The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

Mr. REID. I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. COATS. Mr. President, may I ask the minority leader if it would be possible to speak as in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate is in a quorum call.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. REID. Through the Chair, I ask my friend from Indiana how long the Senator wishes to speak as in morning business.

Mr. COATS. No more than 10 minutes.

Mr. REID. I do not care. I would just like to know. That is fine.

I ask unanimous consent that the Senator from Indiana be recognized for up to 10 minutes.

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

Mr. COATS. I thank the minority leader for this opportunity.

IRAN NUCLEAR AGREEMENT REVIEW ACT

Mr. President, recently on this floor, I spoke about the need to pass the Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act with robust, veto-proof, bipartisan majorities. That is asking a lot, but I did so because this is the only chance we have to prevent President Obama from having a free and totally independent hand to conclude a flawed agreement with the Government of Iran. We cannot allow that to happen.

This Congress has pleaded for and worked for and will achieve the opportunity to play a major role in this decision, which is a decision of historic consequence.

Let me repeat what I just said. This bill is the only chance we have now to prevent President Obama from having a completely free hand, with no opportunity to address it in a bipartisan way, to achieve success in rejecting a bad agreement.

Passage of the bill before us will result in either forcing critical and absolutely necessary improvements in the deal now being cooked with our Secretary of State and the President and his people or defeating a bad deal if a bad deal is presented to us.

The stakes in this game are beyond calculation. I personally regard this as the most consequential issue of my entire public career. Our failure to have an opportunity to have this Congress—the representatives of the American people—bring before the American people what is in this deal and the consequences if this deal is not a good deal that will prevent Iran from having nuclear weapons capability—this is absolutely essential. The only chance we have to exercise our constitutional right, which I believe, but our right to address something of this consequence is to pass the Corker-Cardin bill.

It is not the perfect bill. It is not the bill that I think perhaps even Senator CORKER would have preferred. But it is where we are. The only way we could get here and get bipartisan support for this was to do this.

This gives us the opportunity to do the following: A Congressional review period will be provided before implementation. An opportunity for Congress to vote on the agreement will be provided under Corker-Cardin.

A limitation on the President's use of waivers to suspend sanctions that have been put in place by this body will be taken away. A requirement that Congress receive the final deal will be lost. The requirement that the President certify that Iran is complying will be taken away. A mechanism for Congress to rapidly reimpose sanctions in the event of violations will be lost. Reporting on Iran support for terrorism, ballistic missile development, and human rights violations will be lost. All of this is lost if we do not stand together and insist on the right to engage in this. We must pass this or the defeat will be of historical consequence.

This bill is the only chance, as I said, that Congress has to weigh in on a potential agreement. The stakes are too high. The consequence is too great to engage in changes. Many well-intended statements have been made by my colleagues, and I endorse every word of what has been said. Amendments have been offered that, had they not been offered by someone else, in a different fashion, I would have wanted to offer. We can still offer those going forward.

But in order to achieve the bipartisan support necessary to deny the President the opportunity to have a free hand in cutting any deal he wants and the concessions already given—this should raise alarms in each of us in terms of support for this bill which is before us.

What are the stakes? What are the consequences? Former Secretaries Kissinger and Shultz and other foreign policy experts did a recent Wall Street Journal piece and said this:

> If the Middle East is ''proliferated'' and becomes host to a plethora of nuclear-threshold states, several in mortal rivalry with each other, on what concept of nuclear deterrence or strategic stability will international security be based?

They continue:

> It is in America's strategic interest to prevent the outbreak of a nuclear war and its catastrophic consequences. Nuclear arms must not be permitted to turn into conventional weapons. The passions of the region allied with weapons of mass destruction may impel deepening American involvement.

In closing, I want to address statements offered by some who argue that passing this bill is unnecessary because in 2017 we will have a new President in the White House and that President will be a Republican. Well, I hope that is so, but there is obviously no guarantee of that. But in the meantime—in the meantime—Iran will achieve a free hand to go forward with newly acquired wealth, the will to achieve and the technical capability to achieve nuclear weapons capability.

Let me conclude by supporting a statement that was made by Max Boot, a respected foreign policy analyst:

> Skeptics about the looming nuclear accord with Iran may be taking comfort from the promises of Republican presidential candidates to tear up the treaty as soon as they reach the Oval Office. They shouldn't be. Even assuming a Republican wins the White House next year—

Which, as we know, is not a certainty. Hopefully, from our standpoint, we hope that is the case—

> pulling out of the agreement won't necessarily fix its defects. In fact, it could make the situation even worse.
>
> The U.S. would then get the worst of both worlds: Iran already would have been enriched by hundreds of billions of dollars of sanctions relief—and it would be well on its way to fielding nuclear weapons with de facto permission from the international community. To avoid this nightmare scenario, the best play from America's standpoint could well be to keep the accord in place to at least delay Iran's decision to weaponize.
>
> In short, don't expect salvation in 2017. If the accord is signed its consequences will be irrevocable. Whatever a future president does or does not do, Iran's hard-line regime will be immeasurably strengthened by the agreement. That makes it all the more imperative to stop a bad agreement now—not two years from now.

I urge my colleagues, Democrats and Republicans, to vote to give Congress—this Congress—the right and the opportunity to scrutinize every single word of what is being negotiated with the Iranians, to inform the American people, and then achieve what I would hope would be an overwhelming rejection of the agreement if it does not achieve the goal of denying Iran its nuclear weapons capability. This is a very important vote before us. I think we need to look at what the end goal is and how we can best get there under the circumstances which we now are in. We would all like to be in a different position. But to achieve and get to this particular point, we are looking at this particular bill to give us a say—a meaningful say—and an opportunity to reject a bad agreement which at this particular point in time, in my view, does not achieve what we need to achieve and should be thoroughly scrutinized by us and the American people.

I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

PROTECTING VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS AND EMERGENCY RESPONDERS ACT

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 1191, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 1191) to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to ensure that emergency services volunteers are not taken into account as employees under the shared responsibility requirements contained in the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

Pending:

Corker/Cardin amendment No. 1140, in the nature of a substitute.

Corker/Cardin amendment No. 1179 (to amendment No. 1140), to require submission of all Persian text included in the agreement.

Blunt amendment No. 1155 (to amendment No. 1140), to extend the requirement for annual Department of Defense reports on the military power of Iran.

Vitter modified amendment No. 1186 (to amendment No. 1179), to require an assessment of inadequacies in the international monitoring and verification system as they relate to a nuclear agreement with Iran.

Cotton amendment No. 1197 (to the language proposed to be stricken by amendment No. 1140), of a perfecting nature.

Cotton (for Rubio) amendment No. 1198 (to amendment No. 1197), to require a certification that Iran's leaders have publically accepted Israel's right to exist as a Jewish state.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the time until the cloture vote will be equally divided in the usual form.

Mr. CORKER. Mr. President, I will have to ask for a unanimous consent request on something in just a moment, but I think they are still working out some details.

Before I move to that, I thank the Senator from Indiana. He has done so much to further this cause of us having a congressional review on whatever is negotiated with Iran. All of us want a good agreement, but we want to ensure that we play a role in ensuring that is the case. I cannot thank the Senator enough for his leadership on this issue and so many other issues that matter relative to our national interests around the world and the safety of our citizens. Again, I thank the Senator so much.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that notwithstanding rule XXII, the Senate vote on the motion to invoke cloture on the pending substitute amendment at 2 p.m. today.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. CORKER. Mr. President, I further ask unanimous consent that at 11 a.m., Senator LANKFORD be recognized to deliver his maiden speech and that the time from 11:30 a.m. until 12:50 p.m. be equally divided, with the majority controlling the first half and the Democrats controlling the second half.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. CORKER. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

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

BALTIMORE AND CVS HEALTH

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, yesterday, I took the floor to talk about the events in Baltimore over the last 10 days, 2 weeks, and I spoke about how Baltimore is coming together and recognized that in order to move forward, there are two pillars we need to work on, and one of those is public safety and justice. I talked about some initiatives we are looking at, including legislation that I filed that will eliminate profiling by police and how we need to deal with the restoration of voting rights and other issues that deal with accountability of police.

I also talked about rebuilding and dealing with the core issues of our urban centers. I just want to supplement those remarks with a conversation we had with CVS Health. I mention that because it was the CVS pharmacy that was destroyed a week ago Monday night in Baltimore. I think that was seen not only in this country but around the world. It was one of the major assets in a community that for too long a period of time did not have access to a pharmacy. It was tragic to see that it was destroyed during the events in Baltimore.

I wish to bring to my colleagues' attention that CVS has spoken about that episode, and they have made a commitment to restore the two pharmacy locations, which will be rebuilt in the same communities in which they were destroyed. They are committed to return to the community as quickly as possible with those services which are critically important to those communities.

I just want to point that out that they have gone further than that. Previously, I said we need the Federal Government's help in rebuilding and dealing with the core problems, we need State and local governments, and we need the private sector to step up and help us. CVS has listened to that.

First, one of the things they are doing is providing a $100,000 donation to the United Way of Central Maryland's Maryland Unites Fund and the Baltimore Community Foundation. These are funds that will be used to help rebuild Baltimore.

This is a quote from the CVS release:

These funds will help provide immediate and longer-term support to people in hard-hit areas and give those communities much-needed resources.

I also wish to point out what CVS did, and I think this is very important. This is also a quote.

To help minimize the financial impact of the store closing for its Baltimore employees, CVS/pharmacy paid them their regularly scheduled hours the week of the protests, whether or not they were able to work. All displaced employees who want to work in other CVS/pharmacy locations will able to do so.

To me, that is part of rebuilding and dealing with the problems in our community; that those employees, through no fault of their own, could have been at a tremendous disadvantage and will get their full paychecks. They have a job to return to, and we are going to have those pharmacies relocated in the communities which desperately need that. That is the private sector helping us in rebuilding and dealing with the problems in our city. I just wanted my colleagues to know about the work of CVS Health.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

ISIL AND AUTHORIZATION FOR USE OF MILITARY FORCE

Mr. KAINE. Mr. President, I rise today to commemorate an anniversary, as well as to challenge my colleagues in Congress.

Today marks the completion of 9 months of America's war against ISIL. Tomorrow, May 8, starts the 10th month of this war.

In the war on ISIL, here is what has happened so far. We have deployed thousands of troops far from home to support military operations in Iraq and Syria. A significant number of them are from Virginia, including the Roosevelt Carrier Strike Group based in Norfolk.

We have conducted more than 3,000 U.S. air strikes on ISIL from land bases in the region as well as from aircraft carriers.

We have spent more than 2 billion American taxpayer dollars—and counting.

We have lost the lives of American servicemembers and seen American hostages killed by ISIL in barbaric ways.

And while we have seen some significant progress on the battlefield in Iraq, we have also witnessed ISIL spread and take responsibility for attacks in Afghanistan, Libya, and Yemen. We have seen other terrorist groups, such as Nigeria's Boko Haram, pledge alliance to ISIL. We have seen acts of terrorism in Europe and now in the United States that have been influenced or at least inspired by ISIL.

All of this has happened in 9 months.

Here is what hasn't happened. Congress, the article I branch whose most solemn power is the duty to declare war, has not done its job, has not debated this war, has not taken any formal step to authorize what was started unilaterally by the President 9 months ago.

As of today, ISIL has no indication whether Congress cares one iota about the ongoing war. Our allies in the region who are most directly affected by

the threat of ISIL have no indication whether Congress cares one iota about the ongoing war. And most importantly, the thousands of American troops serving in the region and serving in the theater of battle have no indication whether Congress cares one iota about this ongoing war.

In the Senate there has been no authorization vote or even debate on the floor. The Senate Foreign Relations Committee did report out a war authorization in December, but it died without floor action at the end of the 113th Congress. In the House, there has been no debate or authorization on the floor. In fact, there has been no action in any House committee during the 9 months of this war.

The silence of Congress in the midst of this war is cowardly and shameful. How can we explain to our troops, our public, or ourselves this complete unwillingness of Congress to take up this important responsibility?

President Obama maintains that the authorizations voted on by Congress in 2001 and 2002 give him the power to wage this war without Congress. Having reviewed the authorizations carefully, I find that claim completely without merit. The 2001 authorization allows the President to take action against groups that perpetrated the attacks of 9/11. ISIL was not a perpetrator of the 9/11 attack; it was not formed until 2 years after the attacks, in 2003. It is not an ally of Al Qaeda; it is now fighting against Al Qaeda in certain theaters. The only way the 2001 authorization could be stretched to cover ISIL is if we pretend that the authorization is a blank check giving the President the power to wage war against any terrorist group. But that was precisely the power that President Bush asked for in 2001, and Congress explicitly refused to grant that broad grant of power to the President, even in the days right after the 9/11 attacks.

The 2002 authorization to wage war in Iraq to topple the regime of Saddam Hussein also has no relevance here. That regime disappeared years ago.

The War Powers Resolution of 1973 does grant the President some ability to initiate military action for 60 to 90 days prior to congressional approval, but it also mandates that the President must cease military activity unless Congress formally approves it. Here we have blown long past all of the deadlines of the act, Congress has said nothing, and yet the war continues.

So the President does not have the legal power to maintain this war without Congress. Yet Congress—this Congress—the very body that is so quick to argue against President Obama's use of Executive power, even threatening him with lawsuits over immigration actions and other Executive decisions, is strangely silent and allows an Executive war to go on undeclared, unapproved, undefined, and unchecked.

So 9 months of silence leaves the impression that Congress is either indifferent about ISIL and the threat that it poses or lacks the backbone to do the job that it is supposed to do.

That is why I rise today to challenge my colleagues to take this seriously and promptly debate and pass an authorization for military action against ISIL. We should have done this months ago. By now, all know that ISIL is not going away soon. This problem will not just solve itself.

I am given some hope by recent actions of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and this body on the pending matter, the Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act. On a challenging and important national security issue, because of strong leadership by Senators CORKER, CARDIN, and MENENDEZ, we have shown the ability to act in a bipartisan way to assert an appropriate congressional role in reviewing a final nuclear deal with Iran. We are taking an important stand for the congressional role in matters touching upon diplomacy, war, and peace, and we have fought off thus far the temptation to play politics with this important matter.

This gives me some hope that we might do the same with respect to the war on ISIL, because the role of Congress in war is undisputable. The Framers of the Constitution were familiar with a world where war was for the Monarch, the King, the Sultan or the Executive. But they made a revolutionary decision to choose a different path and place the decisions about the initiation of war in the hands of the people's elected legislative branch.

They did so because of an important underlying value. The value is this: We shouldn't order young servicemembers to risk their lives in a military mission unless Congress has debated the mission and reached the conclusion that it is in the Nation's best interest. That value surely is as important today as it was in 1787.

To conclude, I hope we will remember that right now in places far from their homes, thousands of members of the American Armed Forces are risking their lives on behalf of a mission that Congress has refused to address for 9 long months. Their sacrifice should call us to step up, do our job, and finally define and authorize this ongoing war.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

Mr. FLAKE. Mr. President, I want to echo the sentiments of my colleague from Virginia, who is also my colleague in the Foreign Relations Committee, for taking action on authorization for use of military force against ISIL. This is an issue that has confronted us for a while, and the Senator from Virginia has stood up forcefully time and again to insist that Congress fulfill its necessary role here, and yet we have not.

As he mentioned, the United States has led a multination coalition since September of last year to achieve the President's stated objective to ''degrade and ultimately destroy ISIL.'' The White House insisted when operations began that it didn't need an AUMF for this mission because it was on solid legal footing by using the AUMF which Congress had passed in 2001—2001—14 years ago. That authorization for use of force went after Al Qaeda and the Taliban in the wake of the 9/11 attacks. Many of us took umbrage with the assertion at the time, and we pushed for the administration to work with Congress to authorize a mission against ISIL. It was important then and it remains important now for Congress to voice its support for the mission and to signal to our allies, as well as our adversaries, as well as our troops who are in harm's way, that our commitment will not change based on prevailing political winds.

It wasn't until the Foreign Relations Committee took initiative to consider its own view on that, that the administration was forced to engage with Congress. The President submitted a draft AUMF to Congress in February of this year and the Senate Foreign Relations Committee held hearings thereafter. Yet movement of this vital piece of legislation has seemingly stalled. It remains a stalemate because the majority and minority parties can't agree on how to address the use of combat troops in this conflict. This is damaging to the effort to defeat ISIL. Frankly, it is also damaging to the credibility and relevance of this institution with regard to the conduct of foreign affairs.

The war against ISIL has been waged continuously since September of last year with Congress appropriating funds for its operations. Yet Congress has yet to authorize the mission itself. What kind of message does that send to our allies? What kind of resolve does it provide to ISIL? And what does it portend for others who are out there watching to see what Congress will do?

Members of both parties in the House and the Senate pushed the President to send us an AUMF so we could authorize this mission, and in the end we were successful. The White House did send language in February of this year. When we demand engagement from the President on this issue—an issue as vital as this one—and then we disengage ourselves due to internal discord, it provides those who would choose not to take Congress seriously, perhaps, further reason to avoid it.

Those who might be watching, whether at the White House or anywhere else in the world, might be left wondering whether this Congress means what it says. Last Congress, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee marked up and voted on two authorizations for use of military force: one to address Bashar al-Assad's use of chemical weapons and the other to authorize the mission against ISIL. Both resolutions went no further than recorded votes in committee. That would lead some to question the relevance of the committee, when resolutions as grave

and as important as these are simply allowed to languish.

The committee needs to reassert itself. We need to reassert our relevance by marking up a resolution to authorize military force against ISIL and to advance it to the floor where it can get a strong bipartisan vote. We all know this needs to be a bipartisan product. I am convinced that working with other Members of the committee, we can arrive at a bipartisan product. Obviously, I look forward to working with my colleague from Virginia on this matter.

When we look just over the past couple of years at the engagements that we have had overseas, particularly at Libya, where we had for several months a bombing campaign without Congress weighing in at all, would we not have benefitted with a fulsome debate on that engagement and for Congress to speak and delineate our involvement there? Now we are faced with a situation where we have basically a failed state that spawns terrorists. We cannot continue to do that. We have to take ourselves more seriously and this institution more seriously by taking action on this AUMF.

Along with the Senator from Virginia, I have been encouraged by the actions of the committee and this Congress recently on the Iran review package that we will likely vote on later today. That vote bodes well for bipartisanship here. We need to return to the time, to the extent possible—and we are not naive to those who believe that partisanship can always stop at the water's edge—but we have to have a situation where we have a bipartisan foreign policy and where the Senate Foreign Relations Committee takes its traditional role in formulating that policy in authorizing these engagements.

With that, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

DEBT, DEFENSE, AND DIRECTIVES AND THE WORK AHEAD

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. President, it is my honor to represent my family, my neighbors, and the millions of people in my very diverse State of Oklahoma. I am an ordinary Oklahoman. I do not come from a prominent political family or from any kind of political machine. My wife of 23 years, Cindy, is here in the Gallery today. We have walked through life together and have raised two incredible girls who love God and love our Nation. Stepping into this body was a high cost for my family. We took this on together.

