

(C) information on which cybersecurity workforce positions are—

(i) performed by—

(I) permanent full-time equivalent employees of the Department, including, to the greatest extent practicable, demographic information about such employees;

(II) independent contractors; and

(III) individuals employed by other Federal agencies, including the National Security Agency; or

(i) vacant; and

(D) information on—

(i) the percentage of individuals within each Cybersecurity Category and Specialty Area who received essential training to perform their jobs; and

(ii) in cases in which such essential training was not received, what challenges, if any, were encountered with respect to the provision of such essential training.

(b) WORKFORCE STRATEGY.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall—

(A) not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of this Act, develop a comprehensive workforce strategy to enhance the readiness, capacity, training, recruitment, and retention of the cybersecurity workforce of the Department; and

(B) maintain and, as necessary, update the comprehensive workforce strategy developed under subparagraph (A).

(2) CONTENTS.—The comprehensive workforce strategy developed under paragraph (1) shall include a description of—

(A) a multi-phased recruitment plan, including with respect to experienced professionals, members of disadvantaged or underserved communities, the unemployed, and veterans;

(B) a 5-year implementation plan;

(C) a 10-year projection of the cybersecurity workforce needs of the Department;

(D) any obstacle impeding the hiring and development of a cybersecurity workforce in the Department; and

(E) any gap in the existing cybersecurity workforce of the Department and a plan to fill any such gap.

(c) UPDATES.—The Secretary submit to the appropriate congressional committees annual updates on—

(1) the cybersecurity workforce assessment required under subsection (a); and

(2) the progress of the Secretary in carrying out the comprehensive workforce strategy required to be developed under subsection (b).

SEC. 4. CYBERSECURITY FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM.

Not later than 120 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall submit to the appropriate congressional committees a report on the feasibility, cost, and benefits of establishing a Cybersecurity Fellowship Program to offer a tuition payment plan for individuals pursuing undergraduate and doctoral degrees who agree to work for the Department for an agreed-upon period of time.

The amendment was ordered to be engrossed, and the bill to be read a third time.

The bill was read the third time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The bill having been read the third time, the question is, Shall the bill pass?

The bill (H.R. 2952), as amended, was passed.

Mrs. BOXER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Carper title amendment be agreed to, and the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

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

The title amendment (No. 4002) was agreed to, as follows:

(Purpose: To amend the title)

Amend the title so as to read: “To require the Secretary of Homeland Security to assess the cybersecurity workforce of the Department of Homeland Security and develop a comprehensive workforce strategy, and for other purposes.”.

Mrs. BOXER. Madam President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

PROTECTING VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS AND EMERGENCY RESPONDERS ACT OF 2014—Continued

COAST GUARD AUTHORIZATION

Mr. BEGICH. Madam President, I will be brief, but I want to thank both Senators on the floor, Senators BOXER and VITTER, for working on this issue. It was critical for Alaska’s fishermen and really for fishermen across the country. More importantly this will resolve the issue with the Coast Guard bill, which is critical to get done for many other reasons.

First, on the discharge issue, as stated earlier, this is an important waiver for our fishermen in Alaska. This will ensure that a regulation that wasn’t going to have any positive impact with regards to what they were attempting to do but would have a negative impact in regards to our fishermen—giving them a 3-year waiver is exceptional because every year we would have a 1-year waiver. So a 3-year waiver is fantastic, but I agree with Senator BOXER that this should be permanent. I would like to watch from the outside in to see how this develops over the years.

The Coast Guard authorization bill was critical to get done. This has many important provisions. As the chair of the committee that dealt with the Coast Guard bill, not only this year but 2 years ago, we have been successful now at least since I have been chair to ensure the bill passed by unanimous consent and not to have big fights over working out the differences. Again, I thank Senator VITTER for his effort, making sure we move forward on this piece of legislation.

The issue I want to highlight—and then I will close—is that the Coast Guard bill is not only important for our fishermen in Alaska, the 79 feet and under ships, but also many other things. It ensures additional resources for the Arctic and Antarctic and ensures ice-breaking capabilities, including extending the service life of the currently idled *Polar Sea*. It enhances vessel safety information regarding ice and weather conditions and improves the oil spill prevention and response capabilities. It also ensures availability of quality childcare for our Coast Guard personnel. We require Coast Guard personnel to go all over this country. Part of it is their families are obviously with them and making sure they have quality of life aspects

that are important for us to continue to recruit and get the best of the best. It also creates educational and portable career opportunities for Active-Duty Coast Guard spouses and eases the transition for Coast Guard personnel into postservice life. It provides inflation adjustment for funding levels for something very important to us in Alaska, the Cook Inlet Regional Citizens Advisory Committee. This group of citizens is involved in ensuring that the community at Cook Inlet—there is a lot of oil activity and fishing activity and other types of activities that are in that region—and citizens are engaged in their input. It is not just industry, but it is industry and citizens working together. This ensures that their funding continues and is inflation adjusted for the future. That is important.

Lastly, a small item, but it allows the Commandant to issue leases on tidelands and submerged lands. That is important because there are parcels of property that the Coast Guard controls that are adjacent to communities, and we need to make sure that there is flexibility for them to do the work they need to do. This piece of legislation was cosponsored by Senator ROCKEFELLER, Senators THUNE, RUBIO, MARIA CANTWELL and many others. This truly is a bipartisan piece of legislation and an example of what we do best when we work together.

Imagine a piece of legislation such as this, an authorization legislation for one of our large agencies, the Coast Guard, now the second time happening without a big fight on the floor, without this back and forth between the House and Senate, but actually getting the work done so our Coast Guard personnel know they have a budget that improves upon their quality of life issues and in my case in Alaska, making sure the Arctic is taken care of. We also increased and made sure the Coast Guard ongoing replacement programs are there, with \$1.5 billion to continue to increase and improve the Coast Guard programs for our country, which is also very important.

Again, I want to thank the body, thank the folks on both sides of the aisle. As chair of the committee, it was my honor to be able to move this forward, but also I want to give a special thanks to all my staff members who worked on this because without the Senate staff who participated in this work, we could not have gotten the work done. I appreciate that.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

IMMIGRATION

Mr. VITTER. Thank you, Madam President. I rise today to express strong concern and opposition to President Obama’s Executive amnesty, which I think is clearly, flat-out illegal and unconstitutional.

I announce that because of that I will be voting “no” on the confirmation of Loretta Lynch to become Attorney General—because she would directly

help President Obama execute that illegal Executive amnesty, and she would be actively giving him legal cover, if you will—bad legal reasoning—used for PR purposes to further that illegal Executive order. I urge all my colleagues who share my concern about this illegal Executive amnesty to do the same.

I strongly oppose President Obama's recent action for two reasons. The first is I think it is a horrible policy that is going to take a desperate situation of illegal immigration into this country—a situation that has truly reached crisis proportions, including over the last several months with these new waves, for instance, of illegal minors—and make that desperate situation much worse.

Why do I say that? Well, it is common sense. If you take a big action that is going to reward folks who have participated in that illegal crossing, what do you think you are going to get—more of it or less of it? If you reward behavior, you are going to get more of it; if you punish or stop behavior, you will get less of it. So on policy grounds, this Executive action—this illegal Executive amnesty for about 5 million illegal aliens in our country—is going to reward that behavior and produce more of it.

As we have proved, we don't have adequate protections at the border—an adequate system of enforcement in place either at the border or just as importantly at the workplace. It is horrible policy that is going to make the situation worse.

But the second concern I have is much more fundamental, and it goes to the constitutional authority of the President and the fact that this is clearly beyond his authority because he is acting contrary to statutory law. The Congress and the President have acted together in the past and laid out statutory law about immigration. This is clearly directly contrary to statutory law because the President through this Executive action is not simply saying: I am going to refuse to prosecute this case or that case or even a broad category of cases. He is going even further and saying: I am going to issue work permits to affirmatively say that these people can work legally in our country, to affirmatively say that employers can hire these people, even though that is directly contrary to all sorts of statutory law on the books now.

Every President in the United States has significant powers, obviously, and Presidents have the power to fill in the details of legislation when those details are not clear and when they need to do so to properly execute the law. But that is completely different from doing something contrary to statutory law, and that is what President Obama is doing here.

Several people directly involved in this—including the Supreme Court, including President Obama, ironically—have made this clear: The Supreme

Court in the past has recognized that “over no conceivable subject is the power of Congress more complete” than over immigration. So the Supreme Court has said that in all subject matters of law across the board, immigration is squarely in the hands of Congress under the Constitution.

As I said, even more interesting, President Obama in the past, before this illegal Executive order, has said he doesn't have this power. He has repeatedly acknowledged that in the past before he took this action. He said: “This notion that somehow I can just change the laws unilaterally is just not true.”

Furthermore he said: “For me to simply, through Executive order ignore those congressional mandates would not conform with my appropriate role as President.”

That is what he said when he was defending not taking action before, and he was right. Now he has done exactly what he correctly said before he did not have the power to do.

As I suggested at the beginning of my remarks, the Attorney General is directly related to this immigration issue and this legal constitutional issue. The Attorney General is the top law enforcement officer of the United States. The Attorney General is the top legal expert for the President and for the Federal Government. So I think if we truly believe—as I do and as certainly my Republican colleagues and as several Democrats do, based on their public statements—that this Executive action is wrong, is unconstitutional, is illegal, then we should not confirm an Attorney General who is going to further that illegal unconstitutional course of action. To me that is very straightforward. This is not just grabbing someone out of the blue. The Attorney General is directly—directly—related to these issues of the constitutional bounds of law, the constitutional lines between the executive and the legislative—and immigration enforcement. Based on that, I will vote no, and I will strongly push against the confirmation of Loretta Lynch as attorney general, and I urge my colleagues to do the same.

If you believe that President Obama's actions are illegal or unconstitutional through executive amnesty, then I think you need to reach the same conclusion, but the attorney general is directly related to these issues of both immigration enforcement and the Constitution.

I thank the Presiding Officer and yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. BALDWIN). The Senator from Massachusetts.

FINANCIAL SYSTEM

Ms. WARREN. Madam President, I come to the floor today to ask a fundamental question: Who does Congress work for? Does it work for the millionaires, the billionaires, the giant companies with their armies of lobbyists and lawyers, or does it work for all the people?

People are frustrated with Congress and part of the reason, of course, is gridlock, but mostly it is because they see a Congress that works just fine for the big guys, but it won't lift a finger to help them. If big companies can deploy armies of lobbyists and lawyers to get the Congress to vote for special deals that benefit themselves, then we simply confirm the view of the American people that the system is rigged.

Now the House of Representatives is about to show us the worst of government for the rich and powerful. The House is about to vote on a budget deal—a deal negotiated behind closed doors—that slips in a provision that would let derivative traders on Wall Street gamble with taxpayer money and get bailed out by the government when their risky bets threaten to blow up our financial system. These are the same banks that nearly broke the economy in 2008 and destroyed millions of jobs, the same banks that got bailed out by taxpayers and are now raking in record profits, the same banks that are spending a whole lot of time and money trying to influence Congress to bend the rules in their favor.

You will hear a lot of folks say that the rule that will be repealed in the omnibus is technical and complicated and you shouldn't worry about it because smart people who know more than you do about financial issues say it is no big deal. Well, don't believe them. Actually, this rule is pretty simple. Here is what it is called—the rule the House is about to repeal, and I am quoting from the text of Dodd-Frank, is entitled “Prohibition Against Federal Government Bailouts of Swaps Entities.”

What does it do? The provision that is about to be repealed requires the banks to keep separate a key part of their risky Wall Street speculation so there is no government insurance for that part of their business. As the New York Times has explained, “the goal was to isolate risky trading and to prevent government bailouts” because these sorts of risky trades, called derivatives trades, were “a main culprit in the 2008 financial crisis.”

We put these rules in place after the collapse of the financial system because we wanted to reduce the risk that reckless gambling on Wall Street could ever again threaten jobs and livelihoods on Main Street. We put this rule in place because people of all political persuasions were disgusted at the idea of future bailouts. And now, no debate, no discussion, Republicans in the House of Representatives are threatening to shut down the government if they don't get a chance to repeal it.

That raises a simple question: Why? If this rule brings more stability to our financial system and helps prevent future government bailouts, why in the world would anyone want to repeal it, let alone hold the entire government hostage in order to ram through this appeal? The reason, unfortunately, is

simple—it is about money and power. Because while this legal change could pose serious risks to our entire economy, it will also make a lot of money for Wall Street banks.

According to Americans for Financial Reform, this change will be a huge boon to a handful of our biggest banks—Citigroup, J.P. Morgan, and Bank of America.

Wall Street spends a lot of time and money on Congress. Public Citizen and the Center for Responsive Politics found that in the runup to Dodd-Frank, the financial services sector employed 1,447 former Federal employees to carry out their lobbying efforts, including 73 former Members of Congress.

According to a report by the Institute for America's Future, by 2010, the six biggest banks and their trade associations employed 243 lobbyists who once worked in the Federal Government, including 33 who worked as chiefs of staff for Members of Congress and 54 who worked as staffers for the banking oversight committees in the House and Senate. That is a lot of former government employees and Senators and Congressmen pounding on Congress to make sure that the big banks get heard.

It is no surprise that the financial industry spent more than \$1 million a day lobbying Congress on financial reform, and that is a lot of money that went to former elected officials and government employees. Now we see the fruits of those investments.

This provision is all about goosing the profits of the big banks. Wall Street is not subtle about this one. According to documents reviewed by the New York Times, the original bill that is being incorporated into the House spending legislation today was literally written by Citigroup lobbyists who “re-drafted” the legislation, “striking out certain phrases and inserting others.” It has been opposed by current and former leaders of the FDIC, including Sheila Bair, a Republican who formerly chaired the agency, and Thomas Hoenig, the current vice chairman of the agency. For those who are keeping score, this is the agency that will be responsible for bailing out Wall Street when their risky bets go south.

I know that House and Senate negotiators from both parties have worked long and hard to come to an agreement on the omnibus spending legislation, and Senate leaders deserve great credit for preventing the House from carrying out some of their more aggressive fantasies about dismantling even more pieces of financial reform, but this provision goes too far. Citigroup is large and powerful, but it is a single, private company. It should not get to hold the entire government hostage to threaten a government shutdown in order to roll back important protections that keep our economy safe. This is a democracy, and the American people didn't elect us to stand up for Citigroup, they elected us to stand up for all the people.

I urge my colleagues in the House—particularly my Democratic colleagues

whose votes are essential to moving this package forward—to withhold support from it until this risky giveaway is removed from the legislation. We all need to stand and fight this giveaway to the most powerful banks in this country.

I thank the Presiding Officer and yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

Mr. BOOKER. Madam President, I rise today to discuss an issue that I believe should be discussed and worked on so much more in Congress. It demands an urgency of action, a dedication, and a focus to address our shortfalls as a nation to live up to our ideals, liberty and justice for all. Equal justice under the law is written on the Supreme Court, and is a theme of our Nation.

It is the source of anguish that I believe is driving protests all over our country right now. From Ferguson to Staten Island, from New Jersey to Oakland, citizens of all races and all backgrounds—Americans are joining together to call for change, and to have this idea that our legal system really should be a justice system.

Now this is an anguish that is not simply the result and the reaction to specific incidents. Yes, there is much discussion about those specific incidents in places such as Staten Island, but it is a reflection of a deeper anguish, an unfinished American business that has lasted for decades.

I feel in my own personal life this sense of gratitude for my unique upbringing. As a young man in 1969, my parents literally had to get a white couple to pose as them to buy the house I grew up in in New Jersey. They literally had to go through the indignity of trying to break barriers of race to move into a town that was all white at the time.

I stand here to tell you I grew up in the greatest place. The citizens of Harrington Park, NJ, are why I am standing here right now. The love and caring that exists in my State is remarkable.

I am also here today because of a city that is a majority Black city, Newark, NJ, that embraced me as a young professional, and where I eventually became mayor.

Through my unique position, I have to say I am able to understand all corners of this country. In an intimate way, I see this anguish that I speak of with so many of my friends and colleagues. I heard it here in the Senate. I have had security guards pull me aside to talk to me about their anguish and frustrations about the criminal justice system. I have had the people who do the work in this body—those who clean our floors or tend to the needs of our Senators—and they feel this frustration about an American legal system that is falling short of American ideals and is not a justice system.

I saw it with my own parents who, with agony and pain, talked to me

about not having a margin of error when it comes to dealing with police officers. They would coach me on how I should speak and talk and what I should do with my hands because of the fears they had of the treatment I might have that would be different than other Americans.

I stand today because this cannot simply be reduced to a racial issue. This is the larger questions of justice in our country. This calls to the consciousness of all Americans, and it is sourced by the realities we face in this country where we lead the globe in areas that no American who believes in freedom and liberty should want to lead.

We have had over the last decades of my lifetime an explosion in incarceration that belies the truth of who we are. This Nation has seen this country have an 800-percent increase in the Federal prison population over the last 30 years. Think about that—an 800-percent increase. We now have the very ignominious distinction on the globe for leading the planet Earth in a country that incarcerates its own citizens. In fact, America is just 5 percent of the globe's population, but we have 25 percent of the world's imprisoned people, and I tell you that is not because Americans have a greater proclivity for criminality, it is because our legal system is not a justice system.

This overincarceration and overcriminality anguishes this Nation, aggravates divisions, undermines freedom and liberty and costs taxpayers so much more money. It is an unnecessary burden and expense that is a self-inflicted wound in this Nation that undermines our prosperity and our success. We spend \$¼ trillion a year locking people up, and the majority of those people are nonviolent offenders.

In fact, over the last decade, right now in America there are more people in prison for drug offenses than all of the people in prison in the 1970s. It is an extraordinary fact. Whether you are Black or White, if you get arrested and charged with a felony crime for doing some things that the last three Presidents of the United States admitted to doing, and then tried and convicted—I say “tried” with hesitancy because the majority of them are plea bargains. As the President knows, if you get convicted of that felony offense, the nondrug violent offense, the collateral consequences to your life are horrendous.

We now live in a nation where the collateral consequences are profound. We now know that time behind bars, even for these nonviolent offenders, reduces people's hourly wages by 11 percent, their annual employment by 9 weeks, their annual earnings by 40 percent. It has a powerful economic impact.

If a person is convicted for possession of controlled substances use, they become ineligible for so many benefits that we would often think we would want these very people to have. They

can't get Federal education grants such as a Pell grant. They can't get loans or work assistance. They become ineligible for business licenses, outrageously so. A person convicted of a felony will be denied public housing, even the ability to visit their family in public housing. They could be kicked out of their current housing arrangements. Former inmates can't get jobs, shelter, or loans. They often feel that no option exists other than going back to that slippery slope toward more crime. That is for all the people within the criminal system.

But what is anguishing so many is the clear and undeniable applications of this criminal justice system and the applications of this legal system in unequal ways to different portions of our population.

In my life I have seen that firsthand—how the usage of drugs in different communities where there is no difference between Blacks and Whites is treated differently based upon their race or their socioeconomic status.

Let me be clear. These issues are American issues, not simply race issues. They affect us all because we are a nation with a profound declaration of independence, but the truth of our country speaks also to an interdependence. Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.

I point out these facts to let you understand why we have to have such an urgency. African Americans and Whites have no difference in drug usage whatsoever, but an African American who chooses to use marijuana is 3.7 times more likely to be arrested for that usage than someone who is White.

In fact, between 2007 and 2009, drug sentences for African-American men were 13.1 percent longer than those for White men. Usage has no difference, but arrest rates are dramatically higher for African-American men. In fact, for all crimes, when you start breaking the actual data down, you see patterns of discriminatory impact that are unacceptable in a nation this great.

Even for police violence, we have to understand that today nearly 2.5 times more Whites are arrested than Blacks for crimes that are violent and non-violent—2.5 times more arrests for Whites than Blacks, but somehow African Americans are 21 more times more likely to be shot dead by a police officer.

This is data that should not shock us along racial lines but shock us along American lines. We are the Nation of liberty and justice for all. We are the country of equal protection under the law. African Americans make up just 13 percent of our population but 40 percent of the prison population.

In New Jersey, African Americans are 13.7 percent of New Jersey's population but 62 percent of New Jersey's prison population. Much of that, as clearly the data shows, has come about through the persecution of the American drug policy that is applied to different groups and different effects. The

reality for minorities is punishing. By the age of 23, 44 percent of Latino youth will be arrested. We know the sad reality that 1 in 3 black males born in America today can expect, if we make no changes, to be incarcerated at some point in their lives compared to 1 in 87 White males, ages 18 to 64, incarcerated, while 1 in every 12 Blacks is.

I struggled with these issues my whole life. As a mayor of a city constantly working to fight to protect citizens, I know how complicated these problems can be. My police department, ourselves, we dug into the data. We saw that our practices had to be changed, that we had to find better ways of keeping our community safe, but we also knew something deeper. I will never forget when I sat with the head of the FBI in Newark, and I asked him about the violent crime problem: How are we going to solve this problem?

He looked at me and said: You don't understand, Mayor. We—meaning law enforcement—are not going to solve this problem. What has to be done are changes greater than this.

I watched how young kids get arrested for breaking the law, for smoking marijuana or being caught with possession. Teenagers find themselves—because they have marijuana on them of a certain amount and weight so the charges increase, to being in a school zone which is every place in many cities—now facing mandatory minimums of upwards of 5 years. These teenagers are scared, afraid, knowing they broke the law, but other folks like the last three Presidents have gotten away with it. They get offered it by the prosecutor, overworked, trying hard to serve the public and keep people safe. The prosecutor doesn't give them the mandatory minimum, they give them a deal: Just take time served or a month or 6 months, but they find themselves with a felony conviction. Now they find themselves in a world where they think they have no options. They can't get jobs. They can't get education grants. They can't get hope.

Hopelessness is a toxic state of being, and those kids then often get caught up again into the underground economy, back into the world of drugs.

What we saw in my time as mayor is that so many of the people who ultimately end up being violent criminals started as kids who felt all their options closed in on them because they got caught up in this world of drugs.

One of the worst collateral consequences of the way we are going about prosecuting our criminal legal system is the violence we are seeing from people who think they have no options but to do what they are doing.

I say this all to simply say we must find a way out. If we are America, a system that believes in elevating human potential and believes in ideas of liberty and freedom and deplores this concept that government should take people's liberty for no good

means, we have to do something about this issue.

We who believe in freedom, who tell the world to look at our light and our torch and our promise, should evidence something better than leading the globe in incarcerating our own citizens. We, this country, where generation after generation has conquered discrimination against Irish, has conquered discrimination against Italians, has beat back discrimination against Catholics, has stood up to discrimination against Jews, has fought against Jim Crow and slavery; advancing not toward Black ideals or Jewish ideals or Irish ideals, but the common ideals that bind us as brothers and sisters of justice, of freedom, of equality—we have to do better than lead the globe in incarceration, to have a legal system that subjects more of its people and minorities toward search and scrutiny than seizure and arrest. This we cannot tolerate.

Why I stand so confidently with a faith in my Nation that we can do better does not just stem from this hallowed history. It also stems from the President. Right now in America there are States doing incredible things, incredible things, to change away this reality.

I am proud of my State. We have gone far but not far enough. In New Jersey, between 1999 and 2012, we reduced our prison population 26 percent. Guess what. During that same period of time, New Jersey saw a 30-percent reduction in violent crime. We showed to America that we are better than this. We can give more liberty to people, lowering our prison population, having a disproportionate effect on minorities, and actually drive down crime as well.

We are not the only State. New York's prison population is down 24 percent from the late 1990s. This is due almost entirely to reforms of the Rockefeller drug laws, policies that sent thousands of people to prison often serving sentences for low-level crimes. Over that same period, New York reduced its crime by more than half, lowering prison populations, disproportionately affecting African Americans and Latinos and lowering crimes.

