United States of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 114th CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

Vol. 162 WASHINGTON, TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 2016 No. 23

House of Representatives

The House met at noon and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. FARENTHOLD).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

WASHINGTON, DC,
February 9, 2016.

I hereby appoint the Honorable BLAKE FARENTHOLD to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

PAUL D. RYAN,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

A message in writing from the President of the United States was communicated to the House by Mr. Brian Pate, one of his secretaries.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 5, 2016, the Chair would now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until 2 p.m. today.

Accordingly (at 2 o'clock and 1 minute p.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1400

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. FARENTHOLD) at 2 p.m.

PRAYER

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

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

We ask Your special blessing upon the Members of this people's House. They face difficult decisions in difficult times, with many forces and interests demanding their attention.

Enlighten the hearts of those who are faithful and tireless in securing equal justice under the law. Fulfill the hopes of those who long for peace and security for their children. Guide and protect all elected officials and all who choose to serve this Nation through public service.

Unite Your people and keep them focused on essentials that reflect Your kingdom, even in the midst of conflicting opinions, philosophical differences, and the contentiousness of an election season.

Bless us, O God, and be with us all this day and every day to come. May all that is done be for Your greater honor and glory.

Amen.

THE JOURNAL

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

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

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Will the gentleman from Texas (Mr. BABIN) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. BABIN led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

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

MAKING GOVERNMENT WORK BETTER

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

Mr. LAMALFA. Mr. Speaker, our charge in Congress is to be very careful and frugal and honest with the people's money that they send via their hard-earned tax dollars.

Today we have an opportunity to make good on part of that with our commitment to making the government work better for the people it serves, control spending, and work at finally getting down the national debt.

The VA medical facility construction process is broken and highly in need of major reform. For example, in Colorado, the VA spent at least triple, probably quadruple, even quintuple, what it was expected to spend on the construction of a replacement hospital due to mismanagement and lack of accountability.

The GAO found in 2013 that the VA's four largest medical construction projects were experiencing significant delays and massive cost increases. In my district, the VA plans to build two replacement clinics, in Redding and in Chico, which the VA says will take 5 years.

In order to streamline and improve the VA's medical facility construction process, the House will vote on H.R. 3106 today, which is sponsored by Chairman JEFF MILLER of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

The bill includes commonsense reforms that will require the VA to use industry standards for medical facility construction projects and increase congressional oversight.

I am proud to support this bill and to continue to work to be accountable to the American people, especially our veterans, who need and deserve clear access, present access, and timely access to the health care they deserve.

FLINT, MICHIGAN, WATER CRISIS

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

Mr. KILDEE. Mr. Speaker, the families and the children exposed to high levels of lead in my hometown of Flint deserve action by the people who did this to them.

The State of Michigan—Governor Snyder's administration—created this public health emergency through their own inaction and by decisions that their appointed emergency manager made in the city of Flint, which has led to this crisis. They need to act in a manner equal to the gravity of this terrible situation.

The Federal Government can help as well. The President has already declared a state of emergency, but Congress can act, too. I have legislation that I introduced last week that is a comprehensive set of solutions that not only deals with the need to replace those lead service lines that are leaching lead into the water system in households, but also provides the kind of support for children and families to get through this crisis and give them, as individuals, and my community, as a community, a chance on a future.

Resources are needed, not just a get well card, not just an apology, but we need financial resources. The State needs to step up. I am asking this Congress to do so as well.

COMMUNICATION FROM THE CLERK OF THE HOUSE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Clerk of the House of Representatives:

OFFICE OF THE CLERK,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, February 8, 2016.

Hon. PAUL D. RYAN,
The Speaker, House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. SPEAKER: Pursuant to the permission granted in Clause 2(h) of Rule II of the Rules of the U.S. House of Representatives, the Clerk received the following message from the Secretary of the Senate on February 8, 2016 at 3:26 p.m.:

That the Senate communicates S. Res. 364 (relative to the death of Marlow Cook).

With best wishes, I am
Sincerely,

KAREN L. HAAS.

COMMUNICATION FROM THE CLERK OF THE HOUSE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Clerk of the House of Representatives:

OFFICE OF THE CLERK,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, February 9, 2016.

The Hon. PAUL D. RYAN,
The Speaker, House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. SPEAKER: Pursuant to the permission granted in Clause 2(h) of Rule II of the Rules of the U.S. House of Representatives, the Clerk received the following message from the Secretary of the Senate on February 9, 2016 at 10:44 am.:

Appointments:
Washington's Farewell Address.
With best wishes, I am
Sincerely,

KAREN L. HAAS.

THE BUDGET MESSAGE OF THE PRESIDENT—MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES (H. DOC. NO. 114–86)

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following message from the President of the United States; which was read and, together with the accompanying papers, referred to the Committee on Appropriations and ordered to be printed:

To the Congress of the United States:

As I look back on the past seven years, I am inspired by America's progress—and I am more determined than ever to keep our country moving forward. When I took office, our Nation was in the midst of the worst recession since the Great Depression. The economy was shedding 800,000 jobs a month. The auto industry was on the brink of collapse and our manufacturing sector was in decline. Many families were struggling to pay their bills and make ends meet. Millions more saw their savings evaporate, even as retirement neared.

But thanks to the grit and determination of the American people, we rescued our economy from the depths of the recession, revitalized our auto industry, and laid down new rules to safeguard our economy from recklessness on Wall Street. We made the largest investment in clean energy in our history, and made health care reform a reality. And today, our economy is the strongest, most durable on Earth.

Our businesses have created more than 14 million jobs over 70 months, the longest streak of job growth on record. We have cut our unemployment rate in half. Our manufacturing sector has added nearly 900,000 jobs in the last six years—and our auto industry just had its best year of sales ever. We are less reliant on foreign oil than at any point in the previous four decades. Nearly 18 million people have gained health coverage under the Affordable Care Act (ACA), cutting the uninsured rate to a record low. Our children are graduating from high school at the highest rate ever. And we managed to accomplish all of this while dramatically cutting our deficits by almost three-quarters and setting our Nation on a more sustainable fiscal path. Together, we have brought America back.

Yet while it is important to take stock of our progress, this Budget is not about looking back at the road we have traveled. It is about looking forward. It is about making sure our economy works for everybody, not just those at the top. It is about choosing investments that not only make us stronger today, but also reflect the kind of country we aspire to be—the kind of country we want to pass on to our children and grandchildren. It is about answering the big questions that will define America and the world in the 21st Century.

My Budget makes critical investments while adhering to the bipartisan budget agreement I signed into law last fall, and it lifts sequestration in future years so that we continue to invest in our economic future and our national security. It also drives down deficits and maintains our fiscal progress through smart savings from health care, immigration, and tax reforms. And, it focuses on meeting our greatest challenges not only for the year ahead, but for decades to come.

First, by accelerating the pace of American innovation, we can create jobs and build the economy of the future while tackling our greatest challenges, including addressing climate change and finding new treatments—and cures—for devastating diseases.

The challenge of climate change will define the contours of this century more dramatically than any other. Last year was the hottest on record, surpassing the record set just a year before. Climate change is already causing damage, including longer, more severe droughts and dangerous floods, disruptions to our food and water supply, and threats to our health, our economy, and our security.

We have made great strides to foster a robust clean energy industry and move our economy away from energy sources that fuel climate change. In communities across the Nation, wind power is now cheaper than dirtier, conventional power, and solar power is saving Americans tens of millions of dollars a year on their energy bills. The solar industry employs more workers than the coal industry—in jobs that pay better than average.

Despite these advances, we can and must do more. Rather than shrinking from the challenge, America must foster the spirit of innovation to create jobs, build a climate-smart economy of the future, and protect the only planet we have. To speed our transition to an affordable, reliable, clean energy system, my Budget funds Mission Innovation, our landmark commitment to double clean energy research and development funding. It also calls for a 21st Century Clean Transportation initiative that would help to put hundreds of thousands of Americans to work modernizing our infrastructure to ease congestion and make it easier for businesses to bring goods to market through new technologies such as autonomous vehicles and high-speed rail, funded through a fee paid by oil companies. It proposes to modernize our business tax system to promote innovation and job creation. It invests in strategies to make our communities more resilient to floods, wildfires, and other effects of climate change. And, it protects and modernizes our water supply and preserves our natural landscapes. These investments, coupled with those

in other cutting-edge technology sectors ranging from manufacturing to space exploration, will drive new jobs, new industries, and a new understanding of the world around us.

Just as a commitment to innovation can accelerate our efforts to protect our planet and create a sustainable economy, it can also drive critical medical breakthroughs. The Budget supports a new ''moonshot'' to finally cure cancer, an effort that will be led by the Vice President and will channel resources, technology, and our collective knowledge to save lives and end this deadly disease. It also supports the Precision Medicine Initiative to accelerate the development of customized treatments that take into account a patient's genes, environment, and lifestyle, as well as the BRAIN Initiative, which will dramatically increase our understanding of how the brain works.

Second, we must work to deliver a fair shot at opportunity for all, both because this reflects American values and because, in the 21st Century global economy, our competitiveness depends on tapping the full potential of every American. Even as we have rebounded from the worst economic crisis of our lifetimes, too many families struggle to reach the middle class and stay there, and too many kids face obstacles on the path to success.

Real opportunity begins with education. My Budget supports the ambitious goal that all children should have access to high-quality preschool, including kids from low-income families who too often enter kindergarten already behind. It also supports States and cities as they implement a new education law that will place all students on a path to graduate prepared for college and successful careers. The bipartisan Every Student Succeeds Act sets high standards for our schools and students, ensures that States are held accountable for the success of all students, including those in the lowest performing schools, spurs innovation in education, helps schools recruit and support great teachers, and encourages States to reduce unnecessary testing. And because jobs in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics are projected to grow faster than other jobs in the years ahead, the Budget makes critical investments in math and science. Through a new Computer Science for All initiative, the Budget will expand the teaching and learning of these important concepts across America's schools, better preparing our Nation's students for today's innovation economy.