We have a tremendous staff, both here in Washington, DC, and in Oklahoma, who sacrifice incredible time and energy for the future of our Nation. Every day they work incredibly hard to solve the issues that we face as a nation. I am grateful to serve in this Chamber and for this to be my very first time to be able to speak in this Chamber. There are a few issues that I want to be able to raise and address in our conversation today.

I have the opportunity to be able to live in a heritage of distinguished Oklahomans who have served in this Chamber. I serve alongside Senator JIM INHOFE, who has stood for conservative principles in this body for two decades. I am humbled to follow the irreplaceable Dr. Tom Coburn. For those of us who are Dallas Cowboy fans, my coming here is kind of like being Danny White after Roger Staubach.

There have been 17 other Senators from Oklahoma, great names such as Don Nickles, Henry Bellmon, Robert S. Kerr, David Boren, and Mike Monroney, just to name a few. I have the honor to sit at the same desk on this Chamber floor used by fellow Republican Senators Tom Coburn, Dewey Bartlett, and Edward Moore.

In the 1930s, Oklahoma's favorite son and humorist, Will Rogers, said:

> Congress is so strange. A man gets up to speak and says nothing. Nobody listens, and then everybody disagrees.

This is my first official moment to join the ranks of those who step up to speak, but I want to speak about a few things that I consider essential to the work ahead for all of us—what I call the three Ds, which I talk about all the time: debt, defense, and directives.

Let me take those in reverse order. The directives. People ask me all the time: What do Oklahomans want from their Federal Government? The answer is simple. They want to be left alone. They do not want someone else, over 1,000 miles away, telling them what to do, how to run their business, and how to run their lives. It is not that people in Oklahoma are antigovernment—far from it. We have a strong patriotism that drives us to serve our Nation and honor those who give their lives to public service.

Twenty years ago, Oklahoma and the Nation were devastated by a truck bomb in the Oklahoma City Federal building, killing 168 people, most of those Federal employees. We are grateful for people in government who serve faithfully every day.

But we also understand that our Federal Government has a task, and it also has a territory. Federal officers should do their task efficiently with great transparency and accountability, but they also stay out of other people's tasks and do theirs with great effectiveness. When I step into a restaurant, I may have an idea for a new recipe. But I cannot just wander back into the kitchen and start cooking and changing the way the restaurant works. Neither can a Federal regulator drift into every business and decide they are going to redo how that business is done. That is not their territory. That is not their job.

But today in America, if you want to start or run a business, you will find out that the government has already made most of the decisions for you about how you will run your business. Well, an Oklahoma company recently paid a fine for not reporting to a Federal agency that they had nothing to report. Now, I am fairly confident that the Founding Fathers, when they were envisioning a country of the people, by the people, and for the people, were not envisioning that citizens of the country would pay fines to their government for reporting they have nothing to report.

In the past week, I have started a bipartisan initiative called the Cut Red Tape Initiative to try to identify ways to streamline government, to return decisions back to individuals and local governments, and clear the clutter of regulations that benefit the government but slow down business. Just so that people would know that this process is difficult, I have faced weeks of red tape here in the Senate to start an initiative called Cut Red Tape. We will work through that.

In the past few years, over 30,000 pages have been added to the Federal Register. Nothing in American life does not face a Federal regulation. To make sure the government considers the cumulative effect of all of those regulations, agencies are required to do a regulatory lookback to evaluate problem regulations each year. But most don't take it seriously.

The Department of Labor has 676 regulations and rules. This year, their regulatory lookback includes 4 regulations—4 of 676. That is not a serious review. The new Consumer Financial Protection Bureau has no accountability to the American people, and it has no limit to its authority. They are becoming a fourth branch of government with no checks or balances.

The EPA spends their time looking for gray areas of law in places where they can reinterpret old laws to fit their new agenda. Consent decrees and novel interpretations of statutes have superseded consistent rulemaking and statutory and State primacy of enforcement. Agencies now write rules, interpret their rules, enforce their rules, and establish the punishment for not following their rules. Many people want to blame this administration. I disagree. This administration has become expert at pushing the boundaries; that is true. But the rise in the regulatory state is not new. For decades, the Congress has delegated responsibilities to agencies and given them very few boundaries.

Since the 1970s, in the Chevron case, the courts have increased the power of the regulatory agencies by allowing them to have deference to determine their own rules. This is not a Republican or Democrat issue. It is an American issue, which will not improve until this body demands its constitutional authority back and clarifies to the courts that the Constitution states

that all legislative authority shall lie in Congress—not in an agency.

The American people want to give the Federal Government their own directive: Leave us alone. Now, I am willing to work with anyone who is willing to work on some of these issues. So far this session, I have coauthored or cosponsored bills and worked on ideas with TED CRUZ, ELIZABETH WARREN, GARY PETERS, JOHN CORNYN, HEIDI HEITKAMP, DIANNE FEINSTEIN, ORRIN HATCH, MIKE LEE, STEVE DAINES, TIM SCOTT, ROB PORTMAN, TOM CARPER, ANGUS KING, RAND PAUL, JEANNE SHAHEEN, JOHN MCCAIN, MIKE ENZI, KELLY AYOTTE, MARK KIRK and RON JOHNSON, just to name a few.

I did not have to sacrifice my conservative values, but I did have to admit that anyone can have a good idea. Just because we disagreed on one thing does not mean I have to belittle people. I told my wife several years ago, when I first came to the House of Representatives, that I had this deja vu moment, thinking I had felt this way before. I have never been in politics or Congress, but I know this feeling. After about 6 months I called her and I said: I finally figured out what this feeling is to be in Congress. It is the emotion you have in middle school lunch. It is that feeling that I get more popular by sitting at my table and making fun of everyone else at everyone else's table. And if I ever say something nice about someone else at another table, my table shakes their head and says: Why would you do that? But if I ever say something unkind, everybody says: Way to go. Welcome to Congress.

Only we can turn this around. We will strongly disagree on areas, but we should find the areas of common ground where we do not have to sacrifice our values and be able to find ways to work together.

The second issue is defense—directives and defense. Our freedom is foreign to most of the world, and it is a threat to them, not because the United States is an aggressor nation—far from it—but because the liberty we export is so powerful they know well it can depose their dictatorships and weaken their control. Many government leaders around the world would rather keep their people poor and closely managed than allow them to be prosperous and free.

Iran is on the rise. Since the 1979 revolution, Iran has exported terrorism around the world. I am convinced that some individuals—even in this administration—trust Iran's words more than they trust history, the facts on the ground or even their own intuition. We cannot allow the largest exporter of terrorism in the world to have nuclear weapons. We cannot do that.

Dictatorial governments around the world and totalitarian Islamic leaders consistently test our mettle, probe our infrastructure and computer systems, test our passion for freedom and our resolve for the dignity of every person. By the way, that is one of our core values. Every person—even people we disagree with—is valuable. It is why the issue of race—just as a side note—is so important to us in America—because we understand that in many parts of the world if you are from the wrong family, the wrong tribe, the wrong race or the wrong faith, you cannot get a job, you cannot get government services, you cannot get housing—all of those things.

That is how other places do it. That is not us. We have chosen not to be like that as a nation. Where injustice exists, we want to bring freedom and equality—within our boundaries or around the world.

We believe every person is created equal and is endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights—every person. When brutal thugs attack innocent nations, we have the moral high ground to call out the aggressor and to stand with the oppressed. We always work with resolve to solve the issues peacefully. We understand this proverb: ''A gentle answer turns away wrath.''

Our diplomacy leads the way. But when nations and philosophies will not stop their aggression, they learn that we do not bear the sword for nothing. I have the privilege—and I do count it as a privilege—of serving thousands of men and women and their families who faithfully protect our Nation every day in all branches of the military—first responders on our streets, in the intelligence community, at our ports, in the air, training, equipping, and protecting hundreds of thousands in Oklahoma. In fact, without Oklahoma, just so this body will know, our Nation could not sustain our Air Force, train our pilots, rearm our munitions, fire artillery or rockets, talk to our subs, train our young soldiers, refuel our aircraft, control battlefield airspace or deliver supplies. So you are welcome for what happens in Oklahoma every day.

Our Guard and Reserve units have fulfilled everything that has been asked of them by their Nation, some of them to their last full measure of devotion. But in Oklahoma our patriotism also challenges us to deal with military waste when it takes money, especially directly from the warfighter. Why would we call waste in defense patriotism? Let's solve it. We want the intelligence community to be well equipped. We want them to be attentive to the issues around the world, but we also want our Fourth Amendment freedoms protected. Remember, Oklahomans like to just be left alone.

The third issue is our debt—directives, defense, and debt. Our economy runs on increasing debt. That is how we are actually managing life day to day nowadays. We gamble every year that interest rates will not go up and the rest of the world will still want our bonds. This year we paid $229 billion in interest payments. Think about that for a minute—$229 billion.

The highway trust fund is short just $10 billion, and we are spending $229 billion just in interest payments this year. CBO estimates that we will spend over $800 billion in interest payments by the end of the 10-year window. That is more than we spend on all defense spending, education, transportation, and energy combined—what we will do just in interest payments in the years ahead.

We need to fix two things in this budget hole: efficiently manage Federal spending and a growing economy, duplication in programs. All these things need to be resolved.

Let me take a couple of these things. Efficiency in the Federal Government. We need to deal with the tremendous fraud and waste and duplication. Where we see it, we should go after it. For the past 2 weeks, I have held a bill that funds a grant program for bulletproof vests.

I am not opposed to the program. I am opposed to the fact that we have two programs that do the same thing—two different applications, two different sets of processes, two programs that do the same thing. If we see it, we should solve it. Yesterday, we marked up and passed a bill in committee that I authored called the Taxpayer Right to Know Act, which will identify duplicative programs, the administrative cost, the number of full-time staff, and how and if programs are evaluated.

It is a commonsense thing to do that, and it passed by a voice vote out of the committee. In the days ahead, I hope we will use that tool wisely to be able to actually identify where we have duplication, and instead of complain about it, we solve it as a body. The goal is to find those and eliminate them.

A friend of mine in Oklahoma is a former marine. His name is Hank. Hank runs a small business. Hank is a guy who if you see him, you need to brace yourself because when he shakes your hand you know it. Hank runs his small business from a desk in his unair-conditioned garage.

When I think about the way we spend money, I often think of Hank. Hank is not a guy who wants to have our government suffer or our Nation do something weak. Hank is an incredible patriot, but he wants us to spend money wisely, and when we find waste, he would expect us to get rid of it. He does. He would expect that we do.

A good example of that may be Social Security disability. It is a difficult issue for us to talk about because we want a safety net for the truly vulnerable, but we all know there is incredible waste in that program, and there are people who are ripping off the system. To have a strong safety net for the vulnerable doesn't mean we allow people to freeload off the top. Disability is designed for people who cannot work in any job in the economy, not someone who just doesn't want to.

Let's find a way to protect our vulnerable but incentivize those who are freeloading off the system to engage them back into work. We need people to work.

The earned-income tax credit is another one of those. We read the reports every year: a 24-percent fraud rate, the highest fraud rate in the Federal Government. Last year, there was $14.5 billion in loss; one program, $14.5 billion.

We have to pay attention to this. We have to get the economy going or we will never fix the debt. We can't just fix it by reducing spending. We all know that well. Tax reform seems to be the elusive dream of our economy. I can only hope that as a body we will not continue to strive for large-scale tax reform and fail to do some things that are significant and possible.

Banking reform must be done. Dodd-Frank is choking out lending. Now, I don't want to attack any individual who voted for it, but I am very well aware that there are many unintended consequences that have come down, especially on community banks.

People can feel our economy tightening and the lending tightening. They don't know why. Main Street community banks are dealing with uncertain regulations. We have to get our community banks back in business. We can do that by exempting traditional banks from heavy regulatory burdens that complex banks face and replacing simple capital requirements. This isn't controversial or complicated. We just need to work on some simple things while we still work on the complex.

Trade. We are a nation that believes in trade. Quite frankly, our Navy was created in the infancy of our Republic to protect our trade. In fact, one of our grievances that we had with King George in the original Declaration of Independence was the King was cutting off our trade with all ports of the world. Trade has been a big deal to us as a nation since before we were a nation.

Currently, this ongoing debate about whether we will be a nation of trade seems to be a little odd to me. Yes, we are going to be a nation of trade. We always have been. Let's work it out and let's continue to grow our economy.

Energy issues. The past 6 years the brightest star in our economy has been energy. If we want to have the economy grow, energy is going to be a major part of that formula. If anyone disagrees with that, I would love to get a chance to meet them because I can show you all the job growth that has happened in America just circled around energy. But we all know EPA policies make energy development harder and increase the energy cost of everything for every person in America.

Energy jobs are great-paying jobs, but they are suddenly fading away because of this mixture of low oil prices and bad energy policy. A few years ago, America was led to believe they were running out of oil and gas and our supplies were going away. Now our supplies are at record numbers and we keep finding more.

In the past 6 months, America has lost 100,000 jobs because we have stopped drilling because our tanks are full and the prices have collapsed. If we could only sell that oil, what a difference that might make to our economy. You see, we can sell our coal and we can sell our natural gas, but for whatever reason we as a nation are still thinking we can't sell oil. Now, we can sell gasoline, just not oil. It would be kind of like saying you can sell flour, but you can't sell wheat.

Currently, we import about 27 percent of our crude. Most of that is heavy oil that is imported. Most of that is done by foreign ownership, foreign ownership of refineries. They are bringing in their own oil. Most of our new finds are in light sweet oil, a different type of oil that our refineries don't need. Do you know who needs this? Mexico needs it, Canada needs it. So, literally, while our storage tanks are at maximum capacity and the prices continue to drop in America, the rest of the world is craving our oil, and we are debating whether that is a good idea. It is the ultimate irony right now that the administration is in negotiations to open the sale of Iranian oil to the world market, and we cannot sell oil from America on the world market.

Let's pay attention to American jobs. Let's get our economy going. There are some basic things we can do.

All this talk about security, economy, and liberty boils down to one thing, though—our families. Nothing is bigger in our Nation than our families—nothing. We are not a nation of wealth, we are a nation of families. The rise of government is directly connected to the collapse of families. It is not that government is pushing down families, it is that families are collapsing and government is trying to rise to fix that. It will not fix it. Government can't fix a family, but we can make sure there is no marriage penalty in our tax law. We can make sure we don't incentivize broken families and our social welfare programs. We can actually use our moments in our times when we speak to state the obvious. America is strongest when American families are strong. Let's not be afraid to step out and protect what we know works. We don't live in a nation with no hope. We live in a nation of incredible hope.

The seeds are all still there. It is a matter of how much we are going to engage in those things, whether we are going to be an exporter of freedom and of our basic values. That is what I think we should do.

We should export our freedom to the world. We should export our values to the world. We will do that best as we protect our families and as we rise to speak about the things we know are right.

There is a tremendous diversity of American opinion, freedom of speech, but before the Framers even mentioned free speech, they mentioned the free exercise of religion. It is popular culture now for people to be intolerant of people of faith and people who live their faith. You can say you have faith, but you are pushed down if you actually practice the faith you say you have. I served 22 years in ministry before I came to Congress. I have a little different perspective than some on that. I see our Nation with a great spiritual hunger. I don't criticize Washington, though, in the process. Quite frankly, I believe Washington perfectly reflects our culture, and to people who are frustrated with what Washington has become, I remind them, this is who we are as a nation.

What we are going to do about it becomes the big issue. What are we going to become? While we beat ourselves up, we lose track that the rest of the world still looks at us, and they still want to be us.

Last September, I was in Central America for a few days meeting with some of the leaders there talking about immigration. I don't know if anyone has noticed, but there are a few issues about immigration now. We had this conversation about immigration and started talking about what are we going to do and how are we going to limit the number of these unaccompanied minors coming in and what is actually driving them to come.

One of the leaders there said: Sir, I don't know if you have noticed, but you are the United States of America. Everyone in the world wants to go there. There doesn't have to be a driving factor to go to your nation. Everyone wants to be your nation.

We do not have open borders, nor should we. But it was another lesson learned that while we argue among ourselves, we have the opportunity to be able to serve in the greatest Nation, in the greatest body in the world. We still lead the world with our values. We should represent that well. That is our greatest export, our values.

This is the National Day of Prayer, and I thought it would be entirely appropriate to be able to end this conversation with both a reminder to call our Nation to prayer and to remember Psalm 46:1–2:

> God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear.

So we not only remember that, but let us actually call this Senate to pray.

Let us pray.

Our Father, I pray for our Nation. I pray that You would give us wisdom and direction. I pray for this body, incredible men and women who have set aside their families, their careers, and their life, to come serve their Nation. I pray that You would give us unity of attitude and diversity of opinion and that You give us the capacity to be able to solve the issues ahead of us.

I pray for President Obama, for Vice President BIDEN, the Supreme Court, for the House of Representatives, for the men and women around the world right now who are serving quietly in ways of intelligence, publically as first responders and leaders, and our military scattered across the Earth. God,

would You protect them and would You allow us, as families and as leaders, to represent You and the values of our Nation to a world that needs our leadership still.

God, use this time. Use us. As broken as we are, we know that You are an ever-present help in time of trouble, and we will not fear.

Thank you, Jesus. Amen.

Madam President, I yield back the remainder of my time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. FISCHER). The majority leader.

CONGRATULATING SENATOR LANKFORD

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I wish to say to my new colleague from Oklahoma, what an insightful assessment of the challenges facing our country and an extraordinary list of solutions to those challenges, not to mention reminding us all that we are the envy of the world.

So I congratulate our new colleague from Oklahoma. I wish him well and thank him for his fine remarks.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Georgia.

Mr. ISAKSON. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Under the previous order, the time from 11:30 a.m. until 12:50 p.m. will be equally divided, with the majority controlling the first half and the Democrats controlling the second half.

NSA COUNTERTERRORISM PROGRAM

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, since the unlawful leaks of NSA programs, opponents of our counterterrorism program have painted a distorted picture of how these programs are conducted and overseen by exploiting the fact that our intelligence community cannot discuss classified activities. So what you have is an effort to characterize our NSA programs, and the officials who conduct them cannot discuss the classified activities. So they are clearly at a disadvantage.

Since September 11, 2001, FISA has been critically important in keeping us safe here in America. According to the CIA, had these authorities been in place more than a decade ago, they would likely—likely—have prevented 9/11. Not only have these tools kept us safe, there has not been a single incident—not one—of an intentional abuse of them.

The NSA is overseen by the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of our government. They are not running rogue out there. The NSA is overseen by the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of our government. The employees of NSA are highly trained, supervised, and tested.

The expiring provisions of FISA are ideally suited for the terrorist threats we face in 2015. These provisions work together to protect us from foreign terrorists abroad who use social and other media to conspire and eventually plan attacks inside the United States.

ISIL uses Facebook, uses Twitter, its online magazine, and other social media platforms to contact and eventually radicalize recruits online. If our intelligence community cannot connect the dots of information, we cannot stop this determined enemy from launching attacks.

Under section 215 authority, the NSA can find connections—find connections—from known terrorists overseas and connect that to potential terrorists in the United States. But the NSA cannot query the database, which consists of call data records such as the number calling, the number called, and the duration, without a court order.

Let me say that again. NSA cannot query the database, which consists of call data records such as number calling, the number called, and the duration, without a court order. Under section 215, the NSA cannot listen to phone calls of Americans at all. Under section 215, the NSA cannot listen to the phone calls of Americans at all.