Texas reduced its prison population in 2013 dramatically and has seen decreases in both crime and recidivism rates. All of these States can do more, but why has the Federal Government done little to nothing to follow suit?

I am proud of what is going on in the Senate with many of my colleagues. I came and joined this body when people pulled together to begin legislation such as the Smarter Sentencing Act or, more recently, the REDEEM Act I did in partnership with RAND PAUL.

I am so proud that this issue cuts across political sides, that we have Democrats and Republicans, red States and blue States, all beginning to say we can do better. I am here today to end my remarks with that call to the consciousness of our country. If we

have an injustice in our midst with a legal system that is so far away from the justice system to which we should aspire, we have to do better.

I was raised to believe that injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. In the words of Langston Hughes: "There's a dream in this land with its back against the wall; to save the dream for one, we must save the dream for all."

I know in my heart that with anguish of millions of Americans being punished by a legal system that has gone way out of control, affecting Blacks and Whites, young people of all backgrounds, a legal system that patently has a discriminatory impact on minorities, a legal system that steals the people's liberty, we can do better than this. We can save taxpayer money. We can lower our prison incarceration rates. We can elevate the promise of so many now denied their promise, and we can celebrate our American ideals. We need to lead this globe, not in incarceration, by telling the truth of who we are; that America is a land of freedom, of justice, where there truly is liberty and justice for all.

Thank you.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

EPA REGULATIONS

Mr. BLUNT. Madam President, I want to talk a little bit about regulation today. We end this Congress failing once again for the Congress to take more responsibility for regulation. Items such as the REINS Act, which I have sponsored with Senator PAUL and others and which would require Members of Congress to vote on regulations that had significant economic impact did not get done.

A bill that I introduced with Senator KING from Maine that would create a regulatory review process that got great reviews in every economic and many other papers and magazines did not get done. But what I am seeing in Missouri and around the country is more and more concern that begins to focus on the Congress not doing what it needs to do to keep the regulators under control—legislation that would routinely put an end date on every regulation so that regulation has to be reviewed and regulation has to come up again and be looked at. Frankly, if you combined that with the requirement for the Senate and the House to vote on that regulation, it would be very unlikely that regulations that no longer made sense would be presented another time—having to look at this in a way that makes sense for our economy.

One of the generally used estimates is that \$2 trillion is spent every year in the United States complying with regulations. Well, let's assume that maybe as much as half of that—it could be more—is either duplicative or simply unnecessary. What would happen in our economy if we had \$1 trillion chasing the future rather than trying to needlessly comply with things that no longer make sense.

We have to take more responsibility for that because frankly there is no other way to get our hands on the regulators. The regulators are often out of control and almost always unaccountable. Frankly, they are more unaccountable in the second term of a President than they are in the first term because nobody in the chain of command ever has to go back and answer to the people we work for about the cost of these regulations.

I know in my State of Missouri, people are really concerned about a couple of regulations out there now that are dealing with energy policy and water policy, regulations the EPA has imposed that really do not make sense when you look at the cost of those regulations versus what would be gained by the regulations if they were even possible to comply with.

I think a clear message was sent in November to the next Congress that people want the government to be more responsive, that people want the government to—when you have a cost-benefit analysis of something the government has done, make it a realistic analysis, make it an analysis that would stand the straight-face test, when you say, oh, this is not the emotional cost of worrying about some societal problem that you really cannot quite define, this is what it really costs American families in terms of, for instance, their utility bill.

We look at these regulations that frankly go beyond the capacity of the regulators. I am not suggesting that the Congress is the right place to draft most regulations. I would say that the process of passing a law and saying that we want this agency to figure out how to implement the law is, in fact, the right way to do that. But I would also suggest that then that agency has to come back to the Congress and say: Here is the regulation that we think is the proper implementation. Now you have to vote yes or no. This regulation is the way to go forward with this law.

I think often the regulators now are well beyond what the law allows them to do. There is a case in point I am going to talk about in a minute, the water rule that is out there, where a navigable water was used as a definition of where the EPA had some jurisdiction. Well, I think their view right now is well beyond "navigable." So what would we do about that? There is the ENFORCE the Law Act that I introduced in the Senate and that the House passed months ago with a bipartisan vote, where the Congress would have standing in court to be able to go to court if either House of the Congress thought the President was not enforcing the law as intended, so that the Congress—which now cannot go to court and say that we want a third party to step in right now and define this principle—could go to court and say that we want to know right now what "navigable" meant in 1972 when it was put into law, in the early 1970s, what it meant in 1899 when it was used

for the first time, and what it means today.

There is no reason to have a couple of years of trying to comply with a regulation when eventually the Supreme Court will say, as they did a handful of times last year, that the Federal Government does not have jurisdiction to do this or that people were appointed illegally to a board or commission and that all of the actions they took had to be set aside. This is not a hypothetical case. This is what the Court decided just last year. The ENFORCE the Law Act would give us the capacity not to require a citizen to have to bear the burden of looking at a regulation that is outside the law or does not make sense and would allow the Congress to actually participate in that process at a much earlier time. So I hope in the next Congress we will do in the Senate what the House did and pass something like the ENFORCE the Law Act. I certainly intend to introduce that legislation again, put it on the President's desk, and have that discussion.

The administration recently took the opportunity to roll out a new rule on the Wednesday before Thanksgiving. This was an estimate of—this was a rule on air matter, ozone. A new ozone rule came out the Wednesday before Thanksgiving. Believe me, if you have a rule that you think people are going to like, you do not put it out the Wednesday afternoon before Thanksgiving. This is like the—we always watch late Friday afternoon what comes out because that is what whoever is announcing it did not want to announce on Monday. Even a bigger day is the Wednesday before Thanksgiving. We have an air rule now that we have not achieved. We have made great strides in the right direction, but looking at where we are now on this rule and mercury in the air and the quality of the air, we would have to have at least 75- to 85-percent attainment in counties all over America before you could then raise the bar one more time.

This would take the 75-percent standard, or the 75 standard that we have now for particulate matter—the so-called MACT Standards—and reduce it even further. We are not in attainment with the first rule yet. In fact, the EPA just recently, years after the rule, put out the guidelines you would need that were helpful to try to achieve the rule. But as soon as you get the guidelines for the last rule, the EPA wants to say: Oh, here we want to talk about the next rule, even though we just now told you how to begin to think about complying with the last rule. Even though there are nonattainment areas all over the country, we want to move right beyond that and go to the next rule.

That is the kind of thing that should not be allowed to happen. People are still looking for good-paying jobs. They are still looking at a utility bill they want to make sense of. I hope the Congress can be a part of that. The EPA has another rule they have been asking

for comment on, the so-called clean powerplant. Well now, who is opposed to that? Nobody. There is nobody who does not want clean power. In fact, the standards for utility powerplants have moved in a very positive direction in the last 10 years.

We have made great gains. The question is, are the next gains worth the economic cost, if the next gains are worth people having utility bills they cannot pay or if the next gains are worth people not having jobs they would otherwise have. That is a discussion we need to have. You know, the wrong utility policies produce an absolute lose-lose. A utility bill goes up, we lose jobs that we otherwise would have, and they go to places that care a whole lot less about what comes out of the smokestack than we do.

So the problem gets better, we lose jobs, and the country that has made the most positive strides in recent years is the country that pays the price for rules that no longer make sense. The rule that is out now—our State is largely coal dependent. We are the fifth most coal-dependent State. We are about 82-percent coal dependent. Of the 1 million comments that have been made on the rule, 305,000 of them came from Missouri families.

There are 1 million comments of people talking about why this rule does not make sense for them. We need to be sure that we do the things that not only meet the legal standard but also meet the commonsense standard as we move forward. The Wall Street Journal recently ran an op-ed—an opinion editorial piece—by Harvard Professor Laurence Tribe, who happened to be one of President Obama's law school professors and who is more often a witness for the left side of an argument than for the right side of an argument.

He joined the world's largest private coal company, Peabody Energy, to criticize the executive overreach in what the EPA is proposing as they propose to regulate carbon emissions from existing powerplants. There is a big difference if you have a rule that talks about what you do in the future for the utility companies than regulating what people have previously decided to do under the old rules.

There is a bill out there that I am a cosponsor of that really tries to use the great resource we have through coal in a most effective way. We do not produce any coal in Missouri any more, but we used to. We do not have any coal mines left in our State. But we have coal-fueled power plants. It is not really a war on coal as far as Missourians are concerned; it is a war on coal-fired plants.

If you built a plant under the old rules and, in fact, it has better air quality than any powerplant has ever had up until this time, as all of our recent plants have had, and you still have life in that plant, but the EPA comes in and says that now you have to meet a new standard with the plant you just built or you built 5 years ago, somebody has to pay that bill.

There is this mythical view that well, it is big industry or it is manufacturing. The most laughable of all is that somehow the utility companies are going to pay the bill. The utility companies do not pay the bill. People that get a utility bill pay the bill. The people that are most impacted by that are the people who are having a hard time paying their utility bill now.

These are bad policies. I am committed that as a Congress we should do more than we have been doing to accept responsibility for these agencies we fund, for some overall law, that no matter how much they are abusing it by stretching it beyond what the Congress intended, the Congress would have passed—nobody is out there issuing a rule and saying: By the way, we do not have any legal authority to do this. So defining that authority, being sure the rules make sense is important.

On the power rule, on December 2 I filed comments urging that this rule be withdrawn and we think more carefully about the impact it has on jobs that have good take-home pay and about families who have a hard time paying their utility bill now—our retired individuals, our single moms or others who have a hard time paying their utility bill now. We need to continue to look at that.

One other rule I want to talk about, as my time comes to a conclusion here, is the so-called waters of the United States rule. The EPA was given the authority under the Clean Water Act, as I said earlier, to have some authority over navigable waters. Navigable water, beginning in the 1890s, was used in Federal law as a constitutional explanation of why the Federal Government would be involved in water policy, because the Federal Government under the Constitution is involved in commerce.

Navigable and commerce come together. Navigable actually means you can navigate with some sort of vessel that can carry a commercial load. Well, the EPA has now decided, or is in the process of proposing, at least, that navigable waters means any water that can run into any water that could run into any water that can be navigable. I am confident that is not what the Congress intended.

Now, if they want to propose that, that is fine. Through the President and the administration, the EPA can come to Congress and say: We think we ought to control all the water everywhere; let's have a debate about that. And the Congress would not give the EPA that authority.

I hope the next Congress sets as a priority taking responsibility for what the Federal Government does, taking responsibility for these regulators and regulations, being sure we have regulations where we need them that make sense, and that we push back and don't have regulations where all they do is hurt families, hurt jobs, and don't solve the bigger problem. I hope we see

that happen, and I hope the next Congress will be more focused on doing that job than this Congress was.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Mexico.

(The remarks of Mr. UDALL of New Mexico pertaining to the submission of S. Res. 596 are printed in today's RECORD under "Submitted Resolutions.")

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. REED. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. REED. Madam President, I rise today in support of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2015. I commend the work of my colleagues on the Armed Services Committee—especially the chairman, Senator CARL LEVIN of Michigan—on reaching an agreement with the House to complete this important legislation.

It is also appropriate that this legislation be named in honor of both Senator CARL LEVIN and Congressman BUCK MCKEON, the chairmen of their respective committees who this year are retiring after extraordinary service and dedication to the Nation and particularly to the men and women of the armed services. It is another reason why this bill is particularly special—because it represents the culmination of the work of these two extraordinary gentlemen.

For over 50 consecutive years this Senate has passed a defense authorization bill. I hope we will be able to send the bill before us to the President for his signature. We owe it to our servicemembers to pass a law that will support them and enable the DOD to execute this year's budget efficiently and effectively.

This year, once again we have had to make very difficult decisions, especially because of the economic circumstances we face as a nation, the resources, and the threats which are challenging at this moment in our history. But this bill will allow the Department of Defense to combat these current threats, plan for future threats, and provide for the welfare of our brave servicemembers and their families.

While it is disappointing that we are not able to bring this bill to the floor for amendments in regular order because time really is running out, this is a very good bill which is based on the principle of compromise between many parties. It is critical at this moment that we pass it for the men and women in uniform for the United States.

I wish to point out a few highlights of the bill.

First, it authorizes a 1-percent across-the-board pay raise and reauthorizes over 30 types of bonuses and

special pays for our men and women in uniform.

It includes numerous provisions that build on the reforms we passed last year to further strengthen and improve sexual assault prevention and response programs. It is unacceptable and it is completely antithetical to the ethic of the military that anyone in uniform would be a predator. To be a soldier, to be a marine, to be a sailor, to be an airman—it is about your subordinates, your comrades, helping them and sacrificing for them, not using them. So we can do more, and we must do more, but I am pleased to see that we have taken important steps and we are following through on these steps.

The legislation in general improves the ability of the Armed Forces to counter emerging and nontraditional threats, particularly cyber warfare. This is a new dimension of warfare. It is one we are coping with, but I don't think anyone should feel we have the technology, the techniques, the operations, and the insights to feel fully competent. This legislation will help us move in that direction.

The legislation also authorizes the full request of \$4.1 billion for the Afghanistan Security Forces Fund to sustain the Afghan National Security Forces as the U.S. and coalition forces shift our mission to training, advising, and assisting these forces, letting them take the lead in combat operations. It is very essential.

It also authorizes several train-and-equip programs to assist foreign militaries conducting counterterrorism and counternarcotics operations. Of particular note are programs and resources that will go to Iraq and Syria, where we face serious challenges, where we have to provide the kind of support that is indicated in this legislation.

This year I once again had the honor of serving as the chairman of the Seapower Subcommittee alongside Senator JOHN MCCAIN, the ranking member. Our subcommittee focused on the needs of the Navy, Marine Corps, and strategic mobility forces. We put particular emphasis on supporting Marine and Navy forces engaged in combat operations, improving efficiencies, and applying the savings to higher priority programs. Specifically, the bill includes the required funding for two Virginia-class submarines and a moored training ship and approves other major shipbuilding programs, including funding for two DDG-51 destroyers, the aircraft carrier replacement program, and three littoral combat ship vessels, and it permits incremental funding for another amphibious transport dock ship.

I am particularly pleased about the funding for the Virginia-class submarines and the DDG-1000 destroyers. So many Rhode Islanders build them, design them, and they are an incredible part of our national security. So we are reinforcing shipbuilding programs that are not only under budget and ahead of

schedule but are vitally important to the security of the United States.

Along these same lines, I am pleased to note that the bill establishes the National Sea-Based Deterrence Fund to provide resources and to manage the construction of the Ohio-class replacement ballistic missile submarine program. According to testimony provided to the Armed Services Committee, the Ohio-class replacement is the Navy's highest priority program. We are currently constructing attack submarines. These submarines are designed to go against other submarines, to deliver special operations troops, and to conduct fire missions from the sea.

The Ohio class will replace our ballistic missile submarines, which are part of our deterrence forces. These submarines have nuclear weapons and are part of our triad, our architecture to deter the use of nuclear weapons; we have to replace them. It cannot be done just with Navy resources because it is not just a Navy program, it is a national security program embracing our nuclear deterrence. This fund is a good starting point for that process, and I am very pleased to see it in the legislation.

Working together with Senator MCCAIN, particularly following Senator MCCAIN's lead, this bill increases accountability for the taxpayers' dollars spent on several major Navy programs. For example, the bill includes a provision to require the Director of Operational Test and Evaluation to submit a report of the current LCS test and evaluation master plan for seaframes and mission modules. The report would provide an assessment of whether completion of the test and evaluation master plan will demonstrate operational effectiveness and operational suitability for both seaframes and each mission module.

This is a very important program. We want to make sure we get it right. We want to make sure we build in efficiencies where we can, and the Director of Operational Test and Evaluation will help us do that.

The bill also includes language that will continue support of and advance planning for the refueling of the USS *George Washington* aircraft carrier and preclude the Navy from spending any funds to inactivate this ship. Again, this goes to the congressional mandate of having a specified number of aircraft carrier battle groups, and without refueling the *Washington*, we will not meet that legislative mandate. So we hope we will go forward this year and provide the requisite funding to complete the refueling, but at least we are moving in the right direction. I think that is important.

I particularly want to voice my thanks to Senator MCCAIN and other members of the Seapower Subcommittee for their diligence, for their leadership, for their assistance in not only giving what our Navy and Marines need, but also making sure that the taxpayers are protected as best we can.

And, frankly, we have to do more with respect to efficiencies, economies, and being wise in our allocation of resources.

Before I conclude with my remarks regarding the traditional defense programs, I want to touch on two other aspects of the legislation, one in particular with respect to the Defense act. I am pleased that it includes the HAVEN Act. This is bipartisan legislation that I introduced with Senator JOHANNIS to help more veterans with critical repairs and modifications for their homes so they are safer and more accessible.

This program is directed at our disabled and low income veterans. They find themselves out of the service, they have benefits, but they have needs to fix their homes and this program will help them do that. It establishes a competitive pilot program allowing nonprofit organizations throughout the country to apply for grants administered by the Department of Housing and Urban Development to help make key improvements to the houses of veterans with disabilities, or low-income veterans.

It is fitting we take this step to give back to those who have made a personal sacrifice for our Nation, and I am particularly delighted I was able to work with Senator JOHANNIS. As I noted in my remarks yesterday, he is retiring, but his decency, integrity, intelligence, and commitment to his constituents and also to the men and women of the Armed Forces will be missed here.

I am also glad that, on a topic not usually found in the defense authorization bill, we reached a bipartisan agreement on a package of public land bills, including two longstanding priorities for my State. For years, I have supported the preservation and renewed development of the Blackstone River Valley and have led the effort to designate parts of that area as a national park, which the bill before us will finally establish.

In 1793, Samuel Slater began the American industrial revolution in Rhode Island when he built his historic mill on the Blackstone River—really the first industrial-scale operation in the United States—and from that, much has ensued. Today, the mills and villages throughout what is now known as the John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor in Rhode Island and Massachusetts stand as witness to this important era of our history.

Much credit has to go to Senator John H. Chafee, who picked up the ball from those who preceded him. In fact, I was told last weekend that this attempt to get recognition goes back as far as a letter to Lady Bird Johnson in the 1960s, asking if she could help get land in the Blackstone Valley preserved. So it has been a long and winding road, and John Chafee was a key person in that process.

Creating a national historic park within the existing corridor would preserve the industrial, natural, and cultural heritage of the Blackstone Valley for future generations. It will improve the use and enjoyment of the natural resources, including outdoor education for young people; it will assist local communities while providing economic development opportunities; and it will increase the protection of the most important and nationally significant cultural and natural resource of the Blackstone River Valley.

I can recall last year inviting Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell to Rhode Island, and we kayaked along the Blackstone River. When I was young, in the 1950s and 1960s, the idea of going into the Blackstone River, which was then frankly an industrial waste zone, would have been ridiculous. Today, we not only use the Blackstone River for recreation but, with this national park designation, we will be able to do so much more.

The public lands package also includes legislation to authorize the National Park Service to look at another river system in Rhode Island and adjacent Connecticut—specifically rivers within the Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed—for potential inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. These rivers are, again, so important to Rhode Island.

One of the things you discover as you go around Rhode Island, particularly after a storm when you can see the true power of these rivers, is that development during the industrial revolution was centered around rivers because water was a source of energy. As a result, many of our communities are clustered around the rivers and have great historic, cultural, recreational, and environmental value.

So let me thank not only my colleagues here but in the House, Congressmen DAVID CICILLINE and JIM LANGEVIN, for their great effort; also the Members of the Massachusetts delegation, because the Blackstone runs into Massachusetts; and I particularly want to thank SHELDON WHITEHOUSE, a stalwart when it comes to all these issues—anything to do with the environment, particularly Rhode Island's environment. His leadership and his support were absolutely critical in getting this measure today included in this bill. I would also like to thank the countless number of stakeholders in Rhode Island and Massachusetts who have tirelessly advocated for the preservation of the Blackstone River Valley all these years.

We have a good national defense authorization bill before the Senate, and I urge all of my colleagues to support it. I look forward to being able to witness, even remotely, the signing of the Levin-McKeon national defense authorization.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

OBAMACARE

Mr. BARRASSO. Madam President, earlier today the former Secretary of Health and Human Services, Kathleen Sebelius, said there was a way to fix ObamaCare. She said: Change the name. She said: Change the name. That was her solution.

Now that is not something she just told a friend. It is something she told many, as she was participating in Politico's "Lessons From Leaders" events. Well, leaders don't blame the failure of a bad product on a name. You can blame it on a lot of things, but the name is not it. After all, the President said he was fond of the name ObamaCare. Apparently, Kathleen Sebelius is taking a page from the playbook of Professor Gruber about underestimating the intelligence of the American people.

This law isn't unpopular because it was named after the President. The law is unpopular because it doesn't work. It is unpopular because it doesn't deliver what the President promised the American people it would. So Democrats can rename this health care system whatever they want and people all across the country are still going to know that the law is failing them.

People have been hit by higher costs—higher copays, higher premiums, higher deductibles. Many of them can't continue to see the doctor who treated them in the past. So no matter what the Democrats and Kathleen Sebelius want to call it, the law remains very unpopular because it is unworkable and it is unaffordable.

As we head into the middle of December, next week, December 15, is the deadline for people to sign up on Healthcare.gov if they want to have their health insurance coverage starting next January—January 1—just a few weeks from now.

That is for people living in the 37 States that use the Federal health care exchange. A lot of people still haven't signed up, and they may learn over the next few days if they do go to the Web site to sign up that their health care and their insurance premiums are actually more expensive next year than they were this year. That is what people continue to see: Health care rates going up in spite of the President's promise.

When President Obama was selling his health care law to the American people, he promised them they would save money. He actually went so far as to say people would save \$2,500 per year, per family, under his plan. And NANCY PELOSI, the former Speaker of the House, actually went on "Meet the Press" and at one point said: Everyone's rates would go down. Everyone's rates, she said, would go down.

Well, that didn't happen. Now the Obama administration finally admits that people are paying more, not less. Americans buying health insurance through the Federal exchange will see their premiums go up and the administration finally admits it. And that is

according to a new report by the Department of Health and Human Services which came out last Thursday.

Democrats said prices would go down, the President promised they would go down, and NANCY PELOSI said they would go down for everyone. Instead, the prices keep going up.

Here is what one person in Syracuse, NY, wrote to his local newspaper last week. Lawrence Petty wrote to the Syracuse Post-Standard last Monday, December 1. He wrote that he has a plan he bought through the State ObamaCare exchange. This year, the cost was about \$664 a month for the couple. Next year, going on the exchange, the rate for the same plan—the same plan, because the President said if you like your plan you can keep it—the same plan is going up from \$664 a month to \$773 a month. That is over \$1,300 extra per year. Mr. Petty asked the newspaper in Syracuse, NY: "So what gives?"

The average increase across the country is less than that, but this man in Syracuse, NY, is looking at a price hike of more than 17 percent. Every Democrat in the Senate voted for the President's health care law—every one of them. The Democratic Senator from New York voted for the health care law—the very State where this man is writing to his newspaper in Syracuse, NY. What do they have to say to this man in Syracuse whose insurance premiums are going up 17 percent next year? How do they respond to this man who is writing to the paper in New York asking "what gives"?

Maybe his question has something to do with what the senior Senator from New York said a couple of weeks ago at the National Press Club, when he admitted that the health care law, in his words, "wasn't the change we were hired to make."

It is not just premiums. They are not the only problem here. The health care law has added so many Washington mandates, so many things people didn't want, can't afford, aren't interested in, don't need, that other costs have gone up as well. That includes the money people have to pay out of pocket for things such as copays, their deductibles. Some people have actually had to delay their medical care because of all these additional expenses. According to a new Gallup poll last month, 33 percent of Americans say that over the past year they have put off getting medical treatment because of the cost.