Higher education is the clearest path to the middle class. By 2020, two-thirds of jobs will require some education beyond high school. For our students and for our economy, we must make a quality college education affordable for every American. To support that goal, the Budget strengthens Pell Grants to help families pay for college by increasing the scholarships available to students who take enough courses to stay on track for on-time graduation, allowing students making progress toward their degrees to get support for summer classes, and providing scholarships to help incarcerated Americans turn their lives around, get jobs, and support their families. It also offers two years of free community college to every responsible student and strengthens the American Opportunity Tax Credit.

In addition to preparing students for careers, we must help workers gain the skills they need to fill jobs in growing industries. My Budget builds on the progress we have made to improve the Nation's job training programs through implementation of the bipartisan Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. It funds innovative strategies to train more workers and young people for 21st Century jobs. And it doubles down on apprenticeships—a proven pathway to the middle class—and supports a robust set of protections for the health, safety, wages, working conditions, and retirement security of working Americans.

Even as we invest in better skills and education for our workforce, we must respond to dramatic changes in our economy and our workforce: more automation; increased global competition; corporations less rooted in their communities; frequent job changes throughout a worker's career; and a growing gap between the wealthiest and everyone else. These trends squeeze workers, even when they have jobs, even when the economy is growing. They make it harder to start a career, a family, a business, or retirement.

To address these changes and give Americans more economic security, we need to update several key benefit structures to make sure that workers can balance work and family, save for retirement, and get back on their feet if they lose a job. The Budget supports these priorities by funding high-quality child care, encouraging State paid leave policies, extending employer-based retirement plans to part-time workers, putting us on a path to more portable benefit models, and providing a new tax credit for two-earner families. It also modernizes the unemployment insurance system, so that more unemployed workers receive the unemployment benefits they need and an opportunity to retrain for their next job. And, if that new job does not pay as much initially, it offers a system of wage insurance to encourage workers to rejoin the workforce and help them pay their bills. The Budget includes tax cuts for middle-class and working families that will make paychecks go further in meeting the costs of child care, education, and saving for retirement. It builds upon the demonstrated success of the Earned Income Tax Credit by expanding it for workers without children and non-custodial parents.

Providing opportunity to all Americans means tackling poverty. Too many Americans live in communities with under-performing schools and few jobs. We know from groundbreaking new research that growing up in these communities can put lifelong limits on a child's opportunities. Over the past few years, we have made progress in supporting families that were falling behind. For example, working family tax credits keep more than 9 million people—including 5 million children—out of poverty each year, and the ACA provides access to quality, affordable health care to millions. Nevertheless, we need to do more to ensure that a child's zip code does not determine his or her destiny. Improving the opportunity and economic security of poor children and families is both a moral and an economic imperative.

The Budget funds innovative strategies to support this goal, including helping families move to safer neighborhoods with better schools and more jobs, revitalizing distressed communities to create more neighborhoods of opportunity, preventing families experiencing a financial crisis from becoming homeless, and ensuring that children have enough to eat when school is out for the summer. It also supports efforts to break the cycle of poverty and incarceration through criminal justice reform.

Finally, as we work to build a brighter future at home, we must also strengthen our national security and global leadership. The United States of America is the most powerful nation on Earth, blessed with the finest fighting force in the history of the world.

Still, this is a dangerous time. We face many threats, including the threat of terrorist attacks and violent extremism in many forms. My highest priority is keeping the American people safe and going after terrorist networks. That is why my Budget increases support for our comprehensive strategy to destroy the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), in partnership with more than 60 other countries, by eliminating its leadership, cutting off its financing, disrupting its plots, stopping the flow of terrorist fighters, and stamping out its vicious ideology. If the Congress is serious about winning this war and wants to send a message to the troops and the world, it should specifically authorize the use of military force against ISIL.

The Budget also sustains and builds the strength of our unmatched military forces, making the investments and reforms that will maintain our Nation's superiority and ensure our advantage over any potential adversary. It also makes investments to ensure that our men and women in uniform, who sacrifice so much to defend our Nation and keep us safe, get the support they have earned to succeed and thrive when they return home.

Cybersecurity is one of our most important national security challenges. As our economy becomes increasingly digital, more sensitive information is vulnerable to malicious cyber activity. This challenge requires bold, aggressive action. My Budget significantly

increases our investment in cybersecurity through a Cybersecurity National Action Plan. This Plan includes retiring outdated Federal information technology (IT) systems that were designed in a different age and increasingly are vulnerable to attack, reforming the way that the Federal Government manages and responds to cyber threats, and recruiting the best cyber talent. It will also help strengthen cybersecurity in the private sector and the digital ecosystem as a whole, enhancing cyber education and making sure companies and consumers have the tools they need to protect themselves. But many of our challenges in cybersecurity require bold, long-term commitments to change the way we operate in an increasingly digital world. That is why, to complement these steps, I am also creating a commission of experts to make recommendations for enhancing cybersecurity awareness and protections inside and outside of Government, protecting privacy, and empowering Americans to take better control of their digital security.

To ensure security at home, we must also demonstrate leadership around the world. Strong leadership means not only a wise application of military power, but also rallying other nations behind causes that are right. It means viewing our diplomacy and development efforts around the world as an essential instrument of our national security strategy, and mobilizing the private sector and other donors alongside our foreign assistance to help achieve our global development and climate priorities. The Budget supports this vision with funding for effective global health programs to fight HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other illnesses; assistance for displaced persons and refugees, including from Syria; and expanding educational opportunities for girls, among many other critical development initiatives.

As we make these investments to meet our greatest challenges, we are also working to build a 21st Century Government that delivers for the American people. The Budget supports efforts to make the Federal Government more efficient and effective, through smarter IT delivery and procurement, improving digital services, eliminating outdated regulations, and recruiting and retaining the best talent. It also invests in a new approach to working in local communities, one that disrupts an outdated, top-down approach, and makes our efforts more responsive to the ideas and concerns of local citizens. The Budget supports the use of data and evidence to drive policymaking, so the Federal Government can do more of what works and stop doing what does not.

The Budget is a roadmap to a future that embodies America's values and aspirations: a future of opportunity and security for all of our families; a rising standard of living; and a sustainable, peaceful planet for our kids. This future is within our reach. But just as it took the collective efforts of the American people to rise from the recession and rebuild an even stronger economy, so will it take all of us working together to meet the challenges that lie ahead.

It will not be easy. But I have never been more optimistic about America's future than I am today. Over the past seven years, I have seen the strength, resilience, and commitment of the American people. I know that when we are united in the face of challenges, our Nation emerges stronger and better than before. I know that when we work together, there are no limits to what we can achieve. Together, we will move forward to innovate, to expand opportunity and security, and to make our Nation safer and stronger than ever before.

BARACK OBAMA.

THE WHITE HOUSE, *February 9, 2016*.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until approximately 3 p.m. today.

Accordingly (at 2 o'clock and 25 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1503

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. RIBBLE) at 3 o'clock and 3 minutes p.m.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

Record votes on postponed questions will be taken later.

COMMISSION ON CARE FINAL REPORT DEADLINE EXTENSION

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 4437) to extend the deadline for the submittal of the final report required by the Commission on Care.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 4437

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

SECTION 1. EXTENSION OF DEADLINE FOR SUBMITTAL OF FINAL REPORT BY COMMISSION ON CARE.

Section 202(b)(3)(B) of the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014 (Public Law 113–146; 128 Stat. 1773) is amended by striking ''Not later than 180 days after the date of the initial meeting of the Commission'' and inserting ''Not later than June 30, 2016''.

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

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and to add any extraneous material on H.R. 4437.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 4437, a bill that I am honored to sponsor, to extend the deadline for the submittal of the final report that is required by the Commission on Care.

The Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act, which Congress passed in 2014 in response to the Department of Veterans Affairs' crisis that saw far too many veterans waiting too long for the care that they needed, required the establishment of a Commission on Care to examine veteran access to care and recommend how to best organize the VA healthcare system over the next 20 years.

The law required the Commission to develop a final report 180 days after their first meeting, or by February 20, 2016.

However, the Commission has requested that Congress extend the reporting deadline to June in order to provide the commissioners more time to develop their findings and recommendations. As such, H.R. 4437 would extend the Commission's final reporting deadline to June 30 of this year.

The Commission's work is vitally important to determining the future of the VA healthcare system, and I am proud to sponsor this bill to allow the commissioners more time to carry out their mission on behalf of our Nation's veterans.

I urge all my colleagues to support H.R. 4437, and I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 4437, of which I am an original cosponsor.

When the Congress passed and the President signed into law the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014, we included a section requiring an independent assessment of the hospital care, medical services, and other health care furnished in medical facilities of the VA. We also established a Commission on Care to examine the access of veterans to health care from the

Department of Veterans Affairs and strategically examine how best to organize the Veterans Health Administration, local health care resources, and deliver health care to veterans over the next 20 years.

The Commission has contacted us to explain that they will not be able to meet the statutory deadline of presenting their report to us in time, and would like an extension until June of 2016.

I feel this is a very important report, and I am willing to extend the authorization for the Commission on Care in order to receive this information.

I urge my colleagues to support this legislation.

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

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I urge all Members to support H.R. 4437.

I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MILLER) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 4437.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

CONSTRUCTION REFORM ACT OF 2016

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 3106) to authorize Department major medical facility construction projects for fiscal year 2015, to amend title 38, United States Code, to make certain improvements in the administration of Department medical facility construction projects, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 3106

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

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the ''Construction Reform Act of 2016''.

SEC. 2. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS CONSTRUCTION REFORMS.

(a) APPLICATION OF INDUSTRY STANDARDS; ASSISTANCE.—Section 8103 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new subsections:

''(f) To the maximum extent practicable, the Secretary shall use industry standards, standard designs, and best practices in carrying out the construction of medical facilities.

''(g)(1) The Secretary shall provide to a non-Department Federal entity with which the Secretary has entered into an agreement under subsection (e)—

''(A) design, planning, and construction assistance before the entity issues a request for proposals for the design or construction of the super construction project covered by the agreement;

''(B) any documents or information needed for the entity to carry out the responsibilities of the entity with respect to the super construction project; and

''(C) upon the request of the entity, any other assistance that the entity determines necessary to carry out such responsibilities.

