.

When faced with a frontal assault on its audit authority by the target of one of its audits, senior IG officials got a bad case of weak knees and caved under pressure. They trashed high-quality audit work that was critical of a certified public accounting firm and its opinions. In doing this, they covered up reportable deficiencies, they allowed the audit target to run roughshod over sacred oversight prerogatives, without uttering one word of protest or asking one single question.

I am talking about audits of the financial statements produced by the Department's Central Accounting Office. This is what I refer to as DFAS, which stands for Defense Finance and Accounting Services. The audits were conducted by a CPA firm, but supposedly under the watchful eye of the inspector general, or IG, but not really under his eye.

The story of the two bungled audits is told in an oversight report which I have now posted on my Web site.

While I received the first anonymous email on this matter in April of 2012, my audit oversight work actually began more than 5 years ago. It was triggered by a steady stream of tips from whistleblowers complaining about the quality of these audits. These reports then grabbed my attention.

My colleagues may wonder why the Senator from Iowa is down in the weeds in such arcane issues. The reason is simple. It is the importance of audits.

Audits are probably the primary oversight tool for rooting out fraud and waste in the government. To protect the taxpayers, Congress needs to ensure that government audits are as good as they can be. They must produce tangible results. They must be able to detect theft, waste, mismanagement, and then recommend corrective action.

With mounting pressure for serious belt-tightening under sequestration, audits have taken on an even greater importance. Audits should help senior management separate the wheat from the chaff and apply mandated cuts where they belong. Sequestration cuts should be guided by hard-hitting, rock-solid audits. Unfortunately, rock-solid audits produced by the inspector general's office are hard to come by, and that is the problem.

After evaluating hundreds of audits, I issued three oversight reports in the years 2010 and 2012. With a few notable exceptions, I found that the inspector general's Audits were weak, ineffective, and wasteful—wasteful when we consider that we spend $100 million a year to produce them. Poor leadership is part of the problem, but there is still another driver; that is, the Department's broken accounting system. It allows fraud and waste to go undetected and unchecked. That is bad enough, but the lack of credible financial information makes it very difficult to produce hard-hitting audits. Auditors are forced to do audit trail reconstruction work to connect the dots on the money trails and, of course, that is very labor intensive, very time-consuming work.

Although the Department continues to spend billions to fix the busted accounting system, I am sorry to say it is still not working right. The Department cannot pass the Chief Financial Officers Act audit test. It is unable to accurately report on how the taxpayers' money is spent as it is required to do each year under that law. By comparison, every other Federal agency has passed that test. Why not the Department of Defense?

So long as the accounting system is dysfunctional, audits will remain weak and ineffective and the probability of rooting out much fraud and waste during sequestration is low—and then still continuing to waste $100 million that we spend on the inspector general's office.

While I am talking about the need for better audits, I would like to offer a word of encouragement to the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, John Sopko. He is the head of SIGAR, which is the name for the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan, or SIGAR, for short. SIGAR is cranking out aggressive, hard-hitting audits, and I commend SIGAR for doing that—setting a good example. The audits I am about to discuss, by contrast, deserve darts, not laurels.

I first came to the floor to speak on this subject on November 14, 2012. At that point, I completed a preliminary review of seven red flags or potential problem areas that popped up on my radar screen. Since then, I have double-checked the facts. I have confirmed my preliminary observations. I did this by examining the official audit records known as work papers. So I will not walk the same ground again tonight. Instead, I will briefly summarize what I did, how I did it, what I found, why it is important, and offer some fixes for consideration.

To conduct this investigation, I had to examine literally thousands of documents. I could not have done it without the help and guidance of CPA-qualified government auditors. Evidence uncovered in the work papers were validated with interviews and written inquiries with knowledgeable officials. Together, these tell the story of what happened and of course it is not a pretty picture.

True, my report is nothing more than a snapshot in time, but if this snapshot accurately reflects the work being produced by the IG audit office, then we have big problems.

In a nutshell, this is what I found out: A CPA firm, Urbach Kahn & Werlin, which goes by UKW, had awarded an unblemished string of seven clean opinions on the central accounting agency's financial statements. Then the IG stepped in and took a 2-year snapshot for fiscal years 2008 and 2009. It was supposed to report on whether those statements and opinions met prescribed audit standards, but due to a series of ethical blunders, that job was never finished.

A third review was planned for 2010, but after the 2008–2009 fiasco, it was canceled, allowing DFAS—the Defense, Finance, and Accounting Service—it allowed DFAS to rack up another string of clean opinions through last year. All together, this work probably costs the taxpayers in excess of $20 million.

The work performed by DFAS in 2008 and 2009 was substandard. The outside audit firm rubberstamped DFAS's flawed practices using defective audit methods.

For its part, the inspector general was prepared to call foul on the CPA firm for substandard work but got sidetracked and then steamrolled by DFAS. The contract gave the IG preeminent oversight authority to accept or reject the firm's opinions. The whole purpose of the contract was to position the auditors to make that determination. If the firm's opinions met prescribed standards, they would be endorsed. If not, the IG would issue a nonendorsement report.

On both the fiscal year 2008 and 2009 audits, the record clearly indicates the IG's audit team determined that the firm's opinions did not meet prescribed standards. They did not merit endorsement. Though I cannot cite work papers to prove it, whistleblowers alleged that top management ordered them to endorse the 2008 opinion with this caveat: If known deficiencies were not corrected in the 2009 opinion, a nonendorsement was guaranteed. When the very same deficiencies popped up again—in other words, in 2009 as they did in 2008—the auditors prepared a hard-hitting nonendorsement report as promised. It was even signed. The transmittal letter was ready to go out the door.

The nonendorsement decision had been communicated to DFAS via email in unmistakable terms. In line with that decision and contract requirements, the IG took steps to cut off payment to the CPA firm based on advice of the inspector general's legal counsel.

The next step was to issue the nonendorsement report. But this is where the inspector general chickened out. In a power vacuum, DFAS moved swiftly to block the report with a blatant end-run maneuver to bypass independent oversight. So DFAS literally neutered independent oversight by the inspector general with two bold moves: On the

same day the IG's office notified DFAS in writing that a nonendorsement report would be forthcoming, DFAS unilaterally and proudly declared that it had earned a clean opinion and ordered that all disputed invoices be paid. This was an act of out-and-out defiance.

Next, it kicked the IG off the contract. Yes, my colleagues heard me right. The agency being audited literally kicked the inspector general—the oversight agency—clean off the oversight contract. In making this end-run maneuver, DFAS broke every rule in the audit book.

What happened was a frontal assault on the inspector general's oversight authority. The frontal assault was mounted by the agency being subjected to the audit and by an agency whose financial reports were found to be grossly deficient. In the face of such outright defiance, I would like to think that any inspector general would have stood up to the offending agency and held its ground and protected and defended its oversight prerogatives. That is the law—but not the Department of Defense inspector general.

Instead, the IG's knees buckled under pressure. The IG retreated before the onslaught. The IG caved and trashed the report. The IG rolled over and played possum, giving DFAS the green light to proceed full speed ahead.

The IG accepted these blatant transgressions without expressing one word of criticism, without expressing one concern, without raising one single question.

Other than a lone hotline complaint that disappeared down a black hole, no protest was ever lodged, no corrective action was ever proposed, and obviously no corrective action ever taken.

The inspector general's silence appeared to signal total acquiescence to a series of actions that undermine the integrity of the audit process, which is the basis for ferreting out waste, fraud and mismanagement and illegal activity.

For a Senator who watches the watchdogs, what I see is a disgrace to the entire inspector general community. The IG allowed DFAS to run roughshod over the contract, the IG Act, audit standards, and independent oversight. The audit firm probably got paid for the work that was never performed—payments that were alleged to be improper.

Instead of exposing poor practices and improper actions by both the accounting agency and the CPA firm, the Office of Inspector General allowed sacred principles to be trampled. It just kept quiet. It turned a blind eye to what was going on. It hunkered down. It tried to cover its tracks.

Two misguided acts set the stage for the collapse of oversight of these audits.

The problem began with the contract. At the insistence of the Department's chief financial officer and accounting agency, the IG agreed to a contractual arrangement that put DFAS—the target of the audit—in the driver's seat. This contract allegedly violated the IG Act and standing audit policy, according to the assistant IG who spoke out at that particular time.

To address this issue, a fragile waiver arrangement was crafted. It was supposed to address the legal issues and protect the Office of Inspector General's interests under the DFAS contract. All the parties involved agreed to abide by this questionable setup.

But being nothing more than an informal trust, it came unglued under the pressure and controversy generated by the nonendorsement decision.

Even the Office of Inspector General legal counsel voiced grave concerns about the fragile waiver arrangement. In his opinion, the terms of the contract ''transferred''—those words come from the Office of Legal Counsel—''transferred'' the Office of Inspector General oversight function to DFAS, the very component whose financial data was being subjected to the oversight. In his words—meaning the Office of Legal Counsel's words—the contract terms will leave the Office of Inspector General ''open to criticism on the Hill. . . . In two years some Senator will yell at us [about this]. If I had known about the arrangement,'' he said, ''I would have advised against it.''

Counsel's concerns were well-founded, and similar to a modern day Nostradamus, this prediction has come to pass.

The second problem was a failure of leadership at the top. When the inspector general's auditors reached the conclusion that the CPA firm's opinions did not measure up to prescribed standards, the current deputy IG for audit drove the final nail into that coffin.

The official audit records make it crystal clear. The deputy IG gave the fateful order: ''There will be no written report.'' This was a lethal blow. This is how the report got bottled up. True, it disappeared from public view. It got buried, and DFAS was promised it would never see the light of day; that is, until one of my investigators came along and dug it out of a pile of work papers. Here—for the benefit of my colleagues—here it is in my hand. I hold it up. It did not get buried like they thought it would get buried.

Once the deputy IG had smothered the report, DFAS knew it had the green light to bypass oversight with impunity.

All of this bungling could have harmful consequences.

First, compelling audit evidence, which undermined the credibility of the financial statements prepared by the Department's flagship accounting agency, was shielded from public exposure. The suppression of that evidence has helped to immortalize the myth of DFAS's clean opinions. It is so bad now that the myth is an inside joke. It is laughable, according to a former accountant. Here is what he said on the record to McClatchy News on November 22, 2013:

> When I was there, DFAS would brag about getting a clean opinion. We accountants would just laugh out loud. Their systems were so screwed up.

If the output of the Defense Department's flagship accounting agency, which disburses over $600 billion a year is, indeed, laughable, then Pentagon money managers have another big problem. As that famous whistleblower Ernie Fitzgerald liked to say: ''It's time to lock the doors and call the law.''

Since the myth involves the reliability of data reported by the Department's central accounting agency, it has the potential of putting the Secretary of Defense's audit readiness initiative in jeopardy. DFAS's apparent inability to accurately report on its own internal housekeeping accounts for $1.5 billion—it is $1.5 billion that they have—casts doubt on its ability to accurately report on the hundreds of billions DOD spends each year. If the Department's central accounting agency cannot earn a clean opinion, then who in the Department can?

Second, the integrity and independence of the inspector general's audit process may have been compromised. If the independence of the audit process was, in fact, compromised, as my report suggests, then the Department's primary tool for rooting out waste and fraud could be disabled—at least it was in these cases.

If that did indeed happen, then it probably happened with the knowledge and silent acquiesce of senior officials in the IG's office, the institution that exists to root out fraud, waste, and abuse.

In simple terms, the watchdog appointed to expose waste—not only expose but stop fraud and waste—may have been doing some of it himself or herself. If true, it clearly demonstrates a lack of commitment on the part of senior management to exercise due diligence in performing its core mission.

Almost all of the key players allegedly responsible for the bungled audits still occupy top posts in the IG's audit office today. Surely, these officials did not act alone. This was a concerted effort. According to recent news reports, other higher-ups were allegedly involved. Senior IG officials must bear primary responsibility for this unacceptable and inexplicable failure of oversight. They could have, in fact, stopped it.

To address and resolve these issues, I made four recommendations in a letter recently sent to Secretary Hagel and the new Inspector General Rymer.

First, the Department of Defense CFO should pull the DFAS financial statements for the fiscal years 2008 and 2009 and remove those audit opinions from official records.

Second, the OIG needs to undertake an independent audit of DFAS's financial statements for fiscal year 2012 and determine whether those statements and the CPA firm's opinion meet prescribed audit standards. The fiscal year

2012 beginning account balances must also be verified. In response to my oversight, the inspector general has initiated what he called a postaudit review of DFAS's fiscal year 2012 financial statements. This is, in fact, a good move. But to ensure that it is done right this time, I asked the U.S. GAO to watchdog the inspector general's work. I want independent verification because last time there was none. This process will be completed next year.

Third, the inspector general should address and resolve any allegations of misconduct involving DFAS officials and make appropriate recommendations for corrective action.

Fourth, I am referring unresolved concerns regarding the conduct of IG officials to the Integrity Committee of the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency for further review as provided under the IG Reform Act of 2008.

What happened here is almost beyond comprehension.

All of it happened under the IG's watchful eye. All of it probably happened with top-level knowledge. Most of it probably happened with top-level approval. Some of it was probably allowed to happen through tacit approval or silent acquiescence. All of it was bad for the integrity and independence of the audit process and the accuracy of financial information in the government's largest agency.

As I said a moment ago, the Department has a new IG, Jon Rymer. I hope he is a genuine junkyard dog who likes aggressive, hard-hitting audits. I hope Mr. Rymer will take a long, hard look at what happened and work with Secretary Hagel and others to find a good way to right the wrongs and get audits back on track. I know he can do it, and I stand ready to help him in any way I can. I want Mr. Rymer to know my door is open to him.

THE FARM BILL

Mr. President, I wish to talk about the farm bill, specifically about reforming payment limits for farm programs, something this Senate agreed to in a bipartisan way.

Beyond saving money, these reforms help ensure farm payments go to those for whom they were originally intended, small- and medium-size farms. In addition, the reforms include closing off loopholes so nonfarmers cannot game the system.

Supporters of the farm bill need to take a hard look at what challenges were presented last year to getting a bill done. We need to forge ahead knowing some tough decisions need to be made.

There are more reforms we need to make in programs such as food stamps, and they are reforms that can cut down on waste, fraud, and abuse in the program but also safeguard assistance to the people who actually need it.

While I support closing loopholes in the food stamp program, I believe the farm bill should also close loopholes for farm programs that are so absurd they are just so obvious.

As we move forward on finalizing a new farm bill, I wish to state clearly that sections 1603 and 1604 relating to the farm payments—which are in both the House farm bill and the Senate farm bill—should stay in that bill. There should be a ''do not stamp'' on those provisions under negotiation now between the House and Senate. Most important, for House conferees, they should remember that these provisions were put on the floor of the House of Representatives in an amendment sponsored by Congressman FORTENBERRY of Nebraska, with an overwhelming vote in the House of Representatives. So this is a case of where the majorities of both bodies support these provisions. Yet they are under attack by House conferees.

These farm payment reforms strike a needed balance of recognizing the need for a farm safety net, while making sure we have a defensible and responsible safety net. In case there is any doubt, we do need a farm program safety net. For those who argue we do not need a safety net for farmers, I argue they do not understand the dangers to a Nation which does not produce its own food.

For all the advances in modern agriculture, farmers are still subject to conditions out of their control. While farmers need a safety net, there does come a point where a farmer gets big enough that he can weather tough times without as much assistance from the government. Somehow, though, over the years, there has developed this perverse scenario where big farmers are receiving the largest share of the farm program payments.

We now have the largest 10 percent of the farmers receiving 70 percent of those farm payments coming out of the Federal Treasury. There is nothing wrong with farmers growing an operation bigger. But the taxpayers should not be subsidizing large farming operations to grow even larger, making it very difficult for young farmers to buy land or to rent land to get into the operation.

By having reasonable caps on the amount of farm program payments any one farmer can receive, it helps ensure the program meets the intent of assisting small- and medium-sized farmers through tough times.

My payment reforms essentially say that we will help farmers up to 250,000 per year, but then the government training wheels come off. Those new caps will also help encourage the next generation of rural Americans to take up farming. I am approached time and again about how to help young people get into farming.

When large farmers are able to use farm program payments to drive up the cost of land and rental rates, our farm programs end up hurting those they are intended to help. It is simply good policy to have a hard cap on the amount a farmer or farm entity can receive in farm program payments.

While both bodies of Congress have decided to cap farm payments, crop insurance is still available to large operations, no limits on indemnity. Section 1603 and 1604 which I authored and which Congressman FORTENBERRY authored, in our current farm bill, set the overall payment caps at $250,000 for a married couple.

In my home State of Iowa, many people say that is still too high. On the other hand, other farmers in other parts of the country say it is way too low. But I recognize agriculture can look different around the country. So this is a compromise. Just as important, however, to setting a hard cap on payments is closing loopholes that have allowed nonfarmers to game the farm program. The House and Senate farm bills also end the ability of nonfarmers to abuse what is known as the actively engaged test. In essence, the law says one has to be actively engaged in farming to qualify for farm payments.

Is that not common sense? However, this has been exploited by people who have virtually nothing to do with farming or with a farming operation and yet receive payments from the farm program. Not citing myself, but the Government Accountability Office issued a report I released in October outlining how the current actively engaged regulations are so broad that they essentially are unenforceable. Those comments came from the USDA employees who administer the program.

The report illustrated that one farming entity had 22 total members of which 16 were deemed contributing ''active personal management only'' to the farm. What does ''active personal management only'' mean? That means they are becoming eligible for farm programs because of one of the eight overly broad and unenforceable eligibility requirements that currently exist. More simply put, they likely are not doing any labor and are nothing more than a participant on paper to allow the entity to get more government payment.

Our Nation has over a $17 trillion debt. We cannot afford to simply look the other way and let the people abuse the farm safety net. I mentioned earlier how we need to assess some of the challenging areas of farm policy as we look to pass a 5-year farm bill. Some tough decisions need to be made.

However, my reforms to payment limits do not pose a tough decision. They are common sense. They are necessary reforms that are included in both the House and Senate versions of the farm bill. I wish to take this opportunity to thank Senator STABENOW, the chairman of our Senate committee, for fighting for these Senate provisions. You see, these provisions were part of the Senate bill, representing a majority of the Senate.

More important, these same provisions were added on the House floor by Congressman FORTENBERRY of Nebraska by an overwhelming majority. So Senator STABENOW has the high

moral ground in conference with the House conferees in fighting for payment limitation. She represents a majority of the Senate; whereas, the House conferees, in opposing her, represent a minority of the House of Representatives.

HOMELAND SECURITY NOMINEE

The last issue I am going to speak about, then I will yield the floor, deals with the some correspondence I am trying to have with the nominee to be Secretary of Homeland Security.

On July 12, Secretary Napolitano announced she would be leaving the Department of Homeland Security after 4 years heading up one of the largest departments of the Federal Government. On October 17, the Obama administration announced it had finally found a replacement. The Committee on Homeland Security moved quickly on Jeh Johnson's nomination, approving him by voice vote on November 20.

On November 15, before the committee approved him, I sent a letter to Mr. JOHNSON, along with several colleagues on the Judiciary Committee. We on the Judiciary Committee asked for his views on a number of important matters, including our Nation's immigration policies and the fair treatment of whistleblowers.

We asked if he would cooperate with us on oversight matters and work with us to improve immigration policies going forward. Because the Judiciary Committee has primary responsibility on immigration matters, it is necessary for us to know any nominee's position on almost any issue. It has been nearly 1 month, and there has been no response to our letter and no indication that he might respond.

In fact, I would be surprised that any nominee would respond to Congress any more given the majority only needs a simple majority to vote for confirmation. Thanks to a rule change done unilaterally by the majority, there will no longer be a proper vetting of executive branch nominees. The rule change essentially takes away the Senate's constitutional role of advice and consent, thereby allowing nominees to ignore Congress on issues of extreme importance such as immigration.

But I am still going to pursue these questions, even though we do not have the leverage we used to have when a 60-vote majority was necessary, because Congress has a responsibility to know how laws are going to be enforced by the President's a appointees. President Obama promised this would be the most transparent administration in history. Yet getting answers from this President or his administration on legitimate Congressional oversight has been like pulling teeth.

They have stonewalled Congress at every turn. Over the last 5 years, the administration has gone around Congress and pushed the envelope with their authority. He has ignored his constitutional duties to faithfully execute the laws by picking and choosing which laws he wants to enforce. Congressional oversight, an important responsibility that holds the government accountable for its people has been nearly impossible.

In other words, the checks and balances of government do not work the way the Constitution writers intended. Now it is going to get worse. There will be more blatant disrespect for checks and balances than we have ever seen. So I would like to take time to read some of the questions—just some of the questions—that we asked Mr. JOHNSON. I think these would be reasonable questions that any Secretary ought to tell us what he is going to do if he gets sworn into that office. I think they underscore how important it is that we have answers before we move forward on the nomination.

First and foremost, we asked Mr. JOHNSON about his commitment to uphold the laws on the books. We asked if he would continue the lawless policies created by the former Secretary and her deputy. We asked about what he would do to improve the morale of immigration officials and agents who are concerned about their nonenforcement protocols. We want to know how he would strengthen cooperation between Federal and local law enforcement entities.

Secondly, we asked Mr. JOHNSON what he would do to improve border security. We want to know what specific measures he will implement to ensure that the Department will comply with the Secure Fence Act of 2006. In 2010, Secretary Napolitano suspended our Nation's only comprehensive border security measurements, known as the operational control metric.

More than 3 years have passed and the Department of Homeland Security has failed to replace that metric. Will Mr. JOHNSON then hold the Department accountable by regularly releasing a comprehensive border security metric? Will he commit to achieving operational control of the borders as required by our law? We do not know that. We would expect him to answer that he is going to enforce the laws. But will he? Will he answer?

Individuals who overstay their visas account for about 40 percent of the undocumented population of this country. This presents a national security risk. Without a biometric exit system, this country will have no clue who remains on our soil undocumented. Will Mr. JOHNSON make it a priority to finally implement the entry-exit system Congress mandated in 1996, still not being enforced?

Third, we asked about the culture of the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service. In January 2012, a Department of Homeland Security inspector general released a report criticizing the USCIS for pressuring its employees to rubberstamp applications for immigration benefits.

In that report, nearly 25 percent of the USCIS officers surveyed said supervisors had pressured them to improve applications that should have been denied. We want to know if he will take measures to better screen applicants and do away with the get-to-yes philosophy. That get-to-yes philosophy is a gigantic risk to our national security.

Just look at the EB–5 Program which allows foreign nationals to obtain green cards if they invest in the United States. We asked whether he would make it a priority to improve that program. We asked Mr. JOHNSON about his position on immigration reform, especially since the bill passed the Senate, and the House could act, sending a bill to the President.

We asked if people who are in the country illegally, in removal proceedings or subject to an order of removal, should be eligible for immigration benefits, including legal status. We asked whether illegal immigrants convicted of a felony or convicted of multiple misdemeanors should be eligible for benefits, including legal status.

We want to know if gang members, drunk drivers, domestic abusers, and other criminals should be allowed to stay in the country. It is important for us to know from Mr. JOHNSON because the Senate bill provides a way for those law breakers to gain citizenship. Mr. JOHNSON may be responsible for implementing that.

Finally, we asked Mr. JOHNSON to comment on issues generally impacting the Department. We asked if he would pledge to cooperate with congressional oversight efforts and be responsive to all congressional requests for information and do it in a timely manner. We asked that because we have received very little cooperation in the last 5 years from that Department. We asked if he believed whistleblowers who know of problems with matters of national security should be prevented from bringing that information to Congress. We asked if he would commit to ensuring that every whistleblower is treated fairly and that those who retaliate against whistleblowers would be held accountable.

No matter what department one manages, the answers to these questions are very important and should be simple to answer. We need a Secretary who is well versed on these issues. We need a Secretary who will implement policies that truly protect the homeland. We need cooperation and transparency. We need answers. In other words, what is wrong to expect answers to these questions I just related before we give advice and consent to this nomination?

Majority Leader REID has indicated through his cloture motion on Mr. JOHNSON that answers to these critically important issues are not warranted.

Senators cannot consent to just anyone to head this department. We should not fail in our constitutional responsibility of advise and consent.

This body should not move forward with this nomination, and I encourage my colleagues to consider these issues when the cloture vote ripens.

I yield the floor.

Mr. REID. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent that at 9 a.m., Thursday, December 12, all postcloture time on the Pillard nomination be considered expired and the Senate proceed to vote on confirmation of the Pillard nomination; that upon disposition of the Pillard nomination, the mandatory quorum required under rule XXII be waived with respect to the cloture motion on the Feldblum nomination and the Senate proceed to vote on the motion to invoke cloture on the Feldblum nomination; that if cloture is invoked on the Feldblum nomination, all postcloture time be yielded back and the Senate proceed to vote on confirmation of the Feldblum nomination; finally, that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table and the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. GRASSLEY. I object, and I wish to state the reason I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

The Senator's time has expired.

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent that the Senator be allowed to speak for whatever time he feels appropriate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. GRASSLEY. The reason I object for the minority to moving these votes is we should follow what regular order we have left on nominations, especially after the way the majority changed the rules on nominations 2 weeks ago.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. REID. My friend, the senior distinguished Senator from Iowa, that is what we are talking about here, the face of obstruction—not him, but the Republican caucus, stalling for no reason other than to stall for time.

No wonder the rules were changed. No wonder the American people look at the Senate as a dysfunctional body. A couple of weeks ago we voted to make it a functional body so that nominations can be confirmed for any President. The President deserves to have his team.

We have been wasting days, weeks, and months on nominations. We have scores of people and positions that need to be filled. We are only dealing with a handful. People understand the rules. We have changed the rules the last couple of Congresses—very little—but we have changed them.

If we have a Supreme Court Justice or a Cabinet officer or someone of that level, they get 30 hours of time following the cloture vote. What are they supposed to do during that 30 hours? Come and explain their position why they oppose a person.

For virtually every one of these nominations there hasn't been a single, single complaint about any of them. This culminated by virtue of the Republicans in the Senate making a decision that people who serve in the prestigious DC Circuit Court of Appeals were not entitled to have a full court. There are eight there now, and they said that is enough. That is, some say, the most important court in America; some say more important than the Supreme Court.

The Republicans arbitrarily have said we are not going to fill those spots, not only because of qualifications, not because of their education, their experience or their integrity, only because they don't want them filled. That is a new low.

I am disappointed to have to inform the Presiding Officer and all Senators tonight that because Republicans are wasting time, all of this staff, police officers—and some of them are getting paid over time—will have to work. Why? Because the Republicans are wanting to waste more of this body's time and this country's time. No wonder the American people feel about the Senate as they do. For 5 years the obstruction that has taken place is unprecedented.

We are going to continue to work tonight and remain in session as long as we need to. Republicans are forcing us to waste this week on nominees they know will be confirmed. Every one of them will be confirmed.

There are no objections to the qualifications of these nominees, with one exception, and there are only little squeaks here and there about what could be wrong. But the outcome of each vote we will take over the next 4 days is a foregone conclusion. Yet the Republicans insist on wasting time simply for the sake of wasting time. There is no reason these votes couldn't take place right now or in the morning, and we could move to some important items.

I have Senators come to me all the time—the chairman of the Veterans' Affairs Committee was here a few minutes ago, the distinguished junior Senator from Vermont. He has some important work he wants to move on this floor. They have passed some things in the House—and that doesn't happen very often, but they passed it. They sent it over, and it deals with veterans.

He wants to bring that to the floor, have a debate, and offer an amendment. We can't do that because we are wasting time in the Senate on this senselessness.

The junior Senator from the State of Delaware has spent weeks and weeks on manufacturing, which has shown some promise in America the last few years. Jobs are being created. Working on a bipartisan basis with other Senators, they have legislation they want to bring to the floor to talk about ways of improving manufacturing, capabilities, and capacity in the United States.

We can't do that. We are here postcloture looking at each other and doing basically nothing, as we have done for vast amounts of time because of Republican obstructionism.

I had a meeting with the chairman of the Environment and Public Works Committee and the junior Senator from the State of Rhode Island a few minutes ago. In the world today we have something called climate change. It is here. Climate is changing all over the world. We have global warming.

Are we doing anything legislatively to address that? No, nothing. She has a portfolio of legislation that she would like to take care of.

There is going to be zero done because we are sitting under these lights complaining about the Republicans wasting time. We could finish these votes now, but we are going to work into the weekend.

We had a break for Thanksgiving. It was very pleasant for me to be home for 2 weeks. Unfortunately, I had a death in the family that put a real cloud over things, and that is an understatement.

Christmas is coming. Everyone should know that we are going to work until we finish the items we have before us this week. I am going to file on a number of other nominees as soon as I get a chance, and we are going to finish those. If we have to work the weekend before Christmas, we are going to do that. If we have to work the Monday before Christmas, we are going to do that. If we have to work through Christmas, we are going to do that. I know the game they are playing. They have done it before. A lot of nominations they will ask to be sent back to the administration, and they will have to start all over again. We are not going to start all over again.

We need a director of the Internal Revenue Service. I think that is a very good idea. We need to fill Chairman Bernanke's spot as chairman of the Federal Reserve. That would be very important for us to do with all the problems we have financially.

We are going to do that before we leave. If it means we have to work through Christmas, we will work through Christmas.

Even if we are spending a lot of time—as we have done over the last 5 years because of their obstructionism—looking at the lights, and that is about all we have to look at because we are not looking at substantive legislation as we should be, the only impediment to holding votes without delay in reasonable hours is blatant, partisan Republican obstructionism.

It is pointless spending an entire week wasting time and waiting for a

vote. This is a foregone conclusion that is going to happen to every one of these votes. This is exactly the kind of blatant obstructionism and delay that has ground the Senate to a halt and prevented Congress from doing the work of the people over the last 5 years.

I remind Members that without cooperation there will be rollcall votes, perhaps after midnight tonight, and as early as 5:30 in the morning. With only a little cooperation, Senators can stop wasting time and resources.

The only way the Senate can stop wasting time is if we get some reasonableness and clarity from the Republicans. If there were ever an example why the rules had to be changed and how we tried during two successive Congresses to be reasonable—remember the exercise? Judges would only be opposed under extraordinary circumstances. There isn't a single judge that the President of the United States has nominated who has problems that are extraordinary. I think what is going on is a shame.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Delaware.

Mr. COONS. I came to speak to a bipartisan bill which I hope to take a few minutes to talk about, but first I wish to comment on what is happening or not happening on the floor and the comments of the majority leader.

I have been a Senator for only 3 years, as the Presiding Officer well knows. We were sworn in as a group of those elected to the class of 2010. I just came from an inspiring event where the Vice President, who previously held this seat on behalf of Delaware, gave an award to the former majority leader, a real patriot, a veteran, former Senator Bob Dole. They talked about how compromise, principled compromise, made it possible for Senator McGovern and Senator Dole, folks from opposite ends of the political spectrum, to work together in the interests of hungry children in the United States.

Frankly, what I have seen in the 3 years that I have been in the Senate, the 3 years that we have served together on the Judiciary Committee, has been a slow walk.

There are minority rights in this body, but there are also minority responsibilities. There are majority rights but also majority responsibilities.

I wish to add to the comments of the majority leader that the nominees to serve on the DC Circuit, the nominees to many district court seats, whose confirmations I have either presided over or attended, were not objected to on substantive grounds. I have trouble with the idea that the three empty seats on the DC Circuit do not need to be filled.

I have listened at great length to the arguments about caseload and about workload. As the chair of the courts subcommittee of the Judiciary Committee, I presided over the presentation of the Judicial Conference's report on where we need additional judgeships and where we don't.

I will note briefly and in passing that Judge Tymkovich, who presented this report, did not suggest there was some need to reduce the DC Circuit by eliminating these currently vacant spots.

We could go through this chapter and verse. This has been debated to death on this floor. In my view, we have three excellent, qualified candidates. I regret that we have spent so much time burning the clock and that we have had to make changes that ultimately will make it possible for qualified nominees to be confirmed. It is, to me, a subject of some deep concern that we cannot work better together, Republicans and Democrats, to move work forward.

If I might, I would like to move for a moment to an example of exactly the sort of bipartisan bill that we should be able to move to here, that if there weren't this endless obstruction, if we weren't running out the clock on nothing, we might be able to get done together. This is an example of the sort of reaching across the aisle that used to dominate this body when giants such as Dole and McGovern served here but is no longer the case. They are no longer the daily diet of this body. We are no longer reaching across the aisle and finding ways to make our country more competitive, create more manufacturing jobs in partnership with the private sector, and responsibly reduce our deficit.

I was encouraged as a member of the budget conference committee that we seemed to be moving toward enacting a significant—small in scale but significant in its precedence—deal for the Budget Committee that could allow us to go back to regular order for appropriations. But here, as we waste hour after hour running out the clock to confirm nominees, I wonder. I wonder whether we are going to be able to take up, consider, and pass substantive legislation.

CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY CENTERS

If I might, I would like to take a few minutes to talk about why I initially came to the floor today; that is, to talk about the power of children's advocacy centers. Children's advocacy centers exist across the country today in large part because this Congress, on a bipartisan basis, passed back in 1990 the Victims of Child Abuse Act—a bill that for the first time authorized funding for an important nationwide network of what are called children's advocacy centers. These centers help deliver justice, they help heal victims of violence and abuse, and we must act to continue empowering their service to our Nation.

Today is a time when we could work together to reauthorize that initial landmark bill from 1990 and rededicate ourselves on a bipartisan basis to something that is one of our most sacred obligations: protecting our children, protecting the victims of child abuse and delivering justice for them. That is what this bipartisan bill does that was introduced earlier today along with my colleagues, Senators BLUNT and SESSIONS and HIRONO—a great example of being able to work together across the aisle.

As parents, as neighbors, as leaders of our Nation, we have no more sacred obligation than protecting our children. In most of our cases, we dedicate everything we have as parents to ensuring our children's safety, to providing for their future, and that is what this bill is all about—that responsibility.

Tragically, too often, despite our best efforts, too many of our children fall victim to abuse. We cannot guarantee their safety, but what we can do is ensure that when children in this country are harmed, we can deliver justice without further harming them. Thankfully, children's advocacy centers, for which this bill reauthorizes funding, are critical and effective resources in our communities that help us perform this awesome and terrible responsibility. Through this bill, we can continue to prevent future tragedies and deliver justice in ways that are effective and less costly than communities can deliver alone.

This bill helps prevent child abuse proactively. Just last year its programs trained more than 500,000 Americans, mostly in school settings, in how to spot and prevent child sexual abuse.

Secondly, and in my view most importantly, this bill delivers justice. Children's advocacy centers increase prosecution of the monsters who perpetrate child abuse. One study showed a 94-percent conviction rate for center cases that carried forward to trial.

Third, and in many ways equally as important, this bill helps to heal. Child victims of abuse who receive services at a child advocacy center are four times more likely to receive the medical exams and mental health treatment they desperately need compared to children who are served by non-center supported communities. No parent ever wants to go to one of these places or have to bring their child to one of these places, but those parents who have under these tragic circumstances, nearly 100 percent of them say they would recommend seeking this help to other parents.

How do these advocacy centers achieve all these different results of prevention, of justice, and of healing? Well, they are unique because they bring together under one roof everybody who needs to be present to help deal with the tragedy of child abuse: law enforcement, prosecutors, mental health and child service professionals—all focused on what is in the best interest of the child.

Through a trained forensic interviewer, they interview the child to find out exactly what happened. They ask difficult, detailed questions, and they structure the conversation in a trained and nonleading way so the testimony can be used later in court, preventing what otherwise is retraumatization, making it possible for child victims to testify in a way that will lead to justice but without forcing those children

to take the stand and to repeat over and over what they testified to once at a center.

Prosecutors take the information obtained in the interview all the way through the court system, while doctors and other child service professionals ensure the child is getting the help he or she badly needs to begin the process of healing.

One place, one interview, with all the resources a victim would need to move forward to secure justice and to heal.

In my home State of Delaware, we have three children's advocacy centers, one in each of our counties. In the last year, I visited the centers in Wilmington and in Dover and saw firsthand the extraordinary work the professionals there do. These are places haunted by the tragedies that are described and recorded there, but the staff are welcoming, nurturing professionals, and the law enforcement and mental health and child service professionals who are there are deeply dedicated to making sure that they achieve justice and that they promote healing.

It was striking on my tours, my visits, to see how strategically and thoughtfully each of these centers has been put together, how they have worked through every possible detail to enable obtaining the testimony needed to secure justice while enabling healing of child victims. This is critical in order to avoid retraumatization—a threat that is real for victims and for their long-term healing process. The centers in Wilmington and Dover and Georgetown in my home State show over and over how these centers create the sort of nurturing but effective space to ensure that we both meet the needs of victims and secure justice.

As I am sure the Chair knows, in my home State of Delaware just a few years ago we saw exactly the kind of evil we most dread in this world when a pediatrician, a man named Earl Bradley whom many Delawareans trusted with their children's health and safety, was found to have sexually assaulted more than 100 of our children. Delaware is a State of neighbors, and his horrific crimes against our children, our families, and our communities affected all of us. Attorney general Beau Biden and his team effectively led the investigation and prosecution of this monster. Thankfully, children's advocacy centers were able to play a key role in ensuring that the interviews and the assistance provided to the victims and their families were effective and that ultimately justice was rendered.

Randy Williams, the executive director of Delaware's Children's Advocacy Center in Dover, wrote to me:

> Our multidisciplinary team worked tirelessly and seamlessly in providing forensic interviews, assessments, medical evaluations and mental health services for every child referred to our centers.

Randy went on to say:

> I feel confident that our team's outstanding collaborative response was a direct result of the financial and technical assistance and training resources made possible over many years through the Federal Victims of Child Abuse Act.

In the end, Dr. Bradley was convicted on multiple counts. Over 100 victims were involved. He is now serving 14 life sentences plus 164 years in prison.

As a nation, we have no greater responsibility than to keep our children safe. As a father, there is nothing that keeps me up at night more than concerns about the safety and security and health of my own children. We must do everything we can to prevent sexual abuse of those most vulnerable and those most precious members of our society—our children. When that tragedy strikes, we need to be prepared with the best services we have to foster healing and deliver justice.

This specific bill is about upholding our responsibility to our children, to our families, and to this Nation's future. It is at the very core of why we serve and of what we believe. I am grateful that this is a bipartisan bill, that this is a bill which can demonstrate the best of what this Senate, this Congress, and this country is capable of. It represents the best of our Federal commitment to targeted, effective, and essential assistance to State and local law enforcement, to our communities, and to our children.

I urge my colleagues to join with us because in the end, no child should fall prey to physical or sexual abuse. No mother or father should have a haunting experience of finding that an adult they trusted took advantage of that trust and horribly hurt their child. No country should tolerate these crimes when there are things we can do now, today, on a bipartisan basis, to protect and to heal our children and to ensure that justice is secured.

With that, Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. COBURN. Mr. President, I came to the floor to talk about several other things, but after hearing the majority leader and my colleague from Delaware, I think the revisionist history needs to stop.

This place ran from 1917 under a process where any one Senator could stop anything. That was changed by a two-thirds majority of those present voting to a number less than that. The point I am getting to is that we are in this process because the rules weren't good enough to accomplish what the majority wanted to accomplish and the majority leader wanted to accomplish. Majority Leader Byrd didn't have any trouble when he had the same vote number. Majority Leader Daschle didn't have any trouble. Neither did Frist or Dole. None of them had any trouble. As a matter of fact, what we have seen and what has happened is a lack of effective leadership in building bipartisanship.

The Senate wasn't designed to be the House, as my colleagues have recently made it. The Senate was designed to absolutely protect minority rights. And what happened the week before we went on Thanksgiving break actually hurt the majority more than it hurt the minority because now the majority has lost the ability to hold their own administration accountable.

The majority leader used the words ''reasonableness'' and ''clarity.'' Reasonableness is compromise. Reasonableness is allowing amendments on major bills. Clarity is the ability of Senators to offer their viewpoint on $600 billion bills. Reasonableness would be to say that every Member of this body ought to be able to contribute important ideas to the Defense authorization bill or to the farm bill or to any other major piece of legislation.

So we have gone down this road. It can be stopped. All this can be stopped, but it cannot be stopped without the recognition of the damage done to this body by a very frivolous act.

The revisionist history I am talking about is with the DC court. There is no difference in what the President is doing on the DC court than what Roosevelt decided to do or attempted to do. Everybody knows the workload there is enormously small compared to all the rest of the courts. Everybody knows there are also judicial vacancies that are much more important than those.

So what is the reason for this? It is so we can continue to have executive orders and bureaucratic rules and regs come through that are going to get challenged because they are not within the consent and the vision of the laws that are passed, and, in fact, they can be enforced by a stacked court. My colleagues can't claim anything other than that. We know that is what is going on, and they know that is what is going on. That is going to be there forever. That is a legacy of the Obama administration, and it is a planned legacy.

So it is not about what is claimed to be Republican obstructionism. It is about changing the very nature of our country. It is about changing the rule of law. It is about whether the President will be an emperor or be the President. And my worry is that we are moving fast and quickly toward an executive branch that has decided and has stated very proudly: If the Congress won't do it, we are going to do it anyway. Where does that fit in with the rule of law? And we have heard that three times from this President. In fact, they are doing it—ignoring law.

So now the very court where those laws will get challenged is going to be stacked with his nominees, and we refuse to admit this very same point was made by senior members of the Judiciary Committee when the Republicans were in charge. No one can deny that history. It is out there. Senator SCHUMER did it, as well as others, knowing that court should not be filled.

Now, we know it is going to get filled. We understand what is happening. What is at risk is the future of our country and whether we will really have balance between the powers of the judiciary, the executive, and the legislative branches in this country. What we are seeing is a reshaping of that. It is a dangerous trend. It was something our Founders worried about, and we have seen executive orders and executive privilege taken to new heights that have never been seen in this country before by this administration.

So let's be clear what we are talking about. This isn't about obstructionism. This is about you limited our rights. You also very well limited your own rights in the ability to extract information.

We just heard Senator GRASSLEY spend 1 hour on the floor talking about the lack of response from this administration. There is no tool for you to get answers anymore, there is no tool for any of us to get answers anymore, because we can no longer hold any nominations because they will go through. So there is no power. We have given up the one significant power to hold the executive branch accountable.

Not only that, but we have diminished the minority rights that are part of what the Founders created to force compromise—to force us to compromise, to bring us together. There is not ill will. There are damaged hearts in this institution today.

We understand the strong beliefs on the other side, but we don't understand the lack of moral fiber that is associated with avoiding and violating what has always been the tradition of the Senate—which is, you change rules with two-thirds votes of those duly elected and present. Rule XXII still stands. It just has a precedent in front of it.

So for the first time in our history in this body, one group—because they couldn't achieve compromise and wouldn't compromise—has forced a changing of the rules, not through two-thirds of duly elected and sworn members but by fiat and by simple majority. What is next? We are going to make it the House. That is what is next. That is coming. I know that is coming.

So consequently what is going to happen in our country is we are not going to have significant deliberation. We are going to have laws changed at public whim, rather than the long-term thinking and an embracing of what the Constitution says.

The whole purpose for this body is to be a counter to the House in terms of response to political and public demand; to give reasoned thought and forced compromise, so that what comes out of here is a blend of what both the public wants, but also what the public might have lost sight of in terms of a short-term view versus a long-term view. You are putting that at risk. It is coming at risk. The very the soul of the country can unwind right here in the Senate.

So what remaining powers do we have as minority Members—and you may get to find that out someday—is to use the rules that are there to our benefit.

In the past, nominations were agreed upon between the majority leader and the minority leader, and they were ferreted out and moved. We have had 21 nominations come through the homeland security committee. I voted positively for 19 of them, against one, and voted present on one today. I would say that is about 90 percent that I am in agreement of moving the nominations.

We actually force compromise on our committee. We actually work to compromise on our committee. But that is because of the leadership of Senator CARPER to create an atmosphere where you can have compromise and you can have back and forth. We don't have that leadership in the Senate as a whole. The Senate has never seen these problems. But it is not about the rules. It is about the leadership and who is running the place.

Most of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle haven't been here for a long time. They have never seen it in the majority work. Seventy-seven times the majority leader over the last 7 years has filled the tree and barred amendments. That is more than all the rest combined in the entire history of the Senate. Is that about us or is that about him not wanting to allow the place to work? He is a good man. But the problem is that leadership matters, and this place is not functioning.

I will make one other statement I think needs to be made. I believe that climate does change. I believe that climate is changing all the time. Global warming has been disputed now. It is undeniable; it is not global warming. We are now into a global cooling period, and that is OK. You can have cooling. But the fact is the science is still nebulous on all the claims being made. I have said before on this floor, I am not a climate change denier. But I am a global warming denier, because the facts don't back it up.

We heard what the majority leader had to say about the importance of getting things through on climate change. There may be important things we need to do, but we ought to be doing them together rather than in opposition. If that were the attitude, that we would work together, if we would have an open amendment process—a truly open amendment process where the majority leader isn't picking our amendments and deciding what we can offer—pretty soon you are going tell us what we can say on the floor. You are going to determine what I can say on the floor. This is the first step in this process. That is the ultimate conclusion to this process that you have started.

So it is about leadership, and it is either there or it isn't. Right now, it is not there.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Nebraska.

Mr. JOHANNS. Mr. President, I appreciate the comments of the Senator from Oklahoma, and I would like to use his comments maybe as a springboard for some thoughts I have, not only on this nomination but on the terrible mess we find ourselves in today here in the Senate.

I am a fairly new Member of the Senate. I came here just 5 years ago. I thought a lot about reelection, and I announced some months ago that I would not seek a second term in the Senate. So you might say I don't really have a fighter in this ring. I am here for a limited period of time. I have already decided that. My interest is seeing the Senate operate in a way which will be in the best interests of our country, that will fulfill the vision that our Founders had of a country where there would be freedom and where the minority would be able to voice their view as well as the majority.

The process by which the House of Representatives and the Senate were put together was a very thoughtful process. Our Founders looked at our country and its future, and they decided there needed to be a body where the population would be represented based upon numbers, based upon the population, and that became the House of Representatives.

For a State like Nebraska, 200-some years later that doesn't work very well. It is pretty obvious that our three House Members can be consistently, routinely outvoted by a whole bunch of other States: California, New York, Pennsylvania, Florida, Texas. I could go on and on. We have three Members in the House. It is obvious that we are going to be on the losing end.

The other piece of that is it is a majority-based body. So if you are in the majority, with the Rules Committee, you pretty well set the rules. It just works that as long as the majority can keep their members together, they are going to win. That is just the way it works. About the only way you can change that is to change the majority.

When our Founders looked at that, they said: We have to have a different approach in the Senate. That led to the great compromise.

What we ended up with is just a remarkable system. If you think about it, Nebraska in the Senate is as powerful as California. Nebraska is as powerful as Pennsylvania because we each get two Members. We are equally represented.

They also recognize that the pendulum would swing. Sometimes one party would be in control, and sometimes another party would be in control. Originally, when the Senate was set up, any one Member of the body could come to the Senate floor and object or just debate something to death. That pretty well was how it operated, and it operated for decades and decades that way.

Then came World War I and Senators began to recognize that funding the

war was going to be a very serious problem. There was a tremendous amount of affinity between Senators and people back in the country where their ancestors came from—Germany—and they had to find a way to end debate. So they finally, after discussing this and debating it, decided the best way of doing that was to put something in place where you could literally take a vote. I think back then, if my memory serves me correctly, if two-thirds of the Senators voted, they could end debate.

That was quite a change for the Senate. The whole idea that a single Senator wasn't going to be able to literally force issues in the Senate was a very difficult issue. But that change was made, and it operated that way for many decades following. Then in the 1970s, the decision was made that it would take 60 votes to end debate. It would pull the number down to 60. But it was always recognized that the rules could only be changed by a two-thirds majority; that is, until just a few weeks ago. Then, something happened here in the Senate that literally shakes the foundation of this country and it shakes the foundation of this body.

I guess if you are in the majority at the moment, you are probably saying: Geez, Mike. It seems to work out pretty well. Well, it won't work out very well for the history of this body, for this institution, for its Members, and, most importantly, for the citizens of the United States, because it was the method chosen to change the rules that is the frightening piece.

Think about this. We came down here a few weeks ago. A ruling was made by the Chair, and the majority leader said: I will appeal that ruling.

Now, we all know, if we have read the Senate rules—and I hope to goodness we have all read the Senate rules—that by appealing the ruling of the Chair, you can overrule the Chair by a majority vote.

Let me repeat that. We bypassed the rule that says it takes two-thirds to change the rules of the Senate, and the majority said: We will appeal the ruling; and if we get a majority, we will overturn the ruling. That is what happened, and that is where we find ourselves tonight.

This isn't inconsequential, and we are not trying to be arbitrary and capricious, but we are trying to make the point that this is a huge issue for the future of our country. Let me point out what this now means for the Senate. What this means is that if the majority leader, whoever that is, Republican or Democrat, does not like the way things are going, they can appeal the ruling of the Chair and overturn that ruling by a majority vote because now the precedent is set. It is in our history. It is in our rules.

Some look at this and say: You need not panic; this only applies to circuit court nominees, district court nominees, and executive appointments.

Let's think about that for a second. Let's say we have a Supreme Court of the United States where there are four members who are pretty consistent in ruling one way—some might call it the liberal way—and we have four members who are pretty consistent in ruling another way—some might call it the conservative way—and there is one member of the Supreme Court who kind of moves back and forth between the four over here and the four over here, between the four liberal members and the four conservative members, whatever you want to call it. That is a pretty unpredictable vote.

Let's say something happens. Maybe there is a health issue. Maybe there is a decision by that member there in the middle to retire. I don't know. It could be a whole host of things. That is the human condition. Things happen to us. Let's say we are in the last 18 months of an administration. The President is due to go out. The campaign has already started. People are showing up in Iowa, New Hampshire, South Carolina, and everywhere else. They are raising money. They have Presidential races they are organizing, and they are doing all the things they need to do. You have Republicans thinking: By golly, it is our time. We either keep the White House or win the White House. You have Democrats thinking the same. And you have a President who all of a sudden has a Supreme Court appointment smack dab in the middle of four members on one side and four members on the other side.

Let's say the majority has the ability to put somebody of their own ilk into that position—whether it is Republican or Democrat or liberal or conservative. They look at this and they say: You know, we could lose the White House or we might not get the White House. These are appointments for life. It is not as if we are appointing somebody for 4 years; these are appointments for life. We have kind of come to the conclusion, as we talked about it on our side of the aisle, that, by golly, it is in the best interests of this country if we can make this appointment. You know what. We do not have 60 votes to get it done. We have counted the votes. It looks as though this is going to come out of the Judiciary Committee on a straight party-line vote. What are we going to do now?

I know what will happen. You know what will happen. Every Member of the Senate knows what will happen. I don't care if you are a Republican or a Democrat or a conservative or a liberal or a Socialist or whatever you want to call yourself, we know what will happen. There will be a ruling by the Chair. There will be an appeal by the majority leader. And all of a sudden we will have a rule where you can confirm a Supreme Court nomination—a nomination to a job for life—based upon a majority vote. Does anybody think for a minute that is not going to happen? Does anybody think for a minute that the circumstances surrounding that will not occur?

I guess if you are on the Republican side of the aisle and it is a very strong conservative who is going to the Supreme Court, maybe you look at that and say: Thank goodness. We saved the country.

Maybe if you are a Democrat and it is a good strong liberal who is going onto the Supreme Court, you say: Thank goodness. We saved the country, and it was worth it.

But you see, here is the dilemma in which we find ourselves. The dilemma in which we find ourselves is that the majority of this body has now set the precedent and you cannot pull it back. There is not any way now that you can unwind the clock and turn back the clock.

Let me offer another thought. Let's say we are a few years down the road and you have a piece of legislation and your side of the aisle has decided that piece of legislation is absolutely critical for the future of this country. Maybe it is cap-and-trade, maybe it is another health care bill—whatever. All of a sudden somebody says: We have to get this done. We are in the last 12 months of this administration. We are looking at the numbers. We are not going to win the White House again, the way it is looking. The precedent is there: Appeal the ruling of the chair.