Gallup has been asking this same question all the way since 2001, well before the health care law was passed. And this year it is the highest number ever. This is after the President's health care law has been signed into law and has taken effect and the exchanges are in effect—the highest number ever of people not getting care because of the cost.

Two-thirds of these people say they have put off treatment for a serious condition. One of them is a woman

named Patricia Wanderlich. She is 61 years old, and she works part time at a landscaping company outside of Chicago, in the President's home State. She told the New York Times that she has a small brain aneurysm that needs monitoring.

She tells her story in an article the New York Times published on October 17 under the headline "Unable to Meet the Deductible Or the Doctor." Patricia has a health insurance plan through ObamaCare that has an annual deductible of \$6,000, so she has to pay for most of her medical expenses up to that amount. Because of that, she says she is skipping this year's brain scan and hoping for the best. She says: "A \$6,000 deductible—that's just staggering."

This is the kind of person ObamaCare was supposed to help. And changing the name of ObamaCare, as Kathleen Sebelius has recommended today, isn't going to solve the problems for this patient with the \$6,000 deductible. She got the insurance, she got the coverage, but she still cannot get care, and that is a fundamental problem with this health care law.

The other thing this New York Times article points out is that people can't meet their deductibles, and they also can't meet their doctor. Patricia told the newspaper that if she switches to a policy with a lower deductible next year, she will get a smaller network of doctors, which means she will lose access to the specialists taking care of her.

A lot of people are finding that they are in the same situation—losing access to their doctors. Sometimes it is because the insurance has these narrow networks of health care providers. Sometimes it is just because the doctors are so overburdened that you can't get an appointment.

There was an Associated Press report that came out over the weekend, the title was: "Health Law Impacts Primary Care Doc Shortage." We already knew there was a shortage of primary care doctors in the country, also a shortage of specialists, also a shortage of nurses. The President's health care law has made it worse.

The Associated Press article quoted an insurance agent in California named Anthony Halby, who says he has clients tell him that their ObamaCare plan made it extremely difficult for them to find primary care doctors. As he says, "Coverage does not equal access."

He is advising his clients to skip ObamaCare next year and pay more for insurance with a broader network so they can at least see the doctors they want, the doctors they choose, the doctors they need.

He tells people:

The premiums are going to be higher because there's no subsidy. However, I'm going to guarantee you can [actually] keep your doctor.

So people are finding they are paying more, when they were promised by

President Obama, by the Speaker of the House NANCY PELOSI that they would pay less. But she is the same one who said: First you have to pass it before you get to find out what is in it.

So people are having to put off care they need because Washington says they have to pay for things they don't want, they don't need, and they can't afford. People are finding out that coverage isn't the same as care, and millions of people are finding out they can't meet their deductible or their doctor.

That is not what the American people wanted from health care reform. People wanted access to the care they need, from a doctor they choose, at lower cost. That is what they wanted. Instead, what they got are all these new Washington mandates, all these new expenses, all these new problems.

What was the President's solution to that? He said: Put more people on Medicaid. He told Governors around the country to expand the Medicaid Program—make sure people have gotten on Medicaid.

We know that is a system that has been broken for a long time. The question we continue to ask is: Can somebody who has gotten a Medicaid card printed up and given to them or sent to them, can they actually see a doctor?

The Department of Health and Human Services says: Don't worry about that. What did the inspector general say this week? Yesterday in the New York Times: "Half of Doctors Listed as Serving Medicaid Patients Are Unavailable, Investigation Finds."

Who did the investigation? The inspector general of the Department of Health and Human Services.

So even though Health and Human Services says all of these doctors are available to take care of Medicaid patients, their own inspector general of the Department says not true—not true. Only half of the doctors listed as serving Medicaid patients are available.

This is what we are dealing with. That is why Republicans are going to vote to repeal the entire health care law. Meanwhile, we will also vote to strip away the worst and most destructive parts of the law: things such as the arbitrary 30-hour workweek which has been damaging to part-time workers across the country; things such as the unfair medical device tax that sends American jobs overseas, threatens life-saving innovation.

The Republicans are going to talk about finally giving people choices. That is what people want with health care. They want choices. They want availability. They want affordability. That is what they are looking for—available, affordable care and choices, not more Washington mandates—and, finally, giving access to the health care people wanted all along.

Kathleen Sebelius may come out and give a lecture on lessons of leadership. Changing the name of this health care law from ObamaCare to anything else

isn't going to make it any better for the people across this country who are finding out that the President's promises were empty promises; that they have been intentionally deceived as to the way this health care law was presented and passed, and now they find out their insurance is less affordable, their costs of care are going up, the availability of that care is going down, and they have lost their choices.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. LEE. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. LEE. Madam President, the bill before the Senate today at once represents the best of our Nation and some of the worst of Washington. On the one hand, the primary purpose of the National Defense Authorization Act, or NDAA, represents the best of America. In past years it has been one of the few very consistently bipartisan pieces of legislation considered by the Senate, and it usually has been afforded lengthy debate and open and transparent amendment process on the floor. That is because it is one of the most important and solemn duties of Congress to provide for our national defense.

The United States of America has the best armed services the world has ever seen, not just because of what they do, but because of who they are: honest, courageous, selfless patriots who love our country and have dedicated themselves to protecting and defending our way of life.

Of all the bills that come before Congress, the NDAA deserves to be treated with the kind of integrity and respect with which our military personnel approach their jobs. And yet the process that has unfolded this year in connection with the NDAA has fallen fall short of the standard that our armed personnel have set forth. Congress has waited until the last minute to conduct our most important business, using the holidays to fabricate a false sense of urgency. The Senate majority leader has refused to allow an open and transparent debate, shutting down our ability to offer amendments on the Senate floor to this important piece of legislation.

Finally, only a privileged few Members of Congress have a hand in drafting this bill, which was cobbled together with numerous extraneous provisions behind closed doors.

What used to be an exception to the typical legislative process, the typical legislative sausage making for which Washington has become famous, has been subsumed by the status quo, and it is exactly what is wrong with Washington today.

Each one of us as Members of Congress is here for just one reason: We

have been elected to represent and serve the American people. Unfortunately, the twisted, tainted process that has produced this bill prevents all of us from carrying out this responsibility, and it threatens our obligation to do what is right for our men and women in uniform.

As the title suggests, the National Defense Authorization Act is supposed to be a relatively straightforward, largely noncontroversial bill. It is the primary legislative instrument for Congress to exercise its constitutional power granted in article 1, section 8 of the Constitution which is to provide for the common defense. But that is not what we are voting on today; that is not what we are considering in connection with this bill.

This bill, the NDAA for fiscal year 2015, is a legislative hodgepodge that includes those straightforward noncontroversial items that almost all of us support, but also numerous other provisions that are entirely unrelated to national defense.

Most egregiously, the drafters secretly added 68 unrelated bills pertaining to the use of Federal lands—the so-called lands package portion of this bill. They put that into this bill without any opportunity for debate or for a vote on any of those 68 independent bills. None of these bills were included in the version of the NDAA that the Senate Armed Services Committee debated and voted on in May of this year, because had any Member tried to include them in the normal process of our committee, they clearly would have been ruled out of the committee's jurisdiction.

Another outlier in this legislative grab bag is a provision reauthorizing a Defense Department program to train and equip “moderate” Syrian rebels for the next 2 years.

Now we have testimony from some of America's top military leaders warning us of the immense risks involved in this program. They have told us there is no way to guarantee these efforts won't backfire, further embroiling the U.S. military in volatile and unpredictable parts of the world—in the Middle East, in conflicts in that part of the world. Yet here we are, forced to reauthorize this risky program in order to provide for our troops and the Defense Department.

The authority for this program was first added to the NDAA in the closed committee markup process in May and then later attached to the must-pass spending bill in September, giving Senators the all-or-nothing choice of either approving this controversial program or voting against all other government spending. This is not how Congress is supposed to work.

Congress is supposed to evaluate, debate, and amend individual pieces of legislation based on their own merits, with enough time to inform and educate the American people about what their representatives are doing. Instead, it is politics as usual in Wash-

ington. Rather than an open, transparent, and inclusive process, several extraneous and sometimes controversial provisions were added to the NDAA at the last minute by a select few operating entirely behind closed doors.

As we have come to expect from the outgoing majority in the Senate, once the bill appears from behind those closed doors, the American people are denied any real debate or even a chance to read, let alone understand, the bill.

This is a shame, because there are good bipartisan amendments out there, such as the Due Process Guarantee Act, an amendment that Senator FEINSTEIN and I attempted to offer for the Senate's consideration, which would improve the 2015 NDAA by prohibiting the indefinite detention of U.S. persons. Even though the Due Process Guarantee Act received 67 votes of support in the last Congress, it continues to be blocked by these privileged few who cobbled together this bill.

Now at the eleventh hour we are told we have to vote for everything in this legislative medley or vote for none of it. After deliberately allowing time to expire, up to the final moments before the holiday, the Senate majority leader has told the American people that the only way to support our soldiers is to support a distorted legislative process and controversial items that have never been debated in public. Our soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines, and others who serve us in the pursuit of our national security interests deserve better.

Many of my colleagues have said that this is a “must-pass” bill. I would put it slightly differently. I would say we must pass legislation without political gimmicks or procedural games that enable men and women serving our Defense Department to fulfill their missions. We absolutely must pay our soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines, and authorize our national defense budget as a matter of constitutional responsibility, national security, and moral duty. We must do these things. But not like this. I fear that we in the Senate have perhaps become far too comfortable with the idea that the most important issues such as paying our troops, funding our Defense Department, sending our sons and daughters halfway around the world into harm's way—that it is somehow OK to bend the rules to a breaking point and we allow our colleagues to hijack funding for our men and women in uniform to pass their unrelated political priorities.

There is no doubt that it is easier this way—easier, that is, for Senators. It is easier to outsource our representative duties to a select few and to avoid debate on the tough topics that come up along the way. But that doesn't make it right. As our courageous servicemembers and their families know, easier is rarely best.

The rules governing how a bill becomes a law are not optional. They are not arbitrary, either. They exist for a

good reason: to ensure that the will of the American people is heard and followed. If we fail to adhere to the rules, then we fail in the duties we were elected to carry out, and we fail to be a truly representative democracy. But these rules are not self-enforcing. Writing them down doesn't make them so. Unless we hold them true in our hearts and in our minds and in our actions, they will be nothing more than words on paper, mere parchment barriers, as James Madison put it.

If we as an institution can accept a legislative process driven by backroom deals rather than fair and inclusive debate when we are dealing with the most important issues, then when are we ever going to do things the right way?

We can do better. The American people and especially those serving in uniform deserve better; and as we saw in the recent elections, the American people demand we do better. I think we can and we must.

I thank the Presiding Officer.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BENNET). The majority whip.

SSCI STUDY OF THE CIA'S DETENTION AND INTERROGATION PROGRAM

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, many people think that Congress is irrelevant, unimportant, and wastes time with the floor speeches that go nowhere. Yesterday on the floor of the Senate something historic occurred. Standing right back here, the senior Senator from California, Senator DIANNE FEINSTEIN, delivered to Congress and to the Nation a report on the use of torture by the United States of America. Seated on this side was Senator JAY ROCKEFELLER who, as the predecessor and chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, initiated this investigation into the use of torture. Her speech, which lasted about an hour, was followed by Senator JOHN MCCAIN, who stood up and applauded her for releasing this report.

It is worthy of note that what happened on the floor of this Senate yesterday was an assertion of constitutional principles that goes back to the founding of this country. It was an assertion of the three branches of government and their authority, and the authority of Congress to oversee the executive branch of government, and it got down to basics. Let's remember how we reached the point where this report was put together and delivered to the American people.

I will say at the outset that before I came to this job, I used to practice law and occasionally I would go into a courtroom. I really waited for that moment when I could turn to the jury and say: I want to let you know that my opponent in this case destroyed evidence, and I want to let you know why my opponent destroyed evidence—because what was in that evidence was so terrible they would rather leave it to your speculation of how bad it was than actually to let you read it. That is what started this debate which led to

the report. What happened was the Central Intelligence Agency destroyed videotapes of the interrogation of prisoners. After it was discovered that they destroyed them, the Senate Intelligence Committee asked: Why did you destroy those videotapes? They said: Because Congress never asked for them. The Intelligence Committee said: We didn't know they existed.

At that point the Central Intelligence Agency said to the Senate Intelligence Committee: We did nothing wrong, and we invite you, through your staff and members of the committee, to review the cables and emails within the Central Intelligence Agency which prove our case. It proves we did nothing wrong.

I think the CIA was surprised and shocked when the Senate Intelligence Committee took up their invitation. It meant, I understand, 5 years of work. They reviewed some 6 million pages of information. Two staffers from the Senate Intelligence Committee sat in what they call the cave day after day after day, poring through emails and cables to try to reconstruct what happened after 9/11 when the Central Intelligence Agency was interrogating prisoners. It wasn't an easy task. It was made even more difficult when we came to learn that the Central Intelligence Agency hacked into the computers of the Senate Intelligence Committee. It was a tough confrontation between two branches of government, and it is one that resulted, I think, in the right ending when Senator FEINSTEIN, and the Senate Intelligence Committee, following the lead of Senator ROCKEFELLER, stepped forward and produced this report.

I will reflect for a minute on how we reached this point, but first I will tell you that this report concluded that the CIA repeatedly misled senior officials in the Bush and Obama White Houses about detention and interrogation programs. The report said the CIA falsely told the Justice Department that techniques such as waterboarding helped to obtain lifesaving information that kept our country safe.

The report said the CIA detained more individuals and subjected more individuals to abusive interrogation techniques than it ever disclosed to Congress or the President. The CIA did not disclose the use of brutal interrogation techniques that went way beyond what even the torture memo of the previous administration had authorized.

It is worth noting what brought us to this point, and of course, it was the tragic, horrible events of September 11. After that occurrence, the Bush administration unilaterally decided to set aside treaties and laws that have served us in the past. President Bush's then-White House counsel, Alberto Gonzales, recommended to President Bush that the President ignore the requirements of the Geneva Conventions. The Geneva Conventions were treaties that grew out of World War II and es-

tablished rules of warfare to protect soldiers and civilians. These treaties were ratified by the United States of America. They are and were the law of the land.

Colin Powell, who was Secretary of State under President Bush, objected to Alberto Gonzales's recommendation. He argued that we could comply with the Geneva Conventions, fight terrorism, and still keep America safe.

Here is what Secretary Powell said at the time about setting aside the Geneva Conventions. This "will reverse over a century of U.S. policy and practice . . . undermine the protections of the law of war for our own troops. . . . It will undermine public support among critical allies, making military co-operation more difficult to maintain."

Today, Secretary Powell's words seem prophetic. Unfortunately, President Bush rejected Secretary Powell's advice and instead followed Alberto Gonzales's recommendations to set aside the Geneva Conventions.

Then in August 2002, the Department of Justice issued the infamous torture memo. The memo said abuse only rises to the level of torture if it causes pain equivalent to organ failure or death. The memo also concluded the President has the authority to order the use of torture even though that torture would be a crime under U.S. law.

The Justice Department of the United States also signed off on the use of torture techniques such as waterboarding. This was in August of 2002. Thanks to the Intelligence Committee report, we now know that the Justice Department's legal advice was based on false information given to them by the CIA.

I have a long history with this issue. It was almost 10 years ago that I stood at this very desk and read into the RECORD a graphic description of an FBI agent's record of abuse of interrogation that she witnessed at Guantanamo Bay. At the time I was criticized by members of the Bush-Cheney administration, but we now know that the description by this FBI agent was accurate, and what she described was authorized by the Bush administration based on false information provided by the CIA.

It was 10 years ago when I first authored legislation to ban cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment of detainees. In June of 2004 America was shocked by the revelations about what had occurred at Abu Ghraib prison. The Bush administration told us these were rogue actions of a few bad players. I introduced my torture legislation in 2004. I wanted to make it clear that America condemned the abuses at Abu Ghraib and stood by our commitment to the humane treatment of prisoners. But what we didn't know was that the administration had approved the use of abusive interrogation techniques in CIA facilities and at Guantanamo Bay. A Defense Department investigation later concluded that these techniques migrated to Abu Ghraib.

I offered my legislation as an amendment to the defense authorization bill. I expected it to be noncontroversial. It was adopted unanimously here in the Senate; however, the Bush administration had it removed in conference.

In the fall of 2004, I tried again. I offered the same amendment to the 9/11 commission intelligence reform legislation. Again, my amendment was adopted unanimously by the Senate, and again in conference negotiations the Bush administration removed it. I didn't understand their opposition to my amendment because the United States ratified the torture convention, a treaty that prohibits cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment, the same thing my amendment said.

A few months later, I had an opportunity to get to the bottom of this. Alberto Gonzales, President Bush's White House counsel, was nominated to be Attorney General. During his confirmation hearings in January 2005, Mr. Gonzales told me the administration believed they had legal authority to subject detainees to cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment. That was the first time that a Bush administration official had acknowledged this legal loophole. The Washington Post called that testimony "a gross distortion of the law" and cited it as a key reason for opposing the Gonzales nomination to be Attorney General.

After this revelation, Senator MCCAIN asked me if he could take the lead on legislation that I had written to ban cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment. I agreed. There was no better person than JOHN MCCAIN, who in service to the United States of America was a prisoner of war in Vietnam for more than 5 years. He had been subjected to torture because of his service on behalf of our Nation. It became known as the McCain torture amendment. Despite a veto threat from President Bush, the Senate passed the McCain torture amendment in December of 2005 by an overwhelming bipartisan 90-to-9 vote. When the President signed the amendment into law, he issued a signing statement reserving the right to ignore it if he chose.

In June 2006, in the Hamdan decision, the Supreme Court held that the administration was required to follow the Geneva Conventions in its treatment of detainees. The Court took the same position as Secretary Colin Powell had argued years before when President Bush had first decided to disregard the Geneva Conventions.

In September 2006 President Bush publicly acknowledged the CIA detention and interrogation program for the very first time.

In July 2007 President Bush signed an Executive order stating the CIA's detention and interrogation program "fully complies with the obligations of the United States" under the Geneva Conventions and authorizing the use of certain interrogation techniques. Again, the administration twisted the law to justify the use of abusive tactics

based on false information provided by the CIA.

In October 2007 the Senate Judiciary Committee held hearings on the nomination of Michael Mukasey to be Attorney General. The hearings were going smoothly until I asked Mr. Mukasey to condemn waterboarding as torture. He refused. That became the focal point of the debate on his confirmation.

On December 6, 2007, the New York Times reported that in November 2005 the CIA had destroyed videotapes showing the CIA's use of abusive interrogation techniques. The next day I sent a letter to Attorney General Mukasey asking the Justice Department to open a criminal investigation into the destruction of CIA interrogation video evidence. I was the only Member of Congress to call for that investigation. In January the Attorney General opened the investigation. The CIA's destruction of these videotapes is what led to this Intelligence Committee report.

Then-CIA Director Hayden suggested that the Intelligence Committee staff review the operational cables and emails. The Intelligence Committee study was authorized by an overwhelming 14-to-1 bipartisan vote after the SSCI, the Select Committee on Intelligence, found that the cables detailed detention conditions and interrogations far worse than what the CIA had previously described to the committee.

The investigation led to the production of a report that is more than 6,700 pages long, including nearly 38,000 footnotes. It is based on a review of more than 6 million pages of CIA records.

In December 2012 the Intelligence Committee approved this report with a 9-to-6 bipartisan vote. Two months later, in February 2013, I received a briefing on this report before it was redacted. I was so disturbed by what I heard that I personally spoke with the President, then-Secretary of Defense Panetta, and John Brennan, to urge each of them to do everything possible to be briefed on its findings and support its declassification.

In March 2014 I sent a letter to CIA Director Brennan raising serious concerns about the CIA's hacking of Senate Select Committee on Intelligence computers and again urging declassification of the report.

In April 2014 the Intelligence Committee approved the declassification and the public release by an 11-to-3 bipartisan vote.

It is critically important that this has been declassified so the American people can understand what has been done in their name. It was inconsistent with American values. It didn't make us safer, and it must never be repeated again.

Yesterday Senator MCCAIN came to the floor to support Senator FEINSTEIN's disclosure. During the course of his statement on the floor, he said: Our enemies are acting without conscience.

America cannot act without conscience. We are called to a higher standard than some because we believe in basic human values and in basic principles, and it may mean that some of the tactics used by our worst enemies are out of bounds for us, as they should be.

What happened with this disclosure is an important reaffirmation of our separation of powers and our constitutional responsibility.

I wish to congratulate Senator FEINSTEIN, Senator ROCKEFELLER, and every member of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, but particularly those who voted to go forward time and time again. They were under immense pressure not to do so.

The fact they have held the CIA accountable to the American people, to Congress, and to the President is part of our constitutional responsibility. It reminds people that in a democracy the people govern and the people have a right to know what this government is doing in their name.

There has been a lot of debate since the release of this report, and I assume it will continue. But if it ends with the report in the press, we have not done enough. We have to reform our processes, and let me start with Congress.

I served on the Senate Intelligence Committee for 4 years. It was a daunting assignment. Virtually every hearing is behind closed doors and classified. No one knows here even at the Select Committee on Intelligence unless you tell them afterwards. Testimony before us isn't available to the public. Most of the time, the professionals from the intelligence agencies come before us and speak in the acronyms of their agencies to the point you can't even follow what they are saying. It took me 2 years of sitting there puzzling over what they were saying to finally get an insight into what the committee and its responsibility were all about. That is not right.

We need to make sure that congressional oversight of our intelligence function is up to the job and up to the Constitution. That means more resources put in the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence. When I served, members of the committee shared a staffer. We each shared a staffer. We didn't even have one staff person working for each of us on these subjects. The amount of money that is being spent, tens of millions of dollars in covert activities and the like, needs to be carefully monitored. As the chairman of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense, I have that responsibility to look at the overall budget on intelligence. There is not enough oversight. We need to make certain that our branch of government is up to that challenge so we can guarantee to the American people that we are doing our job, so that we can be held accountable as we hold the intelligence agencies accountable as well.

I think what happened yesterday is going to be part of the history of the

Senate, an important, positive part. I hope it is just the beginning where both political parties come together and accept their constitutional responsibility.

TRIBUTES TO DEPARTING SENATORS

Mr. DURBIN. I have some tributes here for my colleagues who are retiring, leaving the Senate. It is a lengthy list of tributes.

TOM HARKIN

To Senator TOM HARKIN, neighboring State of Iowa, whom I worked with over many years on so many important topics, I want to salute him for his service. The highlights of his service include the Americans With Disabilities Act and, of course, the Affordable Care Act. His work on education and medical research is legendary. There was a time when TOM HARKIN and Arlen Specter, Republican of Pennsylvania at that time, set out to double the medical research budget at the National Institutes of Health and they did it. Lives have been saved, people have been spared suffering because they had the political determination and courage to achieve it. I am going to miss TOM HARKIN.

I have served in Congress for a number of years and I have heard an awful lot of speeches. One of the most powerful speeches I ever witnessed in this Senate was delivered by TOM HARKIN in 1990. He gave his speech without uttering a single word. He delivered it entirely in American Sign Language—a language he knows from years of communicating with his brother Frank, who was deaf. In that historic speech in sign language—a first for this body—TOM HARKIN was urging the United States Senate to pass the Americans with Disabilities Act.

The ADA is one of the great civil rights laws of the 20th century. It is often called "the Emancipation Proclamation for Americans with disabilities." It is a landmark achievement in America's ongoing efforts to create a more perfect union. No one worked harder for its passage than the senior Senator from Iowa, TOM HARKIN. He is often and rightly referred to as "the father of the ADA."