''(2) Any assistance provided under paragraph (1) shall be provided to the non-Department Federal entity on a non-reimbursable basis.

''(h)(1) With respect to a proposed change to a contract entered into by a non-Department Federal entity with which the Secretary has entered into an agreement under subsection (e) that is estimated at a value of less than $250,000, the non-Department Federal entity shall issue a final decision regarding such change not later than 30 days after the date on which the change is proposed.

''(2) With respect to a proposed change to such a contract that is estimated at a value of $250,000 or more—

''(A) the Secretary may provide to the entity the recommendations of the Secretary regarding such change;

''(B) during the 30-day period beginning on the date on which the entity furnishes to the Secretary information regarding such change, the Secretary may issue the final decision regarding such change; and

''(C) if the Secretary does not issue a final decision under subparagraph (B), during the 30-day period following the period described in such paragraph, the entity shall issue a final decision regarding such a change no later than 90 days from when the entity furnished information regarding such a change to the Secretary.

''(i) The Secretary shall ensure that each employee of the Department with responsibilities relating to the construction or alteration of medical facilities, including such construction or alteration carried out pursuant to contracts or agreements, undergoes a program of ongoing professional training and development. Such program shall be designed to ensure that employees maintain adequate expertise relating to industry standards and best practices for the acquisition of design and construction services. The Secretary may provide the program under this subsection through a contract or agreement with a non-Federal entity or with a non-Department Federal entity.''.

(b) LIMITATION ON PLANNING AND DESIGN FOR SUPER CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Section 8104(a) of title 38, United States Code, is amended—

(A) by redesignating paragraph (3) as paragraph (4);

(B) by inserting after paragraph (2) the following new paragraph (3):

''(3) The Secretary may not obligate or expend funds for advance planning or design for any super construction project, until the date that is 60 days after the date on which the Secretary submits to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs and the Committee on Appropriations of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs and the Committee on Appropriations of the House of Representatives notice of such obligation or expenditure.''; and

(C) in paragraph (4), as redesignated by paragraph (1) of this subsection, by adding at the end the following new subparagraph:

''(C) The term 'super construction project' means a project for the construction, alteration, or acquisition of a medical facility involving a total expenditure of more than $100,000,000, but such term does not include an acquisition by exchange.''.

(2) APPLICABILITY.—The amendments made by paragraph (1) shall take effect on the date of the enactment of this Act and shall apply with respect to a construction project that is initiated on or after that date.

(c) CONGRESSIONAL APPROVAL OF CERTAIN PROJECTS.—

(1) PROJECTS THAT EXCEED SPECIFIED AMOUNT.—Subsection (c) of section 8104 of title 38, United States Code, is amended to read as follows:

''(c)(1) The Secretary may not obligate funds for a major medical facility project or a super construction project approved by a law described in subsection (a)(2) in an amount that would cause the total amount obligated for that project to exceed the amount specified in the law for that project (or would add to total obligations exceeding such specified amount) by more than 10 percent unless the Committee on Veterans' Affairs and the Committee on Appropriations of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs and the Committee on Appropriations of the House of Representatives each approve in writing the obligation of those funds.

''(2) The Secretary shall—

''(A) enter into a contract with an appropriate non-department Federal entity with the ability to conduct forensic audits on medical facility projects for the conduct of an external forensic audit of the expenditures relating to any major medical facility or super construction project for which the total expenditures exceed the amount specified in the law for the project by more than 25 percent; and

''(B) enter into a contract with an appropriate non-department Federal entity with the ability to conduct forensic audits on medical facility projects for the conduct of an external audit of the medical center construction project in Aurora, Colorado.''.

(2) USE OF EXTRA AMOUNTS.—Subsection (d) of such section is amended—

(A) in paragraph (2)(B), in the matter preceding clause (i), by striking ''Whenever'' and inserting ''Before''; and

(B) by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

''(3) The Secretary may not obligate any funds described in paragraph (1) or amounts described in paragraph (2) before the date that is 30 days after the notification submitted under paragraph (1) or paragraph (2)(B), as the case may be, unless the Committee on Veterans' Affairs and the Committee on Appropriations of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs and the Committee on Appropriations of the House of Representatives each approve in writing the obligation of those funds or amounts.''.

(3) NOTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS.—

(A) COMMITTEES REQUIRED.—Subsection (d)(1) of such section is amended by striking ''each committee'' and inserting ''the Committee on Veterans' Affairs and the Committee on Appropriations of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs and the Committee on Appropriations of the House of Representatives''.

(B) USE OF AMOUNTS FROM BID SAVINGS.—Subsection (d)(2)(B) of such section is amended by adding at the end the following new clause:

''(iv) With respect to the major construction project that is the source of the bid savings—

''(I) the amounts already obligated or available in the project reserve for such project;

''(II) the percentage of such project that has been completed; and

''(III) the amount of such bid savings that is already obligated or otherwise being used for a purpose other than such project.''.

(d) QUARTERLY REPORT ON SUPER CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—At the end of subchapter I of chapter 81 of title 38, United States Code, add the following new section:

"§ 8120. Quarterly report on super construction projects

''(a) QUARTERLY REPORTS REQUIRED.—Not later than 30 days after the last day of each fiscal quarter the Secretary shall submit to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and House of Representatives on the super construction projects carried out by the Secretary during such quarter. Each such report shall include, for each such project—

''(1) the budgetary and scheduling status of the project, as of the last day of the quarter covered by the report; and

''(2) the actual cost and schedule variances of the project, as of such day, compared to the planned cost and schedules for the project.

''(b) SUPER CONSTRUCTION PROJECT DEFINED.—In this section, the term 'super construction project' has the meaning given such term in section 8104(a)(4)(C) of this title.''.

(2) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of the chapter is amended by adding at the end of the items relating to such subchapter the following new item:

''8120. Quarterly report on super construction projects.''.

(e) ACCELERATED MASTER PLANNING FOR EACH MEDICAL FACILITY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.—

(1) EXISTING FACILITIES.—Not later than December 31, 2016, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall complete a master plan described in paragraph (3) for each medical facility of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

(2) NEW FACILITIES.—For each medical facility of the Department for which construction is completed after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall complete a master plan described in paragraph (3) for the facility by not later than the earlier of the following dates:

(A) The date on which activation is completed.

(B) The date of the formal dedication of the facility.

(3) MASTER PLAN DESCRIBED.—A master plan described in this paragraph is, with respect to a medical facility of the Department, a plan to inform investment decisions and funding requests over a 10-year period for construction projects at such medical facility—

(A) to meet the health care needs of a changing veteran population through a combination of health care from the Department and other community resources; and

(B) to maximize the best use of the land and structures comprising such medical facility.

SEC. 3. ASSISTANT INSPECTOR GENERAL FOR CONSTRUCTION.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 3 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by inserting after section 312 the following new section:

"§ 312A. Assistant Inspector General for Construction

''(a) IN GENERAL.—There is in the Office of Inspector General an Assistant Inspector General for Construction. The Assistant Inspector General for Construction is responsible for conducting, supervising, and coordinating audits, evaluations, and investigations of the planning, design, contracting, execution, and construction of facilities and infrastructure of the Department, including major and minor construction projects and leases.

''(b) QUALIFICATIONS.—Each individual appointed as Assistant Inspector General for Construction shall be an individual who has expertise in construction and facilities management.

''(c) REPORTS.—(1) Not later than 60 days after the appointment of an individual as the Assistant Inspector General for Construction, and every calendar quarter thereafter, the Assistant Inspector General for Construction shall submit to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and House of Representatives a report summarizing the activities of the Assistant Inspector General for Construction during the 120-day period ending on the date of such report.

''(2) In addition to the report required in paragraph (1), and the requirements contained in section 5 of the Inspector General Act of 1978 (5 U.S.C. App.), the Assistant Inspector General for Construction shall promptly provide to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and House of Representatives the findings of any investigation undertaken by the Assistant Inspector General for Construction, and shall notify the Committees promptly if the Assistant Inspector General for Construction identifies any serious or flagrant problem or deficiency relating to the administration or operation of any construction program of the Department, if, during the course of any investigation, the Assistant Inspector General for Construction determines that Congress should take immediate action.

''(3) Nothing in this subsection shall be construed to authorize the public disclosure of information that is—

''(A) specifically prohibited from disclosure by any other provision of law;

''(B) specifically required by Executive Order to be protected from disclosure in the interest of national defense or national security or in the conduct of foreign affairs; or

''(C) a part of an ongoing criminal investigation.''.

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of such chapter is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 312 the following new item:

''312A. Assistant Inspector General for Construction.''.

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

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and to add extraneous material on H.R. 3106, as amended.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, I do rise in support of H.R. 3106, as amended, the Construction Reform Act of 2016. This bill would strengthen the Department of Veterans Affairs' major construction program by making a number of needed improvements to VA's construction management processes.

As the owner and operator of one of the Federal Government's largest real property portfolios, VA manages a complex and costly major medical facility construction program.

In recent years, that program has been fraught with failures and mismanagement that has led to millions of dollars of cost increases and years of schedule delays on all of VA's major medical facility construction projects.

The most glaring example of these failings can be seen in the construction of the replacement VA medical center in Denver, Colorado.

The discussion surrounding that facility—if my colleagues will recall—began more than 16 years ago, in 1999. Construction is now expected to conclude in 2018. Upon completion, that project will be more than $1 billion over budget and many, many years behind schedule. That is assuming, of course, that the project does not experience any further delays.

To prevent any further construction calamities like the ongoing one in Denver, this bill would require VA to use industry standards, standard designs, and best practices for all medical facility construction projects; to complete a master plan for each VA medical facility; and to provide regular reports on super construction projects.

To further strengthen oversight of VA's construction projects, the bill would also create an assistant inspector general for construction within the VA Office of Inspector General.