Despite the value of the section 215 program and the rigorous safeguards that govern it, critics of the program either want to do away with it or make it much more difficult to use. Many of them are proposing a bill—the USA FREEDOM Act—that they say will keep us safe while protecting our privacy. It will do neither. It will neither keep us safe nor protect our privacy. It will make us more vulnerable and it risks compromising our privacy.

The USA FREEDOM Act would replace section 215 with an untested, untried, and more cumbersome system. It would not end bulk collection of call data. Instead, it would have untrained—untrained—corporate employees with uncertain supervision and protocols do the collecting. So it switches this responsibility from the NSA, with total oversight, to corporate employees with uncertain supervision and protocols. They get to do the collecting. It would establish a wall between the NSA analysts and the data they are trying to analyze. At best, the new system envisioned by the USA FREEDOM Act would be more cumbersome and time consuming to use when speed and agility are absolutely crucial. At worst, it will not work at all because there is no requirement in the legislation that the telecoms hold the data for any length of time. Put differently, section 215 helped us find the needle in a haystack, but under the USA FREEDOM Act, there may not be a haystack to look through at all.

In short, the opponents of America's counterterror programs would rather trust telecommunication companies to hold this data and search it on behalf of our government. These companies have no programs, no training or tools to search the databases they would need to create, and if that isn't bad enough, we would have to pay them to do it. The taxpayers would have to pay them to do it.

In addition to making us less safe, the USA FREEDOM Act would make our privacy less secure. The section 215 program is subject to rigorous controls and strict oversight. Only a limited number of intelligence professionals have access to the data. There are strict limits on when and for what purpose they can access the data. Their access to the data is closely supervised with numerous—numerous—levels of review. These safeguards will not apply to the untried and novel system under the USA FREEDOM Act, and rather than storing the information securely at NSA, the information would be held by private companies instead.

There was an excellent editorial today in the Wall Street Journal pointing out the challenges we face. It was entitled the ''Snowden Blindfold Act.'' The ''Snowden Blindfold Act'' was the headline in the Wall Street Journal today.

Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD a copy of that article.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Wall Street Journal, May 7, 2015]

THE SNOWDEN BLINDFOLD ACT

Congress moves to weaken antiterror surveillance while France expands it.

At least one of the gunmen who shot up a Texas free speech event on Sunday was known to the FBI as a potentially violent radical and was convicted in 2011 on a terror-related charge. The Islamic State claimed credit for this domestic attack, albeit an unproven connection. So it is strange that Congress is moving to weaken U.S. surveillance defenses against the likes of shooters Elton Simpson and Nadir Soofi.

Two years after the leaks from Edward Snowden's stolen dossier, a liberal-conservative coalition is close to passing a bill that would curtail the programs the National Security Agency has employed in some form for two decades. Adding to this political strangeness, France of all places is on the verge of modernizing and expanding its own surveillance capabilities for the era of burner cell phones, encrypted emails and mass online jihadist propaganda.

The Patriot Act expires at the end of the month, and a fragile House-negotiated compromise on reauthorization would end NSA sweeps of telephone metadata—the date, time stamps and duration of calls. The content of those calls isn't collected without a separate warrant. The measure also includes mostly cosmetic nuisance changes such as a panel of outside amicus lawyers to advise the secret Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court (FISC) that supervises and approves NSA activities.

But the metadata eulogies are premature before what ought to be a sturdy debate in the Senate. Majority Leader Mitch McConnell introduced a ''clean'' extension of current law as a base bill that the chamber will open to amendments later this month. The Senate narrowly defeated a bill similar to the House measure last year, and we hope it does so again.

Senators should think carefully about the value of metadata collection, and not only because the technical details of the House bill are still being parsed by security experts. In January 2014, President Obama

tried to suppress the Snowden wildfire by pronouncing the end of ''bulk metadata program as it currently exists,'' via executive order. Civil libertarians rejoiced. Yet NSA transparency disclosures show the FISC court approved 170 search applications of the database in the same calendar year.

Presumably the NSA continued to analyze metadata—despite pro forma White House opposition—because these details provide intelligence that is useful for uncovering plots, preventing attacks and otherwise safeguarding the country. The NSA must demonstrate to FISC judges a ''reasonable, articulable suspicion'' to gain approval for each ''selector,'' or search query.

In other words, there is little invasion of privacy because the searches are narrow. The NSA isn't even using automated algorithms to reveal suspicious patterns the way that credit card companies and retailers mine consumer data every day. The NSA's 170 metadata searches involved merely 160 foreign targets and 227 known or presumed U.S. citizens.

There is still no evidence that the data have been abused. The Supreme Court has held since Smith v. Maryland in 1979 that the Constitution provides no guarantee of metadata privacy. Domestic police and prosecutors in routine criminal investigations enjoy more warrantless access to metadata well beyond even the NSA status quo.

The House bill pretends not to undermine intelligence collection by requiring telecom and tech companies to retain metadata business records. The NSA could then request these documents with FISC consent or unilaterally in an emergency. But assembling this information retroactively may be too slow in a true crisis—in return for little or no added privacy protection. After the hacking breaches at Sony, Target and a string of health insurers, Americans may reasonably wonder if their data are safer fragmented across many private third-party repositories.

The Members of Congress who know the most about intelligence know all this, but they say that ending metadata collection is the price of blocking a political stampede that might also kill more important provisions such as Section 702 that authorizes foreign-to-foreign wiretaps. That might have been true immediately after the Snowden heist, but it may not be true after the attacks on Charlie Hebdo and in Texas by Islamic State-inspired jihadists.

Those shootings show that surveillance is more crucial than ever to prevent mass murder on U.S. soil by homegrown or foreign radicals. The French understand this, which is why they are widening their intelligence reach. No prevention can ever be perfect. But the House measure is a deliberate effort to know less and blind U.S. spooks to potentially relevant information. This self-imposed fog may be politically satisfying now, but deadly if there is another attack.

Mr. McCONNELL. Finally, I would like to ask the senior Senator from North Carolina, who is the chairman of the Select Committee on Intelligence, the following question: Why was it necessary to enact the provisions of the PATRIOT Act after the attacks of 9/11/2001, and why are they relevant today given the threat we face from ISIL and Al Qaeda?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Carolina.

Mr. BURR. Madam President, I appreciate the question the leader has asked, and, also, I ask unanimous consent to enter into a colloquy with my Republican colleagues.

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

Mr. BURR. The leader raises a great question, and it is really the purpose for which section 215 was created. It is the reason the NSA looked at ways to effectively get in front of threats that take us back to 9/11 and the attacks.

As we reacted, through our law enforcement tools within the United States, we used an instrument called a national security letter. They produced a national security letter. They had to go to the telecoms and ask that they search their systems for this information.

The leader alluded to the fact that many looking back to pre-9/11 said that had we had the tools we have today, we might have stopped this attack. But over a series of years, Congress, the executive branch, the Justice Department, and our intelligence community worked to refine the tools we thought could effectively be used to get in front of a terrorist attack.

That brings us to where we are today. Over those years, we created section 215, the ability to use bulk data. What is bulk data? Bulk data is storing telephone numbers—we have no idea to whom they belong—that are foreign and domestic. The whole basis behind this program is that as a cell phone is picked up in Syria and we look at the phone numbers that phone talked to, if it is someone in the United States, we would like to know that—at least law enforcement would like to know it—so we can understand if there is a threat against us here in the homeland or somewhere else in the world.

Section 215 allows the NSA to collect, in bulk, telephone numbers with no identifier on them. We couldn't tell you who that American might be. And if for a reason they believe they need to look at that number because of an Executive order from the President, they go to a judge, and the judge is the one who gives them permission to search or query that data. If, in fact, they find a number that connects with one of a known terrorist, they have to go back to the court and prove there is reason for them to know whose number that is and the duration of time of the conversation. Further information requires further judicial action.

Why are we here today? Because this expires on May 31. Some would suggest it is time to do away with it.

Over the same period of time, we added something the American people have been very close to. It is called the TSA. Every time we go to an airport, we go through a security mechanism. Americans have never complained about it. Why? Because we know that when we get on the airplane, there is a high degree of likelihood that there is not a terrorist, a bomb, or some type of weapon that is going to be used against us.

The leader said there has not been a single instance of a breach of privacy. Yet, those who suggest we need to change this do it 100 percent on the fact that privacy has been invaded. Let me say to all my colleagues, to the public, and to both sides of the Hill, today every American now has a discount grocery card on their key chain. They go and buy groceries and they proudly scan that card because it gets them a discount, it gets them coupons, it gets them a gas reduction. Here are the facts: Your grocery store collects 10 times the amount of data that the NSA ever thought about collecting on you.

There is a big difference between the NSA and your grocery store: The NSA doesn't sell data; your grocery store does. From the data they collect, they could do a psychological profile on an individual. They could tell you how old they are, what their health is, where they live, how often they shop, therefore when they work. We are not in the business of doing that. They are. But I don't hear anybody complaining about the grocery stores' discount card because you get a discount, so you are willing to do that.

What we haven't shared with the American people is, what do you get through this program? You get the safety and security of knowing we are doing everything we possibly can to identify a terrorist and the act and to stop it before it happens.

So we are here today with a choice. The choice is whether we are going to reauthorize this program, which has been very effective, with the same conditions the President has in place—you have to go to a judge—and with important controls on privacy by professionals with rules, or whether we are going to roll it back to the telecoms. Make no mistake about it—the compromise legislation rolls us back to the same thing we were doing pre-9/11.

So whether we let it expire or we reauthorize it, those are the two choices because this compromise bill actually forces it back to telecoms—very cumbersome, time-consuming, and, I would say, fraught with privacy issues, as the leader pointed out. It is my choice to continue the program because the program has worked.

NSA only has less than three dozen people who have the authority to look at this data. I will bet there would be more people in every telecom company who are authorized to search data.

Let me suggest this to my colleagues: If their argument is valid, then they should be on the floor with a similar bill eliminating the TSA. I am not sure anybody invades my privacy any more than the TSA process. When I go through, they x ray me, they look at my luggage. In some cases, they stop me and wand me and, in some cases, hand-check me. I am not sure there are any more blatant privacy concerns than that. But they are not in here suggesting we do away with TSA because they know the public understands the safety TSA provides to aviation.

Our big mistake is we haven't been out here sharing with the American people why it has been so long since there has been an attack. We were

lucky this week in Garland, TX—lucky because 40-some Texas law enforcement officers happened to be at a museum, and everybody there was carrying. We are not going to be lucky every time.

I remind my colleagues and the public, in the same week, ISIL went on social media networks and said: America, don't think that you have got this in your rearview mirror. There are over 70 terrorists that we have in America in 15 States, and it is a matter of time before it happens.

Why in the world would we think about rolling back the tools that are the only tools that put us post-9/11 versus pre-9/11?

The threat is greater today domestically and around the world than it has ever been, and the argument we will be consumed with is whether we do away with tools that have been effective for law enforcement to protect America.

I would suggest that we reauthorize this bill for 5.5 years as is and that we make the same commitment to the American people we do when we reauthorize and fund the TSA: No matter where you are, we have controls. We are going to keep America safe. We are not going to let it revert back to where we are susceptible to another 9/11.

With that, I turn to Senator COTTON, my distinguished colleague from Arkansas, and ask whether he agrees that the collection of telephone and call data does not raise any reasonable expectations of privacy under the Fourth Amendment.

Mr. COTTON. Madam President, I thank the Senator from North Carolina, and I appreciate his work and the majority leader's work on this critical issue. I have been working hand in glove with them all along.

I would say the answer to the question is, no, this does not raise any reasonable concern about privacy. In fact, the program does not collect any content. It does not surveil any phone call. It doesn't even include any personally identifiable information.

I have spent hours with the intelligence officers and the FBI agents who are responsible for administering these programs—not merely the general counsels or the directors of these agencies but the men and women who administer them. I have asked them what they think poses a greater risk to their privacy—the discount grocery card the Senator from North Carolina mentioned or the fact that e-commerce Web sites have their name, address, credit card number, and personal history? And to a person, every one of them said a greater threat to their privacy is commercial marketing practices, not this program.

The program has been approved 40 times by 15 different independent Federal judges based on 36 years of Supreme Court precedent and has been approved by two Presidents of both parties. If President Obama wanted to end the program tomorrow, he could, but he hasn't. That is because this program is lawful, it is faithful to the Constitution, it is smothered with safeguards against abuse, and it is needed to fight a rising terrorist threat that we face today. In fact, those threats today are greater than they were on 9/11. And that is not my opinion; that is the testimony of this administration's senior intelligence officials.

The rise of Al Qaeda affiliates in Africa and the Arabian Peninsula and the broader Middle East illustrates the metastasis of Al Qaeda following its retreat from Afghanistan. These groups are larger and more spread out than their predecessors. They are also more technologically and operationally savvy, developing new, nonmetallic bombs, recruiting westerners, and using the Internet to spread their hatred. They even publish ''how to'' manuals for becoming a successful terrorist at home.

Of course, there is the Islamic State—the Obama-described ''JV team''—which has cut the heads off of innocent Americans, is torturing and murdering Christians and other religious minorities, and has sadistically burned people alive. More than 20,000 foreigners have gone to Syria and Iraq to join this enemy. Some have returned to their home countries, including the United States, some have remained in their home countries, becoming more radicalized and ready to inflict harm against Americans.

We don't have to look any further than this past week, when two Islamic State-inspired jihadists decided to open fire in Texas. Press reports indicate that one of the attackers was in contact with an ISIS supporter currently located in Somalia. This conduct illustrates why this program is so important. It helps close the gap that exists between foreign intelligence gathering and stopping attacks here at home. This is the gap that contributed in part to our failure to stop the 9/11 attacks.

There are also open source reports of ISIS cells in Virginia, Maryland, Illinois, California, and Michigan. As a member of the Intelligence Committee, I receive regular briefings on such threats, and I invite all my colleagues to receive these briefings if they doubt that the wolves are at the door or even in our country.

This highlights one challenge of this debate: Most of the information surrounding the plots and the programs is classified. The intelligence community has been very accommodating in providing classified briefings to Members of the Senate and the Congress. The issue, though, is often getting Members to attend or to visit with the agencies. That is why I believe the Senate may have to enter a closed session as we debate these programs, so that Members are not woefully ignorant of the threats America faces.

Under consideration in the House and proposed in the Senate is the so-called USA FREEDOM Act, which will eliminate the essential intelligence this program collects. Proponents of the bill claim that it provides alternative ways for the intelligence community to obtain critical information needed to stop terrorist attacks and that it doesn't compromise our counterterror efforts. But let me be clear. This is wrong. The alternatives to the current program do not come close to offering the capabilities we now have that enable us to protect Americans.

One alternative offered by opponents is to have phone companies retain control of cell data and provide the NSA only the data responsive to searches phone companies would run on the agency's behalf. This isn't technologically feasible.

At the request of the President's own Director of National Intelligence, the independent National Research Council examined this proposal, and its experts concluded that the technology does not currently exist that would enable a system spread among different carriers to replace the capabilities of the current NSA metadata program. Any such system would create holes in our ability to identify terrorist connections.

First, phone companies don't store the data for longer than 180 days and oftentimes for much shorter periods, and nothing in the USA FREEDOM Act requires them to store it any longer. The current NSA program, however, stores data for 5 years, which allows the NSA to discover potential terrorist links during that time period. A system that keeps data with multiple carriers that store their data for much shorter time periods is close to useless in discovering terrorist network and sleeper cells, many of which lie in wait for years before launching an attack.

Second, a system that tries to search multiple carriers and then collects and unifies their responses is cumbersome and time-consuming. In many investigations, the loss of valuable minutes, hours, and days may mean the difference between stopping an attack or seeing it succeed.

Third, data stored with phone companies rather than the NSA is more vulnerable to hackers who would seek to abuse queries of the stored metadata.

Fourth, the costs are unknown, and the American people will bear them—either as taxpayers if the telecom companies ask to be reimbursed or as consumers as the companies pass along the costs on your phone bill, perhaps as an NSA collection fee.

Fifth, to those people who say that this is technologically feasible and that we can easily execute it, I would remind you that this is the Federal Government that brought you healthcare.gov.

A second alternative offered is to pay a third-party contractor or quasi-private entity to store data and run the program. I would argue that this is untested and unworkable.

First, the proposal would also require an indefinite stream of taxpayer dollars to fund it.

Second, the private entity may be subject to civil litigation discovery orders as it may hold information relevant to cases, which would expose Americans' data to judicial proceedings with no connection to national security and without the security and privacy protections in place today.

Third, a new organization will create the need for heavy security, top-secret clearances for employees, and strong congressional oversight. As more resources are devoted to such an entity, what we end up with is a reconstituted NSA program but at additional cost to taxpayers and greater threats to privacy.

As I mentioned, I have taken the opportunity in recent months to go and visit the men and women who work at the NSA and FBI. I can tell you all that they are fine Americans with the highest character. I spent hours with the very small number of men and women at Fort Meade who are allowed to search this data. I would ask how many critics of the program have actually done that.

Let's examine in detail how these men and women search this data. An independent Federal court regularly approves NSA's authority to collect and store the data in the first place. But for these men and women to even look at the data, it must go through a multistep process that includes approval by four different entities at the NSA, numerous attorneys at the Department of Justice, and those very same judges who sit on that court. Even if a search request is granted, not just anyone at the NSA can access the data; access is limited to this small group of men and women, all of whom undergo regular background checks, drug tests, and are subject to regular polygraphs, many of whom are military veterans.

To prevent abuse of the program in retrospect, searches of the data are automatically recorded and regularly audited by both the inspector general and the Department of Justice, with strict penalties for anyone found to have committed abuse.

Moreover, I, the Senator from North Carolina, and other members of the intelligence committees of both Houses of this Congress participate in these reviews. This is a robust and layered set of protections for Americans, their privacy, and these protections would not exist under the proposed USA FREEDOM Act.

There are also protections that almost definitely will not be adopted by private telecom providers, which some wrongly suggest might retain exclusive control of this data.

These multiple safeguards are why to date these programs have a sterling record, with no verified instances of intentional abuse, not a single one.

In conclusion, in the wake of the traitorous Snowden disclosures, Senator Chambliss and Senator FEINSTEIN showed great leadership when they came together to defend these programs as both legal and effective. As Senator FEINSTEIN wrote when she was chair of the Senate Intelligence Committee, to end this program will substantially increase the risk of another catastrophic attack in the United States. That is a proposition with which I wholeheartedly agree.

I now see my colleague from the Judiciary Committee on the floor. He is a former U.S. attorney and State attorney general, and I wonder if he agrees that this program is both constitutional and does not differ in substantial ways from the traditional tools prosecutors can use against criminals while also providing adequate safeguards to American privacy.

Mr. SESSIONS. Madam President, that is an important question. First, I would like to thank the Senator for volunteering to serve in the forces of the United States to protect the security of our country and the Middle East and dangerous areas.

We do need to protect our national security. We lost almost 3,000 people on 9/11. The Nation came together. I was a member of the Senate Judiciary Committee at the time, and we evaluated what to do about it. We worked together in a bipartisan way and in a virtually unanimous agreement passed the PATRIOT Act to try to help us be more effective in dealing with international terrorism.