The point I am making is this. It is not that the rules were changed. The rules have been changed in the Senate a number of times by the way the Senate rules contemplate—with a supermajority voting to change those rules. Now we have torn that up because now we have established a precedent.

I am in the process of reading Senator Byrd's history of the Senate—a remarkable man. I got to know him a little bit. He was still here when I came to the Senate, before he passed. He happened to be on the other side of the aisle, but I came to respect him so much. He would never have stood for this. He never would have tolerated that this institution would be so mistreated by anybody, Republican or Democrat. Boy, in his heyday he would have been at his seat screaming at the top of his lungs about what we were doing to the Senate with this vote, what the majority was going to do to the future of this great body.

In his history of the Senate, he talks about how important it is that there is this body where a minority view of the world can be represented.

If I were the majority leader, I guess I would like this to run efficiently and well-oiled and smoothly. I was a Governor. I was a mayor. The days when I got my way were much better than days when I did not get my way. I did not like being frustrated by the legislature. I didn't like the city council telling me I couldn't get my way. I could not understand, some days, why they could not figure out that I was right.

One day I was sitting down with a State senator. He had been there a lot of years. I was complaining about the way the legislature was treating me. I couldn't understand why the legislature couldn't follow everything the

Governor wanted done. He listened very patiently and he looked at me and he said: You know, Mike, nobody elected you king.

I think that is what Bob Byrd would have said—nobody elected any of us king. You see, our Founders set up this system with the whole idea that we would not have kings anymore, that there would be checks and balances, and that we would be forced to deal with each other, sometimes more artfully than at other times but that we would be forced to deal with each other.

The majority leader came down here and he said: I don't understand this, and he talks about this process. This process got started because he filed cloture on 10 nominations. Why are we not working on this? If you look at the history of the Senate over the last years—I have been here; I watched it; I turn on my TV in the office to see what is going on on the Senate floor. Do you know what I see? Exactly what you see, what all of us see. We sit hour after hour, in cloture or in quorum call hour after hour when amendments are pending.

I thought—I had this mistaken impression—that every Senator could file an amendment; that if I had a better idea on something, I could file an amendment and I would get a hearing on the amendment. I would be able to come down here and try to argue to my colleagues: Pass my amendment. We have not seen that kind of process for years under this majority.

I didn't think it was possible to mishandle the Senate when I came here. I looked at the books of rules and interpretations and volumes, chapter after chapter written about the rules of the Senate, and I said to myself: There is no way you could mismanage this body because these rules are as intricate as they could be. Boy, was I proven wrong. You can mismanage this body. We have seen it. And that is where we find ourselves today.

At the end of the day, why did it happen? Why did it happen? Why are we putting ourselves in this position? A former U.S. Senator from Nebraska who had been here—I think he was here three terms. He had a wonderful saying. When his party was not in power, he would say at speeches: Ladies and gentlemen, let me remind you, the worm will turn. It was his way of saying: You know what. I have been in the majority and I have been in the minority, and it will change because the people will send a message into this Chamber, just as they did on the health care bill. They will send a message that this is not the kind of country they want.

We somehow have to figure out how to put this back in the box. This nuclear option needs to be sealed up, hidden away, and never used again—I don't care if the Republicans are in the majority or the Democrats are in the majority. This basically means, today, that all of those rules, all of those chapters written about those rules have no meaning whatsoever because there are no rules. If I do not like what is going on here and I am in the majority, all I have to do is appeal the ruling of the Chair and get my team to stand together and we have changed the way the Senate operates. It is as simple as that.

I think at times in our history we would like to think that we are the smartest people in the world, that we thought of something no other person has thought of in the history of this country. Not true. If you read what Senator Byrd wrote about the history of the Senate, many times U.S. Senators, dissatisfied, losing personally because of a ruling of the Chair, had an opportunity to appeal that ruling and win and realized that was the wrong course of action because they would set a precedent that you could change the rules by breaking the rules. That is exactly what happened a couple of weeks ago. It is not the fact that the rule has changed, although I disagree with where we ended up, it is the method by which the majority—Democrats—changed those rules, because that method is now precedent and it is now available to Republicans and Democrats and it is wide open. I guarantee that in our lifetime we will see a Supreme Court nominee put on the Supreme Court by this method. I guarantee that we will see—whether it is in our lifetime or at some point after—that there will be a situation where legislation is now done by a majority.

What does that mean for the country? I will give a good example. The great compromise protected States such as Nevada, Nebraska, and Iowa. We all get two Senators. We all get to come to the floor and fight for what we believe in.

I imagine that every Senator would say something to the effect of: I come from a beautiful State, the State of Nebraska. We are conservative people by nature. I don't think you live in Nebraska unless you have a pioneer spirit and you are conservative by nature. That is who we are. We essentially believe that less government is a good idea.

When I was Governor, people didn't want me running their schools. They had a school board. They felt they could make thoughtful and intelligent decisions about running their schools. I thought they could too. That is the nature of who we are.

Do you realize that on executive appointments—district court and circuit court judges—we basically get dealt out of this. Let's say I have a problem with a nominee, and I want to put a hold on that nominee until they come to my office and deal with me. Everybody on both sides of the aisle gets the opportunity to use that. Well, guess what. That was voted away a few weeks ago.

Why would a Republican administration deal with anyone in today's majority? Why would they care? It doesn't make any difference.

I went through that process. I was a member of the President's Cabinet. I hope I would have the decency that if anybody asked me a question, I would answer the question or try to solve their problem or try to work with them. Quite honestly, why do they need to? How can that issue be forced now? They don't need your vote. They can get through the process if their party is the majority of the Senate. This body was never intended to operate that way.

I want to spend a few minutes of my time talking about what I really think this is about, and this makes it an even more tragic story. The majority leader was here a few minutes ago and said: Well, if you are going to be like this, then we will work on Christmas. We will work the weekend before; we will work the day before.

I was sitting there thinking: What is new about that? What's even threatening about that? I mean, that is the way business is done.

We sit through hours and hours of quorum calls and then all of a sudden they file cloture on 10 nominees 2 weeks before the break? It is kind of obvious to me what is going on here. Is it obvious to anyone else what is going on here? They are trying to force the issue.

Why didn't we start working on this weeks ago? Why don't you run the Senate 24/7 so we can move amendments and give us the opportunity to vote on amendments? Why sit hour after hour in a quorum call?

I think what this is really all about is this: We had reached an agreement. Remember that evening when we all walked down the hall—Republicans, Democrats, and Independents—and went into the Old Senate Chamber and shut the doors. There was no media or staff. It was just us talking about the Senate.

I am not going to share a lot about what was talked about in there, but I thought it was a pretty good meeting. We have done that a couple of times. We did that on the START treaty, and we did it that evening a few months ago.

It wasn't very pleasant, but over the next day or so we shook hands and said to each other: OK, we get it. We don't want to get in the business of breaking the rules to change the rules. We understand the precedent that is setting. Once you put that on the books, like I said, you can't unwind the clock.

So, OK, this is what we are going to do—and I must admit I didn't like it very much. I thought we were giving up too much. Having said that, the alternative was not very attractive. We shook hands, like gentlemen do, and we called a truce and those were the rules we would operate under.

Everybody said: We dodged a bullet on that one, and the Senate will continue to function like it has functioned the last 225 years. It will function as a place where the minority, whoever that might be at any given time, has a

voice. It is the only body in the world that operates like that.

As I said, I must admit I had qualms about it. I talked to some of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle about my qualms, and at the end of the day I reached the conclusion that it was better than the nuclear option.

So why did this come up again? If we had reached a deal—if we shook hands like gentlemen and women do, why did this come up again? I thought this was behind us. I thought we would make our way through nominations and work long hours. Most of these are very noncontroversial, and I thought we had reached an agreement.

We had reached an agreement. We all knew we had reached an agreement. So why did Democrats feel that all of a sudden we needed to revisit this?

The argument I want to make tonight is this—and I am going to draw on a little bit of history. When I first came here, I sat in a chair over there. I will never forget it. It was Christmas Eve day when we were brought in here to vote on a piece of legislation. Christmas Eve votes are pretty unusual around here. We all sat at our desks. We don't usually enforce that rule, but we all sat at our desks.

For people like me, I left this Chamber very, very sad and discouraged. On a pure party-line vote, a monumental piece of legislation that practically no one had read and was poorly understood—in fact, the Speaker said: We have to pass this to understand what is in it. No truer words were ever spoken. It passed. Not a single Republican in the House or the Senate voted yes on that legislation.

When I came here, I kind of had the idea that there would be give and take, that I would get my idea, you would get your idea, and at the end of the day the Senate was a body that would force compromise or the bill wouldn't pass.

Something unusual happened. The President was a Democrat, the Senate had 60 Democrats, so debate could end, and the majority of the House was overwhelmingly Democrat. It became very clear to me that my view of the world didn't matter, and it wasn't going to matter because as long as they could sweeten this thing up and do deals, and whatever else, my State was impacted by it. We all remember the Cornhusker Kickback. But at the end of the day it passed.

I could never figure out how that bill would work. It just didn't make any sense to me. I had been a Governor. I had seen how failed Medicaid was—40 percent of the doctors would not take Medicaid. I could not imagine how adding millions to that system was going to help poor people. To me it looked like it was going to hurt them. It was kind of like giving them the bus ticket and then saying: We are only running one bus in Washington, DC, these days. It is probably not going to be very successful.

I looked at what was happening in the rest of the bill, and it just didn't make any sense to me. I think I know why we revisited this rule. When the rollout occurred right about that time, all heck broke loose. The American people finally realized how bad this bill was. In fact, there is one State out there, the State of Oregon, that didn't sign anybody up because their system melted down.

The exchange was a mess. People found out that all of these promises—remember this one: If you like your plan, you can keep it, period. If you like your plan, you can keep it, period.

Not only was that used on the campaign trail—you know, we all get out on the campaign trail and hyperventilate here and there. That phrase was used by somebody in real authority: The President of the United States of America. He went to the American people and said: If you like your plan, you can keep it.

I said how could that possibly work. The whole idea is you have to force people off their plan and onto a different plan. If you like your plan, you get to keep it?

In 2010, the administration's own rule on this subject showed that as many as 80 percent of small business plans and 69 percent of all business plans would lose their grandfathered status.

A very thoughtful Senator, a guy by the name of MIKE ENZI, put in a resolution of disapproval which would have canceled that regulation. Back then he was able to get it to a vote. You would think that if you want to support the President of your party and his pledge to the American people—if you like your plan, you get to keep it, period—you would vote with your President. You would think that would be 100 to 0.

I don't know how Republicans could be against that. I don't know how Democrats could be against that. After all, that is what this person in authority promised the American people: If you like your plan, you get to keep it, period. He said it over and over. It was like a broken record.

You know how that vote went here? Let me remind everybody. It failed on party-line votes. Democrats voted no on the resolution: If you like your plan, you get to keep it. My goodness. Is that an embarrassment or what?

What was the message that day? Were they trying to say: No, if you like your plan, you don't get to keep it? The President isn't being truthful with you. Was that the message that day? What was going on? I mean, I was stunned by that vote.

How could you be against the President's own promise? That was back in 2010. That information was available to the President and his people back in 2010. Yet they kept saying it: If you like your plan, you get to keep your plan.

One other estimate by the Congressional Budget Office, which I think generally we all respect—they do good work for us. They do our scoring. They said that up to 20 million employees could lose their employer-sponsored insurance. Wait a second. That information was available too. So how has this promise worked out?

This fall, more than 4.7 million cancellation letters went out in 32 different States. I have read the articles. I imagine everybody in the Chamber has read the articles. They say 4.7 million people got cancellation letters in 32 different States. The cancellation letter basically said: Well, sorry. This big law got passed on a party-line vote, and you don't get to keep your plan, just as was predicted by the CBO and the administration's own people. This should not be stunning to anybody in this body, but it was stunning to the American people.

The President said: Oh my goodness. I think this is a problem. So he said to insurance companies: You have to fix this. You have to get people their plan. If they like their plan, they get to keep their plan. And it didn't matter whether it was Democrats or Republicans in given States, they said: Mr. President, you can't unwind that clock.

What I would say to that is, wait a second here. I don't like this law, but it passed. I was sitting there the day it passed. It passed on a completely party-line vote. And people literally were caught in a situation—millions of them—where they realized they wouldn't get to keep their plan. So could the President solve that problem? No. It wasn't a policy fix; it was a political fix. That is what he was doing. He was literally trying to solve a political problem for the majority that passed the darn bill. I mean, it is unbelievable.

Many weighed in. The American Academy of Actuaries said this:

> Changing the ACA provisions could alter the dynamics of the insurance market, creating two parallel markets operating under different rules, thereby threatening the viability of insurance markets operating under the new rules.

Now, I am as competitive as anybody. I have run a lot of elections. I understand the importance of being in the majority in this body. I especially understand that after what the majority did over the last few weeks. We went 225 years as a country, and it was only in the last couple of weeks that the majority said: Look, we are tired of dealing with you, minority. We are going to get our own way.

It reminded me of the day ObamaCare was passed. It was identical. It was like: JOHANNS, get lost. We don't care what you think about this. We have 60 votes. Sit down and shut up.

Is that the way the Senate is supposed to operate? I don't think so. I don't think that is what was envisioned when this body was put together, and it has been forever changed. It happened because ObamaCare is out of control. It is not the Web site. The Web site was a mess. It just proved to us that the White House couldn't manage this. That is what it proved to us. But we can fix a Web site. They can get smart people who go in and figure it out.

That wouldn't be me, but there are many people in the United States who could be brought to bear to solve this problem of dealing with the Web site. It is not the Web site, although it is a huge embarrassment. It was a huge embarrassment for the White House. It was a huge embarrassment for the President of the United States. It was a huge embarrassment for Kathleen Sebelius. It was a huge embarrassment for the Democrats who voted for this. But at the end of the day it can be fixed, and I would guess they would fix it. I kept saying to people back home that I think they will get it fixed. How tough is that? How tough would it be to do it the right way the first time? But they didn't. It just proves they are not very competitive.

What is happening here is the wheels are coming off this policy because the policy never made any sense. When the President made this announcement: Insurance companies, you fix it, America's health insurance plans said that premiums have already been set for the next year based on the assumption of when consumers will transition into the new marketplace. Who decided when they would transition into the new marketplace? The insurance companies didn't. The majority did. The White House did. Health and Human Services did.

They go on in their statement:

> If now fewer younger and healthier people choose to purchase coverage in the exchange, premiums will increase and there will be fewer choices for consumers.

Well, let me say something that is obvious to everybody in this Chamber. Your premiums are going up. Why? Young people are so turned off. Young people are so turned off by what is happening. I had a young person show up at a town hall. This was a year and a half ago. They said: Here is kind of the deal. It is just my wife and I. We don't have children. We are both working. We are trying to get ahead. We don't make a lot of money, and we decided the best plan for us was kind of a catastrophic plan. We will deal with our day-to-day health care needs, which, incidentally, aren't much because we are young and fortunately we are healthy. We have a high deductible.

I was listening to that, and I said: God bless you. This is America. They can make that choice. That was the best choice for them. They thought about it and decided the money they were making might be better allocated someplace else. What a great country that people can decide that.

Well, what happened with this health care bill? That decision was taken away from that young couple. They were ordered by the Federal Government, under penalty, to buy a given plan. Now, I have not caught up with that young couple, but I bet they are mad as wet hens. I will bet they have looked at what has happened to them and they are saying: Why?

We all know the little secret here: Young people are paying more for coverage that they don't need to finance me in my sixties. Does that make any sense?

I could go on and on about what is happening here with this health care bill, but it is not sheer coincidence that Senators in the Senate reached an agreement months ago on the rules. We shook hands on it. We put that behind us. Right about the time ObamaCare rolled out, all of a sudden that agreement wasn't valid anymore, and we got set up on a manufactured crisis to force a vote, and the method chosen to change the rules forever changes how the Senate operates.

In our history, many Senators had the opportunity to change these rules and thought better of it because they so respected and admired this institution, that they believed there was a place for a minority whether that Senator was in the minority or the majority at the time. That is what happened.

I will take another step. All of us know what this is really about. This is about control of this body. All of a sudden, because of ObamaCare and the truth coming out about what a terrible piece of policy this is, it became evident that Members over here were in deep trouble and were going to lose their elections if their elections were held now, and the majority had to change the conversation. So the agreement we reached after that night we spent in the Old Senate Chamber hashing through this, debating and discussing it, basically got torn up and tossed out the window, and the majority forever changed how this body will operate and what this body is going to be about in the future.

So what I say to my colleagues tonight is this: I am not planning on being here much longer. I have made that decision. One could say I don't have a boxer in the ring. A year from now, I will be doing something else. Some will be here, some won't be here. But at the end of the day, what I will remember about this time in the Senate is that a precedent was set that is vastly different from the way this Senate operated for 225 years. A precedent was set that allows the majority to take control of executive branch appointments, district court appointments, circuit court appointments. It is a precedent that would allow a majority to take control of a Supreme Court appointment. It is a precedent that will allow a majority, when it chooses to—not if; I believe it is a question of when—to take control of the policymaking.

So it is true when we say that if they were attempting to change the conversation, I say to the majority Members of the U.S. Senate, away from ObamaCare to this, all they have done is reminded the American people that what they are really doing is abusing this institution in a way that, quite honestly, is going to be very hard to turn around.

My thought is this: I feel very strongly that we can reverse what has occurred here, but we can't do it as a minority. We need the majority to back off. We need the majority to recognize that this body has existed through difficult times, it has existed through wars, it has existed through attacks on our country, and we have found a way to operate. We need the majority to recognize that we reached an agreement many months ago after an evening spent together in the Old Senate Chamber where we debated these things and, like gentlemen and gentlewomen, we shook hands and put this behind us for this session.

We can do the work of the Senate. We can do the work for the American people. I have no doubt about that whatsoever.

I am very concerned, though, that we have put the Senate in a position where it is a very vulnerable body now. Any majority can now use this precedent to turn this into something that is entirely different than what anybody who founded this country believed it should be. When the majority decided that it would bypass the requirement that rules would be changed by a two-thirds vote and do it by appealing the ruling of the Chair, they put the Senate in a position where there are no rules. There are no rules. All you need is 51 Members—50 if you have the Vice President in the Chair—who decide to stick together and make that Supreme Court appointment. They can get it done. All you need is 50 Members, if you have the Vice President in the Chair, who decide they stick together, and they would do a legislative process by a majority vote.

Many, many times the nuclear option was discussed, it was debated, and Senators much wiser than I looked at the history of this great country and its future and decided it was a step that should never be taken—that was until a couple of weeks ago, all driven by the fact that this piece of legislation called ObamaCare has turned out to be such a train wreck and that there was a need to change the discussion and change the topic and try to draw the people's attention away from that legislation, and that is how this rule got adopted. It is a sad time in our Nation's history. It is a sad time in terms of what is going on.

What I would offer is my hope is that wise people will realize the problems they have created for this country in the future, realize that the precedent they have set forever changes the way we operate and back away from what occurred.

Let's start doing the work of the Senate. If that means we work through Christmas, good. I am here. If that means we work on weekends, if that means we work around the clock, fine with me. I am good. I will do it. I will be happy to do it. But to try to streamline this process in a way that silences the minority is not right, and it is not what this country should be about.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. UDALL of New Mexico). The Senator from Connecticut is recognized.

Mr. MURPHY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that after I finish speaking, Senator BLUMENTHAL be allowed to speak.

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

SANDY HOOK

Mr. MURPHY. Mr. President, this Saturday we are going to mark the 1-year anniversary of the shooting in Sandy Hook, CT, in which 20 little 6- and 7-year-old boys and girls lost their lives, as well as 6 adults who worked in that school who were charged with protecting them.

Senator BLUMENTHAL and I have come down to the floor today to offer some thoughts as we reflect on the 365 days that have passed since the most horrific mass shooting that most of us have ever seen in our lifetimes.

I think back a lot on that day—being in the Sandy Hook firehouse as the parents realized that their sons and daughters were not coming back from that school. One of the things I remember about that day is getting an awful lot of phone calls from my colleagues from all around the country, Senators and Congressmen who represented places such as Columbine and Aurora and Virginia Tech and Tucson. They all called because they had been through this before and they just wanted to offer their condolences and a little bit of advice on how a community can try to get through these awful, tragic, shattering incidents.

I sort of thought that day how awful it was that there were that many colleagues, that many representatives from across the country who could call and give me advice. What a tragedy it is that we are amassing this bank of expertise across the Nation on how to respond to mass shootings. It speaks to how far and wide the carnage and the devastation are from these mass shootings that are occurring now it seems almost on a weekly or monthly basis somewhere around the country. It is not getting better; it is getting worse.

In 1949 a guy by the name of Howard Unruh went through the streets of his town of East Camden, NJ, firing shots indiscriminately such that he killed 13 people. It was the Nation's first mass shooting. Now we have, unfortunately, had a lot of mass shootings since that first one in 1949.

But here is what is stunning: Of all of the mass shootings that have taken place since 1949, half of them took place from 1949 to 2007 and the other half have taken place in the last 6 years. Something has gone wrong. Something has changed. The problem is that it is not this place. We are approaching the 1-year mark of the school shooting in Sandy Hook, and it will be a week of mourning, but here in the Senate it should also be a week of embarrassment. It should be a week of shame that after 1 year passing since 20 little boys and girls were gunned down in a 5-minute hail of furious bullets, the Senate and the House of Representatives have done nothing to try to prevent these kinds of mass atrocities in the future.

I come down here today not just to challenge this place to act but to tell you a little bit about what I have learned in the last year. I have learned a lot, but I want to distill it down to two pretty simple things I have learned.

I did not work on the issue of gun violence when I was a Member of the House of Representatives, in part because my corner of Connecticut did not have tremendously high levels of gun deaths. Now it is central to my mission as a Senator.

What I have learned over the last year is that despite all the rhetoric we hear from the gun lobby, when you change gun laws to keep guns out of the hands of criminals and to take dangerous military-style weapons and ammunition off of the streets, guess what happens. Communities become safer. The data tells us this.

Since 1998 the National Instant Criminal Background Check System has blocked more than 2 million gun sales to prohibited purchasers. That is up to 2 million criminals—people with criminal histories who should not have bought a gun—who were prohibited from buying a gun. The background check system works but for the fact that only about 60 percent of gun purchases actually go through the system because more and more guns are being bought in online sales, more and more guns are being bought online, and more and more guns are being bought at gun shows.

We know background checks work because we have stopped 2 million people who would be prohibited from owning guns because they have a history of domestic abuse or serious felonies or mental illness. Two million times we have stopped those people from getting guns.

Second, we can compare what happens in States with near universal background check systems versus States that have looser laws. I will give you one statistic, for instance. In States that require a background check for every handgun sale, there is a 38-percent reduction in the number of women who are shot to death by intimate partners. Deaths from domestic violence are almost 40-percent less in States that have near universal background checks.

The same data exists for assault weapons as well. In 1994 we passed the assault weapons ban. Over the next 9 years crimes committed with assault weapons declined by two-thirds.

There are legitimate arguments that there are other factors that contributed to that decline, but certainly a portion of that decline is connected to the restriction on assault weapons. Thirty-seven percent of police departments reported a noticeable increase in criminals' use of assault weapons since the 1994 Federal ban expired.

When it comes to these high-capacity magazine clips, we do not need the data that is out there because common sense tells us that if somebody decides to do mass damage with a high-powered weapon, they are going to do less damage if they only have 10 bullets in a clip rather than 30. Adam Lanza in Sandy Hook Elementary School got off 154 bullets and killed 20 children and 6 adults in less than 5 minutes. In Tucson, a 74-year-old retired Army colonel and a 61-year-old woman were able to subdue the shooter when he went to change cartridges. In Aurora, the rampage essentially stopped when James Holmes went to switch cartridges. When you have to reload multiple times, there are multiple opportunities for these mass shootings to stop. We should do things to make sure the shootings never begin in the first place, but the carnage is much worse when these madmen are walking into shopping plazas, movie theaters, and schools with 30-round clips and 100-round drums.

But here is the second thing I have learned. I learned this as well over the last year. I have learned about the amazing ability of good to triumph over evil even when this place does not act to change the laws. I have learned that despite the evil of those 5 minutes in Sandy Hook, the community of Newtown has amazingly found a way over and over to bring so much beauty and goodness to essentially cover up and drown out that horror. I have seen these kids' memories become the inspiration for literally thousands of acts of generosity and kindness.

Daniel Barden was a genetically compassionate little kid. He was that kid who always sat with the kid in school who did not have anybody sitting next to them on the bus or in the classroom. When his parents would take him to the supermarket, they would be all the way to their car with their groceries, and they would look back and Daniel would still be at the door holding open the grocery store door for people who were leaving.

His parents started a Facebook page that challenges people to engage in little, small acts of kindness in Daniel's memory. It had about 40,000 likes the last time I had checked, and the stories are endless—a woman who bought coffee and doughnuts for a firehouse in New York State; a Missouri woman who helped restock a food pantry in Daniel's honor; a woman in Illinois who paid for a stranger's meal and just wrote ''Love from Daniel Barden'' on the bill.

Jack Pinto was a very active 6-year-old boy. He enjoyed playing sports of all kinds. He was buried in his New York Giants jersey. His parents, Dean and Tricia Pinto, have raised money and put some of their own money in to pay for hundreds of children all around the country to have access to the same kind of opportunity to play sports that Jack had, despite the fact that their families might not have the resources the Pintos do.

Jessica Rekos loved animals. She loved whales and horses most, so her parents started a foundation, the Jessica Rekos Foundation, and they have provided yearlong scholarships for horseback riding lessons for students who would not otherwise have the resources to be able to have the opportunity to enjoy horses in the same way Jessica did.

This week an effort is under way in Newtown and across the Nation to inspire people to every day do a different act of kindness as a way to pay tribute to the 1-year anniversary. These charities that have sprung up in the wake of Newtown are doing amazing work to change people's lives—just the small acts of kindness that maybe we all do in trying to pay tribute to the memory of those kids and those adults. That makes a difference.

Charitable acts and changes in behavior—they are necessary although insufficient responses to the scourge of gun violence that plagues our Nation.

This place has to change the laws. Do something because you do not want to be next. You do not want to be sitting on a train station platform, as I was on December 14, when you get a call that 10 or 20 or 30 or 40 kids or adults have been gunned down in your State. You certainly do not want to get that call when you had a chance, but you did not take it, to do something to prevent it.

I got calls that day from my colleagues all across the country because there are not many corners of the Nation that have not been touched by gun violence. Some 11,000 people have been killed by guns since December 14 of last year. When one person is killed, psychologists tell us there are 10 other people who sustain life-altering trauma as a result of that shooting. So just imagine when 26 kids and adults die in a small community.

So I wish to leave you not with my words but with the words of a mother from Sandy Hook who represents the scope of the trauma that has been the reality for Sandy Hook for the last 365 days. Sandy Hook is recovering but very slowly. The charities and the acts of kindness, they make a difference, but there is a lot of head shaking in that community as to why this place has not risen to the occasion, shown the same type of courage those families have and done something to change the reality of everyday and exceptional mass violence across this country.

Here is what this mother writes. These are her words in an open letter:

> In addition to the tragic loss of her playmates, friends, and teachers, my first grader suffers from PTSD. She was in the first room by the entrance to the school. Her teacher was able to gather the children into the tiny bathroom inside the classroom. There she stood, with 14 of her classmates and her teacher, all of them crying. You see, she heard what was happening on the other side of the wall. She heard everything. She was sure that she was going to die that day and did not want to die before Christmas. Imagine what this must have been like. She struggles nightly with nightmares, difficulty falling asleep, and being afraid to go anywhere in her own home. At school she becomes withdrawn, crying daily, covering her ears when it gets too loud and waiting for this to happen again. She is 6.
>
> And we are furious. We are furious that 26 families must suffer with grief so deep and so wide that it is unimaginable. We are furious that the innocence and safety of my children's lives have been taken. Furious that someone had access to the type of weapon used in this massacre. Furious that gun makers make ammunition with such high rounds and our government does nothing to stop them. Furious that the ban on assault weapons was carelessly left to expire. Furious that lawmakers let the gun lobbyists have so much control. Furious that somehow, someone's right to own a gun is more important than my children's right to life. Furious that lawmakers are too scared to take a stand.

She finishes by writing this:

> I ask you to think about your choices. Look at the pictures of the 26 innocent lives taken so needlessly and wastefully, using a weapon that never should have been in the hands of civilians. Really think. Changing the laws may ''inconvenience'' some gun owners, but it may also save a life, perhaps a life that is dear to me or you. Are you really willing to risk it? There must not be another Sandy Hook. You have a responsibility and an obligation to act now and to change the laws.
>
> I hope and pray that you do not fail.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, many words have been spoken since Newtown, including the very powerful words of my colleague just now. But the plain, simple fact is no words can capture what I feel about that day. No words ever will capture that day or the days and weeks and months afterwards, when we have grieved and healed and resolved that we will do everything within our power to make sure that kind of massacre never happens again.

But equally important is that the deaths by gunfire are reduced or prevented—those 26 senseless, unspeakable deaths of 20 beautiful children and 6 great educators but also the 194 children who have been killed by gunfire since Newtown, and the 10,000 or more deaths caused by gunfire, person by person, a tragic river of senseless deaths that we have the power to prevent, the power in this body and the power in this Nation.

As much as we should be shamed and embarrassed by the failure to act, we also must have hope and resolve that we will act. History is on our side. The example of courage and strength provided by those families ought to give us the resolve and the determination to act; likewise, the examples of courage and resolve by Father Bob Weiss, who had a service in St. Rose of Lima on the evening of December 14, one of the most moving public experiences I will ever have. As I said then, the world is watching Newtown. The world has watched Newtown. It has watched First Selectman Pat Llodra, who has led Newtown with her own courage and strength and determination, including coming here as my guest on the night of the State of the Union to be an example for all of us about what a public official can do by her own example, leading by her own example.

We will mark, this Saturday morning, at St. Rose of Lima the 1-year anniversary at a service Senator MURPHY and I will attend. I have worn since virtually that day a bracelet. I wear it now. It says, ''We are Newtown. We choose love.'' If there is a message for all of us in this Chamber, it is that we continue to choose love. We are all Newtown. Our town is Newtown. All of our towns are Newtown. I see this bracelet literally from the time I wake in the morning to when I go to bed. It will always be an inspiration for me, inescapably our hearts and minds go back to that moment when we first learned about this horrific, unspeakable tragedy.

Of course, I went to the Newtown firehouse that day. The sights and sounds of grief and pain are seared in my memory. They will be with me forever. So will be the story of the children whom we lost: Grace McDonnell and Allison Wyatt, who loved to draw pictures for their families and planned to be artists; Chase Kowalski, a Cub Scout who loved playing baseball with his father; Jessica Rekos, who wanted to research orca whales and become a cowgirl.

We will never forget the heroism and the bravery of the educators such as Vicki Soto and Anne Marie Murphy. Vicki Soto is in this picture. Her brother Carlos came to a service today here in Washington. He has continued, and so have his sisters, to come to events that provide impetus and movement and momentum to the effort to stop gun violence.

Vicki Soto and Anne Marie Murphy literally shielded their students, sought to save them with their own bodies. Dawn Hochsprunk and Mary Sherlach ran unhesitatingly toward the danger entering their school and perished doing so. There are heroes in this story. It is not only about bad people who used guns improperly and illegally; it is not only about evil; it is also about good. The good includes the first responders and police who stopped the shooting when they came to the school and ran toward danger and toward gunfire and thereby ended it, when the shooter took his own life.

It is also about Ana Marquez-Greene, a beautiful girl who loved music and flowers, loved to wear flowers in her hair. She was described by Bishop Leroy Bailey as a beautiful, adoring child. That picture evokes the stories of all of those children: beautiful, adoring, a future and a life ahead of them.

For all of those stories and the tears, and the teddy bears and tributes that were outside of the firehouse, Newtown has refused to be defined simply by tragedy; refused to be locked in its past. It has moved forward, because Newtown is not just a moment, it is a movement. It is not just a moment in

history defined by tragedy, it is a movement to make the world better. It is a movement to make America safer.

That is the movement we have articulated and sought to advance. Those families, including Neil Heslin, who has come here numerous times for his son Jesse, have been an example of courage. Indeed, they have been profiles in courage. When Neil Heslin dropped Jesse off at school on the morning of December 14, Jesse gave him a hug and said: ''It's going to be all right. Everything's going to be OK, Dad,'' because Jesse was that kind of kid, Neil told the Senate Judiciary Committee in his testimony. His pride in Jesse, as well as his grief, brought tears to all of our eyes.

Jesse was just that kind of kid. He never wanted to leave a baby crying. He never wanted to leave anybody feeling hurt. Jesse and Neil used to talk about coming to Washington, about meeting with the President. Neil met with the President but Jesse was not there, at least physically he was not there. He was with all of us as we worked with Neil to make America safer and make sure Newtown is not a moment but a movement toward a better, safer America.

I thank my colleagues for the outpouring of feeling and support on the eve of that tragedy. It was a rare moment of bipartisan unison and feeling as well as words. I wish to thank them as well for meeting with many of those families because they demonstrated a graciousness and generosity regardless of their views on any of the issues relating to gun violence and any of the bills on the floor. That graciousness and generosity I hope will prevail on this issue and again move us forward.

The acts of kindness and generosity that followed have been inspiring as well.

College students and firefighters have come together to build playgrounds in honor of the Sandy Hook victims. Bill Lavin of New Jersey, on behalf of the New Jersey firefighter system, has done yeoman's work. There are now new playgrounds in their memory in Norwalk, New London, Fairfield, Ansonia, Westport, and Stratford.

I have visited many of them. They are distinct, reflecting the character of those children such as Ana Marquez-Greene.

The Newtown High School football team took time away from celebrating a perfect winning season to devote their efforts to the children and educators we have lost.

The Sandy Hook Run for the Families not only raised more than $450,000 for the Sandy Hook Support Fund, but it also broke the world record for attendance. In millions of actions, large or small, in Connecticut, all around the country, the people of Newtown, the State of Connecticut, and the country showed what compassion, giving, and kindness truly means in action. They chose to honor them by action.

Often the compassion and kindness unleashed by the Newtown tragedy took many other forms that were unheralded, unreported, and unspoken. These were acts of kindness that were not in the newspapers or in the public view but simply acts that meant something to the recipient and to the giver.

These fundraisers and vigils, emails and postcards, small and large signs of recognition and love from our colleagues, from people across the country, are a form of giving back. They give me hope that eventually we will prevail in this effort to make a difference.

Scarlett Lewis, Jesse's mom, is also a hero. She heard about the Cruz family who had lost two of their children to a drunk driver. Scarlett responded with that same resilience and strength by offering to give a fundraiser for the Cruz family.

When she was asked about her family and about what she had done, she explained:

> What brings meaning to the suffering is doing something for someone else. . . . In doing something for them I'm also helping my own healing.

Nearly 90 percent of Americans support commonsense measures such as background checks, a number that is virtually unchanged since the issue soared to the forefront of our political discourse in the wake of Sandy Hook. Even in gun-owning households the support is virtually identical, 88 percent. That figure hasn't changed. A mountain of public support has failed to produce measures, but our resolve is unchanged because those memories of Sandy Hook, those examples of kindness and compassion, will drive us forward, as will the more than 10,000 other victims including at least 14 children under the age of 12 in 43 different States.

Congress has shamefully and disgracefully failed to act, but that is not the end of the story. There has been one vote, and we lost, but that vote is not the end of this movement. Newtown is not a moment. It is a movement. Surrender is unacceptable; the status quo is inexcusable. The families and Newtown community have refused to surrender to personal despair, and we cannot surrender to political dismay or difficulty.

I was moved the other day when I saw a clip of Ronald Reagan endorsing the Brady bill. Ronald Reagan, as President, was a victim of gun violence, as was Jim Brady, who was paralyzed by the same hail of bullets that struck the President of the United States when they were fired by a deranged person, John Hinckley.

Twelve years passed before the Brady bill was passed. It was 12 years of struggle, work, resolve, and courage by Sarah and Jim Brady, with eventually an endorsement by Ronald Reagan.

The sadness and anger I feel today, prompted by the memory of that tragedy and this body's failure to respond, is mitigated by the knowledge that history is on our side, that America is better than the oath we took in April. The people of Newtown have not failed. The people of America have not failed, and this body has not yet failed.

We can and we will do better because Newtown and that vote will be with us.

Newtown is more than a moment. It is a movement that eventually will prevail.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore.

Mr. BURR. I rise to address the nomination of Cornelia Pillard to the DC Circuit Court. This nomination is a good example of government overreach that has led to things such as the ObamaCare debacle.

Let me say to my colleagues who have been on the floor speaking about Newtown, I had an opportunity to spend an hour with parents of Newtown children. It is a compelling personal story that they shared.

No parent should have to watch a child die. No parent should have to live and a child die. My heart still goes out to those who lost children at Newtown.

Today, with the Affordable Care Act fresh on my mind, I venture back to think about when I came to the floor in 2009 and said in front of my colleagues of the Senate and the American people—I wish to spend the balance of this second half of the hour rehashing some of the things I came to the floor to talk about.

There were numerous opportunities before the legislation was passed. I remember it was very close to Christmas in December of 2009.

I said premiums will increase for younger and healthier individuals because of the new federally mandated rating rules. Over 40 percent of the uninsured are ages 18 to 34, the same group that will be hit with the highest increases if this bill passes.

What do we hear Americans are focused on today? Young people. Are they going to join?

Today their insurance is three times lower than what it will be in January of 2014. Why? Because of the Affordable Care Act.

No. 2, premiums will increase because of new federally mandated insurance standards. Experts estimate many of the health plans purchased today by individuals and small businesses will not meet the minimum requirements mandated by this bill, which means that all Americans will be forced to buy richer plans.

Let me remind those who are listening that this was in 2009 on the Senate floor. Listening to the comments of those today who say we never anticipated some of these things would happen—if they didn't anticipate, it is not because people weren't on the Senate floor. It wasn't because we made this up. It is because people who were experts, CMS actuaries, CBO administrators, were sharing with us what would happen if this legislation became law.

Premiums will increase because of new federally mandated benefit packages. The bill empowers the Secretary

of Health and Human Services to decide which benefits are covered and which benefits are not.

What are Americans learning every single day? When they can get on the exchange, they are finding that they are 65 years old and they have to have maternity coverage.

I turned 58 and my wife has pretty much informed me we are not going to have more children, but I can't buy coverage without maternity coverage. Why? Because they want to charge me more to shift that cost.

We didn't have health care reform. We just changed where we are shifting the cost from. Now we are embedding the premium versus charging more at the delivery point of health care and shifting it within the delivery system.

We are shifting it within the population by charging those of us who are a little bit older more—because we mandate that we have to have services we are never going to use—and younger people who are healthy who probably are never going to need to go to the doctor. I hope they do because prevention is actually one of the most beneficial things we can promote. Now we are going to charge them three times what they were paying, and we believe they will take it?

Premiums will increase because of the new excise tax on medical devices. Innovation is what saves health care dollars. Yet in the Affordable Care Act, or what some call ObamaCare, we actually put new taxes on medical devices.

Every time we have a stent that is inserted, every time a medical device is used on a person, their health care bill goes up because we have now taxed the device they are using. If the device price goes up, and the reimbursement goes up, the premium goes up.

It is starting to make some sense. Again, this was in 2009 before we passed the bill. Premiums will increase because of a new excise tax on health plans.

We actually taxed the same health plans that are in the exchange that we told everybody would save them money. Premiums will increase because of the new excise tax on prescription drugs. Wait a minute. I thought we were bringing down the cost of health care.

In 2009, again, new taxes on devices, new taxes on health plans, new taxes on prescription drugs, these were all things that we all knew. The President knew it. My colleagues who voted for the plan knew it, but everybody seems to have amnesia today: Oh, my gosh. How could the costs go up? I never knew this was going to require people to buy a health insurance policy that had benefits they would never use.

Premiums will increase because of a new fee to sell plans in the mandated exchanges. This phenomenal exchange market that created competition, we now created a new fee on the part of insurers to enter the exchange. Premiums will increase because of a new tax for comparative effectiveness.

Comparative effectiveness means we are trying to bring new generics, whether they are in pharmaceuticals or biologics to the marketplace. We have decided to tax that process. Premiums will increase because the bill forces 15 million more Americans to enroll in Medicaid.

Why is that happening? It happens because doctors are paid so little on Medicaid that they have to charge more for everybody else. We are cost shifting when we purchase the premium, and all of a sudden we are learning we are cost shifting even when the service is delivered. Reform? No.

In 2009, again I came to the floor and I talked about the Affordable Care Act, ObamaCare. Zero times did it mention provisions prohibiting the rationing of health care—zero. Nine times it mentioned new taxes created in the bill. Thirteen pages are in the table of contents. The bill weighed 20.88 pounds and it took 36 pages for the CBO to estimate the pricetag of ObamaCare; 70 government programs authorized by the bill, and 1,697 times in the Affordable Care Act the Secretary of Health and Human Services was given the authority to create, determine, and define things in the bill. This is a bureaucrat whom we allowed 1,697 times to determine what Congress's intent was in the legislation through almost 3,000 pages; 3,609 times the word ''shall,'' not ''may,'' was in the bill. It cost $6.8 million to taxpayers per word.

Let me remind you. This is what I came to the floor and talked about in 2009 before the Senate passed this legislation in the dark of night.

Twenty-four million people left without health care. This is the bill that was supposed to insure everybody. Twenty-four million people without health insurance; a $1.2 billion cost to the taxpayer per page, and $5 billion to $10 billion of additional funding needed for the IRS' implementation of the bill.

In other words, we are going to fund $5 billion to $10 billion for the IRS to chase down people who owe a penalty because they made the determination they couldn't afford or they didn't need health care insurance.

There are $8 billion in taxes levied on uninsured individuals. There is a way to make health care affordable—tax people who don't have it.

So $25 billion of additional Medicaid mandates placed on States; $28 billion in new taxes on employers not providing the government-approved plans; $100 billion estimated annually of fraud in Medicare and Medicaid; $118 billion in cuts in Medicare Advantage—to seniors all across this country who found this product to be the one that provided the most security and benefits for them; $465 billion in cuts to Medicare—cuts to Medicare. This was the health care system that was at that time projected to be insolvent by 2017.

There are $494 billion in revenues from new taxes, fees, levied on American families and businesses; a $2.5 trillion cost for full implementation of the legislation.

At that time we had a $12 trillion debt. Today, we have a $17 trillion debt. Health care was supposed to be more affordable because we reformed it. We didn't reform it. We took it over. The Federal Government took it over.

Let me go to another process I talked about in 2009. This is all marked up. It has been in my desk drawer since then. It is a word search of the bill. There are 4,677 times where the legislation said shall, must or require; 899 times it said tax, fee or revenue; 470 times it said agency, department, commission, panel or bureau; 196 times it said regulate or regulation; 134 times it mentioned treatment; 180 times it mentioned prevention; 40 times it mentioned choice; 25 times it mentioned innovation; and 13 times it mentioned competition.

If we listen to those who are out selling this awful plan today, what are the three words we hear? Choice, innovation, competition—those things that are mentioned the least in the almost 3,000 pages of health care legislation in 2009. This bill wasn't reform. This bill spent trillions of dollars at a time of record deficits and debt. When fully implemented, I said then, this bill is projected to cost $2.5 trillion over 10 years. CBO said at the time that this bill will increase Federal health costs, not lower it.

What have we heard from the President? It is going to lower health costs. It is going to bring it down. It is going to be more affordable. Middle class, this is the greatest deal for you.

The bill raised taxes by more than $500 billion at a time of record unemployment. The bill violated the President's own pledge to protect the middle class. Who gets taxed in this bill? Again, this is from 2009 on the Senate Floor, right here, before the vote. Uninsured Americans, insured Americans, families with high-value insurance plans, high health costs, small business, individuals who need medicines or medical devices, and employers that provide retiree drug coverage. Employers that provide retiree drug coverage, we tax them.

The bill cut $466 billion in Medicare to fund new government programs. Medicare faced at that time a $38 trillion underfunded liability and insolvency that was projected to occur in 2017. Instead of fixing those problems, this bill raided Medicare to start a new government entitlement. The bill cut Medicare Advantage. It cut hospitals, it cut nursing homes, it cut home health, and it cut hospice.

Nobody in the administration can go out today and say: Oh my gosh, we didn't know this was going to happen. We talked about it right here day after day after day.

These are not things we made up. If we did, we would be prophets, because they are all coming true. Everything is aligning with what we said.

The bill would increase premiums, making care more expensive, not less. I mean let's get past what was the easy

part, and that was setting up the exchange, setting up the Web site. Or at least it should have been.

New taxes in this bill will get passed on to consumers, increasing yearly premiums—this is what I said then; listen to this—by $488 a year, according to some estimates. The average premium would increase by $2,100 for a family policy in the individual market.

There are individuals who are seeing $488 a month in increase, and in addition to that a deductible they have never had applied to them before.

This bill imposed costly new burdens on struggling States. The bill threatens health care choices millions now enjoy with a tangled web of new rules, regulations, and government-run plans. The government will require you to purchase insurance or face a fine and will tell you what kind of insurance you have to have, even if you like what you currently have.

I am not a prophet. I was going by what the experts said in reading the bill. So for everybody who went out and said: If you like your insurance, you can keep it; if you like your doctor, you can keep him; if you like your hospital, you can keep it—we were on the Senate Floor saying: That is not what the bill says. It is not going to happen.

This bill cut $135 billion from hospitals, $120 billion from 11 million seniors on Medicare Advantage, nearly $15 billion from nursing homes, nearly $40 billion from home health agencies, nearly $7 billion from hospice. Cutting Medicare to fund a new government program in my book is not reform. It is ignorance.

The CMS Office of the Actuary—let me tell you, the Actuary is like the gold standard. The CMS Actuary is like the guy who puts that stamp of approval on it, and there is nobody higher from the standpoint of what the actuary says. He says the bill increases national health expenditures. National health expenditures under this bill would increase by an estimate of a total of $234 billion, 0.7 percent, during 2010 and 2019.

That is exactly the opposite of what everybody is out saying today. Despite promises that reform would reduce health care spending growth, the bill actually bends the health care curve upward. According to the analysis, the national health expenditure as a share of GDP is projected to be 20.9 in 2019, compared to 20.8 percent under current law.

How could you go out and make a claim this was bending the cost curve down? How could you promise the American people it was going to be cheaper?

The total number of persons with employer coverage in 2019, according to the CMS Actuary pre-2009, when the bill was passed, was projected to be 5 million lower under the reform package than under current law. Let me say that again. The CMS Actuary told us in 2009, before we passed this bill, that employer-based coverage would drop by 5 million individual covered lives. I might say that some estimates are coming in at 100 million employees losing their health care under employer plans right now.

The new fees for drugs, devices, and insurance plans in the bill will increase prices and health insurance premium costs for consumers, and this will increase the national health expenditure by approximately $11 billion per year.

The bill funds $930 billion in new Federal spending by relying on Medicare payment cuts which are unlikely to be sustainable or permanent. As a result, providers could find it difficult to remain profitable; and absent legislative intervention, they might end their participation in the Medicare program, possibly jeopardizing the care to beneficiaries.

See, it wasn't Republicans who talked about rationing, it was the Actuary at CMS in his analysis of the Affordable Care Act. He said: Here is what is going to happen. It is seniors who are going to get hosed on it because they are not going to have access to the doctors anymore.

The bill is especially likely to result in providers being unwilling to treat Medicare and Medicaid patients, meaning that a significant portion of the increased demand for Medicaid services would be difficult to meet.

How could anybody listen or read what the CMS Actuary said and remotely go out and tell the American people: Geez, this is going to increase coverage for everybody.

The CMS Actuary noted that the Medicare cuts in the bill could jeopardize Medicare beneficiaries' access to care. He also found that roughly 20 percent—20 percent—of all Part A providers—hospitals, nursing homes, et cetera—would become unprofitable within the next 10 years as a result of these cuts, meaning they are going to go out of business.

You know, pretty soon it is not going to be the network the insurance provider put together, it is going to be the fact the hospital went out of business because they couldn't withstand what this bill has done to them.

The CMS Actuary found further that reductions in Medicare growth rates through the actions of the Independent Medicare Advisory Board—now, that is going to sound a little odd to some because prior to the bill passing it was called the Independent Medicare Advisory Board, but it is now called the Independent Payment Advisory Board—IPAB—an entity that when set up and it is kicked in—16 members picked by the President—will determine reimbursements and scope of coverage. It is not the Congress of the United States. If we don't legislatively do something with their recommendation, it becomes law. It goes into effect.

The bill would cut payments to Medicare Advantage plans by approximately $110 billion over 10 years resulting in less generous benefit packages and decreasing enrollment in Medicare Advantage plans by about 33 percent. So 33 percent of seniors would lose their Advantage plan. Again, this is 2009. This is not today.

The President, in 3,000 pages said it would reduce costs. The chief actuary says that is not the case.

Let me read a letter I got in the last couple of weeks from Lori Perez from Willow Springs, NC.

> I am a divorced mom of three. I received insurance through my employer. My rate has increased $100 a month. This is a huge difference that will have to be budgeted by reducing groceries and foregoing my son's braces I had planned for 2014. I looked into dropping my company provided insurance to join an exchange but I do not qualify to receive a subsidy because my insurance rate is less than 9½ percent of my income. It is 9 percent. My yearly income qualifies. Apparently, Obama thinks I can afford an additional $1,200 a year. I am considering dropping my insurance, paying out of pocket as needed for health care, and paying the fine at the end of the year. It would be less expensive. This is ridiculous. What can we do?

What do you say to Lori? Oops. That is the law. Here is somebody who was 100 percent satisfied, an employer doing the right thing, and the Federal Government has now put her in a situation where she is considering just giving up her health care, doing away with it. Why? Because she can't afford it. This is a woman with a job. She is thinking about giving up her groceries and delaying her son's braces. Why? Because of ObamaCare.

Where are we today? Let me speed forward. I said we have the health care exchange, the healthcare.gov Web site. There are companies every day that get Web sites set up. This one is complicated. They had 3 years to do it. It still is not right today. But I am convinced they will get it right.

For the first time the American people are getting on the Web site and they are able to look at the health care options they have. And what are they finding? They are finding that the premium costs for something equal to what they had are two times, three times more expensive per month. They are finding this new thing they have never had before called deductibles. And I am not talking about a $100 deductible that you pay before you get participation in a doctor's visit or an emergency room visit; I am talking about $1,000, $3,000, $5,000. I have heard from friends who have now signed up for plans and have a $15,000 deductible.

I say to my colleagues—especially my colleague from Florida—it sounds like a health savings account, doesn't it? You have insurance, but you are responsible for the first $15,000. The guy who shared that with me, his premium is $1,444 a month with a $15,000 deductible. I don't think he is going to drop it, but sticker shock is rampant.

Benefit package. How many people have come up to me and said: I am not going to have any more children, but I have to have maternity coverage. Something is wrong.

They are right—something is wrong.

How many kids would like to have a scaled-down version that allows them to have a set of benefits, and they are willing to roll the dice, and if something bad happens, they will pay out of pocket? No, they don't get that option. The choice does not exist—unless it is a choice of the things created in the Affordable Care Act.

Networks. This is one the American people haven't gotten to yet, and I can't wait until it happens. I have gone through getting on the DC exchange and going through the process of trying to figure out whether my doctor in North Carolina is available in this plan or that plan. Wait until the American people go onto healthcare.gov and they start picking a plan and look to see: Is my primary doctor on there? Is my hospital on there? Is the specialist I see on there? Are the drugs that I take on this plan?