These are commonsense reforms that will lead, ultimately, to better facilities for our veterans and better use of our taxpayers' hard-earned dollars. I urge all my colleagues to support this legislation.

I reserve the balance of my time.

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

I want to thank the chairman for his fair and even leadership on this committee. While we don't agree on all issues, I feel he has made an effort to allow all voices to be heard, and for that I want to thank him. I thank the chairman for bringing this important legislation to our attention.

As we have seen by recent events, the VA has been challenged with major construction projects. Before they undertook the most recent medical center construction projects, it had been at least 15 years since a new medical center had been built.

This lack of experience showed and continues to show today. Not one of the major hospitals is on its original timeline. However, the VA has demonstrated they are able to do small, less complicated projects on time and under budget.

The bill also references ''a non-department Federal entity to provide full project management services for the super construction project, including management over the project design, acquisition, construction, and contract changes.''

We all know from experience that there is only one Federal entity that fits that description, and that is the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

For those projects that have not broken ground yet, the VA and the Corps of Engineers are already working on plans to include the Corps in the planning and construction of major projects over $100 million.

I continue to believe that the threshold for a super construction project should be at least $250 million. As a member of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, I know how busy the Army Corps is in responding to the projects that the committee requires them to complete. It is important that they do not get bogged down with projects of insufficient complexity. I will continue to watch the construction process and follow the complexity issue to determine if the threshold needs to be increased in the future.

I am pleased this legislation also includes an assistant inspector general for construction. Oversight of the projects needs a person who has the expertise to evaluate the complexity of VA's ongoing construction projects.

I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this legislation.

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

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. COFFMAN), my good friend, a member of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, and somebody who has been on this from the very, very beginning.

Mr. COFFMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the Construction Reform Act of 2016, an important piece of legislation that will further reform VA's severely troubled major construction program.

For decades, the Government Accountability Office has documented hundreds of millions of dollars in cost overruns on mismanaged VA major construction projects. GAO reports from 1981, 1993, 2009, and 2013 all reflect a stunning degree of bureaucratic incompetence in VA's construction management. In my own district, a single VA hospital project is over $1 billion over budget, and years behind schedule.

VA's construction failures represent billions of wasted tax dollars that should have gone towards VA's core mission: taking care of our Nation's veterans.

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Since 2012, the House Veterans' Affairs Committee has conducted at least six separate hearings exploring the VA's construction failures, and this bill's reforms incorporate many of the committee's findings.

First, it forces the VA to leave hospital construction to the experts—to Federal construction managers like the Army Corps of Engineers. In fact, the contractor on the troubled Aurora, Colorado, project demanded that the Army Corps of Engineers take over the project from the VA before they returned to work on the project.

Previously, in 2014, the House unanimously passed my legislation, which required the Army Corps to take over the VA's most troubled projects, including the project in Aurora. I am pleased that my colleagues in both the House and the Senate are now fully supportive of this transfer of authority.

Second, this bill introduces a much-needed improvement over the contract change order process. The GAO and the Veterans' Affairs Committee identified the VA's inept change order management as a major driver of both cost increases and project delays.

Third, the bill creates a new, independent assistant inspector general for construction who would be required to report directly to Congress when significant construction problems have been discovered.

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

Mr. MILLER of Florida. I yield the gentleman an additional 1 minute.

Mr. COFFMAN. As we learned with the project in Aurora, the VA went to great lengths to hide the significant problems with the project from the American people, insisting in congressional hearing after hearing that the project was on time and on budget. It was not until the project's contractor sued the VA—and won on every count in December of 2014—that the VA finally admitted it had significant problems with the Aurora project.

I urge all of my colleagues to support this measure and continue with the long-needed construction reforms in the VA.

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

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I encourage all Members to support H.R. 3106, as amended.

I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MILLER) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 3106, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

The title of the bill was amended so as to read: ''A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to make certain improvements in the administration of Department medical facility construction projects.''.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

VETERANS EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION, AND HEALTHCARE IMPROVEMENT ACT

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 3016) to amend title 38, United States Code, to clarify the role of podiatrists in the Department of Veterans Affairs, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 3016

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

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE; TABLE OF CONTENTS.

(a) SHORT TITLE.—This Act may be cited as the ''Veterans Employment, Education, and Healthcare Improvement Act''.

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

Sec. 1. Short title; table of contents.

TITLE I—VETERANS HEALTH CARE

Sec. 101. Role of podiatrists in Department of Veterans Affairs.
Sec. 102. Priority of medal of honor recipients in health care system of Department of Veterans Affairs.
Sec. 103. Improvement of care provided to newborn children.
Sec. 104. Comptroller General audit of budget of Veterans Health Administration.
Sec. 105. Outreach to veterans regarding effect of certain delayed payments by Department of Veterans Affairs Chief Business Office.
Sec. 106. Department of Veterans Affairs pilot program on dog training therapy.

TITLE II—VETERANS ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY AND TRANSITION ADMINISTRATION

Sec. 201. Establishment of Veterans Economic Opportunity and Transition Administration.
Sec. 202. Under Secretary for Veterans Economic Opportunity and Transition.

TITLE III—EDUCATION ASSISTANCE AND VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

Sec. 301. Modification and improvement of transfer of unused education benefits to family members under Department of Veterans Affairs Post-9/11 Educational Assistance Program.
Sec. 302. Clarification of eligibility for Marine Gunnery Sergeant John David Fry Scholarship.
Sec. 303. Approval of courses of education and training for purposes of the vocational rehabilitation program of the Department of Veterans Affairs.
Sec. 304. Authority to prioritize vocational rehabilitation services based on need.
Sec. 305. Recodification and improvement of election process for Post-9/11 Educational Assistance Program.
Sec. 306. Clarification of assistance provided for certain flight training and other programs of education.
Sec. 307. Consideration of certain time spent receiving medical care from Secretary of Defense as active duty for purposes of eligibility for post-9/11 educational assistance.
Sec. 308. Work-study allowance.
Sec. 309. Vocational rehabilitation and education action plan.
Sec. 310. Reduction in redundancy and inefficiencies in vocational rehabilitation claims processing.

TITLE IV—ADMINISTRATION OF EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE

Sec. 401. Centralized reporting of veteran enrollment by certain groups, districts, and consortiums of educational institutions.
Sec. 402. Provision of information regarding veteran entitlement to educational assistance.
Sec. 403. Role of State approving agencies.
Sec. 404. Criteria used to approve courses.
Sec. 405. Compliance surveys.

Sec. 406. Survey of individuals using their entitlement to educational assistance under the educational assistance programs administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.
Sec. 407. Improvement of information technology of the Veterans Benefits Administration of the Department of Veterans Affairs.
Sec. 408. Technical amendment relating to in-State tuition rate for individuals to whom entitlement is transferred under All-Volunteer Force Educational Assistance Program and Post-9/11 Educational Assistance.
TITLE V—OTHER MATTERS
Sec. 501. Amount of loan guaranteed under home loan program of Department of Veterans Affairs.
Sec. 502. Longitudinal study of job counseling, training, and placement service for veterans.
Sec. 503. Limitations on subcontracts under contracts with small business concerns owned and controlled by veterans.
Sec. 504. Procedures for provision of certain information to State veterans agencies to facilitate the furnishing of assistance and benefits to veterans.

TITLE I—VETERANS HEALTH CARE

SEC. 101. ROLE OF PODIATRISTS IN DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) INCLUSION AS PHYSICIAN.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Subchapter I of chapter 74 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

"§ 7413. Treatment of podiatrists

''For purposes of this chapter, the term 'physician' includes a podiatrist.''.

(2) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of such chapter is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 7412 the following new item:

''7413. Treatment of podiatrists.''.

(3) CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—Section 7401(1) of such title is amended by striking ''Physicians, dentists, podiatrists,'' and inserting ''Physicians, dentists,''.

(b) QUALIFICATIONS.—Section 7402(b) of such title is amended—

(1) in paragraph (1)—

(A) in subparagraph (A), by striking ''or of doctor of osteopathy'' and inserting '', doctor of osteopathy, or doctor of podiatric medicine''; and

(B) in subparagraph (C), by inserting ''podiatry,'' after ''surgery,'';

(2) by striking paragraph (5); and

(3) by redesignating paragraphs (6) through (14) as paragraphs (5) through (13), respectively.

(c) PERIOD OF APPOINTMENT.—Section 7403(a)(2) of such title is amended—

(1) by striking subparagraph (C); and

(2) by redesignating subparagraphs (D) through (H) as subparagraphs (C) through (G), respectively.

(d) MODIFICATION OF PAY GRADE.—

(1) GRADE.—The list in section 7404(b) of such title is amended by striking ''CLINICAL PODIATRIST, CHIROPRACTOR, AND OPTOMETRIST SCHEDULE'' and inserting ''CLINICAL CHIROPRACTOR AND OPTOMETRIST SCHEDULE''.

(2) APPLICATION.—The amendment made by paragraph (1) shall apply with respect to a pay period of the Department of Veterans Affairs beginning on or after the date that is 30 days after the date of the enactment of this Act.

(e) CONTRACTS FOR SCARCE SERVICES.—Section 7409(a) of such title is amended by striking ''podiatrists,''.

(f) PERSONNEL ADMINISTRATION.—Section 7421(b) of such title is amended—

(1) by striking paragraph (3); and

(2) by redesignating paragraphs (4) through (8) as paragraphs (3) through (7), respectively.

(g) MEDICAL DIRECTORS.—Section 7306(a)(4) of such title is amended by inserting '', doctor of podiatric medicine,'' after ''doctor of medicine''.

(h) APPLICATION.—The amendments made by this section shall apply with respect to podiatrists employed by the Department of Veterans Affairs as of the date of the enactment of this Act or who are appointed on or after such date.

SEC. 102. PRIORITY OF MEDAL OF HONOR RECIPIENTS IN HEALTH CARE SYSTEM OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) ENROLLMENT PRIORITY.—Section 1705(a) of title 38, United States Code, is amended—

(1) in paragraph (1), by striking the period at the end and inserting the following: ''and veterans who were awarded the medal of honor under section 3741, 6241, or 8741 of title 10 or section 491 of title 14.''; and

(2) in paragraph (3), by striking ''veterans who were awarded the medal of honor under section 3741, 6241, or 8741 of title 10 or section 491 of title 14,''.