That speech in 1990 was unique in its use of sign language. In another way, however, it was like nearly every speech TOM HARKIN has given because he was speaking for people whose voices too often are not heard in Congress.

In his 40 years in Congress, TOM HARKIN has been a passionate, often fiery and relentless voice for good people who have often been dealt a bad hand by life. He has been a champion for men like his father, a coal miner with black lung disease, and others who desperately need health care. He has been a champion for people with disabilities—in America and around the world. He has been a champion of children in foreign lands who are trapped in the worst forms of forced labor.

TOM HARKIN has been a champion of working men and women in this country—and of their constitutionally protected right to organize and bargain for decent pay and safe working conditions.

TOM HARKIN has been a leader in safeguarding Medicare and Social Security, and moving people from welfare to work.

The senior Senator from Iowa and I were both very lucky. We are first-generation Americans. Senator HARKIN's mother came to this country from Slovenia; my mother came from Lithuania.

He knows from his own family's experience the love and gratitude that so many immigrants feel for the freedoms and opportunities America has given them and their children. So he has fought for immigration laws that protect America's security at the same time they honor our heritage as a nation of immigrants.

I want him to know that we will continue our efforts to pass such laws until we succeed—just as we will continue to push for adoption by this Senate of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities until we pass that important treaty.

As are so many others, TOM HARKIN was inspired to public service by the example of President John Kennedy. After working his way through college, Senator HARKIN spent 5 years as a Navy pilot in the 1960s. He had applied to become a pilot for a commercial airline when he received a more compelling offer. In 1969, an Iowa Congressman invited TOM HARKIN to join his Washington, DC staff. He said yes. He also used his GI Bill benefits to earn a law degree from Catholic University.

TOM went back home to Iowa—and then he returned to Washington in 1974, not as a staffer, but as a Member of the House of Representatives. A decade later, Iowa voters elected him to the U.S. Senate. And in 1990 he became the first Democrat ever to be re-elected to the U.S. Senate by Iowa voters. They must have thought that was a good idea because they re-elected him three more times after that.

Today, 40 years after his first election, TOM HARKIN is grayer and wiser. But he has never forgotten where he came from. He is a proud Midwestern progressive who has never forgotten the hope and dignity that smart, compassionate government gave his family when they needed it. And he has never tired of working to make sure that other families have the same chances his family had.

I wish TOM and Ruth, their daughters and grandchildren all the best.

TOM HARKIN leaves a legacy of achievement and compassion. I will miss his presence in this Senate but he and Ruth will always be a part of our Senate family.

KAY HAGAN

KAY HAGAN, my colleague from North Carolina, has done an amazing job. In her one term in the Senate, she really

made a name for herself when it came to public service. She stepped up time and again and took tough votes. I know it because as whip I asked her to take on some important issues that would make this a better and stronger nation.

When KAY entered the Senate in those perilous days, America was in crisis. The economy was in freefall. Millions had lost their homes to foreclosure. America was fighting two wars—and though our military is the finest in the world, many of its members were exhausted from multiple deployments.

Six years later, we have made progress in all of these areas. Historians will record that Senator KAY HAGAN helped to make America stronger and better.

Senator KAY HAGAN comes from a family that knows a great deal about serving and sacrificing for America. Her maternal uncle, Lawton Chiles, was a Korean War veteran who represented Florida in the U.S. House and Senate and served as Florida's governor. Her father-in-law was a two-star Marine general, her brother and father both served in the Navy, and her husband is a Vietnam veteran who used the GI Bill to help pay for law school.

Senator HAGAN first learned the ups-and-downs of Congress—literally—by operating the Senators-only elevator while interning for her uncle.

Senator HAGAN is a former ballet dancer—a discipline that demands great discipline and hard work. As a Senator, she has used those same qualities to benefit her State and our Nation.

She served 10 years in the North Carolina State Senate and in those 10 years, she earned a reputation as a commonsense hard-worker interested in results, not partisan fighting. As co-chair of the State Budget Committee, she increased the State's "Rainy Day" fund and balanced five straight budgets. You heard that right—five straight budgets. She also helped make record investments in education, raised teacher pay, and increased the minimum wage.

Here in the U.S. Senate, she has continued to be a leader on education issues, most notably helping to lead a group of Senators to start fixing No Child Left Behind. With her family's military background, it is no surprise that Senator HAGAN has fought hard for military families and veterans. She introduced another bill that is close to my heart and that I will continue to work for. It would prohibit for-profit colleges from using the phrase "GI Bill" in aggressive marketing efforts aimed at separating veterans and servicemembers from their hard-earned education benefits. And she led the successful effort to provide health care to those affected by water contamination at Camp Lejeune in North Carolina, the largest Marine Corps base on the East Coast.

KAY HAGAN will leave this Senate with a proud record of dauntless ac-

complishment and I am proud to have had the privilege to call her colleague. I thank her for her friendship and service, and I wish her the best in all her future endeavors.

MARK BEGICH

I can't imagine how the Senator from Alaska handles that commute back and forth, but he did it. I said the other day when we spoke about his service that many people don't realize his father was a Congressman before him and he died in a plane crash with Hale Boggs when they were flying back to Alaska to appear at an event. That plane was lost and never recovered. When MARK BEGICH came from Alaska to serve the United States, he completed the journey his father never could complete. His 6 years of service to Alaska have been extraordinary.

Before he got into politics, though, MARK was a whiz kid entrepreneur. When he was just 16 years old, he got a business license and he and his brother opened two businesses: a nightclub for teens and a vending-machine operation. The business world's loss was our gain.

Senator BEGICH started his political career working as an aide to then-Anchorage Mayor Tony Knowles. At 26, he was elected to the Anchorage Assembly, or city council. And in 2003, he became the first native-born Alaskan to serve as mayor of Anchorage.

In 2008, he dared to take on an Alaska legend: Senator Ted Stevens. When the votes were counted, MARK had become the first Democrat since Mike Gravel in 1981 to represent Alaska in the U.S. Senate.

As a Senator, MARK BEGICH has been a voice for working families in Alaska and across America. He has diligently and doggedly pursued common-sense, bipartisan solutions to big challenges. In all things, MARK's heart is always with Alaska. He has helped to protect Alaska fisheries, promoted renewable energy development in the State, and made sure Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson remains strong and active.

Here is something about MARK my colleagues may not know. In 2011 he was part of a four-man team in the Hotline's live annual trivia contest. His teammates were three House members: DENNIS ROSS, Tom Davis, and Martin Frost. They were up against a formidable team that included Chuck Todd and Amy Walters. No one gave MARK's team a prayer of winning. But once again, MARK BEGICH scored an upset victory. He is to DC political trivia what Ken Jennings is to Jeopardy: A memorable champion.

But the actions for which he will be remembered are very far from trivial. When MARK BEGICH and others in the Class of 2008 arrived in the Senate America's economy was in freefall. Millions of families had lost their homes to foreclosure—the worst foreclosure crisis in America since the Great Depression. America was fighting two wars. Our military is the finest in the world. Many of its members were

exhausted from multiple deployments. On top of that, an outdated policy of “don’t ask, don’t tell” forced some servicemembers to lie about who they were in order to serve the Nation they love. Time after time, Senator MARK BEGICH took brave and principled votes that have made America better and stronger—militarily, economically, and socially.

This son of one of Alaska’s great families has well earned—and will always hold—a place in our Senate family.

TIM JOHNSON

TIM JOHNSON and I came to the Senate together, TIM from South Dakota. He eventually became chairman of the banking committee after he faced one of the toughest physical challenges any Senator has ever faced, a debilitating brain injury that left him physically limited but never limited in spirit and intelligence. Thank God, with Barb at his side, he continued in public service to serve the State of South Dakota.

I am going to miss my great friend TIM JOHNSON.

He and I go back quite a ways. We served together in the House—and we came to the Senate together in 1996. That year, TIM JOHNSON was the only Senate candidate to defeat an incumbent U.S. Senator in a general election.

He won that first Senate election the old-fashioned way—with dedication, hard work, and a lot of shoe leather. I think he knocked on every door in South Dakota—twice. Dedication, humility, and unbelievable hard work—those are the values TIM learned as a fourth-generation South Dakotan. And they are the values that have exemplified his entire career.

In 1986, TIM JOHNSON was a semi-obscure state legislator from Vermillion, SD when he decided to run for his State’s only seat in the U.S. House of Representatives. TIM might have been the only person who thought he had a chance of winning that race, but he surprised people. He did win—and he has never lost an election since. Eight consecutive statewide victories and zero losses. That is quite an accomplishment.

Here is another interesting fact about TIM JOHNSON: During his first term in the House, he was responsible for passing more legislation than any of the other 50 first-term Members.

In his 36 years of public service, TIM JOHNSON has been a strong voice for family farmers and ranchers in South Dakota and across America. He is a longtime advocate of Federal support for renewable energy—especially ethanol and wind energy. He helped lead the effort to pass the Country of Origin Label Act—the COOL Act, for short—to let consumers know if the meat they feed their families was raised in America.

Senator JOHNSON has been a leading advocate for Native Americans. He has fought especially hard for the members of the Lakota and Dakota tribes—descendants of the legendary Indian lead-

ers Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse—who call South Dakota home.

TIM JOHNSON has fought for a livable minimum wage. He helped strengthen America’s health safety net by voting to create the Children’s Health Insurance Program and to expand Medicaid to those who need it. He voted for the Affordable Care Act, which passed this Senate without a vote to spare. That was a difficult vote for many but I believe that history will show it was the right vote for America, and TIM JOHNSON was on the right side of history.

As chairman of the Senate Banking Committee these last 3 years, TIM JOHNSON has played an historic role in helping to implement the Dodd-Frank Wall Street reform law and prevent a repeat of the kinds of abuses that nearly crashed our economy in 2008. He has moved forward despite intense opposition to reform from both inside and outside of Congress.

One of the most important of the Dodd-Frank reforms was the creation of a new Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. Chairman JOHNSON pressed successfully for Senate confirmation of Richard Cordray to head that new bureau so it would have a strong leader at the helm.

While he is justifiably proud of the legislative victories that bear his imprint, TIM JOHNSON may be even more proud of the constituent services he and his staff have given the people of South Dakota. Helping a veteran secure a superior disability rating or helping a senior citizen receive the Social Security and Medicare coverage he or she is due may not make headlines, but it makes a huge difference in the lives of individuals. TIM JOHNSON and his staff understand that.

I will never forget seeing TIM JOHNSON walk onto the Senate floor on September 5, 2007—less than a year after a brain hemorrhage nearly killed him. The courage and strength it took to come back from such a trauma is hard to imagine. Senator MARK KIRK, my partner from Illinois, told me that during his own recovery from a stroke, if he ever felt like giving up, he would ask himself: “What would TIM JOHNSON do?”

Dedication to public service is a family trait in the Johnson Family. Barb’s work on behalf of children and families has made life better for so many. Kelsey is an advocate for breast cancer awareness and research. Brendan is the U.S. Attorney for the District of South Dakota. And Brooks is in the National Guard following Army service in Bosnia, Kosovo, South Korea, Afghanistan, and Iraq.

Some time ago, the chief and people of the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe honored Senator JOHNSON by bestowing on him a Lakota name. His Lakota name is Wacante Ognake. In English, it means “holds the people in his heart.”

That is the spirit that has guided TIM JOHNSON throughout his public life.

I wish TIM and Barb the very best in all their future endeavors.

SAXBY CHAMBLISS, TOM COBURN, AND MIKE JOHANNIS

I want to say a word about three others on the other side of the aisle who are retiring: SAXBY CHAMBLISS of Georgia, TOM COBURN of Oklahoma, and MIKE JOHANNIS of Nebraska. I got to know them when I gathered with one of these gangs, as they call them around here, to talk about deficit reduction. We spent more time together trying to explore the Federal budget in ways to reduce our deficit in a thoughtful manner so that we really got to know one another and respect one another.

There is a world of difference in our political values and philosophies, but each of them in their own way made a positive contribution toward making this a stronger nation.

I remember well the day Senator CHAMBLISS announced that he would not let Grover Norquist and Grover’s “no tax increases ever” demand dictate the terms of a deficit-reduction plan. That needed to be said, and it took political courage. Although Senator CHAMBLISS will not be with us when the Senate convenes in January, I hope his example will be with us. And I wish him the best in his future endeavors.

Senator TOM COBURN and I come from different parts of the country and different ends of the political spectrum, but we found there is a lot we agree on. I have always believed, as Senators Paul Douglas and Paul Simon said, that being a liberal doesn’t mean you have to be a “wastrel.” Senator COBURN knows that being a conservative and protecting America’s economy demands more than blind budget-cutting. His nickname is “Doctor No,” but when it comes to wishing him well as he steps down from the Senate, my colleagues join me in a resounding “yes.”

Finally, here is a suggestion for when you have watched all of the “shouting head” political TV talk shows you can take: Listen to Senator MIKE JOHANNIS. MIKE’s quiet, reasonable approach was a real asset not only to the Gang of Eight negotiations, but to the entire Senate. We will miss his calm demeanor and his good-faith efforts to find smart, fair solutions to tough challenges.

None of them is running for re-election so I can’t hurt them politically by saying that I regard each of these Senators as friends. They showed political courage when partisanship would have been easier.

I wish them the best in all their future endeavors.

CARL LEVIN

Last night it was my honor to salute CARL LEVIN of Michigan for his 36 years of service in the U.S. Senate. He has done so many things so well. As chairman of the Armed Services Committee, he has produced this contentious and challenging bill year after year, both as ranking member and as chairman. As chairman of the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, he really raised that subcommittee to a new

level. He tackled some of the most complex issues of our day, particularly when it came to corporate abuse. He spent the time to get the facts right. When he had a hearing, he made an extraordinary contribution to the public dialogue about reforming our law and making this a better nation.

When I was first elected to the Senate, people back home said to me: Well, now that you have been in the Senate a year or two, which Senators do you respect the most?

I said then, and I will repeat it today, if I had a tough, important decision, one I was wrestling over, an issue or a vote, and I could only reach out to a couple of Senators at the time, one would be Paul Sarbanes of Maryland, now retired, and the other is CARL LEVIN. That is still a fact.

Long before CARL LEVIN was elected to the U.S. Senate it was clear that he had a gift for politics. Picture this—true story: At Central High School in Detroit, CARL LEVIN was elected class president. He won that race after, as he tells it, “running around with a piece of matzoh telling other students: ‘This is what happens to bread without LEVIN.’ ‘How’s that for a slogan?’

As much as I hate to think about it, soon we will have a United States Senate without LEVIN—for the first time in 36 years. Our only consolation is that CARL LEVIN leaves a legacy of good and important laws. He also leaves a powerful example of what can be achieved when we choose integrity over ideology . . . and our common good over confrontation.

A Jewish publication in Detroit wrote a while back that CARL LEVIN and his brother, Congressman Sandy Levin, both deserve “honorable menschen awards”—with the accent on “mensch”—for their historic service to our Nation. I agree wholeheartedly. Senator LEVIN’s keen intellect, honesty and fair-mindedness—his decency and unflinching civility—have earned him the respect of Senators on both sides of the aisle.

Many years ago I was an intern for a great Senator, Senator Paul Douglas of Illinois. Every year now, the University of Illinois presents a “Paul Douglas Ethics in Government Award” to an elected leader who shares Senator Douglas’ deep commitment to social and economic justice, and efficient government. The recipient of the Paul Douglas Ethics in Government Award in 2006 was Senator CARL LEVIN. Paul Douglas would have approved that choice heartily.

As was Paul Douglas, CARL LEVIN has been a foot soldier for justice. Paul Douglas was a leader in the effort to pass a strong Federal Civil Rights Act. In 1964, the year that law finally passed, CARL LEVIN was appointed the first general counsel for the Michigan Civil Rights Commission.

Paul Douglas believed in government and he hated government waste. He used to say: “You don’t have to be a wastrel to be a liberal.” CARL LEVIN re-

minds us that: “There are some things that only government can do, so we need government. But we don’t need an inefficient, wasteful, arrogant government.”

CARL LEVIN was elected to the U.S. Senate in 1978. Before that, he was active for 15 years in Detroit and Michigan State politics. He taught law before he entered politics. He also held some other interesting jobs—including driving a cab in Detroit and working on a DeSoto assembly line.

He showed up in Washington in 1979 driving a 1974 Dodge Dart with a hole in the floorboard. He was still driving that same car to the Capitol 10 years later. That tells us something about CARL LEVIN’s devotion to the US auto industry, its workers and unions.

When General Motors and Chrysler faced potential collapse in 2008, he pressed Congress and a new president to support the companies with billions of dollars in loans.

Those loans have since been repaid and Chrysler and GM are not only solvent, they are making a profit. The U.S. auto industry is in the midst of its fastest expansion since 1950.

CARL LEVIN is a champion as well of America’s military, military families and veterans. He has served on the Armed Services Committee since coming to the Senate 36 years ago. He is one of Congress’s most respected voices on national security and military issues.

Some years back he used his power on the Armed Services Committee to question the procurement practices of the military. He asked: Why was the Pentagon spending thousands of dollars apiece for things like toilet seats and hammers? He said: We need more money for soldiers and less wasteful spending for contractors. With the world growing more volatile and complex and increasing pressure to reduce defense budgets, those are questions we must all be willing to ask.

As a ranking member and then chair of the Senate’s Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, Senator LEVIN’s piercing intellect and his patient mastery of complex issues helped, over and over, to expose and correct serious wrongdoing.

As PSI chairman in 2002, he led a probe of the activities of Enron Corp; the investigation resulted in legislation to improve the accuracy and reliability of corporate disclosures.

From white collar crime, to money laundering, abusive tax shelters, and gasoline and crude oil price-gouging, he has pursued the subjects of every investigation with nonpartisan vigor, seeking results, not spotlights.

The list of laws bearing his imprint is long and historic: The Competition in Contracting Act of 1984; Social Security Disability Benefits Reform, 1984; The Anti-Kickback Enforcement Act, 1986; The Whistleblower Protection Act, 1989; The Ethics Reform Act in 1989; The Lobbying Disclosure Act in 1995—the first major lobbying reform in 50 years.

The list goes on and on. Senator LEVIN voted: To repeal “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell”; to protect voting rights; and to limit the influence of private-interest money in elections.

He has voted to support American manufacturing—and stop giving tax breaks to corporations to ship American jobs overseas.

He supported my efforts to change bankruptcy laws to allow deserving homeowners to save their homes in foreclosures.

He voted to regulate tobacco as a drug—another issue that is personal for me.

I will always remember Senator LEVIN’s vote on the Iraq war resolution. For years before 9/11, he warned anyone who would listen that America was threatened by terrorism. When the horrific attacks came, he supported pursuing the attackers in Afghanistan.

A year later, he and I were among just 23 Senators to vote against the Iraq War. He voted no, even though he was then chair of the Armed Services Committee. That took extraordinary moral and political courage, and history has shown he was right.

CARL LEVIN is the longest-serving Senator in Michigan history, surpassing another Senate legend, Arthur Vandenberg. As he proved long ago when he was elected president of his high school council, he is a natural-born politician. But like Senator Vandenberg, he is more than a politician; he is a statesman.

I will miss his presence in this Senate and I wish him, and his wife Barbara, all the best in the future.

MARK UDALL

MARK UDALL, my friend from Colorado and the Presiding Officer’s colleague. As I said last night, I served with his dad. His dad may have been the funniest public servant I ever served with. What a wit, what a sense of humor. He once said: If you have politics in your bloodstream, only embalming fluid will replace it.

Thank goodness the Udalls have politics in their bloodstream. Mo Udall served in the House of Representatives, candidate for President; MARK UDALL’s uncle, Stewart Udall, who was Secretary of Interior under President John Kennedy; TOM UDALL, MARK’s cousin, the son of Stewart Udall, serves as Senator of New Mexico; MARK UDALL himself, what a great person.

I can remember so many things about his public service, but I remembered, especially last night, when he lost his brother and came before our caucus lunch and talked about the love he had for that man and what that loss meant to him. It touched the heart of everyone in the room. It gave us an insight into the heart of MARK UDALL as a person.

He was committed to a number of causes. His wife Maggie and he have given so much time to the environment and preserving our national heritage, but he also showed great courage when it came to his service on the Senate Intelligence Committee. Even as a new

member of that committee, he stepped up for principles and values, and I am glad he did, preserving our rights and liberties as American citizens and fully supporting the disclosure that Senator FEINSTEIN made yesterday with her report.

MARK has fought to protect Americans' privacy rights with thoughtful reforms of the NSA and the PATRIOT Act.

In keeping with his family's tradition, he has made protecting our environment and our precious natural resources a top priority. He has been a leader in addressing climate change as a growing threat to our national security. He organized support in the Senate for legislation that would require 15 percent of electricity to be generated from renewable sources by 2021.

And in the 2013 Defense Authorization Act, MARK UDALL led the effort to allow the Pentagon to continue to develop and use renewable energy.

During his one term, MARK UDALL made more dauntless decisions and achieved more good for America than many Senators who have served far longer.

He supported a recovery act that helped turn the tide against the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression. He voted for the most far-reaching financial reform since the Great Depression and he supported one of the biggest investments in college affordability since the GI Bill. Millions of Americans are back at work and millions of Americans know the security that comes with affordable health care, in part, because of his courage.

The famed explorer Edmund Hillary once said, "Human life is far more important than just getting to the top of a mountain."

For MARK UDALL, being a U.S. Senator has been about something more important than acquiring power. It has been about using that power to preserve our precious natural treasures and make life better for others.

Mo Udall would be proud of the U.S. Senator his son has become, and I am certainly proud to have worked with him.

I have been in the Senate now for 18 years, and I have seen many come and go. But we have lost, sadly, in this departure of these Members some of our best.

MARY LANDRIEU

I will close by mentioning the one whose fate was determined the last, and that was MARY LANDRIEU of Louisiana. She has been a great Senator for Louisiana. She worked harder and achieved more for that State than, obviously, the people of that State realized. There wasn't an issue that came before us that MARY didn't stand up and say: Now let me tell you how that affects Louisiana, and usually make an ask which was fulfilled.

Let me add one other grace note when it comes to her personal and public life. MARY and her husband have adopted two children. They are the

light of their lives. Her dedication to the cause of adopted children has really made a difference not just to the United States but in the world. I am sure she didn't get a lot of political reward for it, but thank goodness she put a big part of her life and her public life into standing up for the rights of adopted children and adoptive parents, encouraging more and more, so the kids would have a loving home as part of their lives. It was just one of the things that MARY worked on, but it was one of the things I will remember. I am going to miss her and her service to the U.S. Senate.

MARY bleeds Louisiana. Her father is the legendary statesmen Moon Landrieu, former New Orleans mayor, HUD Secretary under President Jimmy Carter, and Judge of Louisiana's 4th Circuit Court. Her brother, Mitch, is the current Mayor of New Orleans.

MARY—the eldest of the eight siblings—learned important political lessons early. She was taunted in early grade school about her father's pro civil rights stands in the 1960s. Those experiences taught her that taking the right position sometimes makes you unpopular—but you do it anyway.

MARY was only 23 when she entered the Louisiana House of Representatives in 1980. She went on to serve as a member of her State's senate.

MARY is a formidable fighter for Louisiana. In her State's darkest hours, during Hurricane Katrina and in the aftermath of that terrible catastrophe, she stood strong. She was exactly the right person for Louisiana. More than any other single official, she deserves the credit for directing billions of dollars in relief and rebuilding money to her hometown and home State.

Governor Bobby Jindal's Secretary of Administration had this to say about MARY LANDRIEU: "She's relentless; once she starts, she will not stop. And once she's on your side, she's on your side."