This is incredibly complicated. The American people were used to calling their insurance broker and saying: Here is how much coverage I want, here is how much I have to spend, and here is my health condition. And they designed a program to meet their health condition, their income, and their age. Now we penalize you for your age—if you are old or young—and we force everybody to take the same benefit package regardless of whether they can afford it, and we say: If you don't get it, we are going to charge you this year a 1-percent penalty on your income, and that goes up to 2½ percent at the end of the transition period.

We are going to get past this period which I call the enrollment plan period. Next, we get to the part the President delayed. We never understood that something that was in statute, the executive branch could just decide, no, it is not going to go into effect. But for large and small employers, they had a 1-year delay. All of a sudden, in 2015, their employees are going to be in the same marketplace that we are.

What makes that particularly difficult is we extended the enrollment period for individuals in healthcare.gov until March 31, 2014. They can still enroll. Well, April 1, 2014, through April 27, 2014, insurers will have to decide what their premium cost will be in 2015. So given that they have no real experience on what the mix of ages and health conditions in their plan is, what are they going to do? They are going to err on the side of higher premiums; that is, higher than we will see in 2014, which a majority of the American people say are higher than they can afford. Imagine what it is going to be like in 2015. And in that group is the 80 percent of America, not the 5 to 10 percent who are provided for by employers today.

I see my colleague here, and I am infringing on his hour, but I do want to stress one last thing. I mentioned only once the Independent Payment Advisory Board, IPAB. At the end of the day, mark my word, everything that I commented on I read from my 2009 notes—notes that I came to the floor then and said: This bill shouldn't become law, and here is why. I spent 5 minutes talking about that today.

But I am going to make this statement, and I will come back to the floor 2 years from now when IPAB is up and running and the benefit packages have been cut down and the reimbursements have been cut to doctors and hospitals, and I will point to the statement that I made here that picking a 16-member advisory panel that has the authority and the power to set the scope of coverage and, more importantly, the reimbursements will have a most devastating effect on health care in this country.

It will ration health care because of the doctors who choose not to participate in plans that participate in the exchange. It will force hospitals out of accepting plans that participate in the exchange. And for those of us forced by government to be in the exchange and to choose, our choices will be gone. Our costs will go up. We will get care—when we are queued in line or at the emergency room or from a doctor we don't know or don't trust or from a hospital we have to drive to. It is not going to be reassuring to that mother who now has maternity coverage but no obstetrician and no local hospital to deliver a child because, you see, we didn't reform health care. We didn't do anything to liability. We just changed the pocket we pay out of. We taxed everybody we could find to pay for it. And still—as I said in 2009 and I believe will be true today—at the end of the process, there will be 24 million people without health insurance. Why? Because of ObamaCare. Because of the choice—or the lack of choice—we gave them.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MANCHIN). The Senator from Florida.

Mr. RUBIO. Mr. President, I intend to be here for the next little bit—under an hour—sharing this time on the floor with you to discuss some of the issues before us, particularly the pending issue before us of nominations and the concern we have about that.

People back home and across the country may be watching the news tonight or perhaps over the last few weeks they have watched the news and wonder what this debate is about. I wish to use this opportunity tonight to address the nomination of Cornelia Pillard for the DC Circuit because it is a good example of the government overreach that has impacted all sorts of issues in our lives. So on this nomination issue, let's lay the groundwork here so people back home understand what is happening.

Last week or the week before last the Senate majority, by a simple majority vote, changed the practice of the Senate that has existed here since the beginning of the Senate, and they did so in an effort to grab more power for themselves and the President.

Basically, here is the precedent which has been set here and which is exemplified by the nomination before us. The precedent which has been established from now on is that any Presidential nominee, except for the Supreme Court—at least for now—is only going to need a simple majority vote to confirm them. There are problems with that because in the Constitution it gives the Senate—wisely—the power to advise and consent. The reason that was done, especially for judges, is that these are lifetime appointments. When someone is made a Federal judge, it is for the rest of their lives—unless they are impeached, which is a rare occurrence, thankfully. So these are people who are going to serve on the bench for the rest of their working lives, making decisions about the application and interpretation of our Federal laws. That is why the Senate was given this extraordinary opportunity to vet these people and to look for a supermajority of votes in this Chamber before someone is put in a position such as that. The other positions, of course, are Cabinet nominees, and so forth, and those are very important as well.

By breaking the rules to change the rules of the Senate—something that, by the way, we were told at least on two occasions this year was not going to happen but ultimately did—what we basically saw was the ramming through—just as ObamaCare was, on a party-line vote—of the President's nominees, and tonight's nominee is an example of that. This is going to have enormous consequences on this institution for sure. You are seeing it play out tonight.

I say to my colleagues in the majority party that the history of this body is that power trades hands. I believe that as early as January next year when a new Congress reconvenes, you won't be in the majority, you will be in the minority. Soon thereafter, there may be a Republican President appointing judges and appointing Cabinet members and other appointees. Now, all of a sudden, a simple majority is going to be enough, and you have set that precedent.

Beyond the impact that is going to have on this institution, it is going to have an impact on this country. It is going to have the impact of putting these activist judges, such as the nominee before us tonight, on the bench. It is going to have an impact on a wide range of issues, from ObamaCare, to the sanctity of life, to the Second Amendment, just to name a few.

Why does the majority want to pack this particulate bench, this particular DC Circuit Court of Appeals with a supermajority? Why? Well, it is because it is a court which is often called the second highest court in the country. It is a court which is key in reviewing all these regulations that are being imposed upon us. It is a court which is key in reviewing all these assertions of Executive power that this President and other Presidents have instituted.

The current DC Circuit as currently made up has proven to be somewhat of an obstacle to the big-government agenda the White House and the majority here in the Senate have been pursuing, and they don't like it. That is, by the way, why the majority leader earlier this year said: We need at least one more—meaning one more judge—and that will switch that majority on that court. Well, with that vote, by changing the rules, that is what they are setting up for here.

Now they seek to expand it tonight or early tomorrow with a nominee who, quite frankly, is completely out of the mainstream. For example, on the question of abortion, do you know what Professor Pillard calls pregnancy? ''Conscription into maternity.'' I don't know what that means, but I bet the vast majority of Americans would see that as outside the mainstream.

By the way, as you look at the majority pulling out all these stops to confirm controversial nominations, such as this one who is someone completely outside the mainstream, they do so despite the fact that they have spent most of the last 10 years basically filibustering some of former President George W. Bush's best nominations to the judiciary, especially to the DC Circuit. Let me give some examples.

Senate Democrats, over 2 years, refused to even give Peter Keisler a Judiciary Committee vote despite his extraordinary credentials and a record of public service. At the time, they argued among other things that maybe the DC Circuit wasn't busy enough to warrant filling some of these vacancies. He was just the most recent of several Republican nominees to the DC Circuit whom Senate Democrats blocked and filibustered. There were others. For example, they successfully filibustered Miguel Estrada, a Honduran-born legal superstar, a person who some said may one day be the first American of Hispanic descent to serve as a Supreme Court Justice. Senate Democrats voted seven times to filibuster this great American success story and this great judge. Other nominees to the DC Circuit, including then-California Supreme Court justice Janice Rogers Brown and Brett Kavanaugh, also faced long delays of failed cloture votes and filibuster attempts, as did, by the way, President Bush's nominees all across the country.

The numbers on this issue do not lie. Numbers are facts, and the numbers don't lie about the double standard that has been applied here today. For example, tonight's vote on Judge Pillard will come after just 190 days after her nomination. For historical context, Senate Democrats obstructed now-Chief Justice John Roberts' DC Circuit nomination by 729 days. Another impressive nominee whom I mentioned earlier, Mr. Cavanaugh, took 1,036 days. Miguel Estrada was obstructed for 184 days. Janice Brown's nomination took 684 days. Tonight, 190 days. And on that and similar cases, they have completely changed the rules of the Senate and how the Senate nominates people to lifetime appointments to the second highest court in the land.

But despite this record and despite the fact that the DC Circuit is still known to be underworked today, the majority presses ahead on what will be a midnight or 1 a.m. vote to install a controversial law professor on the Nation's second most important court.

So what has changed? What caused the same people who used to routinely filibuster highly qualified judges to now come here and make these changes?

What has changed is that now there is a Democrat in the White House. What has changed is they now want an ideologically compliant court. What they want is a liberal activist court, one that protects all the things they have rammed through Congress over the years and imposed through regulations and pushed through Executive order.

Now we know why Senate Democrats were less interested in the workload of the DC Circuit or the objective qualifications of the nominees over the past decade, why they were less concerned about that than they are today. It is because their dreams came true of having a Democrat in the White House and a majority in the Senate so their efforts to keep vacancies open, that is what has brought us here today, in order to fill them in order to radically change the Federal judiciary into their own image.

But I think what is important to understand is that this whole effort to start this debate about judges and all that is an effort to distract from another big government intrusion that everyone knows too well; that is, ObamaCare. Interestingly enough, this Sunday I was at a wedding. I was approached by someone who had a story similar to what my colleague from North Carolina just outlined. This is outside of ObamaCare. This is someone who has employer-provided care, but that is going to be impacted by these changes that are happening in the law. She had just gotten notice that her premiums had gone up, but here is what is worse. Her deductible had gone up to about $5,000 or $6,000. She doesn't have $5,000 or $6,000. The way she quickly figured it out is she is going to have to spend $6,000 she doesn't even have before she can even begin to use the health insurance plan that she can barely afford. She is basically uninsured.

I wish I could tell you that is a rare story and we are not getting a lot of input about that, but we are. This ObamaCare disaster is starting to take its toll. I think it is unconscionable, by the way, that the majority seeks to distract focus of this body on these important issues such as ObamaCare by pulling this stunt on the judges. But what it doesn't stop is the wave of letters we are getting from people all across the country. These letters are not talking points. These are not complex policy analysis. These are not op-eds in newspapers. These are the letters from real people who are being impacted in real ways by this law.

I wish to share with you some of their stories. I am going to leave their last names out to protect their privacy, but I wish no share with you some of these examples because these are very typical of the kinds of things we are hearing about all across the country.

Philip in Winter Springs. Philip is retired. He is living on a fixed income with insurance from United Health Care that he has for himself and for his wife. His monthly premium increased from $530 to $867. That is over a 60-percent increase in his monthly premium and his $15 copay has doubled now to $30.

How about Charles in Winter Garden? Charles had employer-provided health care which ObamaCare caused to spike in price nearly 80 percent more for his plan and his deductible is $12,000. He cannot afford $156 a week for health insurance if he wants to be able to provide for his two children and pay his bills.

Here is one from Janet in Titusville. Janet is a single mom who is losing insurance for herself and her children in January. This is not Janet's first challenge with the economy, by the way. She has been unemployed for 3 years. She took an underemployed job to provide insurance for her kids but only to lose it 1 year later. She just wants insurance that doesn't cost nearly 10 percent of her income so she can provide for her kids.

David in Lakewood Ranch has an insurance plan that will be canceled as of April 1, 2014. His current policy costs him about $291 a month with a $6,000 deductible. The new policy his insurance company suggested raises his monthly premium over 60 percent to $466 with a $12,000 deductible as well. David also looked at the silver plan for the exchanges but the monthly costs would be $525, with a $7,500 deductible. David's other problem is if he waits until his current plan is canceled on April 1, 2014, any other costs he has leading up to his deductible did not count on the new policy so he will be spending even more trying to reach a deductible that will increase along with his much higher monthly premiums. As he wrote to our office: I just want my old plan back.

Colleen in Winter Park is self-employed. She chose to have a plan that costs her $60 a month because that is all she can afford. She says that while she knows if she had to use her policy there would be hospital costs, she is more than willing to accept the risks.

Guess what. Her policy has been canceled. The new option is a $600-a-month plan and there is no way she can afford that plan. There is no way she can afford it.

How about Sarah in Live Oak. Sarah had an individual policy for herself with a $2,000 deductible that ran $68 per month. Her plan has been canceled. Now she is looking at a $288-a-month plan with a $5,000 deductible. She feels she has been lied to by the President and by Congress and who can blame her for feeling that way.

How about Warren in Sanford. Warren in Sanford had health insurance for his family, four members of his family, with a monthly premium of $533 and a $10,000 deductible. While he would have preferred a lower deductible because his family is healthy and he was willing to take that risk, now that plan is gone. So Warren went on the exchanges to look for a new policy. His new monthly price was $1,300, more than double his old plan, with a $13,000 deductible. As Warren noted: ''Bottom line is I will be paying more and I will be getting less.'' He will be forced to do things like skip vacations or miss out on his children's activities.

Then there is Joe in Melbourne Beach. Joe had a health care plan that was canceled because of ObamaCare. He liked his plan. He told our office that he ''took great care in selecting my plan that I felt was right for me and for my needs.'' Now he has to shop for a new plan and all he sees are more expensive options. He tried the ObamaCare Web site, but it did not work for him, and on top of the Web site not working he is nervous about security risks when it comes to submitting his information to these Web sites.

There is Kenneth in Land O Lakes. He and his wife had a private insurance plan for over 11 years, but they do not anymore. They received a letter in the mail canceling their plan, telling them that ''due to the recent ACA legislation this policy is no longer available.'' The new option that is available to him, by the way, is from an insurance company that had a premium that was double the price of his current plan: $2,400 more a year. He doesn't know how he is going to cover this additional expense.

I don't think anyone disputes that we have a health insurance problem in America. But this is a disaster. Of course they want to do this judge thing. Of course they want to trigger some sort of fight about judges, Republicans objecting to judges and nominees. If you supported this, if you had voted for the law that does this to people, you don't want to talk about this. If you are responsible for the passage of this law, if you have gone around the last 2 years bragging about this law, if you are the one who went around telling me if you have a policy you like you can keep it, why would you ever want the world focused on this?

The problem is people are going to be focused on this because this is no longer a theory. ObamaCare is no longer some theoretical thing that is going to happen at some point in the future to someone else. ObamaCare is happening to real people right now. Right now, all over this country, people are feeling these impacts. These are real people. This is not some outside third-party group running a commercial. This is not someone here giving a speech about what they think is going to happen. This is what is happening now and there are going to be more of these and it is going to impact Republicans and Democrats and conservatives and liberals, red States and blue States. Everyone is going to be impacted by this. They already are being impacted by this. This is going to have a dramatically negative impact on our economy, on our people, and our country as a whole.

That does not mean we do not have a health insurance issue that should not be addressed. We could have addressed it and we still can by, for example, giving people more options in a truly vibrant, private, personal marketplace. Allow people to buy insurance from any company in America that will sell it to you. Allow people to buy it with money that is not taxed, just like when your employer buys it for you. Incentivize, encourage people, make it easier for people, make it more rewarding and more flexible to put money in a health savings account so you can have tax-free money you can use to pay your deductible, to pay your copayments, to pay out of pocket, to pay for your kid's braces. These are real options that are available to us, none of which were pursued.

Instead, what was pursued is this big government solution, one-size-fits-all plan rammed down the throats of the American people just like the judges, just like the nominee tonight. She is being rammed down our throat. Because when what you stand for cannot withstand scrutiny, when you have a judge such as the one before us tonight who is so outside the mainstream, you don't want a process that examines their record and requires consensus. You have to ram it through. When you have a law that so fundamentally alters the makeup of American health care, you don't want this thing being analyzed. You have to ram it through. They did it on ObamaCare and they did it on judges.

There is a reason our Republic was set up this way. There is a reason the system of checks and balances was set up this way. There is a reason the Senate was built this way, with people who serve 6-year terms, two per State. Because they wanted a Chamber that would slow things down and look at them carefully and weigh them.

But you cannot do that when you are changing the rules to ram things through. What you are going to get are radical lifetime appointments to the bench such as what we are on the verge of doing tonight in the Senate and what you get are these damaging changes to the law on health care which leave people with fewer choices, with more expenses and, here is the kicker, with less access to the quality health care that is second to none in the United States.

We have the best health care providers in the world. When rich and powerful people around this planet get sick, do you know where they come? They come to the United States. They come to our centers of excellence. Other places around the world have quality places similar to that too, but they are only available to people who have money to pay out of pocket. Their government-run insurance plans don't allow you to do that. They socialize you. They force you to wait in line behind other people until your turn is up. The only people who can go to the front and get the highest quality health care in many places on Earth are the richest people in the world who can afford to pay for that out of their pocket. This law brings us a little closer to that because many of these quality providers, the Sloan-Ketterings, the Mayo Clinics, the MD Andersons, these extraordinarily high-quality health care centers, many of these are not on the health care plans at all. In order to fit under ObamaCare, you have to cut people out of the plan so we get closer to the day when the only people who can afford to go to these centers are people who can afford to pay for it out of their pocket and everybody else, people on ObamaCare, they are just going to get whatever the plan covers. That is what you are stuck with. That is what we are headed toward.

We are going to deny the American people access to the highest quality health care system in the history of the world, not the best health insurance marketplace—there are reforms that need to happen there—but qualitywise, second to none. We are going to deny people access to that.

The other reason, by the way, this whole debate on judges is very bad for the country is it distracts us from the fundamental issue of our time, the central issue that faces our people and our country. It is one that I wish we spent more time focused on around here. I think both parties are a little guilty of not focusing on it enough.

When I was a child, when I was younger, I had all kinds of ideas about what I wanted to be when I grew up. I was blessed with parents who taught me that every single one of these dreams are within my reach. From my earliest memories, my parents instilled in me the belief that even though my family was not rich or powerful or connected, I could grow up to be anything I set my mind to because I was in America. Because I am an American. My parents knew America was special because they knew what life was like outside of it.

My parents were born into a society that most people are born into—where the success you have in life is predetermined by the family you were born into. By the grace of God, my parents were able to come here—the one place on Earth where that isn't true—and the promise of America changed their lives.

My parents never made it big. My mother worked as a cashier, a hotel maid, and even a stock clerk at Kmart. My dad was a bartender who primarily worked at banquets. Through hard work and determination, my parents made it to the middle class, and they gave us, their children, the opportunity to do all the things they were never able to do—to be anything we wanted to be. As I said, they were never rich, but my parents achieved the American dream.

That phrase, the ''American dream,'' is a phrase we use all the time, but it is a phrase that is often misunderstood. The American dream has never been about becoming wealthy or famous. Instead, it is about people, like me, who were born and raised here. It is about things I sometimes think we take for granted.

The American dream, what is it about? It is about a happy and stable home life where you can live without fear for your safety or the safety of your family. It is about the freedom to worship any way you want. It is about having the chance to get a good education and find a job that rewards hard work with financial security. The American dream is about being able to send your kids to college and being able to retire comfortably. It is about the opportunity to pursue happiness without being limited by your social status or your background. Perhaps most of all, the American dream is about being able to give your kids the chance and the opportunities you never had. This is the true American dream. It is not just a phrase. It is our identity as a nation. It is what it means to be an American.

We are still a country where the American dream is possible. We are still a place where, if you work hard and are determined, you can earn a better life. But we have to be honest. Over the last 10 years it has gotten harder to achieve this. It has gotten harder to find a good job and get ahead financially. It has gotten harder to save for retirement and send your kids to college. It has gotten harder to pay for health care, childcare, and the monthly payments on your student loan.

For the last 5 years we have been told that a bigger government that does more and spends more is the answer to this problem. Do you know what that has left us instead? It has left us with about $17 trillion in debt and millions of Americans chronically out of work. The result is that despite all of this news we get from time to time about how the economy is getting better or the stock market is climbing, for many people across this country there is a sense that recovery is not reaching them. That is creating true uncertainty and even fear about the future. There is the constant worry that you could lose everything you worked so hard for. There are doubts about whether you will ever make enough and have a few extra dollars after payday or be able to save for the future. Even for those who are enjoying the life they always wanted, you find a growing sense that their children may not get that same chance.

It is not surprising that some are starting to wonder whether the time has come for us to lower our expectations. Maybe the time has come to downgrade the American dream. This doesn't have to be the new normal. We have a choice. If we go in a new direction that gives us a government that creates less debt, an economy that creates more stable middle-class jobs, an education system that trains our people for the jobs available now and in the future, strong families who teach the values of success, and a financially healthy Social Security and Medicare system for retirees—if we are responsible enough to courageously and boldly fight to do these things, we can save the American dream. We can restore it. Actually, we can expand it to reach more people than it has ever reached before.

Our first priority here should not be ramming through rules changes to get liberal judges appointed. Our first priority should be more stable middle-class jobs. That should be our first priority. Stable middle-class jobs are the cornerstone of the American dream.

Let me break it to everybody here in Washington: Politicians don't create jobs. Politicians don't create these stable middle-class jobs. These stable middle-class jobs are created by everyday people when they start a business or grow an existing one. That, my friends, is the reason the American free enterprise system is the single greatest engine of prosperity the world has ever known. The key to our success as a country has always been a thriving free enterprise system, not a thriving bigger government.

What we need from our government are policies that foster a free enterprise system, that provide opportunities for everyone who is willing to work hard, and a government that stops spending money it doesn't have. We have to bring our $17 trillion debt under control.

We need to address our broken Tax Code. We need one that creates more taxpayers, not more taxes. The current one we have is a major obstacle to the American dream. Why? Because our current Tax Code is expensive and complicated. Our current Tax Code is rigged. It is rigged to help those who are politically connected. It is rigged to help them at the expense of everybody else.

We need to reform the runaway regulations we have. They are destroying job creation. By the way, they too favor the well connected. They too favor the people who can afford to hire lobbyists to help write these rules and lawyers to help write the loopholes.

We need government policies that remove unreasonable restrictions on energy exploration here in this country so we can be freed from our dependence on foreign oil and create more jobs in the energy sector but also in manufacturing.

As I mentioned earlier, we need to get the cost of health care under control but not through the big-government solutions, such as ObamaCare, that were rammed down the throat of the American people but by encouraging the development of an individual health insurance market that gives people more choices, not more mandates.

The middle-class jobs of today and in the future will require more education and skills than ever before. That is why one of the most important investments of our time and our resources that we can make—instead of wasting time on all of these distractions on changing the Senate rules to force through radical judges like the one being proposed here tonight—is in a quality and affordable education system that gives our people the unique skills they will need to succeed in a new global economy. To do that we need to take the power out of the hands of Washington, DC, and give it to the State and local school boards so they can undertake innovative reforms.

We need to pursue policies that expand access and interest in science, technology, engineering, and math because that is what the jobs of the future are going to be based on.

As mentioned a moment ago, we need to get the cost of college under control. I know. I graduated with over $100,000 in student loans. We need to give working Americans trapped in low-paying jobs access to college or a career education that is affordable and flexible so it meets within their busy lives. If you are a working parent—particularly a single parent who is working—you can't just quit your job and move to the nearest college town to go to school for 4 years. We have to create programs. We have to reform our existing programs so they are accessible and affordable for people who are in this position. It will give a receptionist at a law firm the ability to become a paralegal. It will give a mail clerk at a medical office the ability to become an ultrasound technician. We have to meet this issue. There is an extraordinary need.

By the way, we have to give all of our students more access to career and vocational education. You can still make a good middle-class living as an airplane mechanic or as an electrician. Why have we stigmatized these? Why have we told children in this country that if they go into these fields, they are not successful? These are good, stable, and necessary middle-class jobs. You know what happens when a kid wants to work with their hands but they are not learning it in high school. They drop out. We have to address that—not just at the Federal level but across the country.

In addition to a good education, the American dream was built on a set of

fundamental values such as hard work, discipline, honesty, and self-control. Teaching these values is the responsibility of our families. Government can't impose these values, and, quite frankly, it can't teach them. Government policies should encourage and reward them.

I think we should empower parents by giving them the ability to send their kids to any school they choose. There is no reason why a parent should not be able to put their kids in the best possible educational setting just because they are poor. There is no reason why we should force people to send their kids to failing schools just because that happens to be the school right down the street. That is not fair. If you are rich, you can send your kids to any school you want. You know what. They do. Do you know who can't do that? The people who can't afford to pay for that. That is wrong, and we should change it.

We should strengthen our charities and our churches, which make an extraordinary contribution in helping the less fortunate and reinforcing values that are so important to success. We should reinforce them by making important changes to our Tax Code that will encourage and reward Americans for donating more.

We need to have safety net programs. The free enterprise system doesn't work without a solid safety net. It needs to be a safety net that helps people who cannot help themselves or to help people who have fallen to get back up and try again. We don't need a safety net that is a way of life.

We need to reform our existing safety net programs—welfare, unemployment insurance, disability, and Medicaid. They should all be reformed so that in addition to providing for those who are in need, these programs should also be promoting work and education and self-reliance.

Last but not least, I think the American dream means the ability to retire with stability and security. That is why having a financially healthy Social Security and Medicare system is so important. We can bicker around here all we want about how many votes it takes to get a judge in or who is obstructing what. Here is a fundamental fact: Social Security is going to run out of money in 20 years, which happens to be right around the time I will be getting close to being eligible for it. Medicare is going to run out of money in as few as 8 years.

The good news is that if we act and start to take steps to address that now, we can fix these programs, and we can fix them without disrupting the lives of people who are on those programs now—like my mother. I would never support any changes to these programs that would hurt people like my mother, who is on Social Security and Medicare. We can fix it, but to fix it, people like me—decades from retirement—are going to have to accept that while our Medicare and Social Security will be the best in the world, it is going to be different than it was for our parents, but it is going to exist.

By the way, beyond this, we should do some other things. We should make it easier, through changes in our taxes, for people to work beyond their retirement years. We should expand access to tax-advantage savings accounts for those who don't have access to a 401(k). We should incentivize people to save for their retirement.

I think what has bothered me the most in the 3 years I have been here is the lack of urgency about any of this. People talk about it. They propose laws called good things that maybe they polled and it sounded good. But in terms of moving on any of these things I just talked about, there is not a lot of urgency about it. We need to have more urgency about it. We need to stop wasting time around here changing the rules of the Senate to get a couple more of the President's radical appointments to the bench confirmed and spend a little bit more time figuring this out.

For most of the history of the world, almost everyone who was born was poor, without power, and without wealth. That only belonged to a select few. For most of the history of the world, your future was determined by your past. If your parents were poor, you would be poor too. If a person was born without opportunities, so were their children. What makes our country special is that hasn't been true here. What makes America special is we are a people not united by a common race or a common ethnicity; we are a people united by a common value: The idea that everyone has the God-given right to achieve a better life without being held back by the government or by one's social standing.

Right now, I work here. Washington is broken. It was broken when I got here and it still is. It is a process that is unable to function. With all due respect, it is a process that is plagued with people—in both parties, by the way—who are more interested in being someone than in doing something. I am telling my colleagues that if we continue on this road we are on right now, if we continue on the road we have placed this country on, we are going to lose the things that make America special. That is what we should be focused on, because there is another direction we can take. If we can find the political courage to boldly and responsibly confront and solve the challenges before us, we can restore the American dream. Actually, we can expand it to reach more people than it ever has before.

Every generation of Americans before us has had to do this. Every generation before us has been asked to do something to keep America special. Each has been asked to make sacrifices and take bold steps to preserve what makes us exceptional, and now it is our turn.

I remember a few years ago, there was a moment that reminded me of what is truly at stake here. I have shared this story many times. I was about to give a speech in a hotel ballroom. I think it was in New York City. There was a bartender there who had heard me speak before about my father, who was also a bartender, and he approached me with a gift. The gift he gave me was a name tag that said ''Rubio, banquet bartender,'' a name tag the same as they give in hotels. At that moment, I was reminded of how this country literally changed my family's very life. Not so long ago, it was my father who stood behind a bar, just like the one that gentleman stood behind, in order to give me the chance to earn a better life, and America made that possible. It was never easy. Both of my parents worked well into their retirement years.

I remember when I was in high school, well past midnight, on many nights, I would hear my father's keys jingling at the door as he came home from another long day of work. When we are young, the meaning of moments such as that escapes us. But now, as I get older and my children get older, I think I understand that moment a little bit better. Like the man who gave me that name tag that night in New York, my father was coming back from more than just another day at work; he was coming back from a day of fighting, so that the doors that had closed for him would be open for me.

This is still one of the few places on Earth where a person can do that. That is what makes us special.

Before us is the question of whether this generation of leadership is up to the task of keeping this country that way. I don't personally have any doubt that we are up to the task. Despite our many differences, I believe our people are much more united than our politics would lead one to believe.

Every single one of us, every single American is the descendant of a go-getter, of an immigrant or of a slave or of someone who overcame extraordinary odds to stake their claim in this American dream. Every single one of us comes from someone who refused to accept the life they lived and always desired to have something better for themselves and for their families. Every single one of us is a descendant of someone who insisted that their future must always be better than their past.

This is who we are as a people. This is who we come from. I believe that is still who we are. All we need now are leaders that reflect that in their policies and in their priorities.

So I still have more faith in this country than perhaps the political coverage might lead us to have because we are free people, and we are always going to vigorously debate the best way forward. Sometimes, because of the nature of our Republic, it takes us a little longer to get it right, but we always have. I believe we will again. In the end, there is no such thing as the Republican dream or the Democrat

dream, there is only an American dream. Despite all the challenges this country faces and despite some of the skirmishes on the floor of the Senate—at times unnecessary, such as this debate with the judges and the rule change—despite all of that, I know for a fundamental fact that the American people are not willing or prepared to give up on this American dream.

That requires us to act. That requires us to stop wasting time around here and to focus on the issues. We have this golden opportunity to restore this American dream and to bring it within reach of more people than ever before. We have an opportunity before us to claim our heritage as a people who always leave behind a Nation better than the one that was left for them. We have a chance to usher in a new American century and to write the latest chapter in the story of the single greatest Nation that man has ever known. So I hope as we conclude these debates on issues such as this, we will somehow find a way to begin to work together on what really matters, on matters of importance, on what impacts Americans now and those yet to come.

That leads me to one final point. I see my colleague from Wisconsin is on the floor, as well as others who wish to speak. I will close with one more point, one more issue I think we are being distracted from because of the silliness of breaking the rules to change the rules so we can impose on the American people out-of-the-mainstream judges and cabinet appointments that are less than qualified, and that is the issue of American leadership in the world. Look around the world today. Look at the impact of uncertainty about our foreign policy and what effect it is having across the planet.

I am going to be honest and straightforward about this issue especially: This is an issue for both parties to reflect on for a moment. We all understand why we are wary—and we should be—of international engagement. We have gone through a decade of two conflicts in the Middle East. We turn on the television and we see people we have spent money and sacrificed lives on behalf of burning our flag and celebrating our tragedies, and we wonder, Why are we involved in the world. Why are we engaged in these places? But I hope everybody understands that in the absence of American leadership a vacuum is created, and that vacuum leads to chaos, and chaos ultimately impacts our national security and our economic well-being.

Take a brief tour around the world with me for a moment and my colleagues will see what I am talking about. Turn on the news and see what is happening in Ukraine where a country is being increasingly intimidated into going back into basically what looks like an effort to reconstitute the former Soviet Union, being torn between that and choosing modernization in the West with the European Union. There are people in the streets protesting against that and riot police going in there to force them out.

Look at the Middle East, where Iran proceeds full speed ahead with weaponizing, towards creating a nuclear weapon and the impact that would have—and not just on arming the one country in the world that most uses terrorism as a tool of statecraft. We had testimony today from the administration. No country in the world uses terrorism more than Iran does, and they are going to get a nuclear weapon. It won't just be Iran getting a nuclear weapon. If Iran gets a weapon, so will Saudi Arabia and potentially Turkey. Look at what is happening in Asia. The Chinese have announced that a certain area belongs to them and their airspace, that others have to get permission from them and notify them before anyone flies through there. South Korea and Japan and others, they are starting to wonder whether America will live up to its commitments to provide for their defense and to assist them or maybe they need to strike out on their own and provide their own defense capabilities.

Look at the opportunities in the Western Hemisphere we have abandoned because we have taken our focus elsewhere. I could go on and on.

Are we a strong enough voice on behalf of religious liberties? Meanwhile, religious minorities around the world are being oppressed in unprecedented ways. In particular, Christians in the Middle East are facing persecution that is reminiscent of the early days of the church.

How about human rights? How about human trafficking and modern day slavery? All of these things require American leadership.

We can't solve every problem. Foreign aid isn't charity. It needs to further our national interests and the funds need to be accountably spent. But this is something we should be more focused on and we are not. Why? Because we continue to get involved in these sorts of skirmishes here and, in particular, undermining the ability of this body to function by changing the rules by breaking them.

So I hope this will serve as an opportunity to reevaluate all of this, because the challenges before our country are real and the consequences of not acting appropriately are dramatic. I hope we will take this seriously, because we still have time to get this right, but we do not have forever.

With that, Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business for up to 20 minutes.

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

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, this is the 52nd consecutive week we are in session that I have come to the floor to ask us to please, for Lord's sake, wake up to the damage carbon pollution is already doing to our atmosphere, oceans, and climate, and to look ahead, to use our God-given sense, and to plan for what is so obviously coming.

In those weeks, I have spoken about all different aspects of carbon pollution, its effect on sports and our economy; its effect on oceans and coasts; its effect on agriculture and wildfires; its effect on storms and insurance costs. I have spoken about the measurements we can already make of the harm already happening: Sea level rise, which we measure with a yardstick, basically; ocean temperature, which we measure with a thermometer; and ocean acidification—the fastest in 50 million years, according to research published in ''Nature Geoscience''—which we can measure with litmus tests.

I have, I hope, to anyone listening with their logic turned on, thoroughly rebutted the deniers' phony arguments against solving carbon pollution, whether those arguments purport to be based in science or religion or economics or our competitiveness.

I have listed the thoughtful and responsible groups—from the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, from Walmart to NASA, from Ford and GM to Coke and Pepsi, from America's garden clubs to just last month our major sports leagues—who understand the truth about climate change and are saying so.

I have done my best to expose the calculated campaign of lies that we are up against and the vast scandalous apparatus of phony organizations and engineered messages that are designed to propagate those lies. I have traced the connections back to, of course, the big carbon polluters and their billionaire owners. I have been obliged to point out that the money of those big polluters and billionaires floods this Chamber, that their lobbyists prowl the outer halls, and that to a sad and disappointing degree this Congress is bought and paid for by that polluter influence.

One factor we have yet to consider is whether as an institution Congress has just become completely irresponsible. Maybe this Congress just cannot operate as an institution at an intelligent level. Some Congresses are going to be smarter and more responsible than others. That is just the natural order of variation. Some Congress is going to be the sorriest Congress ever. Maybe we are it.

Some organizations, like NASA, for instance, are very smart. That is why NASA is driving a rover around on the surface of Mars right now. That is a seriously smart organization.

Some organizations take ordinary people and call them to be their very best, to play at a level above their natural talents, to heed a higher calling than their selfish inclinations. At their best, our military and our churches tend to achieve that.

Some organizations, however, take even the most talented people and drag them down to the lowest common denominator, and stifle the best and bring out the worst in even those very talented people.

I ask people watching, which type of organization do you think Congress is right now? Which type do you think we are? As an organization, it is hard to say anything kinder of Congress than that it is now a really irresponsible organization. We could not even keep the U.S. Government running. Standard & Poor's estimated that our tea party shutdown foolishness cost Americans tens of billions of dollars for no gain—none. We cannot sort out the basics of building and maintaining our American infrastructure. Our own American Society of Civil Engineers gives our country a D-plus for infrastructure.

That is not complicated stuff. Yet we flub it like a football team that fumbles the ball at the snap.

Get a little more complicated and Congress seems to get even worse.

Let me show you just one health care chart. This chart I have in the Chamber shows the average life expectancy—in years—in a country compared to the cost per capita of health care in that country. Together, they make a pretty good proxy for how a country's health care system is doing. This group shown here on the chart represents most of the OECD member and partner countries—our industrialized international competitors.

This, shown here on the chart, is us—way out here, all alone, spending the most by far for results that are mediocre at best. We would save nearly $1 trillion a year if we could just get our per capita cost down to what Norway and Switzerland spend. They are the next two most expensive countries on the planet, and we are $1 trillion a year more laid out per capita. Think of what we could do as a nation, what we could build and invent with $1 trillion a year if we were not wasting it on bad health care. And bad it is. We get worse results in longevity than virtually any modern economy.

Look who beats us: Japan, Great Britain, Switzerland, Netherlands, Norway. Germany does, Italy does, Greece does, Luxembourg does. They all beat us. Chile and the Czech Republic are the two countries we beat for longevity.

Look at the size of that problem—those lives lost, those trillions of dollars wasted—and then look at the quality of the health care discussion we are having in Congress, and tell me this is not a completely irresponsible organization.

That brings us to climate change. Yes, it is complicated, when you are trying to predict and model something as complex as what our climate is going to do in the years ahead. But it is also simple, when you look at the stuff that everyone agrees on, the stuff that you can measure, the stuff that you would have to be a nut or a crank or an eccentric to dispute.

Nobody responsible—nobody responsible—disputes the principle that adding carbon dioxide to the atmosphere raises the temperature of the Earth, and that it does so through the so-called greenhouse effect. A scientist named John Tyndall figured that out at the time of the American Civil War. I brought his musty old paper in here several speeches ago. Its old leather binding was flaking and peeling. When that report was first published, Abraham Lincoln had just been elected President. In all the years since then, this principle of science has always been confirmed and validated. It is not some questionable theory. The greenhouse effect is real. It would not just be wrong, it would be irresponsible to deny that.

Nobody responsible disputes that for over a century our modern economy has run on fossil fuels and that burning those fossil fuels has released gigatons of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. The Global Carbon Project estimates that mankind has pumped about 2,000 gigatons of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere since 1870. That is a pretty solid estimate, and I have never even heard anyone dispute it.

So we know those two things: adding carbon dioxide to the atmosphere traps more heat; and we have released an estimated 2,000 gigatons—2,000 billion tons—of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere.

Let's go on from there. It is a known principle of science that a significant portion of that multigigaton carbon load is absorbed by the oceans, and that the chemical reaction when that absorption happens into the oceans makes the oceans more acidic. No responsible person disputes either proposition. It is not some theory. It is something that you can actually do and measure in a lab. Again, it would not just be wrong, it would be really irresponsible to deny that.

We also know that the oceans do more than absorb carbon. They absorb heat. Indeed, they have absorbed most of the excess heat trapped by greenhouse gases—over 90 percent of the heat between 1971 and 2010, according to the recent IPCC report. What happens when the oceans absorb heat? They expand. Thermal expansion is a basic physical property of liquids. It can also be shown in a very simple lab. It is not a theory. Again, it would be not just wrong but irresponsible to deny that too.

It would not just be wrong, it would be irresponsible to deny what those simple measurements and clear principles tell us. But we do. We do. We deny it. Congress will not wake up and address this problem. Like those monkeys: See no carbon, hear no carbon, speak no carbon.

Because we are so irresponsible, because we deny this reality, we are failing to take precautions and, as a result, many people will suffer.

For those of us who love this country and are proud of it, and are proud of our government, and want this country and its government to be a beacon of hope and promise and rectitude, it hurts a little extra for the Congress to be such a failure. It hurts a little extra that we in our generation have driven Congress—the hub of our noble American experiment in democracy, the beating heart of this great Republic—down to that low level.

It is a harsh judgment that this body is an irresponsible failure. But on climate this Congress got it the old-fashioned way; it earned it.

I will close with a final observation. Compare the irresponsibility of this ''see no carbon, hear no carbon, speak no carbon'' Congress with the recent exhortation from Pope Francis. Here is what the Pope said. I will quote him at some length.

> There are other weak and defenceless beings who are frequently at the mercy of economic interests or indiscriminate exploitation. I am speaking of creation as a whole. We human beings are not only the beneficiaries but also the stewards of other creatures. Thanks to our bodies, God has joined us so closely to the world around us that we can feel the desertification of the soil almost as a physical ailment, and the extinction of a species as a painful disfigurement. Let us not leave in our wake a swath of destruction and death which will affect our own lives and those of future generations.

The Pope continued:

> Here I would make my own the touching and prophetic lament voiced some years ago by the bishops of the Philippines:

And he quotes them:

> ''An incredible variety of insects lived in the forest and were busy with all kinds of tasks. . . . Birds flew through the air, their bright plumes and varying calls adding color and song to the green of the forests. . . . God intended this land for us, his special creatures, but not so that we might destroy it and turn it into a wasteland. . . . After a single night's rain, look at the chocolate brown rivers in your locality and remember that they are carrying the life blood of the land into the sea. . . . How can fish swim in sewers like the . . . rivers which we have polluted? Who has turned the wonderworld of the seas into underwater cemeteries bereft of color and life?''
>
> Small yet strong in the love of God, like Saint Francis of Assisi, all of us, as Christians, are called to watch over and protect the fragile world in which we live, and all its peoples.

What is our answer to the Pope, to this great Christian leader? In Congress, it is the monkey answer: Hear no carbon, see no carbon, speak no carbon.

We still have time to mitigate the worst effects of climate change.

We can actually do it in painless ways. We can even do it in advantageous ways, in ways that will boost our economy, but we have to do it. We have to wake up. We simply have to wake up.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wisconsin.

Mr. JOHNSON of Wisconsin. Mr. President, I rise to address the nomination of Cornelia Pillard to the DC Circuit. This nomination is a good example of the government overreach that has led to the ObamaCare debacle.

The good Senator from Rhode Island was talking about how much we spend on health care in this Nation. The very unfortunate fact is the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act does not address that cost.

Let's face it. The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act is about as Orwellian a name as you could possibly come up with for a piece of legislation. We are watching millions of Americans lose their health care coverage. Those patients are not being protected by the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. We certainly are not watching the cost of health care decline.

The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act did not bend the cost curve down. It has dramatically increased or bent the cost curve up. Of course, anybody who even has the slightest knowledge of basic economics realizes that if you mandate expensive coverages on any insurance policy, the price is not going to go down, the price is going to go up. We are witnessing that.

We are certainly witnessing that in my home State of Wisconsin, where a young man aged 27, on average, is seeing his premium increase by 124 percent, going from a little over $1,100 per year, to closer to $2,500 per year. A young woman of that same age, 27, is seeing her premium increase by 78 percent, going from about $1,400 per year to about $2,500 per year. That is not bending the cost curve down.

That is not even talking about the added or the increased cost of their deductibles, the increases in their maximum out-of-pocket amounts they are going to be spending every year. So again the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act does nothing that it promises. It is a disaster for our health care system. It is a disaster for our Federal budget. It is a disaster for people and their health and their lives.

I am on the floor of the Senate tonight, normally not down here at this time. Normally, I would be sitting at home doing a little bit of homework. So I guess what I would like to do is spend a few minutes doing what I would be doing at home, reading letters from constituents from Wisconsin.

When I introduced my piece of legislation, trying to protect as many Americans as possible from the damage of the health care law, trying to honor the promise President Obama and Members of this Chamber made repeatedly to the American public that if you liked your health care plan, you could keep it, I told a story about a couple in Wisconsin who contacted our office. Initially, this couple wanted to be identified. They wanted their story told. By the time I had gotten ahold of them on the phone, to make sure they were actually getting some help in securing some health care, the husband had second thoughts. He watched his government. He watched the Internal Revenue Service being used as a political weapon. So he feared for his privacy. He feared for his economic security. So he asked me: Please do not use my name. Tell my story, just don't use my name.

That is a pretty sad fact. That is something we need to ponder. It is something we need to address. But that couple, their story is pretty simple and pretty sad. His wife was suffering from stage IV lung cancer. He was recovering from prostate cancer. They were participating in the high-risk pool in the State of Wisconsin, a risk-sharing pool that worked.

It was expensive for them, but it was something they could afford. I knew it worked because in my 31 years of business, as I provided health care for the people who worked with me, every now and again, unfortunately, one of the people who worked for me would have a serious health condition. When we would go to renew our policy, frequently those individuals, if the condition was bad enough, would be lasered out. They would lose coverage under our plan. But that was OK because the State of Wisconsin, very responsibly, made a provision for those individuals, the high-risk sharing pool.

So what would end up happening is because they were denied coverage, they automatically qualified for the high-risk pool. I, of course, would pay for that coverage in the same way we would pay for coverage through our own health plan. What I found over the years, because this happened a number of times, is the coverage was very comparable. It was not a Cadillac plan but solid insurance coverage. So similar coverage and very comparable price.

It was a plan that worked. It was a plan that covered those individuals with high risks. It was a plan that covered 22,000 Wisconsinites until this body, this Congress, passed the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, which I describe here as neither of those two things.

As a result of the passage of that bill, those high-risk pools are now obsolete. So this couple got the letter saying they would lose coverage as of January 1. Put yourself in the position of people suffering from cancer or recovering from it. You have a lot of worries in life. You do not need the additional worry of losing your health care plan. But that is what this couple faced, as millions of Americans are facing the exact same worry, the exact same harm, the exact same damage. It is unconscionable.

They obviously went onto healthcare.gov, almost 40 times when I talked to them. They were never able to successfully log onto it at that point in time. So we helped this couple get in touch with the insurance carriers that would be operating within the exchange. They started getting quotes. They quickly learned their premiums were going to double. Their out-of-pocket maximums were also going to come close to doubling as well. So the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act did not protect these two individuals, and it certainly did not offer them affordable care.

As I went through letters from our constituents, we did make a few phone calls, knowing I was going to come down here, and asked if anybody would want to be identified. A few brave souls agreed to be identified. I will read their names as I read their letters. The first Wisconsinite, Michael Wagner, writes:

> I am self-employed and have a family of four. The President said we could keep our plan if we liked it and our doctors. Not true. We are being pushed off our plan for the exchange. He said the average family of four would save an average of $2,500. Not true. I think he just makes numbers up. My equivalent policy on the exchange will cost $7,500 more per year. That is almost a 100 percent increase.
>
> He said we can keep our doctors. Not true. Our current company and PPO network is not offered on the exchange. The list goes on and on. The bottom line is that this needs to be stopped. If it is not, the American people will stand up and the landscape of Senators will be unrecognizable after the next midterm election. Thank you for your time, and I hope you have the gall to stand up for your constituents.

Mr. Wagner, I definitely have the gall to stand up for my constituents. The reason I ran for the Senate was not because I wanted to be a Senator. The primary reason I ran for the Senate was to be the vote to repeal this monstrosity, to be the vote to protect Americans from the damage I full well knew this law would inflict on millions of our fellow citizens.

The next constituent who wrote to me, Darren Schauf, wrote:

> We are a small manufacturer in Sparta, Wisconsin, who has been in operation since the mid 1960s. We currently employ 24 people and are a family-owned business, fabricating large fiberglass statues and water slides that are shipped all over the U.S. and Canada. We have been providing our employees health insurance for 15 years, paying for 100 percent of the premium.

Pretty responsible employer. Those are the types of businesspeople I know. Those are the types of businesspeople who are very concerned about the people who work with them. Those are the types of businesspeople who this President demonizes in his class warfare. Let me go on:

> We have experienced the increases in health care cost over the years and weathered them fine. I received our renewal this week for next year. Because of the Affordable Care Act, our premium went from $3,887.77 per month to $7,103 per month. How does this happen? What definition of ''affordable'' is being used to describe this effect? We will not be able to pay 100 percent of our employee's premium at this rate. How can we get a plan that is at least close to the cost that we were paying last year?

Mr. Schauf, I know how you can get a plan close to what you were buying last year. If this body would take up my bill, If You Like Your Health Plan, You Can Keep It Act, that is a true grandfather clause that actually would honor that promise for millions of Americans. We cannot save the policies that have already been lost. We cannot repair all the damage already done by this health care law. But we can still help millions of Americans if we act, if we are responsible, if we care.

The next two constituents to write me are Brad and Dawn Nielsen. They write:

My wife and I just received a notice that our monthly health care insurance cost will increase by 184 percent, increase by $1,330 per month starting in January 2015, and you need to understand how cheated we feel with this and what you have done.

I am assuming he is referring to President Obama and Democratic Senators and Democratic Members of the House who voted for this monstrosity. Again, I ran to be the vote to repeal this law.

We are both retired and have been paying our health care insurance for the past 3 years. We have what would be considered a good policy that falls in line with what would be considered a gold package as it relates to the ACA guidelines. We will be able to keep this policy with our insurance carrier through 2014 with a 7½ percent increase in the monthly premium that is to cover the new—

He puts in quotes—

''the Affordable Care Act'' cost. Although we were not happy about the increase, we were told by our carrier that the monthly premiums will increase to $2,054.51 per month starting January 2015. This is not right. You as our representative need to understand what you have allowed to happen to us as well as others.

Again, Mr. and Mrs. Nielsen, I wish—I wish we would have prevented this.

I wish the Members of this body would hear your plea and do something to protect you, as the bill claims to do, to repair the damage.

We have worked hard, made sacrifices to be able to retire, saved through our company's retirement plan, invested when we could and even put both our kids through college. Now to be forced to pay an outrageous amount for something we have had for the last 3 years isn't right. This increase is a game changer for us and will dramatically affect our standard of living moving forward.

It is important that you understand what is happening and the need to change this unfair law.

I hope the President, I hope Members are listening.

The next constituent, Jeff Cubinski, writes:

I am sending you this email about the 2014 ACA. I just received my letter from Humana stating my insurance is going to increase nearly 300% from $550/month to $1559/month. I cannot afford this—how is this Affordable Care? I have carried insurance all my life being self-employed—what is this plan trying to put the self-employed out of business???? I want to keep my plan the way it is—why are we being forced to change to a plan that has benefits we DON'T need?? Please help us citizens that have been carrying health care. Please make Government for the people by the people again!

I wish to quickly answer that question. Why is this individual being forced to change to a plan that has benefits that he doesn't need? It is because there are people in Washington, in this alternate universe, who believe they are so smart, so clever, they know what is best for every American. They are so compassionate. They are trying to help.

They are not helping much. This law is not helping much. It is doing real harm.

President Obama and Senate, Members of the House, please listen to these constituent letters. Have a change of heart. Work with us to limit the damage before it gets greater.

Those were the individuals we contacted who were willing to be identified. The rest of the individuals were either not contacted in time or decided, as the couple, that they had seen their government be used as a weapon against other citizens and decided to remain anonymous.

The next Wisconsinite writes:

I am writing you to inform you that as of January 1st 2014 my family of six and I will no longer have health care. This will be the first time in my life or the life of my children that we will be in this position. The reason for this is the Affordable Health Care Act, laughable name. On that day my premiums through work will go from $250/month to well over $1000/month. In looking through the Market place, my family's premium would also be well in excess of $1000/month.

We are a typical middle class family, my wife and I both work full time, our combined income is in the $75,000 range. We are home owners with a mortgage, we drive 8 to 9 year old cars, our children go to public schools, we do not live an extravagant life style.

I have been struggling to figure what to cut to be able to afford this new health care system the government stuck us in. No matter what we cut it will not add up to $1000. The other option is to put our house on the market and try to find something else outside of Madison. That is not what we want to do. Our kids are in high school, one with special needs and we feel that would be unfair to them.

So do I.

Continuing:

Mr Johnson please explain to me how on earth is this affordable and fair.

I can't. It is not affordable; it is not fair; it is utterly unfair. It is utterly unnecessary, but it is a fact. It is one I hope everyone who supported this bill can live with. I hope it is a fact that everyone who voted in support for this bill thinks about and is held fully accountable.

Continuing:

I find this Affordable Care Act to be divisive, unfair and an unjust tax on the middle class.

I will not vote for anyone that supported this Act or continues to support this Act given the effect that it is having on my family. Sir, I am begging for your help. Please find a way to help my family and the rest of the Americans like us.

Did we hear that, an American citizen begging for help from the harm that the Affordable Care Act, the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, inflicted on his family. He is begging this Congress, this chamber, this President, for help. Please hear him.