(b) ELIGIBILITY.—Section 1710(a)(2)(D) of such title is amended by inserting after ''war'' the following: '', who was awarded the medal of honor under section 3741, 6241, or 8741 of title 10 or section 491 of title 14,''.

(c) EXTENDED CARE SERVICES.—Section 1710B(c)(2) of such title is amended—

(1) in subparagraph (B), by striking ''or'';

(2) in subparagraph (C), by striking the period at the end and inserting ''; or''; and

(3) by adding at the end the following new subparagraph:

''(D) to a veteran who was awarded the medal of honor under section 3741, 6241, or 8741 of title 10 or section 491 of title 14.''.

(d) COPAYMENT FOR MEDICATIONS.—Section 1722A(a)(3) of such title is amended—

(1) in subparagraph (B), by striking ''or'';

(2) in subparagraph (C), by striking the period at the end and inserting ''; or''; and

(3) by adding at the end the following new subparagraph:

''(D) to a veteran who was awarded the medal of honor under section 3741, 6241, or 8741 of title 10 or section 491 of title 14.''.

(e) APPLICATION.—The priority of enrollment of medal of honor recipients pursuant to chapter 17 of title 38, United States Code, as amended by this section, shall apply to each such recipient, regardless of the date on which the medal is awarded.

SEC. 103. IMPROVEMENT OF CARE PROVIDED TO NEWBORN CHILDREN.

Section 1786 of title 38, United States Code, is amended—

(1) in subsection (a), by striking ''seven days'' and inserting ''42 days''; and

(2) by adding at the end the following new subsection:

''(c) ANNUAL REPORT.—Not later than October 31, 2016, and each year thereafter through 2020, the Secretary shall submit to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives and the Senate a report on the health care services provided under subsection (a) during the fiscal year preceding the date of the report, including the number of newborn children who received such services during such fiscal year.''.

SEC. 104. COMPTROLLER GENERAL AUDIT OF BUDGET OF VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Subchapter II of chapter 73 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

"§ 7330B. Comptroller General audit of VHA budget

''(a) IN GENERAL.—The Comptroller General of the United States shall periodically conduct an audit of elements of the budget of the Veterans Health Administration, including the budget formulation, execution, allocation, and use of funds.

''(b) SELECTION OF ELEMENTS.—(1) In selecting elements of the budget of the Veterans Health Administration for purposes of an audit under subsection (a), the Comptroller General shall take into consideration—

''(A) knowledge of the programs of the Veterans Health Administration;

''(B) current issues;

''(C) national priorities; and

''(D) priorities expressed by the appropriate congressional committees.

''(2) Not later than 30 days before conducting an audit under subsection (a), the Comptroller General shall submit to the appropriate congressional committees notice of the elements selected by the Comptroller General for purposes of the audit.

''(c) APPROPRIATE CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES.—In this section, the term 'appropriate congressional committees' means—

''(1) the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, the Committee on Appropriations, and the Committee on the Budget of the Senate; and

''(2) the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, the Committee on Appropriations, and the Committee on the Budget of the House of Representatives.''.

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of such chapter is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 7330A the following new item:

''7330B. Comptroller General audit of VHA budget.''.

SEC. 105. OUTREACH TO VETERANS REGARDING EFFECT OF CERTAIN DELAYED PAYMENTS BY DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS CHIEF BUSINESS OFFICE.

(a) OUTREACH.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall conduct outreach, including through national and local veterans service organizations, to inform veterans of how to resolve credit issues caused by delayed payment of a claim for emergency hospital care, medical services, or other emergency health care furnished through a non-Department of Veterans Affairs provider. The Secretary shall establish a toll-free telephone number for veterans to report such credit issues to the Chief Business Office of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

(b) ANNUAL REPORT.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—During the five-year period beginning on the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall annually submit to Congress a report on the effectiveness of the Chief Business Office in providing timely payment of proper invoices for emergency hospital care, medical services, or other emergency health care furnished through non-Department of Veterans Affairs providers by the required payment date during both the five-year period preceding the date of the report and the one-year period preceding such date. For any part of the period covered by a report under this subsection that occurred before October 1, 2014, the report shall evaluate the provision of such payments by the Veterans Integrated Service Networks.

(2) MATTERS INCLUDED.—The reports under paragraph (1) shall include, for each period covered by the report, the following:

(A) The number of veterans who contacted the Secretary regarding a delayed payment that negatively affected, or will potentially negatively affect, the credit of the veteran.

(B) The total amount of interest penalties paid by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs

under section 3902 of title 31, United States Code, by reason of a delayed payment.

(C) The number of proper invoices submitted, listed in a table for each quarter and fiscal year of each such period that includes—

(i) the total amount owed by the Secretary under the proper invoices;

(ii) the payment status of each proper invoice, as of the date of the report; and

(iii) the period that elapsed until each proper invoice was paid, including an explanation of any delayed payment.

(D) Any comments regarding delayed payments made by medical providers.

(E) A description of the best practices that the Chief Business Office can carry out to provide timely payment of a proper invoice, including a plan to improve such timely payments.

(c) QUARTERLY REPORTS ON PENDING CLAIMS.—During the five-year period beginning on the date of the enactment of this Act, the Chief Business Office of the Department of Veterans Affairs shall submit to Congress quarterly reports on the number of pending claims for reimbursement for emergency hospital care, medical services, and other emergency health care furnished through non-Department of Veterans Affairs providers. Each such report shall include each of the following:

(1) The total number of such pending claims for each hospital system of the Department, as of the last day of the quarter covered by the report.

(2) The total number of veterans who submitted such a pending claim in each State, as of such day.

(3) The aggregate amount of all such pending claims in each State, as of such day.

(4) As of such day—

(A) the number of such pending claims that have been pending for 30 days or longer;

(B) the number of such pending claims that have been pending for 90 days or longer; and

(C) the number of such pending claims that have been pending for 365 days or longer.

(5) For each hospital system, for the quarter covered by the report—

(A) the number of claims for reimbursement for emergency hospital care, medical services, and other emergency health care furnished through non-Department of Veterans Affairs providers approved during such quarter;

(B) the number of such claims denied during such quarter; and

(C) the number of such claims denied listed by each denial reason group.

(d) COMPTROLLER GENERAL STUDY.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Comptroller General of the United States shall conduct a study that evaluates the effectiveness of the Chief Business Office in providing timely payment of a proper invoice for emergency hospital care, medical services, or other emergency health care furnished through non-Department of Veterans Affairs providers by the required payment date.

(2) SUBMITTAL.—The Comptroller General shall submit to Congress a report on the study conducted under paragraph (1), including the total amount of interest penalties paid by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs under section 3902 of title 31, United States Code, by reason of a delayed payment.

(e) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

(1) The term ''delayed payment'' means a proper invoice that is not paid by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs until after the required payment date.

(2) The term ''proper invoice'' has the meaning given that term in section 3901(a) of title 31, United States Code.

(3) The term ''required payment date'' means the date that payment is due for a contract pursuant to section 3903(a) of title 31, United States Code.

SEC. 106. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS PILOT PROGRAM ON DOG TRAINING THERAPY.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Commencing not later than 120 days after the date of the enactment of the Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall carry out a pilot program under which the Secretary shall enter into a contract with one or more appropriate non-government entities for the purpose of assessing the effectiveness of addressing post-deployment mental health and post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms through a therapeutic medium of training service dogs for veterans with disabilities.

(b) DURATION OF PILOT PROGRAM.—The pilot program required by subsection (a) shall be carried out during the five-year period beginning on the date of the commencement of the pilot program.

(c) LOCATIONS OF PILOT PROGRAM.—In entering into contracts for purposes of the pilot program, the Secretary shall seek to enter into contracts with appropriate non-government entities located in close proximity to at least three but not more than five medical centers of the Department.

(d) APPROPRIATE NON-GOVERNMENT ENTITIES.—For purposes of the pilot program, an appropriate non-government entity is an entity that is certified in the training and handling of service dogs and that has a training area that would be appropriate for use in educating veterans with mental health conditions in the art and science of service dog training and handling. Such training area shall—

(1) include a dedicated space that is suitable for grooming and training dogs indoors;

(2) be wheelchair accessible;

(3) include classroom or lecture space;

(4) include office space for staff;

(5) include a suitable space for storing training equipment;

(6) provide for periodic use of other training areas for training the dogs with wheelchairs and conducting other exercises;

(7) include outdoor exercise and toileting space for dogs; and

(8) provide transportation for weekly field trips to train dogs in other environments.

(e) DESIGN OF PILOT PROGRAM.—Each contract entered into under subsection (a) shall provide that the non-government entity shall—

(1) ensure that veterans participating in the program receive training from certified service dog training instructors;

(2) ensure that in selecting assistance dogs for use in the program, dogs residing in animal shelters or foster homes are looked at as an option, if appropriate, and ensure that all dogs used in the program have adequate temperament and health clearances;

(3) ensure that each service dog in training participating in the pilot program is taught all essential commands pertaining to service dog skills;

(4) ensure that each service dog in training lives at the pilot program site or a volunteer foster home in the vicinity of such site while receiving training;

(5) ensure that the pilot program involves both lecture of service dog training methodologies and practical hands-on training and grooming of service dogs; and

(6) ensure that the pilot program is designed to—

(A) maximize the therapeutic benefits to veterans participating in the program; and

(B) provide well-trained service dogs to veterans with disabilities; and

(7) in hiring service dog training instructors to carry out training under the pilot program, give a preference to veterans who have successfully graduated from post-traumatic stress disorder or other residential treatment programs and who have received adequate certification in service dog training.