What I have to tell you is what we were facing. Many people were shocked to see the improper obstacles that were placed in the way of our intelligence community as they sought to try to figure out how to identify and capture people who wanted to do harm to America. It was stunning. There was a wall between the CIA, which did the foreign intelligence, and the FBI. They could not say to the FBI: We have intelligence that this person might be a terrorist. The FBI has jurisdiction within the United States. That wall was eliminated when we developed these intelligence tools. And we did other things in an overwhelmingly bipartisan way.

As a person who spent 15 years as a prosecutor, I would say there is nothing in this act that alters the fundamental principles of what powers investigators have to investigate crime in America.

A county attorney can issue a subpoena from any county in America—and they do every day by the hundreds of thousands—including subpoenas to phone companies for telephone toll records. Those toll records have the name, the address, and the phone numbers called and how many minutes. What is maintained in this system basically is just numbers.

Not only can a county attorney, who is a lawyer, but also a drug enforcement agent and an IRS agent can issue an administrative subpoena on the basis that there is information in telephone toll records regarding John Doe that are relevant to the investigation they are conducting. They can get that information. It is done by law, and there is a written document, but that is the way it is done every day in America. There does not have to be a court order to get those records. We are talking about hundreds of thousands of subpoenas for telephone toll records.

In every murder case, virtually every robbery case, every big drug case, the prosecutor wants to use those toll records to show the connection between the criminals. It is extremely valuable for a jury. This is part of daily law practice in America.

To say that the NSA analysts have to have a court order before they can obtain a telephone toll record is contrary to everything that happens every day in America. I am absolutely amazed that the President has gone further than the law requires and is requiring some form of court order.

Apparently, this bill would go even further, this FREEDOM Act. It is not necessary. You do not get the communications. All you get is—the person may be a terrorist in Yemen, and they are making phone calls to the United States, and you check to see what those numbers are and who they may have called. You might identify a cell that is inside the United States that it is on the verge of having another 9/11, hijacking another airplane to blow up the Capitol. I mean, this is real life.

I think we only had a couple hundred queries. I think that is awfully low. One reason is, I am sure, we have such a burden on it.

I would say, let's not overreact on this. Please, let's not overreact on this.

Former Attorney General Mukasey, a former Federal judge himself, has really pushed back on this, and he believes it is the wrong kind of thing for us to be doing at this time.

This is what he said:

> To impose such a burden on the NSA as the price of simply running a number through a database that includes neither the content of calls nor even the identity of the callers is perverse. The president said that this step may be dispensed with only in a ''true emergency,'' as if events unfold to a musical score with a crescendo to tell us when a ''true emergency'' is at hand.

He was talking about the additional requirements the President put on it.

One more thing. This is the way the system works and has worked for the last 50 years—40 years at least. A crime occurs. A prosecutor or the DEA agent investigates. They issue a subpoena to the local phone company that has these telephone toll records—the same thing you get in the mail—and they send them in response to the subpoena. They send those documents. They maintain those records.

Now the computer systems are more sophisticated. There are more phone calls than ever. The numbers are by the tens of millions, probably almost billions of calls. So they are reducing the number that they are maintaining in their computers—I believe Senator COTTON said it was 18 months. Maybe

they abandon or they wipe out all these records. Well, an investigation into terrorism may want to go back 5 years.

The government downloads the records, they maintain them in this secure system, and they are accessible just as they had been before but actually with less information than the local police get when they issue a subpoena.

I believe this would be a big mistake. Senator BURR.

Mr. BURR. I thank the Senator from Alabama.

Madam President, I ask unanimous consent for 5 additional minutes on the majority side and 5 additional minutes on the minority side.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. BURR. Madam President, I am very curious to hear what my colleague Senator RUBIO has to say and whether he is in agreement with what we have said on the floor to this point.

Mr. RUBIO. Madam President, I think my colleagues have made an excellent point today in outlining all the details of how this program works. Let me back up and point out why we are even having this debate, other than the fact that it is expiring. It is because the perception has been created—including by political figures who serve in this Chamber—that the U.S. Government is listening to your phone calls or going through your bills as a matter of course. That is absolutely categorically false.

The next time that any politician—Senator, Congressman—talking head, whoever it may be, stands up and says ''The U.S. Government is listening to your phone calls or going through your phone records,'' they are lying. It is not true, except for some very isolated instances—in the hundreds—of individuals for whom there is reasonable suspicion that they could have links to terrorism.

Those of us in this culture in our society are often accused of having a short attention span. We forget that less than a year ago, Russian separatists shot down a commercial airliner armed by the Russians. Maybe even the Russians themselves did it. We forget that it was not long ago that Assad was using chemical weapons to slaughter people in Syria. The world moves on.

What we should never forget is what happened here on the 11th of September of the year 2001. There are a number of seminal moments in American history that people always remember. They remember when President Kennedy was assassinated. Everyone in this room remembers where they were and what they were doing on that morning of the 11th of September of the year 2001 when the World Trade Center was attacked and the subsequent attacks happened.

Here is the truth. If this program had existed before 9/11, it is quite possible we would have known that 9/11 hijacker Khalid Al Mihdhar was living in San Diego and was making phone calls to an Al Qaeda safe house in Yemen. There is no guarantee we would have known. There is no way we can go back in time and prove it. But there is a probability we would have; therefore, there is a probability American lives could have been saved.

This program works as follows: If the intelligence agencies of the United States believe there is an individual who is involved in terrorist activity—a reasonable belief—and that individual might be communicating with people as part of a plot, they have to get an order that allows them access to their phone bill. The phone bill basically tells you when they called, what number they called, and how long the call was. Why does that matter? Because if I know that subject X is an individual who is involved in terrorism, of course I want to know whom they are calling. I would not be as interested in the calls to Pizza Hut or the local pharmacy, but I would be interested in calls overseas or calls to other people because they could be part of the plot as well. That is why this is such a valuable tool.

My colleagues have already pointed out that if the IRS wants your phone bill, they just have to issue a subpoena. If virtually every agency—any agency of American Government—if your local police department wants your phone bill—in fact, if you are involved in a proceeding in a civil litigation and they want access to your phone bill because it is relevant to the case, they can just get a subpoena. It is part of the record. The intelligence agencies actually have to go through a number of hoops and hurdles, and that is fine. That is appropriate because these are very powerful agencies.

I will further add that the people who are raising hysteria—what is the problem we are solving here? There is not one single documented case, not one single documented case—there is not one single case that has been brought to us as an example of how this program is being abused. Show me the story. Give the name to the world. Show us who this individual is who is going out there and seizing the phone records of Americans improperly. There is not one example of that—not one. And if there is, that individual should be fired, prosecuted, and put in jail. The solution is not to get rid of a program at a time when we know the risk of homegrown violent extremism is the highest it has ever been.

We used to be worried about a foreigner coming to the United States and carrying out an attack, and then we were worried about an American traveling abroad and coming back and carrying out an attack. Now we are worried about people who may never leave here, who are radicalized online and carry out an attack.

This is not theoretical. Just last weekend two individuals who were inspired by ISIS tried to carry out an attack in the State of Texas. One day—I hope that I am wrong—there will be an attack that is successful. The first question out of everyone's mouth will be: Why didn't we know about it? And the answer better not be because this Congress failed to authorize a program that might have helped us know about it. These people are not playing games. They don't go on these Web sites and say the things they say for purposes of aggrandizement. This is a serious threat, and I hope we reauthorize this bill.

Mr. BURR. Madam President, I thank my colleagues for their participation, and I thank my colleagues on the other side of the aisle for their accommodation.

I will conclude by saying that in the very near future this Congress will be presented two choices: to reauthorize a program that works or to roll back our tools to pre-9/11. I don't believe that is what the American people want, and I don't believe that is what Members of Congress want.

I urge my colleagues to become educated on what this program is, what it does, and more importantly, how effective it has been implemented.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Mexico.

FRANK R. LAUTENBERG CHEMICAL SAFETY FOR THE 21ST CENTURY ACT

Mr. UDALL. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the following Senators be added as cosponsors to S. 697, the Frank R. Lautenberg Chemical Safety for the 21st Century Act, a bill to reform the Toxic Substances Control Act of 1976: Senators BARRASSO, BOOKER, CORNYN, COTTON, ISAKSON, KAINE, MCCASKILL, MERKLEY, MURKOWSKI, MURPHY, RUBIO, SCOTT, SHAHEEN, and WHITEHOUSE.

There is a substantial list here that brings the total up to 36 cosponsors on this piece of legislation.

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

Mr. UDALL. Madam President, I came from a press conference on the third floor, with Chairman INHOFE, Senator VITTER, Senator WHITEHOUSE, and Senator MERKLEY, about the Frank R. Lautenberg Chemical Safety for the 21st Century Act. So I thought I would talk a little bit about what we are trying to do and where we are headed.

Americans trust that when they go to the grocery store or when they are in their own homes, the products they reach for are safe. The current system fails that trust. It fails to provide confidence in our regulatory system, and it fails to provide confidence in our consumer products. We cannot let that failure continue.

I rise today to urge support for the Frank R. Lautenberg Chemical Safety for the 21st Century Act. It is the best chance we have—possibly for many years—to protect our kids from dangerous chemicals.

The Toxic Substances Control Act of 1976, or TSCA, is supposed to protect

American families. It does not. There are over 84,000 known chemicals and hundreds of new ones every year. Of all of these chemicals, how many have been regulated by the EPA? Less than half a dozen. The EPA cannot even regulate asbestos, a known carcinogen, since losing a court battle in 1991. So for decades, the risks and the dangers are there, but there is no cop on the beat.

Some States are trying to fill the gaps by regulating a few chemicals. But my home State of New Mexico, and the vast majority of other States, have no ability to test chemicals. They have no department to write regulations. Without a working Federal law, they have no Federal protection—no protection at all.

Even in the 7 years since California—which probably has the greatest capacity of all States to test and regulate—passed a law to regulate chemicals, it has only begun the process on three. We have an opportunity and an obligation to reform our broken chemical safety law. That is why I and others have worked so hard to find compromise. That is why I introduced the Frank R. Lautenberg Chemical Safety for the 21st Century Act.

I have been privileged to work with Senator VITTER on this bill. I thank the Senator from Louisiana and our colleagues who have worked with us. This is a true bipartisan effort. We don't always agree, but we have one goal. Reform is overdue—40 years overdue.

Our esteemed former colleague, the late Senator Lautenberg, led the way for many years with great determination. His bipartisan effort with Senator VITTER to reform TSCA was the last major legislation he introduced.

Two years ago, the New York Times endorsed the Lautenberg-Vitter bill. The Times said correctly that previous efforts at reform had gone nowhere and the bill ''deserves to be passed because it would be a significant advance over the current law.''

I was honored to take over as the lead Democrat on the bill. Since then, I have listened to concerns, I have reached across the aisle, and I have brought everyone into the room—or at least tried to. With Senator VITTER we have improved the bill.

By working with three of our colleagues on the Environment and Public Works Committee—Senators WHITEHOUSE, MERKLEY, and BOOKER—we made more progress. I thank them and Senator VITTER for coming to the table and working with us.

I also thank our cosponsors. We are up to 36 cosponsors from both sides of the aisle—half Democrats, half Republicans. This is a big accomplishment.

The bill is even stronger now with more protections for consumers and a stronger role for States to play in keeping their citizens safe.

I want to talk for a moment about how this bill moves forward. First, the manufacturer of a new chemical cannot begin until the EPA approves it. More than 700 new chemicals come into commerce each year. Our bill gives the EPA the time it needs and keeps these chemicals out of American homes in the meantime.

Second, the current TSCA has no requirement for evaluating existing chemicals—none. Our bill does and includes deadlines even more aggressive than the EPA itself said it was ready for.

Third, we require a stronger safety standard for all chemicals to be evaluated. No longer will the EPA be required to choose the least burdensome regulation. Its criteria will be safety, science, and public health—never costs or convenience.

Fourth, our bill requires, for the first time, that the EPA protect our most vulnerable populations—pregnant women, infants, the elderly, and workers—from chemicals in commerce or manufacturing.

Fifth, TSCA is silent on animal welfare and testing. The Lautenberg act minimizes animal testing and develops a strategy to do so.

Finally, we limit the protection of confidential business information so that businesses cannot hide information from the public.

Let's be clear. We have a choice. We can continue with a law that has failed, we can continue to leave the American people unprotected or we can actually make a difference. I believe the choice is obvious. Our bill will make Americans safer—and not just for Americans fortunate enough to live in States with protections. All Americans, no matter where they live, will be protected.

For those Americans in States with existing safeguards, that will not change. Those safeguards will stay in place. Any regulations in place as of August of this year will remain. And there is a role for States to play to help with the thousands of chemicals that the EPA will not be able to evaluate. But the EPA has the largest staff on chemical safety of any country in the world. They should be able to put that staff to good work. To do otherwise is wasted opportunity and continued failure.

This has not been an easy process, but it has been a necessary one. I believe it will result in a good bill. We welcome a healthy debate, we welcome constructive amendments, and at the same time we should not lose sight of the key goal to actually pass a bill.

I believe we can do this, and Senator Lautenberg, who was a great environmental champion, believed we could as well. He used to talk a lot about his children and grandchildren and that this bill might save more lives than anything he had ever done.

We have a historic opportunity to create a chemical law that works and provides American families with the protections they expect and deserve. Let's work together. Let's make that happen. Let's not wait another 40 years.

I thank the Presiding Officer.

I may speak again after Senator DURBIN has finished his statement on the floor.

I thank Senator DURBIN. I have had some very good exchanges with him on this bill. I look forward to working through the issues that Illinois has. I know that Illinois is a big State, and the Senator cares about chemicals and chemical safety. I want to make sure the Senator is comfortable with what we have in this bill and will try to work with my colleague as we move down the road.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The assistant Democratic leader.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I commend my colleague from New Mexico. It is difficult to put in words the way I feel about his effort on this subject.

It was first brought to my attention when there was a series in the Chicago Tribune about fire retardant chemicals in furniture. It turned out that many people who were making furniture were putting fire retardant chemicals in the fabric of the upholstery, as well as in the cushions of chairs and couches.

After further examination, we found that these chemicals were not, in fact, fire retardant, and secondly, they had properties that were dangerous and, frankly, should not be in our homes.

I thought about that series over and over again because my wife and I have two of the cutest grandkids on Earth who are a little over 3 years old. I thought to myself: Every time I plop down on the couch to play with the kids, I am pushing down on that cushion and spraying those chemicals into the room. I thought long and hard about it. I didn't know what those chemicals meant, what they could do to my grandkids or what they could do to innocent people. It never crossed my mind.

Senator UDALL has taken on what is in many ways a thankless task but a very important one—to try to come up with some standards for new chemicals so they are reviewed and so we know they are safe for Americans and for families.

He has taken his share of grief in the process. I may have given him a little of grief along the way because it is a critically important subject. But he is right to invoke the name of Senator Frank Lautenberg.

The Senator's widow, Bonnie Lautenberg, was in to see me yesterday. We talked about Frank and all the things he had done over the years. He was my Senate sponsor when I was a House originator of the bill banning smoking on airplanes 25 years ago. Frank Lautenberg carried the flag over here in the Senate. He was my partner.

One of the last press conferences I ever had with him was on this subject, the toxic chemicals and the review of these chemicals. I remember that it was right outside.

I thank the Senator from New Mexico for continuing this. I am not one of

the cosponsors, but I might be. I have three or four issues I want to sit down and go over with my friend and make sure I understand them and maybe suggest some changes. But I commend the Senator for sticking with this. I know it has not been easy. There are those who disagree with him, even within our own caucus.

Again, I thank the Senator for trying, on a bipartisan basis, to deal with an issue that we should deal with as a nation. I commend the Senator for that. I thank the Senator from New Mexico for his leadership.

FOR-PROFIT COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

Madam President, for several years I have been coming to the floor and giving speeches—which some of the staff here can repeat because they have heard them so often—about the for-profit colleges and universities in America. I always preface my talk about these for-profit colleges and universities by saying: I am going to give you three numbers that are going to be on the final. So get out your pen and paper, students, because this will be on the final.

Ten percent of college students go to for-profit colleges and universities. Who are the for-profit colleges and universities? The biggest ones are the University of Phoenix, Kaplan University, DeVry University, and many others that I will mention. Ten percent of college students go to these colleges and universities that are run for profit. How do they find them? They cannot avoid them. Ask a high school student when the last time was that they logged in on the Internet with the word ''college'' or ''university'' and whether they were not inundated for ads to go to for-profit schools. They are on billboards and on television. They are everywhere. So 10 percent of students go to these schools. That is the first question on the final.

The second question: What percentage of Federal aid to education goes to for-profit colleges and universities? The answer is 20 percent—20 percent of Federal aid to education. Why so much? Ten percent of the students and 20 percent of the Federal aid? These schools aren't cheap. They charge a lot of money. Students have to borrow a lot more money to go to school.

So the Federal aid to education, which includes student loans to for-profit schools, is 20 percent. Ten percent of the students; 20 percent of the Federal aid to education.

But here is the important number: 44. Forty-four percent of all of the student loan defaults in the United States are from students at for-profit colleges and universities. Why? Well, there are two reasons—maybe more but two that are obvious. They accept everyone. If a student is low income—particularly a minority student—they can't wait to bring them in the door. Why? Because they automatically qualify for about $5,000 in Pell grants that the school can get right away, and they automatically qualify for college loans because their family doesn't have a lot of money. So those are the great opportunity students: low-income students.

What happens to those students? They start in these schools. They sign up and pay to the schools what they can afford. They take their grant money and give it to the schools, and then they sign up for student loans and they start their classes. Then they find, for a variety of reasons, they can't continue. Maybe they are not ready for college. Maybe—just maybe—they start adding up all of the loans they have taken out and say, I have to stop; it is getting too much—because the indebtedness of students coming out of for-profit colleges and universities is twice what it is for those who go to public universities. It is a very expensive undertaking.

Then there is the other category: those who finally finish at these for-profit colleges and universities but can't get a job. One of them was at a press conference with me last Monday in Chicago—a sweet young woman who was born in West Virginia and raised in Eastern Kentucky. She moved to Chicago, went to Everest College in Chicago, a for-profit school owned by Corinthian Colleges. She didn't quite finish, but she spent several years there. Then she learned something after she went out looking for a job. The employers would look at her and say: Corinthian, that is not a good college. Why did you go there? Don't put that on your resume. Stop putting that on your resume because it makes you look bad.

Here she is in debt $20,000 to this for-profit college and her employers are saying stop putting that on your resume; it is not a real college.

This poor young woman, now in City Colleges, is trying, at a very young age, to put it back together again.

So that is where we start: for-profit colleges and universities, 10 percent of the students, 20 percent of the Federal aid to education, and 44 percent of all of the student loan defaults.

I have been giving this speech on the floor for literally years saying something is wrong. Why are we accrediting these schools that have such dismal records? Why are we looking the other way when the students who go to these schools have massive debt and can't pay back their student loans? When are we going to wake up as a Federal Government and stop shoveling hundreds of millions—and billions—of dollars at this industry?