Another constituent writes:

I'm feeling very upset and stressed over the new health care laws. I feel they are unfair and hurting working families. Our household income has shrunk and our health care cost is going up over $300 a month. According to healthcare.gov if insurance costs more than 9.5% of gross income it is considered unaffordable. When a single person applies only his/her income is taken into consideration. When a family applies total household income is used to figure out affordability of single-only coverage. Single only coverage for myself is about 8% of our family income; single only coverage for my husband is about the same. That means 16% of our income would be used for insurance (throughout employers) just for us. 16% of our income would be gone and our 4 children would be uninsured. Family coverage costs 12% of our family income still higher than 9.5%. Where is our tax credit? We don't qualify for tax credits because we have ''affordable insurance through our employers.'' If total household income is used why isn't family coverage affordability taken into consideration. Last year my family made about $55,000 (174% of the poverty level.) Next year we will make less due to reduced hours. Money is already tight, this new law will make things very uncomfortable for my family. I am turning to my representatives for help. Please help families in the same situation to the best of your ability; we need your help! This law is hurting us; be our voice.

Another Wisconsinite writes:

I just called Physician's Plus to find out about the status of our Health Insurance policy. Our policy will not be renewed due to the Affordable Care Act.

It seems these constituents decided to drop the patient protection because he obviously wasn't feeling particularly protected.

Continuing:

My husband and I are freelancers in the video production field. My husband works so hard to support and take care of me and our two children. We are not rich, by any means, just taking care of business. We have paid 100% of our premiums for 15 years. We have bought coverage that makes sense for our family at different times. Currently, we pay $513.60/month with a $3000 deductible. When I called Physician's Plus yesterday, the person there said that my plan cannot be renewed. He said the new premium for a comparable plan will be $1743.00!!!

Again, that compares to $513 and it will be $1,743.

Continuing:

We cannot afford this in any way. I guess we are the collateral damage?

I have tried to get on the ACA to find out our options. I refuse to give them personal information so I can only go by the Kaiser Foundation estimate. There is only one plan that will keep our Pediatrician and it looks like we will be looking at a $12,000 deductible with close to a $1000/month premium. We are on the high end, so get a very minimal subsidy. We do not want to get any help from the government, we want to be independent, but the government is forcing their hand on us!

Again, we live in the land of the free, the home of the brave, and yet these brave Wisconsinites are being forced. They are being coerced. This is the antithesis of freedom of choice.

Continuing:

Please understand we want people to have health care, but why are they destroying us in the process? I am in the process of scrambling to find a job that provides insurance. I was offered a Educational Assistant job that has been changed to 29 hours, no health insurance.

I wonder what caused that change in employment.

Continuing:

Most opportunities I am finding have recently dropped insurance coverage has a benefit.

We are scared about the future.

This is what the Affordable Care Act has done. That is what the patient protection and Affordable Care Act has done to Americans, to Wisconsinites. It has made them fearful. They are afraid, they are scared for their futures. Good job, Congress. Good job, President Obama. My, aren't we a compassionate lot. Didn't we do a fine job. Aren't we smart.

The next Wisconsinite writes:

I'm extremely unhappy with the so called ''Affordable Care Act.'' Unfortunately, for my middle class family, the new law is creating un-affordable health insurance. I am a 35 year old project management consultant and my wife and I have 2 children. We currently purchase health insurance on the individual market and are very happy with our coverage. We currently pay $352 per month to cover our family of 4. The plan offers a copay of $35 when going to the doctor, and has a $7,500 deductible for our family.

I have begun researching what our health insurance premiums will cost going forward under ObamaCare and I am outraged with what I've found. The cheapest policy I can find is $761.71—

Let me refer back to the fact that they are paying $352, so that is more than a 100-percent increase.

Continuing:

—$761.71 per month for a Bronze plan and a $12,600 deductible!

Again, that compares to the $7,500 deductible under the plan that they are ''happy with.''

This is 116 percent more than what we currently pay, with a higher deductible. If I look at a comparable plan to what we have now, the new cost will be around $900 per month, which is a 156 percent increase. Also, our income is slightly above the threshold to get any subsidies.

The new regulations in ObamaCare will not benefit our family, but they will more than double our cost. We need to repeal this terrible law and replace it with simple, market based incentives. Health insurance should be more like car insurance. You don't submit a claim to get your oil changed in your car. Same goes for health care. We should pay out of pocket for routine health care using a transparent price structure that allows consumers to shop for the care they want. Then have a cheap insurance policy for major illness coverage. Republicans need to communicate this alternative, and make it simple for people to understand.

I could not agree with this individual more. He continues:

I realize repeal and replace is not possible until after the 2016 elections, but I appreciate and support wholeheartedly your new ''If You Like Your Health Plan, You Can Keep It Act.'' For the millions of people out there like me, we should be able to keep our current plan indefinitely. Hold the President to his promise and pass this law to grandfather in all existing policies.

Let me just stop a minute and talk a little about the bill I did introduce—If You Like Your Health Plan, You Can Keep It Act. It is a pretty simple act. I encourage my colleagues to cosponsor it and pass it as soon as possible. I wrote it a certain way. I wrote it using the exact same grandfather language that was in ObamaCare. The problem with the grandfather language within the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act is that, yes, it grandfathered plans, as long as you totally changed them. We took the grandfather language and we just pulled out the you just have to totally change your plan. We made it a true grandfather provision: the same language, the true intent, the honest intent.

So I urge my Democratic colleagues to support that bill. Again, let me emphasize we cannot at this late hour, unfortunately, salvage most of these plans that have already been lost to the individuals whose emails I am reading from tonight. But there are millions of Americans who will lose their coverage in the future.

Let me tell you how it is going to happen. I bought health care for the people who worked for me for 31 years in my business. I always was going to do that. There was no way I was ever going to subject the people who worked with me to the financial ruin of not having a health care plan.

That being said, as the previous writer was saying, I didn't pay for their auto insurance, I didn't pay for their homeowners or property insurance. I always kind of wondered: Why am I having to make these very personal decisions for the people who work with me? Why am I having to decide on their levels of deductible and having to decide is it a PPO or an HMO? I know the reason why. It was government interference in the marketplace back in the 1940s, with wage price controls.

Unions very naturally said: You can't raise our wages, give us some other benefit tax free, and that began the destruction of our health care system in terms of patient involvement, in terms of a competitive marketplace. Back then, 68 cents of every health care dollar was actually paid by the patient. There was free-market competition to ensure cost restraint, to ensure high-quality and high levels of customer service. That is what the free market does. Today, only 12 cents of every $1 is paid by the patient.

But getting back to the millions who are going to be losing their employer-sponsored care, most employers care deeply about the people who work with them. They also would not expose the people who work with them to financial risk. But under the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, the decision is totally different now. Now an employer is going to be facing double-digit premium increases when these plans they were able to quickly renew before January 1 come due in 2014.

If the exchanges, as they should have been from day one, start operating properly, employers are going to be faced with a decision: Should I pay $15,000 per family for family coverage? By the way, that is up $2,500 per year, not down $2,500 per year as President Obama promised us. Do I pay $15,000 per family coverage and try to comply with the 20,000-plus pages of law and rules and regulation or do I pay the $2,000 or $3,000 fine, and I am not putting my employees at financial risk? I am potentially making them eligible for subsidies in the exchange.

That is the decision employers are going to be facing. Here is the kicker. Even those who are saying: I am not going to do that; I am going to keep providing that coverage, just wait until the first competitor drops coverage and pays the $2,000 fine rather than a $15,000 fine. Marketplace competition is brutal. It is not fun. It is why businesses that succeed should be celebrated, not demonized. But that is a decision to be made by millions of employers. As a result, tens of millions of additional Americans will lose the health care coverage they get through their employers using pretax dollars and get forced into the exchanges.

Maybe some will get subsidies paid for by the American taxpayer—actually, paid for by a debt burden placed on the backs of our children and grandchildren because we can't afford the Affordable Care Act. That is what is going to happen. That is what this Chamber, this Congress, this President needs to consider.

That is why I am asking my colleagues in the Senate to join with me to pass the If You Like Your Health Plan, You Can Keep It Act—so we can protect millions of Americans, so we can honor that promise that was made repeatedly by this President and Members of this Chamber who voted for and supported this bill. Accept responsibility, be held accountable, act responsibly, and join me in that effort to protect Americans.

Another Wisconsinite writes:

Please allow me to introduce myself and my family. We are an average, middle class Wisconsin family that is having a really bad year. My husband was diagnosed with cancer in May, I lost my job and our family health insurance in June. Because of preexisting conditions, our only insurance option was the high insurance risk sharing pool.

Again, that is the plan in Wisconsin I certainly found worked for real Americans. It worked. It will now be obsolete because of the health care law.

This individual continues:

For our family of three (myself, husband and college student daughter) our monthly premiums are $783 per month, with a $7,500 individual deductible. With the high insurance risk sharing pool ending December 31, 2013, I am searching for insurance, as I have yet to find employment. I have tried over 20 times to get on the affordable health care Web site with no luck. I have been able to set up a log in and user name, and have entered some information, which is never saved when I have to log out due to a ''please wait'' message that never goes away. I am working with an insurance agent to secure quotes outside of the government Web site, as I am sure we are way too middle class to be afforded any type of subsidy. Although I am unable to determine this through the defective Web site. Our cheapest quote is $1,580 per month—

Again, that compares to $783 per month. Again, basically a 100-percent increase.

—with a $12,500 deductible.

Her previous deductible was $7,500.

Therefore, the Affordable Care Act would cost my family over $9,500 more per year in premiums and our total deductibles to meet

will increase to $37,500 from $22,500 for the family. The total effect is $24,500 additionally in 2014. Are we seriously supposed to be able to absorb this into our budget? What does our family do in this situation? We simply cannot afford $1,580 per month for insurance or $24,500 per year. What are our options? My husband will undergo chemotherapy and has a surgery scheduled for 2014. I am feverishly—

Do you hear that word—''feverishly''—looking for employment with health insurance coverage. I am sure we are not the only family adversely affected by the law. Please provide answers for all of us. I look forward to hearing from you.

Again, my plea is to please provide true protection. Please provide security. Please accept the responsibility of what this law, what your support for this law did and is doing to millions of Wisconsinites, to millions of Americans. It is simply immoral what this law is doing to people, to their lives.

It is not going to be pretty what this law is going to do to our health care system. It will lower quality and it will produce rationing because the only way the government can afford to provide all of this access is actually by limiting access. Of course, we are already seeing a very limited number of doctors who are actually accepting these contracts from the networks that are provided in the exchange, primarily because of all of the mandated coverages that are dramatically increasing the price of health care, as I have demonstrated this evening in these emails and these letters we are receiving from real people, from people who are suffering because of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SCHATZ). The Senator from Pennsylvania.

Mr. TOOMEY. Mr. President, I rise to speak on the topic of the nomination of Cornelia Pillard to the DC Circuit.

Before I go to that specific topic, I wish to address a broader topic, which is how we got in these circumstances in the first place and why we are here tonight, why we are having this discussion, and how this nuclear option, as it has been described, has come about.

Most immediately was November 21, 2013, just a few weeks ago, when the majority party in the Senate unilaterally decided to break the rules of the Senate, violate the rules and rewrite the rules themselves. Despite the fact the rules clearly say it takes a two-thirds majority of the Senate to do that, they decided to disregard that and change the rules themselves. So they did that on November 21, 2013.

What they specifically did, the specific rule change they imposed unilaterally on the Senate, was to completely eliminate the opportunity for the minority party to have any ability to be a check or a balance to the process of selecting and confirming the nominees of a given President to the judiciary of the United States of America, the Federal judiciary, or to the executive branch.

It is a little bit sweeping, but that is exactly what has been done. This is contrary to the entire history of the Republic, where this has never been done before, and it applies to lifetime appointees. Of course, Federal judges, as we all know, once they are confirmed, they hold that office until they decide they are done—at whatever age that might be. It is a lifetime appointment. Unless they commit an impeachable offense, there is nothing anybody can do about it.

One of the things that is interesting about this decision by our Democratic colleagues is they decided to eliminate the rights the minority party has had in the Senate for centuries. They decided to do that despite the fact that 20 of them warned vehemently against engaging in this very activity just a few years ago. As a matter of fact, none other than the Senate majority leader who personally led this effort, Senator REID, said in 2009:

The right to extend the debate is never more important than when one party controls the Congress and the White House. In these cases, a filibuster serves as a check on power and preserves our limited government.

In 2009 the senior Senator from New York said:

The checks and balances which have been at the core of this Republic will be evaporated by the nuclear option. The checks and balances say that if you get 51 percent of the vote, you don't get your way 100 percent of the time.

That is what our friends, the leadership of the majority party, the Democratic party, said very recently.

So you have to ask yourself, why would they do a complete reversal? Why would they do a 180-degree switch? Why would they go from a position of absolute vehement opposition to the nuclear option that denies the minority party any say whatsoever in the confirmation of Federal nominees—why would they go from that to where they were just a couple weeks ago when they executed their plan and unilaterally broke the rules so they could change the rules to inflict that very policy on the current minority party, the Republican Party?

We can look at what the majority leader said at the time. One of the things he said on November 21, 2013, the day on which the majority leader made this change:

There has been unbelievable, unprecedented obstruction. For the first time in the history of our Republic, Republicans have routinely used the filibuster to prevent President Obama from appointing his executive team or confirming judges.

That is what Senator REID has asserted as his justification for this unilateral, unprecedented deprivation of minority party rights. In fact, just this evening Senator REID was back on the Senate floor, and he used the word ''obstructionism'' about a dozen times. So I think it is worth considering what has actually happened. What does the record show? Let's go back to March 2011 because that is an interesting moment in this discussion about how and whether and when and under what circumstances to confirm nominees.

In March 2011, Republicans decided that, you know what, it probably would be a good idea for the President—President Obama at this time, obviously—to be able to get a very large number of nominees appointed and confirmed without even having to go through the Senate process. The legislation is called the Presidential Appointment Efficiency and Streamlining Act of 2011. Under this act, thousands of appointees from the executive branch were simply no longer subject to Senate confirmation.

So what Republicans did in March 2011—far from obstructing anything—was to say: Mr. President, here is a huge category of Federal nominees, and we won't even require a vote. We won't even require Senate consideration. You get these, all of them. You nominate them, they are done, period.

Does that sound like obstruction? Not to me. It was passed by a Republican-controlled House, supported by Republicans in the Senate, and signed into law.

So today the law of the land, as a result of Republican cooperation, is that this President enjoys a luxury no previous President has had—this huge category of nominees who are solely, exclusively at his discretion. It doesn't matter if a single Senator or every Senator strongly objects. It doesn't matter. It is totally irrelevant.

So I think we ought to consider that legislation in the context of this discussion. But let's take a look at those nominees who remain subject to and who prior to this legislation have been subject to Senate confirmation.

One category is Federal judges. We have many district courts around the country. So far, the President has nominated 174 candidates to Federal district courts around the country. Of the 174 the President has nominated, I wonder if you could guess how many have been confirmed. I will tell you how many have been confirmed—174. There have been 174 confirmed and zero rejected. At the circuit court level, prior to the recent episode, the President had nominated 41 candidates to the circuit court. Of the 41, 39 had been confirmed. So the total of judicial nominees President Obama has sent to us in the Senate is 217, and 215 have been confirmed and 2 have been objected to. By my math, that is something like 1 percent objected to, 99 percent confirmed. This doesn't strike me as unreasonable obstruction.

But judges aren't the whole story. There are also the nonjudicial nominees, and we ought to consider those as well. So far, at least as of when we compiled this data, the President has nominated 1,488 individuals to various Federal spots throughout the executive branch—the agencies, his departments, and so on. Of the 1,488, 1,486 have been confirmed and 2 have been blocked by Republicans. That would include 100 percent of the President's Cabinet

nominees and 100 percent of virtually every other category but not every last one. If we add those together, the total of the President's nominees, both judicial and nonjudicial, 1,707 confirmed, 4 rejected. So that works out to something like the Senate has confirmed with Republican support—because prior to the rule change, it couldn't happen without Republican support—the Senate has confirmed 99.9 percent of President Obama's nominees to judgeships and to nonjudgeships. You have to ask yourself, could that possibly constitute outrageous obstruction, unprecedented obstruction, as Senator REID has said, preventing President Obama from appointing his executive team or confirming judges? How can this possibly be?

The majority leader came down to the Senate floor on the date on which he decided to unilaterally change the rules by breaking the rules and he cited as an example the outrageous case of Chuck Hagel, who had served in this body. Chuck Hagel. Whatever became of Chuck Hagel? Oh, that is right, he was confirmed to be Secretary of Defense, as has virtually every single other nominee the President has proposed.

The leader seemed to think it was completely unreasonable that Republican Senators would demand some information from former-Senator Hagel along the way. It seems to me the fact that he is a former Senator should not change his obligation to provide the information the Senate requests, and when he provided that information, he was confirmed easily.

So it seems pretty clear to me, it seems pretty indisputable that this really never was about obstructionism. A 99.9-percent confirmation rate? It just can't be about obstruction. It is clearly not.

So we have to ask ourselves, if it is not the case that Republicans have been obstructing the President's team—and it is clearly not—then why did the majority in this body decide to unilaterally change the rules and deny the minority the opportunity to have any say whatsoever on the confirmation process? Fortunately, some of our colleagues on the other side have explained this for us. They have told us why they made this change. But let me put it in a little bit of context.

We are in a situation here where we have a divided government. It is true that the American people elected President Obama to a second term, and elections have consequences. But on the very same day, the American people reelected Republicans to be the majority party in the House. And all elections have consequences, not just Presidential elections.

So the reality is that the very liberal agenda President Obama would like to pursue is very difficult. He can't get most of the liberal things he wants to do, whether it is some kind of cap and trade or card check or his war on coal. This is well outside of the mainstream of where the American public is, and it is not where the consensus is in the House of Representatives. So his legislative agenda isn't going anywhere in the House. The administration understands that very well, the President understands that very well, and so do the members of the majority party here in the Senate.

What do you do if you have an agenda that is out of step with the American people and can't pass in a duly-elected House of Representatives? Well, some people think the thing to do is do an end run around the legislative body, bypass the legislation, and use an undemocratic—I would argue unconstitutional—process and have unelected, unaccountable bureaucrats impose by fiat and through regulation that which you cannot achieve through legislation.

Of course, that is completely inconsistent with our Constitution, with the way our Federal Government is intended to operate, and with the principle of the separation of powers. It would require pursuing an agenda that is out of step with the American people and without the consent of Congress, which, of course, is supposed to be a partner with any executive branch, with any President in pursuing any agenda.

Of course, our Founders foresaw the danger of an Executive who would try this sort of thing and would do an end run around the legislature and try to use the enormous power at the disposal of the Executive, who has massive staff and huge agencies and all kinds of resources, and understood that it is quite possible that you could have an Executive who would try, for instance, selective enforcement of laws, maybe unilateral suspension of laws, as we have seen this administration do, writing rules and regulations that are inconsistent with the laws. These are all behaviors we could anticipate.

Our Founders did. They did. They anticipated this could happen. So what they did is they built a system that would have some checks and balances, that would provide some limitations. Among the other ways they did it—there were many ways this was done, but one of them was the separation of powers and specifically the creation of a judiciary which would be a referee on whether, for instance, a given agency, a given regulator, was in fact complying with the laws or whether they had gone rogue, whether they had gone overboard, whether they were overreaching, whether they were pursuing some agenda for which they did not have authority.

These courts play an absolutely vital and I would say completely indispensable role in giving individual Americans their last hope in seeking to preserve their liberty against an unfair, arbitrary, and even unconstitutional executive overreach. That is what the courts do.

As it happens, there is one particular court that plays a disproportionate role in this process of adjudicating and officiating over Federal regulations. It just so happens that by virtue of its location, a big majority of cases in which an American citizen challenges a regulation because that citizen believes this is a regulation that is unfair, unconstitutional, illegal or otherwise not consistent with our laws—the venue where this ends up finally getting adjudicated is very often the DC Circuit Court of Appeals.

This has become a bit of a problem for the administration and some of our friends in the Senate because the DC Circuit Court of Appeals has become a bit of an obstacle to some of the ambitions they would like to impose. One example, for instance, is last year the DC Circuit Court of Appeals struck down for the second time in 4 years the EPA's regulations on cross-State air pollution. This is a complicated story. We do not have to get into all the details but, bottom line, these are regulations that would among other things have a devastating impact on States such as Pennsylvania that have a big coal industry and that have a big utility industry that uses coal to fire generators. The court found that the EPA had gone beyond its legal authority. The statute clearly says what the EPA may do and may not do. They were going beyond what they are permitted to do and the DC Circuit Court of Appeals said so.

That is not the only case in which the DC Circuit Court of Appeals has ruled in ways that are problematic to some of our friends here. Another was a decision they made regarding recess appointments. You may remember this. A while back, the President made a very extraordinary decision. The President decided for the first time in the history of the Republic that it was up to him to determine when the Senate was in recess and when it was not; that was his unilateral decision to make. No other President ever took it upon himself to decide it was his power to determine when a different branch of government was in recess, but this President did. He said that is his decision. So I guess by his logic he could decide when we are out on lunch, that is a recess; out on the weekend, that is a recess; that is up to him by his standard. So he created an opportunity for himself to make appointments that he knew would not be confirmed in the Senate or were unlikely to be confirmed.

There was bipartisan, in some cases, concern about some of these folks. He went ahead and made the appointments. The DC Circuit Court of Appeals said actually, no, the Constitution is pretty clear. You do not have that authority.

These are just a couple of examples where a nonpartisan, completely competent, and very highly respected appellate court made decisions about Executive behavior. This has not sat so well with some of our colleagues.

Why do I bring this all up? Because this is what this is truly all about. This

is not about Republican obstructionism. What this is about is our Democratic friends want to pursue a very liberal agenda. They cannot do it through legislation so they intend to do it through regulation. As they overreach and go beyond the legal authority, which they have already done and intend to continue to do, the victims, American citizens who are victims of this overreach, are going to challenge these rules and regulations in court. When they do, they are going to end up in the DC Circuit Court of Appeals.

Some of our friends want to do whatever it takes to make sure they can win those decisions. Those are not just my words. The senior Senator from New York complained about the DC Circuit. He was on record claiming the DC Circuit ''overturned the EPA's ability to regulate existing coal plants.''

OK. He further went on to say, ''The SEC cannot pass rulings unless they do what is called a cost-benefit analysis.'' That was another complaint the senior Senator from New York made about the DC Circuit.

So he told a group of supporters that in order to reverse this, Democrats will ''fill up the DC Circuit one way or another.''

I think this is about as clear as it could be. There are people who do not like the decisions coming out of the court and so their intention is to pack the court with people who share their political views and will therefore sustain decisions about the advancement of their liberal agenda.

But it was not only the senior Senator from New York who made these comments. The majority leader himself explained this as well. Referring to the DC Circuit Court he said:

> They're the ones that said . . . the president can't have recess appointments. . . . They've done a lot of bad things, so we're focusing a very intently on the D.C. Circuit. We need at least one more. There's three vacancies, we need at least one more and that will switch the majority.

Could there be a more direct, straightforward statement about what their real intent is? Their intent is to pack the court with partisan people who will give them the decisions they need so they can advance the agenda they want when it is blocked through the ordinary legal and constitutional legislative process. That is what is going on here. That is why we are here tonight. That is what is taking place.

When Republicans decided that we do not think it is a good idea to manipulate courts this way, to populate them with partisans, to try court stacking for the purpose of advancing an agenda, that is when our Democratic friends decided to go nuclear. The pity of this is our Founders had enormous foresight. They were absolutely brilliant. They constructed an incredible document, a series of documents that have guided this Republic for centuries now. They anticipated a lot. I do not think they anticipated that the leader of the majority party in the Senate would just turn it over to the control of the executive branch and make this institution just a rubberstamp for what the President wants to do. But that is where we are.

What is the practical consequence of all this? Why is it that this is such a terrible idea? Let me touch on a few of the reasons. There are a lot of reasons I think this is a disastrous policy, but let me touch on a few of them. One result of this is undoubtedly a further polarization, in fact a radicalization of the Federal Government.

The second is that as a direct result of this unilateral decision and the ability now of our Democratic friends to simply steamroll nominees through without any consideration by the minority party, we will have to expect fluctuations, volatility in administrative and regulatory rulings.

Then last and probably most disturbingly, I think there is a real danger that a justice system that has been the envy of the world and is recognized for its impartial and nonpartisan integrity may very well be increasingly viewed as a partisan and biased one.

Let me explain this a little bit, the idea that we have a more radicalized Federal Government. For 200 years, a President has always known that in order to nominate and to get confirmed one of his nominees he would need broad support in the Senate. It would not fly if he selected someone who was only appealing to a few or even a very small majority. So what does this do? That forces any President, whether it is a Republican or a Democrat, to nominate people who would have that broader bipartisan appeal. Frankly, Presidents of both parties are always under pressure from their respective bases to pick the most extreme people. That is what pleases the base of either party. It has always served the Republic well that a President can say I have to get that person confirmed through the Senate and if I pick the most extreme people that is going to be a problem. The fact that a President has needed that bipartisan support has essentially required that a President look for people who represent a broad consensus across America.

In this postnuclear Senate, that moderating influence is gone. There is no such influence anymore, and I think it is a safe bet that we can expect more extreme nominees. We have already seen some evidence of it. The Hill ran a story recently. It reported that now that the nuclear option has been detonated, far left interest groups are ''pressing President Obama to select left-wing nominees for key regulatory and judicial posts, nominees who could never have been confirmable before.'' That is no surprise. That is exactly the kind of consequence we should expect.

The second consideration is stability in rules and regulations that are promulgated by the various regulators and agencies. I hear every day across Pennsylvania one of the grave concerns of business that is hampering our ability to have a stronger economy, to have the kind of growth we would like to have, is uncertainty about regulations.

It is true and it is important. Guess what. It is likely to get worse because, first of all, this huge administrative, bureaucratic State that we have devolved into recently touches on virtually every aspect of our life and there are hundreds of agencies, boards, and commissions that the administration controls. What is likely to happen now is that if the White House and control of the Senate changes parties, we are likely to see big swings in the ideology and the partisanship of these folks because they were not consensus candidates in the first place, right. Given that now we have a situation where a majority party just steamrolls their way through whomever they want and has every incentive to go to the extremes, when they lose an election what are we going to have? We are going to have the exact opposite swing. So for businesses trying to make a decision about whether to invest in America to grow their company, to hire more workers, they are going to worry and wonder: What will the regulatory regime look like in just a few years, depending on how the election goes? It is much less predictability, less stability, and the direct result of that is going to be less investment and fewer jobs. This is not good news for our economy at all.

Finally, my concern is that for similar reasons we are going to see a diminishing of the judiciary, of the status of the judiciary among the American people, of the credibility, of the respect the American people have had.

A moment ago I said I think one of the great strengths of the American Federal Government throughout our history has been, generally speaking, that—and there have been exceptions, and there will always be some exceptions—by and large at all levels the American people have had a pretty high respect for the judiciary. They respect the fact that our judges are capable and competent and tend not to be partisan hacks. They tend not to be polarizing political figures who are trying to advance an agenda. They have tended to be men and women of ability and integrity who were calling balls and strikes the way they see fit. They realize they are the umps and referees; they are not the players on the field. They are not there to advance an agenda; they are there to officiate based on the law and the Constitution. That has been the case.

The reason our judiciary has been so respected is because it is nonpartisan. It is independent of the other branches of government, and it has behaved that way. The American people have the confidence that they can go before a Federal judge and receive a fair and unbiased hearing whether the judge is a Democrat, Republican, liberal, or conservative. The fact is that most Americans don't worry and say: Wait a minute. Is that judge a Republican? It

doesn't occur to most people to ask that question, nor should it because it doesn't matter in most cases.

This respect for the judiciary that the American people have is extremely important. In Federalist 78, Alexander Hamilton talked about the importance of this deep respect for the judiciary. He said:

The judiciary is beyond comparison the weakest of the three departments of power.

Whereas the executive branch has the military and Congress has the power of the purse, the judiciary cannot enforce its own decisions. It relies on Americans' respect for it and willingness to enforce its rulings as essential.

The fact is that the deep respect the American people have had for the judiciary has allowed our courts, including the Supreme Court of the United States, to issue decisions that have profoundly affected our lives, profoundly changed our society, and so many times so much for the better. A famous example would be Brown v. the Board of Education, which reversed the separate-but-equal doctrine. It ended the southern government laws that banned White and Black persons from associating with each other. This created a certain upheaval at the time, but it stuck, and part of the reason it stuck was because the public saw that this was a decision by a nonpartisan court that was acting as an arbiter of our Constitution. The respect the American people had for our courts was a big part of why a contentious decision quickly became accepted and became part of our fabric.

Alexander Hamilton explained that the judiciary's integrity and independence are absolutely critical; otherwise, Americans' ''confidence'' in the courts will be replaced by what he described as ''universal distrust and distress.'' He said:

The benefits of the integrity and moderation of the judiciary . . . must have commanded the esteem and applause of all the virtuous and disinterested.

Considerate men of every description ought to prize whatever will tend to beget or fortify that temper in the courts: as no man can be sure that he may not be to-morrow the victim of a spirit of injustice, by which he may be a gainer to-day.

The inevitable tendency of such a spirit is to sap the foundations of public and private confidence, and to introduce in its stead universal distrust and distress.

When a President, with the cooperation of a legislature, rubberstamps judicial nominees for the purpose of ratifying a political agenda—when this happens, the American people's trust in the judiciary will be badly damaged, and we are at the threshold of that moment now. Of course, it also completely undermines our whole system of separation of powers. The fact is that when judges are seen as being at the beck and call of a legislature, a President, or a party, our individual liberty is simply not secure.

Again, to quote Hamilton:

The general liberty of the people can never be endangered from [the courts] . . . so long as the judiciary remains truly distinct from both the legislature and the Executive.

He goes on to say:

Liberty can have nothing to fear from the judiciary alone, but would have everything to fear from its union with either of the other departments.

When you have one party ruling and completely controlling this process—and controlling it for the purpose of advancing a partisan agenda—that strikes me as exactly the danger Hamilton warned us of.

So where does that leave us in this regard? I don't think we are doomed, but I do think it is very important that the American people rise and make their objection to this clearly heard. It is important that the American people contact their Members of Congress. They need to exercise their ultimate control of this process at the ballot box and urge the Senate majority to give up its plan to use the courts to achieve a legislative agenda that they cannot get through a duly-elected Congress that represents the American people.

By the way, there is another big incentive for our friends to want to pack this DC Circuit Court, and that is because the front-burner and most prominent policy and political issue of the day is largely going to be litigated right there very soon. The DC Circuit is going to hear a very important case that goes to heart of ObamaCare. The DC Circuit is hearing a case about how the IRS has chosen to implement some rules. The law is very clear. The law unambiguously states that the subsidies ObamaCare has designed for many people who buy health insurance through their exchange—those subsidies will only be available through the State exchanges.

As the Presiding Officer knows, ObamaCare contemplates two different categories of exchanges through which people are forced to buy the mandated insurance. There are State exchanges, and in those States that don't operate an exchange, there are Federal exchanges. Well, the law says that the subsidies are available only for the people who purchase their health insurance through the State exchanges. What the administration is attempting to do is to completely disregard the law and make the subsidies available to people who buy through either the State exchange or the Federal exchange. That is not what the law says. I understand that this administration routinely disregards the law, but that is why we have an independent judiciary—to impose a check when they do this.

There is a legal scholar by the name of Mike Garvin who is following this case closely. He has explained what is going on. He said:

Congress knew that the federal government cannot require the states to establish or operate Exchanges, so it offered subsidized insurance premiums for residents of states with State-operated exchanges to entice states to undertake this responsibility. Instead, fully 33 states—from Texas to Ohio to President Obama's and Vice President Biden's home states of Illinois and Delaware—have said ''thanks, but no thanks.'' Instead, these states have chosen to shield their businesses and residents from the worst of the potential ''train wreck.''

That creates a bit of a problem for the administration because with so many States choosing not to participate in this disaster and having only a Federal exchange, if they actually comply with the law they signed, then there would be a lot of people who would not be eligible for the subsidy. If the DC Circuit Court of Appeals were to simply follow and impose the law, then that would create a huge problem, which strikes me as yet another incentive for why perhaps we have gone through what we have gone through over the last couple of weeks—because it is so important for our friends on the other side to get the decisions they want out of this court.

All of this brings me to what we really ought to be working on. By the way, all of these nominees who are before us and tying us up this week are all entirely at the choosing of the majority leader. None of these are essential, none of these are urgent, and none of these are emergencies. We could be passing legislation, such as our Defense authorization legislation. We have a budget deal that could be on the floor. We have a farm bill that is overdue. We have a lot of things we could be doing. We could be trying to deal with the enormous problems caused by ObamaCare, but we are not. We are dealing with nominees instead.

I think we ought to focus on the problems that ObamaCare is causing, and I will admit that sometimes it is hard to know where to begin because these problems are so huge. I will start with the taxes ObamaCare has been imposing on us and continues to impose on us. It is a pretty extraordinary list. As best we could tabulate, there are something like 20 different taxes that were created as part of ObamaCare. There is over $1 trillion worth of taxes to burden this economy and diminish our opportunities to grow and invest and create the jobs we need at a time when our economy is weak and needs an opportunity to recover. Instead, we saddle it with all of these taxes.

For instance, we have an excise tax on charitable hospitals.

We have a tax in the form of the codification of the economic substance doctrine. It is a tax hike of $4.5 billion that allows the IRS to completely disallow legal tax deductions.

We have the black liquor tax hike, which is a tax increase on a type of biofuel.

We have a tax on innovator drug companies.

We have a $2.3 billion annual tax on the industry. We have a Blue Cross Blue Shield tax hike, which is a special tax deduction in current law that would only be allowed if 85 percent or more of the premiums are spent on clinical services. That is a tax increase which went into effect in 2010.

We have a tax on indoor tanning services.

We have taxes that took effect in 2011. There is the medicine cabinet tax. Americans are no longer able to use health savings accounts or flexible savings accounts or health reimbursement pretax dollars to purchase nonprescription over-the-counter medicine. So the inability to use these taxpayer accounts for legitimate medical needs is a tax increase.

We have the HSA withdrawal tax hike.

Going into effect in 2012, we have the employer reporting of insurance on W–2.

In 2013 we have a surtax on investment income. We have a whole new 3.8-percent surtax on investment incomes, and this can only have the effect of diminishing investment in our economy. It diminishes the return on investment, diminishes the incentive to take a risk and start a new business, provide capital to a new business, grow a business, which is all due to ObamaCare.

We have the hike in the Medicare payroll tax.

One of the most egregious of them all—we have the tax on medical device manufacturers. This one is particularly egregious because it is so badly designed on top of being ill-conceived. This is a 2.3-percent tax on the sale of medical devices. Irrespective of whether a company has any income whatsoever or makes any money from this, we are imposing a tax on the sale of these products. The average medical device company has a profit margin of less than 5 percent. A 2.3-percent tax is about half of all their income that now goes to a new sales tax. By the way, they still have to pay income taxes, all the ordinary income taxes.

This is absolutely devastating, because what these companies are then forced to do is, if virtually the entire bottom line goes for taxes, they don't have the money to reinvest in their business. The medical device industry is one of the best industries we have in this country. It is so dynamic. It is so creative.

I wish my colleagues would come with me to parts of Pennsylvania where this industry is just thriving—or was thriving but not so much anymore. It was thriving because of the creativity, the innovation, the devices, and inventions that people are making, improving the quality of life and extending life. It is amazing, the marriage of technology and creative minds and experts in health care, what they are creating.

But, unfortunately, for a lot of these products, it takes a long time before they are actually profitable for the company that sells them, long after they have begun sales. This tax imposes the burden before they have ever become profitable. What is the effect of that? It is that it makes this whole industry less appealing to invest in, less attractive to entrepreneurs, to investors. Whether it is venture capital or private equity or wherever the source might be, less is going to medical devices, an industry that is saving lives and improving the quality of lives. It is a big manufacturing industry. Most of these companies manufacture their products in the United States and many in Pennsylvania. We sell a lot of them overseas. We have a big trade surplus in medical devices because we lead the world.

What does ObamaCare do? It slaps a new tax on the sales. It is a terrible policy.

We have a high medical bills tax. Currently, those people who face high medical bills are allowed a deduction for medical expenses to the extent that those expenses exceed 7.5 percent of adjusted gross income. The new provision, which took effect just earlier this year, raises that threshold before a person can take that deduction. That is just a complicated, convoluted tax increase on people who have high medical bills.

There is the flexible spending account cap. There is the elimination of the tax deduction for employer-provided retirement drug coverage in coordination with Medicare Part D. There is the individual mandate excise tax. There is the employer mandate tax. There is the tax on health insurers. There is an excise tax on comprehensive health insurance plans.

There are 20 different taxes, the combined effect of which is, without a doubt, to significantly weaken our economy.

But that is not the only way ObamaCare weakens our economy. The mandate ObamaCare imposes on employers kicks in on employers who have 50 or more employees. I have spoken with a number of Pennsylvania employers who have 45 or 47 or 48 employees. They are not subject to the hugely expensive mandates of ObamaCare, and do my colleagues know what they tell me? They are not going to be subject to it. They will go to great lengths to avoid hiring the fiftieth employee. They will hire temps. They will pursue automation. They will do all kinds of things they wouldn't otherwise do because this government makes it too expensive for them to hire a fiftieth employee. At a time when our workforce participation rate is at a record low because so many people have given up even trying to find work, ObamaCare makes it too expensive for employers to hire new workers.

It has a similar effect on hours worked, because this 50-employee count applies to anybody who works 30 hours or more, so one of the ways a business can avoid these crippling costs is to cut back on the number of hours for their workers. That doesn't work out so well for somebody who needs those hours to pay their bills to support their family. It is happening all across the country.

Another aspect that is really outrageous is this mandate in ObamaCare that employers must—regardless of whether the employees want it or not—provide contraceptive and abortifacient coverage. One of the problems with this is that these services run completely contrary to deeply held religious views for a lot of people, faith-based institutions, and others. So the administration decided they will offer an accommodation for faith-based institutions. The accommodation they offer is pure sophistry. What they offered was to say you won't have to—you, the faith-based institution—you won't have to actually pay for those services which you find objectionable based on your faith. You won't have to pay for them, but you have to buy an insurance plan that has them and the insurance company will just have to give you that for free.

This is the most ridiculous thing in the world. Private companies aren't in the business of offering their services for free. If there is an aspect of it that they supposedly have to give away, then they will pass on the costs for the services they provide. Nobody is fooled by this. This is yet another of the details of ObamaCare.

But, really, some of the biggest problems I have saved for the end, and that is the series of broken promises that ObamaCare constitutes. One of the most glaring is this promise we have all heard. I don't know how many times we have heard it, but we all have. We heard the President and so many of our Democratic colleagues who support this bill say: If you like your health plan, you can keep your health plan. Let's be very clear. Everybody who supported this bill who is familiar with it—and that would certainly include the President of the United States and my friends here—they knew from the beginning that was not possible. They knew that because the legislation was designed to prevent many people from keeping their health insurance. It was written for that purpose, in part, because they had to. The whole point, or a big part of the point of ObamaCare was to establish standards that the government determined were appropriate, regardless of whether an individual American thinks that a given plan is adequate or not or suitable for herself or her family. It was up to the government to make this decision, not the individual, and they would establish criteria, and if your plan didn't meet the criteria, your plan was going to be canceled. That is in the legislation. That is codified. It always was. It is at the heart of this legislation.

So for anybody to go around the country saying, If you like your health plan, you can keep your health plan, they were knowingly stating something that was completely untrue, was always untrue, and was necessarily untrue. The examples abound.

I have emails from constituents. I have too many. I won't have a chance to run through them all this evening. I may have to come back on another occasion. But I will share a few with my

colleagues. This is from a small business owner from Lancaster County, PA. I got this just—I think I got this earlier today. I will just quote from this email from my constituent, addressed to me. It says:

As my Congressional representative, you need to know how ObamaCare is harming my life and health care.

I work for a small construction company. My cost for family health care was already over $11,000 per year. We received notification that our policy was being canceled since it did not comply with the requirements of the Affordable Care Act.

Our company looked for the best rates they could find for comparable coverage which did comply. They chose a new insurance company. We just recently were given the costs for next year. My costs to cover myself and my family will be over $17,500, a 59-percent increase. Even with that, the deductibles and out-of-pocket maximums are higher. This is not ''Affordable Care''. This would eat up a major part of my income.

I attempted to log onto the healthcare.gov website several times, but always get kicked out. I do not hold much hope that I will get any better rates, because I don't qualify for a credit.

We were already struggling to live on my take home pay. We cannot afford to have it reduced by over $6,500.00. We may have to drop coverage for my wife or kids, and pay the penalty.

I suspect that this law will result in many more people losing more health care, at the expense of a few getting free or reduced cost healthcare.

I got this just a week ago from a man from Cumberland County, PA. He said:

My wife Barb and I have been trying for almost three weeks now to get signed up. . . . all income and health info and private information is on the unsecured web site and the application is accepted . . . but we have not been able to get on to pick the plan or get our price . . . so nobody has been paid. Thus our canceled insurance ends on Dec. 31st and we look to be out.

A BIG mistake by the folks who voted for this . . . I've had cancer a couple times, my wife has had cancer and we both see our doctors when needed. This ACA will ruin many families if we can't get onto an insurance plan.

A woman from Lebanon County, PA, sent me this email a week ago. She said:

We had our healthcare discontinued, and after an appeal we were able to get it reinstated, but only for this year. Currently we have a health care savings plan with a deductible of $3,000 a year. . . . In the new plan, our deductible would increase to $12,000 . . . and our premiums would increase to $9,000 a year. How is a middle class married family supposed to pay for that?

This is absolutely ridiculous, and this is our situation. I hope every government worker has to purchase their plan through this plan.

Here is another. A man from Delaware County in southeastern Pennsylvania:

I am 66 and I am on Medicare. My wife is 63. Her insurance company canceled her ''longstanding'' policy due to the requirements of the ACA. Her ''new'' policy costs $350 more per month. We are on a strict budget. . . . We are the hard working middle class. Who stands for us?

There was another promise we frequently heard, and that promise we frequently heard was that if you like your doctor, you will be able to keep your doctor. This too was known to be impossible. Since the law was designed to discontinue health insurance plans and force people on to alternative plans, not all plans cover the same doctors. Certainly, some were going to lose their coverage. Let me give an example of an email I got from Westmoreland County just last week. She writes:

I have been self-employed for 13 years and have never been without health insurance. 3 years ago I was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. Having an expensive preexisting condition was not a problem for me as I had never let my insurance lapse. My medications cost (without insurance) $4,000+ per month. I received notice several weeks ago that they would now cancel my plan and would do so as of Jan 1, and I had to sign up for new coverage through the health insurance exchange.

My staff reached out to this woman and tried to help and, after several attempts, she was able to access the exchange. Do my colleagues know what she learned? She learned that in her region there were two options available to her. One covers her doctors who have been treating her for her MS for years. The other covers her prescription drugs. Neither one covers both.

These are the kinds of decisions people are being forced to make all over America. They are the kinds of decisions people are being forced to make every day. It is the direct result of the loss of personal freedom that this legislation imposes on people, and this is the topic that we ought to be addressing in this body so we can pursue the only solution, which is to repeal this bill and move health care in a completely different direction.

I believe my time has expired, so I will yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New York.

FALLEN FIREFIGHTERS ASSISTANCE TAX CLARIFICATION ACT

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I rise to speak about a particular incident that occurred in Webster, NY, a beautiful town near the City of Rochester.

On Christmas Eve, 2012, nearly 1 year ago today, the 125-member West Webster Volunteer Firemen's Association—a volunteer fire department east of Rochester, NY—faced an unimaginable tragedy when four of their brave members were wounded, two fatally, when they responded to a fire but instead faced an ambush of unspeakable proportions.

While many families across our Nation were waking up last Christmas Eve morning to finish preparing Christmas dinner, shopping, wrapping presents, picking up the family from the airport, four Webster families were instead confronting a heart-wrenching tragedy.

The call of a house on fire came into the West Webster Fire Department at 5:30 a.m. on December 24, and although it was a cold snowy morning, still dark before the Sun rose, everyday heroes from the West Webster Fire Department courageously did what they volunteered to do on behalf of their neighbors and on behalf of their hometowns. They, similar to millions of brave volunteer firefighters throughout our country and throughout its history, left their homes and their families in safety to put out a fire that always creates danger.

This routine call turned into a tragedy which shocked the community, people throughout the country, and even people throughout the world.

Firefighter Joseph Hofstetter, a 14-year volunteer for West Webster Fire Department, arrived first on the scene. Firefighter Theodore Scardino arrived soon after with LT Mike Chiapperini in a pumper truck, followed by 19-year-old firefighter Tomasz Kaczowka driving the department's SUV.

What they did not know was that the fire was intentionally set by the home's owner in order to lure these innocent firefighters into a senseless sniper ambush. The sniper was hiding behind a berm amid the chaos of the fire and began shooting at the responding firefighters.

The firefighters were confused at first to hear popping sounds and thought it might be from the fire but LT Mike Chiapperini, who was also a Webster police officer, knew better and shouted to his fellow volunteers to take cover, but unfortunately it was too late.

Firefighter Hofstetter was shot in the pelvis while trying to alert dispatchers on the radio to the situation.

Ted Scardino was shot in the shoulder, and 5 minutes later he was shot again in the leg. The 16-year volunteer lay there while bleeding for over an hour, enduring the December cold while sustaining second-degree burns on his head as the fire now spread to consume six other neighboring homes.

Lieutenant Chiapperini and Firefighter Kaczowka both died in the ambush.

As news of this horrific, senseless Christmas Eve tragedy spread, well-meaning people from across the Rochester and Finger Lakes area, across New York State, across the Nation and the world reached out to the West Webster Volunteer Firemen's Association to offer support and prayers.

Thousands of incredibly generous people flooded the department with countless financial contributions to support the volunteer department, to support the four firefighters—and in the case of Lieutenant Chiapperini and Firefighter Kaczowka, to support the families they had left behind.

Not realizing that collecting and distributing the funds to the families would jeopardize the association's tax-exempt status with the IRS, the association accepted donations from generous people all around the Nation wanting to help the four families who suffered the most on that day.

They collected these donations for the victims, for their families, and they want to give these donations to

the victims and their families. It defies reason that they would be unable to do so now because of a technicality in the Tax Code.

Just as we did after 9/11, and again after a similar fire department tragedy in California in 2006, it is our obligation to make sure the West Webster Volunteer Firemen's Association can now disburse to these families the contributions that their neighbors and unknown, countless, generous others wanted them to have.

As it is, the disbursement of these funds has been delayed for months and now almost 1 year. That is why I am asking the Senate to proceed with consideration of the Fallen Firefighters Assistance Tax Clarification Act.

This proposal merely clarifies—as we did after 9/11 and again after the California tragedy in 2006—that the West Webster Volunteer Fire Department will not lose its status as a nonprofit association by distributing the donations to these firefighters and their families.

As we again enter the Christmas season and approach the 1-year anniversary of this tragedy, now is the time to make this right.

We need to do it on behalf of the families of the fallen and the injured. The family of 43-year-old LT Mike Chiapperini includes his wife Kim, his 19-year-old son Nick, and his daughters, 4-year-old Kacie and 3-year-old Kylie.

Known to many as Chip, Lieutenant Chiapperini was a West Webster Fire Department volunteer firefighter for 25 years. He was past chief of the West Webster Fire Department and adviser for its Fire Explorer Post. He also served with distinction for 19 years as a police officer with the Webster Police Department and rose through the ranks as a dispatcher, police officer, investigator, sergeant, and lieutenant. In short, he committed his entire life to public service for the town of Webster.

Likewise, 19-year-old firefighter Tomasz Kaczowka left behind his parents Janina and Marian Kaczowka, along with his older twin brothers and a large extended family. Firefighter Kaczowka was selflessly devoted to his family and his community. In fact, he was not even supposed to be on duty that Christmas Eve but elected to make the shift so that older department members could be home with their families that day.

The surviving firefighters, Ted Scardino and Joseph Hofstetter, have had to endure long rehabilitations for their injuries and their families have had to deal with life's ordinary challenges and day-to-day expenses as Ted and Joseph recover and move forward with their lives.

The fact is, ordinary Americans, moved by the heroic sacrifice of these volunteer firefighters, have offered their generous support. They have intended their contributions to help these families in the wake of the tragedy and in recognition of the service of these brave firefighters.

These were volunteer firefighters—volunteers. I know many of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle are well acquainted with the volunteer fire service. Many may even have a membership in a volunteer fire company themselves.

You all know men and women just like the members of West Webster. They are the epitome of the American spirit.

The French observer de Tocqueville was taken by that spirit when he visited America and the Rochester area in 1831 and thought voluntarism was one of the things that set America apart from the rest of the world. That was true then. It is still true today.

These heroes do not ask for anything. They just want to protect their neighbors and their community. It is just plain wrong that they would lose their not-for-profit status simply for being a passthrough to convey donations to these families after an unspeakable tragedy.

In that same spirit, I had hoped to request unanimous consent this evening to move forward with the consideration of this legislation. Who could object? Who could object? However, I understand that some of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle object to me making the request at this time. Therefore, I will withhold that request this evening and sincerely hope my colleagues will think about this overnight and allow us to proceed with consideration tomorrow. It is, indeed, the right thing to do.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, I appreciate the comments of my colleague from New York. He has been a tireless champion for the terrific, dedicated, self-sacrificing firefighters of New York City.

Tonight we are on the floor addressing the question of whether we should confirm Cornelia Pillard as a candidate for the DC Circuit Court. She is a law scholar with a long track record of public service. She served twice in the Justice Department and successfully defended the Family and Medical Leave Act, a crucial piece of legislation for working families. She now teaches law at Georgetown University, one of the top law schools in the Nation.

The truth is, she is an extremely well-qualified nominee who will be an excellent addition to the DC Circuit Court. She has personally argued and briefed Supreme Court cases brought or defended by government lawyers from Republican administrations, and Republican-appointed Justices have often authored majority opinions in her favor.

She is currently the codirector of the Supreme Court Institute at Georgetown Law, where she personally assists lawyers preparing for the Supreme Court on a pro bono, first-come basis, without regard to which side they represent.

In fact, Professor Pillard chaired the American Bar Association Reading Committee that reviewed Samuel Alito's writings during his nomination process for the Supreme Court. Her committee's assessment led the ABA to give Justice Alito their highest rating of ''well-qualified.''

Professor Pillard's unbiased approach to the law has won the respect of her colleagues in law and in government, including former Department of Justice officials in Republican administrations who have endorsed her nomination to the DC Circuit.

In short, Professor Pillard is a fair-minded, highly accomplished litigator, with an outstanding reputation for public service.

Then why are we here now, after midnight, carrying on this debate? To get to the root of that question, we have to examine the dysfunction that is present in the Senate.

Virtually all Americans know Congress is not working well. Virtually all Americans know the Senate is broken. I saw a poll that said 92 percent of Americans believe Congress is dysfunctional, and I wondered: What is wrong with the other 8 percent? They must not be paying attention. Because what we have experienced in the Senate is a continuous campaign of obstruction and paralysis of the normal proceedings.

There was a time when we had a Senate that had a core principle, which was up-or-down votes, with rare exception—up-or-down votes, with rare exception. That was the tradition of the Senate. That tradition was rooted in the courtesy—the courtesy—of hearing out every Senator who wished to share their opinion on a topic before the Senate would make a decision.

Maybe that was something easier to do when there were only 26 Members of the Senate. We now have 100 Members of the Senate. So maybe it takes a while to hear the opinions of every Member, but still that courtesy has been honored through the years. But the counterpart to that is that folks knew in the end the Senate, with very rare exception, would get to a simple majority vote. The entire structure of our Constitution and the vision of our Founders was that this body would make decisions with a simple majority vote.

Recall, if you will, that the Founders put into the Constitution special occasions for a supermajority. Those special occasions were things such as overriding a Presidential veto. Those special occasions were things such as reviewing a treaty. But they envisioned a simple majority vote for the legislature because they felt the majority decision most of the time would be a better direction to go than the minority opinion. That is the principle of democracy. The direction that most Senators believe is the correct direction is the basis for going forward.