This is what St. Tammany Parish Sheriff Jack Strain remembers about Katrina: "The very first federal representative we had on the ground after Katrina was MARY LANDRIEU . . . when water was still in our houses and neighborhoods. . . . She spoke to my deputies and offered assistance to them."

Perhaps the best description of MARY LANDRIEU was offered by her mentor, former Senator John Breaux, who calls her "a pit bull with Louisiana charm."

In 2009, when Hurricane Katrina was just a dim, bad memory for some, Senator LANDRIEU made sure the stimulus bill included a provision that ended up allowing the state to rebuild Charity Hospital, the cornerstone of health care for many low-income New Orleans families.

Senator LANDRIEU has been a champion of the energy industry—so crucial to the economy of her State and her Nation. She has fought to preserve Social Security and Medicare and other safety net programs that provide dig-

nity and security for so many. She has fought to defend voting rights, women's right, and children's right. She has earned a spot in heaven with her work to promote adoption. She provided a crucial vote to pass the Affordable Care Act, knowing full well that it would cost her politically. If that doesn't earn her a spot in heaven, it will at least earn her a place in history as a profile in courage.

With her political genes and determination, I know that MARY LANDRIEU will continue to be a force in Louisiana and American politics for years to come. And while I will miss seeing her every day in this Senate, I look forward to seeing her fight for what is right for many, many more years. It has been an honor to serve with her.

I yield the floor.

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

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

TAX EXTENDERS AND OMNIBUS

Mr. COONS. Mr. President, as we come to the close of the 113th Congress, I wish to speak for a few minutes about why I think we should be optimistic about the future and what we can and must do to take advantage of the opportunities that lie ahead.

Despite economic slowdowns throughout much of the world among developing and developed Nations alike, America's economy continues to steadily grow. Just last Friday we got great news that our economy created more than 300,000 jobs in the month of November. That marks 57 straight months, or nearly 5 years, of positive job growth numbers. For the first time since Bill Clinton was President of this Nation, we have averaged more than 200,000 new jobs per month for 10 straight months.

Particularly in the economy is an area of growth and opportunity that I have focused on in my time before coming into public service and in my 4 years here. That is American manufacturing, an industry about which I have spoken at length here on the Senate floor and have worked with my colleagues to craft and assemble a group of bipartisan bills that can help move American manufacturing forward.

The news this last month was good, as it has been for months, for years now, about American manufacturing, which continues to grow as well. There were 28,000 new American manufacturing jobs last month, which continued this steady climb. It has now created more than 750,000 new jobs over the last 4 years. Manufacturing jobs are great jobs. They typically are higher wage and higher skill and have higher benefits than jobs in any other sector. They are good, middle-class jobs

you can raise a family on. They deal with one of the biggest ongoing remnants of the great recession, which is the lack of real wage growth in our economy. So I am excited to see that manufacturing jobs continue to grow in our economy and to talk about the things we can and should do to help sustain this growth in manufacturing.

We have reason to be optimistic, but we cannot be complacent. As much as we built momentum over the last year since the recession, and especially this year, there is, of course, no natural law, no economic fundamental principle that says it will not turn back around. We need to sustain our positive direction, particularly in this sector, particularly as we move toward the 114th Congress.

I am proud that Congress last year passed a 2-year budget to create some stability and some certainty for our country and economy. We have gotten out of the way and allowed our businesses and workers to do what they do best, to move our economy forward. In the next few days we will have chances to do the same when we vote on a number of bills, one that, most importantly, will keep our government running, not for a few days or weeks or months, but the overwhelming majority of this government will be authorized and funded through next September.

The funding bills that are included in this omnibus continue investments in innovation and continue to move our country forward. There is a whole rash of bills that I have been interested in and engaged in as a member of the Appropriations Committee that are valuable programs, that will strengthen manufacturing—for example, the Manufacturing Extension Partnership, which has done amazing work on the ground in Delaware, helping small and medium manufacturers to be competitive, to train their workforce in current skills, to grow into the spaces of the world economy where we have real opportunity. This bill will help sustain the funding for the Manufacturing Extension Partnership nationally.

There are several other programs related to innovation in the Department of Energy. For example, sustained funding for the ARPA-E, for an innovative model that helps fund cutting-edge, category-redefining research and investment in energy and in clean energy manufacturing and in technology deployment.

There are also opportunities for us to continue to put Americans to work through investments in infrastructure. As someone who lives on Amtrak 16 hours a week, I am thrilled with the outcomes for both the Amtrak budget and for the TIGER grant programs, a tool used by the Department of Transportation to help incentivize innovative transportation projects that break through bottlenecks and help put Americans back to work.

There are so many different ways that the work of this bipartisan com-

mittee, the Appropriations Committee, helped move our economy forward that at times are not focused on here on the floor or in the general press coverage. It is such a large and comprehensive bill, the omnibus. But I wanted to take a moment and highlight a few ways in which the omnibus invests in innovation, in competitiveness, and in moving our economy forward. I am also grateful, in some ways most importantly, that it includes emergency funding to respond to Ebola, both at home and abroad, which will be critical to helping stamp out this deadly virus at its origin in West Africa and in protecting Americans here at home and others around the world.

The appropriations bills that were shepherded through the dozen subcommittees give us reason to be optimistic about the future because the Chair, Senator MIKULSKI, and the Vice Chair, Senator SHELBY, have done a laudable job of listening to each other, of working together, and of crafting a bipartisan bill here in the Senate, which I hope the Members of this body will study, consider, and move forward and adopt.

As we move to complete the business of funding the government, we would be remiss if we did not also take stock of the opportunities in front of us we have not yet grasped. There is unfinished work to be done. This week we will also almost certainly pass a 1-year tax extenders bill, which will carry forward certain temporary tax credits and deductions, but for just the 1 year.

Although the extension for many businesses and many sectors is better than nothing, it signifies a missed opportunity on our part. Much of what has made me optimistic over the last year is how much our economy has begun to thrive in a stable fiscal environment, in a more predictable regulatory environment. Yet, this 1-year extension does not do much to give businesses the certainty they need to predict and plan for the future.

I have worked hard with Democrats and Republicans alike to expand and make permanent the research and development tax credit, which is particularly relevant to manufacturing, because manufacturing is the most R&D-intensive sector in the American economy. Manufacturers invest more in R&D than any other part of the American landscape. This 1-year extension misses an opportunity to either make the R&D tax credit permanent, or to make it more accessible.

I was excited to have the opportunity early on here to team up with two Republican Senators, MIKE ENZI of Wyoming and PAT ROBERTS of Kansas, to find ways to make the R&D tax credit more accessible to early-stage and startup companies, companies with high growth potential, but because of the way the R&D tax credit has been structured and used for decades, do not have the opportunity to access it.

The Startup Innovation Credit Act, which I introduced with Senator ENZI,

would have further expanded the access to the R&D credit for startups. The bipartisan Innovators Job Creation Act, which I introduced with Senator ROBERTS, would have expanded the credit to innovative small businesses as well. Both of those bills passed on a bipartisan basis out of the Finance Committee and were part of a package being advanced here in the Senate but will not be part of the ultimate 1-year extenders considered later this week.

I wanted to highlight that as we look forward there are opportunities still in front of us for us to tackle the challenges and to seize the opportunities, to take things that are important to manufacturing and to move them forward. There are lots of other bills in the mix that will be adopted this week, either by unanimous consent or as part of larger packages, and a number of them relate to manufacturing. I am optimistic that we will adopt a national manufacturing strategy bill that I have worked hard on with Republican Senator MARK KIRK of Illinois. I am optimistic that a bipartisan manufacturing hubs bill that Senator SHERROD BROWN of Ohio and Senator ROY BLUNT of Missouri have worked hard together to craft and to hone and to get to a place where it is ready to be passed—that they both will make it across the finish line to the President's desk.

But just this past week, I stood on this floor with Senator KELLY AYOTTE of New Hampshire and we spoke about a bill that is not yet ready for adoption, but we will take up next year, the Manufacturing Skills Act, which helps to focus and prioritize the investments in manufacturing skills training at the State and municipal level all over the country in partnership with the Federal Government.

What I wanted to do today was to simply highlight a few perhaps underappreciated, underrecognized areas of legislative action on a bipartisan basis in this Chamber that helped put some lift under the steady forward progress of the manufacturing sector in our country and to express my hope that we can find ways to continue to work together on a bipartisan basis to keep our economic momentum going in the year and the Congress ahead.

TRIBUTE TO DEPARTING SENATORS

As I close, I would also like to thank those of our colleagues who will be leaving the Senate after the New Year.

It is an incredible privilege to work in this Chamber and to represent the people. Every day I am awed by the dedication and talent of many of my colleagues, public servants who come to work to fight for their States and their government.

To those who are ending their service in the Senate, know that I value your friendship and partnership. It has been an honor to work with you, and I thank you for all you have done for our Nation.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nevada.

Mr. HELLER. Mr. President, I rise to speak in support of some of the public lands provisions that were included in this year's National Defense Authorization Act. Before I do so, I wish to recognize the work Senators LEVIN and INHOFE have put into this bill and their dedication to reach an agreement with the House so that this bill could move forward on time, as it has done over the past 50 years.

As a member of the Veterans' Affairs Committee, I hear every day about the sacrifice our servicemembers make to protect our country. Passing the authorization bill that helps ensure they have the equipment they need and the resources required to meet the mission they are tasked with is very important.

While I am pleased the Senate will be moving forward on this bill, I wish to note that the bill's reduction in servicemembers' benefits concerns me. I do believe Members should have had the chance and the right to debate and amend it, and I hope the Senate will have the opportunity to do so in the future.

This year the final Defense bill includes several Nevada public land priorities that will spur economic development and job creation in our State while enhancing U.S. national security. I have been working on many of those proposals since I was first elected to Congress in 2006.

I thank incoming Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee chair LISA MURKOWSKI for her leadership and work on this public lands package. We have been working together for many years on many of the bills included in the package, and I am pleased to see they are finally getting across the finish line.

Let me first clarify that just because some of these bills are related to public lands does not mean they have a direct relationship to defense and protecting our national security. My Nevada Copper bill will protect domestic production of copper—the second most used mineral at the Department of Defense—as well as directly benefit two bases that are located in the State of Nevada.

As the Presiding Officer knows, roughly 85 percent of the land in Nevada is controlled by the Federal Government. This presents our local and State governments with many unique challenges. Our communities' economies are directly tied to the way the Federal Government manages those lands. They often work closely with me to develop legislative solutions to their problems.

Whereas out East local governments can acquire land on their own to build public works projects, out West, unfortunately, we have to get the permission of Congress. That is why reducing the Federal estate and increasing access to our public lands has been one of my top priorities in Congress, and this package goes a long way toward accomplishing these goals. It resolves over 60 of these types of issues

throughout the West. In total, over 110,000 acres of land will be removed from Federal ownership and utilized for mineral production, timber production, infrastructure projects, and other community development. In addition, it releases approximately 26,000 acres of current wilderness study areas, which unlocks lands to be used for multiple use.

It is very important to discuss the eight Nevada provisions today to show my colleagues in the Senate the many hoops our western communities have to go through to take the same steps many eastern communities can accomplish in a single day.

The Lyon County Economic Development and Conservation Act is a jobs bill I first introduced while in the House, but it has been held up by the Senate for many years because of gridlock.

This bill allows the city of Erring to partner with Nevada Copper to develop roughly 12,500 acres of land surrounding the Nevada Copper Pumpkin Hollow Project site to be used for mining activities, industrial and renewable energy development, and recreation.

Senate passage is the final hurdle to more than 1,000 new jobs at an average wage of over \$85,000 per year. The mine will contribute nearly \$25 million in property and net proceeds taxes per year that would be distributed to the State, to Lyon County, their schools, the hospital district, and the Mason Valley Fire Protection District.

In addition, Nevada Copper plans to invest \$80 million in infrastructure for the mine and processing facilities that can be utilized to support other land uses and economic development.

This bill will transform the local economy of one of the counties in our Nation that are struggling most during this recent economic downturn.

As I said before, copper is the second most used mineral at the Department of Defense and is considered an essential mineral for weapons production. Copper is also the primary mineral from which other strategic and critical metals, such as rhenium, are derived. A domestic supply of this important resource greatly benefits our national security.

Second, there is a provision in this package that will allow Naval Air Station Fallon to acquire over 400 acres of BLM land for a safety arc for an explosive ordnance-handling facility and to construct much needed family housing at the station. Both of these plans will greatly benefit mission operations and the quality of life for our brave servicemembers serving there. The station first asked for these lands over 20 years ago. I am pleased their wait can finally come to an end.

Third, the package includes the Pine Forest Recreation Enhancement Act—a proposal that has been in the works in Humboldt County for nearly a decade. Just north of the Black Rock Desert, the Pine Forest offers a diverse landscape of sagebrush, aspen, and rock

formations. Scenic lakes and reservoirs offer world-class trout fisheries. From the ranchers who make their livelihood on grazing allotments to conservationists intent on preserving a rugged landscape, anyone familiar with the place agrees it is special.

In addition to conserving these areas, the bill releases areas from wilderness that needs watershed restoration and treatment due to a high wildfire threat. It also provides for the construction of additional campsites and accommodations for motorized camping.

The initial work on the Pine Forest bill was grassroots-driven, transparent, and ultimately supported unanimously by all stakeholders and local governments in this county.

Fourth, the package includes the Elko Motocross and Tribal Conveyance Act—another bill I first introduced in the 111th Congress as a Member of the House. The commonsense bill conveys 275 acres of BLM lands to Elko County for a public motocross park. Additionally, it provides 373 acres to the Elko Band of Te-Moak Tribe for housing and tribal economic development.

Outdoor recreation and tourism are such important parts of life in Nevada. Opening up this land will benefit the residents of northern Nevada for years to come.

Fifth, this land package also includes the Las Vegas Valley Public Land and Tule Springs Fossil Beds National Monument Act, which is the culmination of several years of effort to conserve the ancient Tule Springs fossil beds while providing job-creation opportunities and critical civilian and military infrastructure that will be necessary to meet the needs of the Las Vegas Valley.

After working with stakeholders at every level, I am pleased that we can navigate a path forward for southern Nevada.

While serving in the House, I also introduced legislation in both the 110th and 111th Congresses to convey parcels of BLM land to the Nellis Air Force Base to create an off-highway vehicle park in the Nellis Dunes and to convey land to the Nevada System of Higher Education to expand educational opportunities for southern Nevadans.

Those smaller bills were ultimately included in S. 973 in this Congress, so I am pleased that 6 years of work on this Tule Springs legislation will finally become a reality.

The final three Nevada bills included in the lands package are newer proposals but achieve long-term economic development objectives that the affected communities have long asked for.

The Fernley Economic Self-Determination Act provides Fernley the opportunity to purchase up to 9,114 acres of Federal land within the city boundaries for the purpose of economic development.

Fernley was incorporated in 2001. Since incorporation, the city has been

working with private business partners and State and Federal regional agencies to develop a long-term economic development plan. These parcels have significant potential for commercial and industrial development, agricultural activities, and the expansion of community events.

Similarly, the Carlin Economic Self-Determination Act allows Carlin to purchase up to 1,329 acres of BLM lands. This city, located in Elko County, is completely landlocked by the Federal Government. Without this legislation, it would be impossible for their leaders to meet the demands for the expansion of their growing population needs.

Finally, the Storey County provision conveys over 1,700 acres of BLM lands to Virginia City. These properties have been occupied for decades by individuals who purchased them or acquired them legally; yet their continued residency is trespass, according to the Federal Government.

It is a very burdensome oversight by the Federal Government that must be resolved for the sake of my constituents. They have struggled for years, haunted by this error that is the result through no fault of their own.

These small public lands proposals are going to make a major impact on Nevada's economy. They have been developed at the local level and signed off on by the local communities.

I understand my colleagues' concerns that they would have liked the opportunity to debate and vote on more amendments to this bill. I, too, filed a number of amendments that I wished to see considered, and I will continue pushing those priorities next year. But right now Congress has a rare opportunity to pass this public lands package that enables important mining, energy development, ranching, and timber work to go forward, generating economic and employment opportunities for my State, other States, and local residents.

Let's get the government off these Nevadans' backs and allow them to do what they do best; that is, create jobs.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. COONS). The Senator from Maryland.

APPROPRIATIONS

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, I come to the floor today during the consideration of the national defense authorization to bring my colleagues up to date on the appropriations bill.

As we know, the continuing resolution expires on Thursday at midnight, but I am here to talk about some good news. The Appropriations Committee on both sides of the dome—the House Appropriations Committee and the Senate, working in a conference committee—has completed its work. This legislation is now as we speak heading to the Rules Committee and to the House. Hopefully it will head to the House for tomorrow, on to the Senate tomorrow night and into Friday. This means no government shutdown, no

government on auto pilot, and we fund the government through the rest of the fiscal year for 2015, except Homeland Security, which will be a continuing resolution.

What we are talking about here is a monumental achievement. It is a monumental achievement showing how we can work together, we can govern, and we can get the job done.

Working on a bipartisan basis in the Senate, we worked in our subcommittees, and we held our hearings. We held 60 hearings in 60 days and did a good bit of our markups. We were able to work on our Senate appropriations. Over in the House, they did the same thing. But then, alas, when we got to September, we had to go on a continuing resolution until December 11.

I, as a rule, don't like continuing resolutions. We have 12 subcommittees, and I had hoped, under the time I chaired the committee and held the gavel, that we could consider one bill at a time and bring it to the Senate floor. Alas, partisan politics, gridlock, deadlock, gamesmanship, and showmanship prevented all of that.

But you know what, we on the Appropriations Committee, working with our vice chair, Senator SHELBY of Alabama, kept ourselves on track. Then we met in the conference committee, first our subcommittee chairs and then Chairman ROGERS, Senator SHELBY, Congresswoman LOWEY, and myself. We worked together on a \$1 trillion spending bill. That number is breathtaking, but we need to remember that over \$550 billion is in national defense. The rest is in domestic discretionary. That means everything from veterans, to foreign aid, to school aid, and also funding innovation.

I will talk more explicitly about the bill when it comes to the Senate floor. But for today I wanted everyone to know we are keeping the process going. We actually made the process work. We showed that we could govern. We worked across the aisle. We worked across the dome. We practiced civility. We argued. We debated. We fought. You know, sometimes you give a little, you take a little, but you stand for them all. And I want everyone to know we were able to concentrate and compromise what I call capitulation on principle.

So I wanted to say to my colleagues: Stay steady, stay strong. We expect that the House will pass its rule sometime after 3 o'clock today. That is the framework that enables them to go to the floor tomorrow. They will follow their own rule and hopefully that bill will pass. If it does pass, it will come to the Senate, and we will immediately take it up under the rules the two leaders will have worked on and established. So we look forward to completing the job on the Appropriations Committee within the next 72 hours.

I hope this update is of value to my colleagues as they plan their schedule and wish to participate in the debate and in the discussion. But it is not

whether it is of value to us, it is whether it is of value to the Nation. I think what the voters in the last election said was: We have lost confidence in your ability to govern.

I hope over the next 72 hours, by the way we will bring this bill to the floor, we will take a significant step in regaining that confidence and getting out of this whole game of government by crisis, government by artificially imposed deadlines, where all it is, is more drama than debate.

We would like to get back to the regular order. Hopefully, though, we now can move forward on our bill.

I thank the Chair for his attention, and I yield the floor. I note the Senator from Arizona is on the floor so I will not ask for a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

TRIBUTE TO TOM COBURN

Mr. MCCAIN. Today, I would like to offer words of tribute to my departing colleague, Senator TOM COBURN, whose service exemplifies standards of purposefulness, integrity, and decency, to which we should all aspire and whose example ought to inspire the service of new and returning Senators alike.

I am going to miss an awful lot our colleague from Oklahoma. I have always admired TOM for the strength of his convictions and the courage and candor with which he expresses them day after day. "The No. 1 thing people should do in Congress," TOM once said, "is stay true to their heart." No one in the history of this institution has ever followed that injunction more faithfully than TOM COBURN has.

TOM COBURN has an unshakable faith in the goodness of America, and he has worked diligently with others when he could and alone, if necessary, to make sure government respects the people we serve—respects their hopes and aspirations, their concerns and sacrifices. He has never forgotten he is the people's servant first and last, and they have never had a more genuine and determined champion.

I think TOM has often acted as the conscience of the Senate. He can be unmovable on matters of principle when to do otherwise would harm or do no good for the country. TOM COBURN is sometimes called "Dr. No," affectionately most, if not all, of the time. He has held up more legislation that he thought ill served the public interest than any other Member of this body. He even placed a hold on one of his own bills that he thought no longer met his high standard of accountability after it was reported out of committee. I don't think the American taxpayer has ever had a greater defender than TOM COBURN.

I like to think I have taken a few principled stands when the situation has warranted it, and I have made myself an occasional nuisance in service to what I thought was a good cause. But I have never been so conscientious that I felt obliged to defeat my own legislation. That is a pretty high

standard of personal responsibility to meet and a character test of the first order. I am not sure many of us would pass it. I wouldn't. But then, as all his colleagues can attest, TOM COBURN is a person of the very highest character. He possesses the highest virtues—courage, humility, compassion—in an abundance. It has been an honor to serve with him.

As principled as he is, as unwavering as he can be when he believes it necessary, he has also been a brave and determined proponent of compromise when he believed it served the public interest, when it would help build a more prosperous and secure society with more opportunities for more people and brighter futures for our children.

We always have detractors. It comes with the job. Whether TOM was standing on principle or seeking a principled compromise, he stood up to criticism. He stood up to pressure. He stood up to threats and insults and whatever negative personal consequences he might suffer. He stood up to whatever came his way to do what was right for his country. He stood up for the American people, no matter how difficult it was. What better can you say about a public servant?

TOM and I worked together on a lot of things. We fought together to end earmarks and opposed other forms of wasteful spending. We worked together on oversight projects for the stimulus bill and highway trust fund spending. We also fought for a long time to let veterans decide where they could best receive health care. We made good progress on some issues and not enough on others, but TOM COBURN was always an example and an inspiration to me.

If I could speak more personally, TOM has been more than a paragon to me and to other Members of the Senate. He is first and foremost a kind, considerate, and loyal friend—a friend in good times and bad, a friend who brings out the best in you because he believes in the best part of you. I said earlier TOM COBURN sees the innate goodness in the American people. He also sees it in his colleagues, even when it isn't apparent to other observers.

We have shared happy times together, TOM and I, but TOM has the instinct and the kindness to be the kind of friend who is there when you need him—when you need him most, in moments that aren't so happy.

We all lead pretty good lives here. We get the chance to serve the greatest country in the world and, on occasion, to make history. We are honored and feted and praised more than we deserve. But as all human beings do, we have moments of worry and doubt and disappointment. TOM always has the knack for showing up when I need cheering up. He has made the point over the years of being company when you most need it.

Friendship is a virtue to TOM, and he means to live a virtuous life. You could be working on something with him or

opposing each other on an issue, it doesn't matter. If you need him, he will be there for you with a kind word, a piece of advice, a little encouragement or just good company. There are too few people like that in anyone's life not to cherish the hell out of those who are. I cherish my friendship with TOM COBURN, and I always will.

The Senate will be a poorer place without TOM COBURN to set an example of public service for the rest of us. But in gratitude to him for his leadership and friendship, I will try a little harder to live up to his standards, and I hope he will let me know when I fall short.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

THE TAX CODE

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, there was an opportunity this session to work together in a bipartisan way to provide certainty around the Tax Code for families and farmers and businesses, at least for 2014 and 2015. There may still be a small window of opportunity to get things done. I certainly support doing that, if we can. But I want to speak to the importance of having some certainty, at least through the end of 2015, as it relates to our tax policy for investing, for the economy, and for homeowners to make decisions.