For-profit colleges and universities' share of Federal aid to education—if it were a separate line item in the Federal budget, would be the ninth largest Federal agency. That is how much money we send to these people. These are for-profit, private sector companies—baloney. Their revenues—80 to 95 percent of their revenues come right from the Treasury. This is the most heavily subsidized industry in America.

But now something historic has happened. Corinthian Colleges, one of the largest for-profit colleges and universities, announced its bankruptcy last week, and that isn't the end of the story. Yesterday, Career Education Corporation, headquartered in my home State of Illinois, announced it would teach out, which means close, its 14 Sanford-Brown institutions across the country and online. This follows the decision to close its Harrington College of Design in Chicago and to look for a buyer for its Le Cordon Bleu culinary schools. Ever heard of those? I can guarantee my colleagues that high school kids have heard of them. I have run into students at these places.

Harrington College of Design. I cannot tell my colleagues how many students went there, took out the loans, and found out it was worthless, and then contacted my office and asked, What are we supposed to do next?

I had a hearing on for-profit colleges and universities in Chicago and there were students from these for-profit colleges picketing ''Durbin is unfair.'' I went out to the students and I said: Where do you go to school?

One student said: I go to the Institute of Art of Chicago. Now, there is a Chicago Art Institute, but this play on words turned out to be significant.

I said: What are you studying there?

The student said: I am going to be a super chef.

Oh, really. How much is it going to cost you to take the culinary courses to be a super chef?

It is $54,000 in tuition.

To be a chef? I have asked the major restaurants in Chicago; they don't even want to see those degrees. They don't look for them. They don't value them. These poor kids, these young men and women who watch these cooking shows on TV and get all caught up in it and say, That is for me, end up getting suckered into these schools.

Le Cordon Bleu is another one. Le Cordon Bleu—doesn't that sound great? My wife has a cookbook that says that on it. These students quickly sign up for this French-sounding culinary school and get in debt and deeply in trouble. Now they are in more trouble because the school is in the process of going out of business.

In a public statement about their decision, CEO Ron McCray of Career Education Corporation blamed a more difficult higher education environment and challenging regulatory environment. Do people know what the challenge is? The Department of Education is finally challenging these schools when they say to the Department, Oh, our kids all get jobs—when they graduate, they all get jobs.

When they challenged Corinthian Colleges, here is what they found out. Corinthian graduates would be employed—check the box—after they graduate for about 30 days, sometimes less. Corinthian had cooked a deal with employers to hire their graduates for 30 days, and it paid them to do it, and they were caught redhanded and eventually went out of business. Fraud—

fraud in reporting to the government, fraud on the taxpayers leading to the collapse of Corinthian Colleges.

Career Education Corporation, incidentally, is under investigation—this for-profit school—by 17 different State attorneys general relating to recruitment practices and graduate placement statistics, among other things. In 2013, this company, Career Education Corporation, settled with the New York attorney general for 10 million bucks. The company is on the Heightened Cash Monitoring list, meaning they are suspect, of the U.S. Department of Education.

What else happened yesterday? This is all within the last 2 weeks.

Education Management Corporation—EDMC—announced that it was going to close 15 of these art institute campuses. Remember that one? I told my colleagues about that costs $54,000 tuition to become a cook? They are going to close 15 of these campuses, including reportedly one in Tinley Park, IL. They have been financially faltering for some time. They had recently tried to do a debt restructuring which apparently didn't work. They are currently being sued by the Department of Justice for false claims violations.

The Justice Department alleges that this one, Education Management Corporation, falsely certified compliance with provisions of the Federal law that prohibit the university from paying financial incentives to its admissions staff that is tied to the number of students they recruit. We made it a law that said you can't pay a bounty for bringing in kids and signing up in the school. They did it anyway.

In addition, this company is under investigation by 17 State attorneys general, just like the other one, related to, among other things, marketing and recruitment. EDMC is also on the Department of Education's Heightened Cash Monitoring list.

Let me say a word about ITT Tech. We have to watch the names of these places because they sound like real schools. We have an Illinois Institute of Technology that is a real university, one of the best in the Nation—one of the best in the world—when it comes to engineering and science. So along comes a for-profit school and makes a little change. It is ITT Tech, hoping the Illinois students will not catch it. They are another company under heavy scrutiny.

They have been sued by the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau for predatory lending to students. The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau alleges that ITT pushed students into high-cost private loans that they knew were going to end in default. Sometimes these students are still eligible for government loans at low interest rates and good terms and these schools don't care. They push them into private loans with high interest rates.

Do my colleagues know how high the interest rates on the student loans were from private lenders to these kids at ITT Tech? How about 16.25 percent. Think about that for a minute. At a time when the interest rates in our country are at rock bottom, these kids were paying 16 percent to the lenders for private loans.

There is something else we should know. Unlike virtually any other loan that we take out in America, student loans are not dischargeable in bankruptcy. No matter how deep a hole these kids get into—and their families—no matter how deep the hole, if they go bankrupt over student loans, they can't discharge them in bankruptcy. Student loans follow you to the grave. That is what these kids at age 19 and 20 are getting into. Sadly, these for-profit schools are dragging them in that direction.

The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau believes ITT misrepresented the basics, including how often you can get a job, the quality of the diploma. Does this sound familiar? It is a recurring theme in this industry. ITT is under investigation by everybody in sight: 15 State attorneys general, the Securities and Exchange Commission, the New Mexico attorney general is suing them, and ITT is on the Department of Education's Heightened Cash Monitoring list.

What happens when these schools go bankrupt, when they close or teach out and finish? Well, Corinthian ended up closing many of their campuses a week or so ago and now the students who are in debt because they went to school there have an opportunity. They can walk away from the credits they earned at a Corinthian college and then walk away from their college debt associated with them since their school closed. But some of these other students will not be so lucky. They will have ended their education at these worthless schools and have a mountain of debt to show for it and the school will go out of business.

This isn't fair. There comes a point where we are supposed to step in, the government is supposed to step in. This is our money, hundreds of millions of dollars from taxpayers going to these rotten schools that are abusing students, leaving them deeply in debt and then going out of business.

We shouldn't be surprised to learn that the CEOs of these schools do quite well. The CEO of Corinthian College that went bankrupt: $3 million a year—not bad for what turned out to be a fraudulent enterprise.

That is why this week I joined several of my colleagues and sent a letter to the Department of Justice. The Department of Education said we don't know how to go after these individual wrongdoers at these for-profit college corporations. So we said to the Attorney General: We hope you will investigate this. Take a look at it. If you cheat on your income tax or you defraud the government, you are going to be held responsible for it. Why shouldn't these people who took hundreds of millions of dollars not only from Federal taxpayers but at the expense of students now burdened with the debt of their schools also be investigated? I think it only stands to reason they should be.

Madam President, I have another statement to make, but I see two of my colleagues. I will come back a little later in the day.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Mexico.

Mr. UDALL. Madam President, I would ask the Chair to notify me when I have consumed 5 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator will be so notified.

Mr. UDALL. Madam President, I rise to support the President's negotiations with the P5+1 and Iran and to speak about the tremendous work—especially at our national laboratories—to create a framework agreement that meets the scientific requirements to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon.

I also wish to express my support for the Corker-Menendez bill as passed by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

Congress must have an oversight role; there is no doubt about that. While I do not believe this bill is necessary to have such a role, I do believe it is the best compromise to ensure a congressional oversight role without weakening the President's hand to continue critical negotiations.

First, let's be clear, we all agree on one basic point: a nuclear-armed Iran is a serious threat. No one doubts this. No one questions the history of Iran's deception. That history is well documented and the danger is evident. This is the greatest nuclear nonproliferation challenge of our time. It is of tremendous import to our Nation, to the Middle East region, and to our ally, Israel. It is a challenge we must meet. We do not disagree on the danger; we disagree on the response.

The Corker-Menendez bill is truly bipartisan. It passed the Foreign Relations Committee on which I am proud to serve unanimously. I wish to thank Chairman CORKER and Ranking Member CARDIN for their leadership and all of their hard work to find a compromise solution. This is a solid bill. It gives Congress the opportunity to review a final agreement, to hold hearings and ask tough questions, and it creates an orderly method for Congress to approve or disapprove of any final agreement, providing more than enough time for both.

The administration still has work to do and needs time to do it. I believe the framework agreement has promise to stop Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon, to protect Israel, and to prevent a new war in the Middle East. And it would take longer for Iran to secure the nuclear materials needed to make a bomb. As a result the United States and its allies would have much more time to respond if Iran attempted to break out and build a nuclear weapon.

This is not speculation. This is not wishful thinking. Energy Secretary

Moniz and Secretary of State John Kerry make this commitment clear. If anyone doubts this, visit our nuclear security experts at the labs in New Mexico, California, and Oak Ridge, TN, or Argonne in Illinois. Talk to the engineers and scientists who know the most about nuclear weapons and what is needed to make them.

The Secretary said in his recent oped in the Washington Post:

An important part of the parameters is a set of restrictions that would significantly increase the time it would take Iran to produce the nuclear material needed for a weapon—the breakout time—if it pursued one. The current breakout time is just two to three months . . . that would increase to at least a year for more than 10 years, more than enough time to mount an effective response.

Secretary Moniz goes on to say: ''The negotiated parameters would block Iran's four pathways to a nuclear weapon—the path through plutonium production at the Arak reactor, two paths to a uranium weapon through the Natanz and Fordow enrichment facilities, and the path of covert activity.''

These negotiations must continue. The President and his team must have room to proceed. Let's not kid ourselves. This process is complex. It is daunting. Success is not guaranteed.

I will oppose any amendments to the Corker-Menendez bill that would tie the President's hands. Efforts such as the letter sent by 47 Members of this body and other efforts to derail negotiations only serve to confound and weaken our position. Politics must stop at the water's edge.

The Senate will have ample time to review any agreement and to approve or reject any agreement. But our debate is within these halls. It is with each other and with our fellow Senators and with our President. The Ayatollah has no place in that debate. The Congress should give the President the room he needs to negotiate. This is a world of imperfect choices. And if negotiations fail, make no mistake, our options are limited and likely costly.

We are dealing with an unstable region. Use of force or regime change has unforeseen consequences. That path may seem simple. It is not. Both recent history in Iraq and the history of our interactions with Iran in the 20th century surely have taught us that much.

Senators CORKER and CARDIN have given us a solid bill, one that is in the best tradition of the Senate and in the best interest of our country. I commend them for this, and I urge my colleagues to support the bill.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Madam President, I rise to speak on the Corker-Menendez Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act. As I have said from the start, bipartisanship on this legislation has always been the key to making sure that Congress has the ability to review any agreement with Iran—a nation that we cannot trust. It is critically important that bipartisanship is preserved.

As we head to a 2 o'clock vote on cloture to move forward on this bill, let me just say I want to thank Chairman CORKER for his leadership. I want to thank Ranking Member CARDIN for taking up the cause and for helping to bring this legislation to this point, starting with a unanimous vote out of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. At the end of the day, we can pass a bipartisan bill almost as Senator CORKER and I first envisioned it.

It has been a long and difficult process. There has been debate, disagreement, and some amendments, but we have almost reached the finish line. Despite the good intentions—and I would say the good intentions of many of the amendments, some which I agree with—we cannot risk a Presidential veto. And we cannot at the end of the day risk giving up congressional review and judgment.

That is the critical core issue before the Senate. Will we have congressional review and judgment on probably the most significant nuclear nonproliferation national security—global security—question, I think, of our time? We cannot risk having no oversight role, and without the passage of this legislation, we will have missed an opportunity to send a clear message to Tehran.

As we near the finish line and, hopefully, agree to govern as we should, I believe we will ultimately pass legislation without destroying what Senator CORKER and I carefully crafted and was passed unanimously out of the committee. From the beginning, we fashioned language to ensure that Congress plays a critical role in judging any final agreement. I want to also recognize Senator KAINE, who had significant input as we were devising the bill, for his support.

The bill we crafted was intended to ensure that if the P5+1 and Iran ultimately achieved a comprehensive agreement by the June deadline, Congress would have a say in judging that agreement. A core element of the framework agreement that is the foundation of the negotiations leading into June is about sanctions relief as a core point, at least from the Iranian perspective. The sanctions relief that the administration is proposing is at the heart of these negotiations from their perspective. For us, it is about their nuclear infrastructure and their drive for a nuclear weapon. Why are they seated in negotiations in the first place? As the administration itself recognized, it is because of the sanctions. Well, the sanctions were crafted by Congress and enacted by Congress, and we should be the ones to make a determination as to whether or not it is appropriate to relieve those sanctions.

I have to say, as one of the authors of those sanctions, I never envisioned a wholesale waiver of sanctions against Iran without congressional input and without congressional action. The message I believe we can send to Iran—and I hope we will do it powerfully—is that sanctions relief is not a given and it is not a prize for signing on the dotted line.

Make no mistake. Having said that I hope we can have a strong bipartisan vote on this bill, I have serious questions about the framework agreement as it stands today, from the different understandings that both sides have of the agreement—which is, I guess, part of the challenge of not committing it to one document in writing—and about the pace of sanctions relief. I increasingly get alarmed that there is a suggestion that there will be greater upfront sanctions relief. I don't believe that Iran should get a signing bonus. I am concerned about the recent statement by the President that he could consider greater sanctions relief coming upfront for Iran. I have real questions about where the spectrum is of Iran's research and development authority as we move forward and how far they can advance their research and development as it relates to nuclear power. Greater research and development means, among other things, more sophisticated centrifuges that can spin faster and dramatically reduce breakout time towards a nuclear bomb.

I am concerned about the ability to snap back sanctions if there are violations of any agreement. Certainly, what I have seen in the first instance—which sounds like a committee process—doesn't guarantee that a snapback will take place or that it will be done in a timely fashion. Ultimately, snapback, in and of itself, is a challenge because it doesn't recognize the time it takes for sanctions actually to take effect. So even if you snap them back and say that we won't have to go to the law again to have them take place, to have them take effect and to pursue enforcement, we have learned that it takes time, and time is something that is ultimately not on our side.

I am concerned about the International Atomic Energy Administration's inability to obtain at any time and place snap inspections. We have already heard the Iranians say they are balking at that. They are also balking about the possibility that the IAEA believes that such a location might be on a military installation. They are saying: Oh, no, we are not going to allow any of our military installations to be inspected. That is a surefire way to guarantee that if you want ultimately to violate a deal, then do it at a military site where you are not allowing inspections to take place.

I am concerned that I hear the administration is trying to differentiate between the Iranian Revolutionary Guard and the Quds Force to provide greater sanctions relief. Both, as far as I am concerned, are terrorist groups. As far as I am concerned, they are clearly covered by U.S. law. So trying to get the Treasury Department to differentiate is really problematic and concerning.

I am deeply disturbed that the agreement does not speak to the long-established condition that Iran must come

completely clean on the question of their possible weaponization of their nuclear program. We need to know how far along Iran has progressed in their weaponization so that we can understand those consequences as it relates to other breakout time issues.

Above all, I am concerned that when you read about the framework agreement, while it does talk about something in longer timeframes, the core question as to when Iran could advance its nuclear program in a way they want to—and which I think is problematic—is that the expiration is 10 years. Does that mean we are ultimately destined to have Iran as a nuclear weapons State after that period of time? That cannot be and should not be the ultimate result.

I state all of those concerns to say to my colleagues that, even though I passionately believe this legislation is critical for us, it is not that I don't have concerns. This legislation is the vehicle by which we can judge. Now, maybe these issues will be resolved in a negotiation. I don't know. Ultimately, without this vehicle we have no final say on an agreement, and we have no oversight role with established parameters for compliance.

I am concerned that the sanctions relief comes without what appears to be a broader Iran policy, in terms of how we contain its acts of terrorism. It clearly is the largest State sponsor of terrorism. We see its hegemonic interests. We see it as a major patron of Assad in Syria, what is happening in Yemen, what is happening in different parts of the region. I am concerned about its missile technology. So there are a lot of elements here of concern at the end of the day.

I would say to my colleagues who feel passionately about some of these amendments they have offered, this isn't the only bill in which we could consider these issues. I stand ready to work with colleagues immediately on pursuing other concerns, such as missile technology, terrorism, their human rights violations, their anti-Semitism, and the Americans who are being held hostage; and to look at either sanctions or enhanced sanctions that may already exist on those elements that we should be considering and which are separate and apart from the nuclear program. I would be more than willing to work with my colleagues to deal with all of those issues.

I will say that even as we have worked to give the administration the space to negotiate and believe very passionately in this legislation, it bothers me enormously that just last week Reuters reported that Great Britain informed the United Nations sanctions panel on April 20 of an active Iranian nuclear procurement network, apparently linked to two blacklisted firms, Iran's Centrifuge Technology Company, called TESA, and Kalay Electric Company, KEC.

If what Great Britain brought before the U.N. Security Council sanctions panel is true, how can we trust Iran to end its nuclear weapons ambitions and not be a threat to its neighbors when, even as we are negotiating with them, they are trying to acquire illicitly materials for their nuclear weapons program in the midst of the negotiations?

Forgetting about everything they are doing in Yemen and Syria, forgetting about their hostility to ships in the Strait of Hormuz, forgetting about their actions of terrorism, this is square-on trying to ultimately use front companies to get materials for their nuclear program. So we cannot build this on trust alone. I know the administration says we are not going to trust them, we are going to verify, but it goes beyond that.

It can't be a fleeting hope that Iran will comply with the provisions and change their stripes. I believe they will not. It cannot be built from the aspirations or good intentions, like the North Korea deal, not when Iran continues to sponsor terrorism, not while it asserts its interests from Yemen to Bahrain, from Iraq to Lebanon, not as events in Syria continue to worsen.

I just had the U.N. relief coordinator in on Syria. This is a human tragedy of unimaginable proportions. We have become almost desensitized. We do not hear about it on the Senate floor anymore. It is all supported, encouraged, and financed by Tehran, and not while Iran 's fingerprints remain in the dust of the bombings of Israel's Embassy and Jewish community center in Argentina, even as it seeks to bargain with that country's leaders for absolution.

That is the Iran we are dealing with. That is the state we are being asked to hope will change. Well, hope is not a national security solution when it comes to dealing with Iran. Congress having a say on any final agreement is critical to how we deal with Iran. So I urge my colleagues to have a strong vote on cloture and I hope, after that, a unanimous vote on passage.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SASSE). The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, I rise to address legislation before us, the Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act of 2015, which sets up a deliberate process for congressional review of a final nuclear agreement with Iran. The United States, our citizens, our President, and probably every Member of the Senate and House stand united in our commitment to prevent Iran from securing a nuclear weapon.

Nuclear proliferation is a huge danger to human civilization on our planet. The more nations that possess nuclear weapons, the more opportunities there are for misunderstandings between nations to trigger first use of a nuclear weapon. The more nations that possess nuclear weapons, the more opportunities there are for failures in command and control to result in the unintended use of a weapon.

The more nations that possess nuclear weapons, the more opportunities there are for terrorist groups to gain acquisition of a weapon. Certainly, the possibility of Iran possessing a nuclear weapon poses special security concerns. The Middle East is being torn asunder by longstanding conflicts and challenges. If Iran acquires a nuclear weapon, then other nations like Saudi Arabia are likely to also seek to secure a nuclear weapon.