This principle has been completely lost in the last few years. A small

group of Senators decided they should replace the constitutional principle of a simple majority with a supermajority, that virtually every action would be subject to a requirement to have 60 votes to close debate rather than the constitutional 51.

This has been applied in ways American citizens cannot even imagine. Let's take motions to proceed. A motion to proceed simply says it is time to take up this bill. Let's vote yes or no on taking up this bill. That is the motion to proceed.

But in recent times the minority has said: You know what. We can use this motion to proceed as an opportunity to paralyze the Senate. We can object to having that simple majority vote, and then we can deny—there being this supermajority to close debate—even if we have nothing to say, and we can simply waste the Senate's time on debating whether to debate.

I have argued for a long time that this abuse must end. It is time to get rid of the filibuster on this motion to proceed. But nonetheless we have it and my colleagues in this permanent campaign to paralyze the Senate have chosen to exercise this filibuster, if you will, this supermajority requirement, simply on a motion to debate an issue as opposed to actually being in debate.

Let's take conference committees. It was extraordinarily rare for conference committees—the formation of them—to be subject to a supermajority in the history of the Senate. Conference committees were very common in the seventies and eighties. I was first here as an intern in 1976 with Senator Hatfield, here on Capitol Hill working for Congress in the 1980s.

If one Chamber of Congress and the other Chamber had both passed a bill, well then automatically you had a conference committee meet and resolve the differences. That is just common sense. Why would you delay that for a second? But when I came to the Senate in 2009 as a Senator, I was mystified to discover that conference committees were not being held. So I inquired why that was. The answer was that the minority had decided to use the filibuster, the supermajority, on establishing a conference committee; in other words, block the House and Senate from even talking to each other to resolve differences between two houses.

That drove the debate out of the public realm, in a public room with a TV camera, into private discussions as negotiators tried to resolve and develop a common version of the bill. There too I proposed that we need to get rid of this filibuster on conference committees. It is disrespectful of the most valuable commodity of this body; that is, time; that is, time is wasted on filibusters on whether to start a discussion with the House when both the House and Senate have passed a version of the bill.

Then, of course, we have the ongoing campaign of subjecting virtually every nomination to a supermajority. In fact, in the history of America, in the entire history, before President Obama, only three times was there a filibuster of a district court nominee. But in the time President Obama has been in office, we have had 20 filibusters of district court nominees. Only 3 in our history until President Obama is President and then 20 filibusters when he became President until now—20 out of 23.

That is just a pure deliberate campaign of paralysis and obstruction, undermining the contribution of this body, its responsibility as a legislative body. It is not only judicial nominees, it is executive nominees as well. In our entire history as a nation, 168 nominations have been filibustered—168 in our entire history—82 of them have been nominations by President Obama; 82 nominees just in the 5 years President Obama has been in office out of the 168 in our entire history. So we see, whether we are looking at motions to proceed or conference committees or judicial nominees or executive nominees, a campaign of deliberate paralysis and obstruction rather than a dedication to serving our Nation as the Constitution requires.

Indeed, some have justified this ongoing paralysis. Some of my colleagues have said: But remember, President Washington said the Senate should be a cooling saucer. That concept is that you have a cup of hot tea, and it is too hot to drink, you pour it into a saucer, it cools and then it is just right.

President Washington would never recognize this strategy of obstruction and paralysis as legitimate under the U.S. Constitution. Indeed, there were elements designed to make this body deliberative. But there is a difference between deliberation and the destruction of the legislative process. There is a difference between a cooling saucer, thoughtful deliberation, and a deep freeze.

But certain Members of this body have decided they did not come here to fulfill the constitutional vision of the Senate as a deliberative body, they instead have come to paralyze the function of this body, to obstruct this body.

So there we see it in the filibuster of the conference committees, in the filibuster of the motions to proceed, in the filibuster of the executive branch nominees, filibuster of the judicial nominees, and, of course, the filibuster of legislation that has reached extraordinary levels never seen in the history of our Nation.

Just a little while ago one of my colleagues chose to quote Alexander Hamilton in defense of this strategy of paralysis. I would encourage my colleague to actually read more of Alexander Hamilton because he actually directly addressed this question of filibusters and the potential to obstruct the will of the majority.

What did Alexander Hamilton say? He said: The real operation of the filibuster ''is to embarrass the administration, to destroy the energy of government, and to substitute the pleasure, caprice or artifices of a significant, insignificant, turbulent or corrupt junta, to the regular deliberations and decisions of a respectable majority.

He went on to say: When the majority must conform to the views of the minority, the consequence is ''tedious delays, continual negotiation and intrigue, contemptible compromises of the public good.''

That is a pretty good description of what Americans see happening in this Chamber as a result of the deliberate campaign of paralysis and obstruction: tedious delays, continual intrigue, contemptible compromises of the public good.

Many in this Chamber have tried to reason and convey to Members that we should return to the tradition of the Senate, up-or-down votes with rare exception. In 2005 it was the Democrats in the minority and it was the Republicans who were in the majority. At that time the Democrats decided to filibuster a series of judicial nominees. So this was certainly a tactic employed by both Democrats and Republicans.

Our Republican friends who were in the majority said: That is not acceptable. They said: That is not consistent with the philosophy of up-or-down votes with rare exception. They said that is not consistent with the power vested in the Constitution and the President to be able to place forward his nominees for consideration under the advice and consent clause of the Constitution.

Our Republican colleagues were persuasive. The Democrats in the minority agreed not to filibuster judges except under rare exceptions, exceptions of extraordinary flaws of character and experience. Then the clock turned. We came to 2009. Now we have a Democratic President and Democratic majority. The deal that was cut in 2005, agreed to by both sides, that there would be only rare filibusters based on exceptional flaws of character or experience disappeared. It disappeared completely. The new minority did not honor the deal that had been negotiated in 2005.

So come January 2011, there was a debate on this floor about trying to again restore the traditional understanding, up-or-down votes with rare exception. There was a deal made. It did not last but a few weeks. Then there was another attempt in January 2013. On this occasion, there was a promise made on the floor of the Senate. The minority leader came to the floor and said: The Republicans will return to the norms and traditions of the Senate regarding nominations.

What are those norms and traditions? Those norms and traditions are a simple majority vote with rare exception. Within weeks, that promise was completely shattered. The first ever filibuster in U.S. history of a Defense nominee, ironically a former colleague from the Republican side of the aisle.

Then we had 43 Senators write a letter and say they would not allow anyone to be confirmed for the position as

Director of the Consumer Federal Protection Bureau, certainly inconsistent with up-or-down votes with rare exception for issues of character.

Then there was another big effort in July of 2013, just earlier this year. We all got together in the Old Senate Chamber and we shared our frustrations and our views. Again, the promise was put forward: We will stop filibustering except under rare circumstances related to character or qualifications.

Well, that was terrific.

We had confirmation of the person who was awaiting to be Director of the Environmental Protection Agency, Gina McCarthy. We had confirmation of the person who had been waiting for a very long time as the nominee of the Labor Department, Tom Perez. We had the confirmation of the folks who had been waiting to be confirmed to the National Labor Relations Board. In fact, I think that was the first time we had all five members Senate confirmed in 10 years.

We had the Director of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, Richard Cordray was finally confirmed. Shortly thereafter, we had Samantha Powers confirmed to the United Nations, and so forth. The norm was restored but only for a couple of weeks.

Then came the nomination of MEL WATT to head the Federal Housing Finance Agency. Suddenly the commitment for up-or-down votes disappeared. Then we had a whole new strategy on the judiciary. This strategy had never been experienced in U.S. history. It was: No matter whom President Obama nominates for the DC Circuit Court, we are going to block that nominee because we only want to leave in place the nominees that were put in place by President Bush.

That is in direct contravention of the vision of the Constitution where each President as elected has the power to nominate. This Chamber is a check. It gets to vote up or down and decide whether they should be in office. But this was a deliberate strategy to pack the Court, to say that when a President of my party is in power, there will be up-or-down votes, as was insisted in 2005 when the tables were turned, but when the President is of the other party, we are going to have a perpetual campaign and we are going to block up-or-down votes.

Let's picture down the road and the new President is a Republican President. Is there truly any Member here who would say, from the Republican side, that when the Republican President is in place, they were still going to believe they should not fill vacancies on key courts around this country?

It is too bad this campaign of paralysis has been allowed to go on so long. We should have acted long before to fulfil our responsibility to have a deliberative body because that is what legislation is. It is doing enormous damage to the United States of America. First, because of the paralysis, we are not doing the work we should be on legislation. We are not addressing the big issues facing America. There are all kinds of job creation bills that have not been able to get to this floor because they have not been able to get through the gauntlet of paralyzing filibusters that have been laid down.

Americans actually want to work. Americans want to have living-wage jobs. They expect us to act, to make that happen, not to paralyze this institution so it is unable to do so. Indeed, in addition, we are damaging the view of the United States around the world because it used to be the world looked to the United States and said: Look how well their Congress works. They had this Great Depression. They took on and fixed all kinds of flaws in their financial system. They established insurance for bank accounts so there would not be runs on the banks. They replaced a flawed mortgage strategy, which involved callable balloon mortgages, with noncallable fully amortizing mortgages so we did not create a series of dominoes.

They took and created organizations, the Securities and Exchange Commission, to oversee stock markets so folks could have faith, invest in stocks, and put their capital in knowing there was a very good chance that capital would be well utilized because there were accounting standards and qualifications that block predatory practices on Wall Street.

The world saw the U.S. respond to World War II and convert our economy through enormous amounts of legislation in a single year to apply it to the war effort and take on the big challenge of defeating the Nazis.

Then the world saw America use its legislative power to build the largest middle class the world has ever seen. Those living wage jobs, every one of them means a foundation for a family. If we want to talk family values, then fight to have this body, this Senate, work on legislation that creates living-wage jobs. Quit paralyzing the Senate.

Then we have, of course, the fact of this new strategy in these recent months, a deliberate attack on the balance of powers. The Constitution envisioned three branches in balance. It has no hint of any kind that a minority of one branch should be able to undermine the operation of the other two branches. Some colleagues have seized upon a strategy of trying to undermine the integrity of our judiciary. Some colleagues have seized on a strategy of trying to undermine the capability of the elected executive branch, the President and his executive branch.

Read your history—balance of powers, not the ability of the minority or one branch to undermine the success of the other two branches. We need these three branches each doing their assigned roles.

We are at this point after this long set of strategies of paralysis, on motions to proceed, on legislation, on conference committees, on executive branch nominees, on judicial nominees. We have taken the first step toward restoring the function of the Senate, and we have said we should return to the notion of up-and-down votes as envisioned under advise and consent. This is as envisioned by Alexander Hamilton and the other Founders who railed against the notion that a minority would be able to block the will of a majority in the Chamber.

We have done that with nominations. In a continuation of a strategy of paralysis, we are here tonight rather than having voted much earlier in the day. Instead of working on legislation that would create jobs, we are standing here through a series of nominations as the minority insists on wasting the valuable commodity of time in this Chamber.

I hope my colleagues who are intent upon creating this huge imbalance between the branches will reconsider, that they will decide they want to see this Chamber become what it was when I was first here in the 1970s and when I worked for Congress in the 1980s, a great deliberative body. What it was when we took on the Great Depression, what it was when we took on World War II, what it was when we built the great middle class, this is what the United States wants to see. May we make it so.

Thank you, Mr. President.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, tonight we will vote on the nomination of Nina Pillard to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the DC Circuit. On Tuesday, we were finally able to invoke cloture on her nomination, after it had been unjustifiably filibustered by Senate Republicans for nearly 3 months after being favorably voted out of the Senate Judiciary Committee. The DC Circuit is often considered to be the second most important court in the Nation and should be operating at full strength. We are finally taking another step towards making this Court operate at full strength for the American people.

Nina Pillard is an accomplished litigator whose work includes 9 Supreme Court oral arguments, and briefs in more than 25 Supreme Court cases. She drafted the Federal Government's brief in United States v. Virginia, which after a 7 to 1 decision by the Supreme Court made history by opening the Virginia Military Institute's doors to female students and expanded educational opportunity for women across the country. Since then, hundreds of women have had the opportunity to attend VMI and go on to serve our country.

She has not only stood up for equal opportunities for women, but for men as well. In Nevada v. Hibbs, Ms. Pillard successfully represented a male employee of the State of Nevada who was fired when he tried to take unpaid leave under the Family Medical Leave Act to care for his sick wife. In a 6 to 3 opinion authored by then-Chief Justice William Rehnquist, the Supreme Court ruled for her client, recognizing

that the law protects both men and women in their caregiving roles within the family.

She has also worked at the Department of Justice as the Deputy Assistant Attorney General in the Office of Legal Counsel, an office that advises on the most complex constitutional issues facing the executive branch. And prior to that, Ms. Pillard litigated numerous civil rights cases as an assistant counsel at the NAACP Legal Defense & Educational Fund. At Georgetown Law, Ms. Pillard teaches advanced courses on constitutional law and civil procedure, and co-directs the law school's Supreme Court Institute. She has earned the American Bar Association's highest possible ranking—Unanimously Well Qualified—to serve as a Federal appellate judge on the DC Circuit.

Today, however, I have heard some unfortunate and unfair attacks on this fine woman. I have heard comments that she would be ''the most left wing judge'' in U.S. history; that she has extreme views on abortion and religious liberty; and that she would ''rubber stamp'' the most radical legislative and regulatory proposals. One might expect these outrageous accusations to come from right wing fringe groups, but to hear some of these outlandish accusations on the Senate floor is unfortunate.

So let me clear the record. Nina Pillard is one of the finest nominees we have had before this body. On the issue of abortion, Republicans have cherry picked quotes and taken them out of context to try to paint her as someone she is not. The truth is that taken as a whole, her writings have focused on bridging the gap between pro-life and pro-choice advocates by ''finding common ground for ways to reduce reliance on abortion.''

More importantly, I cannot ignore the double standard of certain Senators on the issue of abortion. In 2002, the Senate unanimously confirmed President Bush's nomination of Michael McConnell to the Tenth Circuit by voice vote. Professor McConnell argued that Roe v. Wade was wrongly decided and urged the Supreme Court to overturn it. He applauded a Federal judge for refusing to convict anti-abortion protestors, even though they had clearly violated the law, because of his sympathetic reading of the defendants' motives.

Similarly, in 2002, the Senate confirmed William Pryor to the Eleventh Circuit, even though he called Roe v. Wade the ''worst abomination in the history of constitutional law.'' Another President Bush nominee, J. Leon Holmes, was confirmed to the Federal district court in Arkansas, even though he had argued that abortion should be banned even in case of rape because pregnancy from rape is as uncommon as ''snowfall in Miami.'' He had also written that wives should be submissive to their husbands. He was not filibustered. He was confirmed.

Each of these judicial nominees stated under oath in testimony before the Senate Judiciary Committee that they could set aside their personal beliefs and would interpret the law consistent with the Constitution and Supreme Court precedent. They were confirmed. Nina Pillard testified under the same oath that, ''A judge's opinions and views should have no role in interpreting the Constitution.'' Are we to believe that only judicial nominees who do not support a woman's access to abortion services are able to set aside their personal views to be fair and impartial judges? I cannot help but notice the glaring double standard that is imposed on Nina Pillard.

On the issue of religious liberty, Senate Republicans continue to misrepresent comments Ms. Pillard made about the possible outcome of a Supreme Court case to suggest she is hostile to religious freedom. In a 2011 briefing to educate the press on legal issues in Hosanna Tabor v. EEOC, she described the issue in the case, identified what was difficult about it, and offered a prediction of how the Court might resolve it. Her prediction turned out to be wrong.

If Senators, who have also sworn to uphold the Constitution, were held accountable every time they incorrectly predicted the outcome of a Supreme Court case, I am not sure how many of us would be left. Ultimately, she has testified that if confirmed she would uphold the Supreme Court's precedent on the issue.

The suggestion that Ms. Pillard will be ''the most left-wing judge in the history'' is simply outlandish hyperbole, as demonstrated by the bipartisan support she has received. Viet Dinh, the former Assistant Attorney General for the Office of Legal Policy under President George W. Bush, wrote in a letter of support for her nomination that ''Based on our long and varied professional experience together, I know that Professor Pillard is exceptionally bright, a patient and unbiased listener, and a lawyer of great judgment and unquestioned integrity. . . Nina has always been fair, reasonable, and sensible in her judgments. . . She is a fair-minded thinker with enormous respect for the law and for the limited, and essential, role of the federal appellate judge—qualities that make her well prepared to take on the work of a D.C. Federal Judge.''

Former FBI Director and Chief Judge of the Western District of Texas William Sessions has written that her ''rare combination of experience, both defending and advising government officials, and representing individuals seeking to vindicate their rights, would be especially valuable in informing her responsibilities as a judge.''

Nina Pillard has also received letters of support from 30 former members of the U.S. Armed Forces, including 8 retired generals; 25 former Federal prosecutors and other law enforcement officials; 40 Supreme Court practitioners, including Laurence Tribe and Carter Phillips, among many others.

Despite having filled nearly half of law school classrooms for the last 20 years, women are grossly underrepresented on our Federal courts. We need women on the Federal bench. A vote to end this filibuster is a vote to break yet another barrier and move in the historic direction of having our Federal appellate courts more accurately reflect the gender balance of the country.

I commend President Obama on his nominations of highly qualified women like Nina Pillard, Patricia Millett, Elena Kagan and Sonia Sotomayor. In each of these women, the Senate has had the opportunity to vote to confirm women practicing at the pinnacle of the legal profession. Once the Senate confirmed Justice Kagan, the highest court in the land had more women than ever before serving on its bench. With the confirmation and appointment of Nina Pillard, the same will be true for what many consider to be the second highest court in the land, the DC Circuit because she will be the fifth active female judge on the court. Never before have five women jurists actively served on that court at one time. I look forward to that moment and to further increasing the diversity of our Federal bench.

I urge my colleagues to vote to confirm this outstanding nominee. This Nation would be better off for Nina Pillard serving as a judge on the DC Circuit.

Today, the Senate will also vote on the nominations of Elizabeth A. Wolford, of New York, to be U.S. District Judge for the Western District of New York; Landya B. McCafferty, of New Hampshire, to be U.S. District Judge for the District of New Hampshire; Brian Morris, of Montana, to be U.S. District Judge for the District of Montana; and Susan P. Watters, of Montana, to be U.S. District Judge for the District of Montana.

Senate Republicans have continued to abuse the filibuster and required cloture to confirm all four of these noncontroversial district court nominees. All four of these nominees were reported unanimously by voice vote from the Senate Judiciary Committee. They all have the support of their home State senators. With the filibuster of these four district court nominees, Senate Republicans have now filibustered 24 of President Obama's district court nominees. Not a single district court nominee was filibustered under President Bush's 8 years in office. I hope Senate Republicans come around so that we can work together to meet the needs of our Federal judiciary so that the American people can have the justice system they deserve.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Carolina.

Mr. SCOTT. To change the rules our friends on the left had to break the rules. We are here tonight because the Obama administration and our friends on the left needed a distraction by invoking the nuclear option leading up to the vote on Nina Pillard of the DC Circuit. They are attempting to quiet a disaster of their own making.

Please note that this is a court that will hear the ACA disputes. It was easy enough for them to paint a rosy picture of life after ObamaCare. For 3 years they did it, and they did their best to do so, but words could only go so far and no speech will help the failed implementation of the monster they have created.

Health care premiums for the average American family have already gone up by $2,500 since ObamaCare has become law. I wish to say that one more time. The average premium that an American family will have to face and then pay is $2,500.

As costs continue to rise for middle-class Americans, the median household income has dropped by more than $3,600 under President Obama. If we take $2,500 and add in the drop of income of $3,600, the difference for the average American household under President Obama's watch is significant. That doesn't even take into consideration the skyrocketing costs and the increasing deductibles under ObamaCare.

According to the Wall Street Journal, the average individual deductible for what is called a Bronze plan on the exchange, the lowest-priced coverage is a $5,000 average deductible. This is 42 percent higher than the average deductible today of $3,589 one would currently purchase in 2013.

Tell me how this helps those in need. How does this help the most vulnerable in our society? The answer is simple. It doesn't.

We are here because Democrats need a break from having this pointed out to them again and again as newspapers, magazines, and TV stations have been doing for the last several weeks.

In South Carolina we have about 4.7 million people and 600,000 or 700,000 folks do not have health insurance coverage. Think about that. There are 4.7 million South Carolinians, of which about 700,000 today do not have health insurance.

Under ObamaCare, we would hope that the number would go down, not up, that it would go down from 700,000 to 600,000 or 500,000 or 400,000. Over 430,000 of the 700,000 people are eligible for ObamaCare. The number is not going down. The number is going up because 150,000 South Carolinians have received cancellation notices.

Let us frame that a little bit. We have 700,000 uninsured, of which 430,000 are eligible for ObamaCare. Instead of seeing the number of uninsured go from 700,000 down to 600,000 or 500,000 or 400,000, we have seen the number go up because 150,000 people have received cancellation notices—150,000 South Carolinians have received cancellation notices.

Someone would obviously ask the question: How many folks have signed up for ObamaCare in South Carolina?

If 430,000 South Carolinians are eligible to sign up, we ought to answer the question of how many have signed up.

As of late November, only 600 South Carolinians have successfully signed up for ObamaCare. This means that under the implementation process of what some consider the solution to America's woes on health insurance, only 600 South Carolinians have been able to successfully sign up for ObamaCare, even though 430,000 are eligible and 700,00 do not have insurance. Only 600 of them have been able to sign up for ObamaCare.

When we think about those numbers, it reminds me of the challenges we face with going through the process of seeing the DC Circuit Court stacked to hear the disputes.

Part of the challenge we see is that ObamaCare hasn't worked, so stacking the court seems that it is the most likely option for our friends on the left.

When we started out having these conversations about ObamaCare, we started a conversation about those who are uninsured. I think every American in our country wants to see greater access to health insurance.

The vast majority of Americans do not want to see the government take it over, and now we understand why. In 2009—not 1999, but 2009—we had estimated for the unaffordable care act around $900 billion. In 2011 they came back and said: Wait, wait, I need to take another look at this.

The estimate came back at $1.8 trillion. In 2009, it was $900 billion and in 2011 the number had already increased to $1.8 trillion or a 100-percent increase in the estimated cost of the Affordable Care Act.

Only 2 more years later we could see that the number could perhaps eclipse $3 trillion. All we are talking about is the up-front pricetag, the price of ObamaCare on the front. We haven't delved into the actual cost of ObamaCare because those estimates say that on the back end of the Affordable Care Act we are going to see a $7 trillion increase or addition to our debt.

We started in 2009 with $900 billion; in 2011, $1.8 trillion; in 2013, perhaps over $3 trillion, adding $7 trillion to the deficit. That is not the whole picture.

Families in South Carolina still have to struggle with finding access to affordable health care, and ObamaCare is not simply providing the access. We see families such as the Hucks, the everyday American family. Mr. Hucks loves his family. He is in Greenville, SC. He loves his family. He spends 12 to 14 hours a day working as a financial adviser in South Carolina.

Mr. Hucks, unfortunately, faces the challenge of buying health insurance through ObamaCare. As he went through the process of trying to figure out what would happen—certainly he liked his coverage, but, of course, he can't keep it, period. He can't keep it. He cannot keep his coverage.

As I was talking to Jason Hucks in Greenville 2 weeks ago, Jason currently has a Blue Cross Blue Shield high-deductible plan. Remember the word ''deductible'' because we will come back and have a conversation about deductibles. He has a high-deductible plan that covers him, his wife, and their two cute little boys.

Instead of having a conversation between Mr. and Mrs. Hucks about planning for the college education of those two fine young men, they are having instead a conversation about whether they can afford the health care coverage.

What has happened? Let us take a look. Their current plan was a $10,000 deductible that cost them over $415 a month.

To stay on the Blue Cross Blue Shield plan under ObamaCare, Mr. Hucks and his family would have to pay nearly $1,000 a month—$895—almost $1,000 a month, more than doubling the premium. They will see their deductible increase by 150 percent.

A deductible that was $10,000 is pretty high, significantly high. It will go to $25,000 for this young family of four. That doesn't seem right to me; it doesn't seem fair.

We believe in fairness. For those who are most vulnerable, having access to $25,000 before their health insurance company is able to start paying is quite a high price to pay. Digging into your savings account for $25,000—because ObamaCare takes their $10,000 deductible, and not the $15,000, not the $20,000, but the $25,000—is simply not fair. This is not how we treat the most vulnerable in our society, by seeing their deductible go up by 150 percent. I simply don't understand. It is just wrong. It is not right.

Even if they were willing to switch companies, he would still see his rates rise almost 75 percent and his deductible would still rise from $10,000 to $12,000. No wonder they are trying to stack the DC courts. We see here a young family not planning for a 529 plan, not planning to send their kids to Clinton University or the University of South Carolina, but instead they are planning on tightening their belts because they have to have a budget that plans for not a $10,000 deductible but a $12,000 deductible, with a 20-percent increase in the deductible and a 75-percent increase in the cost. This is the effect of the Affordable Care Act. It becomes unaffordable for the average American family.

As for a plan with copays, Mr. Hucks says flatly that he can't afford to have a conversation about copays because a plan with a copay would skyrocket his premiums from $415 or so to as high as $1,200 or $1,500 a month. So instead of being able to go see a doctor and have a conversation and pay a 20-percent copay, instead of having the opportunity to do what many of us have been doing for the last decade-plus—pay a $15 or $20 or $25 or $30 copay when you go see your doctor—he has to first satisfy a deductible of not $15,000 but now a $25,000 deductible. This is higher than $15,000. This is wrong. It is not right.

Mr. Hucks' family is an example of how it is not just premiums that are

rising but deductibles are going through the roof. This is painful for a family who should be planning for college but instead is planning to spend more money on their health care because the Affordable Care Act is so unaffordable.

The New York Times recently quoted someone faced with this problem as saying the deductibles were so high—$4,000 to $6,000 a year—that it very much defeats the purpose of having insurance. I wonder why we say that. Well, think about it for a minute or two. Think about a family who has a $4,000 deductible. What does that mean to the average family, where Americans are spending over 100 percent of their income? What that means to the average family is they have to figure out how to pay $4,000 for visiting their doctors, getting their x rays, and having everything done at the doctor's office, getting their blood work done, before they can satisfy that $4,000 deductible and their health insurance plan starts paying. Under ObamaCare, one would think that number would go down, but it doesn't. It goes up. As a matter of fact, it goes up quickly in the first year of ObamaCare. It goes from an average out-of-pocket expense of $63.50 to over $12,000—not $4,000, not $5,000, not $6,000 but over $12,000 in out-of-pocket expenses.

So I am looking forward to the day we have a serious conversation about a free market solution that would reduce the cost of health insurance and at the exact same time create greater access for the average person in America to afford a free market health insurance policy. That is where we need to go. That is where the conversation should be. Instead of having that conversation, we are having a conversation about deductibles jumping $5,000, out-of-pocket expenses going up significantly. And I should have said that when you combine the out-of-pocket expenses and the deductibles, the out-of-pocket total for a year is the $12,000. The average deductible is a little over $5,000.

We are talking about a significant taking from the average American family—taking their money out of their pockets in the form of deductibles, taking money out of their pockets in the form of copays. And God forbid they actually go outside of the network. In many of these plans, we are talking about zero coverage out of network for ambulatory care. A family would bear 100 percent of the cost. So don't travel to the wrong place with the wrong plan at the wrong time. You will find yourself stuck without benefits because, unfortunately, the ACA isn't affordable for most Americans. I find that sad.

We think we are having a conversation about nominees here today, and we think we are having a conversation about nominees because President Obama has somehow, some way been treated differently than President Bush and other folks. But the facts are simply inconsistent with the reality of the alternate universe that has been created by the left.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. All postcloture time has expired.

The majority leader.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, we are going to have a confirmation vote on Cornelia Pillard. That will be the first vote. Then we are going to have—I don't believe there will be a need for a rollcall vote on the quorum. I think there will be enough Senators here that the Chair will be able to see clearly there are 51 Senators here. Then we will have a cloture on Executive Calendar No. 378, Chai Rachel Feldblum of the District of Columbia to be a member of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Then, Mr. President, the next vote will be tomorrow morning at 9 a.m. This morning, yes; I am sorry.

We are going to do everything we can to finish our schedule before Christmas, but it is going to be pushing it. We will do our best. But this session doesn't end until the end of the year, so we are going to continue working until we get our work done. I am not going to yield back all of our time on all of our nominations. We are going to do those piece by piece.

I hope the body has been able to understand what a waste of time this has been, but we are going to confirm these nominations, and that is a step in the right direction.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the nomination of Cornelia T.L. Pillard, of the District of Columbia, to be United States Circuit Judge for the District of Columbia Circuit.

Mr. COATS. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk called the roll.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. BALDWIN). Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Delaware (Mr. CARPER) is necessarily absent.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Georgia (Mr. CHAMBLISS), the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. COBURN), the Senator from Illinois (Mr. KIRK), and the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MORAN).

The result was announced—yeas 51, nays 44, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 256 Ex.]

YEAS—51

Baldwin	Casey	Hirono
Baucus	Coons	Johnson (SD)
Begich	Durbin	Kaine
Bennet	Feinstein	King
Blumenthal	Franken	Klobuchar
Booker	Gillibrand	Landrieu
Boxer	Hagan	Leahy
Brown	Harkin	Levin
Cantwell	Heinrich	Markey
Cardin	Heitkamp	McCaskill
Menendez	Reid	Tester
Merkley	Rockefeller	Udall (CO)
Mikulski	Sanders	Udall (NM)
Murphy	Schatz	Warner
Murray	Schumer	Warren
Nelson	Shaheen	Whitehouse
Reed	Stabenow	Wyden

NAYS—44

Alexander	Fischer	Murkowski
Ayotte	Flake	Paul
Barrasso	Graham	Portman
Blunt	Grassley	Pryor
Boozman	Hatch	Risch
Burr	Heller	Roberts
Coats	Hoeven	Rubio
Cochran	Inhofe	Scott
Collins	Isakson	Sessions
Corker	Johanns	Shelby
Cornyn	Johnson (WI)	Thune
Crapo	Lee	Toomey
Cruz	Manchin	Vitter
Donnelly	McCain	Wicker
Enzi	McConnell	

NOT VOTING—5

Carper	Coburn	Moran
Chambliss	Kirk	

The nomination was confirmed.

MESSAGE FROM THE HOUSE

At 4:23 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mrs. Cole, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has passed the following bills, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H.R. 1402. An act to amend title 38, United States Code, to extend certain expiring provisions of law, and for other purposes.

H.R. 3521. An act to authorize Department of Veterans Affairs major medical facility leases, and for other purposes.

MEASURES PLACED ON THE CALENDAR

The following bill was read the second time, and placed on the calendar:

S. 1797. A bill to provide for the extension of certain unemployment benefits, and for other purposes.

EXECUTIVE REPORT OF COMMITTEE

The following executive report of a nomination was submitted on December 11, 2013:

By Mr. CARPER for the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

*Alejandro Nicholas Mayorkas, of the District of Columbia, to be Deputy Secretary of Homeland Security.

*Nomination was reported with recommendation that it be confirmed subject to the nominee's commitment to respond to requests to appear and testify before any duly constituted committee of the Senate.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

The following bills and joint resolutions were introduced, read the first and second times by unanimous consent, and referred as indicated:

By Mr. COONS (for himself, Mr. BLUNT, Mr. SESSIONS, and Ms. HIRONO):

S. 1799. A bill to reauthorize subtitle A of the Victims of Child Abuse Act of 1990; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. BARRASSO (for himself and Mr. SCHATZ):

S. 1800. A bill to require the Secretary of the Interior to submit to Congress a report on the efforts of the Bureau of Reclamation to manage its infrastructure assets; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

By Mr. MERKLEY (for himself and Ms. BALDWIN):

S. 1801. A bill to amend the Tariff Act of 1930 to include in the calculation of normal value the cost of paying adequate wages and maintaining sustainable production methods, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. DONNELLY (for himself, Mr. INHOFE, Mr. LEAHY, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, Ms. HEITKAMP, Mr. COATS, Ms. COLLINS, and Mr. BLUNT):

S. 1802. A bill to provide equal treatment for utility special entities using utility operations-related swaps, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

By Mr. DURBIN (for himself, Ms. WARREN, Mrs. BOXER, and Mr. REED):

S. 1803. A bill to require certain protections for student loan borrowers, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. TESTER (for himself and Mr. BEGICH):

S. 1804. A bill to amend title 49, United States Code, to direct the Assistant Secretary of Homeland Security (Transportation Security Administration) to establish an Aviation Security Advisory Committee, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

By Mr. LEAHY (for himself, Mr. COCHRAN, and Mr. REED):

S.J. Res. 28. A joint resolution providing for the appointment of John Fahey as a citizen regent of the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution; to the Committee on Rules and Administration.

By Mr. LEAHY (for himself, Mr. COCHRAN, and Mr. REED):

S.J. Res. 29. A joint resolution providing for the appointment of Risa Lavizzo-Mourey as a citizen regent of the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution; to the Committee on Rules and Administration.

SUBMISSION OF CONCURRENT AND SENATE RESOLUTIONS

The following concurrent resolutions and Senate resolutions were read, and referred (or acted upon), as indicated:

By Mr. SESSIONS (for himself and Mrs. SHAHEEN):

S. Res. 317. A resolution expressing the sense of the Senate on the continuing relationship between the United States and Georgia; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

By Mr. DURBIN (for himself, Mr. ENZI, and Mr. MURPHY):

S. Res. 318. A resolution expressing the sense of the Senate regarding the critical need for political reform in Bangladesh, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

ADDITIONAL COSPONSORS

S. 38

At the request of Mrs. SHAHEEN, the name of the Senator from Washington (Mrs. MURRAY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 38, a bill to amend title 28, United States Code, to prohibit the exclusion of individuals from service on a Federal jury on account of sexual orientation or gender identity.

S. 209

At the request of Mr. PAUL, the name of the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MORAN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 209, a bill to require a full audit of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System and the Federal reserve banks by the Comptroller General of the United States, and for other purposes.

S. 489

At the request of Mr. THUNE, the name of the Senator from Hawaii (Ms. HIRONO) was added as a cosponsor of S. 489, a bill to amend the Tariff Act of 1930 to increase and adjust for inflation the maximum value of articles that may be imported duty-free by one person on one day, and for other purposes.

S. 635

At the request of Mr. BROWN, the name of the Senator from California (Mrs. BOXER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 635, a bill to amend the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act to provide an exception to the annual written privacy notice requirement.

S. 636

At the request of Mr. MENENDEZ, the name of the Senator from Florida (Mr. NELSON) was added as a cosponsor of S. 636, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to allow certain hospitals in Puerto Rico to qualify for incentives for adoption and meaningful use of certified EHR Technology under the Medicare program.

S. 862

At the request of Ms. AYOTTE, the name of the Senator from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 862, a bill to amend section 5000A of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide an additional religious exemption from the individual health coverage mandate.

S. 878

At the request of Mr. FRANKEN, the name of the Senator from Massachusetts (Mr. MARKEY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 878, a bill to amend title 9 of the United States Code with respect to arbitration.

S. 947

At the request of Mrs. HAGAN, the names of the Senator from Idaho (Mr. CRAPO) and the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. JOHNSON) were added as cosponsors of S. 947, a bill to ensure access to certain information for financial services industry regulators, and for other purposes.

S. 1011

At the request of Mr. JOHANNS, the name of the Senator from Rhode Island (Mr. WHITEHOUSE) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1011, a bill to require the Secretary of the Treasury to mint coins in commemoration of the centennial of Boys Town, and for other purposes.

S. 1069

At the request of Mrs. GILLIBRAND, the name of the Senator from Wisconsin (Ms. BALDWIN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1069, a bill to prohibit discrimination in adoption or foster care placements based on the sexual orientation, gender identity, or marital status of any prospective adoptive or foster parent, or the sexual orientation or gender identity of the child involved.

S. 1114

At the request of Mr. BROWN, the name of the Senator from West Virginia (Mr. MANCHIN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1114, a bill to provide for identification of misaligned currency, require action to correct the misalignment, and for other purposes.

S. 1187

At the request of Ms. STABENOW, the name of the Senator from Rhode Island (Mr. REED) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1187, a bill to prevent homeowners from being forced to pay taxes on forgiven mortgage loan debt.

S. 1217

At the request of Mr. CORKER, the name of the Senator from Alaska (Mr. BEGICH) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1217, a bill to provide secondary mortgage market reform, and for other purposes.

S. 1235

At the request of Mr. WYDEN, the name of the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. BURR) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1235, a bill to restrict any State or local jurisdiction from imposing a new discriminatory tax on cell phone services, providers, or property.

S. 1271

At the request of Mr. RUBIO, the name of the Senator from Delaware (Mr. COONS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1271, a bill to direct the President to establish guidelines for the United States foreign assistance programs, and for other purposes.

S. 1302

At the request of Mr. HARKIN, the name of the Senator from Colorado (Mr. UDALL) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1302, a bill to amend the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 and the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide for cooperative and small employer charity pension plans.

S. 1417

At the request of Mrs. HAGAN, the name of the Senator from Minnesota (Mr. FRANKEN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1417, a bill to amend the Public Health Service Act to reauthorize programs under part A of title XI of such Act.

S. 1419

At the request of Mr. WYDEN, the name of the Senator from Hawaii (Mr. SCHATZ) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1419, a bill to promote research, development, and demonstration of marine and hydrokinetic renewable energy technologies, and for other purposes.

S. 1510

At the request of Mr. COBURN, the name of the Senator from Florida (Mr. NELSON) was added as a cosponsor of S.

1510, a bill to provide for auditable financial statements for the Department of Defense, and for other purposes.

S. 1622

At the request of Ms. HEITKAMP, the names of the Senator from Washington (Mrs. MURRAY) and the Senator from Montana (Mr. BAUCUS) were added as cosponsors of S. 1622, a bill to establish the Alyce Spotted Bear and Walter Soboleff Commission on Native Children, and for other purposes.

S. 1659

At the request of Mr. DURBIN, the name of the Senator from Rhode Island (Mr. REED) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1659, a bill to amend the Higher Education Act of 1965 regarding proprietary institutions of higher education in order to protect students and taxpayers.

S. 1690

At the request of Mr. LEAHY, the name of the Senator from Maine (Mr. KING) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1690, a bill to reauthorize the Second Chance Act of 2007.

S. 1708

At the request of Mr. MERKLEY, the names of the Senator from Massachusetts (Mr. MARKEY), the Senator from Minnesota (Mr. FRANKEN) and the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS) were added as cosponsors of S. 1708, a bill to amend title 23, United States Code, with respect to the establishment of performance measures for the highway safety improvement program, and for other purposes.

S. 1712

At the request of Mr. HATCH, the name of the Senator from Indiana (Mr. COATS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1712, a bill to provide protections for workers with respect to their right to select or refrain from selecting representation by a labor organization.

S. 1725

At the request of Mr. VITTER, the name of the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. COCHRAN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1725, a bill to amend the Securities Investor Protection Act of 1970 to confirm that a customer's net equity claim is based on the customer's last statement and that certain recoveries are prohibited, to change how trustees are appointed, and for other purposes.

S. 1735

At the request of Mr. ALEXANDER, the name of the Senator from Indiana (Mr. COATS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1735, a bill to amend the Public Health Service Act, the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974, and the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to exclude from the definition of health insurance coverage certain medical stop-loss insurance obtained by certain plan sponsors of group health plans.

S. 1739

At the request of Mr. HOEVEN, the name of the Senator from Wisconsin (Mr. JOHNSON) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1739, a bill to modify the efficiency standards for grid-enabled water heaters.

S. 1740

At the request of Ms. LANDRIEU, the name of the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. INHOFE) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1740, a bill to authorize Department of Veterans Affairs major medical facility leases, and for other purposes.

S. 1747

At the request of Mr. REED, the names of the Senator from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) and the Senator from Delaware (Mr. COONS) were added as cosponsors of S. 1747, a bill to provide for the extension of certain unemployment benefits, and for other purposes.

S. 1797

At the request of Mr. REED, the names of the Senator from Ohio (Mr. BROWN), the Senator from Rhode Island (Mr. WHITEHOUSE) and the Senator from Delaware (Mr. COONS) were added as cosponsors of S. 1797, a bill to provide for the extension of certain unemployment benefits, and for other purposes.

S. RES. 299

At the request of Mr. SCHUMER, the names of the Senator from Nebraska (Mr. JOHANNS) and the Senator from Florida (Mr. RUBIO) were added as cosponsors of S. Res. 299, a resolution congratulating the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee on the celebration of its 100th anniversary and commending its significant contribution to empower and revitalize developing communities around the world.

AMENDMENT NO. 2155

At the request of Mr. COBURN, the name of the Senator from Ohio (Mr. PORTMAN) was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 2155 intended to be proposed to S. 1197, an original bill to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2014 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 2244

At the request of Mr. HEINRICH, the names of the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. PRYOR) and the Senator from Ohio (Mr. PORTMAN) were added as cosponsors of amendment No. 2244 intended to be proposed to S. 1197, an original bill to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2014 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 2365

At the request of Mr. MORAN, the name of the Senator from Delaware (Mr. CARPER) was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 2365 intended to be proposed to S. 1197, an original bill to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2014 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes.

STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

By Mr. DURBIN (for himself, Ms. WARREN, Mrs. BOXER, and Mr. REED):

S. 1803. A bill to require certain protections for student loan borrowers, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the text of the bill be printed in the RECORD.

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

S. 1803

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the ''Student Loan Borrower Bill of Rights''.

SEC. 2. TRUTH IN LENDING ACT AMENDMENTS.

The Truth in Lending Act (15 U.S.C. 1601 et seq.) is amended—

(1) in section 128 (15 U.S.C. 1638)—

(A) in subsection (e)—

(i) in paragraph (1)(O), by striking ''paragraph (6)'' and inserting ''paragraph (9)'';

(ii) in paragraph (2)(L), by striking ''paragraph (6)'' and inserting ''paragraph (9)'';

(iii) in paragraph (4)(C), by striking ''paragraph (7)'' and inserting ''paragraph (10)'';

(iv) by redesignating paragraphs (5) through (11) as paragraphs (8) through (14), respectively;

(v) by inserting after paragraph (4) the following:

''(5) DISCLOSURES BEFORE FIRST FULLY AMORTIZED PAYMENT.—Not fewer than 30 days and not more than 150 days before the first fully amortized payment on a private education loan is due from the borrower, the private educational lender shall disclose to the borrower, clearly and conspicuously—

''(A) the information described in—

''(i) paragraph (2)(A) (adjusted, as necessary, for the rate of interest in effect on the date the first fully amortized payment on a private education loan is due);

''(ii) subparagraphs (B) through (G) of paragraph (2);

''(iii) paragraph (2)(H) (adjusted, as necessary, for the rate of interest in effect on the date the first fully amortized payment on a private education loan is due);

''(iv) paragraph (2)(K); and

''(v) subparagraphs (O) and (P) of paragraph (2);

''(B) the scheduled date upon which the first fully amortized payment is due;

''(C) the name of the lender and servicer, and the address to which communications and payments should be sent including a telephone number and website where the borrower may obtain additional information;

''(D) a description of alternative repayment plans, including loan consolidation or refinancing, and servicemember or veteran benefits under the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (50 U.S.C. App. 501 et seq.) or other Federal or State law related to private education loans; and

''(E) a statement that a Servicemember and Veterans Liaison designated under paragraph (15)(F) is available to answer inquiries about servicemember and veteran benefits related to private education loans, including the toll-free telephone number to contact the Liaison pursuant to paragraph (15)(F).

''(6) DISCLOSURES WHEN BORROWER IS 30 DAYS DELINQUENT.—Not fewer than 5 days after a borrower becomes 30 days delinquent on a private education loan, the private educational lender shall disclose to the borrower, clearly and conspicuously—

''(A) the date on which the loan will be charged-off (as defined in paragraph (15)(A)) or assigned to collections, including the consequences of such charge-off or assignment to collections, if no payment is made;

''(B) the minimum payment that the borrower must make to avoid the loan being charged off (as defined in paragraph (15)(A)) or assigned to collection, and the minimum payment that the borrower must make to bring the loan current;

''(C) a statement informing the borrower that a payment of less than the minimum payment described in subparagraph (B) could result in the loan being charged off (as defined in paragraph (15)(A)) or assigned to collection; and

''(D) a statement that a Servicemember and Veterans Liaison designated under paragraph (15)(F) is available to answer inquiries about servicemember and veteran benefits related to private education loans, including the toll-free telephone number to contact the Liaison pursuant to paragraph (15)(F).

''(7) DISCLOSURES WHEN BORROWER IS HAVING DIFFICULTY MAKING PAYMENT OR IS 60 DAYS DELINQUENT.—

''(A) IN GENERAL.—Not fewer than 5 days after a borrower notifies a private educational lender that the borrower is having difficulty making payment or a borrower becomes 60 days delinquent on a private education loan, the private educational lender shall—

''(i) complete a full review of the borrower's private education loan and make a reasonable effort to obtain the information necessary to determine—

''(I) if the borrower is eligible for an alternative repayment plan, including loan consolidation or refinancing; and

''(II) if the borrower is eligible for servicemember or veteran benefits under the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (50 U.S.C. App. 501 et seq.) or other Federal or State law related to private education loans;

''(ii) provide the borrower, in writing, in simple and understandable terms, information about alternative repayment plans and benefits for which the borrower is eligible, including all terms, conditions, and fees or costs associated with such repayment plan, pursuant to paragraph (8)(D);

''(iii) allow the borrower not less than 30 days to apply for an alternative repayment plan or benefits, if eligible; and

''(iv) notify the borrower that a Servicemember and Veterans Liaison designated under paragraph (15)(F) is available to answer inquiries about servicemember and veteran benefits related to private education loans, including the toll-free telephone number to contact the Liaison pursuant to paragraph (15)(F).

''(B) FORBEARANCE OR DEFERMENT.—If a borrower notifies the private educational lender that a long-term alternative repayment plan is not needed, the private educational lender may comply with this paragraph by providing the borrower, in writing, in simple and understandable terms, information about forbearance or deferment options, including all terms, conditions, and fees or costs associated with such options pursuant to paragraph (8)(D).

''(C) NOTIFICATION PROCESS.—

''(i) IN GENERAL.—Each private educational lender shall establish a process, in accordance subparagraph (A), for a borrower to notify the lender that—

''(I) the borrower is having difficulty making payments on a private education loan; and

''(II) a long-term alternative repayment plan is not needed.

''(ii) CONSUMER FINANCIAL PROTECTION BUREAU REQUIREMENTS.—The Director of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, in consultation with the Secretary of Education, shall promulgate rules establishing minimum standards for private educational lenders in carrying out the requirements of this paragraph and a model form for borrowers to notify private educational lenders of the information under this paragraph.'';

(vi) in paragraph (8), as redesignated by clause (iv), by adding at the end the following:

''(D) MODEL DISCLOSURE FORM FOR ALTERNATIVE REPAYMENT PLANS, FORBEARANCE, AND DEFERMENT OPTIONS.—Not later than 2 years after the date of enactment of the Student Loan Borrower Bill of Rights, the Director of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, in consultation with the Secretary of Education, shall develop and issue model forms to allow borrowers to compare alternative repayment plans, forbearance, and deferment options with the borrower's existing repayment plan with respect to a private education loan. Such forms shall include the following:

''(i) The total amount to be paid over the life of the loan.

''(ii) The total amount in interest to be paid over the life of the loan.

''(iii) The monthly payment amount.

''(iv) The expected pay-off date.

''(v) Related fees and costs.

''(vi) Eligibility requirements, and how the borrower can apply for the alternative repayment plan, forbearance, or deferment option.

''(vii) Any consequences, including the loss of eligibility for alternative repayment plans, forbearance, or deferment options.'';

(vii) in paragraph (11), as redesignated by clause (iv), by striking ''paragraph (7)'' and inserting ''paragraph (10)'';

(viii) in paragraph (14), as redesignated by clause (iv), by striking ''paragraph (5)'' and inserting ''paragraph (8)''; and

(ix) by adding at the end the following:

''(15) STUDENT LOAN BORROWER BILL OF RIGHTS.—

''(A) DEFINITIONS.—In this paragraph:

''(i) BORROWER.—The term 'borrower' means the person to whom a private education loan is extended.

''(ii) CHARGE OFF.—The term 'charge off' means charge to profit and loss, or subject to any similar action.

''(iii) PRIVATE EDUCATION LOAN.—The term 'private education loan' has the meaning given the term in section 140(a).

''(iv) SERVICER.—The term 'servicer' means the person responsible for the servicing of a private education loan, including any agent of such person or the person who makes, owns, or holds a loan if such person also services the loan.

''(v) SERVICING.—The term 'servicing' means—

''(I) receiving any scheduled periodic payments from a borrower pursuant to the terms of a private education loan;

''(II) making the payments of principal and interest and such other payments with respect to the amounts received from the borrower, as may be required pursuant to the terms of the loan; and

''(III) performing other administrative services with respect to the loan.

''(B) SALE, TRANSFER, OR ASSIGNMENT.—If the sale, other transfer, or assignment of a private education loan results in a change in the identity of the party to whom the borrower must send subsequent payments or direct any communications concerning the loan—

''(i) the transferor shall—

''(I) notify the borrower, in writing, in simple and understandable terms, not fewer than 45 days before transferring a legally enforceable right to receive payment from the borrower on such loan, of—

''(aa) the sale or other transfer;

''(bb) the identity of the transferee;

''(cc) the name and address of the party to whom subsequent payments or communications must be sent;

''(dd) the telephone numbers and websites of both the transferor and the transferee;

''(ee) the effective date of the sale, transfer, or assignment;

''(ff) the date on which the transferor servicer will stop accepting payment; and

''(gg) the date on which the transferee servicer will begin accepting payment; and

''(II) forward any payment from a borrower with respect to such private education loan to the transferee servicer, immediately upon receiving such payment, during the 60-day period beginning on the date on which the transferor servicer stops accepting payment of such private education loan; and

''(ii) the transferee shall—

''(I) notify the borrower, in writing, in simple and understandable terms, not fewer than 45 days before acquiring a legally enforceable right to receive payment from the borrower on such loan, of—

''(aa) the sale or other transfer;

''(bb) the identity of the transferee;

''(cc) the name and address of the party to whom subsequent payments or communications must be sent;

''(dd) the telephone numbers and websites of both the transferor and the transferee;

''(ee) the effective date of the sale, transfer, or assignment;

''(ff) the date on which the transferor will stop accepting payment; and

''(gg) the date on which the transferee will begin accepting payment;

''(II) accept as on-time and may not impose any late fee or finance charge for any payment from a borrower with respect to such private education loan that is forwarded from the transferor servicer during the 60-day period beginning on the date on which the transferor servicer stops accepting payment, if the transferor servicer receives such payment on or before the applicable due date, including any grace period;

''(III) provide borrowers a simple, online process for transferring existing electronic fund transfer authority; and

''(IV) honor any promotion or benefit offered to the borrower or advertised by the previous owner or transferor servicer of such private education loan.

''(C) MATERIAL CHANGE IN MAILING ADDRESS OR PROCEDURE FOR HANDLING PAYMENTS.—If a servicer makes a change in the mailing address, office, or procedures for handling payments with respect to any private education loan, and such change causes a delay in the crediting of the account of the borrower made during the 60-day period following the date on which such change took effect, the servicer may not impose any late fee or finance charge for a late payment on such private education loan.

''(D) APPLICATION OF PAYMENTS.—

''(i) IN GENERAL.—Unless otherwise directed by the borrower, upon receipt of a payment, the servicer shall apply amounts first to the interest and fees owed on the payment due date, and then to the principal balance of the private education loan bearing the highest annual percentage rate, and then to each successive interest and fees and then principal balance bearing the next highest annual percentage rate, until the payment is exhausted. A borrower may instruct

or expressly authorize the servicer to apply payments in a different manner.