Back in April, thanks to the leadership of Chairman WYDEN and Ranking Member HATCH, those of us on the Senate Finance Committee worked together closely and passed the EXPIRE Act, a bipartisan bill that would renew tax provisions for 2014 and 2015 so that again people could plan, businesses, and farmers, at least through that 2-year period. It would give businesses and families across the country the certainty they desperately need.

Unbelievably, back at the time when we brought it to the floor, after a bipartisan effort, Republicans in the Senate filibustered it and we could not move it forward. So we have been trying to get this 2-year bill done as the first year has been ticking away. We are now at the end of the first year of the tax bill, and, unfortunately, instead of having a 2-year bill, we now have a bill from the House that contains what we call tax extenders—extending tax policy for the economy, from research and development to homeowners to depreciation for investments and jobs. We have something that is only extended to the end of this year. As our chairman has said, it is a 3-week bill. By the time we get done, it will probably be a 2-week bill.

We need to do more. The chairman, ranking member, and many of us are still trying to do everything we can to

get the House to agree to something with more certainty than 2 or 3 weeks. I think it is an embarrassment for the Congress that we are not able to come together and pass the EXPIRE Act to be able to give more certainty.

There is a glimmer of hope though on a piece of tax reform I wish to mention. Frankly, there is disagreement on this on our side of the aisle, and I respectfully disagree with those in the White House on this as well. But there is a bill I hope will move on the suspension calendar in the House around charitable giving.

I can't imagine at this time of year of charitable giving, as we come up to the end of the year and people are making decisions about where to place their dollars, what kinds of causes and so on, that we couldn't come together on a bipartisan bill to deal with donations to food banks and conservation easements that protect our land for the future, that make sure we are not plowing up our land and putting more CO₂ into the air right at the time we are trying to deal with climate issues—land protection, forestry protection for the future; dealing with investments in our research institutions, dealing with investments in important areas near and dear to my heart—such as the city of Detroit, where our foundations are playing such a critical role in making the investments, whether it is in transportation infrastructure, whether it is job training, whether it is rebuilding the neighborhoods to be able to turn Detroit around. I believe we are going to be able to do that. I know we are going to be able to do that. But a major reason has been the foundations—the Kresge Foundation, the Keller Foundation. There are so many that have been there.

So we have an opportunity prior to going into a larger debate on tax reform to actually take a piece of this, which normally would be, on its substance, very bipartisan, and actually be able to get that done. I am hopeful we will be able to do that before the end of the year because of the important provisions in it.

I go back to though the broader tax bill being sent as a 1-year renewal from the House of Representatives and, as I said, at most is a 3-week bill. By the time it is done, it may end up being a 2-week bill at this point in time. I can't believe people honestly, with a straight face, are calling this tax policy to be able to do this.

There are homeowners who lost their job during the recession and can no longer afford their mortgage payments. They have had their homes foreclosed on or maybe they have been able to do a short sale with their mortgage lender or the bank. For the past year—11 months and 10 days—these families have had no way to know whether we were going to renew the mortgage forgiveness tax relief bill, which I was proud to author as a bipartisan bill back in 2007, which we have continued to renew because we still have families

struggling from the recession in terms of their loan.

If we can renew this bill, it will spare families from having to pay income tax on the difference between their mortgage and the value of their home. So if in fact they get loan forgiveness or can work something out with the bank—and if in fact \$20,000 is forgiven on the mortgage or \$30,000 or \$40,000—they don't end up paying taxes on that as income, which is what will happen if we don't get something done.

But we are looking at the fact that these folks, going into 2015, at a time when they are trying to decide what to do on their homes—whether they can keep their mortgage—will be right back in the same situation of not knowing whether they are going to owe thousands of dollars' worth of tax going into next year.

We are seeing a lot of folks trying to keep their homes who had to cut corners in every which way—parents stopped paying toward their kids' college fund or they put off buying new clothes or they canceled vacations or plans to visit their relatives while they are trying to figure out how to keep a roof over their head. Obviously there are many things that need to be done to support families, but one piece of tax policy that has given them some ability to plan has been this mortgage tax forgiveness bill.

What we are saying is: OK. For 2 weeks you can know that you can refinance with the bank—not next year. We kept you hanging for all of 2014, but for 2 weeks or 3 weeks we will give you some certainty.

So next year more families are going to be stuck with the same wrenching decisions they have this year if we can't at least get a 2-year bill.

When we look at other areas where folks will be left hanging, we have a very important area of the economy creating jobs every day in wind energy. There is a huge supply chain—as the Presiding Officer knows, as someone who cares deeply about manufacturing—from the making of turbines to the installation in the field, to the operations, to the maintenance, all of these are connected to American jobs, good-paying jobs. In fact, one of the big turbines has 8,000 parts in it. Somebody is making those parts. I would suggest to everyone that we can make every one of those in Michigan. I am sure we can make them in other places as well, although we would love to make them in Michigan. But what the industry doesn't know is whether the production tax credit which they depend on will be renewed for more than 3 weeks at the end of the year.

In fact, what the House did say is: You have 3 weeks to make business decisions about hiring new people, growing your business, building more parts for the winter. You have 3 weeks. Go get them—in 3 weeks. So they can't make business decisions, and they are going to have to cut.

In the meantime, that means layoffs, similar to the 30,000 workers who were

laid off when Congress waited to the very last minute in 2012; 30,000 people were laid off when the same thing happened in 2012 when the production tax credit renewed at the last minute. Even if this bill passes, extending the production tax credit this week through the end of the year may be too late for 30,000 people, right before the holidays. Merry Christmas. Thirty thousand people not being able to have their job extended, people who could help us lead the world in clean energy production, who could help us develop energy here to be less dependent on foreign oil, but because we don't have the fortitude to extend this even after we had a bipartisan bill—the EXPIRE Act—come out of the Finance Committee last spring, they are looking at job losses.

So 30,000 families are putting holiday gifts on their credit card not knowing whether they are going to be able to make payments when the bills arrive.

Businesses in the wind power industry make investment decisions on what their taxes will be, similar to any other business, 5 years, 10 years, 15 years into the future.

There have been, by the way, tax breaks for Big Oil for almost 100 years; the first one in 1916 embedded in the Tax Code, never having to be renewed so long-term business decisions can be made. But for their competitors to create jobs and bring prices down through things such as wind or solar or biofuel, it is a slog every year, every 2 years to try to keep these industries going.

Is that fair? It is absolutely not fair. We ought to have the same kind of tax policy. If we are embedding the Tax Code provisions to support oil production, we should be doing the same for wind, the same for solar, the same for biofuels.

What Republicans are doing when they force us into a situation where it is only a 3-week extension is they are basically telling Americans businesses: Don't invest. Don't hire people. We don't want competition to bring prices down on gasoline or prices in electricity. We don't want you to do that. We are unwilling to commit to something that will create jobs beyond somebody we have been fighting to protect for almost 100 years.

So this is a great concern to me. In the process, Americans deserve better. Our businesses and our innovators deserve better. We go out and say we want new innovation to create new kinds of jobs. That is happening. Then the doors are shut over and over again or it takes forever to pry open the door: You have 3 weeks, the door is open, and then it shuts.

Let me talk about another area I am deeply concerned about where people will be hurt if we do not pass the 2-year EXPIRE Act that we put together in the Finance Committee in a bipartisan way; that is, salaried workers such as those at Delphi auto parts manufacturer—which used to be a part of General Motors. During the 2008 rescue of

the auto industry, somehow the salaried workers slipped through the cracks in terms of losing portions of their pensions, their health care coverage, and their insurance, and it is not fair.

One woman who worked at Delphi for over 30 years lost nearly half her pension and all of her health care coverage, which she needed for her husband who suffers from chronic pain.

A manager who worked at a Delphi facility in Michigan was so devoted to the people he supervised that he volunteered to retire rather than lay off some workers. Then 4 months after his retirement, he found out he was losing 40 percent of his pension and all of his health care coverage. Most of what was left out of his pension will go toward paying the cost of his health care, and it was devastating to him and his family.

So we have in this extenders bill, this EXPIRE Act, the health coverage tax credit which was created for people such as these people. I am proud to be a coauthor with Senator BROWN, who has been a real leader on this for people who have lost their benefits that were supposedly guaranteed to them. It does not restore their pension, but this credit pays 72.5 percent of their health care premiums, making it possible for retirees to afford coverage similar to what they could have earned when they were working. It frankly helps people who can't get help in other ways, who fell through the cracks.

The credit expired at the end of 2013, and the bipartisan bill we passed in the spring, in April, renewed that credit. I was very pleased we were able to put this in the bill and thought we were on our way again to help people throughout this year who have been waiting and waiting.

Again, when we passed this in April it was filibustered on the floor by the Republicans. Now we are at 3 weeks left before the end of the year and what we get from the House is a bill that is retroactive for 2014, but it does not even include the health coverage tax credit. So even though this is retroactive for 2014, the people involved—the salaried workers who lost pensions who have been getting some help for their health care at least—will not even get that for this year. There are 20,000 Delphi retirees not only in Michigan and Ohio, but Pennsylvania, Indiana, Wisconsin and Illinois, all who are watching right now this process in the Senate and the House to see what will happen, and are reaching out to their House Members and Senate Members—Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Indiana, Wisconsin, and Illinois.

To renew all the other tax provisions but cancel the HCTC is a cruel trick to play on families and certainly is underscored in terms of the holiday season we are getting into now. It is time for our colleagues across the aisle to stop forcing Americans to play a guessing game about their future taxes or their health care.

I regret that the clock has been ticking and running out and left us with no time at this point to get the fairness in the Tax Code that we need. There is still time if we wanted to pass this EXPIRE Act and send it back to the House, and I am all for it, and I know our chairman, Senator WYDEN, has been working night and day with colleagues across the aisle to try to make that happen. If it is too late for this year, if the clock runs out, shamefully, and we return next year with our Republican colleagues in the majority, I would suggest a New Year's resolution to stop doing retroactive extensions—stop doing retroactive extensions when it involves investments that people have to make that they are not going to be able to do retroactively or decisions about health care or decisions about a home. Start getting serious about making long-term economic decisions.

I know the Presiding Officer agrees with me on this and has spoken with me frequently on this.

Whether it is tax policy, health care policy, infrastructure policy, we need to make long-term decisions and support policies so that businesses can make long-term decisions.

Finally, we need to deliver certainty for families, for small businesses, for manufacturers, for those in alternative energy, for all who are working hard to invest in America across this country. Stop doing retroactive extensions, start working seriously on long-term tax policy and deliver certainty for families and businesses across the country. I think there is still time, if we wanted, to at least give the certainty of next year. Shame on the Congress if that does not happen. But I hope that we will at least commit ourselves that this is the last time this is done this way.

Thank you, Mr. President. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

DECLINE OF THE MIDDLE CLASS

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, the American people must make some very fundamental decisions in the coming years, and the most important of them is whether we continue the status quo of American society, and that is in terms of our economics and our politics which includes a 40-year decline of our middle class. Let me repeat that.

We are not just talking about what is happening today. We are not talking about the Wall Street crash of 2008. We are talking about a 40-year decline of the American middle class and an ongoing and growing gap between the very wealthy and everybody else. That is the reality of America now.

We can continue the same old, same old, or we can develop a bold economic

agenda that begins the process of creating the millions of jobs we desperately need, an agenda which raises wages so that most of the new jobs being created are not low wage or part time, an agenda which protects our environment, and an agenda which enables us to join the rest of the industrialized world and guarantee health care to all people as a right. That is the issue of our time. Do we continue the status quo, continue the disappearance of the middle class, continue the growing gap between the very rich and everybody else, or do we have the courage to come up with an agenda that stands for working families and raises wages and provides for our kids and our seniors?

As part of that decision in my view is the reality that we cannot go forward unless we deal with another very important question, and that is, do we as a nation have the courage to take on the enormous economic and political power of the billionaire class? I know many of my colleagues don't like to talk about it. We talk about this and we talk about that, but most Americans in their gut understand that our economic and political life are controlled by a small number of very wealthy people and institutions, including but not limited to Wall Street, the oil companies, the insurance companies, the drug companies, the military-industrial complex, et cetera, and all of their lobbyists who flood Capitol Hill—trying to get this or that provision in tax bills and everywhere else—and, of course, their power in terms of campaign contributions, and especially since this disastrous Supreme Court Citizens United decision. It means the billionaire class can put unlimited sums of money into electing candidates who represent their interests.

Those are the most important questions of our time. Do we have the courage to take on the handful of billionaire special interests who wield so much economic and political power? Do we have the will to push forward an economic agenda that works for working families and not just for the very wealthy?

The long-term deterioration of the middle class, accelerated by the Wall Street crash of 2008, has not been a pretty sight. Today we have more wealth and income inequality than any major country on Earth and the gap between the very rich and everybody else is growing wider. The top 1 percent now owns about 41 percent of the financial wealth of our country, while the bottom 60 percent owns all of 1.7 percent. The top 1 percent owns 41 percent of the financial wealth, the bottom 60 percent owns 1.7 percent. In fact, amazingly enough, the top one-tenth of 1 percent now owns almost as much wealth as the bottom 90 percent of the American people. Does anyone believe that is what America is supposed to be about, where the top one-tenth of 1 percent owns as much wealth as the bottom 90 percent?

Today we have the absurd situation, the obscene situation, where one family, the Walton family, the owners of Walmart, are worth about \$148 billion. That is more wealth in that one family than the bottom 40 percent of the American people.

Today in the United States we have the highest rate of childhood poverty of any major country on Earth. About one-quarter of our kids get nutrition through food stamps, and we are the only industrialized country—major country—that does not guarantee health care to all people as a right.

We once led the world in terms of the percentage of our people who graduated college, but today in a highly competitive global economy we are now in 12th place.

In terms of infrastructure, the United States used to have the finest, most envied infrastructure in the world. Today, as I think every citizen of this country knows, our infrastructure, our roads, our bridges, rail, water systems, airports, dams are virtually collapsing. The American Society of Civil Engineers tells us that we need to spend \$3 trillion just to bring our infrastructure up to par. But with infrastructure spending now at its lowest level since 1947, we rank 16th in the world in terms of infrastructure according to the World Economic Forum.

So once we led the world in terms of the numbers of percentages of people graduating college; today we are 12th. Once we led the world in terms of the strength of our infrastructure; today we are the 16th. But we do have the dubious distinction of being first in terms of childhood poverty of any major country.

Real unemployment today is not what the official unemployment states of 5.8 percent; it is over 11 percent when you include those people who have given up looking for work or are working part time. Youth unemployment is over 18 percent.

We hear a lot about Ferguson, MO, and that is a very important issue, but we don't hear enough about the reality that African-American youth unemployment is over 30 percent.

Today in this country millions of Americans are working longer hours for lower wages. In inflation-adjusted-for dollars, the median male worker—listen to this; this is really quite unbelievable and it tells us a little bit as to why the American people are angry. The median male worker—that worker right in the middle of the economy—last year earned \$783 less than he made 41 years ago—\$783 less than he made 41 years ago in inflation-accounted-for dollars. In the explosion of technology, the great global economy, all of the great free trade agreements, and that male worker today is earning over \$700 less than he made in real dollars 41 years ago. The median female worker made \$1337 less last year than she earned in 2007.

Since 1999, the median middle-class family has seen its income go down by

almost \$5,000 after adjusting for inflation, now earning less this year than a family earned 25 years ago. Are we better off today than we were 6 years ago when Bush left office and we were hemorrhaging 700,000 jobs a month and the financial system was on the verge of collapse with a \$1.3 trillion deficit? Of course we are. But if you look at the trends over the last 40 years, the reality is, the middle class in this country is disappearing and almost all new income and wealth is going to the people on top.

The American people must demand that Congress and the White House start protecting the interests of working families, not just wealthy campaign contributors. We need Federal legislation to put the unemployed back to work, raise wages, and make certain that all Americans have health care and education in order to live healthy and productive lives.

We can spend hours dissecting and analyzing the problems of American society, and in my view, they are worse today than at any time since the Great Depression, and if you throw in the planetary crisis of climate change, we may have more problems today facing our Nation than at any time in a very long period.

But what I wish to do today is very briefly throw out and discuss 12 initiatives that I believe, if enacted by the Congress, could begin to address the collapse of the middle class and rebuild our economy. I will just touch on them briefly.

No. 1, as I mentioned earlier, our infrastructure is collapsing—our roads, bridges, water systems, wastewater plants, airports, railroads, and older schools. We spent \$3 trillion—or when we take care of the last veteran, we have spent \$3 trillion fighting a war in Iraq that we never should have fought in the first place.

If over a period of years we were to invest \$1 trillion in rebuilding our infrastructure, we could create 13 million decent-paying jobs, and that is exactly what we have to do. Think of what America would look like if you went around the country and saw work being done on roads, bridges, and cutting-edge technology for our water plants and wastewater plants. We would become more productive and efficient. We would put people back to work.

No. 2, in my view—and I know many of my Republican colleagues don't agree, but the scientific community is united when they say climate change is real, it is caused by human activity, and if we do not reverse and substantially cut back carbon emissions, this planet will become increasingly uninhabitable for our kids and our grandchildren. In my view, we must transform our energy system away from fossil fuels and into energy efficiency and sustainable energy, such as wind, solar, geothermal, et cetera.

When we address energy efficiency and sustainable energy, not only do we lead the world in transforming our en-

ergy system and reversing climate change, but we also create a significant number of meaningful and important jobs.

No. 3, in my view, instead of giving tax breaks to large corporations which shut down in America and go to China, we want to invest in new economic models to increase job creation and productivity, and that is giving workers the opportunity to own their own businesses. We have some of that in Vermont, and I know in Ohio there are worker-owned businesses where workers are more productive and feel better about their jobs. I would rather invest in that than in corporations that will shut down in this country and move abroad.

No. 4, I think most people understand that when you have a union to negotiate and engage in collective bargaining, wages are higher and working conditions are better. Today corporate opposition to union organizing makes it extremely difficult for workers to join a union. We need legislation which makes it clear that when a majority of workers signs cards in support of a union, they can have that union.

No. 5, the Federal minimum wage today is a starvation wage of \$7.25 an hour. We need to raise the minimum wage to a living wage. People who work 40 hours a week should not live in poverty.

No. 6, women workers today earn about 78 cents on the dollar to what their male counterparts earn doing the same work. That is not acceptable. We need equal pay for equal work. We need pay equity in our country, and we have to pass that legislation.

No. 7, an issue that we don't talk about enough, and, in fact, has had bipartisan support for many decades, is our disastrous trade policy, NAFTA, CAFTA, and permanent normal trade relations with China. The simple fact is these trade policies have been a disaster for the American worker. Since 2001, we have lost more than 60,000 factories in this country and more than 4.9 million decent-paying manufacturing jobs. Not all of that is attributable to bad trade policies, but a lot of it is. We need to rethink our trade policies and demand that corporate America invest in the United States of America and not in China.

I know that is a radical idea. Imagine going shopping in a department store where we can actually purchase products made in America and not in China, but I think we should be doing that.

No. 8, we are not going to be a successful economy unless our young people have the ability to get the college education they need regardless of the income of their families. Right now it is increasingly difficult for working families to afford college. Many of our young people are coming out of college deeply in debt. In this area we are moving in exactly the wrong direction. Forty, fifty years ago, tuition was virtually free at some of the great public

universities in America, such as the University of California, New York City, and State colleges around country. Today it is unaffordable.

We need to radically rethink higher education in this country. Our goal is that everyone, regardless of income, should be able to get a quality college education and not come out in debt.

No. 9, I think everybody understands the enormous stranglehold that Wall Street has on our economy. Banking is supposed to be the facilitator to get money out in the productive economy where companies are producing products and services and not see Wall Street or financial institutions as an end in itself, but that is exactly what we have right now. We have six financial institutions in this country that have assets equivalent to over 60 percent of the GDP of the United States of America. That is too big, and it gives them too much economic and political power. In my view, they must be broken up and we must bring about a more competitive financial system where money is getting out to the real economy so businesses can create real jobs.

No. 10, and many people don't know this, but the United States is the only major country on Earth that doesn't guarantee health care to all people as a right. Yet we end up spending almost twice as much per capita on health care as any other Nation. In my strong opinion, if we want health care for all and we want to do it in a cost-effective way, we need to move toward a Medicare for all, single-payer system.

No. 11, today in this great Nation, millions of seniors are living in poverty, and that number is growing, and we have the highest rate of childhood poverty of any major country. We must strengthen the social safety net, not weaken it. Instead of talking about cutting Social Security or cutting Medicare or cutting Medicaid or cutting nutrition programs, we should be expanding those programs. This is a great country, and we should not have millions of people wondering how they are going to be able to buy medicine for their illness or heat their homes in the wintertime. We have to expand the social safety net for our kids, our seniors, and our vulnerable populations.

Last, but certainly not least, at a time of massive wealth and income inequality, we need a progressive tax system in this country which is based on ability to pay. It is not acceptable that major profitable corporations have paid nothing in recent years in Federal income taxes and that corporate CEOs in this country often enjoy an effective tax rate which is lower than their secretaries'.

We are losing about \$100 billion a year from companies that stash their profits in the Cayman Islands, Bermuda, and other tax havens. We need real tax reform. We need to end all of these corporate tax loopholes so we have the revenue we need to do the important tasks in front of us to rebuild this country.

With that, I think the American people have some fundamental choices to make. Do we continue the status quo from an economic perspective and political perspective or do we demand that Congress start listening to the pain of the middle class and working families of this country and start producing legislation which rebuilds our crumbling middle class?

With that, I yield the floor.

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I appreciate the comments of the Senator from Vermont.

I ask unanimous consent that at the conclusion of my remarks, of up to 10 minutes, that Senator MANCHIN be recognized for his remarks.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, every year about this time—actually every few months, or maybe every month—there are attempts by Wall Street to again change the rules, cut back consumer protection laws, and change the regulations that protect the American public against Wall Street greed.

It happens almost weekly, it seems, in the Financial Services Committee in the House of Representatives. There are attempts in the Agriculture Committee, beaten back by Senator STABENOW, to her credit, and attempts in the banking committee, beaten back by Chairman JOHNSON, to his credit.

Almost every week, it seems, there are efforts by Wall Street to undermine the protections that we were able to build in under the Dodd-Frank bill to stop Wall Street from doing to the economy what it did in 2005, 2006, 2007, and 2008. September of 2008 had been preceded by a decade of deregulation of the financial industry, decades of lobbying by very effective lobbyists for the six biggest Wall Street banks. Risky behavior was rewarded with gargantuan profits for the firms and multimillion-dollar bonuses for the executives.

The CEO of one of the largest megabanks in the history of the world—not just in our country—said: As long as the music is playing, you have got to get up and dance. There is a lot of money to be made on Wall Street, and they have to take advantage of every loophole, particularly those loopholes that their lobbyists create.

This unmitigated greed led to 8 million people losing their jobs, 7 million losing their homes after being foreclosed on because the financial system lacked the necessary safeguards to protect Wall Street. Dodd-Frank was supposed to end all of that. It has made progress by preventing taxpayer bailouts for banks. Risky derivatives trading was one of the central goals of Dodd-Frank. An amendment by Senator Lincoln, then the Chair of the Agriculture Committee, brought forward an amendment in 2009. Dodd-Frank went through the process.

The day that President Obama signed the Dodd-Frank bill to protect Americans from Wall Street greed, the chief lobbyists for the chief financial trade association in this town said: Now it is half-time. What does “now it is half-time” mean? Well, the bill passed, and Wall Street financiers and lobbyists said, we don’t like that, but now we can go to the regulatory agencies and weaken the rules, delay their implementation, sometimes stop some of the rulemaking, and we can go back to Congress and continue to lobby and weaken these rules.