Moreover, in the fervent rivalry between Shia Islam and Sunni Islam, which brings powers into bloody and extensive conflict from Syria, to Yemen, to Iraq, there are abundant scenarios that could generate potential use of a nuclear weapon, either through misunderstandings or misguided perceptions of military advantage. None of us will ever forget that the Government of Iran has put forth a steady stream of invectives against our close ally Israel calling for her destruction.

Iran's possession of a nuclear weapon would pose a very real threat to the existence of the State of Israel. For all of these reasons, Americans are united. Our 100 Senators are united in believing it is imperative that Iran does not secure a nuclear weapon, but the question we must debate and resolve is, Which strategy is most effective to achieve this outcome? There are three basic options: a negotiated dismantlement of Iran's nuclear weapons program with an intrusive inspection and verification regime to ensure Iran is keeping its word; second, a reliance on indefinite extension of tough multinational economic sanctions in hopes that will continue to dissuade Iran from pursuing a nuclear weapons program; third, a military option designed to destroy critical components of Iran's nuclear weapons infrastructure. Of these options, for reasons I will explain in due course, the first is the far superior option. To understand this set of possibilities, however, we have to understand the current situation. The United States has imposed sanctions against Iran since 1979.

Many of the sanctions Iran faced in that time from 2008 were unilateral. These sanctions, however, were largely ineffective. Iran's trade with the United States was diminished, but sanctions had little overall effect because Iran was able to continue trading through other nations.

President Obama, coming into office in 2009, saw this clearly. He recognized the importance of enforcing existing U.N. resolutions, passing stronger ones, and convincing our allies to go beyond those resolutions and truly tighten the web of restrictions on Iran's trade and finances. The result was coordinated with the P5+1—France, United Kingdom, Germany, United States, Russia, and China.

These multilateral sanctions have come about in several phases. In 2010, Congress enacted a series of sanctions targeting Iran's banking and oil sectors. In 2011, section 1245 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2012 was passed. In 2012, we

passed the Iran Threat Reduction Act and Syria Human Rights Act. In 2013, we passed the Iran Freedom and Counter-Proliferation Act. Those sanctions—the American sanctions—and the multilateral sanctions have had an enormous impact on the economy of Iran.

Their crude oil exports fell from around 2.5 million barrels per day in 2011 to about 1.1 million barrels per day at the end of 2013. Trade between Europe and Iran plunged. It plunged from almost $32 billion in 2005 to about $9 billion today. Iran's economy has taken a huge hit. Iran's current President was elected on a platform of negotiating with the goal of alleviating the enormous economic impact created by the sanctions.

The sanctions have accomplished their intended goal. They have brought Iran to the negotiating table in search of an agreement based on a simple, straightforward formulation. Iran will forgo a nuclear weapons program if the international coalition will, in return, lift its devastatingly effective sanctions.

That is the background to the negotiations underway today between Iran and the P5+1. But when these negotiations got into full motion, they were not just about talking, they agreed on a set of conditions to free and, to some degree, reverse elements of Iran's domestic nuclear program, not waiting until the conclusion of the negotiations but as a condition of the negotiations.

This Joint Plan of Action or JPA that Iran and the P5+1 agreed to has a substantial number of elements. I will mention a few. First, Iran has to refrain from any further advances of its activities at three critical nuclear facilities: at the Fordow underground uranium enrichment facility, at the Natanz underground commercial scale uranium enrichment facility, and further activity at the Arak heavy water reactor that could—that reactor could, when completed, produce plutonium that could be utilized in a bomb.

Second, Iran, in this Joint Plan of Action, has agreed to provide the International Atomic Energy Agency, or IAEA, with additional information about its nuclear programs, as well as access to sensitive nuclear-related facilities, to which Iran's IAEA safeguards agreement does not require access.

Third, and again as a condition of the negotiations, Iran agreed not to produce 20 percent enriched uranium. That is a form of uranium—uranium hexafluoride or enriched uranium—in Iran's stockpile that has caused the most concern. Fourth, Iran has agreed to fully eliminate its existing stockpile of 20 percent enriched uranium by diluting half of that stockpile to uranium hexafluoride, containing no more than 5 percent of uranium 235, and converting the rest of the material to a uranium compound unsuitable for further enrichment.

These conditions, in effect as I speak on the floor of the Senate, have not only frozen Iran's nuclear program during the negotiations, they have also given the P5+1 coalition members enormously improved understanding of Iran's nuclear program. That understanding of Iran's program has increased the ability of the P5+1 to shape a framework for a final agreement designed to block all the possible pathways to a nuclear weapon.

There are four Iranian pathways to a bomb. One pathway is to utilize fissile material from the Fordow underground uranium enrichment facility. This is the secret uranium facility—formerly secret uranium facility—built deep underground beneath a base of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard, massively reinforced with concrete and steel to enable it to withstand most bombing assaults.

The second pathway is to utilize fissile uranium made in the Natanz underground enrichment facility. The third pathway is to utilize, at some future point, plutonium processed from spent fuel at the Arak heavy water reactor. I say at some future point because this reactor is still under construction. The fourth pathway is to utilize covert operations to acquire or to make sufficient fissile material for a bomb.

On April 2, last month, Iran and the P5+1 coalition announced a framework for a joint comprehensive plan of action on Iran's nuclear program intended to address and block all four of these pathways to a bomb. Now, as reported by the State Department, I am going to review a few of those details of this framework. These are essentially the bones of the agreement that have to be fleshed out in the weeks to follow.

Let's talk first about the Fordow, this deep underground, massively reinforced, formerly secret uranium enrichment facility. Iran would repurpose Fordow for peaceful nuclear research. Iran would not retain any fissile material at this installation. They would not enrich uranium at this facility. Iran would remove approximately two-thirds of the centrifuges. The remaining centrifuges and related infrastructure would be placed under IAEA monitoring.

Let's turn to Natanz. Here are a few of the restrictions to the second pathway—second possible pathway for an Iranian nuclear weapon. Iran would remove the 1,000 IR–2M centrifuges currently installed at Natanz and place them under IAEA monitoring for 10 years. Iran would engage in limited research and development with some of its advanced centrifuges according to a schedule and parameters agreed to by the P5+1.

Iran would use only its less-efficient first-generation centrifuges to enrich uranium at Natanz, a process that would be closely monitored. Beyond 10 years, Iran would abide by its enrichment R&D plan submitted to the IAEA under the addition protocol, resulting in certain limitations on enrichment capacity.

Let's turn to the third pathway. That is the possibility of plutonium secured from nuclear fuel used at this heavy water reactor. To block this pathway to a nuclear bomb, Iran would agree to ship all of its spent fuel out of the country and to not build a reprocessing facility for such nuclear fuel.

Iran would redesign and rebuild its heavy water reactor in Arak based on a design that is agreed to by the P5+1.

The original core of that reactor, which would enable the production of significant quantities of weapons-grade plutonium, would be destroyed or removed from the country, and Iran would not build any additional heavy water reactors.

Finally, the framework provides major design—provides high confidence that Iran is not employing covert operations to develop a bomb. This is the fourth pathway, the covert pathway.

Under the agreement, the IAEA would have regular access to all of Iran's nuclear facilities, including Natanz and Fordow. Inspectors would have access to the supply chains, starting with the uranium mines, the uranium milling. They would have continuous surveillance at the uranium mills. They would have continuous surveillance of Iran's centrifuges.

In addition, all of the centrifuges and enrichment infrastructure removed from Fordow and Natanz would be placed under continuous monitoring by the IAEA.

Iran and the P5+1 would establish a dedicated procurement channel for Iran's nuclear program to monitor and approve the supply, sale, or transfer to Iran of certain nuclear-related and dual-use materials and technology.

Iran would be required to grant the IAEA access to investigate suspicious sites or allegations of a covert enrichment facility, conversion facility, centrifuge production facility, or yellowcake production facility anywhere in the country.

Iran would implement an agreed set of measures to address IAEA's concerns regarding the possible military dimensions of its program.

Many of the framework elements I have just described are to last 10 years. Some have a lifetime of 15, 20, or 25 years under this initial framework. So this framework, as many have pointed out, does not lock into place all of these elements for an eternity. But by building a deep cooperation, consultation, and coordination over a 10-year period, we create the best possible chance of forging a long-term enduring agreement that will preclude the proliferation of nuclear weapons in the Middle East.

The challenge now is to take this framework as articulated by the State Department and generate detailed agreement language. That will not be an easy task. Already, you can tell the complexities from just the elements I

have mentioned on each of these four pathways.

Earlier, I noted that while Senators are united in believing we must prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear bomb, there is disagreement over the best strategy. I have laid out the main elements of the negotiated strategy, but in addition to the negotiated verified dismantling of Iran's nuclear program, there are two other options that are widely discussed.

One option that has been articulated by Members of this Chamber and others would be simply to end negotiations and try to continue with an intensified, multilateral sanctions regime. It is important to note, however, that if you end negotiations, it means an end to the measures that are currently in place, measures in place today as I speak on this Senate floor. It would mean an end to the freeze on construction of the Arak reactor; an end to the negotiated elimination of stockpiles or the modification of the 20-percent enriched uranium; an end to the inspections of Iran's nuclear facilities and infrastructure, which has enabled us to learn so much about their activities.

Moreover, without any interim agreement on inspections, Iran could decide to vastly expand its nuclear program—an outcome that is in direct contradiction of the security interests of the United States and our allies.

Furthermore, there is no guarantee that if the United States ends negotiations, multilateral sanctions would survive. If our partners in the P5+1 believe the United States has deliberately undermined the success of the negotiations, the partners may very well be unwilling to maintain and enforce a strong, multilateral sanctions regime. And that is not just speculation. Representatives from Britain, France, and Germany have conveyed strong concerns that to undermine the negotiations to withdraw could fracture the international coalition that has made the sanctions effective.

Where are we, then? Without effective multilateral sanctions, Iran would have achieved its top negotiating objectives. Its economy would improve, and the pressure to make concessions on nuclear activities and international monitoring would evaporate.

In short, pursuing aggressive sanctions as an alternative to negotiations could have disastrous consequences, with our major objectives undermined, Iran's economy improved, and Iran's nuclear program unleashed—an outcome that would further degrade international security.

The third option discussed in this Chamber is to destroy Iran's nuclear infrastructure through military force.

Advocates for the use of force point to Israel's 1981 attack on Saddam Hussein's Osirak reactor in Iraq and Israel's 2007 destruction of a Syrian reactor. Advocates for this military option paint a picture in which a small group of American bombers conduct limited strikes using bunker buster bombs. Thus, they argue, the United States could easily break key links in a nuclear fuel cycle and set Iran's program back by 3 to 5 years.

This simplistic analysis is way off the mark. Military experts paint a very different picture. I encourage all of my colleagues to read the analysis prepared by the Center For Strategic and International Studies entitled ''Analyzing the Impact of Preventive Strikes against Iran's Nuclear Facilities,'' revised September 10, 2012. This analysis recognizes that a competent campaign would involve many complicated offensive and defensive elements. Here are a few of them: an extensive strategy to diminish Iranian anti-aircraft radars, missiles, and batteries; an extensive strategy to destroy Iran's ballistic missiles and other weapons Iran could use in a retaliatory strike; an extensive strategy for the direct assault on Iran's nuclear facilities; extensive refueling and supply logistics; a rigorous strategy to prevent Iran from shutting down the Strait of Hormuz; extensive strategies to protect neighboring Gulf States and Israel from retaliatory fights; and a huge effort to defend against asymmetrical attacks on American assets throughout the world.

That is just a modest list of the complexities of the military option. I again encourage folks to read the analyses by serious military analysts. Hopefully you get the picture. There is nothing quick, nothing easy about a military option.

Moreover, retaliatory threats to the United States and our allies might come from sources other than Iran. Attacks by Shia groups or a nation sympathetic to Iran are a possibility.

One thing is clear: The course of war is messy and unpredictable. What we can be sure of is that in the chaos and complexity of war, there will be significant detrimental developments. We know this because it is true of virtually every war ever fought.

Our recent history provides more than enough evidence that, once unleashed, a military option that looks simple in the beginning can be very difficult to control and very costly.

Ask yourself this question: Which American leaders thought that our efforts to eliminate terrorist training camps in Afghanistan and destabilize that nation's government would lead to a 14-year occupation, thousands of deaths, a huge number of life-debilitating injuries, and the loss of vast national treasure exceeding $1 trillion?

Ask yourself this question: Which American leaders thought that attacking Iraq to eliminate phantom weapons of mass destruction would shatter that nation, strengthen Iran, and unleash ISIS?

In addition, the military option has a substantial risk of increasing rather than decreasing Iran's determination to acquire a nuclear weapon. Iranian leaders, after attack, might well decide it is their top national priority to acquire nuclear weapons no matter the cost so that neither the United States nor any other nation would dare to attack Iran in such a fashion again.

So if the United States chooses a military option, it is most likely committing to a cycle of war as Iran rebuilds a nuclear program in the future with more steel, more concrete, and more depth underground.

So let's return to the three options before us.

A negotiated and verifiable agreement for Iran to dismantle its nuclear program promises the possibility of achieving our core security objectives without a massive cost in terms of lives, injuries, and treasure. It addresses uranium, plutonium, and covert pathways to a bomb.

Compare this to the second option: ending negotiations and resuming the toughest possible sanctions. Under this option, there is a substantial possibility that the multilateral coalition will fracture, ending multilateral sanctions, with the additional disadvantage that all the uranium nuclear programs that are frozen or diminished under the current negotiating process will be free to operate again.

Let's turn to the third option. The third option will be extraordinarily expensive in blood and treasure. It could generate a cycle of warfare that would diminish rather than enhance the security of the United States and our allies. This is an option that could motivate Iran and other nations not to give up their nuclear programs but to redouble their efforts to secure a nuclear weapon.

So the single-best option, if achievable, is a negotiated, verifiable agreement for Iran to dismantle its nuclear program. Thus, we in Congress, we in the Senate Chamber, should do everything possible to increase the likelihood of this option succeeding.

One valuable role of this Chamber and of the House is to articulate the need to have key elements of an agreement well designed. My colleague from New Jersey was raising a series of questions. These are the types of questions the State Department negotiations will be paying close attention to so that when an agreement is delivered for our consideration, there will be strong answers.

We need ironclad assurances about the dismantlement, storage, and control of key materials and equipment; rigorous and enforceable boundaries on any ''research'' nuclear program; extensive and effective inspection protocols; and strong snapback provisions in the event Iran breaks its obligation.

We need an orderly process in which to conduct this assessment of an agreement to confirm that it meets these standards. Such a coherent congressional process has several advantages. First, it strengthens our President's hand in negotiation. The President and his team must strive to get all key elements nailed down, knowing they will

be reviewed by a sometimes skeptical Congress. Second, such a review strengthens the agreement as an enduring framework that will provide the transition to the next Presidency. This can contribute confidence that phased implementation will be honored by both sides and help generate the momentum necessary to hammer out the final agreement.

Thus, I support the bill reported out in the Foreign Relations Committee unanimously on April 14 and currently under debate before the Senate. This bill gives Congress the right to review the agreement and classified and unclassified versions of a verification report Secretary Kerry must provide to Congress. It gives Congress the right to disapprove of the agreement. It requires the President to provide important information to Congress, including evidence of material breaches of the agreement, of Iran's involvement in acts of terrorism, Iran's violation of human rights, and advances in Iran's ballistic missile capabilities.

In addition, the President must certify that Iran has not materially breached the agreement or, if they breached, they have cured that breach; that Iran has not taken any action that would advance its nuclear weapons program; that the suspension of sanctions is both appropriate and proportionate to Iran's efforts under the agreement and vital to the national security interests of the United States; and that the agreement does not compromise in any way our enduring commitment to Israel's security.

Congress shaped the sanctions regime that put the pressure on Iran and forced them to the negotiating table. It is logical, therefore, that Congress should be involved in making sure the results of these negotiations fully serve the security interests of our Nation and our allies. What we must not do, however, is turn this bill, this structure, or appropriate and valuable congressional review into an instrument designed to undermine or poison the success of the negotiations in order to pave the path for war.

I will oppose the adoption of any poison pill amendment designed to undermine the viability of the negotiations. What is at stake is much bigger than the ordinary day-to-day politics of this Chamber. The content of any final agreement with Iran is of profound significance to the national security of the United States, the national security of our allies, and to international peace and stability.

I urge my colleagues to carry the weight of this responsibility, of this topic, of this process, this concern over nuclear proliferation—and particularly, proliferation that could put a nuclear weapon in the hands of Iran—and to keep our eyes on the prize.

I urge my colleagues to work together in partnership with our President to develop and implement a tough, verifiable end to Iran's quest for nuclear weapons.

Thank you, Mr. President.

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to enter into a colloquy with the Senator from Tennessee.

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

COMMITTEE EXAMINATION OF ISSUES IN THEIR JURISDICTION

Mr. SULLIVAN. I rise today to speak about the importance of additional congressional consideration during the congressional review period of a final negotiated nuclear agreement. The involvement of other committees in examining the issues in their jurisdiction will be important. I think my distinguished colleague would agree with me that extended committee consideration means more American voices in the process, and an agreement of this significance—and the resulting implications of possible violations—call for supplemental review. Senator CORKER has reaffirmed the benefits of this process and so I thank him for his support.

I appreciate the leadership of my colleague and look forward to working with him to further advance constructive, deliberative consideration of an agreement that has multilateral effects on the security of our nation and its people.

Mr. CORKER. I agree with my colleague, the Senator from Alaska, that other committees should consider the relevant issues in their jurisdiction. The Senate Foreign Relations Committee will, of course, consider any resolution of approval or disapproval, but the involvement of other committees in the hearing process will certainly assist the full Senate as it debates this issue.

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, I rise today to speak about the Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act.

I intend to vote for this bill because it provides appropriate congressional review of a tremendously important executive agreement that is now being negotiated by the world's major powers and Iran.

First of all, I want to point out that a final agreement with Iran would not be a treaty. It would be an executive agreement which follows agreements in the past going back at least until 1972.

In 1972, President Nixon signed the Shanghai Communique, which reestablished relations with China.

In 1975, the Ford administration signed the Helsinki Final Act, which eased tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War.

In 1986, at Reykjavik, Iceland, President Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev discussed the possibility of complete nuclear disarmament. Even though no agreement was made, Reykjavik laid the groundwork for the 1987 Intermediate Nuclear Forces Treaty and the 1991 Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty.

The next year, in 1987, the Reagan administration established the Missile Technology Control Regime. To this day it helps restrict the proliferation of nuclear-capable missiles and related technology.

In 2013, the United States and Russia came together and disarmed Syria of its most lethal chemical weapons.

Like a potential deal with Iran on its nuclear program, these examples are not treaties and did not require formal ratification by the Senate.

That said, I don't believe there has been an agreement in recent memory that has been as difficult or as complicated as the P5+1 negotiations.

Perhaps more than any other single subject in the 22 years I have been in the Senate, there has never been more secure briefings—both for the leadership of national security committees and the entire Senate—as we have received on the negotiations with Iran.

This constant engagement with Congress has created an opportunity for us to get involved in a constructive manner.

The elected representatives of this country should have an opportunity to weigh-in on and review this agreement.