(f) ADMINISTRATION.—In order to carry out the pilot program under section (a), the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall—

(1) administer the program through the Recreation Therapy Service of the Department of Veterans Affairs under the direction of a certified recreational therapist with sufficient administrative experience to oversee the pilot program; and

(2) establish a director of service dog training with a background working in social services, experience in teaching others to train service dogs in a vocational setting, and at least one year of experience working with veterans or active duty service members with post-traumatic stress disorder in a clinical setting.

(g) VETERAN ELIGIBILITY.—The Secretary shall select veterans for participation in the pilot program. A veteran with post-traumatic stress disorder or other post-deployment mental health condition may volunteer to participate in the pilot program, if the Secretary determines that there are adequate program resources available for such veteran at the pilot program site. Veterans may participate in the pilot program in conjunction with the compensated work therapy program of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

(h) COLLECTION OF DATA.—The Secretary shall collect data on the pilot program required under subsection (a) to determine how effective the program is for the veterans participating in the program. Such data shall include data to determine how effectively the program assists veterans in—

(1) reducing stigma associated with post-traumatic stress disorder or other post-deployment mental health condition;

(2) improving emotional regulation;

(3) improving patience;

(4) instilling or re-establishing a sense of purpose;

(5) providing an opportunity to help fellow veterans;

(6) reintegrating into the community;

(7) exposing the dog to new environments and in doing so, helping the veteran reduce social isolation and withdrawal;

(8) building relationship skills, including parenting skills;

(9) relaxing the hyper-vigilant survival state;

(10) improving sleep patterns; and

(11) enabling veterans to decrease the use of pain medication.

(i) REPORTS TO CONGRESS.—Not later than one year after the date of the commencement of the pilot program under subsection (a), and each year thereafter for the duration of the pilot program, the Secretary shall submit to Congress a report on the pilot program. Each such report shall include—

(1) the number of veterans participating in the pilot program;

(2) a description of the services carried out under the pilot program;

(3) the effects that participating in the pilot program has on the following—

(A) symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder and post-deployment adjustment difficulties, including depression, maintenance of sobriety, suicidal ideations, and homelessness;

(B) potentially relevant physiological markers that possibly relate to the interactions with the service dogs;

(C) family dynamics;

(D) insomnia and pain management; and

(E) overall well-being; and

(4) the recommendations of the Secretary with respect to the extension or expansion of the pilot program.

(j) DEFINITION.—For the purposes of this section, the term ''service dog training instructor'' means an instructor who provides the direct training of veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder and other post-deployment issues in the art and science of service dog training and handling.

TITLE II—VETERANS ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY AND TRANSITION ADMINISTRATION

SEC. 201. ESTABLISHMENT OF VETERANS ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY AND TRANSITION ADMINISTRATION.

(a) VETERANS ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY AND TRANSITION ADMINISTRATION.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Part V of title 38, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new chapter:

''CHAPTER 80—VETERANS ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY AND TRANSITION ADMINISTRATION

''Sec.
''8001. Organization of Administration.
''8002. Functions of Administration.

''§ 8001. Organization of Administration

''(a) VETERANS ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY AND TRANSITION ADMINISTRATION.—There is in the Department of Veterans Affairs a Veterans Economic Opportunity and Transition Administration. The primary function of the Veterans Economic Opportunity and Transition Administration is the administration of the programs of the Department that provide assistance related to economic opportunity to veterans and their dependents and survivors.

''(b) UNDER SECRETARY FOR ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY AND TRANSITION.—The Veterans Economic Opportunity and Transition Administration is under the Under Secretary for Veterans Economic Opportunity and Transition, who is directly responsible to the Secretary for the operations of the Administration.

''§ 8002. Functions of Administration

''The Veterans Economic Opportunity and Transition Administration is responsible for the administration of the following programs of the Department:

''(1) Vocational rehabilitation and employment programs.

''(2) Educational assistance programs.

''(3) Veterans' housing loan and related programs.

''(4) The verification of small businesses owned and controlled by veterans pursuant to subsection (f) of section 8127 of this title, including the administration of the database of veteran-owned businesses described in such subsection.

''(5) The Transition Assistance Program under section 1144 of title 10.

''(6) Any other program of the Department that the Secretary determines appropriate.''.

(2) CLERICAL AMENDMENTS.—The tables of chapters at the beginning of title 38, United States Code, and of part V of title 38, United States Code, are each amended by inserting after the item relating to chapter 79 the following new item:

''80. Veterans Economic Opportunity and Transition Administration ..... 8001''.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—Chapter 80 of title 38, United States Code, as added by subsection (a), shall take effect on October 1, 2017.

(c) FULL-TIME EMPLOYEES.—For fiscal years 2017 and 2018, the total number of full-time equivalent employees authorized for the Veterans Benefits Administration and the Veterans Economic Opportunity and Transition Administration, as established under chapter 80 of title 38, United States Code, as added by subsection (a), may not exceed 21,913.

SEC. 202. UNDER SECRETARY FOR VETERANS ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY AND TRANSITION.

(a) UNDER SECRETARY.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 3 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by inserting after section 306 the following new section:

''§ 306A. Under Secretary for Veterans Economic Opportunity and Transition

''(a) UNDER SECRETARY.—There is in the Department an Under Secretary for Veterans Economic Opportunity and Transition, who is appointed by the President, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate. The Under Secretary for Veterans Economic Opportunity and Transition shall be appointed without regard to political affiliation or activity and solely on the basis of demonstrated ability in—

''(1) information technology; and

''(2) the administration of programs within the Veterans Economic Opportunity and Transition Administration or programs of similar content and scope.

''(b) RESPONSIBILITIES.—The Under Secretary for Veterans Economic Opportunity and Transition is the head of, and is directly responsible to the Secretary for the operations of, the Veterans Economic Opportunity and Transition Administration.

''(c) VACANCIES.—(1) Whenever a vacancy in the position of Under Secretary for Veterans Economic Opportunity and Transition occurs or is anticipated, the Secretary shall establish a commission to recommend individuals to the President for appointment to the position.

''(2) A commission established under this subsection shall be composed of the following members appointed by the Secretary:

''(A) Three persons representing education and training, vocational rehabilitation, employment, real estate, mortgage finance and related industries, and survivor benefits activities affected by the Veterans Economic Opportunity and Transition Administration.

''(B) Two persons representing veterans served by the Veterans Economic Opportunity and Transition Administration.

''(C) Two persons who have experience in the management of private sector benefits programs of similar content and scope to the economic opportunity and transition programs of the Department.

''(D) The Deputy Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

''(E) The chairman of the Veterans' Advisory Committee on Education formed under section 3692 of this title.

''(F) One person who has held the position of Under Secretary for Veterans Economic Opportunity and Transition, if the Secretary determines that it is desirable for such person to be a member of the commission.

''(3) A commission established under this subsection shall recommend at least three individuals for appointment to the position of Under Secretary for Veterans Economic Opportunity and Transition. The commission shall submit all recommendations to the Secretary. The Secretary shall forward the recommendations to the President and the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and House of Representatives with any comments the Secretary considers appropriate. Thereafter, the President may request the commission to recommend additional individuals for appointment.

''(4) The Assistant Secretary or Deputy Assistant Secretary of Veterans Affairs who performs personnel management and labor relations functions shall serve as the executive secretary of a commission established under this subsection.

''(d) QUALIFICATIONS OF RECOMMENDED INDIVIDUALS.—Each individual recommended to the President by the commission for appointment to the position of Under Secretary for Veterans Economic Opportunity and Transition shall be an individual who has held a senior level position in the private sector with responsibilities relating to at least one of the following:

''(1) Education policy.

''(2) Vocational rehabilitation.

''(3) Employment.

''(4) Job placement.

''(5) Home loan finance.

''(6) Small business development.''.

(2) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of such chapter is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 306 the following new item:

''306A. Under Secretary for Veterans Economic Opportunity and Transition.''.

(b) CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—Title 38, United States Code, is further amended—

(1) in section 306(c)(2), by striking subparagraphs (A) and (E) and redesignating subparagraphs (B), (C), (D), and (F), as subparagraphs (A) through (D), respectively;

(2) in section 317(d)(2), by inserting after ''Under Secretary for Benefits,'' the following: ''the Under Secretary for Veterans Economic Opportunity and Transition,'';

(3) in section 318(d)(2), by inserting after ''Under Secretary for Benefits,'' the following: ''the Under Secretary for Veterans Economic Opportunity and Transition,'';

(4) in section 516(e)(2)(C), by striking ''Health and the Under Secretary for Benefits'' and inserting ''Health, the Under Secretary for Benefits, and the Under Secretary for Veterans Economic Opportunity and Transition'';

(5) in section 541(a)(2)(B), by striking ''Health and the Under Secretary for Benefits'' and inserting ''Health, the Under Secretary for Benefits, and the Under Secretary for Veterans Economic Opportunity and Transition'';

(6) in section 542(a)(2)(B)(iii), by striking ''Health and the Under Secretary for Benefits'' and inserting ''Health, the Under Secretary for Benefits, and the Under Secretary for Veterans Economic Opportunity and Transition'';

(7) in section 544(a)(2)(B)(vi), by striking ''Health and the Under Secretary for Benefits'' and inserting ''Health, the Under Secretary for Benefits, and the Under Secretary for Veterans Economic Opportunity and Transition'';

(8) in section 709(c)(2)(A), by inserting after ''Under Secretary for Benefits,'' the following: ''the Under Secretary for Veterans Economic Opportunity and Transition,'';

(9) in section 7701(a), by inserting after ''assistance'' the following: '', other than assistance related to Economic Opportunity and Transition,''; and

(10) in section 7703, by striking paragraphs (2) and (3) and redesignating paragraphs (4) and (5) as paragraphs (2) and (3), respectively.

(c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—Section 306A of title 38, United States Code, as added by subsection (a), and the amendments made by this section, shall take effect on October 1, 2017.

TITLE III—EDUCATION ASSISTANCE AND VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

SEC. 301. MODIFICATION AND IMPROVEMENT OF TRANSFER OF UNUSED EDUCATION BENEFITS TO FAMILY MEMBERS UNDER DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS POST-9/11 EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.