To give you an example of what has happened, in 1995, the 6 largest banks in the United States had assets equal to 18 percent of the GDP. I don’t want to bore people with numbers, but in 1995, the 6 largest banks had assets equal to 18 percent of GDP. Today they make up 64 percent of GDP. The largest six Wall Street banks—everybody knows their names—are getting larger and larger, increasing their economic power, and as we see almost every day in this Congress and especially in the House of Representatives dominated by tea party Republicans and people at the beck and call of Wall Street, we see their political power growing.

Under the accounting rules applied by the rest of the world, the derivatives holdings of the 6 largest banks—basically insurance policy on top of insurance policy on top of insurance policy as financial instruments—are 39 percent larger than we think they are, which is a difference of about \$4 trillion.

Derivatives were described by Warren Buffett as timebombs—financial weapons of mass destruction carrying dangers that are potentially lethal. Senator LEVIN, who is about to retire from the Senate after 36 years, calls these derivatives nuclear weapons.

According to the New York Times, bank lobbyists wrote provisions dealing with derivatives that will repeal—not to get too technical—the Lincoln language. And here is what the language in section 716 says: Notwithstanding any other provision of law, no Federal assistance may be provided to any swaps entity with respect to any swaps, security-based swap, or other activity of the swaps entity.

This is the language that is now Federal law. This language says no more bailouts.

However, the legislation likely to be in front of us, the omnibus we will be facing, because of Wall Street lobbyists, because of Republican financial services members caving to special interests, this provision that says “no more bailouts” is done with. We will see language now stripped out of Federal law that says “no more bailouts.”

The public needs to understand that if this language passes to strip this language out, if this bill passes, that again bailouts can be imminent—bailouts brought on by Wall Street greed, bailouts brought on by risky trading, now protected by taxpayers. So, in other

words, it is heads I win, tails you lose. If I make big bets on derivatives and I am a Wall Street banker, I make tens of millions of dollars. However, if I make big bets and something bad happens, taxpayers get to pay for it. That is the problem with stripping out section 716.

I am not the only one who thinks this. Tom Hoenig, Leader MCCONNELL’s selection to the FDIC board, supports keeping 716 in the law. Sheila Bair—once Senator Bob Dole’s chief of staff, President Bush’s appointment, and then President Obama kept her on as a major Federal regulator—she is opposed to repeal, as has the White House opposed the repeal.

Mark Stefanski, a friend of mine from Third Federal in my neighborhood in Cleveland, in Slovak Village, which is about an \$11 billion bank on the southeast side of Cleveland. That is a bank which makes mortgages. It does not trade in exotic derivatives. He told me: You know, banking should be boring. It is not about taking excessive risks, especially when those excessive risks are underwritten by taxpayers.

That is what abolishing 716—that is what the repeal of the 716 language does. It puts taxpayers on the hook in the form of a future bailout. It is a subsidy today for the six largest banks. It puts taxpayers on the hook in the future, gives all kinds of additional incentives for Wall Street bankers to engage in more risky derivatives trading, and puts us all again under the possibility of a bank bailout.

It simply does not make sense. We have the opportunity to reject this part of this legislation. We owe it to the families in my State, to families in Virginia, to families in Delaware, to families in Georgia, and all over this country. That is why we cannot support a measure that values corporate greed over working America.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia.

Mr. MANCHIN. Mr. President, first I thank my colleague for giving me this time, and I acknowledge the hard work he has done.

WEISS NOMINATION

I represent the great State of West Virginia. It is a rural State where we believe in commonsense solutions and values. In the Mountain State, we understand the importance of leveling the playing field for community institutions and helping small businesses create and keep jobs. As a Senator from West Virginia, I was sent here to represent the people of Main Street. For those reasons, I rise today to explain why I must oppose the nomination of Wall Street investment banker Antonio Weiss to be Under Secretary for Domestic Finance at the Department of the Treasury.

I cannot and will not support his nomination because I do not believe he possesses the characteristics and the background we need in an Under Secretary to push for strong Wall Street oversight and to protect our small

businesses and financial institutions on Main Streets all across America.

The position to which Mr. Weiss has been nominated is one that would put him at the head of the Treasury's decisionmaking on issues of domestic finance, fiscal policy, government liability, and other related domestic matters. He would oversee critical issues such as Wall Street reform, financing the national debt, housing finance reform, and small business credit. I have serious doubts that Mr. Weiss has the right experience to take on such a role.

It is clear that as the global head of investment banking at Lazard, Mr. Weiss is very talented and experienced in working in financial markets and economic institutions, but as an investment banker on Wall Street, he does not have the experience for this particular oversight position. He has dealt almost entirely with European investment banking, not domestic finance or community banking or regulatory issues of any kind, all of which fall under the jurisdiction of this important position.

Besides not having the right background for the job, the fact that Mr. Weiss is a top corporate dealmaker with a specialization in international financing is in itself troubling to me. He has spent a good deal of his professional career working on mergers and acquisitions for the world's largest corporations. He has spent time in Paris running the firm's European division. There is not a thing wrong with that, but this fits the administration's pattern of choosing Wall Street insiders for senior policy positions instead of those with strong consumer protection or community bank and credit union experience, plain-spoken people who have worked on Main Street.

To make matters worse, the substantial compensation Lazard plans to offer Mr. Weiss upon his confirmation is another reason to be very skeptical. The financial giant is planning to pay him \$20 million if he can win confirmation and come into government service. This kind of arrangement and human nature suggests he will be especially sympathetic to Lazard's lobbying efforts. Public service is a noble cause. A \$20 million golden parachute makes it very hard to gain the public's trust.

With that being said, I do not believe Mr. Weiss can fulfill the duties of Under Secretary of the Treasury Department.

Since joining the Senate banking committee, I have tried to make our banking and financial system work better for small businesses, banks, and middle-class West Virginians and Americans. I will continue to do so. That is why I cannot support this nomination. Mr. Weiss does not have the experience for this particular job.

It is important to send a message that we will no longer allow Wall Street to exclusively make our fiscal policy decisions, especially when they affect so many around this country on Main Street. Economic and banking

policies have too often been made without the input of our Nation's mid-sized banks, community banks, and credit unions. We must strive to have a balanced view of engaging voices on all sides of these important issues. By confirming Mr. Weiss as the Under Secretary, we are putting Wall Street before Main Street. We have already seen from the 2008 crisis how that harmed the Nation as a whole. We do not need to repeat that picture again.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BROWN). The Senator from Virginia is recognized.

TRIBUTE TO SAXBY CHAMBLISS

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, I wanted to rise very briefly because I know Senator CHAMBLISS is about to give his farewell speech. I commend my dear good friend the Senator from Georgia for his service. I am going to stay through his speech, but I know there will be others who will probably rise afterwards to give accolades, and I wanted to be first in line to salute him for his service, his friendship to so many of us in this body, and my personal good wishes for his future. I know there will be others later; I thought for a change I would get a word in first.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Georgia.

FAREWELL TO THE SENATE

Mr. CHAMBLISS. Mr. President, as my service in the Senate comes to an end, I rise today to say thank you to some of the wonderful people who have been part of a great ride for over 20 years.

We as Americans are fortunate to live in the greatest country in the world; a country where the American dream is still alive and well; a country where, in spite of all of our problems, we are the envy of the free world; a country where a preacher's kid from rural southern Georgia can rise to be elected to the House of Representatives and then to the Senate.

We as Members of the Senate are fortunate to have the opportunity to serve. We are blessed to be able to work in such a historic venue as we are in this afternoon. As we come into our offices and into this building every day, there are some things we take for granted. So to the entire Capitol Hill workforce, from those who clean our offices, to those who change the lightbulbs, provide our food, maintain our subways, keep us safe and secure, and to all of those in between, I say thank you. You are very professional in what you do, and you always do it with a smile.

To the floor staff and the cloakroom staff for both the majority and the minority, thanks for putting in the long hours, listening to often boring speeches, reminding us when we have not voted, scheduling floor time, reminding us of the rules, and making sure our mistakes are at a minimum.

I am fortunate to have been surrounded by great staff during all of my

20 years in the House and Senate, mostly young people from varied backgrounds who are the brightest minds my State and my country have to offer. They are committed patriots and loyal to the core. To those current and former members of my staff, thank you for your service to me and to the State of Georgia.

I have been served by four chiefs of staff: Rob Leebern, Krister Holladay, Charlie Harman, and Camila Knowles. Every office plan that each one of them put together starts with providing better constituent service than any other Member of the House or the Senate. I am extremely proud that our record shows we achieve the goal of doing just that. I have even had government agency personnel call my office asking for guidance on cases from other offices.

I have often said that my greatest satisfaction from this job comes not from negotiating major pieces of legislation but from being able to help Georgians with difficulties they are experiencing and having a positive impact on their lives.

I am particularly blessed to have three members of my staff who have been with me for all 20 years. My deputy chief Teresa Ervin, Debbie Cannon, and Bill Stembridge have walked every mile with me and have been so valuable. Thanks, guys.

My greatest support comes from my family. My wife Julianne, my daughter Lia and her husband Joe, my son Bo and his wife Bess, along with our grandchildren—John, Parker, Jay, Kimbrough, Anderson, and Ellie—have all been somehow involved on the campaign trail.

Come the 28th day of this month, Julianne and I will have been married for 48 years, having met at the University of Georgia a couple of years before that. For tolerating a husband who had a 24/7 job for 20 years, for being a single mom part of that time, and for understanding why I could not get home until Christmas Eve some years, I say thank you, sweetheart.

I am privileged today to represent almost 10 million Georgians who are the most wonderful people God ever put on this earth. I lost my first primary election and went on to win each of my next seven races. I won every one of those seven races because I shared the values of my constituents, I outworked each of my opponents, and I had better ideas and the best advisers and staff. Thanks, Tom and Paige.

Thanks to Senators Nunn and Miller for their regular advice and counsel. Thanks to my three leaders, Senator Lott, Senator Frist, and Senator MCCONNELL, each of whom provided me with strong leadership and always listened to me even when I had ideas that might have been different from their ideas.

I am often asked what I will miss most about the Senate. The answer is very easy. I will miss my friends and the relationships we have developed over the years. Senator ISAKSON and I

entered the University of Georgia 52 years ago in September and became friends immediately. We have been the dearest of friends ever since. He is without question the most trusted friend and adviser I have. I will miss our daily conversations.

My three best buddies from my House days, Speaker JOHN BOEHNER, Congressman TOM LATHAM, and Senator RICHARD BURR, along with Senator TOM COBURN, have been the legislative collaborators, dinner partners, golfing buddies, confidants, and numerous other things that should not be mentioned on the floor of the Senate.

Senator LINDSEY GRAHAM is like a member of my family. We have traveled the world together many times, hearing a lot. I have no plans to write a book, but if I did, LINDSEY GRAHAM's anecdotes would fill a chapter.

Senator FEINSTEIN has been a great chairman and partner on the Intelligence Committee. I will miss her leadership, her wisdom, her friendship, and those late-afternoon glasses of California wine.

My most productive time in the Senate has been spent with my dear friend Senator MARK WARNER. Our work with the Gang of 6, which included Senators DURBIN, CONRAD, COBURN, CRAPO, and then later Senators JOHANNIS and BENNETT, represents the very best of everything about the Senate. We spent, literally, hundreds of hours together debating ideas and trying to solve major problems, and we came very close. Senator WARNER's insight, his wanting to solve problems, and his political inspiration are lessons that I will carry with me forever.

As the Senate now goes forward under new leadership, I have two comments. First, the Senate should return to regular order. Senator MCCONNELL has indicated that will be the case, and it should be.

The rule change by the current majority changed the institution of the Senate in a negative way. I hope the rule is changed back to require 60 votes on all issues, including judges and nominees. Some of those most vocal favoring the rules change lost their elections, and while the rules change did not cost them their election, it is very clear that the American people wanted a change in the leadership that changed the rule. Regular order will help in restoring trust and confidence to the world's most deliberative body.

Second, it is imperative that the issue of the debt of this country be addressed. Just last week our total debt surpassed \$18 trillion. We cannot leave the astronomical debt our policies have generated for our children and grandchildren to fix. It is not rocket science; it is what must be done.

Cutting spending alone—for example, sequestration—is not the solution. Raising taxes is not the solution. As Simpson-Bowles, Domenici-Rivlin and the Gang of 6 all agreed, it will take a combination of spending reduction, entitlement reform, and tax reform to

stimulate more revenue. Hard and tough votes will have to be taken, but that is why we get elected to the Senate. The world is waiting for America to lead on this issue. If we do, the U.S. economy will respond in a very robust way. The Gang of 6 laid the foundation for this problem to be solved, and it is my hope that we do not leave the solution for the next generation.

I close with what I have enjoyed most about Congress, and that is the opportunity that I have had to spend with the men and women in uniform and those in the intelligence world, all of whom are willing to put their lives in harm's way for the sake of our freedom.

Whether it was Robins Air Force Base, Kabul, Ramadi, Jalalabad, Khowst or Dubai, I always get emotional telling the men and women how proud I am of them and how blessed we as Americans are to have them protecting us. They are special people who sacrificed much for the sake of all 300 million Americans.

Let us also remember and be thankful for the families of those military and civilian personnel who likewise make a commitment to America. As we head into another Christmas season, many of those families will not have at home their spouse, their parent, their son or their daughter.

May God bless them. May God bless this great institution, and may God continue to bless our great country.

I yield the floor.

(Applause, Senators rising.)

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The senior Senator from California is recognized.

TRIBUTES TO SAXBY CHAMBLISS

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Senator CHAMBLISS, my remarks are personal. We worked together for the past 8 years on the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence. For 4 years we have worked as chair and cochair. We have exchanged views, we have negotiated bills, and we have shared information. We have been there through very tough times and some very pleasant times. It is very hard for me to see you go.

I have learned to trust you. I respect you. We have worked together. The committee put together a Benghazi report. We worked very hard. We found areas of agreement.

Senator COLLINS of the committee is here, and Senator WARNER is here. Am I missing anyone else from the committee? There is Senator BURR, who will be the new chairman, and Senator COATS, Senator COBURN. We were able to come together and put together a report unanimously, and it was really because of your leadership.

As I watched, what became very apparent is that maybe your side isn't as fractious as my side is. You were able to say yes, we can do this or no, we can't do that, and you reflected your Members. That made it very easy for me, and I am very grateful.

Yesterday we disagreed. You have never taken a cheap shot. We worked

together at the same time to move our intelligence authorization bill. There was one last glitch which you worked out, and that bill passed unanimously last night.

Together we have worked to put together an information-sharing bill for what is probably our No. 1 defensive issue, which is cyber and the attacks that have taken 97 percent of our businesses into difficulties.

You have compromised, and I have compromised. Unfortunately, on our side, we have some unsolved issues. So, hopefully, I will be able to pick up with Senator BURR where we left off, and we will be able to get that job done next year.

What I want you to know—and I said this to you in another way—that it was such a wonderful experience for me to work with you. This is the hard part. We are only here for an instant in eternity, and the only thing that matters is what we do with that instant.

What I want you to know is you have really done yeoman's work in that instant, and I am very grateful to have the pleasure of working with you. I have learned from you, and I wish you all good things.

Thank you very much, Senator CHAMBLISS.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Georgia is recognized.

Mr. ISAKSON. I rise to pay tribute to my friend, SAXBY CHAMBLISS.

I will admit to you this is a speech I never wanted to make. I never wanted to make it because we have had a wonderful relationship in this body for the past 10 years. We have done everything together.

He has had my back, and I have had his back. He is a great friend, and I will miss him. But I am not a selfish guy. He married one of the finest women I have ever known, Julianne Chambliss, who is one of the best friends my wife has.

Although he is leaving us and I will miss the crutch I have used for so long, Julianne is getting her SAXBY back. For Julianne, her family, and those grandkids he loves so much, that is exactly what SAXBY wants to do.

Georgia has had some great Senators: Richard Russell, who was really the master of the Senate; Zell Miller, a former Governor of Georgia, a great friend of mine and a great mentor of our State; and Sam Nunn, one of the finest in national defense and foreign policy our State ever offered. SAXBY will be the fourth on the Mount Rushmore of Georgia Senators who have served Georgia with distinction and with class.

I want to tell SAXBY this in person. For 10 years we have done joint conferences. We have messed up twice. When I messed up he covered my back and when he messed up I covered his.

In 2008 when he almost lost a race and got into a runoff in December in Georgia, I rode a bus for 21 straight days introducing him three times a day and eating barbecue every single day

for dinner and for lunch. That is a price to pay that only friendship will bring out.

He is a dear friend, a trusted person. I love him very much and I love his family very much.

I could talk all day, but I wanted to open and close by saying, SAXBY, I love you. The State is going to love having you back. This country is going to miss you, but my grandchildren are safer, my State is better, and our relationship has never been stronger.

May God bless you and your family in every endeavor you undertake, and may God bless the United States of America.

(Applause, Senators rising.)

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia is recognized.

Mr. MANCHIN. First, I would say I have only been in the Senate for 4 years. When I came, let's just say it was not what I expected. For that, you look for a little bit of respite, if you will.

I looked at my colleagues and my friends on the Republican side. I didn't come to the Senate looking at what side you were on. I looked at basically the person I was dealing with.

There was a person who befriended me almost from my first day, knowing that the transition was a challenge. He stepped up to the plate with a few of my other friends over there—I see Senator COBURN behind him—and basically took me under the wing and said: Listen, we can all work together and get along. What we do here is bigger and for the greater good than what we do for ourself.

SAXBY not only showed me, but basically I was able to follow and watch what he did. This Chamber should be filled right now—it really should be from all sides—but the bottom line is the Senator is loved by everybody. I never heard an ill word said about SAXBY CHAMBLISS, the distinction he carries as far as the Senate and as a human being.

I say to the Senator, your family and your priorities are correct. Your moral compass is working and working well. I can only tell you thank you. As someone from the other side of the aisle and as a fellow colleague and a fellow American, you are an inspiration to us all.

SAXBY, there will not be another SAXBY, but I am glad they gave you to me for this short period of time of 4 years. Some of you—I look at JOHNNY, and I envy JOHNNY. For 52 years he has been your close friend.

There is your partner in crime back there, Senator BURR. We hope he doesn't tell it all when he gets up.

But with that being said, there are so many people who have a relationship that is unmatched and that is because of you.

I say, my dear friend, my hat is off to you. Thank you, and God bless you for what you have done for the United States of America, for Georgia, but most importantly for all of us. Thank you.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The senior Senator from North Carolina is recognized.

Mr. BURR. Mr. President, this moment is bittersweet for me.

I spent more time with SAXBY than I have with my own wife for the past 20 years. We have done everything together. Those vacation spots he mentioned—Kabul, Baghdad—I was right beside him.

We traveled to areas of the world that others wouldn't venture to, and there was a reason he was there. He was concerned about America's future, he was concerned about his children's future, and he was in a position to have an impact on it to make it better for them in the future. That is why he served. It is obvious to all of our colleagues that he is a lot older than I am, but he has worked just as hard as the youngest Member of this institution.

Even though we have seen each other's children grow up, and now we have seen them all married off, he deserves the time to go home and spend some time with his grandchildren and, more importantly, to get to know his wife again.

I want to say, Senator FEINSTEIN, I like red wine just as much as SAXBY does. I probably can't be bought as cheaply as he could, but I do look forward to continuing to work with you and, more importantly, to continue to do the work on the Intelligence Committee that really does build on what SAXBY started in the year 2000 as we went on the House Intelligence Committee together.

There is only one way to sum up SAXBY CHAMBLISS. He is a true southern gentleman. He is absolutely a statesman, but what everybody who meets SAXBY understands is this. He is a great American, he loves this country, he loves this institution, and some piece of him will remain here when he leaves at the end of this year. He will have an impact on what happens even though his presence may not be here.

We wish him Godspeed in life after.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The senior Senator from Indiana.

Mr. COATS. Mr. President, I am a bit out of order here. I was waiting for some of my colleagues who have spent a bit more time here than I to speak, but I wanted to take this opportunity to add my sincere thanks to SAXBY CHAMBLISS for the kind of person he is and the kind of leadership he has provided and the kind of example he has set during his time in Congress and in the Senate.

I was privileged to be able to come back to the Senate and join the group of people who shared the same deep concerns I had shared. The reason I did come back was due to the threats to our country from abroad and the fiscal plunge into debt that is going to affect our country dramatically in the future if we don't deal with it. But having the privilege of being with the people who have set such an example has been a great privilege for me.

If I were a producer and director of a movie I was going to have come out about the Senate, I would want SAXBY to be the leading man. First of all, he looks like a Senator, and he has that southern calm presence that most of us envy and he just seems to fit the profile. The next choice would have to be for the leading lady, and you couldn't find a more gracious, beautiful, supportive leading lady than Julianne Chambliss. Together, they just make a stunning couple.

I have had the privilege of traveling with them and seeing them in different places and in different situations, and what a tremendous gift it is to be with the both of them. So the Senate and many of us here will dearly miss SAXBY CHAMBLISS. He comes from a line of distinguished Senators representing the State of Georgia, and as Senator BURR said, he fits right into that long list of people whose tenure here has been remembered for decades and will continue to be remembered for decades.

His commitment to our men and women in uniform, his service to the agriculture community but particularly, in my experience, his leadership of the Intelligence Committee has been leadership this country has needed in a time of dire circumstances. His work with Chairman FEINSTEIN in dealing with the daily pressures and weight of responsibility that falls on the leadership—and all of us who serve on the committee but particularly the leadership of the Intelligence Committee—has probably been as great in the last several years as any time in our history. Very difficult decisions have had to be made.

I know I sometimes stagger out of that committee thinking, this is more than I can get my mind around. This is more than I can get my arms around in terms of how do we deal with some of these threats and some of these challenges that have popped up all over the world in various manifestations. Yet the solid leadership on the Republican side with SAXBY CHAMBLISS has united us in a way that has forged a real bond and a desire to work in a nonpartisan basis to live up to our responsibility to provide oversight for the intelligence community and to be a part of helping make those decisions that are so important and so formative in terms of how we deal with these particular issues.

So I thank SAXBY for the person he has been, the person he is, and the person he will continue to be, for the example he has set, for his friendship, and for his extraordinary leadership. I know the refrigerator will be stocked with Coca Cola, there will be Georgia peanuts in his pocket, maybe a little bit of bourbon in a drawer somewhere, and he will have a tee time at Augusta just about any time he wants. I wish him the very best as he and Julianne go forward with their life. He has left his mark here and certainly he has left his mark on me.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. COBURN. Mr. President, a lot has been said about SAXBY already, but I have an observation I have noticed over the last 10 years since I have been here, and it is about leadership. We see elected leadership on both sides, but then we see real leadership. We see the person people go to for advice. We see the person people go to for counsel. We see the person whom people go to for wisdom and judgment. That is what I have noticed the last 10 years.

More than anybody in this body, whether it is from the other side of the aisle or this side of the aisle, the person whose counsel is most sought is that of SAXBY CHAMBLISS. That is real leadership that is earned, and it needs to be recognized and honored for what it is. Because what it says is his leadership comes without judgment on the person asking the question, without condemnation of a position that may be different than his. It is giving of himself for the benefit of the rest of us. Hear, hear, my friend from Georgia.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nebraska.

Mr. JOHANNIS. Mr. President, it is an honor for me to stand and pay tribute to SAXBY CHAMBLISS. I think the first time I got to work around SAXBY was when I was nominated as the Secretary of Agriculture, and I think the first hearing SAXBY chaired as chairman of the Senate ag committee might have been that hearing.

I arrived in Washington, and I was scared to death. I had no idea what to expect. But I met with SAXBY, and I knew immediately that when I was in that hearing I was going to be treated with dignity and with respect because he wouldn't have it any other way. That is the way he did business.