Several bills have been offered by the Banking Committee and the Foreign Relations Committee, but I believe the bill that was negotiated by Senators CORKER and CARDIN is an appropriate mechanism for Congress to review any agreement with Iran.

What this legislation is about is an agreement preventing Iran from developing a nuclear weapon. Nothing else. To put other issues on this bill jeopardizes the agreement taking shape between the United States, Russia, Germany, China, France, and the U.K. And that is because the only thing discussed in the negotiation has been a nuclear agreement.

Rather than adding extra issues, we should be evaluating the final agreement as it comes together over the coming months.

The bottom line is that this bill—as currently written—does not interfere with the ongoing negotiations. Adding extra issues at this time, no matter how important they may be, could derail diplomacy. As such, I will oppose them.

If a final agreement is reached, the bill requires Congress to review it within 30 days. If Members wish to prevent implementation of the agreement, the bill requires two-thirds of the Senate to vote in favor of a resolution of disapproval. The bill's requirement of an overwhelming majority to disapprove provides significant deference to the President, which is entirely appropriate. If an overwhelming majority of the Congress stands in opposition to an agreement, there is a high likelihood that the agreement will not work regardless of passage, since Congress would likely not vote to lift sanctions—something that has to be factored in to any long-term agreement.

I would like to speak briefly on the framework agreement announced on April 2, 2015. In my view it is strong and deserves to be supported.

For me, the technical assessment of Energy Secretary Moniz is critical. Secretary Moniz is an extremely distinguished nuclear physicist and a man I deeply respect. According to Secretary Moniz, the framework blocks Iran's four possible pathways to a nuclear weapon. Those are the plutonium pathway through the Arak heavy water reactor, the uranium pathway through the Natanz facility, the uranium pathway through the Fordow facility, and the covert pathway, where Iran enriches nuclear material for a weapon in secret.

When each of these pathways is explained in detail, the strength of the framework is apparent.

First, the agreement requires Iran to redesign the Arak heavy water reactor, making it impossible to produce weapons-grade plutonium. Iran will be required to ship the reactor's spent fuel abroad for the life of the reactor; prohibited from building another heavy water reactor, and indefinitely barred from researching the critical technologies needed to build a plutonium weapon. Under the framework, Iran will be prevented from developing a plutonium bomb forever.

Second, with regard to the Fordow facility, Iran will not be able to store nuclear material or conduct any enrichment-related research and development at the site. Only 1,000 of Iran's least efficient centrifuges will remain in the facility, about a third of what it has today. And they will not be used to enrich uranium. The facility, set deep in a mountainside, will become a nuclear medical research center, not a proliferation risk.

Third, with regard to Natanz, Iran will operate no more than 5,060 of its first-generation centrifuges, and it will enrich uranium far short of weapons grade. As Secretary Moniz has said, not only are the 5,060 centrifuges a stark decrease from their current inventory of nearly 20,000, but they are Iran's oldest and least capable model. Iran will place its more-advanced and more-capable second-generation centrifuges in storage under IAEA seal and supervision. Natanz will be the only location where Iran is permitted to enrich uranium, and solely for peaceful purposes.

Further, Iran will not be able to stockpile much of the material it can enrich at Natanz. Iran will only retain 300 kilograms of uranium gas enriched to 3.67 percent. That is a fraction of the nearly 10,000 kilograms of near-5 percent enriched uranium it has today.

Finally, the framework agreement blocks Iran's covert pathway to a nuclear weapon. The framework requires unprecedented inspection of all of Iran's nuclear facilities, including suspect sites.

In addition, Secretary Moniz notes that this access applies to ''the full uranium supply chain, from mines to centrifuge manufacturing and operation.''

Having eyes on Iran's entire supply chain makes it impossible for Iran to breakout using covert facilities. For instance, if uranium cannot be accounted for or if centrifuges go missing, the onus will be on Iran to explain what happened. If it cannot do so, sanctions can—and will—be reimposed. Iran will also be required to implement the Additional Protocol and Modified Code 3.1, which forever increase Iran's obligations to provide access to all of its nuclear sites anywhere in the country.

The combination of strict limits on Iran's nuclear program and highly intrusive inspections will extend Iran's breakout time—that is the time it would need to develop enough nuclear material for one nuclear weapon—from the estimated 2 to 3 months today to a year.

Under the framework, the international community will know if Iran attempts to skirt its obligations and will have sufficient time to respond.

If the P5+1 nations and Iran reach a final accord that reflects the framework agreement, Iran will be blocked from developing a nuclear weapon.

In addition to this important goal, an agreement could possibly reopen Iran to the world. It could provide Iran an opportunity to decrease its destabilizing activities in the region. A deal could potentially lead Iran to drop its financial and military support for Hezbollah and other proxies. Perhaps more importantly, the nuclear deal could open the door to soliciting the help of Iran and Russia on an intractable and to date unsolvable issue: ending the Syrian civil war.

The regime, backed by Iran, of Bashar al-Assad has killed more than 200,000 of its own people and continues to commit war crimes with chemical weapons. Besides the sheer magnitude of the death toll, the manner in which Assad has killed so many—through the continued use of chemical weapons, barrel bombs, and even starvation—is abhorrent.

Further engagement with Iran could also aid our efforts to rid Iraq and Syria of ISIL and its grotesque campaign of terror.

It is far from certain that Iran will change its behavior, but it is far more likely with a nuclear deal than without. Without an agreement, the likelihood of a major military confrontation in the Middle East—as well as more chaos and instability—increases dramatically. This is to no one's benefit. Without an agreement, Iran's nuclear program would be unconstrained, directly jeopardizing the security of our partners and allies in the region, including Israel.

Mr. President, I intend to vote for this bill so that a comprehensive agreement with Iran will be strengthened by congressional review. It is my hope that this bill does not become a vehicle to scrap a verifiable agreement capable of preventing Iran from developing a nuclear weapon. The coming months will bear that out.

Mr. CORKER. Mr. President, I just want to clarify a few aspects of this legislation and to make clear the collective understanding of the Senate in acting on this bill.

First, we should be clear that the bill as it stands would prohibit, during the review period, any sanctions relief that goes beyond the JPOA or any materially identical extension, including but not limited to any increase in the amount of hard currency or other assets that Iran has access to under the JPOA.

That is, during the review period, the amount of relief available under the JPOA could still be offered, if an extension was agreed to in the timeframe provided for in the bill, but no additional amounts could be provided.

Second, the term ''statutory sanctions'' as used in the legislation means sanctions that Congress has imposed or specifically authorized with respect to Iran, including but not limited to all of the sanctions imposed with respect to Iran under the Iran Sanctions Act, the Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability, and Divestment Act of 2010, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2012, the Iran Threat Reduction and Syria Human Rights Act, and the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2013.

That is, the term statutory sanctions as used in the bill, means all of the sanctions contained in these statutes and other Iran-related sanctions that Congress has imposed.

Finally, as discussed during the committee markup, we all agree that the period for review only begins when all the documents required to be submitted along with the agreement itself and all of the annexes and other materials that are covered by the definition of agreement in the bill have been submitted to Congress.

That is, the period for review under our bill only begins to run when all of the documents that make up the agreement and have to be submitted with it are submitted to Congress, as provided in the bill.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. CORKER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that if cloture is invoked on the Corker substitute amendment No. 1140, that a point of order against all of the pending nongermane amendments be in order and be considered to have been made; that the Corker amendment No. 1179 be withdrawn; that the Senate consider and agree to the Corker-Cardin technical amendment No. 1219; that the Corker substitute amendment No. 1140, as amended, be adopted, the cloture motion on H.R. 1191 be withdrawn, and the bill, as amended, be read a third time and the Senate vote on passage of H.R. 1191, as amended, with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection to the request?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Florida.

Mr. RUBIO. Mr. President, I wanted to come to the floor to speak about the

risk Iran poses to the world as a result of the legislation before the Senate at this moment.

A lot has been talked about in the media over the last months—years, quite frankly—about the notion we are going to work out a deal with Iran that will prevent war. Sadly, I believe the direction the deal is headed almost guarantees war at some point, certainly in our lifetime, but maybe before the end of the decade.

Let me back up and first describe the issue at hand. The issue at hand is that Iran, run by a radical Shia cleric—its government, I should say. Its people perhaps don't partake in this thought process, but its government whose head and supreme decisionmaker is a radical Shia cleric has made two decisions: The first is they feel it is their obligation to export their Islamic revolution everywhere in the world, and of course it begins with the Middle East; two, they have decided they want to become the hegemonic power in the region. They want to become the dominant nation, the dominant movement in the Middle East and in that entire region.

So how do you achieve that? First, it requires you to drive the Americans out of the area, which is why we have seen them invest in all sorts of asymmetrical capabilities, such as these small little swarm boats they sometimes use to harass U.S. naval vessels. That is why we saw them just a week ago basically hijack a commercial vessel in international waters.

The second thing they do is they sponsor terrorism. They have all these proxy groups in all these countries in the region doing their bidding. That is also asymmetrical warfare—asymmetrical meaning it is not frontal. It is using some nontraditional method to expand or to show their power. They use groups such as Hezbollah or the Houthis they are now involved with in Yemen and other parts of the world.

The threat is, if you attack Iran, these terrorist groups will attack you. In fact, we have seen the hand of the Iranian Government in terrorist attacks. For example, we saw an attempt to assassinate the Ambassador of Saudi Arabia here in Washington, DC. We know that in 1994 there was a bombing in Buenos Aires linked to Iran. So they sponsor terrorism.

The third aspect of their desire to become the hegemonic regional power is a nuclear weapon. What do you need to acquire a nuclear weapon? You need three things: The first thing you need is a bomb design. The truth is you can buy a bomb design. The second thing you need is a delivery system, an ability to deliver the weapon whether it is on an airplane or on a missile.

That is why Iran is developing long-range rockets. They are expending a lot of money—despite all the sanctions on them, they are expending a lot of money to build these long-range rockets. That isn't for some fancy fireworks show or to put a man on the Moon. They are building these long-range rockets because they understand that is the second critical component of a nuclear weapons program.

The third thing is you have to be able to get your hands on enriched uranium or reprocessed plutonium. No one in the world is going to import to them weapons-grade uranium or plutonium, so they have decided to build the infrastructure to do it themselves, and they do it the way North Korea did it. They do it the way other nations have done it when they tried to hide their programs. They do it by claiming they have a peaceful nuclear program they are trying to build. In essence, their argument is we don't want to build a weapon. We are just trying to build a nuclear reactor so we can provide electricity.

That argument makes no sense for two reasons: The first reason is this is an oil-rich country. They do not really need nuclear energy in order to provide cost-effective energy for their country, and the other reason is it costs so much money to build the equipment to enrich and reprocess, they could just buy it already reprocessed or enriched. They could bring it into the country the way South Korea does and the way other nations do.

So if it would be cheaper to bring these things in by simply importing it, as opposed to spending all this money enriching and reprocessing it themselves, why are they spending all this money on the infrastructure? The answer is because, at some point in the future, they know they are going to want a nuclear weapon. Now, perhaps they haven't made the decision they need it today, next week or next year, but they certainly, at a minimum, want to have the option to be a threshold nuclear power.

I believe, knowing everything we know about them—both open source and classified—that whether they have decided to build a nuclear weapon or not, they will decide to build a nuclear weapon because it provides for them the sort of regime stability they crave.

The radical Shia cleric who heads that country looks at North Korea and he looks at Libya and he says: Libya is what happens when you don't have a nuclear capability. North Korea is what happens when you do. Muammar Qadhafi is dead and out of power, but North Korea is still run by that madman. Why? Because he has a nuclear weapon. You can't invade him or touch him because of what he will do in response.

I think they are guided by that principle. They are guided by the principle that they want to be the regional hegemonic power and nuclear weapons gives them that role. They are guided by a third equally sinister motivation; that is, the open and repeatedly stated desire to destroy the State of Israel, to wipe it of the face of the Earth. They haven't said this once in passing, the Supreme Leader of Iran has said this on hundreds of occasions.

In fact, every Friday in Iran, at government-sanctioned religious events, they chant ''Death to America'' and ''Death to Israel.'' If there is one lesson in history, it is that when a nation or leader repeatedly says that we are going to kill you, you should take that seriously. When the nation that says we are going to kill you is using its governmental money to sponsor terrorism, you should take that even more seriously. When the nation that is going out saying we are going to kill you and wipe you off the face of the Earth is reprocessing plutonium or enriching uranium, you have a right to be extremely scared.

The world understood this 8 years ago, 10 years ago, so it imposed U.N. Security Council sanctions on Iran—international sanctions. They were not easy to put together. A lot of countries in Europe had companies in those countries that were dying to do business in Iran. They didn't want these sanctions, but they did it. They were put in place. Then, about a year and a half or two ago, the President decided it was time to try to open up to Iran and try to work out a deal with them.

Look, in normal circumstances, there is nothing wrong with that; right? Two countries that have a disagreement on some issues can work things out. There is a place for diplomacy in the would. The problem is the issue we have with Iran is not based on a grievance. They are not mad we did something and so that is why they are acquiring a nuclear weapon and if only we stopped doing what it is that aggrieved them they would go away. This is not a grievance-based problem. This is an ideological problem.

If you read the founding documents of the Islamic Republic, it doesn't describe the Supreme Leader as the leader of Iran. Iran happens to be the country from which they operate. It describes him as the Supreme Leader of all Muslims in the world. That is why they believe it is their mandate, it is their calling to export their revolution to every corner of the planet but beginning in the Middle East, and the nuclear weapons capability would give them leverage in carrying out the goal they have. In their mind, nothing would be more glorious than the destruction of the Jewish State.

So the President enters these negotiations, and it has been a process of constant appeasement, moment after moment. We went from saying no enriching or reprocessing, to you can enrich and reprocess at 5 percent, to you can enrich up to 20 percent for research purposes. We went from saying no enrichment ever to saying in 10 or 15 years all bets are off.

There are still items in the negotiations that are not clear. The White House put out a fact sheet, a piece of paper, and it said this is what we agreed to. Iran put out a piece of paper just like it except it sounded like a totally different deal.

For example, the U.S. fact sheet said sanctions on Iran would not come off until Iran complied, but Iran's fact

sheet said no, no, sanctions come off immediately. Now, when you press the White House on it, they refuse to say that, in fact, it will be phased in and not immediate.

That is why I filed an amendment. Even though I thought the President's deal as outlined in the fact sheet was not good enough, I filed an amendment to at least hold them to that. The amendment to this bill read very simply. It just said that whatever deal the President crafts has to reflect the fact sheet he provided the Senate, but we couldn't get a vote on it.

The other amendment I filed is that any deal with Iran should be conditioned on Iran recognizing Israel's right to exist, and here is why that was so important. That was important because this is not just about the nuclear program. The deal the President is trying to sign is about removing sanctions, meaning money is now going to flow back into the Iranian Government's coffers. What are they going to do with this money? Are they going to build roads, hospitals, donate it to charity? No. Are they going to buy food and medicine for people hurting around the world, the hundreds of thousands who have been displaced by Assad, their puppet? No. They will use that money to sponsor terrorism, and the prime target of the terrorism they sponsor is the State of Israel.

We couldn't get a vote on that amendment either. Apparently, there are Senators terrified of voting against that amendment, so they would rather not have a vote at all.

So I am deeply disappointed by the direction this debate has taken because I felt—and I understand this deal was carefully crafted because I am on the committee that passed it, but I also understand that every Member of the Senate has a right to be heard in this debate. Unfortunately, only a couple of amendments were allowed to be voted on, with no one else having an opportunity to get their amendments voted on, amendments I thought would make this bill much more meaningful.

Now we have reached this point where the majority leader has filed cloture on the bill because it is time to move on to these other issues, and I respect that. We now have to make a decision. The decision is not whether we are going to pass the bill we want or nothing at all, the decision is are we better off as a country with this bill or with no bill.

If we don't pass a bill, the Senate can still weigh in on the Iranian deal, but the Iranian deal kicks in immediately, and unless and until the Senate acts, the sanctions will be off. At least the U.S. sanctions will be off. There is also no guarantee the White House will even show us the agreement if we don't pass a bill.

If we pass a bill, it delays the sanctions being lifted for a period of time. It requires the White House to submit the deal to us so we can review it, and ultimately it calls for a vote—up or down—on approving the deal or not. It actually requires that the vote will have to happen, and there can't be any procedural process to impede it, for the most part.

So at the end of the day, while this bill does not contain the amendments—we didn't even get a vote on the amendments we wanted—it doesn't contain the different aspects I thought would make it stronger, if left with the choice we have now, I don't think there is any doubt we are in a better position if this bill passes because, at a minimum, it at least creates a process whereby the American people, through their elected representatives, can debate an issue of extraordinary importance.

If I am troubled by anything, it is that while this issue gets a lot of coverage, I am not sure the coverage accurately reflects what a critical moment this is. I said at the outset that I think a bad deal almost guarantees war, and here is why. Because the State of Israel—such an important ally to the United States—is not thousands of miles away from Iran. Put yourself in their position for a moment. This small country, with a small population, 9 miles wide at its narrowest point—with a neighbor to the north that openly and repeatedly says it wants to destroy them and is on the verge of acquiring a nuclear capability—feels like their very existence is being threatened. Faced with that, Israel may very well take military action on their own to protect themselves. I think a bad deal exponentially increases the likelihood of that happening.

I also think we look at the other nations of the region, because Iran is a Shia country—a Shia Persian country—but its Sunni Arab neighbors aren't big fans of the Shia branch of Islam.

For example, Saudi Arabia, an incredibly wealthy country, has already said: Whatever Iran gets, we are going to get. If Iran gets the right to enrich and reprocess, we will enrich and reprocess. If Iran builds a weapon, we will build a weapon. And so it creates the very real specter that we will have an arms race—a nuclear arms race—in the Middle East. We are talking about a region of the world that has been unstable for 3,800 years.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator's time has expired.

Mr. RUBIO. I ask unanimous consent for an additional 30 seconds to conclude.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. RUBIO. We are talking about a region of the world that could have a nuclear arms race—one of the most unstable regions of the planet.

So I hope we are going to get a good deal. I am not hopeful that we will. But I think we are better off if we have this process in place. So I hope this bill passes here today so that at least we will have a chance to weigh in on an issue of critical importance.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

Mr. NELSON. Mr. President, my colleague from Florida knows the personal affection I have for him, and I enjoy so much his friendship and working with him on issues regarding Florida.

I think this is an example of how two Senators from the same State can come to different conclusions, apparently not about this legislation—advancing it, because this Senator will in fact vote to move this legislation forward—but on the ultimate judgment that we have to make.

Senator RUBIO has correctly stated, in my opinion, that Iran's is a regime that is bent on aggression, that they cannot be trusted, that Israel is threatened, and that we are basically the backstop protector of Israel. All of those things are very true.

But the question is what is in the interest of the national security of the United States—which, in most cases, always folds into what is in the interest of the national security of Israel as well—and the Senator and I come to different conclusions.