(a) RATE OF PAYMENT.—Subsection (h)(3)(B) of section 3319 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by inserting before the period at the end the following: '', except that the amount of the monthly stipend described in subsection (c)(1)(B) or (g)(3)(A)(ii) of section 3313, as the case may be, shall be payable in an amount equal to 50 percent of

the amount of such stipend that would otherwise be payable under this chapter to the individual making the transfer''.

(b) APPLICABILITY.—The amendment made by this section shall apply with respect to an election to transfer entitlement under section 3319 of title 38, United States Code, that is made on or after the date that is 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 302. CLARIFICATION OF ELIGIBILITY FOR MARINE GUNNERY SERGEANT JOHN DAVID FRY SCHOLARSHIP.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 701(d) of the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014 (Public Law 113–146; 128 Stat. 1796; 38 U.S.C. 3311 note) is amended to read as follows:

''(d) APPLICABILITY.—

''(1) IN GENERAL.—The amendments made by this section shall apply with respect to a quarter, semester, or term, as applicable, commencing on or after January 1, 2015.

''(2) DEATHS THAT OCCURRED BETWEEN SEPTEMBER 11, 2001, AND DECEMBER 31, 2005.—For purposes of section 3311(f)(2) of title 38, United States Code, any member of the Armed Forces who died during the period beginning on September 11, 2001, and ending on December 31, 2005, is deemed to have died on January 1, 2006.''.

(b) ELECTION ON RECEIPT OF CERTAIN BENEFITS.—Section 3311(f) of title 38, United States Code, is amended—

(1) in paragraph (3), by striking ''A surviving spouse'' and inserting ''Except as provided in paragraph (4), a surviving spouse'';

(2) by redesignating paragraph (4) as paragraph (5); and

(3) by inserting after paragraph (3) the following new paragraph (4):

''(4) EXCEPTION FOR CERTAIN ELECTIONS.—

''(A) IN GENERAL.—An election made under paragraph (3) by a spouse described in subparagraph (B) may not be treated as irrevocable if such election occurred before the date of the enactment of this paragraph.

''(B) ELIGIBLE SURVIVING SPOUSE.—A spouse described in this subparagraph is an individual—

''(i) who is entitled to assistance under subsection (a) pursuant to paragraph (9) of subsection (b); and

''(ii) who was the spouse of a member of the Armed Forces who died during the period beginning on September 11, 2001, and ending on December 31, 2005.''.

(c) TECHNICAL AMENDMENT.—Paragraph (5) of subsection (f) of section 3311 of title 38, United States Code, as redesignated by subsection (b)(2), is amended by striking ''that paragraph'' and inserting ''paragraph (9) of subsection (b)''.

(d) YELLOW RIBBON G.I. EDUCATION ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM.—Section 3317(a) of such title is amended by striking ''paragraphs (1) and (2) of section 3311(b)'' and inserting ''paragraphs (1), (2), and (9) of section 3311(b) of this title''.

SEC. 303. APPROVAL OF COURSES OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOR PURPOSES OF THE VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM OF THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 3104(b) of title 38, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new sentence: ''To the maximum extent practicable, a course of education or training may be pursued by a veteran as part of a rehabilitation program under this chapter only if the course is approved for purposes of chapter 30 or 33 of this title. The Secretary may waive the requirement under the preceding sentence to the extent the Secretary determines appropriate.''.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendment made by subsection (a) shall apply with respect to a course of education or training pursued by a veteran who first begins a program of rehabilitation under chapter 31 of title 38, United States Code, on or after the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 304. AUTHORITY TO PRIORITIZE VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES BASED ON NEED.

Section 3104 of title 38, United States Code, as amended by section 303, is further amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

''(c)(1) The Secretary shall have the authority to administer this chapter by prioritizing the provision of services under this chapter based on need, as determined by the Secretary. In evaluating need for purposes of this subsection, the Secretary shall consider disability ratings, the severity of employment handicaps, qualification for a program of independent living, income, and any other factor the Secretary determines appropriate.

''(2) Not later than 90 days before making any changes to the prioritization of the provision of services under this chapter as authorized under paragraph (1), the Secretary shall submit to Congress a plan describing such changes.''.

SEC. 305. RECODIFICATION AND IMPROVEMENT OF ELECTION PROCESS FOR POST-9/11 EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Subchapter III of chapter 33 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

''§ 3326. Election to receive educational assistance

''(a) INDIVIDUALS ELIGIBLE TO ELECT PARTICIPATION IN POST-9/11 EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE.—An individual may elect to receive educational assistance under this chapter if such individual—

''(1) as of August 1, 2009—

''(A) is entitled to basic educational assistance under chapter 30 of the title and has used, but retains unused, entitlement under that chapter;

''(B) is entitled to educational assistance under chapter 107, 1606, or 1607 of title 10 and has used, but retains unused, entitlement under the applicable chapter;

''(C) is entitled to basic educational assistance under chapter 30 of this title but has not used any entitlement under that chapter;

''(D) is entitled to educational assistance under chapter 107, 1606, or 1607 of title 10 but has not used any entitlement under such chapter;

''(E) is a member of the Armed Forces who is eligible for receipt of basic educational assistance under chapter 30 this title and is making contributions toward such assistance under section 3011(b) or 3012(c) of this title; or

''(F) is a member of the Armed Forces who is not entitled to basic educational assistance under chapter 30 of this title by reason of an election under section 3011(c)(1) or 3012(d)(1) of this title; and

''(2) as of the date of the individual's election under this paragraph, meets the requirements for entitlement to educational assistance under this chapter.

''(b) CESSATION OF CONTRIBUTIONS TOWARD GI BILL.—Effective as of the first month beginning on or after the date of an election under subsection (a) of an individual described by paragraph (1)(E) of that subsection, the obligation of the individual to make contributions under section 3011(b) or 3012(c) of this title, as applicable, shall cease, and the requirements of such section shall be deemed to be no longer applicable to the individual.

''(c) REVOCATION OF REMAINING TRANSFERRED ENTITLEMENT.—

''(1) ELECTION TO REVOKE.—If, on the date an individual described in paragraph (1)(A) or (1)(C) of subsection (a) makes an election under that subsection, a transfer of the entitlement of the individual to basic educational assistance under section 3020 of this title is in effect and a number of months of the entitlement so transferred remain unutilized, the individual may elect to revoke all or a portion of the entitlement so transferred that remains unutilized.

''(2) AVAILABILITY OF REVOKED ENTITLEMENT.—Any entitlement revoked by an individual under this paragraph shall no longer be available to the dependent to whom transferred, but shall be available to the individual instead for educational assistance under chapter 33 of this title in accordance with the provisions of this section.

''(3) AVAILABILITY OF UNREVOKED ENTITLEMENT.—Any entitlement described in paragraph (1) that is not revoked by an individual in accordance with that paragraph shall remain available to the dependent or dependents concerned in accordance with the current transfer of such entitlement under section 3020 of this title.

''(d) POST-9/11 EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE.—

''(1) IN GENERAL.—Subject to paragraph (2) and except as provided in subsection (e), an individual making an election under subsection (a) shall be entitled to educational assistance under this chapter in accordance with the provisions of this chapter, instead of basic educational assistance under chapter 30 this title, or educational assistance under chapter 107, 1606, or 1607 of title 10, as applicable.

''(2) LIMITATION ON ENTITLEMENT FOR CERTAIN INDIVIDUALS.—In the case of an individual making an election under subsection (a) who is described by paragraph (1)(A) of that subsection, the number of months of entitlement of the individual to educational assistance under this chapter 33 shall be the number of months equal to—

''(A) the number of months of unused entitlement of the individual under chapter 30 of this title, as of the date of the election, plus

''(B) the number of months, if any, of entitlement revoked by the individual under subsection (c)(1).

''(e) CONTINUING ENTITLEMENT TO EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE NOT AVAILABLE UNDER 9/11 ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.—

''(1) IN GENERAL.—In the event educational assistance to which an individual making an election under subsection (a) would be entitled under chapter 30 of this title, or chapter 107, 1606, or 1607 of title 10, as applicable, is not authorized to be available to the individual under the provisions of this chapter the individual shall remain entitled to such educational assistance in accordance with the provisions of the applicable chapter.

''(2) CHARGE FOR USE OF ENTITLEMENT.—The utilization by an individual of entitlement under paragraph (1) shall be chargeable against the entitlement of the individual to educational assistance under this chapter at the rate of one month of entitlement under this chapter for each month of entitlement utilized by the individual under paragraph (1) (as determined as if such entitlement were utilized under the provisions of chapter 30 of this title, or chapter 107, 1606, or 1607 of title 10, as applicable).

''(f) ADDITIONAL POST-9/11 ASSISTANCE FOR MEMBERS HAVING MADE CONTRIBUTIONS TOWARD GI BILL.—

''(1) ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE.—In the case of an individual making an election under subsection (a) who is described by subparagraph (A), (C), or (E) of paragraph (1) of that subsection, the amount of educational assistance payable to the individual under this chapter 33 as a monthly stipend payable under paragraph (1)(B) of section 3313(c) of

this title, or under paragraphs (2) through (7) of that section (as applicable), shall be the amount otherwise payable as a monthly stipend under the applicable paragraph increased by the amount equal to—

''(A) the total amount of contributions toward basic educational assistance made by the individual under section 3011(b) or 3012(c) of this title, as of the date of the election, multiplied by

''(B) the fraction—

''(i) the numerator of which is—

''(I) the number of months of entitlement to basic educational assistance under chapter 30 of this title remaining to the individual at the time of the election; plus

''(II) the number of months, if any, of entitlement under such chapter 30 revoked by the individual under subsection (c)(1); and

''(ii) the denominator of which is 36 months.

''(2) MONTHS OF REMAINING ENTITLEMENT FOR CERTAIN INDIVIDUALS.—In the case of an individual covered by paragraph (1) who is described by subsection (a)(1)(E), the number of months of entitlement to basic educational assistance remaining to the individual for purposes of paragraph (1)(B)(i)(II) shall be 36 months.