Fortunately, I was confirmed, and that started our working relationship. In those years, I would not try to argue that we agreed on every nuance of farm policy. I am positive there were times when SAXBY was convinced I didn't understand a thing about southern agriculture. But he was patient and he was determined to represent all of agriculture, whether it was the South, the Midwest or the West. His goal was to be a chairman of the ag committee for all of agriculture. It was during that time the farm bill was written, and he was a tough negotiator. He had a mind in terms of where he was headed and he was going to stand up for his people and I came to respect him so much.

It was in the Senate though where I truly began to understand his talent. I can't tell you how many times we have been in a caucus meeting and somebody would ask the most intricate, difficult question relating to intelligence and national security, and invariably we would turn to SAXBY. SAXBY would stand and, in that quiet but forceful way he has, he would walk us through the intricacies of the issues. On whatever the topic was, he would explain it in a way that literally everybody in the room understood. They got it.

Watch out. You had better be prepared to be Senators with the information he had given us.

What has impressed me so much, and I know I speak for my colleagues when I say this, is he could do the same thing with the most intricate issues relative to farm policy or ag policy or finance or the Federal budget. The breadth of his knowledge is absolutely unbelievable.

I thank you, SAXBY, for the many times you probably disagreed with me immensely but treated me thoughtfully and respectfully and listened to my opinion. I saw you do that with other Members in this body. I thank you for your service. As one of the retiring Members, I will look forward to the opportunity to spend more time with you. I hope our paths cross many times in the future because I know I will be the better for it.

God bless you, my friend, and best wishes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. PORTMAN. The junior Senator from Ohio.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Your words.

Mr. PORTMAN. Look. I am so proud to be here to say a couple of words about my friend SAXBY. As you have heard from my colleagues, he is beloved. By the way, two of those who spoke are Senators who are also choosing to leave us. TOM COBURN talked about leadership. I will tell you, they are leaving a huge void.

I got to know SAXBY when he came to the House of Representatives. I was there in the early 1990s, and we became friends. Although I am from Ohio and he is a son of the South, he and Julianne embraced me and Jane, and I got to know his son Bo—such a great family.

But I didn't truly get to know him until I was the U.S. Trade Representative and my job was to try to open markets for U.S. agricultural products around the world. That required looking at something called subsidies—agriculture subsidies. This is a dangerous area in terms of politics, and MIKE JOHANNIS is very well aware of this as an ex-Secretary of Agriculture, having been at my side during some of these negotiations.

My job was to come to the Senate ag committee and talk about what we were up to and try to find out how much flexibility there was for us to get these markets open that were so important for our farmers and ranchers but entailed considerable political risk. I learned a new SAXBY CHAMBLISS there. That is when I saw the leadership that was talked about earlier.

SAXBY was willing to not just be constructive but to take that risk and to be totally discreet and confidential in dealing with very sensitive issues. I came away with a whole new level of understanding about SAXBY and therefore a new respect for him, his character, and his willingness to do what was right.

More recently, of course, we have seen his leadership on other issues: standing up for our men and women in uniform. My colleagues, to me, he has been the guardian at the gate, giving us all comfort as ranking member of the Intelligence Committee. We live in a dangerous, volatile world, and knowing SAXBY was there, clear-eyed, disciplined, discreet, and able to tell it like it was and tell it like it is today, I think has given not just us but our families and all Americans considerable comfort. So I appreciate his service there.

Finally, I admire his willingness to step up on this issue of our national debt. This is again not an easy issue, and he joined with some colleagues to promote some proposals. Again, my colleagues who are leaving know this, TOM COBURN, in particular; MIKE JOHANNIS, whom I will always have a great deal of respect for the way he has handled that issue as well.

Despite everything we have heard about him today though, perhaps his greatest accomplishment has yet to be mentioned; that is, the fact that he played golf with the President of the United States and managed to get a hole in one. The press report from that day says two things that are very interesting. First, it says he hit the hole in one on the south course. The son of the South chose to use the south course, of course, for his hole in one, but, second, it says "he was choking up on a 5-iron."

Taking nothing away from his hole in one—and it sounds like it wasn't as long a shot as he explained to me it might have been—but choking up on a 5-iron makes no sense to me. There is nobody more poised, more smooth. I have never seen him choke on anything.

SAXBY, we are sad to see you leave but happy to see you spend more time with Julianne, the kids, and the beloved Bulldogs. Godspeed, my friend.

I yield back.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Hampshire.

Ms. AYOTTE. Mr. President, I rise to thank my friend SAXBY CHAMBLISS. Senator COBURN spoke about leadership. We are very much going to miss Senator COBURN, Senator JOHANNIS, and Senator CHAMBLISS in this body.

But what he said is very true; because as someone who has only served here for 4 years, one of the people who has been most welcoming to me and a mentor and role model and someone from whom I have sought advice is SAXBY CHAMBLISS.

As we look at this body and people whom we can emulate as role models, SAXBY CHAMBLISS is one of those role models. Not only is he incredibly knowledgeable on the issues that are so important to this Nation—and I can say, having served with him on the Armed Services Committee, he is one of the most knowledgeable people in this country, not only on what we need to do to keep the country safe because

of his role on the Intelligence Committee, but also what we need to ensure that our men and women in uniform have the very best to keep our country safe. SAXBY has a deep understanding and very much loves our men and women in uniform, and has stood up for them in ensuring that they have gotten what they need to keep this country safe.

From my perspective, he is someone who is going to be so missed in this body, because he has understood that you can stand on principle, as he has, for the important challenges facing this Nation—whether it is keeping us safe, or addressing the national debt that threatens not only our security but the prosperity of America; but he has also done it in a way that he has been able to build relationships—relationships within our own conference in the Republican Caucus, where he is a go-to leader, where people like me seek his advice on how to get things done—but also, as we can see here, relationships across the aisle.

As we go into the new Congress, I hope as SAXBY goes on to do other important things with his lovely family and Julianne and his children and grandchildren, that we will follow the example of SAXBY CHAMBLISS of what it means to work together, of what it means to be respectful of each other to get things done for this country, and to address the great challenges that SAXBY has done so much important work on—including keeping our Nation safe and making sure that America remains strong.

SAXBY, I want to thank you for being so welcoming to me, for being a role model, and for being someone who I think is an example of what it means to serve this country with distinction.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The senior Senator from North Dakota is recognized.

TRIBUTE TO DEPARTING SENATORS

SAXBY CHAMBLISS, TOM COBURN, AND MIKE JOHANNNS

Mr. HOEVEN. Mr. President, in the new Congress we will welcome 12 new Republican Senators, and that is wonderful. They are great people. They are excited. They are enthusiastic. I think they are going to do wonderful things. So there are 12 new Republican Members coming into the new Senate, and I am looking and we are going to lose 3 of our Republican colleagues. I am thinking, maybe that is about the right ratio; it is about 4 to 1.

But these are three individuals who are unbelievable in what they have been able to do in the relationships they built, the friendships, and the work they have done on behalf of the American people. So I am looking at that statistic and I am thinking: Wow, these are three great people who have done the work of many, and I think they have laid the foundation in many ways for us to get to a majority: Senator JOHANNNS, Senator COBURN, and Senator CHAMBLISS. I think they have done a lot of that work required for us to get to majority.

We have heard about the great Senator from Georgia. But I think the things I am going to talk about for a minute in regard to SAXBY CHAMBLISS apply to the two individuals sitting here with him. They are cut from the same cloth: Senator COBURN, Senator JOHANNNS, true public servants. People who ran for the right reason; people who serve for the right reason. I think we could ask anybody in this body on either side of the aisle, and they would tell us that these three individuals served for the right reasons, and served to the very best of their ability the American people—not just the people of their State, but the American people. They will be remembered long after they are gone. They will be remembered because of the great, wonderful people they are, for the relationships they have built, and for that service. So I echo Senator AYOTTE's comments.

Senator COBURN touched on it, too. One of the first people I looked to as a mentor when I came here 4 years ago was SAXBY CHAMBLISS. Now, that doesn't seem intuitively like something I would do—I am from North Dakota, he is from Georgia. MIKE JOHANNNS has been a mentor of mine since Governor days, so for more than a decade. But one of the first people I looked to as a mentor was SAXBY CHAMBLISS, and I don't even know why. It was one of those things that immediately you like the guy. But as you listened to him a little bit, you respected the guy. You thought: This guy has something to say. He knows what he is doing. But then, it is that relationship thing—that thing where he goes out of his way to work with you, to help you, to understand what you are trying to do in a friendly way, with great humor, and he does it naturally. It is just who he is. It is automatic. I think Senator ISAKSON really put his finger on it: It is just the way he is. You are naturally drawn to him.

I think we could talk to any of our colleagues on the other side of the aisle and they would tell you the same thing: integrity, honesty, intelligence; somebody you can work with, somebody who cares, somebody who always has the best interests of the American people at heart.

I had the opportunity to work with him on the farm bill, and I was counting on Senator COBURN to kind of jump in there and do it with him, but that didn't happen right away. I am kidding a little bit. But we couldn't have had a farm bill without Senator CHAMBLISS.

When I think how difficult it is to move legislation like that, particularly over the course of the past year, and realize that a farm bill really isn't so much Republican/Democratic—it really isn't. If you look at how a farm bill works, that is not the makeup. It comes down to people who know and understand agriculture, who understand the importance of a good farm bill for our farmers and ranchers, but understand also that our farmers and

ranchers across the country create the highest quality, lowest cost food supply in the world. It is not perfect, but every American benefits every day from the highest quality, lowest cost food supply in the world.

So when I think of my State of North Dakota, or Senator COBURN's great State of Oklahoma, or Senator JOHANNNS' State of Nebraska—we all produce all of these different ag products. We raise all these crops, we raise all these animals. And there are so many people out there, so many farmers and ranchers—they don't know SAXBY CHAMBLISS. But I will tell you what: They owe him a great big thank you. They really do, because without him we wouldn't have a good farm plan for this country.

The reality is it is not just the farmers and ranchers. It is true for so many people across this country: They may not know SAXBY CHAMBLISS, but they owe him a lot. He is somebody who epitomizes the very best of this institution.

I know his wife Julianne is here. I have to admit, when I first met her I thought it was his daughter because she is so young and beautiful. I am teasing him a little. But she is fantastic. And the same thing—she was immediately a friend and a mentor to my wife Mikey.

When we talk about SAXBY CHAMBLISS, TOM COBURN, MIKE JOHANNNS, it doesn't get any better than that. We will miss them a lot.

I wish all three of them Godspeed, and may God bless you in your next career.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut is recognized.

SECOND ANNIVERSARY OF SANDY HOOK

Mr. MURPHY. Mr. President, I add my congratulations to Senator CHAMBLISS. It is strange, coming here in the last 2 years and getting to serve only 2 years with giants in the Senate like SAXBY, like TOM HARKIN, and like Senator ROCKEFELLER, whose legacies will live on.

Knowing what a good soul Senator CHAMBLISS is, I bet he would enjoy the Newtown Labor Day parade. I have a picture of it here.

We had the 53rd annual Newtown Labor Day parade this last year. This is the biggest event that happens in Connecticut on Labor Day. It is a celebration of the town. There are 120 different groups that make up the parade. There is the Newtown High School marching band. This year Grand Marshall Sydney Eddison was proudly marching at the front. The Litchfield Hills Pipe Band and newer groups such as the Marching Cobras of New York were there this year. It is a must-stop if you are a Senator, Governor, or Congressperson. We all march together at the front of the parade regardless of party. It is a really fantastic and wonderful place.

This year there were marchers from the Avielle Foundation; a truck decorated in pink promoting a culture of

kindness. Sandy Hook Elementary School had a float called “The Magic School Bus to Sandy Hook School.” It had a positive message of “Think You Can, Work Hard, Get Smart, Be Kind,” and the judges selected Sandy Hook School’s float as the winner in the best school category.

It is a reminder that Sandy Hook is a positive place; Newtown is a positive place—a place that is rebounding as we come upon the 2-year anniversary, the 2-year memorial of the tragic shooting in that town that took the lives of 20 6- and 7-year-olds, and 6 of their teachers who were sworn to protect them.

Senator BLUMENTHAL and I have come to the floor today to mark that 2-year anniversary and to talk for a brief few moments about what has happened over the last 2 years—what has happened that has been positive, and the work that is left to still be done.

There are a lot of positive things that have happened. It is impossible to try to find any good that comes out of this, but the foundational work that has happened in the memory of these children is remarkable.

The Jessica Rekos Foundation was formed in an effort to pay homage to Jessica’s love of horses and her love of whales. They opened up a summer camp where kids ages 6 to 10, the age that Jessica was when she passed, could be able to enjoy horses, learn how to ride and take care of them. They raise money to sponsor the Orca Fellowship, which is dedicated to conservation initiatives for the orca whale.

I mentioned the Avielle Foundation. Avielle’s brilliant parents started a foundation seeking to do new research into brain activity. They have a new PSA video to highlight the need to understand the aspects of the brain that can lead to aggression and violence.

Ana Grace Marquez-Greene. Her family is a musical family. They started a foundation which tries to identify ways to build stronger communities. Her father is a wonderful jazz musician, and he recently released an album called “Beautiful Life.” The proceeds all go to this effort.

Sandy Hook Promise, a group of families, is asking schools and communities to take a simple first step to ending violence. That first step is to talk to children and teens about how to be a good bystander—to look out for those first signs of trouble, and to report anything that may seem out of the ordinary.

We frankly have seen how that small act can make a big difference. Just last week a young man was arrested in Utah after he admitted he had brought a gun to school with the intent to shoot a girl he had a falling out with and then his plans were to open fire on the rest of his classmates, but a student heard about it and tipped off authorities so he could be stopped before he carried out his plan. That is what Sandy Hook Promise is trying to do in the wake of this tragedy, to spread the

word that those small acts can make a difference.

I will talk for a few minutes about what hasn’t been done when it comes to policy changes, but there is a lot that has happened when it comes to policy as well. In Connecticut we passed the strongest antigun violence measure in the country. It cracks down on illegal guns and invests more resources into identifying trouble spots before they happen. Washington State just passed a new referendum with 60 percent of the vote that extends their background check systems to private sales and to transfers. In Colorado they passed a strong new law as well. On the private sector side retailers are stepping up. Big retailers from Starbucks to Chipotle, to Target have taken proactive steps, separate and aside from anything government has done, to keep firearms out of their stores. So there are a lot of positives that have happened in the private sector and in the public sector, and hopefully we can build on that work. Hopefully Congress can recognize that our silence, our inability to pass anything in the 2-year period of time since Sandy Hook passed, effectively makes us complicit in the continuing assault on students all across this country.

Here is the map. In the 2 years since Newtown, there have been 95 different school shootings all across the country. Ninety-five different school shootings have occurred. During the last 3 months alone, there were 17 school shootings, including a single week where there was one every day, five events over the course of 5 days. This is an absolute epidemic that is happening all across this country since Sandy Hook. Why I say we are complicit is that when there is no response from Congress, when there is not a single legislative act passed to try to do something about this, it sends a message of quiet endorsement of what is happening. I know that is not our intent. I know that is not in the hearts or minds of any of our Members, but people notice when every week there is a new story of a school shooting all across the country and Congress does absolutely nothing about it while the private sector and State legislatures step up to do something about it. So this is a day when we remember what happened 2 years ago, but it is also a day in which we should feel ashamed that we haven’t done a single thing to try to stem this tide.

I get it that we are not going to get a background check bill passed in the next 2 years, but why not work on mental health funding? Why not have everybody in this Chamber spend 5 minutes of your time reading the report that was just released by the Connecticut child advocate detailing the history of Adam Lanza’s intersection with the mental health system during his early years and adolescence and how it failed step after step, year after year, month after month—a lack of followup, a lack of coordination, a lack of

diagnosis. We have a mental health system in this country that is broken and can be fixed—yes, with some more resources but just with better coordination. That is something we can work on together over the next 2 years. So we can say when this chart gets peppered with another 50 dots by this time next year that we didn’t just stand silent.

Nobody is more articulate than Senator BLUMENTHAL in talking about that day, and I don’t want to relive it on this floor, except to share the most powerful testimony I have heard about what happened that day.

This is a community that is recovering, but it is still a community in crisis. We don’t lose 20 little boys and girls and just come back to life in 2 years. It is a resilient community, but it is a community that still hurts, and it hurts in part because they don’t see us doing anything about it.

So before I yield the floor to Senator BLUMENTHAL to say a few words, I wish to close with somebody else’s words. I have shared these words on the floor before, but they are just as powerful now as they were the last time I read them.

This is Neil Heslin testifying before Congress in February of 2013. He is still Jesse Lewis’s father, one of the little boys who was killed that day. So as we think about what happened 2 years ago in Sandy Hook and we think about the charge we have before us and we think about the fact that there are those of us such as myself and Senator BLUMENTHAL and others who will not rest until we honor their memories by our actions, let me give you these words:

On December 14, Jesse got up and got ready for school. He was always excited to go to school. I remember on that day we stopped by Misty Vale Deli. It’s funny the things you remember.

I remember Jesse got the sausage, egg and cheese he always gets, with some hot chocolate. And I remember the hug he gave me when I dropped him off. He just held me, and he rubbed my back. I can still feel that hug.

And Jesse said, “It’s going to be alright. Everything’s going to be okay, Dad.” Looking back it makes me wonder. What did he know? Did he have some idea about what was going to happen? But at the time I didn’t think much of it. I just thought he was being sweet.

Jesse had this idea that you never leave people hurt. If you can help somebody, you do it. If you can make somebody feel better, you do it. If you can leave somebody a little better off, you do it.

They tell me that’s how he died. I guess we still don’t know exactly what happened at that school. Maybe we’ll never know. But what people tell me is that Jesse did something different.

When he heard the shooting, he didn’t run and hide. He started yelling. People disagree on the last thing he said. One person who was there said he yelled “run.” Another person said he told everybody to “run now.” Ten kids from my son’s class made it to safety. I hope to God something Jesse did helped them survive that day.

What I know is that Jesse wasn’t shot in the back. He took two bullets. The first one grazed the side of his head. . . . The other hit

him in the forehead. Both bullets were fired from the front. That means that the last thing my son did was look Adam Lanza straight in the face and scream to his classmates to run. The last thing he saw was that coward's eyes.

Before he died, Jesse and I used to talk about maybe coming to Washington someday. He wanted to go up to the Washington monument. When we talked about it last year Jesse asked if we could come and meet the President.

. . . Jesse believed in you.

This is Neil Heslin, his father talking.

. . . Jesse believed in you. He learned about you in school and he believed in you. I want to believe in you, too. I know you can't give me Jesse back. Believe me, if I thought you could, I'd be asking you for that.

But I want to believe that you will think about what I told you here today. I want to believe you'll think about it and then you'll do something about it, whatever you can do to make sure no other father has to see what I've seen.

That is a pretty powerful message, a message that on the 2-year anniversary mark of that horrible tragedy we would be wise to listen to.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The senior Senator from Connecticut is recognized.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, on December 14, 2012, we saw evil, but we also saw good. We saw tragedy, but we also saw actions that should continue to inspire us.

The evil was in a deranged young man who committed unspeakable and unimaginable horrific acts, but the good was exemplified by the police, the emergency responders, and the teachers who not only risked their lives but saved other ones. The good was something that came forward in the days and months and in the past 2 years.

Often I visit the playgrounds that have been built throughout the State of Connecticut in memory of those children, in memory of Charlotte Bacon in West Haven and Ana Grace Marquez-Greene in Hartford, Jessica Rekos in Fairfield, and Dylon Hockley in Westfork, and Victoria Soto in Stratford. I visit them to watch children playing, children often the same age as the wonderful, beautiful children who perished on that day, and parents about the same age as the teachers who lost their lives, sixth-grade educators.

On that day parents in Newtown took their children to school, kissed them goodbye and went about their days, went to work to plan play dates and snack breaks and holiday parties, and just hours into that morning many parents were standing at the Sandy Hook Volunteer Fire Station where I also went that day. What I saw was through the eyes of a parent, not just a public official, the cries of grief, the faces, and voices filled with tears and longing. Those images I will never forget, and they have redoubled my own determination to try to make America safer and better, to keep faith with those 26

wonderful people whose lives were lost that day, and more than 30,000 people who perished in the United States as a result of violence simply because many of them were in the wrong place at the wrong time—on the street or in neighborhoods or in their own home.

The good that is done every day by our police and firemen and emergency responders to try to stem and stop this epidemic of violence cannot overcome the flood of guns in our Nation and cannot compensate for the lack of effective measures to make America safer and better by making our laws against gun violence more effective.

I will never forget that day or any of the victims or their families, and I hope America never forgets them as well. We are memorializing now their wonderful lives by acts of kindness, but the best and truest way to memorialize them in history is to approve effective, commonsense, sensible measures against gun violence.

In the aftermath of those horrific events of December 14, all of Connecticut, certainly in Newtown, and our State came together to lift those who were so devastatingly impacted, and those families have shown incredible strength. They sat in the gallery, they came to visit us and our colleagues urging action. Congress's failure to act is contemptible and unconscionable and a betrayal of those individuals. The action that is ultimately truest and best as a memorial to them will be for this Congress to act.

In Newtown and around the Nation, every community in some way was affected in those days and in some way came together with Newtown. So my hope is still that that spirit will be an inspiration to action, that it will be an impetus to the Congress for effective, commonsense measures that will protect countless others who are in danger and who will die if Congress does not act.

More than 60,000 firearm deaths have occurred since December 14, 2012. There are 32,000 firearm deaths per year. Those families have demonstrated unrelenting resolve, and so should we, and we will. It took more than 10 years for the Brady law to be approved, even after a President of the United States was almost assassinated and his Press Secretary, Jim Brady, was severely injured and paralyzed.

I hope it will not take 10 years for action to be taken by Congress, but we need the persistence and perseverance that will carry us through whatever it takes to achieve lasting reform.

I have been proud to serve as a member of the Judiciary Committee and to have worked hard for this measure, helping to lead the effort to approve the ban on high-capacity magazines as well as assault weapons and background checks. But a mental health initiative and school safety initiative have also been part of what we need do. I will continue my work on those efforts—mental health and school safety bills I have introduced, including the

Lori Jackson Domestic Violence Survivor Protection Act.

Lori Jackson was estranged from her husband. She obtained a court order against him because of the real evidence of danger from him. Unfortunately, that court order failed to save her life because it was only temporary, and it failed to take away the guns her husband had. The Lori Jackson Domestic Violence Survivor Protection Act will fill that gap in our laws now.

Women are five times as likely to die as a result of domestic violence when there is a gun in the home. One in five women are victims of domestic violence at some point in their lives. That is the reason we need to continue this fight on many fronts. Since that day or about then, on December 14, I have worn a bracelet and I still do. The writing has faded and is no longer visible, but the one thing it said was, "Love wins." I truly believe that love won in Newtown, that love won when Connecticut's legislature passed a strong and effective measure. It was the next step. It is not the end of the work, but the next step. I believe that love won through the grace and courage and strength of the families of those children and the loved ones of the teachers who lost their lives.

I believe love wins every day in our classrooms around the Nation when teachers work hard—and they work hard—and resolve to keep their children safe. Love wins every day when someone stands up and speaks out against gun violence. Love will win, eventually. Honor will win. We will honor those children, and we will celebrate the love they felt so deeply and unconditionally—as only children can—unqualifiedly for their parents and their community. I believe that love will win eventually as long as we keep working.

I thank the Presiding Officer and yield the floor.

FAA MODERNIZATION AND REFORM ACT OF 2012

THE PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BLUMENTHAL). The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Finance be discharged from further consideration of S. 2614 and the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration.

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

The clerk will report the bill by title. The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 2614) to amend certain provisions of the FAA Modernization and Reform Act of 2012.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the bill be read a third time and passed, and the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

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