''(ii) APPLICATION OF EXCESS AMOUNTS.—Unless otherwise directed by the borrower, upon receipt of a payment, the servicer shall apply amounts in excess of the minimum payment amount first to the interest and fees owed on the payment due date, and then to the principal balance of the private education loan balance bearing the highest annual percentage rate, and then to each successive interest and fees and principal balance bearing the next highest annual percentage rate, until the payment is exhausted. A borrower may instruct or expressly authorize the servicer to apply such excess payments in a different manner.

''(iii) APPLY PAYMENT ON DATE RECEIVED.—Unless otherwise directed by the borrower, a servicer shall apply payments to a borrower's account on the date the payment is received.

''(iv) PROMULGATION OF RULES.—The Director of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, in consultation with the Secretary of Education, may promulgate rules for the application of payments that—

''(I) minimizes the amount of fees and interest incurred by the borrower and the total loan amount paid by the borrower;

''(II) minimizes delinquencies, assignments to collection, and charge-offs;

''(III) requires servicers to apply payments on the date received; and

''(IV) allows the borrower to instruct the servicer to apply payments in a manner preferred by the borrower.

''(E) REHABILITATION OF LOANS.—If a borrower successfully and voluntarily makes 9 payments within 20 days of the due date during 10 consecutive months of amounts owed on a private education loan, or otherwise brings a private education loan current after the loan is charged-off, the loan shall be considered rehabilitated, and the lender or servicer shall request that any consumer reporting agency to which the charge-off was reported remove the delinquency that led to the charge-off and the charge-off from the borrower's credit history.

''(F) SERVICEMEMBERS, VETERANS, AND PRIVATE EDUCATION LOANS.—

''(i) SERVICEMEMBER AND VETERANS LIAISON.—Each servicer shall designate an employee to act as the servicemember and veterans liaison who is responsible for answering inquiries from servicemembers and veterans, and is specially trained on servicemember and veteran benefits under the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (50 U.S.C. App. 501 et seq.) and other Federal or State laws related to private education loans.

''(ii) TOLL-FREE TELEPHONE NUMBER.—Each servicer shall maintain a toll-free telephone number that shall—

''(I) connect directly to the servicemember and veterans liaison designated under clause (i); and

''(II) be made available on the primary internet website of the servicer and on monthly billing statements.

''(iii) PROHIBITION ON CHARGE OFFS.—A lender or servicer may not charge off or report a private education loan as delinquent, assigned to collection (internally or by referral to a third party), or charged-off to a credit reporting agency if the borrower is on active duty in the Armed Forces (as defined in section 101(d)(1) of title 10, United States Code) serving in a combat zone (as designated by the President under section 112(c) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986).

''(G) BORROWER'S LOAN HISTORY.—

''(i) IN GENERAL.—A servicer shall make available through a secure website, or in writing upon request, the loan history of each borrower for each private education loan, separately designating—

''(I) payment history;

''(II) loan history, including any forbearances, deferrals, delinquencies, assignment to collection, and charge offs;

''(III) annual percentage rate history; and

''(IV) key loan terms, including application of payments to interest, principal, and fees, origination date, principal, capitalized interest, annual percentage rate, including any cap, loan term, and any contractual incentives.

''(ii) ORIGINAL DOCUMENTATION.—A servicer shall make available to the borrower, if requested, at no charge, copies of the original loan documents and the promissory note for each private education loan.

''(H) ERROR RESOLUTION.—The Director of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, in consultation with the Secretary of Education, shall promulgate rules requiring servicers to establish error resolution procedures to allow borrowers to inquire about errors related to their private education loans and obtain timely resolution of such errors.

''(I) ADDITIONAL SERVICING STANDARDS.—The Director of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, in consultation with the Secretary of Education, may establish additional servicing standards to reduce delinquencies, assignment to collections, and charge-offs, and to ensure borrowers understand their rights and obligations related to their private education loans.

''(J) ARBITRATION.—

''(i) WAIVER OF RIGHTS AND REMEDIES.—Any rights and remedies available to borrowers against servicers may not be waived by any agreement, policy, or form, including by a predispute arbitration agreement.

''(ii) PREDISPUTE ARBITRATION AGREEMENTS.—No predispute arbitration agreement shall be valid or enforceable by a servicer, including as a third-party beneficiary or by estoppel, if the agreement requires arbitration of a dispute with respect to a private education loan. This subparagraph applies to predispute arbitration agreements entered into before the date of enactment of the Student Loan Borrower Bill of Rights, as well as on and after such date of enactment, if the violation that is the subject of the dispute occurred on or after such date of enactment.

''(K) ENFORCEMENT.—The provisions of this paragraph shall be enforced by the agencies specified in subsections (a) through (d) of section 108, in the manner set forth in that section or under any other applicable authorities available to such agencies by law.

''(L) PREEMPTION.—Nothing in this paragraph may be construed to preempt any provision of State law regarding private education loans where the State law provides stronger consumer protections.

''(M) CIVIL LIABILITY.—A servicer that fails to comply with any requirement imposed under this paragraph shall be deemed a creditor that has failed to comply with a requirement under this chapter for purposes of liability under section 130 and such servicer shall be subject to the applicable liability provisions under such section.''; and

(B) by adding at the end the following:

''(g) INFORMATION TO BE AVAILABLE AT NO CHARGE.—The information required to be disclosed under this section shall be made available at no charge to the borrower.''; and

(2) in section 130(a)—

(A) in paragraph (3), by striking ''128(e)(7)'' and inserting ''128(e)(10)''; and

(B) in the flush matter at the end, by striking ''or paragraph (4)(C), (6), (7), or (8) of section 128(e),'' and inserting ''or paragraph (4)(C), (9), (10), or (11) of section 128(e),''.

SEC. 3. STUDENT LOAN BORROWER BILL OF RIGHTS.

The Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1001 et seq.) is amended—

(1) in part G of title IV (20 U.S.C. 1088 et seq.) by adding at the end the following:

''SEC. 493E. STUDENT LOAN BORROWER BILL OF RIGHTS.

''(a) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

''(1) SERVICER.—The term 'servicer' means the person responsible for the servicing of any student loan, including any agent of such person or the person who makes, owns, or holds a loan if such person also services the loan.

''(2) SERVICING.—The term 'servicing' means—

''(A) receiving any scheduled periodic payments from a borrower pursuant to the terms of a student loan;

''(B) making the payments of principal and interest and such other payments with respect to the amounts received from the borrower, as may be required pursuant to the terms of the loan; and

''(C) performing other administrative services with respect to the loan.

''(3) STUDENT LOAN.—The term 'student loan' means a loan made, insured, or guaranteed under this title.

''(b) TRANSFER OF LENDER OR SERVICER.—If the sale, other transfer, or assignment of a student loan results in a change in the identity of the party to whom the borrower must send subsequent payments or direct any communications concerning the loan—

''(1) the transferor shall—

''(A) notify the borrower in writing not fewer than 45 days before transferring a legally enforceable right to receive payment from the borrower on such loan, of—

''(i) the sale, transfer, or assignment;

''(ii) the identity of the transferee;

''(iii) the name and address of the party to whom subsequent payments or communications must be sent;

''(iv) the telephone numbers and websites of both the transferor and the transferee;

''(v) the effective date of the sale, transfer, or assignment;

''(vi) the date on which the current servicer will stop accepting payments; and

''(vii) the date on which the transferee servicer will begin accepting payment; and

''(B) forward to the transferee servicer any payment with respect to such student loan, immediately upon receiving such payment, from a borrower during the 60-day period beginning on the date on which the transferor servicer stops accepting payment for such student loan; and

''(2) the transferee shall—

''(A) notify the borrower in writing not fewer than 45 days before transferring a legally enforceable right to receive payment from the borrower on such loan, of—

''(i) the sale, transfer, or assignment;

''(ii) the identity of the transferor;

''(iii) the name and address of the party to whom subsequent payments or communications must be sent;

''(iv) the telephone numbers and websites of both the transferor and the transferee;

''(v) the effective date of the sale, transfer, or assignment;

''(vi) the date on which the current servicer will stop accepting payments; and

''(vii) the date on which the transferee servicer will begin accepting payment;

''(B) accept as on-time and may not impose any late fee or finance charge with respect to such student loan for any payment forwarded from the transferor servicer during the 60-day period beginning on the date on which the transferor servicer stops accepting payment, if the transferor servicer received such payment from the borrower on or before the applicable due date, including any grace period;

''(C) provide borrowers a simple, online process for transferring existing electronic fund transfer authority; and

''(D) honor any promotion or benefit offered to the borrower or advertised by the previous owner or transferor servicer of such student loan.

''(c) MATERIAL CHANGE IN MAILING ADDRESS OR PROCEDURE FOR HANDLING PAYMENTS.—If a servicer makes a change in the mailing address, office, or procedures for handling payments with respect to any student loan, and such change causes a delay in the crediting of the account of the borrower made during the 60-day period following the date on which such change took effect, the servicer may not impose any late fee or finance charge for a late payment on such student loan.

''(d) ELIGIBILITY FOR DISCHARGE.—The Director of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, in consultation with the Secretary, shall promulgate rules requiring lenders and servicers to—

''(1) identify and contact borrowers who may be eligible for student loan discharge by the Secretary;

''(2) provide the borrower, in writing, in simple and understandable terms, information about obtaining such discharge; and

''(3) create a streamlined process for eligible borrowers to apply for and receive such discharge.

''(e) APPLICATION OF PAYMENTS.—

''(1) IN GENERAL.—Notwithstanding any other provision of this Act, the Director of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, in consultation with the Secretary, shall issue rules for the application of student loan payments that—

''(A) minimizes the amount of fees and interest incurred by the borrower and the total loan amount paid by the borrower;

''(B) minimizes delinquencies, assignments to collection, and charge offs;

''(C) requires servicers to apply payments on the date received; and

''(D) allows the borrower to direct the servicer to apply payments in a manner preferred by the borrower.

''(2) METHOD THAT BEST BENEFITS BORROWER.—In issuing the rules under paragraph (1), the Director of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau shall choose the application method that best benefits the borrower and is compatible with existing repayment options.

''(f) SERVICEMEMBERS, VETERANS, AND STUDENT LOANS.—

''(1) SERVICEMEMBER AND VETERANS LIAISON.—Each servicer of a student loan shall designate an employee to act as the servicemember and veterans liaison who is responsible for answering inquiries from servicemembers and veterans, and is specially trained on servicemember and veteran benefits and options under the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (50 U.S.C. App. 501 et seq.) and other Federal or State laws related to student loans.

''(2) TOLL-FREE TELEPHONE NUMBER.—Each servicer of a student loan shall maintain a toll-free telephone number for the servicemember and veterans liaison designated under paragraph (1), which shall be made available on the primary Internet website of the servicer and on monthly billing statements.

''(3) PROHIBITION ON DEFAULT.—Notwithstanding any other provision of this Act, a servicer may not report a student loan as delinquent, assigned to collection (internally or by referral to a third party), charged off, or in default, to a credit reporting agency if the borrower is on active duty in the Armed Forces (as defined in section 101(d)(1) of title 10, United States Code) serving in a combat zone (as designated by the President under section 112(c) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986).

''(4) ADDITIONAL LIAISONS.—The Secretary shall determine additional entities with whom borrowers interact, including guaranty agencies, that shall designate an employee to act as the servicemember and veterans liaison who is responsible for answering inquiries from servicemembers and veterans, and is specially trained on servicemember and veteran benefits and options under the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (50 U.S.C. App. 501 et seq.) and other Federal or State laws related to student loans.

''(g) BORROWER'S LOAN HISTORY.—

''(1) IN GENERAL.—A servicer of a student loan shall make available through a secure website, or in writing upon request, the loan history of each borrower for each student loan, separately designating—

''(A) payment history;

''(B) loan history, including any forbearances, deferrals, delinquencies, and defaults;

''(C) annual percentage rate history; and

''(D) key loan terms, including application of payments to interest, principal, and fees, origination date, principal, capitalized interest, annual percentage rate, including any cap, loan term, and any contractual incentives.

''(2) ORIGINAL DOCUMENTATION.—A servicer shall make available to the borrower, if requested, at no charge, copies of the original loan documents and the promissory note for each student loan.

''(h) ERROR RESOLUTION.—The Director of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, in consultation with the Secretary, shall promulgate rules requiring servicers to establish error resolution procedures to allow borrowers to inquire about errors related to their student loans and obtain timely resolution of such errors.

''(i) ADDITIONAL SERVICING STANDARDS.—The Director of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, in consultation with the Secretary, may establish additional servicing standards to reduce delinquencies, assignments to collection, and defaults, and to ensure borrowers understand their rights and obligations related to their student loans.

''(j) PROMULGATION OF RULES.—The Director of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, in consultation with the Secretary, shall promulgate rules implementing this section.'';

(2) in section 433 (20 U.S.C. 1083)—

(A) in subsection (b)—

(i) in paragraph (12), by striking ''and'' after the semicolon;

(ii) in paragraph (13), by striking the period at the end and inserting ''; and''; and

(iii) by adding at the end the following:

''(14) a statement that—

''(A) the borrower may be entitled to servicemember and veteran benefits under the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (50 U.S.C. App. 501 et seq.) and other Federal or State laws; and

''(B) a Servicemember and Veterans Liaison designated under section 493E(f) is available to answer inquiries about servicemember and veteran benefits, including the toll-free telephone number to contact the Liaison pursuant to section 493E(f).''; and

(B) in subsection (e)—

(i) in paragraph (2), by adding at the end the following:

''(D) A statement that—

''(i) the borrower may be entitled to servicemember and veteran benefits under the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (50 U.S.C. App. 501 et seq.) and other Federal or State laws; and

''(ii) a Servicemember and Veterans Liaison designated under section 493E(f) is available to answer inquiries about servicemember and veteran benefits, including the toll-free telephone number to contact the Liaison pursuant to section 493E(f).'';

(ii) in paragraph (3), by adding at the end the following:

''(F) A statement that—

''(i) the borrower may be entitled to servicemember and veteran benefits under the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (50 U.S.C. App. 501 et seq.) and other Federal or State laws; and

''(ii) a Servicemember and Veterans Liaison designated under section 493E(f) is available to answer inquiries about servicemember and veteran benefits, including the toll-free telephone number to contact the Liaison pursuant to section 493E(f).''; and

(iii) by adding at the end the following:

''(4) NOTIFICATION OF REPAYMENT OPTIONS AND ALTERNATIVES TO DEFAULT.—The Secretary shall require eligible lenders to, not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of the Student Loan Borrower Bill of Rights—

''(A) notify borrowers, in writing, in simple and understandable terms, about alternative repayment options, including income-based repayment, income contingent repayment, consolidation, and forgiveness options, as well as servicemember or veteran benefits under the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (50 U.S.C. App. 501 et seq.) or other Federal or State laws;

''(B) provide borrowers, in writing, in simple and understandable terms, information about alternative repayment plans, including all terms, conditions, and fees or costs associated with such repayment plans in a format that allows the borrower to compare the current repayment plan with alternative repayment plans; and

''(C) offer to enroll such borrowers in alternative repayment plans, if eligible.''; and

(3) in section 455(d) (20 U.S.C. 1087e(d)), by adding at the end the following:

''(6) NOTIFICATION OF REPAYMENT OPTIONS.—The Secretary shall carry out, not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of the Student Loan Borrower Bill of Rights, the activities described in subparagraphs (A), (B), and (C) of section 433(e)(4) with respect to loans made under this part.''.

SEC. 4. KNOW BEFORE YOU OWE.

(a) AMENDMENTS TO THE TRUTH IN LENDING ACT.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Section 128(e) of the Truth in Lending Act (15 U.S.C. 1638(e)), as amended by section 2, is further amended—

(A) by striking paragraph (3) and inserting the following:

''(3) INSTITUTIONAL CERTIFICATION REQUIRED.—

''(A) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in subparagraph (B), before a creditor may issue any funds with respect to an extension of credit described in this subsection, the creditor shall obtain from the relevant institution of higher education where such loan is to be used for a student, such institution's certification of—

''(i) the enrollment status of the student;

''(ii) the student's cost of attendance at the institution as determined by the institution under part F of title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965; and

''(iii) the difference between—

''(I) such cost of attendance; and

''(II) the student's estimated financial assistance, including such assistance received under title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965 and other financial assistance known to the institution, as applicable.

''(B) EXCEPTION.—Notwithstanding subparagraph (A), a creditor may issue funds, not to exceed the amount described in subparagraph (A)(iii), with respect to an extension of credit described in this subsection without obtaining from the relevant institution of higher education such institution's

certification if such institution fails to provide within 15 business days of the creditor's request for such certification—

''(i) notification of the institution's refusal to certify the request; or

''(ii) notification that the institution has received the request for certification and will need additional time to comply with the certification request.

''(C) LOANS DISBURSED WITHOUT CERTIFICATION.—If a creditor issues funds without obtaining a certification, as described in subparagraph (B), such creditor shall report the issuance of such funds in a manner determined by the Director of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau.''; and

(B) by adding at the end the following:

''(16) PROVISION OF INFORMATION.—

''(A) PROVISION OF INFORMATION TO STUDENTS.—

''(i) LOAN STATEMENT.—A creditor that issues any funds with respect to an extension of credit described in this subsection shall send loan statements, where such loan is to be used for a student, to borrowers of such funds not less than once every 3 months during the time that such student is enrolled at an institution of higher education.

''(ii) CONTENTS OF LOAN STATEMENT.—Each statement described in clause (i) shall—

''(I) report the borrower's total remaining debt to the creditor, including accrued but unpaid interest and capitalized interest;

''(II) report any debt increases since the last statement; and

''(III) list the current interest rate for each loan.

''(B) NOTIFICATION OF LOANS DISBURSED WITHOUT CERTIFICATION.—On or before the date a creditor issues any funds with respect to an extension of credit described in this subsection, the creditor shall notify the relevant institution of higher education, in writing, of the amount of the extension of credit and the student on whose behalf credit is extended. The form of such written notification shall be subject to the regulations of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau.

''(C) ANNUAL REPORT.—A creditor that issues funds with respect to an extension of credit described in this subsection shall prepare and submit an annual report to the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau containing the required information about private student loans to be determined by the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, in consultation with the Secretary of Education.''.

(2) DEFINITION OF PRIVATE EDUCATION LOAN.—Section 140(a)(7)(A) of the Truth in Lending Act (15 U.S.C. 1650(a)(7)(A)) is amended—

(A) by redesignating clause (ii) as clause (iii);

(B) in clause (i), by striking ''and'' after the semicolon; and

(C) by adding after clause (i) the following:

''(ii) is not made, insured, or guaranteed under title VII or title VIII of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C. 292 et seq. and 296 et seq.); and''.

(3) REGULATIONS.—Not later than 365 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Director of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau shall issue regulations in final form to implement paragraphs (3) and (16) of section 128(e) of the Truth in Lending Act (15 U.S.C. 1638(e)), as amended by paragraph (1). Such regulations shall become effective not later than 6 months after their date of issuance.

(b) AMENDMENTS TO THE HIGHER EDUCATION ACT OF 1965.—

(1) PROGRAM PARTICIPATION AGREEMENTS.—Section 487(a) of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1094(a)) is amended by striking paragraph (28) and inserting the following:

''(28)(A) Upon the request of a private educational lender, acting in connection with an application initiated by a borrower for a private education loan in accordance with section 128(e)(3) of the Truth in Lending Act (15 U.S.C. 1638(e)(3)), the institution shall within 15 days of receipt of a certification request—

''(i) provide such certification to such private educational lender—

''(I) that the student who initiated the application for the private education loan, or on whose behalf the application was initiated, is enrolled or is scheduled to enroll at the institution;

''(II) of such student's cost of attendance at the institution as determined under part F of this title; and

''(III) of the difference between—

''(aa) the cost of attendance at the institution; and

''(bb) the student's estimated financial assistance received under this title and other assistance known to the institution, as applicable;

''(ii) notify the creditor that the institution has received the request for certification and will need additional time to comply with the certification request; or

''(iii) provide notice to the private educational lender of the institution's refusal to certify the private education loan under subparagraph (D).

''(B) With respect to a certification request described in subparagraph (A), and prior to providing such certification under subparagraph (A)(i) or providing notice of the refusal to provide certification under subparagraph (A)(iii), the institution shall—

''(i) determine whether the student who initiated the application for the private education loan, or on whose behalf the application was initiated, has applied for and exhausted the Federal financial assistance available to such student under this title and inform the student accordingly; and

''(ii) provide the borrower whose loan application has prompted the certification request by a private education lender, as described in subparagraph (A)(i), with the following information and disclosures:

''(I) The availability of, and the borrower's potential eligibility for, Federal financial assistance under this title, including disclosing the terms, conditions, interest rates, and repayment options and programs of Federal student loans.

''(II) The borrower's ability to select a private educational lender of the borrower's choice.

''(III) The impact of a proposed private education loan on the borrower's potential eligibility for other financial assistance, including Federal financial assistance under this title.

''(IV) The borrower's right to accept or reject a private education loan within the 30-day period following a private educational lender's approval of a borrower's application and about a borrower's 3-day right to cancel period.

''(C) For purposes of this paragraph, the terms 'private educational lender' and 'private education loan' have the meanings given such terms in section 140 of the Truth in Lending Act (15 U.S.C. 1650).

''(D)(i) An institution shall not provide a certification with respect to a private education loan under this paragraph unless the private education loan includes terms that provide—

''(I) the borrower alternative repayment plans, including loan consolidation or refinancing; and

''(II) that the liability to repay the loan shall be cancelled upon the death or disability of the borrower or co-borrower.

''(ii) In this paragraph, the term 'disability' means a permanent and total disability, as determined in accordance with the regulations of the Secretary of Education, or a determination by the Secretary of Veterans that the borrower is unemployable due to a service connected-disability.''.

(2) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendment made by paragraph (1) shall take effect on the effective date of the regulations described in subsection (a)(3).

(3) PREFERRED LENDER ARRANGEMENT.—Section 151(8)(A)(ii) of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1019(8)(A)(ii)) is amended by inserting ''certifying,'' after ''promoting,''.

(c) REPORT.—Not later than 24 months after the issuance of regulations under subsection (a)(3), the Director of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau and the Secretary of Education shall jointly submit to Congress a report on the compliance of institutions of higher education and private educational lenders with section 128(e)(3) of the Truth in Lending Act (15 U.S.C. 1638(e)), as amended by subsection (a), and section 487(a)(28) of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1094(a)), as amended by subsection (b). Such report shall include information about the degree to which specific institutions utilize certifications in effectively encouraging the exhaustion of Federal student loan eligibility and lowering student private education loan debt.

SEC. 5. REPORT ON STUDENT LOAN SERVICERS.

Not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of this Act, the Director of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, in consultation with the Secretary of Education, shall submit a report to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs of the Senate, the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions of the Senate, the Committee on Financial Services of the House of Representatives, and the Committee on Education and the Workforce of the House of Representatives on private and Federal student loan servicers, including—

(1) any legislative recommendations to improve student loan servicing standards; and

(2) information on proactive early intervention methods by servicers to help distressed student loan borrowers enroll in any eligible repayment plans.

SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS

SENATE RESOLUTION 317—EXPRESSING THE SENSE OF THE SENATE ON THE CONTINUING RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND GEORGIA

Mr. SESSIONS (for himself and Mrs. SHAHEEN) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations:

S. RES. 317

Whereas Georgia is a highly valued partner of the United States and has repeatedly demonstrated its commitment to advancing the mutual interests of both countries, including through the deployment of Georgian forces as part of the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan, where Georgia is currently the largest non-NATO contributor and serving without caveats in Helmand Province, and the Multi-National Force in Iraq;

Whereas, contrary to international law and the 2008 ceasefire agreement between Russia and Georgia, Russian forces have constructed barriers, including barbed wire and fences, along the administrative boundary line for the South Ossetia region of Georgia;

Whereas this ''borderization'' is inconsistent with Russia's international commitments under the August 2008 ceasefire agreement, is contrary to Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity, creates hardship and significant negative impacts for populations on both sides of these barriers, and is detrimental to long-term conflict resolution;

Whereas the peaceful transfer of power as the result of the October 2012 parliamentary elections in Georgia represents a major accomplishment toward the creation by the people of Georgia of a free society and full democracy;

Whereas the presidential election of October 2013 marks another step in this transition to a free and open democracy in Georgia;

Whereas international election observers from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) concluded that the election ''was efficiently administered, transparent, and took place in an amicable and constructive environment [. . .]. Fundamental freedoms of expression, movement and assembly were respected, and candidates were able to campaign without restriction. [. . .] A wide range of views and information was made available to voters through the media, providing candidates with a platform to present their programmes and opinions freely'';

Whereas such election conduct is consistent with actions that demonstrate progress toward a mature and free democracy; and

Whereas, on November 29, 2013, Georgia initialed an Association Agreement with the European Union (EU), making Georgia a member of the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area, removing significant trade restrictions with the European Union, and signifying an important preliminary step towards the signing and eventual implementation of the Association Agreement by all European Union members states and Georgia: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) declares that the United States supports the sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity of Georgia and the inviolability of its internationally recognized borders, and expresses concerns over the continued occupation of the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia by the Russian Federation;

(2) encourages the President to enhance defense cooperation efforts with Georgia;

(3) supports the efforts of the Government of Georgia to protect its government, people, sovereignty, and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders;

(4) reaffirms its support for Georgia's NATO membership aspirations, congratulates the Government of Georgia on the steps it has taken to further its integration with NATO, and commends the determination of the Government of Georgia to maintain its troop contribution to International Security Assistance Force and its willingness to extend its mission in Afghanistan beyond 2014;

(5) congratulates the Government and people of Georgia on the presidential election of October 27, 2013, commends the Government and people of Georgia on a peaceful and democratic transfer of power, and encourages all parties to work together constructively to maintain continued movement toward a free and democratic society;

(6) strongly encourages the Government of Georgia to defend the rule of law, improve the independence of the judiciary, and protect the rights of political opposition – all essential components of a free and open democracy and which can and should be demonstrated in the upcoming 2014 local elections;

(7) strongly supports a United States and international election monitoring mission for this final phase of Georgia's election cycle;

(8) further encourages the Government of Georgia to refrain from politically motivated arrests and prosecutions;

(9) affirms that the path to lasting stability in this region is through peaceful means and long-term diplomatic and political dialogue; and

(10) remains committed to assisting the people of Georgia in their efforts to establish an enduring democratic society with strong institutions within the rule of law.

SENATE RESOLUTION 318—EXPRESSING THE SENSE OF THE SENATE REGARDING THE CRITICAL NEED FOR POLITICAL REFORM IN BANGLADESH, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Mr. DURBIN (for himself, Mr. ENZI, and Mr. MURPHY) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations:

S. RES. 318

Whereas the nation of Bangladesh was established in 1971 after a bitter war in which it split from Pakistan, and for many of the ensuing years until 1990, it was ruled by military governments;

Whereas political tensions have at times turned to violence in Bangladesh, undermining the democratic process;

Whereas the last parliamentary elections in Bangladesh originally scheduled for January 2007, were postponed indefinitely after the military intervened amid rising violence and questions about the electoral process's credibility;

Whereas a military-backed civilian caretaker government held power until December 2008 when Bangladeshis returned to the polls to elect a new parliament for the first time in many years;

Whereas ongoing antagonism between the country's two ruling parties, the Awami League and the Bangladesh Nationalist Party, distracts from the important needs of the country;

Whereas concerns have grown about religious extremism in the otherwise usually tolerant country;

Whereas the United States-Bangladesh relationship is strong and involves many shared interests, including regional economic integration, counterterrorism, counter-piracy, poverty alleviation, food security, regional stability, and mitigation of natural disasters;

Whereas bilateral trade between the United States and Bangladesh now tops $6,000,000,000 annually, with major United States companies making significant long-term investments in Bangladesh;

Whereas the economy of Bangladesh has grown six percent per year over the last two decades, despite a range of challenges;

Whereas the poverty rate in Bangladesh dropped from 40 percent to 31 percent between 2005 and 2010—a notable accomplishment in a country in which poverty has been deep and widespread;

Whereas the Grameen Bank's revolutionary microfinance lending to the poor has helped reduce poverty not only in Bangladesh, but has served as an innovative and powerful model for helping the poor elsewhere in the world;

Whereas the Department of State, Congress, and other high profile international voices have recognized the Grameen Bank's innovative work and expressed great concern over actions by the Government of Bangladesh that undermine the Bank's independence;

Whereas Bangladesh, an example of a moderate and diverse Muslim-majority democracy, is scheduled to have national elections on January 5, 2014;

Whereas, in 2013, hundreds of Bangladeshis died in violent clashes as a result of political violence and unrest, and some opposition and human rights activists have been arrested;

Whereas trials held by the International Crimes Tribunal in Bangladesh—set up to prosecute those responsible for atrocities committed during Bangladesh's war of liberation with Pakistan in 1971—have fallen short of international standards;

Whereas the Government of Bangladesh eliminated a constitutional provision requiring the governing party to cede power to a neutral caretaker government three months before an election;

Whereas the 18-member opposition coalition in Bangladesh called for numerous nationwide strikes and transportation blockades in 2013, resulting in dozens of deaths;

Whereas Bangladeshi students cannot attend school and complete mandatory exams due to the strikes and blockades and related violence;

Whereas many citizens of Bangladesh have had their work and daily activities disrupted due to the strikes and related violence, which come at a cost to the economy and stability of Bangladesh;

Whereas a stable, moderate, secular, Muslim-majority democracy with the world's seventh-largest population, and the world's fourth-largest Muslim population, will have lasting positive impacts in the region and beyond;

Whereas the success of the democratic process in Bangladesh is of great importance to the United States and the world; and

Whereas during the week of December 8, 2013, United Nations Assistant Secretary General Oscar Fernandez-Taranco visited Bangladesh to foster political dialogue between Bangladeshi political parties and leaders in order to bring a halt to violence and allow for a credible peaceful election: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) condemns the political violence in Bangladesh and urges political leaders in that country to engage directly and substantively in a dialogue toward free, fair, and credible elections;

(2) expresses great concern about the continued political deadlock in Bangladesh that distracts from the country's many important challenges;

(3) urges political leaders in Bangladesh to take immediate steps to rein in and to condemn the violence as well as to provide space for peaceful political protests;

(4) urges political leaders in Bangladesh to ensure the safety and access of observers in its upcoming elections;

(5) supports ongoing efforts by United Nations Assistant Secretary General Oscar Fernandez-Taranco to foster political dialogue between political factions in Bangladesh; and

(6) urges the Government of Bangladesh to ensure judicial independence, end harassment of human rights activists, and restore the independence of the Grameen Bank.

NOTICE OF HEARINGS

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I would like to announce for the information of the Senate and the public that a hearing has been scheduled before the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural

Resources on Thursday, December 12, 2013, at 9 a.m., in room SD–366 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building in Washington, DC.

The purpose of the hearing is to receive testimony on the nominations of Dr. Franklin M. Orr to be Under Secretary for Science, Department of Energy, Mr. Jonathan Elkind, to be an Assistant Secretary of Energy, International Affairs, Ms. Rhea S. Suh, to be Assistant Secretary of Fish and Wildlife and Parks, Department of the Interior, and Mr. Tommy P. Beaudreau, to be an Assistant Secretary of the Interior, Policy, Management and Budget.

For further information, please contact Sam Fowler at (202) 224–7571 or Abigail Campbell at (202) 224–4905.

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I would like to announce for the information of the Senate and the public that a business meeting and hearing have been scheduled before the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources on Tuesday, December 17, 2013, at 10 a.m., in room SD–366 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building in Washington, DC.

The purpose of the business meeting is to consider the nominations of Dr. Steven P. Croley, to be the General Counsel, Department of Energy, Mr. Christopher A. Smith, to be an Assistant Secretary of Energy, Fossil Energy, and Ms. Esther P. Kia'aina to be an Assistant Secretary of the Interior, Insular Areas.

The purpose of the hearing is to consider the nominations of Ms. Janice M. Schneider, Assistant Secretary of the Interior, Land and Minerals Management, Department of the Interior, Mr. Neil G. Kornze, Director of the Bureau of Land Management, Department of the Interior, Dr. Marc A. Kastner, Director of the Office of Science, Department of Energy, and Dr. Ellen D. Williams, Director of the Advanced Research Projects Agency-Energy, Department of Energy.

Because of the limited time available for the hearing, witnesses may testify by invitation only. However, those wishing to submit written testimony for the hearing record should send it to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, United States Senate, Washington, DC 20510–6150, or by email to Abigail Campbell@energy.Senate.gov.

For further information, please contact Sam Fowler at (202) 224–7571 or Abigail Campbell at (202) 224–4905.

AUTHORITY FOR COMMITTEES TO MEET

COMMITTEE ON BANKING, HOUSING, AND URBAN AFFAIRS

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on December 11, 2013, at 3:30 p.m., to conduct a hearing entitled ''Rebuilding American Manufacturing.''

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

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on the Judiciary be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on December 11, 2013, at 2 p.m., in room SD–226 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building, to conduct a hearing entitled ''Continued Oversight of U.S. Government Surveillance Authorities.''

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

SUBCOMMITTEE ON FINANCIAL AND CONTRACTING OVERSIGHT

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Subcommittee on Financial and Contracting Oversight of the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on December 11, 2013, at 2 p.m. to conduct a hearing entitled, ''A More Efficient and Effective Government: Streamlining Overseas Trade and Development Agencies.''

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

SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGING

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Special Committee on Aging be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on December 11, 2013, in room 562 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building beginning at 3:45 p.m., to conduct a hearing entitled ''Protecting Seniors From Medication Labeling Mistakes.''

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

CONFIRMATION

Executive nomination confirmed by the Senate: Thursday, December 12, 2013:

THE JUDICIARY

CORNELIA T. L. PILLARD, OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, TO BE UNITED STATES CIRCUIT JUDGE FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA CIRCUIT.

N O T I C E

Incomplete record of Senate proceedings. Today's Senate proceedings will be continued in the next issue of the Record.

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

IN RECOGNITION OF GINA PAPAN

HON. JACKIE SPEIER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 11, 2013

Ms. SPEIER. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor Gina Papan for her eight years of service on the Millbrae City Council, two of them as mayor, one as vice mayor.

In her role as mayor this past year and throughout her tenure on the council, Gina has focused on sustainable finances and revenue enhancement in Millbrae. She has played an instrumental role in the adoption of the Economic Development Plan and the ongoing negotiations for a fire department merger with Central County Fire and San Bruno Fire. She is an avid advocate for public-private partnerships that benefit the local community.

Gina serves on the City and County Association of Governments Board of Directors and Legislative Committee, the Congestion Management Program and Environmental Quality Committee, the High Speed Rail Policymakers Working Group, the San Mateo County Council of Cities, the Mayor's Civic Coordination Council, the Budget/Finance Subcommittee, the Field Agreement Subcommittee, the Fire Shared Services Subcommittee and the Commission/Committee Subcommittee.

In the past, she represented Millbrae on the San Mateo County Housing Endowment and Regional Trust, the Grand Boulevard Task Force, the Peninsula Traffic Congestion Relief Alliance, the San Mateo County Emergency Services Council and the Airport Land Use Committee.

Gina continues a family tradition of public service and philanthropy following in the footsteps of her late father, Lou Papan, known as the "Dean of the Assembly" for his 20 years of service in the California State Assembly and her late mother Irene Papan, a dedicated community leader and tireless supporter of her husband.

Gina began her professional career as a corporate attorney, but quickly moved to the public sector and served as Deputy Attorney General for the state for 19 years. She litigated to protect civil rights and prevent fraudulent use of taxpayer money. She was appointed deputy director of Governor Gray Davis' Office of Criminal Justice Planning. In that capacity, she served on the School Violence Prevention and Response Task Force, the Child Abduction Task Force and as a legislative advisor to the High Technology Crime Advisory Committee. School safety became an immediate focus on her second day on the job when the nation was shocked by the school shooting in Columbine.

Gina grew up in Millbrae and graduated from Capuchino High School. She received her Bachelor's degree in Finance and Economics from UC Santa Barbara and her law degree from the University of the Pacific's McGeorge School of Law. She completed the Senior Executives in State and Local Government program at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University.

Her commitment and dedication to others is unwavering. She and her sister Diane run John's Closet which provides free new clothing to underserved children and offers them confidence to achieve. John Papan was Gina's brother who suffered from a congenital condition that tragically and prematurely ended his life at age 21. In response and to continue its advocacy for disabled children, the Papan family set up John's Closet. Gina also is the co-director of the John Papan Memorial Scholarship Fund which was founded by the family to help special education students and late bloomers, kids who overcome early learning difficulties in high school.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the House of Representatives to join me in honoring Gina Papan who is retiring today as mayor of Millbrae and who has committed her life and career to serving her community and fighting for justice.

COMMEMORATING THE LIFE OF FLORA DAY KING

HON. JACK KINGSTON

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 11, 2013

Mr. KINGSTON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commemorate the life of Mrs. Flora Day King. Mrs. King passed away on November 29, 2013 in Seneca, South Carolina at the age of 97.

Flora Prussia Day was born on December 27, 1915 in Lexington, Virginia, the daughter of the late Philip Baldwin Day and Ernestine Albery Day. After graduating as valedictorian of the one-room schoolhouse in Lexington, she earned her Bachelor's degree from William and Mary College and her Master's degree in chemistry from Virginia Polytechnic Institute.

Following in the footsteps of her grandfather, Admiral Benjamin Franklin Day of the United States Navy, Flora enlisted in the Navy in 1941. She served as a Lieutenant in the Navy developing and testing jet propellant for rockets at Indian Head Naval Surface Warfare Center in Maryland for the duration of the Second World War.

Flora married Dr. Edwin Wallace King in 1950 and moved to Clemson, South Carolina in 1956, where she worked as a chemist for the United States Department of Agriculture at Clemson University. She was active in community service organizations and her local Episcopal church.

She is survived by her sister, Jane Day Casati, her sister-in-law, Jeanne Poe Day, her son Edwin Wallace King Jr., his wife Edythe and their two daughters, Edythe Day King and Elizabeth Monroe King, and her son Philip Day King, his wife Lori, and their son Philip Robert King.

Today we honor her service to our country and her commitment to her family. She was a kind and loving woman who inspired those around her, and she will be truly missed.

HONORING SCOTT KARCZEWSKI

HON. MICHAEL H. MICHAUD

OF MAINE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 11, 2013

Mr. MICHAUD. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Scott Karczewski on the occasion of his retirement from the Department of Veterans' Affairs after 36 years of dedicated service.

Scott's service to our country began in 1971, when he joined the U.S. Navy, serving on board the USS *John F. Kennedy* for more than three years. He began his VA career in 1977 at the Togus VA hospital as a temporary warehouse worker. He was quickly promoted to a full time file clerk position in the Regional Office, while still attending college at the University of Maine. Scott has held several positions at the Togus Regional Office including Claims Examiner, Senior Claims Examiner, Rating Specialist, Assistant Veterans Service Center Manager, Veterans Service Center Manager, and most recently as Director of the Regional Office.

Under his leadership, the Togus Regional Office has continued its exceptional performance as one of the top regional offices in the Nation, efficiently and accurately processing claims for Maine's veterans. The performance of the Togus Regional Office has been recognized with the establishment of two special missions, a rating resource center and a development resource center. These missions assist other regional offices with their backlogged claims and have contributed greatly towards the reduction in the claims backlog nationally.

Through his dedication and valued work, Scott has earned well-deserved appreciation and accolades including a Commendation Award in 1986 from the Chief Benefits Administrator, and the Eastern Area Leadership Award in 2007.

Mr. Speaker, please join me in congratulating Scott Karczewski on his many years of outstanding service to our veterans and wishing him a rewarding and enjoyable retirement.

HONORING THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND CELEBRATING THE CAREER OF LARRY HORTON OF STANFORD UNIVERSITY

HON. ZOE LOFGREN

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 11, 2013

Ms. LOFGREN. Mr. Speaker, I rise to note the remarkable career of Larry Horton who will retire from his post as Senior Associate Vice President and Director of Government and

Community Relations at Stanford University at the end of 2013. His academic and professional tenure at Stanford spans a combined 52 years.

Born in Louisiana to a railroad switch operator and a homemaker, Larry came to Stanford in 1958 by way of Arkansas and Southern California. After earning his undergraduate degree in political science, he was drafted to serve in the U.S. Army in Europe for two years. He returned to Stanford to complete a master's degree in history. By 1970, the year of my own graduation from the university, he had been appointed an associate dean of student affairs. In this capacity he oversaw the integration of the sexes in coed university housing. During this period he helped ensure that egalitarian American principles and the recognition of the value of diversity that blossomed in the 1960s and '70s was reflected in University policies. Next he served as a special assistant to the secretary of Health and Human Services in both the Ford and Carter administrations.

Returning to Stanford again in 1977 with new experiences in dealing with Washington, he was appointed Associate Director of Government Affairs. From this post he helped Congress to shape the landmark 1980 Bayh-Dole Act. These efforts fostered free-market innovation by encouraging inventors and institutions to pursue ownership of patents for products created with the aid of Federal Government resources.

For all his accomplishments at the Federal level, some of Larry's most challenging and rewarding projects have involved local government. The cities of Palo Alto and Menlo Park and the Counties of Santa Clara and San Mateo as well as various state and local land and water authorities, have required skillful attention. He negotiated many cooperative land-use initiatives, sometimes in the face of disagreement from some of Stanford's neighbors. He made sure there was careful sensitivity to threatened wildlife like the California tiger salamander, for which the University built a tunnel under Junipero Serra Boulevard to encourage migration from Lake Lagunita to a new, more secure habitat in Stanford's foothills.

Beyond his admirable professional achievements, Larry is a thoughtful intellectual, host to authors debuting their books and is a friend and supporter for those who are writers, artists and, most particularly, friends of Stanford. This year, for his dedication to Stanford he was awarded the Cuthbertson Award during Stanford's graduation ceremony. Today I praise my good friend Larry Horton, whose intellect, humility, talent, tenacity, empathy, and dedication to our alma mater are unparalleled. Although his retirement will provide him with more time to spend on his personal loves—history, opera, Stanford Athletics, literature, theater, and his partner of 35 years, George Wilson—he will be deeply missed not only by his Stanford colleagues, but by those of us in Washington, Sacramento, and the Bay Area who have shared in the privilege of knowing him. He leaves a formidable legacy.

HONORING U.S. MARINE CORPS GENERAL RAYMOND GILBERT ''RAY'' DAVIS, SERGEANT RODNEY MAXWELL DAVIS, MAJOR HENRY TALMAGE ELROD, AND U.S. NAVY SEAMAN FIRST CLASS WENDALL LEON JONES

HON. AUSTIN SCOTT

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 11, 2013

Mr. AUSTIN SCOTT of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the careers of several individuals from Georgia's Eighth Congressional District who gave their all for our country and for our freedoms. They have been posthumously inducted into Georgia's first-ever Military Veterans Hall of Fame, and I would like to recognize them today.

United States Marine Corps General Raymond Gilbert "Ray" Davis hails from Fitzgerald, GA. In Korea in December 1950, then Lieutenant Colonel Davis personally led his battalion to victory in hand to hand combat against a strongly entrenched and numerically superior hostile force. For his valorous actions he was awarded the Medal of Honor.

United States Marine Corps Sergeant Rodney Maxwell Davis hails from Macon, GA. In Vietnam in September 1967 while his platoon was pinned down by a numerically superior force, he personally led his men in repulsing an onrushing enemy. With disregard for his own life, he saved many of his men by throwing himself on an exploding enemy grenade. He gallantly gave his life for his country and was awarded the Medal of Honor.

United States Marine Corps Major Henry Talmage Elrod hails from Ashburn, GA. On Wake Island in December 1941, as a fighter pilot, he personally destroyed an enemy warship and shot down two enemy airplanes before assuming command of a ground unit and inspirationally led his men against an attacking superior enemy force until he was killed in action. He gallantly gave his life for his country and was awarded the Medal of Honor.

United States Navy Seaman First Class Wendall Leon Jones hails from Tifton, GA. At the age of 16, he enlisted in the Navy. At age 17 the landing craft that he was aboard was sunk by a German U–Boat killing all but 89 of the 641 aboard. He was severely burned on the face and hands while rescuing Sailors and Soldiers. During the D–Day Landing, he was among the 51 survivors of a 600 man demolition unit, once again sustaining injuries to his hands during small arms fire fights. One month later at age 18, he was wounded again by shell fragments in the right ear, right ankle, and face during a demolition mission behind enemy lines. After recovering, he was headed to Japan when the war ended and he was soon discharged having just reached the age of 19. He was awarded the Navy Commendation Medal for Valor and 3 Purple Hearts. He died at age 36 from injuries to his brain caused by wounds.

RECOGNIZING IVY TECH COMMUNITY COLLEGE SOUTHEAST

HON. LUKE MESSER

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 11, 2013

Mr. MESSER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the contributions of Ivy Tech Community College Southeast to the success of the 6th District Job Fair.

On October 21, 2013, over 150 job seekers from across the district met with 36 businesses looking to hire new employees. In a time when jobs are still hard to come by these job fairs are an important tool in linking job seekers with perspective employers. I am proud we were able to bring community leaders together and provide this service to the people of the 6th District.

The job fair would not have been the success it was without the help of Ivy Tech Community College Southeast. I want to recognize the work of Shakira Grubbs, Tim Buehler, Daniel Smith, and Chancellor Jim Helms. Their efforts in hosting the job fair show a deep commitment to their community and the economic health of Southeastern Indiana.

I ask the entire 6th Congressional District to join me in recognizing Ivy Tech Community College Southeast. I look forward to working with them in the future as we strive to serve the people of Southeastern Indiana.

CELEBRATING THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF SAM AND DOROTHY YOUNG

HON. RALPH M. HALL

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 11, 2013

Mr. HALL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Sam and Dorothy Young who just celebrated their 50th Anniversary. Their commitment to each other and their family is an inspiration and a wonderful reminder of the importance of family, particularly during the holiday season.

Sam and Dorothy, high school sweethearts at Lockett High School, were wed on August 4, 1963 at Lockett Baptist Church shortly after Sam joined the Navy. Over the past five decades, Mr. and Mrs. Young have been blessed with three children—Trent, Christi, and Todd—and seven grandchildren—Dane, Zachary, Teressa, Sammi, Jacque, Gracie, and Aubrey.

The Youngs moved to Mount Vernon, Texas in the early 1980's when Sam was transferred with AO Smith Harvestore Silos. The family later owned and operated Donuts Etc. in Mount Pleasant, Mount Vernon, Pittsburg, and Winnsboro. Sam and Dorothy continue to actively participate in the community, and since 2002, Sam has served Franklin County as Commissioner for Precinct 4.

Sam and Dorothy Young are blessed to have had so many happy years together, and I wish them many more happy years in the future. Mister Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in celebration of the Young's 50th Wedding Anniversary.

IN RECOGNITION OF KAREN CLAPPER

HON. JACKIE SPEIER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 11, 2013

Ms. SPEIER. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor Karen Clapper for her service on the San Carlos City Council since June 2012. She has applied decades of experience with private and public organizations to keep San Carlos the ''City of Good Living'' for all residents.

When a seat on the council became vacant, the four remaining council members unanimously selected Karen to fill the remaining term. She has been a passionate advocate for our neighborhoods, schools, parks and public safety. During her time on the City Council, Karen Clapper has worked collaboratively with her colleagues and sought to create a community marked by fiscal prudence and regional relevance. She was always well prepared at council meetings and asked many important questions during budget and policy sessions. Karen has been a team player who worked hard to ensure that San Carlos had the finest fire, police, and parks services possible. She was frequently attended public events, wanting to be accessible to residents.

During her time in public service, Karen served on the boards of the Peninsula Congestion Relief Alliance and the Library Governing Board WA. She also served on ad hoc committees dealing with school property, the San Carlos Transit Village, and Wheeler Plaza. She was the liaison to San Carlos Green, a citizens group advocating for environmentally sensitive projects and policies, and the Planning Commission. In fact, Karen's longest service to the city was during her time on the commission where she served from 2009–20012. During this formative time in the city's history, she helped to maintain the city's small town character while recognizing that its planning decisions had to fit into the regional need for housing and other changes.

Karen earned her BA in Environmental Design from San Diego State University and her MBA in Finance and Accounting from the Anderson School of Management at UCLA. She has been a consultant, coach and board member for a long list of companies and non-profit organizations, including Great American Bank FSB, Accenture, Friends of San Carlos Library, the Service League of San Mateo County, and Elizabeth F. Gamble Garden.

Karen will continue her work as an independent productivity and leadership coach and be guided by one of her favorite quotes by Albert Einstein: ''Out of clutter find simplicity; from discord find harmony; in the middle of difficulty lies opportunity.'' Her eternal optimism will no doubt direct her to continue to contribute to the community. In her spare time she enjoys reading, quilting and doing crossword puzzles.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the House of Representatives to rise with me to honor Karen Clapper for her outstanding leadership during her tenure on the city council and for her service to the residents of San Carlos at many meetings and forums in the past. She will be missed on the council but certainly seen and heard throughout the community for many years to come.

INNOVATION ACT

SPEECH OF

HON. XAVIER BECERRA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 5, 2013

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 3309) to amend title 35, United States Code, and the Leahy-Smith America Invents Act to make improvements and technical corrections, and for other purposes:

Mr. BECERRA. Mr. Chairman, America is and must continue to be the cradle of invention and innovation. We reward those with big ideas.

I agree we must punish those who troll the waters in search of easy money at the expense of those who harness invention and innovation. But we must attack the abusers soundly and surgically so that we do not destroy in the dragnet the little guy with the big idea.

For this reason, Mr. Chairman, I will be opposing this bill.

RECOGNIZING MT. OLIVE BAPTIST CHURCH

HON. BRIAN HIGGINS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 11, 2013

Mr. HIGGINS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and congratulate Mt. Olive Baptist Church of Buffalo, New York on celebrating the 90th anniversary of its devout faithfulness and dedication to the surrounding community. To commemorate this milestone, Mt. Olive will be hosting a celebration on December 8, 2013 in Buffalo's historic Lafayette Hotel.

Under the visionary leadership of Pastor William Gillison, Mt. Olive Baptist Church has become a central pillar of Buffalo's African-American community through its good and tireless community works and initiatives to nurture educate and support generations of families. Known as one of the most active and ambitious churches in the region, Mt. Olive continues to build on its extensive and rich history. Its outstanding reputation is a testament to the inspiration of its leaders and parishioners.

Mt. Olive Baptist Church was organized in 1923 under the leadership of the late Pastor James Hamilton, inside the gates of Semet Solvay Company Plant in Tonawanda, New York. In 1924, under the leadership of Pastor Clinton N. Polite, the Church moved outside the company gates. When Semet Solvay closed in 1941, Mt. Olive relocated Clinton Street in Buffalo where the first service was held on the first Sunday in May with five families.

Reverend William Gillison was called to pastor Mt. Olive in June 1981, which marked the beginning of an unprecedented era of growth and community engagement projects within the Church. In February 1988, Mt. Olive purchased three and a half acres of land at 701 East Delavan Avenue and in 1992, additional acreage was added giving the church five acres for its new three million dollar home. Construction began in 1994 and upon completion, the new home of Mt. Olive Baptist Church included an impressive complex which seats 1200, 16 classrooms and an all-purpose hall for recreation and social occasions. It is of special note that this Church's decades long mortgage was paid in full in only six years.

Under this extraordinary pastoral leader and faithful following, Mt. Olive continues to experience extensive growth spiritually, financially and munerically. Multiple ministries and a separate faith-based organization, the Mt. Olive Development Corporation, have been formed since 1991. Mt. Olive's First Leadership School, which is recognized by the National Baptist Congress of Christian Education, was held in October 2007. In recent years a Health Ministry was instituted as was a Media Ministry with the addition of a TV studio. This year has also seen the construction of the William Gillison Fellowship Hall and the dedication of the YOMO (Youth of Mt. Olive) Athletic Field.