First of all, we don't know the final details. But we do know a framework that was put out, and if that framework is fleshed out, as is suggested, with the details by June 30, then the simple bottom line for this Senator is if it prevents Iran from building a nuclear weapon over at least a 10-year period, with the sufficient safeguards, intrusions, inspections—unannounced, as well—that prevent them from having a nuclear weapon without our getting, conservatively, a year's advanced notice and we know that is a guarantee for a 10-year period—if not 15 and 20 years—is that in the interest of the United States? And this Senator has concluded that yes, it is.

I hope the agreement comes out as suggested by the framework. I will be looking forward to examining that. And, as a result of our passing this legislation today, we will have a guarantee that we will vote on parts with regard to the lifting of sanctions, and we will be able to weigh in on the specifics.

It is interesting how two Senators from the same State can come out with such different conclusions having shared a lot of the similar information, as this Senator has served on the Intelligence Committee for 6 years and Senator RUBIO is on the Intelligence Committee as well.

It will be an interesting debate as we get into the details.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Carolina.

Mr. TILLIS. Mr. President, it is interesting that I am not a Senator from Florida but I am a Senator who was born in Florida.

With due respect to my friend, Senator NELSON, there was something the Senator said that I had not thought to

talk about, but I think we have to. It has to do with a bit of a shift in the thinking of this President, unlike any other President in the last 40 years, since the Ayatollahs have come into power.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for not more than 5 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I hate to object. There is only 10 minutes remaining and all the time on the Republican side has been used up.

Would my colleague limit his remarks perhaps to 3 minutes so I could have a little bit of time on our side?

Mr. TILLIS. Yes, Mr. President.

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

Mr. TILLIS. Mr. President, with the limited time, first, I am concerned now that we have gone away from President after President saying that Iran could never have a nuclear weapon, to the words of: Well, Iran shouldn't be able to have one at least for 10 years. Or, if they do get one before 10 years, we will know about it a year in advance. That is a fundamental change in the direction of negotiations with this hostile regime.

That is the other thing in my limited time that I wish to point out. I think those of us who are voting for this bill today are voting in large part because of a distrust we have for the Supreme Leader and the regime in Iran. This is not about the Iranian people. There are tens of millions of Iranians that I believe are concerned with this deal as well. They are concerned that this is going to enable the Iranian government to continue to fund terror throughout the world through the Iran terror network. They are funding even Hamas, a natural enemy, to destabilize the region.

We need to worry about what the Prime Minister of Israel said just a few months ago here in this Chamber: This represents a dire threat. Does anyone think that Israel can stand by on their own and allow Iran to continue to be unfettered and potentially move forward with a nuclear program? I don't think so.

But I also want to make sure that the Iranian people know we are also concerned that we have a President who is willing to negotiate with a regime that is guilty of human rights violations, that is guilty of spreading terror through the world, that is guilty of meddling in the affairs of other Middle Eastern nations. And we are sitting along the sidelines and saying maybe we can still move this deal through, because at least knowing when Iran gets a nuclear weapon is better than the current state.

I think the current state is working. Sanctions are working. Pressure on Iran to respect human rights, to get out of the terror business is very important.

The last slide I wanted to show and that I wanted to spend more time on—how on Earth does anyone think that a nation that is not intent on launching a nuclear missile at some time would invest in this sort of infrastructure to reach different parts of the globe? It is only a matter of time. Now, we have heard that maybe it will only be 10 years or maybe a year from when we find out about it. But make no mistake about it. If Iran is left alone, they are going to have the ability to deliver this sort of terror anywhere in the world.

That is why I will be supporting the bill, and hopefully, we can defeat any bad deal that comes from the administration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, after 2 weeks on the floor, in a few moments we will have a chance to advance the Iran bill to passage and then vote on passage. I urge my colleagues to support the cloture motion and to support final passage.

First, I thank Senator CORKER. Senator CORKER has been an incredible partner, and the two of us have worked in the best interests not only of the Senate but in the best interests of our country. We recognize this Nation is stronger when in foreign policy we are united and speak with one voice. That is exactly what we were able to do in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee by a vote of 19 to 0.

This is an extremely controversial area. We understand that. But we reached a position where we could get a 19-to-0 vote in the committee. We were able to bring that forward and were able to get the administration to work with us on this. So the bill will be signed by the President of the United States.

I just want to thank Senator CORKER for his incredible leadership through these very difficult times so that we could reach this point.

It gives us the best chance to accomplish our goal. Our goal is to prevent Iran from becoming a nuclear weapons state—pure and simple. We will be in a stronger position to achieve that objective with the passage of this legislation.

We understand what that means. We understand that it has to be an agreement that prevents Iran from a breakout capacity to have a nuclear weapon in a period of time where we would be compromised, because we know we have to be able to inspect, we have to be able to see what they are doing, and we have to be able to react if they cheat. This bill allows us to have that type of an oversight over such an agreement.

It spells out the proper role for Congress. It was in the 1990s that Congress started to impose sanctions against Iran for its nuclear weapons program. Only Congress can remove those sanctions or permanently change them. So it is in our interests to be able to have an orderly way to review an agreement. And it is an orderly review because it requires the President to submit the agreement to us so we have opportunities for open hearings and for closed hearings, to do what we need to in order to make our judgment as to how to proceed. There is no required action, but we could take the appropriate action, and we have the time to take the appropriate action.

Congress would then have oversight of the agreement. The administration would be required to report to us on a quarterly basis that Iran is in compliance with the agreement. If there is a material breach, there are expedited procedures for us to be able to take action to reimpose and strengthen the sanctions regime that is in place.

So it really gives us the opportunity not only to have oversight on a potential agreement if one is reached but then to monitor to make sure that the agreement is complied with.

But we go beyond that. I have heard a lot of my colleagues talk about Iran and what it is doing on its sponsoring of terrorism, what it is doing on human rights violations, their ballistic missile programs. We understand that. We require reports from the administration as to their activities in each of these areas. It is very clear, as the President made in his summary of the April 2 framework, that nothing in this agreement affects the other sanctions that are imposed against Iran because of ballistic missiles, because of terrorism or because of human rights issues.

So I think we have found the right balance.

Lastly, let me say we have also made it very clear in this agreement that the security of Israel is critically important, and we have spelled that out in our legislation.

So for all those reasons, I think the fact that we were able to reach this type of an agreement—we had a couple votes. The votes were pretty decisive as to how they came out on the floor. I thank all our colleagues for the way they cooperated with us on being able to reach this moment.

Mr. President, I yield the remainder of the time to the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. CORKER. Mr. President, I thank the distinguished ranking member. I will be very brief.

I thank our ranking member, who could not have been more of a gentleman, more of a leader on this issue, and I cannot thank him enough for his efforts and his staff's.

I thank also Senator MENENDEZ, who before was ranking member of the committee and is such a leader on this and has been from day one relative to the sanctions on Iran and bringing them to the table.

I would also thank Senator GRAHAM. We began this process in July of last year. And so many others have been involved. Senator GRAHAM obviously helped drive this. So did Senator KAINE, on the Democratic side of the aisle. But we have had so many rocks,

such as JEFF FLAKE and others who have just been steady in helping make this happen.

Since there is only a short amount of time, I do want to encourage my colleagues here in the Senate to support this cloture motion. We have been on the floor now for 2 weeks, and I know there have been a lot of process issues that we have dealt with.

At the end of the day, without this bill there is no review of what happens relative to Iran. So we worked hard to create a great bipartisan balance. I think we have an opportunity to do something that really is in some ways a landmark piece of legislation, in that the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in a bipartisan way with a 19-to-0 vote has basically taken back the power that the President now has to work collaboratively to make sure that we have the opportunity to see the details, as my colleague has mentioned, of any deal that may be negotiated with Iran, that it stand before the Senate and give us time to actually go through those details, that we see all the classified annexes and everything that go with this. We have the opportunity, should we choose, to pass a resolution of approval or disapproval. And then, very importantly, the President has to certify every 90 days that Iran is in compliance.

So let me just restate that, without this bill, there is no limitation on the President's use of waivers to suspend the sanctions Congress has put in place. There is no requirement that Congress receive full details of any agreement with Iran. There is no review period for Congress to examine and weigh in on an agreement. There is no requirement that the President certify Iran is complying. And there are really no expedited procedures for Congress to reimpose rapidly sanctions should Iran cheat.

So, in summary, no bill, no review; no bill, no oversight. I think the American people want the Senate and the House of Representatives on their behalf to ensure that Iran is accountable, that this is a transparent process, and that they comply.

With that, I concede that the Presiding Officer wants to move ahead.

Again, I thank our ranking member for his distinguished service and all of my colleagues who have brought us to this moment.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the Corker amendment No. 1140 to H.R. 1191, an act to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to ensure that emergency services volunteers are not taken into account as employees under the shared responsibility requirements contained in the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

Mitch McConnell, Bob Corker, Joni Ernst, Rob Portman, Johnny Isakson, Shelley Moore Capito, Thad Cochran, Orrin G. Hatch, David Perdue, Daniel Coats, Jeff Flake, Kelly Ayotte, Cory Gardner, John Hoeven, Roger F. Wicker, John Thune, John Cornyn.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the Corker amendment No. 1140 to H.R. 1191, an act to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to ensure that emergency services volunteers are not taken into account as employees under the shared responsibility requirements contained in the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from California (Mrs. BOXER) is necessarily absent.

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 93, nays 6, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 173 Leg.]

YEAS—93

Alexander	Flake	Nelson
Ayotte	Franken	Paul
Baldwin	Gardner	Perdue
Barrasso	Gillibrand	Peters
Bennet	Graham	Portman
Blumenthal	Hatch	Reed
Blunt	Heinrich	Reid
Booker	Heitkamp	Risch
Boozman	Heller	Roberts
Brown	Hirono	Rounds
Burr	Hoeven	Rubio
Cantwell	Inhofe	Sanders
Capito	Isakson	Sasse
Cardin	Johnson	Schatz
Carper	Kaine	Schumer
Casey	King	Scott
Cassidy	Kirk	Sessions
Coats	Klobuchar	Shaheen
Cochran	Lankford	Shelby
Collins	Leahy	Stabenow
Coons	Manchin	Tester
Corker	Markey	Thune
Cornyn	McCain	Tillis
Crapo	McCaskill	Toomey
Daines	McConnell	Udall
Donnelly	Menendez	Vitter
Durbin	Merkley	Warner
Enzi	Mikulski	Warren
Ernst	Murkowski	Whitehouse
Feinstein	Murphy	Wicker
Fischer	Murray	Wyden

NAYS—6

Cotton	Grassley	Moran
Cruz	Lee	Sullivan

NOT VOTING—1

Boxer

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HOEVEN). On this vote, the yeas are 93, the nays are 6.

Three-fifths of the Senators duly chosen and sworn having voted in the affirmative, the motion is agreed to.

Under the previous order, amendments Nos. 1155; 1186, as modified; 1197; and 1198 fall, as they are not germane.

Amendment No. 1179 is withdrawn.

Amendment No. 1219 is agreed to.

The amendment agreed to is as follows:

(Purpose: To make technical changes)

On page 7, line 17, strike ''the Congress'' and insert ''both Houses of Congress''.

On page 7, strike line 24 and insert ''such passage''.

On page 8, line 6, strike ''the Congress'' and insert ''both Houses of Congress''.

On page 9, between lines 2 and 3, insert the following:

''(7) DEFINITION.—In the House of Representatives, for purposes of this subsection, the terms ''transmittal,'' ''transmitted,'' and ''transmission'' mean transmittal, transmitted, and transmission, respectively, to the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

On page 10, lines 13 and 14, strike ''the Congress adopts, and there is enacted,'' and insert ''there is enacted''.

On page 10, lines 17 and 18, strike ''the Congress adopts, and there is enacted'' and insert ''there is enacted''.

On page 13, line 17, strike ''enhance'' and insert ''reduce''.

On page 17, line 9, strike ''covert action'' and insert ''covert activities''.

On page 19, strike lines 8 through 17 and insert the following:

''(e) EXPEDITED CONSIDERATION OF LEGISLATION.—

''(1) INITIATION.—

''(A) IN GENERAL.—In the event the President does not submit a certification pursuant to subsection (d)(6) during each 90-day period following the review period provided in subsection (b), or submits a determination pursuant to subsection (d)(3) that Iran has materially breached an agreement subject to subsection (a) and the material breach has not been cured, qualifying legislation introduced within 60 calendar days of such event shall be entitled to expedited consideration pursuant to this subsection.

''(B) DEFINITION.—In the House of Representatives, for purposes of this paragraph, the terms 'submit' and 'submits' mean submit and submits, respectively, to the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The substitute amendment, No. 1140, as amended, is agreed to.

The cloture motion on H.R. 1191 is withdrawn.

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?

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There is a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from California (Mrs. BOXER) is necessarily absent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 98, nays 1, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 174 Leg.]

YEAS—98

Alexander	Burr	Coons
Ayotte	Cantwell	Corker
Baldwin	Capito	Cornyn
Barrasso	Cardin	Crapo
Bennet	Carper	Cruz
Blumenthal	Casey	Daines
Blunt	Cassidy	Donnelly
Booker	Coats	Durbin
Boozman	Cochran	Enzi
Brown	Collins	Ernst

Feinstein	Lee	Rubio
Fischer	Manchin	Sanders
Flake	Markey	Sasse
Franken	McCain	Schatz
Gardner	McCaskill	Schumer
Gillibrand	McConnell	Scott
Graham	Menendez	Sessions
Grassley	Merkley	Shaheen
Hatch	Mikulski	Shelby
Heinrich	Moran	Stabenow
Heitkamp	Murkowski	Sullivan
Heller	Murphy	Tester
Hirono	Murray	Thune
Hoeven	Nelson	Tillis
Inhofe	Paul	Toomey
Isakson	Perdue	Udall
Johnson	Peters	Vitter
Kaine	Portman	Warner
King	Reed	Warren
Kirk	Reid	Whitehouse
Klobuchar	Risch	Wicker
Lankford	Roberts	Wyden
Leahy	Rounds	

NAYS—1

Cotton

NOT VOTING—1

Boxer

The bill (H.R. 1191), as amended, was passed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. CORKER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the title amendment to H.R. 1191, which is at the desk, be considered and agreed to.

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

The amendment (No. 1220) was agreed to, as follows:

(Purpose: To amend the title)

Amend the title so as to read: ''A bill to provide for congressional review and oversight of agreements relating to Iran's nuclear program, and for other purposes.''.

Mr. CORKER. I yield the floor.

ENSURING TAX EXEMPT ORGANIZATIONS THE RIGHT TO APPEAL ACT—MOTION TO PROCEED—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CORNYN. Thank you, Mr. President.

IRAN NUCLEAR AGREEMENT REVIEW ACT

Before my colleagues leave the floor, let me just offer my congratulations to the Senator from Tennessee and the Senator from Maryland, who have shepherded this important piece of legislation, the Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act, across the Senate floor.

I think we are all reminded every time we take up some consensus legislation and find all the traps and obstacles to passage that this is not an easy process. But it was not designed to be easy. It was designed to force consensus before a bill actually is passed into law. Thanks to the patience and the tenacity of our colleague from Tennessee and our colleague from Maryland, we have done that today, and I thank them very much for that.

This legislation guarantees that Congress will have the opportunity and the time to scrutinize any agreement reached between the administration and the P5+1 nations with regard to Iran's nuclear program. This is to my mind the single greatest threat—not only to regional peace but to world peace—and that is the prospect of an Iranian nuclear program, a nuclear weapon.

This bill prohibits the President from lifting sanctions that Congress has worked on for so long during this period of time. That is another important feature. But the most important part of this is the fact that Congress will have the right to vote for or against any change in the status quo when it comes to Iran. This bill will serve as a congressional check if there is a bad deal with Iran, and it will allow the American people through their elected representatives to consider carefully whether this potential agreement is a good one.

I have been amazed to read in the newspaper and to see on TV that the President has negotiated a deal. When one asks to read the deal, you find out there is no deal. There is a so-called framework. But if a deal is reached between our negotiating team negotiating with Iran and the P5+1 countries, then Congress will have an opportunity—and through us the American people will have the opportunity—to read it and to understand it. We will have the opportunity then to debate it, and as I said, we will have the opportunity then to vote up or down on this deal once a deal is struck, if a deal is struck.

But I wonder sometimes about the naivete of the administration when it comes to negotiating with the world's foremost State sponsor of international terror. This is a regime that has been killing Americans—mainly by proxy—since the early 1980s. Of course we should not and we cannot trust Iran to do the right thing. It makes it even more necessary for Congress to put all aspects of any deal under a microscope, as we will.

While the President has been negotiating this vague and convoluted framework, the Iranian regime has done nothing to earn the trust of the American people or our allies. Just the opposite is true. Iran has only proven that it is untrustworthy and that it will stop at nothing to further its influence throughout the Middle East at the expense of the United States and our allies.

You don't have to look any further than the New York Times to find a relevant example of Iran's doublespeak—speaking out of both sides of its mouth. Just last month in a New York Times op-ed, Iran's Foreign Minister argued that the United States and the P5+1 countries should reach a final agreement in order to promote the stability and security of the region.

The Foreign Minister, Mohammad Zarif, wrote of the need for ''a regional dialogue'' to ''promote understanding . . . on a broad spectrum of issues,'' among them, ''ensuring freedom of navigation and the free flow of oil and other resources. . . . ''

Well, this very article proves that to think we can negotiate with Iran in good faith is pure fiction. Just this past week, it was reported that U.S. Navy warships have had to accompany British and American commercial vessels through the Strait of Hormuz, an international shipping lane that links the Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf, after the Iranian navy seized a commercial vessel last week.

Reports of another naval scuffle between the United States and Iran was reported yesterday just off the coast of Yemen. Is this how Iran has been working to ensure freedom of navigation in this region?

Well, of course this is just one example of Iran's most recent deceptive tactics. This is the kind of regime that has been, as I said, on our State Department's list as the lead State for sponsorship of terrorism since 1984.

Now the Obama administration seeks to cut a deal with the regime, a country that publicly admits wanting to destroy Israel and to build its empire and influence in places such as war-torn Syria and Iraq. The Obama administration's framework does nothing to hold Iran accountable for its proxy wars or for this type of regional adventurism. Even more concerning, this ambiguous understanding that the President released last month would abandon longstanding U.S. policy of preventing a nuclear-armed Iran and replace it with a feeble plan to contain it.

I remember, as the Presiding Officer no doubt remembers, Prime Minister Netanyahu was just here a few weeks ago. He said that rather than prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon, this framework would pave the path toward a nuclear Iran. The deal also forces the American people to trust the Iranian leadership with threshold nuclear capabilities, without allowing for adequate inspections of all of Iran's nuclear sites by international agencies, both civilian and military. This is unacceptable and dangerous. It also underscores why this legislation that we just passed is so important.

This legislation is vitally important because it is a congressional backstop against an Iranian regime that is well known for its lies and international deception. Guaranteeing the time and the opportunity for Congress to scrutinize this misguided deal is essential. Providing the American people with the kind of transparency they deserve to understand what has been negotiated on their behalf is absolutely critical.

America's elected representatives must be able to get every and any detail on this emerging deal. That is one reason why I think this legislation is so important. We need the time and space to review it. This bill provides for that. It gives us an opportunity to understand its terms and debate its implications.

I am encouraged by the vote we just had, a near unanimous vote on this legislation. This is important because this President has shown a predisposition