Mr. Speaker, it is with great pride that I rise today to honor, acknowledge and add my deepest appreciation to Pastor Gillison and the family and friends of Mt. Olive Baptist Church for 90 years of faith-filled service to its congregation, community, city and country. Its outreach to the least the lost among us provides us with a powerful example of faith and love that will only intensify to help our children be better prepared and be able to enjoy and embrace an enhanced quality of life.

CELEBRATING THE 75TH ANNIVERSARY FOR THE ABILITYONE PROGRAM AND THE NATIONAL INDUSTRIES FOR THE BLIND

HON. DINA TITUS

OF NEVADA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 11, 2013

Ms. TITUS. Mr. Speaker, this year marks the 75th anniversary for the AbilityOne Program and the National Industries for the Blind. Since their inception, the AbilityOne Program and NIB have changed the lives of millions of people who are blind or have other significant disabilities by providing increased independence through job skills training and employment opportunities. They are our nation's largest source of employment for blind and disabled individuals and manufacture over 3,000 quality products, ranging from diesel engine glow plugs to printer toner.

In Las Vegas, the Blind Center of Nevada has helped blind and visually impaired Nevadans reach their highest potential. In addition to offering employment opportunities, computer training, braille classes, and other supportive services, the Blind Center of Nevada has built a community full of music and friendship.

I want to congratulate the AbilityOne Program and NIB on this momentous occasion and thank them for 75 years of service.

THANKING BERN BEIDEL FOR HIS SERVICE TO THE HOUSE

HON. CANDICE S. MILLER

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 11, 2013

Mrs. MILLER of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate and recognize Bernard E. Beidel, an employee of the Chief Administrative Officer of the U.S. House of Representatives. Mr. Beidel was honored with the 2013 Lifetime Achievement Award from the Employee Assistance Professionals Association (EAPA). The Lifetime Achievement Award honors an EAPA member who has made a significant contribution to Employee Assistance Programs (EAP), the EA profession, and to individuals over an extended period of time.

Mr. Beidel has been a leader in providing EAP services to organizations and currently serves as Director of the Office of Employee Assistance. He has held this role for over 20 years providing direct EAP services to members and staff of the U.S. House of Representatives since its inception in 1991.

I am proud to stand before you and the Nation on Mr. Beidel's behalf to recognize the importance of his public service, and honor his award for lifetime achievement and his contributions to the House community.

We wish Bern much happiness in fulfilling his retirement dreams.

RECOGNIZING CURTIS MARTIN

HON. GREG WALDEN

OF OREGON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 11, 2013

Mr. WALDEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize my good friend Curtis Martin for his life-long efforts to support agriculture and ranching, which are so important to jobs and the economy in rural Oregon. Over the past two years, Curtis has done a tremendous job serving as the president of the Oregon Cattlemen's Association. As his term as president comes to an end, I'd like to take a moment to pay tribute to his leadership.

Before and during his service as president of the Oregon Cattlemen's Association, Curtis served in several capacities locally to the benefit of farmers and ranchers. He has been a member of the Powder Basin Watershed Committee, a Director on the Union Soil and Water Conservation District and President of the Powder Valley Water Control District.

During his tenure as Oregon Cattlemen's Association President, Curtis has worked tirelessly to represent Oregon's livestock industry across the state. During the summer of 2012, wildfires devastated over one million acres of rangeland and forest across Oregon, affecting many ranchers' livelihoods along the way. Curtis took the lead in coordinating a relief effort, helping raise over $200,000 in donations for ranchers who had lost cattle and pasture due to the fires. In a further response to the fires, Curtis established the Restore Everything Strategically Through Organized Response (RESTOR) Task Force, bringing together federal agencies, the State of Oregon, local governments and the Oregon congressional delegation to channel resources and assistance to affected livestock communities. RESTOR also put forth proactive solutions to reduce the frequency and intensity of wildfires, and improve government and community responses when fires occur. Federal agencies continue to work towards implementing several of the task force's recommendations.

Curtis also led the Oregon Cattlemen's Association Oregon Habitat Monitoring Initiative, pulling together a diverse group of stakeholders from federal and state agencies, Oregon State University, private consultants and other industry groups to develop a cooperative monitoring standard for producers on the ground. This effort resulted in the current development of the Oregon Rangeland Monitoring Guide, so that livestock producers can easily monitor their pastures and supplement federal agency data supporting public land grazing allotments.

Curtis was raised on a ranch in Vale, Oregon, on the far eastern edge of the state. After high school, he moved full time into the family's ranch operation, building fence, piping water and moving cattle on horseback. By 1978, Curtis had married his wife Cheryl and moved to North Powder, where Cheryl's family has roots back to the Oregon Trail pioneers who first settled the Baker Valley in the 1860s.

In 1983, Curtis and Cheryl bought a ranch in North Powder, where they now center their ranching operation. Curtis has said that upon buying the property, it was so run down it was only suitable for producing "weeds and ground squirrels." Together, they turned their efforts to rehabilitating the property to a state fit for raising cattle and have been successful in their efforts. Curtis and Cheryl treasure their four sons and six grandchildren. They take great pride in their family ranch operation and in seeing yet another generation involved in the ranch and learning the lifestyle that means so much to them.

I'd like to offer a special thank you to Curtis and Cheryl for their friendship and guidance over the years.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing Curtis Martin for his tireless dedication to agriculture and ranching in Oregon as president of the Oregon Cattlemen's Association.

HONORING SGT KYLE CLIFTON ON EARNING THE U.S. ARMY ENGINEER ASSOCIATION'S DE FLEURY MEDAL

HON. RICHARD L. HANNA

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 11, 2013

Mr. HANNA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate SGT Kyle Clifton on being presented with the U.S. Army Engineer Association's prestigious de Fleury Medal. The de Fleury Medal is awarded by the Army Corps of Engineers to honor those individuals who have provided significant contributions to Army Engineering. Since 1779, the de Fleury Medal has held a special place in the ranks of our service engineers for the values that one must demonstrate in order to be deemed worthy of its receipt.

While this medal is certainly a testament to the valor and professionalism possessed and exhibited by SGT Clifton, it is also a natural tribute to SGT Clifton's distinguished service career with the Army Reserve. As the medal itself is inscribed, this is "a memorial and reward for courage and boldness," and perhaps more than that it is a physical accolade of the thanks that his community, his fellow Reservists, and his nation have for the service and sacrifices he has devoted to the defense of the United States of America. In addition to the de Fleury Medal, SGT Clifton's long list of awards also includes the Bronze Star with Valor, the Purple Heart, the Army Commendation Medal, and the Combat Action Badge. These honors have been bestowed upon SGT Clifton for his proven expertise in service efforts including ground clearance missions and professionalism while serving on the front line of duty. Throughout his tours in Iraq and Afghanistan, SGT Clifton proved to be an asset for our Army in holding positions, exhibiting versatility within his vehicle command, clearing improvised explosive devices (IEDs), and demonstrating exceptional instincts and tactics in the midst of contact fire.

Last year, SGT Clifton's truck was struck by an IED while involved in a supply route clearing mission in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. This cruel attack seriously injured SGT Clifton and claimed the lives of his three brothers in arms who were in the truck with him: SSG Dain Venne; SGT Brett Gornewicz; and SPC Ryan Jayne. Upon his arrival at the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, I had the opportunity to personally visit with SGT Clifton and his wife. On that day and in the days since then, I have been continuously impressed by the progress that SGT Clifton has made in his physical recovery and the modesty that he has shown. SGT Clifton exhibits daily the traits of bravery, resolve, and a genuine desire to selflessly serve our nation that exemplify the very best of our troops.

While every soldier's experiences are unique, the story of SGT Clifton, SSG Venne, SGT Gornewicz, and SPC Jayne shares aspects with far too many others that have paid a personal price in their efforts to counter the challenges of the modem battlefield. IEDs are the leading cause of casualties for American servicemembers and the leading cause of injuries afflicting our veterans. In 2012 alone, 104 American troops were killed and 1,744 were wounded by these indiscriminate weapons. SGT Clifton is just one of the more than 51,000 service members who have been wounded in action in our engagements since the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. With these figures in mind, Mr. Speaker, I ask that this body join me in continuing to explore and support ways to reduce the prevalence of these incidents.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleges to join me in congratulating SGT Clifton on being awarded the Steel de Fleury Medal. I express my utmost gratitude to him and all of our servicemembers and veterans for their valiant service and sacrifices, as well as to all of the families and communities who make up the invaluable foundation of support for these men and women.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. SHEILA JACKSON LEE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 11, 2013

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, on December 9, 2013, I travelled to Johannesburg, South Africa, as part of the Congressional Delegation appointed to attend the memorial service for Nelson Mandela, the first president of the new Republic of South Africa and one of the greatest leaders of the 20th century. Because of my participation in this important event I was unable to return in time for Roll Call Votes 630 and 631.

Had I been present I would have voted as follows:

1. On rollcall No. 630 I would have voted ''aye'' (December 10) (H.R. 3521, The Department of Veterans Affairs Major Medical Facility Lease Authorization Act of 2013, as amended (Rep. MILLER (FL)—Veterans' Affairs)

2. On rollcall No. 631, I would have voted ''aye'' (December 10) (H.R. 1402, VA Expiring Authorities Extension Act of 2013, as amended (Rep. COFFMAN—Veterans' Affairs)

IN RECOGNITION OF DAVE WARDEN

HON. JACKIE SPEIER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 11, 2013

Ms. SPEIER. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor Dave Warden for his twelve years of service on the Belmont City Council, including three years as mayor in 2002, 2005 and 2012. Dave was first elected in 1999 and served two terms until 2007. He returned in 2009 for his current term.

Dave has been a tireless advocate for open space and was a driving force behind voter-approved Measure F, the Hillside Preservation Ordinance, and the Slope Density Ordinance. He worked hard on the acquisition of 35 acres in the San Juan Canyon which are now permanent open space. He was also instrumental in getting the new library built and was the council's representative to the library JPA. He also made the seismic upgrade of city hall a reality. He supported the smoking ordinance and the creation of Semeria Park.

Dave's top priority has always been to spend Belmont taxpayers' money wisely. He was critical in negotiating with the city's bargaining units to rein in escalating pension costs. He is well-known for his bargaining skills and has helped keep Belmont's budget balanced with a minimal use of reserves even in a down economy.

Before joining the council, he served as the Planning Commissioner and Parks and Recreation Commissioner. He is also a former president of his neighborhood association and former member of the Belmont Chamber of Commerce.

Dave was born and raised in Belmont and graduated from Carlmont High School in 1979. He earned a Bachelor's Degree in Computer Science from UC Berkeley and is a medical software engineer. He worked for several Silicon Valley start-up firms and developed successful products for Sony, Zenith, Samsung, RCA, Casio, Panasonic and the U.S. Navy. He is also a former school teacher at Ralston Middle School where he was named the PTA Teacher of the Year in 2002.

He and his wife of 17 years, Lisa, have always had an eye out for preserving Belmont's village-like charm and character.

As you can see from this long list of accomplishments, Dave has a love of Belmont that has been demonstrated over many years and in many forms. Working in local government is not always the easiest task. You often face your neighbors and friends whose expectations are sometimes difficult to meet. However, through his tireless efforts, Dave Warden has demonstrated that he truly wanted to meet the needs of residents as much as was possible given fiscal and other constraints.

Mr. Speaker, this dedication over time is rare, but his length of service and focus on the quality of life in Belmont is why Dave Warden's tenure on the council and in so many other capacities will be remembered. He will be missed on the council but his legacy will live on for many, many years.

PAYING TRIBUTE TO MAJOR CONRAD J. JAKUBOW'S DEDICATED SERVICE TO OUR NATION

HON. JACK KINGSTON

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 11, 2013

Mr. KINGSTON. Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to Major Conrad J. Jakubow, United States Army for his extraordinary dedication to duty and selfless service to the United States of America. Conrad has served for the last three years as a Congressional Budget Liaison for the Secretary of the Army and will soon depart for his next duty assignment.

A native of Chicago, Illinois, Conrad earned his commission as an Officer in the United States Army at the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York in calendar year 2000. Major Jakubow's assignments have been diverse and include over twenty-eight months of combat experience. While assigned as a Lieutenant to the 1st Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment, 1st Armored Division, at Armstrong Barracks in Budingen, Germany, Conrad served with Charlie Troop, Alpha Troop, and Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, as a tank and scout platoon leader, executive officer, and squadron motor officer and deployed his units twice to combat in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. As a Captain, Conrad attended the Civil Affairs Qualification Course and became a civil affairs officer serving in both the 96th Civil Affairs Battalion and the 95th Civil Affairs Brigade deploying again in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

After returning from his third combat deployment, Major Jakubow began his professional studies as a United States Army Congressional Fellow, earning a Master's of Professional Studies in Legislative Affairs from The George Washington University. Conrad was then nominated and assigned as an Office of the Secretary of Defense Congressional Fellow in the office of the late Congressman C.W. Bill Young and served as his military advisor on defense and veteran matters, providing critical analysis and insight on defense appropriation matters and pending legislation. Major Jakubow served one year in the Congressional Office and thereafter was subsequently assigned as a Congressional Budget Liaison Officer in the office of the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Financial Management and Comptroller in the Pentagon with responsibility for managing the Army's tactical wheeled vehicle program, military construction accounts, installations, energy, and special access program portfolios. Conrad has skillfully advised the Army's senior leaders, fostering and strengthening the relationship between the Congress and the United States Army. Major Jakubow's leadership as both a Company Grade and Field Grade Officer throughout his career has positively impacted his peers and superiors, Soldiers and civilians alike. As a Congressional Budget Liaison Officer he worked directly with the House and Senate Appropriations Committees to educate and inform Representatives, Senators, and staff about the diverse and important tactical procurement initiatives of the U.S. Army.

Mr. Speaker, it has been my esteemed pleasure to work with Major Conrad Jakubow during his time as a fellow and legislative liaison. On behalf of a grateful nation, I join my colleagues today in recognizing and commending Major Conrad J. Jakubow for over a decade of active service to his country in the United States Army. We wish Conrad, his daughter Mara, all the best as they continue their journey of service to our great Nation.

HONORING ARMY CHAPLAIN COLONEL ERIC OLSEN

HON. CHRISTOPHER P. GIBSON

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 11, 2013

Mr. GIBSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the honorable and distinguished career of Army Chaplain Colonel Eric Olsen. I have had the distinct privilege of knowing Colonel Olsen since serving in the United States Army.

Born in Staten Island, Chaplain Olsen entered the United States Army in December 1983 through the Pennsylvania National Guard. He completed the Chaplain Candidate Course in 1985 and was subsequently ordained by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in 1988. From 1988 until 1992, he led the parish at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church in Saranac Lake before going on Active Duty and serving tours of duty in South Carolina, Germany, Egypt and Fort Drum. Finally, he transitioned to the New York National Guard in 1999 where he remained throughout his career.

Chaplain Olsen's long career has included assignments as Assistant Chaplain HHC 27th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, Chaplain HHS 1–156 Field Artillery, Chaplain HHC 27th UEX, and the State Chaplain of the New York National Guard.

A veteran of Operation Iraqi Freedom, Chaplain Olsen deployed to Iraq, operating in the dangerous Sunni Triangle region. Serving as the Battalion Chaplain, his unit conducted combat and stability operations as a part of Task Force Hunter.

During his notable career, Chaplain Olsen earned various awards and decorations including the Bronze Star Medal, Meritorious Service Medal (with bronze oak leaf cluster), Army Commendation Medal (with 3 bronze oak leaf

clusters), Army Achievement Medal (with 1 silver oak leaf clusters and 1 bronze oak leaf cluster), Army Reserve Components Achievement Medal (with 3 bronze oak leaf clusters), National Defense Service Medal (with 2 bronze oak leaf clusters), Multinational Force and Observers Medal, Meritorious Unit Citation Ribbon, Army Service Ribbon, Overseas Service Ribbon, Army Reserve Components Overseas Training Ribbon, Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal, Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, and Combat Action Badge.

Eric had a truly commendable career, of which he, his wife Susan Marie, and his two sons Garth and Evan should all be very proud. Notably, he made the difficult sacrifice of serving both the United States as well as the higher power of God. I would like to wish him and his family all of the best in his future service and retirement from the United States Army and New York National Guard.

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER 2013 VSIP RETIREES ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

HON. CANDICE S. MILLER

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 11, 2013

Mrs. MILLER of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate and recognize the staff that retired through the Office of the Chief Administrative Officer 2013 voluntary separation incentive payment program, for their collective years of distinguished service to the U.S. House of Representatives: Sharyn Alexander; Kenton Armas; Timothy Babcock; Gerald Bennett; Frederick Bowles, Jr.; Lorenzo Braye; Elery Caskey, Jr., Tredway Childress; Alessandro Cusati; Mark Dalton; Thomas D'Amico; Sandra Durham; Estanislao Field; Jerry Gallegos; Terry Hancock; Monroe Holliway; Barbara Holmberg; Alfredda Horton; Richard Hughes; Trevera Jackson; Christine Jensen; Stephen Johnson; Eric King; Thomas Mako; Russell Malone; Roy McLeod; Gwendolyn Melvin; George Moore; Ronald Mullvain; Thoa Nguyen; David Peebler; Robert Ransom II; Alan Richardson; Willie Roane; Delma Rutkowski; Joe Taylor; Alvin Thompson; Ben Vann; Robert Watson.

These individuals are acknowledged and commended for the hard work, dedication, professionalism, and spirit of public service that each contributed to the operation of the House. On behalf of the Office of the CAO and the entire House community, I am proud to stand before you in recognition of their outstanding contributions to the House of Representatives.

IN RECOGNITION OF CORALIN FEIERBACH

HON. JACKIE SPEIER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 11, 2013

Ms. SPEIER. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor Coralin Feierbach for 14 years of outstanding service on the Belmont City Council, serving as mayor in 1999, 2007 and 2011. Coralin was first elected in 1995 for one term. She joined the council again in 2003 and has served continuously since that date.

Coralin's hands-on and passionate style make her one of the most memorable leaders in Belmont. She always strives to see the side of residents, and works hard to ensure that their interests rather than the interests of others are the central focus of the council's deliberations. She will listen to Belmont residents on any topic, at any time of the day or night.

Coralin has been a longtime advocate of open space. She first made a name for herself in the community in the mid-1970s when a plan to build housing on Sugarloaf Mountain in San Mateo on the border with Belmont was proposed. She and others won the fight to protect open space and Coralin has spent much of her life since protecting the Belmont hills from development.

During her tenure on the council, she was instrumental in getting both Measure F, the Hillside Preservation Ordinance, and the Slope Density Ordinance, passed. She assisted in the acquisition of 35 acres in San Juan Canyon which are now permanent open space. The canyon was slated to have 1,000 homes built and Coralin helped reduce the number of lots for homes down to about 60. She succeeded in preserving the land for its beauty and recreational purposes, making it a sanctuary for the area's wildlife and residents.

She also worked on a revision of the city's tree ordinance, the smoking ordinance, design review, code enforcement, the noise ordinance, construction time limits and green initiatives. Literally, if you look at the lush trees and canyons that distinguish Belmont, you see Coralin's clarity of purpose throughout the community.

Coralin served during some of the most difficult economic times for Belmont. She always wanted a balanced and fair budget. She worked hard to prevent Caltrain's evolution from changing the character of the community, and her service did not begin with the council. Coralin served on the Planning Commission from 1986–1987 and 2001–2003.

Coralin has a Bachelor's in Mathematics from San Francisco State University and did two years in the graduate program in mathematics at San Francisco State. She was a software developer and part owner of a software development firm.

In her well-deserved retirement, Coralin is looking forward to spending more time with her husband Gary, their daughter and grandchildren. And she plans to take music classes at Notre Dame de Namur University in Belmont and to start a quartet as she plays classical piano.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the House of Representatives to rise with me to honor Coralin Feierbach for her outstanding public service to the residents of Belmont. She has preserved and nurtured the city's spirit in order to produce tranquility amidst the urban din, and a small town appeal that makes Belmont a gem on the San Francisco Peninsula.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. K. MICHAEL CONAWAY

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 11, 2013

Mr. CONAWAY. Mr. Speaker, on December 9, the weather delayed my arrival to Washington DC for the afternoon votes, and I missed rollcall No. 630, or H.R. 3521. Had I been present I would have voted ''aye'' on H.R. 3521.

THE NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH (NIH) FUNDING AND THE IMPACT OF SEQUESTRATION

HON. JOYCE BEATTY

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 11, 2013

Mrs. BEATTY. Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague, Congresswoman JACKIE SPEIER, for leading this important bi-partisan discussion on the benefits of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the dire impact that sequestration is having on NIH, its grantees, and our nation.

NIH makes important discoveries that improve health and save lives.

Thanks in large part to NIH-funded medical research, Americans today are living longer and healthier lives.

Life expectancy in the United States has increased and disability in people over age 65 has dramatically decreased in the past 3 decades because of the important research taking place at NIH.

NIH is also a job creator—it has created hundreds of thousands of high-quality jobs by funding scientists at universities and research institutions in every state across America and in countries around the globe.

These investments have led directly to better outcomes for cancer patients and increased the effectiveness of the treatments we have for HIV, influenza, diabetes, obesity, Alzheimer's, and hundreds of other diseases and disorders that affect millions of Americans.

More than 80% of NIH's budget goes to more than 300,000 research personnel at over 2,500 universities and research institutions.

In fiscal year 2013, Ohio received $777 million in NIH funding.

And my district, the third congressional district of Ohio, received 581 NIH grants, worth over $248 million.

NIH has historically funded the largest amount of federally funded research within my district at The Ohio State University.

In 2012, NIH funded approximately 25% of the overall research expenditures at The Ohio State University.

NIH grants went utilized on collaborations between The Ohio State University and Nationwide Children's Hospital to accelerate basic scientific discoveries into life-saving medical advances.

In particular, the discovery of microRNAs, small cellular molecules involved with biological regulation, is now known to play a pivotal role in the growth and spread of prostate, ovarian, colon and lung cancers, as well as other diseases.

NIH grants were also provided to The Ohio State University to establish a research center devoted to the study of tobacco use patterns, research that will help the Food and Drug Administration put science behind its new role in regulating tobacco.

NIH funds investigators in my district, at Nationwide Children's Hospital, to study gene therapy as a treatment for spinal muscular atrophy, the most common genetic defect that results in infant mortality.

At Nationwide Children's Hospital, NIH funding makes possible important clinical trials of viral therapy for solid cancer tumors in children, testing of new agents against childhood tumors, research to prevent and treat infant prematurity, and the furthering of understanding of the mechanisms of autism prevention.

In fact, the Research Institute at Nationwide Children's Hospital is ranked 6th for NIH funding among free-standing children's hospitals in the United States.

Hyper Tech Research, Bertec Corporation, Battelle, and BioOhio—all of these outstanding companies in the third congressional district of Ohio benefit from NIH research funding for biotechnology, drug development, medical devices, and health care.

But, just as NIH dollars that flow to Ohio help grow the state's economy, a reduction in those dollars have hurt us.

On March 1, 2013 sequestration required NIH to cut 5 percent—$1.55 billion—of its fiscal year 2013 budget.

These drastic cuts affected all NIH programs, projects, and activities—every single area of medical research was negatively affected.

NIH now has approximately 700 fewer competitive research grants.

They now have approximately 750 fewer new patients in their clinical center.

The development of more effective cancer drugs is being delayed.

Research on a universal flu vaccine is being delayed.

Research on prevention of debilitating chronic conditions is being delayed.

These delays are proof that sequestration has significantly undermined medical progress across all disciplines of research on the full spectrum of diseases and conditions.

We cannot continue to compromise our nation's future economic growth and security by blindly cutting federal investment in areas that are critical to our nation's ability to innovate and compete in the global economy.

As much as half of U.S. economic growth since World War IIIs a result of technological innovation, much of which resulted directly from federally-funded scientific research.

The private sector, which requires rapid returns in investment, relies on the federal government to fund basic scientific research.

Sustained support for federal research, education, and student aid programs pay dividends by building human, scientific and technological capital for our nation.

We cannot afford to let the United States fall behind other countries, such as China, in such important areas as scientific research and innovation.

Our government must show a clear commitment to sustained funding of scientific research across the disciplines so that our nation can compete globally and we can build a better America for future generations.

Sequestration is not the answer to our nation's fiscal problems.

I urge my colleagues to oppose further cuts to nondefense discretionary programs.

The point of fiscal responsibility is to invest in these critical federal programs in order to provide a better life for all Americans, especially our children who are our future researchers and inventors.

Sustained investments in NIH are essential so that our nation can train the next generation to make tomorrow's health discoveries and to continue America's scientific leadership.

The work done by NIH helps grow our economy, improve our health, and has made our nation stronger and more secure.

We should not weaken them.

IN HONOR OF MR. LARRY HORTON'S RETIREMENT

HON. DORIS O. MATSUI

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 11, 2013

Ms. MATSUI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in recognition of Larry Horton, Senior Associate Vice President and Director of Government and Community Relations at Stanford University, as he celebrates his retirement from a long and distinguished career. I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring this individual who has contributed so much to Stanford University.

Mr. Horton joined Stanford University in 1970, and has served in a number of positions including Assistant and Associate Dean of Student Affairs, Associate Director of Government Relations, and Associate Vice President for Public Affairs. In addition, from 1976 to 1977, he participated in the President's Executive Exchange Program in Washington, where he served as an assistant to the Secretary of Health and Human Services. His achievements at Stanford include the 2000 Community Plan/General Use Permit, the Mayfield Development Agreement and the conclusion of the Trails Agreement with Santa Clara County.

A true Cardinal, Mr. Horton earned both his B.A. in political science, and his M.A. in history, from Stanford. Following graduation, he served our country in the U.S. Army, with two years in Western Europe during the Vietnam War era. Through his years at Stanford, he has seen history unfold on the campus, and helped to shape Stanford's policies in areas vital to the University's success, including housing for women and minorities, federal patent legislation, federal research-funding policy, federal immigration and national security issues, and significantly, land use issues.

At Stanford's 2013 commencement, Mr. Horton was honored with the Kenneth M. Cuthbertson Award For Exceptional Service to Stanford University. This award was truly deserved, and Mr. Horton will leave Stanford University for the better from his 54 years of service to the school. Following his retirement, Larry will certainly maintain a busy schedule pursuing his passions of opera and theater, golf, travel, and enjoying a good book.

Mr. Speaker, I am honored to recognize the numerous contributions made by Mr. Larry Horton during his tenure at Stanford University. As Mr. Horton, family, friends, and colleagues celebrate his retirement, I ask my colleagues to join me in thanking and recognizing him for his many years of service.

A TRIBUTE TO THE FISHER HOUSE: A HOME AWAY FROM HOME, FOR AMERICA'S HEROES AND THEIR FAMILIES

HON. PETE SESSIONS

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 11, 2013

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in this Christmas Season of giving to recognize The Fisher House, an organization that has built sixty-two homes for our wounded warriors and their families. The Fisher House is a place of recovery where families can be reunited with their loved ones as they fight the battle to overcome the scars of war. As a home away from home, The Fisher House provides safe haven and helps relieve the financial hardships that families relocating to be with their wounded loved ones face. The Fisher House Program was founded in 1990 by Zachary and Elizabeth Fisher in Rockville, Maryland. They are located at major military and VA medical centers nationwide. Kenneth Fisher is currently carrying on his Uncle Zach's legacy as acting Chairman. I submit this poem penned by Albert Carey Caswell in their honor.

FISHER HOUSE—BECAUSE A FAMILY'S LOVE IS GOOD MEDICINE

A . . .
A Home . . .
A Home Away . . .
A Home Away From . . .
A Home Away From Home!
And when our heroes come back home . . .
From war and battlefields of honor bright to which they belong.
Back from that most dreaded cost of war . . . .
all in such pain and heartache to endure . . . .
As such a battle up ahead them so lies before,
for all these families in this new war!
Broken all in such places.
With scars upon their faces . . .
With arms and legs missing in all places . . .
With operation after operation,
as this they so face this!
As they can not so be alone . . .
For they so need a place of refuse where they can get strong . . .
A place that they can call Home!
A Home Away From Home,
where they can all belong!
Can grow!
A place where healing is so strong!
A place where their loved ones can hold them tight . . . .
and encourage them both day and night!
A place to ready them for this new battle,
this new fight!
A place of refuse and of rest!
A place where they can but be their best!
A place that which helps their fine heart's crest!
A place which brings them to recovery and nothing less!
A place where they so all belong!
So they know that they are not alone!
A Home Away From Home!
Just like a love song!
Because all of these families come from afar!
As they put their own lives on hold . . .
because that's who they are!
Such quiet heroes one and all,
who so shine like the stars!
Because they make their loved ones who they are!
All In This Home Away From Home from afar!

The Fisher House is the Home of America's Greatest of All Stars!
So that in the morning they can awake . . .
With but smiles upon their face!
Where their children can but so have a place!
Where they can be kids as all around they so race!
Which feels more like home with each new day!
Where at the dinner table they can all say grace!
A safe haven . . .
a sanctuary which in the quiet of the night brings tears to their face!
To let them Heal!
To let them find The Grace!
Where their courage grows at such an enormous pace!
Where family Birthdays . . .
Christmas . . .
Thanksgiving and Holidays they celebrate!
And talk about their first new steps so great!
As they wipe away all those tears from their face!
All in This Home Away From Home,
this so very special healing place!
Until that moment,
that one fine day
when it's time to leave this Home Away From Home!
And finally,
they can all go back to their Home's to so stay!
As they will never forget this place!
Bless this home!

RECOGNIZING THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF SPRINGFIELD CHAPTER 893 OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF RETIRED FEDERAL EMPLOYEES

HON. GERALD E. CONNOLLY

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 11, 2013

Mr. CONNOLLY. Mr. Speaker, I rise to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of Chapter 893 of the National Association of Active and Retired Federal Employees (NARFE), based in Springfield, Virginia.

Founded in 1921, NARFE is a nonpartisan organization dedicated to protecting and enhancing the earned pay, retirement, and health care benefits of federal employees and retirees as well as their spouses and survivors. Springfield Chapter 893 is one of more than 1600 NARFE chapters nationwide.

The Charter for Chapter 893 was issued December 31, 1963. At that time, there were 14 members. Today, the Chapter membership has grown to become the largest of the 59 chapters in Virginia, with nearly 1,400 voting members. Chapter members have had a strong voice in many national and local legislative issues affecting Federal retirees, senior citizens and the public at large.

While Chapter 893 has always emphasized fulfilling the primary NARFE mission, its members have also made invaluable contributions to our Northern Virginia community. Chapter 893 members have volunteered countless hours at hospitals and libraries, and they have worked with local non-profit organizations to support blood drives and Meals on Wheels programs. Since 1987, members have contributed generously to Alzheimer's Research, the charity of choice for NARFE nationwide. In 1992, members first participated in the local area Alzheimer's Memory Walk, which has raised approximately $1,000 annually for several years. In 2009, members began participating in the collection of warm clothing items for homeless veterans for the Washington, DC, Veterans Administration Medical Center. That same year, the Chapter began supporting the National Association of Letter Carriers ''Stamp Out Hunger'' program.

Over the course of its successful history, the Springfield Chapter has benefited from many dynamic, accomplished leaders. Several past presidents have been elected as officers or appointed committee chairs of the NARFE Virginia Federation of Chapters. Others have served in civic, professional, or fraternal organizations locally. Particularly noteworthy are the accomplishments of past presidents Milton Kramer, Vincent Agnelli, David Sullivan, Charles Delaplane, and Ann M. Collins. Past President Kramer played a major role in organizing the Northern Virginia Caucus of Chapters in 1993. Past President Agnelli served on an ad hoc committee influential in the 1993 Virginia Supreme Court Federal retiree tax refund issue. Past President Sullivan served on the Board of the Virginia Federation of Chapters (VFC) for several years and subsequently was elected NARFE National Secretary in 2000 and again in 2002. Past President Charles Delaplane served on the Board of the VFC for several years and chaired the National Legislation Committee at the 2008 and 2010 NARFE National Conventions. Past President Collins served on the Board of the VFC and subsequently was elected VFC President for 2 terms (2005–2007). In 2006 as VFC President she established NARFE VFC Congressional District Liaisons for the 11 congressional districts in Virginia as well as a Senatorial Liaison. Also, Past President Collins was appointed as a delegate to the 2005 White House Conference on Aging to represent the 11th Congressional District of Virginia.

The 11th Congressional District of Virginia, due to its proximity to Washington, DC, is home to a significant number of Federal employees and retirees and I am honored to represent these dedicated and honorable public servants in the U.S. House of Representatives. Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating NARFE Springfield Chapter 893 on the occasion of its 50th Anniversary and in thanking the members for their unwavering support and dedication to Federal employees, retirees, and their families.

INNOVATION ACT

SPEECH OF

HON. HAKEEM S. JEFFRIES

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 5, 2013

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 3309) to amend title 35, United States Code, and the Leahy-Smith America Invents Act to make improvements and technical corrections, and for other purposes:

Mr. JEFFRIES. Mr. Chairman, the Jeffries Amendment to H.R. 3309 accepted in the House Judiciary Committee amended the bill's fee-shifting provision in a meaningful manner designed to reduce the likelihood of an adverse award made against a non-prevailing party. As originally introduced, H.R. 3309 required the court to award fees to a prevailing party in patent litigation ''unless the court finds that the position of the nonprevailing party or parties was substantially justified or that special circumstances make an award unjust.''

The Jeffries Amendment modifies this provision to disallow fee-shifting when: 1) ''the court finds that the position and conduct of the nonprevailing party or parties were reasonably justified in law and fact'' or 2) when a named inventor or non-prevailing party encounters special circumstances such as ''severe economic hardship'' that would make a fee-shifting award unjust. With respect to the latter provision, the amendment further limits the circumstances under which a fee-shifting award is proper by mandating consideration of additional factors by the court.

During the debate on the House floor, a claim was made that the term ''substantially justified'' means ''reasonably justified'' as interpreted through the Equal Access to Justice Act (EAJA), The EAJA is a body of law unrelated to intellectual property jurisprudence. Accordingly, its precedential value is uncertain. However, to the extent this body of law is considered relevant, the oft-referenced Supreme Court decision in Pierce v. Underwood explicitly asserts that ''substantially justified'' and ''reasonably justified'' are not synonymous. Consequently, even when viewed through the EAJA lens, the Jeffries Amendment clearly lowers the bar that a non-prevailing party must meet in order to avoid an adverse fee-shifting determination.

The EAJA states in pertinent part: ''(1)(A) Except as otherwise specifically provided by statute, a court shall award to a prevailing party other than the United States fees and other expenses . . . incurred by that party in any civil action . . . brought by or against the United States . . . unless the court finds that the position of the United States was substantially justified or that special circumstances make an award unjust.''

The Supreme Court in Pierce v. Underwood decided several issues regarding the EAJA, including the applicable standard of appellate review and the meaning of ''substantially justified.'' Regarding the standard of review, the court held that the plain language of the statute stating ''the court finds,'' makes clear ''that the determination is for the district court to make, and thus suggests some deference to the district court on appeal'' by employing an abuse of discretion standard. H.R. 3309 also includes ''the court finds'' language in its formulation. As such, any appellate court reviewing a fee-shifting decision by the district court should apply the deferential abuse of discretion standard as well.

In order to determine the meaning of ''substantially justified,'' the Court studied the plain meaning of the statute, dictionary definitions and the legislative history to conclude: ''[w]e are of the view, therefore, that as between the two commonly used connotations of the word 'substantially,' the one most naturally conveyed by the phrase before us here is not 'justified to a high degree,' but rather 'justified in substance or in the main'—that is, justified to a degree that could satisfy a reasonable person. That is no different from the 'reasonable basis both in law and fact' formulation adopted by the ninth Circuit . . .'' It is important to note, of course, that the phrase ''reasonable

basis'' as referenced in *Pierce* v. *Underwood* does not appear in H.R. 3309 as originally introduced, or as amended.

For purposes of understanding the reduced burden effectuated by the Jeffries Amendment, the most relevant part of the Pierce v. Underwood decision is the majority opinion's assertion that ''our analysis does not convert the statutory term 'substantially justified' into 'reasonably justified.' '' In other words, the two terms yield different standards. Logically, then, ''reasonably justified'' sets forth a lower threshold that must be met by a non-prevailing party.

The concurring opinion of Justice William Brennan further clarifies the practical difference in terms. ''Reasonable' has a variety of connotations, but may be defined as 'not absurd' or 'not ridiculous.' Webster's New Third International Dictionary 1892 (1976) . . . While it is true 'reasonable' and 'substantial' overlap somewhat . . . an overlap is not an identity.''

Accordingly, since the Supreme Court does not equate ''substantially justified'' with ''reasonably justified,'' the suggestion that the change made to the fee-shifting provision in H.R. 3309 is practically meaningless lacks merit. In sum, the Jeffries Amendment deliberately lowers the bar from ''substantially justified'' to ''reasonably justified'' in a manner that relaxes the fee-shifting standard in the bill.

CONGRATULATIONS TO MR. JOHN DALTON

HON. KERRY L. BENTIVOLIO

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 11, 2013

Mr. BENTIVOLIO. Mr. Speaker, Mr. Dalton was appointed to the Livonia Human Relations Commission by Livonia Mayor Jack Kirksey and was elected by his fellow commissioners to serve as the Vice Chairman of the city commission. He takes his new position on the commission at the start of 2014. Congratulations to Mr. John Dalton.

CONGRATULATING THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO AND THE RWJF CENTER FOR HEALTH POLICY ON THEIR DEDICATION TO HEALTH JUSTICE

HON. MICHELLE LUJAN GRISHAM

OF NEW MEXICO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 11, 2013

Ms. MICHELLE LUJAN GRISHAM of New Mexico. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the University of New Mexico and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Center for Health Policy at the University of New Mexico for their dedication to achieving health justice. This September, the University of New Mexico hosted the Congressional Tri-Caucus Health Disparities conference titled ''Practices and Policies That Promote Health Justice''. The summit brought together local and national experts, leaders, policymakers, and advocates for a comprehensive discussion on the status of health justice.

The Tri-Caucus health summit grew out of the need to move forward the discussion on health disparities in Washington and around the nation. The 2013 Health Disparities Summit has set a new standard for this discussion. Thanks to the efforts of the conference planning committee, this summit was the first to include Native American speakers and perspectives, a contribution that sets an important precedent for future summits.

Hosted by the University of New Mexico, under the leadership of President Robert G. Frank and Chancellor for Health Sciences Paul B. Roth, and coordinated by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Center for Health Policy at UNM, led by Director Gabriel Sanchez, the summit provided my Tri-Caucus colleagues and myself with the most relevant and groundbreaking research on health disparities, including in-depth discussions on the serious reality of racial and ethnic health disparities.

The RWJF Center for Health Policy at the University of New Mexico is a research and training institute whose mission is to increase the diversity of health policy leaders who are trained in the social and behavioral sciences and nursing. One of the ways they accomplish this is through their doctoral fellow program, which nurtures promising researchers who are dedicated to social justice and the elimination of health disparities.

Over the course of the conference, I had the distinct pleasure of meeting with several RWJF doctoral fellows whose dedication and passion for achieving health equity helped me return to Washington reenergized to continue working toward health equity. It is meeting people like the RWJF research faculty and their doctoral fellows that gives me hope that we will continue to gain traction in the movement to eliminate health inequalities and achieve health justice.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to have the privilege of representing my alma mater in Congress. As the only Hispanic-Serving Institution in the United States that is classified as a Carnegie Research University with Very High Activity, UNM is at the forefront of education and groundbreaking research, which contributes to a more just and equitable society. The University of New Mexico has taken an active role in working to eliminate health disparities and the RWJF Center for Health Policy is leading this charge. I would like to congratulate the University of New Mexico on their successful conference and for their dedication to achieving health justice.

CELEBRATING THE 75TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE NATIONAL INDUSTRIES FOR THE BLIND (NIB)

HON. LEE TERRY

OF NEBRASKA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 11, 2013

Mr. TERRY. Mr. Speaker, the National Industries for the Blind (NIB) is celebrating its 75th anniversary this year, and I am honored to be a part of its celebration. Seventy-five years ago, the Wagner-O'Day Act was signed into law, which created the AbilityOne Program as well as the NIB.

NIB strives to enhance economic and personal independence of persons who are blind by creating, sustaining, and improving employment.

The NIB works with 91 agencies spread out among 35 states at over 250 locations and the agencies provide products and services for the government.

In my home state, Outlook Nebraska is the NIB provider and is an economic engine that brings valuable business to the Omaha area.

Founded in 2000, Outlook Nebraska, much like its sister NIB agencies, seeks to enhance the quality of life for the blind and visually impaired.

It is Nebraska's largest employer for those with vision disabilities. Outlook Nebraska's work is especially important because, unfortunately, 70 percent of working-age Americans who are blind are unemployed.

The AbilityOne program makes Outlook Nebraska possible. As the official AbilityOne manufacturer of quality tissue and towel products for the government, Outlook Nebraska supplies a full line of 100 percent recycled fiber content tissue and towel products, including bath tissue, pull towels, and all compatible dispensers to the United States government.

Besides the manufacturing of products, the agency provides complete product servicing from its office and tissue-converting site in Omaha.

The agency has also developed additional services for blind and visually impaired employees, such as education and training to provide them with the technological skills that allow them to excel in their professional and personal lives.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. DIANE BLACK

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 11, 2013

Mrs. BLACK. Mr. Speaker, on rollcall No. 630 for final passage of H.R. 3521, and rollcall No. 631 for final passage of H.R. 1402, which took place Tuesday, December 10, 2013, I am not recorded because I was unavoidably detained. Had I been present, I would have voted ''aye'' on both bills.

HONORING THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE UNIFICATION OF THE ISLAND OF CRETE WITH THE HELLENIC REPUBLIC

HON. GUS M. BILIRAKIS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 11, 2013

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the unification of the Island of Crete with the Hellenic Republic. On December 1, 1913, the flag of Greece was raised proudly on the Island, recognizing the will of the people of Crete who declared their unification with Greece, breaking ties with the oppressive Ottoman Empire which had occupied the island since 1669.

Sitting at the crossroads of Africa, Europe and the Middle East, Crete, one of the largest islands in the Mediterranean, is matched by its oversized influence throughout world history. Crete was home to the Minoan civilization, a major center for the Roman, Byzantine, Venetian and Ottoman empires, and birthplace to some of the world's most renowned artists—like Nobel laureate Odysseus Elytis and composer, Mikis Theodorakis.

During their struggle for independence from the Ottoman Empire, the people of Crete endured political oppression and unspeakable atrocities, but they never stopped living their lives under the creed ''Elefteria I Thanatos'' ''Freedom or Death.'' Since rejoining with Greece, Crete has remained a pillar of the fight against tyranny and oppressive regimes. Nowhere was this exhibited more than during the Battle of Crete, when Cretans stood alongside Allied troops and fought off German paratroopers. And—like Crete itself—the Battle had an oversized influence on the outcome of World War II. The damage the Cretans and their Western allies inflicted on the German air force and paratrooper corps prevented Nazi Germany from carrying out another airborne invasion for the remainder of World War II.

For over 267 years, the people of Crete fought a brave battle to rejoin their Greek motherland and I stand here today to recognize their sacrifices and honor their memories.

THE IMPORTANCE OF NIH FUNDING

HON. PETER T. KING

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 11, 2013

Mr. KING of New York. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express my support for full funding of the National Institutes of Health (NIH). The largest source of funding for medical research in the world, the NIH has supported more than 130 Nobel Prize winners.

Medical breakthroughs funded through the NIH include new treatments for cancer and chronic conditions. Clinical trials hosted at the NIH award patients newfound hope that they will be able to overcome debilitating diseases or conditions.

While the significance of NIH funding can be measured through patients reached and treatments developed, it can also be gauged through economic impact. For every dollar of NIH funding spent in New York State, more than twice as much is generated in economic output. In 2011, NIH grants and contracts created and supported more than 33,193 jobs in the state alone and more than 500,000 jobs nationwide.

Due to budget cuts, the NIH funded approximately 700 fewer research grants in 2013 than 2012 and admitted 750 fewer patients to the NIH Clinical Center. Almost immediately, these cuts affected patients hoping to be admitted to clinical trials and research jobs at universities nationwide. In the long term, these cuts will almost certainly delay progress in medical breakthroughs.

We must not allow the significant legacy of the National Institutes of Health be diminished by the harmful effects of funding cuts.

RECOGNIZING THE WILLIAM SMITH COLLEGE SOCCER TEAM

HON. TOM REED

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 11, 2013

Mr. REED. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the William Smith College soccer team, which recently won the 2013 NCAA Division III National Championship. On December 7, 2013, the Herons concluded their record-breaking season with a 2–0 victory over Trinity University, successfully capturing their second national championship title in program history.

Setting new standards for the William Smith soccer program, the Herons completed their season with a record of 23–1–0. Their impressive winning streak of twenty-three games broke the previous school record. Remarkably, twenty-one of those games were complete shutouts, including all six victories in the NCAA tournament. The Herons have now competed in the Final Four ten times in the past twenty-five years and have won the Liberty League title in seven consecutive seasons.

Following the championship game, five players from this incredibly talented squad were named to the NCAA Women's All-Tournament Team. Forward Kara Shue, midfielder Zoe Eth, and goalkeeper Chelsea Dunay were among those who were recognized. In addition, forward Krista Longo and defender Olivia Zitoli were respectively named Most Outstanding Offensive and Defensive Players of the Year.

This gifted team was led by their accomplished and experienced coach, Aliceann Wilber. As the only head coach that the William Smith Herons have ever known, Coach Wilber's 34th season proved to be her most successful yet. The national championship marked Wilber's 480th career win, making her the winningest coach in Division III women's soccer history. She also became the first female collegiate soccer coach to earn more than 400 career wins.

The 2013 William Smith College soccer team demonstrated that hard work and dedication truly pay off. I have no doubt that under the leadership of Coach Wilber, the Herons will continue their extraordinary level of success in the years to come.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. JACKIE WALORSKI

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 11, 2013

Mrs. WALORSKI. Mr. Speaker, on Tuesday, December 10, I was unavoidably detained due to inclement weather and missed two rollcall votes. Had I been present, I would have voted ''yea'' on both rollcall 630, the Department of Veterans Affairs Major Medical Facility Lease Authorization Act, and rollcall 631, the VA Expiring Authorities Extension Act.

HUMAN RIGHTS IN NORTH KOREA

HON. DANNY K. DAVIS

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 11, 2013

Mr. DANNY K. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I rise to call attention to the human rights situation in North Korea. We all remain hopeful that the transition to the leadership of Kim Jong-Un has created new possibilities but we are well aware that there remain fundamental human rights violations in North Korea and humanitarian conditions in North Korea remain deplorable. I believe it is fair to say that the findings in the 2004 North Korean Human Rights Act and 2008 and 2012 Reauthorizations remain substantially accurate today. That is not just my opinion, it was the bi-partisan consensus of this Congress when it reauthorized the North Korean Human Rights Act until 2017.

Mr. Speaker, we know that democracy, economic growth and human development are intimately linked and perhaps nowhere is that more evident than the comparison of North and South Korea. South Korea has taken the path toward more democracy, more human rights, more education, higher living standards and economic self-sufficiency. North Korea has shunned that road . . . and the results of those policies are now glaringly evident. Perhaps even more relevant in today's world is the link of democracy and economic growth to peace. South Korea is not only a major trading partner but an ally in the region while North Korea remains a major source of regional and global instability and insecurity.

Mr. Speaker, the United States has one of the largest Korean populations outside of the Korean Peninsula with millions who have family ties to North Korea and the Seventh Congressional District has its share of the Korean diaspora. Like so many of my constituents, I believe the U.S. must continue its commitment to aid North Korean refugees and advocate for the human rights of the North Korean people. We share the pain of those who have been deprived of these most basic rights and the suffering of those who live in miserable conditions and look forward to the day when the Korean leadership will provide transparency in the delivery of humanitarian assistance, and guarantee the rights of those who seek refuge abroad.

I want to thank my constituent Mr. David Chang, a consistent advocate of human rights, for helping to maintain a focus on this critical issue.

HONORING EARL P. WILLIAMS

HON. DAVID G. VALADAO

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 11, 2013

Mr. VALADAO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Earl P. Williams on his retirement and celebrate his over 20 years of service to the cotton industry and the Central Valley's agriculture industry as a whole.

A native of Arkansas, Earl moved to Buttonwillow, California in 1958. He received a Bachelor of Science in Crop Production from California Polytechnic State University in 1965 and began his agricultural career in California.

Earl was one of fifteen charter members of the California Cotton Ginners Association's Board of Directors and served on the board from 1972 to 1980. He joined the California Cotton Ginners and Growers Associations as the Executive Vice President in 1993, and was later named President and Chief Executive Officer.

Earl is also the past President of the Buttonwillow Chamber of Commerce and Agriculture. He is a past member and chairman of the Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo Crop Science Department's Advisory Council. In 1963 he

was the Crops Club President and in 1996 received the Crops Club's Distinguished Agriculturist Award. Additionally, he served two terms on the California Industrial Welfare Commission's Wage Board #8. He is a past board member of the Agricultural Energy Consumers Association and a past board member of the California Agricultural Education Foundation.

In his various leadership roles, Earl has worked closely with California Governor Gray Davis, and other Democrat and Republican legislators, as well as his colleagues in the agriculture community to pass legislation to assist farmers and agribusinesses in California. Additionally, Earl has been a champion for air pollution and water quality issues facing the San Joaquin Valley of California.

Without a doubt, Earl has been a key player in California's agriculture industry for a number of years. It is with great pride that I recognize Earl P. Williams for his service and leadership and congratulate him on his retirement.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. VICKY HARTZLER

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 11, 2013

Mrs. HARTZLER. Mr. Speaker, on Tuesday, December 10, 2013, I was unable to vote. Had I been present, I would have voted as follows: On rollcall No. 630, ''yea,'' on rollcall No. 631, ''yea.''

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. BRETT GUTHRIE

OF KENTUCKY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 11, 2013

Mr. GUTHRIE. Mr. Speaker, I was absent yesterday due to several flight cancellations and delays due to severe weather. As a result, I missed two votes on Tuesday, December 10, 2013. Had I been present, I would have voted ''aye'' on rollcall votes 630 and 631.

CONGRATULATING JORDAN MARCUS PATE ON ACHIEVING THE RANK OF EAGLE SCOUT

HON. JOHN L. MICA

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 11, 2013

Mr. MICA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize, honor and congratulate an outstanding constituent of my district, Jordan Marcus Pate of Scout Troop 100 in Oviedo, Florida, for achieving the rank of Eagle Scout.

The rank of Eagle Scout is the highest achievement in scouting. To attain this rank, he has demonstrated the qualities of leadership, self-discipline and perseverance while serving his family, friends and community. Only about five percent of Boy Scouts earn the rank of Eagle Scout. The awarding of the Rank of Eagle Scout is a performance-based achievement with high standards that have been well maintained over the past century.

Jordan Pate has met every test and challenge to pass through the ranks of the Boy Scouts. Those aspiring to be Eagle Scouts must fulfill requirements in the areas of leadership, service and outdoor skills. To demonstrate proficiency as a scout, each Boy Scout must achieve merit badges in the areas of First Aid, Citizenship, Environment, Fitness, Family Life and much more.

The work ethic Jordan has shown in his Eagle Scout projects, and every other project leading up to his Eagle Scout rank, speaks volumes about his commitment to assisting his community and serving a cause greater than himself. It is my honor to commend Daniel Moon for his achievement of the rank of Eagle Scout. Jordan will join the ranks of fellow Eagle Scouts like President Gerald R. Ford, Neil Armstrong and Florida Governor Rick Scott.

Mr. Speaker, the example set by this young man and his supportive family demonstrates the rewards of hard work, dedication and perseverance. Jordan's devotion to the Boy Scouts over the past decade is laudable, and I congratulate him on his achievement. I thank him for his dedication to service and know we can expect great things from him in the future. I invite my colleagues in the House to join me in congratulating Jordan Marcus Pate on obtaining the rank of Eagle Scout, and I wish him continued success in his future endeavors.

OUR UNCONSCIONABLE NATIONAL DEBT

HON. MIKE COFFMAN

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 11, 2013

Mr. COFFMAN. Mr. Speaker, on January 20, 2009, the day President Obama took office, the national debt was $10,626,877,048,913.08.

Today, it is $17,234,005,998,603.93. We've added $6,607,128,949,690.85 to our debt in 4 years. This is $6.6 trillion in debt our nation, our economy, and our children could have avoided with a balanced budget amendment.

COMMENDING VIRAJ PURI

HON. ENI F.H. FALEOMAVAEGA

OF AMERICAN SAMOA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 11, 2013

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Viraj Puri, a 13-year-old student at Kilmer Middle School in Vienna, Virginia.

Viraj is interested in technology, music, advocacy, and writes a blog about mobile devices. He is also a certified DJ (DJ Droid) and built his own powerful computer which he uses for his DJ performances. Viraj performs in front of kids, adults and seniors.

As an Indian American teenager, Viraj saw the effects of bullying on his older brother and decided to blend advocacy and technology. He built a website which can be accessed at *www.bullyvention.com.*

Viraj's website calls for teenagers to Write on Washington, to make their voices roar by contacting their lawmakers and urging them to join the campaign to stop bullying now. Viraj believes that kids who are bullied need to know they are powerful enough to reach out to those in position to make a difference.

Bullyvention is the first site to team up with the U.S. House of Representatives' Congressional Anti-Bullying Caucus (CABC). Viraj's website trends from Capitol Hill where he interviews Members of Congress who have a story to share or advice to give victims of bullying.

In support of his vision that the ''pen is mightier than the sword,'' Viraj has been successful in getting Members of Congress involved in a campaign he calls Raise Your Pen. Former Speaker and now Democratic Leader of the U.S. House of Representatives NANCY PELOSI has raised her pen to stop bullying now. President Barack Obama also sent a message of praise and a note of encouragement in response to a hand-written letter Viraj sent to him.

I am pleased that Viraj is also interviewing and posting photos of State Attorneys General, School Superintendents, and others who want to join the campaign. He is creating an online interactive map that highlights areas of concern by searching though keywords in social media like Facebook, Instagram, etc., and by school district, state, and county. It is the only interactive map on this subject.

I commend Viraj for taking a public stand against bullying and for putting his technology skills to use in a way that draws all of us together. His work, especially with Members of Congress, on behalf of teens across America is the first of its kind. And so, for historical purposes, I submit this statement for the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD to recognize Viraj for his advocacy efforts. Viraj is a remarkable young man with a very bright future. I am proud to know him, and I extend to him and his family my kindest regards and best wishes.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. K. MICHAEL CONAWAY

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 11, 2013

Mr. CONAWAY. Mr. Speaker, on December 9, the weather delayed my arrival to Washington DC for the afternoon votes, and I missed rollcall No. 631, or H.R. 1402. Had I been present I would have voted ''aye'' on H.R. 1402.

IN RECOGNITION OF JEFF IRA

HON. JACKIE SPEIER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 11, 2013

Ms. SPEIER. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor Jeff Ira for his 16 years of outstanding service on the Redwood City City Council, two terms as mayor. To say that Jeff's enthusiasm and expertise will be missed by his colleagues and all residents would be the understatement of the decade. Jeff has demonstrated superb leadership in setting Redwood City on a stable financial path and in making it a better place to live. I am proud to call Jeff a colleague and

long time friend. When Jeff became mayor in 2009, he opened his two-year term with a ''Call to Action'' to inspire residents to get engaged in their community and help it recover from the worst recession since the Great Depression. He recommended volunteering at schools, libraries and non-profits and youth sports groups because he knew first-hand that all were suffering during the economic downturn. Under his leadership, and despite tough economic challenges, the city completed a new General Plan and the Downtown Precise Plan, attained a garbage collection agreement, accomplished a partnership with the San Carlos Fire Department to share services and save money, and passed a budget under enormous financial constraints. On his own time, Jeff worked hard to get ballot measures passed to bring more revenue to Redwood City. While mayor, he served on the city's Audit, Finance and Revenue, Jail, Economic Development/Downtown and Fox Theatre committees. He was also the council's liaison for Neighborhood Association co-chairs, and chair of the South Bayside System Authority. Jeff's vision and persistence were instrumental in creating the beautiful downtown of Redwood City. Courthouse Square and the Fox Theater would not be the sparkling jewels they are today without his hard and strategic work. Additionally, he made recycled water a reality for the community. Jeff showed the same creativity, integrity and commitment during his entire tenure on the city council. He will always be known for is the 2004 Great Toilet Giveaway when thousands of residents received low-flow toilets. He saved countless trees by having the city council move to a paperless system for staff reports and digital delivery of agenda packets. You can also thank him for the photo gallery on the city website showing off the beauty of Redwood City. His in-depth understanding of finances and fiscal constraints, and his contribution to creating controls over spiraling costs, helped steer the city through the economic downturn and towards financial stability. As a member of the South Bayside Systems Authority for 13 years, Jeff created the blue ribbon task force to analyze the governing structure of SBSA which resulted in a change on the board to include elected officials and a technical advisory committee. He oversaw the restructuring of the board's commission and committees to make them more effective and to meet the needs of the community. Jeff is passionate about public schools. As a parent, he was deeply involved in Clifford Elementary School in the Redwood City School District, and he worked tirelessly to raise funds for the district. He is committed to equal opportunity for all through quality public education. Jeff also serves as Treasurer of the Sequoia Awards which offers college scholarships to outstanding young people in Redwood City. Jeff has been a major fiscal and spiritual steward of this all-volunteer program for many years. In short, no matter what Jeff takes on, the results are always lasting. Jeff was born and raised in Redwood City and attended Saint Pius School and Saint Francis High School. He graduated from Humboldt State University with a B.S. in Accounting. Jeff is the proud father of Josh, Julie, Jessica and Joseph. While I am sure that he will enjoy more time hiking, kayaking, gardening and traveling after he retires from the council today, I have no doubt he will find ways to stay engaged and to give back to our community. Mr. Speaker, I ask the House of Representatives to rise with me to honor Jeff Ira, one of the finest mayors and public servants San Mateo County has seen. His tireless commitment and contributions to the city and residents of Redwood City will be felt for generations to come.

TRIBUTE TO CHRISTINE DAVENPORT

HON. CANDICE S. MILLER

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 11, 2013

Mrs. MILLER of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of myself and Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania, our Ranking Minority Member, I would like to take this opportunity to recognize Christine Davenport who is leaving the House at the end of this year after serving in the Office of the General Counsel for more than ten years, first as an Assistant Counsel and then as a Senior Assistant Counsel. We will miss her.

Ms. Davenport provided frequent and invaluable legal advice and representation to the Committee on House Administration, as well as to Members, officers and other committees of the House more generally. Our staff came to rely on her expertise and guidance, particularly in connection with their internal oversight activities. Over the years, Ms. Davenport played a significant role in safeguarding the legal and institutional interests of the House of Representatives.

Ms. Davenport served the House with great distinction. On behalf of the Committee on House Administration, we thank Ms. Davenport for her devoted service, and extend to her our very best wishes for her continued success.

RECOGNIZING THE PARKSIDE COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION AS THEY CELEBRATE THEIR 50TH ANNIVERSARY

HON. BRIAN HIGGINS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 11, 2013

Mr. HIGGINS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and congratulate Buffalo's Parkside Community Association (PCA) for celebrating its 50th anniversary in association with the organization's years of dedicated community service. The PCA will celebrate this impressive landmark on Friday, December 6th at the greatbatch pavilion on the Darwin D. Martin House Complex of Buffalo.

Throughout its storied and active past, the PCA has continually sought to meet the challenges that older urban neighborhoods often present. Some of these hurdles include absentee landlords, zoning and code issues, infrastructure deterioration and cutbacks in city services.

The organization is governed by a Board of Directors which comprises 20 members who all serve on a volunteer basis. Each Board member is elected annually by a neighborhood membership of more than 500 individuals, families, and business owners. It is more than appropriate that the PCA's leadership consists of volunteers, as they are truly the backbone of the organization. Eight or more standing and ad-hoc committees consisting of neighborhood volunteers regularly contribute an impressive average of 130 volunteer hours per month.

The PCA provides countless services to local homeowners and the surrounding community. In addition to providing referral and crime prevention services for neighborhood residents as well as assisting in the formation of block clubs and community meetings, the PCA also stages neighborhood tours, hosts programs including the Summer Arts Camp and Little Library Program, and manages committees on crime and safety, housing, and traffic. The PCA was instrumental with the opening of the Parkside COPS Satellite station which addresses quality of life issues, and helped to restore two vacant buildings along the major commercial boundaries. The organization has even assisted some homeowners with property improvements through low-interest loans.

Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I rise today to commend the Parkside Community Association of Buffalo on their 50 years of devoted service to their community. It is the admirable hard work and dedication from organizations like the PCA that maintains the strength and integrity of our neighborhoods. I wish the Parkside Community Association the absolute best in all their future endeavors.

RECOGNIZING THE ROTARY CLUB OF SAVANNAH

HON. JACK KINGSTON

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 11, 2013

Mr. KINGSTON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the Rotary Club of Savannah, which will celebrate the 100th anniversary of its founding this January. This club has been instrumental in providing a network for Savannah's business leaders and serving our community.

The Rotary Club of Savannah is the oldest club in Georgia outside of Atlanta and has over 240 members. It was founded on January 12, 1914. The club's first major project was to buy and promote the sale of bonds to build a road to Tybee Island. The Rotary Club of Savannah was very active in World Wars I and II, helping our service men abroad and aiding relief efforts in Europe.

The Rotary Club of Savannah has been one of the largest supporters of the Bethesda Home for Boys, providing funding, clothing, Christmas gifts, banquets, Boy Scout activities, and volunteer services. They have sponsored the formation of eight new Rotary clubs in our state. They have also been instrumental in establishing the Georgia Rotary Student Program, an international scholarship program which invites students from around the world to study in Georgia.

From organizing youth sports programs to constructing water fountains, the Rotary Club has been a force for good in our community for the past century. I am proud to support the Rotary Club of Savannah as they celebrate this historic milestone. My thoughts are with them during this special time.

EXPRESSING CONDOLENCES TO FAMILY OF DR. CHESTER AIKENS

HON. CORRINE BROWN

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 11, 2013

Ms. BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, it is with deep sadness and a heavy heart, that I wish my condolences to Dr. Chester Aikens' family. Dr. Aikens was not only my dentist, but my long-time friend and community activist whom I greatly respected and admired. Aikens unexpected passing leaves an irreplaceable void throughout the Jacksonville community.

As a recent recipient of Mayor Alvin Brown's ''Trailblazer Award,'' Dr. Aikens embodied that completely. He was a coveted member of the Jacksonville area, where his input, mentorship, and advice was consistently respected and sought out. It is a telling sign towards his character that Dr. Aikens passed after attending a local meeting with the pension reform task force, an issue he was passionate about.

After receiving a doctorate degree in dentistry from Howard University, for 30 years, Dr. Aikens served the Jacksonville area as a prominent dentist. He was a consistent force, acting as one time president of the National Dental Association, a member of the Jacksonville Civic Council, and chairman of the Jacksonville Aviation Authority board to name a few of his accomplishments.

A veteran of the Florida Army Reserve Nation guard, serving 11 years, Dr. Aikens dabbled in just about everything, doing his best to make an impact and improve his community. He was the consummate family man and ultimate professional. I will miss him dearly, but more importantly, the city of Jacksonville and broader Florida community lost an unparalleled leader. That said, he lived a life that should be a blueprint for those to come and an example of great character and unabridged competence.

CONGRATULATING DUKE UNIVERSITY FOOTBALL COACH DAVID CUTCLIFFE FOR BEING HONORED AS WALTER CAMP COACH OF THE YEAR

HON. G. K. BUTTERFIELD

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 11, 2013

Mr. BUTTERFIELD. Mr. Speaker, I rise to congratulate Duke University Head Football Coach David Cutcliffe for being recognized by the Walter Camp Football Foundation, Incorporated as Coach of the Year for the all Division I–A football teams in the National Collegiate Athletic Association, NCAA. Coach Cutcliffe is the only Duke football coach to win the award since its inception in 1967.

After being hired as head coach on December 15, 2007, Coach Cutcliffe led Duke this season to a 10–2 regular season record, which is the best record in the institution's history. This season, Duke football defeated two opponents that were both ranked in the top 25 of all Division I–A football teams—the first victories for Duke football over ranked opponents since 1994. Coach Cutcliffe also guided his team to victories over rivals from the University of North Carolina—Chapel Hill and North Carolina State University in 2013. Last season Coach Cutcliffe led Duke football to its first post season bowl game since 1994 and set a school record by scoring a season total of 410 points.

Coach Cutcliffe has also led the Duke football program to success off the field. Students on the Duke football team had a graduation rate of 92 percent in 2013, compared to the average NCAA rate of 82 percent. Under Coach Cutcliffe's leadership, the Duke football team has strengthened the school's relationship with the community through service opportunities with the Duke Children's Hospital, the Ronald McDonald House, and the Oxford Housing Authority Partnership. Prior to joining the coaching staff at Duke University, Coach Cutcliffe served as an assistant coach at the University of Tennessee and a head coach at Ole Miss. Coach Cutcliffe is a native of Birmingham, Alabama and a graduate of the University of Alabama.

The Walter Camp Football Foundation was created in 1967 and is based in New Haven Connecticut. The foundation is named for Walter Camp, a former athlete and coach at Yale University who is known as the ''Father of American Football.'' He is credited with inventing the line of scrimmage, the game's system of downs, the game's scoring system, and the restriction of play to eleven players per team. The Walter Camp Football Foundation is part of the National College Football Awards Association, which is a coalition of the major collegiate football awards.

Mr. Speaker, I commend David Cutcliffe and the entire Duke University football program for their commitment to excellence. This award is a testament to the outstanding leadership demonstrated by Coach Cutcliffe and tremendous performance on and off the playing field from the Duke University football program's student-athletes. I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring and celebrating Coach David Cutcliffe's great achievement in being recognized as the Walter Camp 2013 Coach of the Year.

TRIBUTE TO DR. CHESTER A. AIKENS

HON. CORRINE BROWN

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 11, 2013

Ms. BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the constituents of the Fifth Congressional District of Florida, I rise today to pay tribute to the life of Dr. Chester A. Aikens.

I am deeply and profoundly saddened by the loss of my dear friend and brother, Dr. Chester A. Aikens. This man of prominence and bearing was the epitome of a gentleman and a scholar. I am moved by his passion, emboldened by his commitments, honored by his friendship and made all the better by his innate wisdom and his belief in the integrity of the human experience. His was a purposeful life and one that helped shape the destinies of historical figures with whom he conversed, and equally so that of the common man and woman, in whom he placed unwavering faith. I came to know him as a husband, father, and dedicated servant to his people and causes, a dentist, a humanitarian, a scholar, a civic leader and businessman without comparison.

Dr. Aikens was born in Madison, Florida, where he was the first black football player and honor society member at his high school. He graduated from Howard University, Washington, DC, with a doctorate in dentistry. He later earned a law degree from Florida Coastal School of Law and Master's degree in Business from Jacksonville University. Dr. Aikens was also a Major in the Florida Army Reserve National Guard.

Known as a fearless warrior, Dr. Aikens was a formidable force who influenced a generation of young people to give both time and resources to their community. Inspired by his strong belief in equal opportunity, he was a true civil rights champion, who went on to greatly influence the community as a whole.

As a member of the Jacksonville community for the past thirty years, Dr. Aikens' presence will be missed by many. He served on many community boards up to and including, first African American from Jacksonville to be President of National Dental Association, Jacksonville Civic Council, Jacksonville Aviation Authority, long-time member, and devoted Deacon of Bethel Institutional Baptist Church and many others.

I am assured, for we all came to know the absoluteness of his word, the sanctity of his promise, the depth of his intellect, the breadth of his worldly experiences and his place in Jacksonville history.

CONGRATULATING WEYERHAEUSER COMPANY

HON. G. K. BUTTERFIELD

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 11, 2013

Mr. BUTTERFIELD. Mr. Speaker, I rise to congratulate Weyerhaeuser Company on being recognized as one of the most community-minded companies in the Nation. Weyerhaeuser was among 50 companies to be awarded this honor by Points of Light and the National Conference on Citizenship's Civic 50 rankings.

Since 1957, Weyerhaeuser has been an integral part of eastern North Carolina. In the First Congressional District that I represent, Weyerhaeuser operates the Softwood Lumber Mill in Plymouth and the Carolina Timberlands Area and GHW Operations Center in Washington. Weyerhaeuser also owns or leases more than 545,000 acres of timberland across the state. The company employs 1,051 North Carolinians and helps support families and businesses in many rural communities.

Weyerhaeuser has been an important contributor to North Carolina's economy and has served as an environmental steward and strong corporate citizen. Since 2008, Weyerhaeuser has donated more than $2.5 million to philanthropic causes throughout North Carolina. Since 1903, the company has provided more than $215 million to support affordable housing and shelter, education and youth development, environmental stewardship, human services, and civic and cultural growth.

The second annual Civic 50 was selected through a stringent survey of S&P 500 companies and measured corporate commitment to improving communities, corporate investment in philanthropy, and civic culture.

Mr. Speaker, I commend employees of Weyerhaeuser Company in North Carolina and throughout the country for their commitment to improving their communities for future generations. I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring and celebrating their efforts to make North Carolina a better place to live and work.

HONORING MEMORY OF LEROY TYSON

HON. CORRINE BROWN

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 11, 2013

Ms. BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the memory of Leroy Tyson. He passed away last week after a long illness. He was a Custodian with the Day Cleaning Division of the House Office Buildings. He began his tour of duty with the AOC on August 6, 2007, where he worked around the clock to help maintain the U.S. Capitol buildings. His kindness and great service will be missed.

I got to know Lee when he took care of the hallways and restrooms around my office on the third floor of the Rayburn Building. He was always quick with a greeting and a friendly smile, always willing to go out of the way for whatever I needed.

Lee was a pleasure to see at work and he will be missed.

Our thoughts and prayers are with the Tyson family during this difficult time.

SENATE COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Title IV of Senate Resolution 4, agreed to by the Senate of February 4, 1977, calls for establishment of a system for a computerized schedule of all meetings and hearings of Senate committees, subcommittees, joint committees, and committees of conference. This title requires all such committees to notify the Office of the Senate Daily Digest—designated by the Rules Committee—of the time, place and purpose of the meetings, when scheduled and any cancellations or changes in the meetings as they occur.

As an additional procedure along with the computerization of this information, the Office of the Senate Daily Digest will prepare this information for printing in the Extensions of Remarks section of the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD on Monday and Wednesday of each week.

Meetings scheduled for Thursday, December 12, 2013 may be found in the Daily Digest of today's record.

MEETINGS SCHEDULED

DECEMBER 13

11 a.m.

Committee on Finance

Business meeting to consider the nominations of Sarah Bloom Raskin, of Maryland, to be Deputy Secretary, and John Andrew Koskinen, of the District of Columbia, to be Commissioner of Internal Revenue, both of the Department of the Treasury, and Rhonda K. Schmidtlein, of Missouri, to be a Member of the United States International Trade Commission.

SD–215

DECEMBER 17

9 a.m.

Committee on Energy and Natural Resources

Business meeting to consider the nominations of Steven Croley, of Michigan, to be General Counsel, and Christopher Smith, of Texas, to be an Assistant Secretary for Fossil Energy, both of the Department of Energy, and Esther Puakela Kia'aina, of Hawaii, to be an Assistant Secretary of the Interior; to be immediately followed by a hearing to examine the nominations of Franklin M. Orr, Jr., of California, to be Under Secretary for Science, and Jonathan Elkind, of Maryland, to be an Assistant Secretary for International Affairs, both of the Department of Energy, and Rhea Sun Suh, of Colorado, to be Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife, and Tommy Port Beaudreau, of Alaska, to be an Assistant Secretary, both of the Department of the Interior.

SD–366

10 a.m.

Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs

To hold hearings to examine the nomination of Arun Madhavan Kumar, of California, to be Assistant Secretary of Commerce and Director General of the United States and Foreign Commercial Service.

SD–538

Committee on Energy and Natural Resources

To hold hearings to examine the nominations of Janice Marion Schneider, of New York, to be Assistant Secretary for Land and Minerals Management, and Neil Gregory Kornze, of Nevada, to be Director of the Bureau of Land Management, both of the Department of the Interior, and Marc A. Kastner, of Massachusetts, to be Director of the Office of Science, and Ellen Dudley Williams, of Maryland, to be Director of the Advanced Research Projects Agency–Energy, both of the Department of Energy.

SD–366

Committee on the Judiciary

To hold hearings to examine protecting small businesses and promoting innovation by limiting patent troll abuse.

SD–226

10:30 a.m.

Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs

To hold hearings to examine the Navy Yard tragedy, focusing on the physical security for Federal facilities.

SD–342

2 p.m.

Committee on the Judiciary

To hold hearings to examine the Federal Arbitration Act and access to justice, focusing on if recent Supreme Court decisions undermine the rights of consumers, workers, and small businesses.

SD–226

2:30 p.m.

Committee on Environment and Public Works

To hold hearings to examine the nominations of Rhea Sun Suh, of Colorado, to be Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Fish and Wildlife, Victoria Marie Baecher Wassmer, of Illinois, to be Chief Financial Officer, and Thomas A. Burke, of Maryland, to be an Assistant Administrator, both of Environmental Protection Agency, and Roy K. J. Williams, of Ohio, to be Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Economic Development.

SD–406

Select Committee on Intelligence

To hold hearings to examine the nominations of Daniel Bennett Smith, of Virginia, to be Assistant Secretary of State for Intelligence and Research, and Caroline Diane Krass, of the District of Columbia, to be General Counsel of the Central Intelligence Agency.

SD–106

DECEMBER 18

10 a.m.

Committee on Finance

Subcommittee on Social Security, Pensions, and Family Policy

To hold hearings to examine the role of Social Security, defined benefits, and private retirement accounts.

SD–215

Committee on Foreign Relations

Subcommittee on East Asian and Pacific Affairs

To hold hearings to examine rebalance to Asia IV, focusing on economic engagement in the Asia-Pacific region.

SD–419

Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

Business meeting to consider S. 1417, to amend the Public Health Service Act to reauthorize programs under part A of title XI of such Act, S. 1719, and H.R. 3527, bills to amend the Public Health Service Act to reauthorize the poison center national toll-free number, national media campaign, and grant program, and the nominations of David Weil, of Massachusetts, to be Administrator of the Wage and Hour Division, Department of Labor, France A. Cordova, of New Mexico, to be Director of the National Science Foundation, Steven Joel Anthony, of the District of Columbia, to be a Member of the Railroad Retirement Board, James H. Shelton III, of the District of Columbia, to be Deputy Secretary of Education, and any pending nominations.

SD–430

Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs

Business meeting to consider S. 1486, to improve, sustain, and transform the United States Postal Service, and an original bill entitled, ''Cybersecurity Recruitment and Retention Act''.

SD–342

2 p.m.

Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship

To hold hearings to examine Small Business Innovation Research and Small Business Technology Transfer, focusing on measuring the effectiveness of the reauthorization act and maximizing research dollars to America's small businesses.

SR–428A

2:15 p.m.

Special Committee on Aging

To hold hearings to examine the future of long-term care policy, focusing on continuing the conversation.

SD–562

2:30 p.m.

Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation

To hold hearings to examine what information data brokers have on consumers, and how they use it.

SR–253

Committee on the Judiciary

To hold hearings to examine certain nominations.

SD–226

DECEMBER 19

2:30 p.m.

Select Committee on Intelligence

To hold closed hearings to examine certain intelligence matters.

SH–219

Daily Digest

Senate

Chamber Action

Senate continued in the session that began on Wednesday, December 11, 2013. See next volume of the Congressional Record.

Routine Proceedings, pages S8607–S8675

Measures Introduced: Six bills and four resolutions were introduced, as follows: S. 1799–1804, S.J. Res. 28–29, and S. Res. 317–318. **Pages S8667–68**

Measures Considered:

Workforce Investment Act: Senate began consideration of the motion to proceed to consideration of S. 1356, to amend the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 to strengthen the United States workforce development system through innovation in, and alignment and improvement of, employment, training, and education programs in the United States, and to promote individual and national economic growth. **Pages S8608–09**

Nomination Confirmed: Senate confirmed the following nomination:

By 51 yeas to 44 nays (Vote No. EX. 256), Cornelia T. L. Pillard, of the District of Columbia, to be United States Circuit Judge for the District of Columbia Circuit. **Pages S8609–67, S8675**

Messages From the House: **Page S8667**

Measures Placed on the Calendar: **Page S8667**

Executive Reports of Committees: **Page S8667**

Additional Cosponsors: **Pages S8668–69**

Statements on Introduced Bills/Resolutions: **Pages S8669–74**

Additional Statements:

Notices of Hearings/Meetings: **Pages S8674–75**

Authorities for Committees to Meet: **Page S8675**

Record Votes: One record vote was taken today. (Tota1—256) **Page S8667**

Evening Session: Senate convened at 2 p.m., and continued in evening session. (For complete Digest of today's proceedings, see next volume of the Congressional Record.)

Committee Meetings

(Committees not listed did not meet)

AMERICAN MANUFACTURING

Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs: Subcommittee on Economic Policy concluded a hearing to examine rebuilding American manufacturing, after receiving testimony from Suzanne Berger, Massachusetts Institute of Technology Production in the Innovation Economy Commission, Boston; Leo Hindery, Jr., New America Foundation, New York, New York; Derek Scissors, American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, Bethesda, Maryland; and Julie Skirvin, Oregon Iron Works, Portland.

DOMESTIC RENEWABLE FUELS

Committee on Environment and Public Works: Committee with the Subcommittee on Clean Air and Nuclear Safety concluded a joint oversight hearing to examine domestic renewable fuels, after receiving testimony from Christopher Grundler, Director, Office of Transportation and Air Quality, Office of Air and Radiation, Environmental Protection Agency; Steven Chalk, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Energy for Renewable Power, Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy; Wesley Clark, Growth Energy, Little Rock, Arkansas; James C. Collins, Jr., E.I. DuPont de Nemours and Company, Inc., Wilmington, Delaware; Charles T. Drevna, American Fuel and Petrochemical Manufacturers, Jon Holzfaster, National Corn Growers Association, and Scott Faber, Environmental Working Group, all of Washington, DC.; and Brooke Coleman, Advanced Ethanol Council, Boston, Massachusetts.

NOMINATION

Committee on Finance: Committee concluded hearings to examine the nomination of John Andrew Koskinen, of the District of Columbia, to be Commissioner of Internal Revenue, Department of the Treasury, after the nominee testified and answered questions in his own behalf.

NOMINATIONS

Committee on Foreign Relations: Committee concluded a hearing to examine the nominations of Catherine Ann Novelli, of Virginia, to be an Under Secretary for Economic Growth, Energy, and the Environment, Alternate Governor of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, Alternate Governor of the Inter-American Development Bank, and Alternate Governor of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, Charles Hammerman Rivkin, of the District of Columbia, to be an Assistant Secretary for Economic and Business Affairs, Tina S. Kaidanow, of the District of Columbia, to be Coordinator for Counterterrorism, with the rank of Ambassador at Large, Puneet Talwar, of the District of Columbia, to be an Assistant Secretary for Political-Military Affairs, Michael A. Hammer, of the District of Columbia, to be Ambassador to the Republic of Chile, Kevin Whitaker, of Virginia, to be Ambassador to the Republic of Colombia, and Bruce Heyman, of Illinois, to be Ambassador to Canada, who was introduced by Senator Durbin, all of the Department of State, after the nominees testified and answered questions in their own behalf.

BUSINESS MEETING

Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs: Committee ordered favorably reported the nomination of Alejandro Nicholas Mayorkas, of the District of Columbia, to be Deputy Secretary of Homeland Security.

OVERSEAS TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT AGENCIES

Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs: Subcommittee on Financial and Contracting Oversight concluded a hearing to examine streamlining overseas trade and development agencies, focusing on a more efficient and effective government, after receiving testimony from Elizabeth L. Littlefield, President and CEO, Overseas Private Investment Corporation; and Leocadia I. Zak, Director, U.S. Trade and Development Agency.

NOMINATION

Committee on Indian Affairs: Committee concluded a hearing to examine the nomination of Vincent G. Logan, of New York, to be Special Trustee, Office of Special Trustee for American Indians, Department of the Interior, after the nominee testified and answered questions in his own behalf.

LAND BUY-BACK PROGRAM OVERSIGHT

Committee on Indian Affairs: Committee concluded an oversight hearing to examine implementation of the Department of the Interior's Land Buy-Back Program, after receiving testimony from Lawrence S. Roberts, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Indian Affairs; Timothy J. Greene, Makah Tribal Council, Neah Bay, Washington; Ivan Posey, Montana-Wyoming Tribal Leaders Council, Billings; and Grant Stafne, Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes of the Fort Peck Reservation, Poplar, Montana.

U.S. GOVERNMENT SURVEILLANCE AUTHORITIES

Committee on the Judiciary: Committee concluded a hearing to examine continued oversight of the United States government surveillance authorities, after receiving testimony from General Keith B. Alexander, Director, National Security Agency, and Chief, Central Security Service; James M. Cole, Deputy Attorney General, Department of Justice; Robert S. Litt, General Counsel, Office of the Director of National Intelligence; and Edward J. Black, The Computer and Communications Industry Association, Julian Sanchez, Cato Institute, and Carrie F. Cordero, Georgetown University Law Center, all of Washington, D.C.

NOMINATIONS

Committee on Rules and Administration: Committee concluded a hearing to examine the nominations of Thomas Hicks, of Virginia, and Myrna Perez, of Texas, both to be a Member of the Election Assistance Commission, after the nominees, who were both introduced by Senator King, testified and answered questions in their own behalf.

VETERANS AFFAIRS CLAIMS SYSTEM

Committee on Veterans' Affairs: Committee concluded a hearing to examine the Veterans Affairs (VA) claims system, focusing on a review of the Veterans Affairs' transformation progress, after receiving testimony from Allison A. Hickey, Under Secretary of Veterans Affairs for Benefits, Veterans Benefits Administration.

MEDICATION LABELING MISTAKES

Special Committee on Aging: Committee concluded a hearing to examine protecting seniors from medication labeling mistakes, after receiving testimony from Janet Woodcock, Director, Center for Drug Evaluation and Research, Food and Drug Administration, Department of Health and Human Services; Doris Peter, Consumer Reports Health Ratings Center, Yonkers, New York; Richard J. Scholz, Jacobs Scholz and Associates, LLC, Fernandina Beach, Florida; and Gerald K. McEvoy, American Society of Health-System Pharmacists, Bethesda, Maryland.

House of Representatives

Chamber Action

Public Bills and Resolutions Introduced: 19 public bills, H.R. 3693–3711; and 3 resolutions, H. Res. 437, 439–440 were introduced. **Pages H7687–88**

Additional Cosponsors: **Pages H7688–89**

Reports Filed: Reports were filed today as follows:

H.R. 2319, to clarify certain provisions of the Native American Veterans' Memorial Establishment Act of 1994, with an amendment (H. Rept. 113–287);

H.R. 2542, to amend chapter 6 of title 5, United States Code (commonly known as the Regulatory Flexibility Act), to ensure complete analysis of potential impacts on small entities of rules, and for other purposes, with an amendment (H. Rept. 113–288, Pt. 1);

H.R. 2542, to amend chapter 6 of title 5, United States Code (commonly known as the Regulatory Flexibility Act), to ensure complete analysis of potential impacts on small entities of rules, and for other purposes, with an amendment (H. Rept. 113–288, Pt. 2); Report of the Joint Economic Committee on the 2013 Economic Report of the President (H. Rept. 113–289); and

H. Res. 438, providing for consideration of the Senate amendment to the joint resolution (H.J. Res. 59) making continuing appropriations for fiscal year 2014, and for other purposes; providing for consideration of motions to suspend the rules; providing for proceedings during the period from December 14, 2013, through January 6, 2014; and for other purposes (H. Rept. 113–290). **Pages H7686–87**

Speaker: Read a letter from the Speaker wherein he appointed Representative Duncan (TN) to act as Speaker pro tempore for today. **Page H7629**

Recess: The House recessed at 10:43 a.m. and reconvened at 12 noon. **Page H7634**

Journal: The House agreed to the Speaker's approval of the Journal by voice vote. **Page H7635**

Committee Resignations: Read a letter from Representative Amodei, wherein he resigned from the Committees on the Judiciary, Natural Resources, and Veterans' Affairs. **Page H7638**

Committee Resignations: Read a letter from Representative Roby, wherein she resigned from the Committees on Agriculture, Armed Services, and Education and the Workforce. **Page H7638**

Committee Resignations: Read a letter from Representative Stewart, wherein he resigned from the Committees on Science, Space, and Technology, Homeland Security, and Natural Resources. **Page H7638**

Committee Elections: The House agreed to H. Res. 437, electing certain Members to certain standing committees of the House of Representatives. **Pages H7638–39**

Suspensions: The House agreed to suspend the rules and pass the following measures:

Native American Veterans' Memorial Amendments Act of 2013: H.R. 2319, amended, to clarify certain provisions of the Native American Veterans' Memorial Establishment Act of 1994, by a ⅔ yea-and-nay vote of 398 yeas with none voting "nay", Roll No. 633; **Pages H7639–40, H7666–67**

Alicia Dawn Koehl Respect for National Cemeteries Act: S. 1471, to authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs and the Secretary of the Army to reconsider decisions to inter or honor the memory of a person in a national cemetery, by a ⅔ yea-and-nay vote of 398 yeas to 1 nay, Roll No. 634; **Pages H7640–42, H7667–68**

Sean and David Goldman International Child Abduction Prevention and Return Act of 2013: H.R. 3212, amended, to ensure compliance with the 1980 Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction by countries with which the United States enjoys reciprocal obligations and to establish procedures for the prompt return of children abducted to other countries, by a ⅔ yea-and-nay vote of 398 yeas with none voting "nay", Roll No. 635; **Pages H7642–50, H7668**

Israel QME Enhancement Act: H.R. 1992, amended, to amend the requirements relating to assessment of Israel's qualitative military edge over military threats, by a ⅔ yea-and-nay vote of 399 yeas with none voting "nay", Roll No. 636; and **Pages H7650–53, H7668–69**

Kids First Research Act of 2013: H.R. 2019, amended, to eliminate taxpayer financing of presidential campaigns and party conventions and reprogram savings to provide for a 10-year pediatric research initiative through the Common Fund administered by the National Institutes of Health, by a ⅔ yea-and-nay vote of 295 yeas to 103 nays, Roll No. 632. **Pages H7653–66**

Agreed to amend the title so as to read: "To eliminate taxpayer financing of political party conventions and reprogram savings to provide for a 10-

year pediatric research initiative through the Common Fund administered by the National Institutes of Health, and for other purposes.''. **Page H7666**

Recess: The House recessed at 1:43 p.m. and reconvened at 2:36 p.m. **Page H7653**

Senate Message: Message received from the Senate today appears on page H7669.

Quorum Calls—Votes: Five yea-and-nay votes developed during the proceedings of today and appear on pages H7666, H7666–67, H6667–68, H7688 and H7668–69. There were no quorum calls.

Adjournment: The House met at 10 a.m. and adjourned at 7:12 p.m.

Committee Meetings

U.S. ASIA-PACIFIC STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS RELATED TO P.L.A. NAVAL FORCES MODERNIZATION

Commitee on Armed Services: Subcommittee on Seapower and Projection Forces held a hearing on U.S. Asia-Pacific Strategic Considerations Related to P.L.A. Naval Forces Modernization. Testimony was heard from Andrew Erickson, Associate Professor, U.S. Naval War College; Ronald O'Rourke, Specialist in Naval Affairs, Congressional Research Service; and public witnesses.

PPACA IMPLEMENTATION FAILURES

Committee on Energy and Commerce: Subcommittee on Health held a hearing entitled ''PPACA Implementation Failures: What's Next?''. Testimony was heard from Kathleen Sebelius, Secretary, Department of Health and Human Services.

MISCELLANEOUS MEASURES

Committee on Energy and Commerce: Full Committee concluded markup on the following measures: H.R. 3527, the ''Poison Center Network Act of 2013''; H.R. 1098, the ''Traumatic Brain Injury Reauthorization Act''; H.R. 724, to amend the Clean Air Act to remove the requirement for dealer certification of new light-duty motor vehicles; H.R. 3683, to amend the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007 to strengthen the collaboration between the United States and Israel on energy development and to bolster the existing United States-Israel energy relationship by encouraging increased cooperation between the two countries; H.R. 3675, the ''Federal Communications Commission Process Reform Act of 2013''; and H.R. 3674, the ''Federal Spectrum Incentive Act of 2013''. The following bills were ordered reported, as amended: H.R. 1098; and H.R. 3675. The following bills were ordered reported, without amendment: H.R. 3527; H.R. 724; H.R. 3683; and H.R. 3674.

AFGHANISTAN 2014: YEAR OF TRANSITION

Committee on Foreign Affairs: Full Committee held a hearing entitled ''Afghanistan 2014: Year of Transition.'' Testimony was heard from James F. Dobbins, Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, Department of State; Donald L. Sampler, Assistant to the Administrator, Office of Afghanistan and Pakistan Affairs, U.S. Agency for International Development; and Michael J. Dumont, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Central Asia, Department of Defense.

MISCELLANEOUS MEASURES

Committee on Foreign Affairs: Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific held a markup on H. Res. 418, Urging the Government of Burma to end the persecution of the Rohingya people and respect internationally recognized human rights for all ethnic and religious minority groups within Burma; and H. Res. 281, Expressing concern over persistent and credible reports of systematic, state-sanctioned organ harvesting from non-consenting prisoners of conscience, in the People's Republic of China, including from large numbers of Falun Gong practitioners imprisoned for their religious beliefs, and members of other religious and ethnic minority groups. The resolutions were forwarded to the Full Committee, without amendment.

ESTABLISHING A COMMISSION TO STUDY THE POTENTIAL CREATION OF A NATIONAL WOMEN'S HISTORY MUSEUM

Committee on House Administration: Full Committee held a hearing entitled ''Establishing a Commission to Study the Potential Creation of a National Women's History Museum''. Testimony was heard from Representatives Blackburn; Carolyn B. Maloney (NY); and a public witness.

SENATE AMENDMENT TO THE CONTINUING APPROPRIATIONS RESOLUTION 2014; AND TEMPORARY EXTENSION OF THE FOOD, CONSERVATION, AND ENERGY ACT OF 2008

Committee on Rules: Full Committee held a hearing on Senate amendment to H.J. Res. 59, the continuing Appropriations Resolution, 2014. The Committee granted, by record vote of 9–3, a rule that provides for the consideration of the Senate amendment to H.J. Res. 59. The rule makes in order a motion offered by the chair of the Committee on the Budget or his designee that the House recede from its

amendment and concur in the Senate amendment with the amendment printed in part A of the Rules Committee report as modified by the amendment printed in part B of that report. The rule provides 70 minutes of debate on the motion with 60 minutes equally divided and controlled by the chair and ranking minority member of the Committee on the Budget and 10 minutes equally divided and controlled by the chair and ranking minority member of the Committee on Energy and Commerce. The rule waives all points of order against consideration of the motion and provides that the motion shall not be subject to a demand for division of the question. The rule provides that the Senate amendment and the motion shall be considered as read. In section 2, the rule provides that the chair of the Committee on the Budget may insert in the Congressional Record at any time during the remainder of the first session of the 113th Congress such material as he may deem explanatory of the motion specified in section 1. In section 3, the rule provides that in the engrossment of the House amendment to the Senate amendment to House Joint Resolution 59, the Clerk may conform division, title, and section numbers and conform cross-references and provisions for short titles. In section 4, the rule provides that the chair of the Committee on Armed Services may insert in the Congressional Record at any time during the remainder of the first session of the 113th Congress such material as he may deem explanatory of defense authorization measures for the fiscal year 2014. In section 5, the rule provides that it shall be in order at any time on the legislative day of December 12, 2013, or December 13, 2013, for the Speaker to entertain motions that the House suspend the rules and that the Speaker or his designee shall consult with the Minority Leader or her designee on the designation of any matter for consideration pursuant to this section. In section 6, the rule provides that on any legislative day of the first session of the 113th Congress after December 13, 2013: the Journal of the proceedings of the previous day shall be considered as approved; and the Chair may at any time declare the House adjourned to meet at a date and time to be announced by the Chair in declaring the adjournment. In section 7, the rule provides that on any legislative day of the second session of the 113th Congress before January 7, 2014: the Speaker may dispense with organizational and legislative business; the Journal of the proceedings of the previous day shall be considered as approved if applicable; and the Chair may at any time declare the House adjourned to meet at a date and time to be announced by the Chair in declaring the adjournment. In section 8, the rule provides that the Speaker may appoint Members to perform the duties of the Chair for the duration of the period addressed by sections 6 and 7 of the rule. In section 9, the rule provides that each day during the period addressed by section 6 and 7 of the resolution shall not constitute calendar days for the purposes of the War Powers Resolution. In section 10, the rule provides a closed rule for H.R. 3695. The rule provides 40 minutes of debate equally divided and controlled by the chair and ranking minority member of the Committee on Agriculture. The rule waives all points of order against consideration of the bill. The rule provides that the amendment printed in part C of the report shall be considered as adopted and the bill, as amended shall be considered as read. The rule waives all points of order against provisions in the bill, as amended. The rule provides one motion to recommit with or without instructions. In section 11, the rule waives clause 6(a) of rule XIII (requiring a two-thirds vote to consider a rule on the same day it is reported from the Rules Committee) against any resolution reported from the Rules Committee through the legislative day of December 13, 2013. Testimony was heard from Chairman Ryan (WI); and Representatives Lowey; Levin; Van Hollen; and Burgess.

FACTUAL LOOK AT THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CLIMATE AND WEATHER

Committee on Science, Space, and Technology: Subcommittee on Environment held a hearing entitled ''A Factual Look at the Relationship Between Climate and Weather''. Testimony was heard from public witnesses.

MISCELLANEOUS MEASURES

Committee on Science, Space, and Technology: Full Committee held a markup on the following measures: H.R. 2413, the ''Weather Forecasting Improvement Act of 2013''; H.R. 2431, the ''National Integrated Drought Information System Reauthorization Act of 2013'', H.R. 2981, the ''Technology and Research Accelerating National Security and Future Economic Resiliency Act of 2013''; and H.R. 3625, to provide for termination liability costs for certain National Aeronautics and Space Administration projects, and for other purposes. The following bills were ordered reported, as amended: H.R. 2413; H.R. 2431; H.R. 2981; and H.R. 3625.

SMALL BUSINESS HEALTH OPTIONS PROGRAM

Committee on Small Business: Full Committee held a hearing entitled ''The Small Business Health Options Program: Is It Working for Small Businesses''.

Testimony was heard from Gary Cohen, Deputy Administrator and Director, Center for Consumer Information and Insurance Oversight, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, Department of Health and Human Services.

COAST GUARD MISSION EXECUTION

Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure: Subcommittee on Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation held a hearing entitled ''Coast Guard Mission Execution: How is the Coast Guard Meetings Its Mission Goals?''. Testimony was heard from Vice Admiral John P. Currier, Vice Commandant, United States Coast Guard.

EXAMINING THE CURRENT AND FUTURE DEMANDS ON FTA'S CAPITAL INVESTMENT GRANTS

Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure: Subcommittee on Highway and Transit held a hearing entitled ''Examining the Current and Future Demands on FTA's Capital Investment Grants''. Testimony was heard from Peter M. Rogoff, Administrator, Federal Transit Administration; Gregory H. Hughes, Chairman, Board of Trustees, Utah Transit Authority; Chris Bushell, Chief Infrastructure Officer, Chicago Transit Authority; Chris Coleman, Mayor, St. Paul, Minnesota; and a public witness.

CONTRACTING AWAY ACCOUNTABILITY—REVERSE AUCTIONS IN FEDERAL AGENCY ACQUISITIONS

Committee on Veterans' Affairs: Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations; and Committee on Small Business Subcommittee on Contracting and Workforce held a hearing entitled ''Contracting Away Accountability—Reverse Auctions in Federal Agency Acquisitions''. Testimony was heard from Michelle Mackin, Director, Acquisition and Sourcing Management, Government Accountability Office; William Sisk, Deputy Commissioner, Federal Acquisition Service, General Services Administration; Major L. Clark, III, Assistant Chief Counsel for Procurement, Office of Advocacy, Small Business Administration; Jan Frye, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Office of Acquisitions and Logistics, Department of Veterans Affairs; and public witnesses.

Joint Meetings

CRISES IN EAST ASIA

Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe: Commission concluded a hearing to examine resolving crises in East Asia through a new system of collective security, focusing on the Helsinki process as a model, after receiving testimony from Carl Gershman, National Endowment for Democracy, Karin J. Lee, The National Committee on North Korea, and Frank Jannuzi, Amnesty International, all of Washington, DC.

COMMITTEE MEETINGS FOR THURSDAY, DECEMBER 12, 2013

(Committee meetings are open unless otherwise indicated)

Senate

Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs: to hold hearings to examine assessing the P5+1 Interim Nuclear Agreement with Iran, focusing on Administration perspectives, 10 a.m., SD–538.

Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation: Subcommittee on Oceans, Atmosphere, Fisheries, and Coast Guard, to hold hearings to examine forecasting success, focusing on achieving U.S. weather readiness for the long term, 10:30 a.m., SD–G50.

Committee on Finance: business meeting to consider an original bill to repeal the Sustainable Growth Rate system and to consider health care extenders, 10 a.m., SD–215.

Committee on Foreign Relations: to hold hearings to examine the nominations of Bathsheba Nell Crocker, of the District of Columbia, to be an Assistant Secretary for International Organization Affairs, Michael Anderson Lawson, of California, for the rank of Ambassador during his tenure of service as Representative on the Council of the International Civil Aviation Organization, Robert C. Barber, of Massachusetts, to be Ambassador to the Republic of Iceland, Cynthia H. Akuetteh, of the District of Columbia, to be Ambassador to the Gabonese Republic, and to serve concurrently and without additional compensation as Ambassador to the Republic of the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe, and Colleen Bradley Bell, of the District of Columbia, to be Ambassador to Hungary, and all of the Department of State, 11 a.m., SD–419.

Full Committee, to hold hearings to examine the nominations of Joseph William Westphal, of New York, to be Ambassador to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Mark Gilbert, of the District of Columbia, to be Ambassador to New Zealand and to serve concurrently and without additional compensation as Ambassador to the Independent State of Samoa, George James Tsunis, of New York, to be Ambassador to the Kingdom of Norway, John L. Estrada, of Florida, to be Ambassador to the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, and Luis G. Moreno, of Texas, to be Ambassador to Jamaica, all of the Department of State, 2:30 p.m., SD–419.

Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions: to hold hearings to examine accreditation as quality assurance, focusing on meeting the needs of 21st Century learning, 10 a.m., SD–430.

Committee on the Judiciary: business meeting to consider S. 619, to amend title 18, United States Code, to prevent unjust and irrational criminal punishments, S. 1410, to focus limited Federal resources on the most serious offenders, S. 1675, to reduce recidivism and increase public

safety, S. 975, to provide for the inclusion of court-appointed guardianship improvement and oversight activities under the Elder Justice Act of 2009, and the nominations of John B. Owens, of California, and Michelle T. Friedland, of California, both to be a United States Circuit Judge for the Ninth Circuit, Nancy L. Moritz, of Kansas, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Tenth Circuit, Matthew Frederick Leitman, Judith Ellen Levy, Laurie J. Michelson, and Linda Vivienne Parker, all to be a United States District Judge for the Eastern District of Michigan, Christopher Reid Cooper, to be United States District Judge for the District of Columbia, Gerald Austin McHugh, Jr., and Edward G. Smith, both to be a United States District Judge for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, M. Douglas Harpool, to be United States District Judge for the Western District of Missouri, Sheryl H. Lipman, to be United States District Judge for the Western District of Tennessee, Stanley Allen Bastian, to be United States District Judge for the Eastern District of Washington, Manish S. Shah, to be United States District Judge for the Northern District of Illinois, and Peter Joseph Kadzik, of New York, to be an Assistant Attorney General, Robert L. Hobbs, to be United States Marshal for the Eastern District of Texas, and Gary Blankinship, to be United States Marshal for the Southern District of Texas, all of the Department of Justice, 10 a.m., SD–226.

Select Committee on Intelligence: to hold closed hearings to examine certain intelligence matters, 2:30 p.m., SH–219.

House

Committee on Energy and Commerce, Subcommittee on Communications and Technology, hearing entitled ''Oversight of the Federal Communications Commission'', 10 a.m., 2123 Rayburn.

Subcommittee on Energy and Power; and Subcommittee on Environment and the Economy, hearing entitled ''Oversight of NRC Management and the Need for Legislative Reform''; and H.R. 3132, the ''NRC Reorganization Plan Codification and Complements Act'', 10:15 a.m., 2322 Rayburn.

Committee on Financial Services, Full Committee, hearing entitled ''The Annual Testimony of the Secretary of the Treasury on the State of the International Finance System'', 9:30 a.m., 2128 Rayburn.

Full Committee, hearing entitled ''Rethinking the Federal Reserve's Many Mandates on Its 100-Year Anniversary'', 2 p.m., 2128 Rayburn.

Committee on Foreign Affairs, Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations; and Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa, hearing entitled ''Iran's Persecution of American Pastor Abedini Worsens'', 9:30 a.m., 2172 Rayburn.

Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade; and Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa, hearing entitled ''The Resurgence of al-Qaeda in Iraq'', 1 p.m., 2172 Rayburn.

Committee on Homeland Security, Full Committee, hearing entitled ''Help Wanted at DHS: Implications of Leadership Vacancies on the Mission and Morale'', 9:30 a.m., 311 Cannon.

Committee on the Judiciary, Full Committee, hearing entitled ''Asylum Abuse: Is it Overwhelming our Borders?'', 10 a.m., 2141 Rayburn.

Committee on Natural Resources, Full Committee, hearing entitled ''ESA Decisions by Closed-Door Settlement: Short-Changing Science, Transparency, Private Property, and State & Local Economies'', 10 a.m., 1324 Longworth.

Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Full Committee, hearing entitled ''ObamaCare's Impact on Premiums and Provider Networks'', 9:30 a.m., 2154 Rayburn.

Subcommittee on Energy Policy, Health Care and Entitlements, hearing entitled ''FDA Checkup: Drug Development and Manufacturing Challenges'', 1:30 p.m., 2154 Rayburn.

Committee on Science, Space, and Technology, Subcommittee on Research and Technology, hearing entitled ''Building a Network for Manufacturing Innovation'', 10 a.m., 2318 Rayburn.

Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, Subcommittee on Aviation, hearing entitled ''The State of American Aviation'', 10 a.m., 2167 Rayburn.

Committee on Ways and Means, Full Committee, hearing on H.R. 2810, the ''Medicare Patient Access and Quality Improvement Act of 2013'', 10 a.m., 1100 Longworth.

House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, Full Committee, hearing entitled ''Clandestine Quarterly Update'', 10 a.m., HVC–304. This is a closed hearing.

Next Meeting of the SENATE

Thursday, December 12

Senate Chamber

Program for Thursday: Senate program is uncertain. See next volume of the Congressional Record.

Next Meeting of the HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

10 a.m., Thursday, December 12

House Chamber

Program for Thursday: Consideration of amendments to the Senate Amendment to H.J. Res. 59—Continuing Appropriations Resolution, 2014 (Subject to a Rule).

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