''(3) TIMING OF PAYMENT.—The amount payable with respect to an individual under paragraph (1) shall be paid to the individual together with the last payment of the monthly stipend payable to the individual under paragraph (1)(B) of section 3313(c) of this title, or under subsections (b) through (g) of that section (as applicable), before the exhaustion of the individual's entitlement to educational assistance under this chapter.

''(g) CONTINUING ENTITLEMENT TO ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE FOR CRITICAL SKILLS OR SPECIALITY AND ADDITIONAL SERVICE.—An individual making an election under subsection (a)(1) who, at the time of the election, is entitled to increased educational assistance under section 3015(d) of this title, or section 16131(i) of title 10, or supplemental educational assistance under subchapter III of chapter 30 of this title, shall remain entitled to such increased educational assistance or supplemental educational assistance in the utilization of entitlement to educational assistance under this chapter, in an amount equal to the quarter, semester, or term, as applicable, equivalent of the monthly amount of such increased educational assistance or supplemental educational assistance payable with respect to the individual at the time of the election.

''(h) ALTERNATIVE ELECTION BY SECRETARY.—

''(1) IN GENERAL.—In the case of an individual who, on or after January 1, 2016, submits to the Secretary an election under this section that the Secretary determines is clearly against the interests of the individual, or who fails to make an election under this section, the Secretary may make an alternative election on behalf of the individual that the Secretary determines is in the best interests of the individual.

''(2) NOTICE.—If the Secretary makes an election on behalf of an individual under this subsection, the Secretary shall notify the individual by not later than seven days after making such election and shall provide the individual with a 30-day period, beginning on the date of the individual's receipt of such notice, during which the individual may modify or revoke the election made by the Secretary on the individual's behalf. The Secretary shall include, as part of such notice, a clear statement of why the alternative election made by the Secretary is in the best interests of the individual as compared to the election submitted by the individual. The Secretary shall provide the notice required under this paragraph by electronic means whenever possible.

''(i) IRREVOCABILITY OF ELECTIONS.—An election under subsection (a) or (c)(1) is irrevocable.''.

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of such chapter is amended by adding at the end the following new item:

''3326. Election to receive educational assistance.''.

(c) CONFORMING REPEAL.—Subsection (c) of section 5003 of the Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2008 (Public Law 110–252; 38 U.S.C. 3301 note) is hereby repealed.

SEC. 306. CLARIFICATION OF ASSISTANCE PROVIDED FOR CERTAIN FLIGHT TRAINING AND OTHER PROGRAMS OF EDUCATION.

(a) FLIGHT TRAINING.—Subsection (c)(1)(A) of section 3313 of title 38, United States Code, is amended—

(1) in clause (i)—

(A) by redesignating subclauses (I) and (II) as items (aa) and (bb), respectively;

(B) by striking ''In the case of a program of education pursued at a public institution of higher learning'' and inserting ''(I) Subject to subclause (II), in the case of a program of education pursued at a public institution of higher learning not described in clause (ii)(II)(bb)''; and

(C) by adding at the end the following new subclause:

''(II) In determining the actual net cost for in-State tuition and fees pursuant to subclause (I), the Secretary may not pay for tuition and fees relating to flight training.''; and

(2) in clause (ii)—

(A) in subclause (I), by redesignating items (aa) and (bb) as subitems (AA) and (BB), respectively;

(B) in subclause (II), by redesignating items (aa) and (bb) as subitems (AA) and (BB), respectively;

(C) by redesignating subclauses (I) and (II) as items (aa) and (bb), respectively;

(D) by striking ''In the case of a program of education pursued at a non-public or foreign institution of higher learning'' and inserting ''(I) In the case of a program of education described in subclause (II)''; and

(E) by adding at the end the following new subclause:

''(II) A program of education described in this subclause is any of the following:

''(aa) A program of education pursued at a non-public or foreign institution of higher learning.

''(bb) A program of education pursued at a public institution of higher learning in which flight training is required to earn the degree being pursued (including with respect to a dual major, concentration, or other element of such a degree).''.

(b) CERTAIN PROGRAMS OF EDUCATION CARRIED OUT UNDER CONTRACT.—Section 3313(c)(1)(A)(ii)(II) of title 38, United States Code, as added by subsection (a)(2)(E), is amended by adding at the end the following new item:

''(cc) A program of education pursued at a public institution of higher learning in which the public institution of higher learning enters into a contract or agreement with an entity (other than another public institution of higher learning) to provide such program of education or a portion of such program of education.''.

(c) APPLICATION.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided by paragraph (2), the amendments made by subsection (a) and (b) shall apply with respect to a quarter, semester, or term, as applicable, commencing on or after the date of the enactment of this Act.

(2) SPECIAL RULE FOR CURRENT STUDENTS.—In the case of an individual who, as of the date of the enactment of this Act, is using educational assistance under chapter 33 of title 38, United States Code, to pursue a course of education that includes a program of education described in item (bb) or (cc) of section 3313(c)(1)(A)(ii)(II) of title 38, United States Code, as added by subsections (a) and (b), respectively, the amendment made by such subsection shall apply with respect to a quarter, semester, or term, as applicable, commencing on or after the date that is two years after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 307. CONSIDERATION OF CERTAIN TIME SPENT RECEIVING MEDICAL CARE FROM SECRETARY OF DEFENSE AS ACTIVE DUTY FOR PURPOSES OF ELIGIBILITY FOR POST-9/11 EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 3301(1)(B) of title 38, United States Code, is amended by inserting ''12301(h),'' after ''12301(g),''.

(b) APPLICATION.—The amendment made by subsection (a) shall apply with respect to active duty service by a member of a reserve component covered by section 12301(h) of title 10, United States, beginning on or after the date that is 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 308. WORK-STUDY ALLOWANCE.

Section 3485(a)(4) of title 38, United States Code, is amended by striking ''June 30, 2013'' each place it appears and inserting ''June 30, 2013, or the period beginning on June 30, 2016, and ending on June 30, 2021''.

SEC. 309. VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION AND EDUCATION ACTION PLAN.

Not later than 270 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall develop and publish an action plan for improving the services and assistance provided under chapter 31 of title 38, United States Code. Such plan shall include each of the following:

(1) A comprehensive analysis of, and recommendations and a proposed implementation plan for remedying workload management challenges at regional offices of the Department of Veterans Affairs, including steps to reduce counselor caseloads of veterans participating in a rehabilitation program under such chapter, particularly for counselors who are assisting veterans with traumatic brain injury and post-traumatic stress disorder and counselors with educational and vocational counseling workloads.

(2) A comprehensive analysis of the reasons for the disproportionately low percentage of veterans with service-connected disabilities who served in the Armed Forces after September 11, 2001, who opt to participate in a rehabilitation program under such chapter relative to the percentage of such veterans who use their entitlement to educational assistance under chapter 33 of title 38, United States Code, including an analysis of barriers to timely enrollment in rehabilitation programs under chapter 31 of such title and of any barriers to a veteran enrolling in the program of that veteran's choice.

(3) Recommendations and a proposed implementation plan for encouraging more veterans with service-connected disabilities who served in the Armed Forces after September 11, 2001, to participate in rehabilitation programs under chapter 31 of such title.

(4) A national staff training program for vocational rehabilitation counselors of the Department that includes the provision of—

(A) training to assist counselors in understanding the very profound disorientation experienced by warriors whose lives and lifeplans have been upended and out of their control because of their injury;

(B) training to assist counselors in working in partnership with veterans on individual rehabilitation plans; and

(C) training on post-traumatic stress disorder and other mental health conditions and on moderate to severe traumatic brain injury that is designed to improve the ability of such counselors to assist veterans with these conditions, including by providing information on the broad spectrum of such conditions and the effect of such conditions on an individual's abilities and functional limitations.

SEC. 310. REDUCTION IN REDUNDANCY AND INEFFICIENCIES IN VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION CLAIMS PROCESSING.

(a) VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION CLAIMS.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall reduce redundancy and inefficiencies in the use of information technology to process claims for rehabilitation programs under chapter 31 of title 38, United States Code, by—

(1) ensuring that all payments for and on behalf of veterans participating in a rehabilitation program under such chapter are only processed and paid out of one corporate information technology system, in order to eliminate the redundancy of multiple information technology payment systems; and

(2) enhancing the information technology system supporting veterans participating in such a program to support more accurate accounting of services and outcomes for such veterans.

(b) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is authorized to be appropriated to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs for fiscal year 2016 $10,000,000 to carry out this section.

(c) REPORT.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to Congress a report on the changes made pursuant to subsection (a).

TITLE IV—ADMINISTRATION OF EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE

SEC. 401. CENTRALIZED REPORTING OF VETERAN ENROLLMENT BY CERTAIN GROUPS, DISTRICTS, AND CONSORTIUMS OF EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 3684(a) of title 38, United States Code, is amended—

(1) in paragraph (1), by inserting ''32, 33,'' after ''31,''; and

(2) by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

''(4) For purposes of this subsection, the term 'educational institution' may include a group, district, or consortium of separately accredited educational institutions located in the same State that are organized in a manner that facilitates the centralized reporting of the enrollments in such group, district, or consortium of institutions.''.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by subsection (a) shall apply with respect to reports submitted on or after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 402. PROVISION OF INFORMATION REGARDING VETERAN ENTITLEMENT TO EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Subchapter II of chapter 36 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

''§ 3699. Provision of certain information to educational institutions

''For each veteran or other individual pursuing a course of education that has been approved under this chapter using educational assistance to which the veteran or other individual is entitled under chapter 30, 32, 33, or 35 of this title, the Secretary shall make available to the educational institution offering the course information about the amount of such educational assistance to which the veteran or other individual is entitled. Such information shall be provided to such educational institution through a secure information technology system accessible by the educational institution and shall be regularly updated to reflect any amounts used by the veteran or other individual.''.

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of such chapter is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 3698 the following new item:

''3699. Provision of certain information to educational institutions.''.

SEC. 403. ROLE OF STATE APPROVING AGENCIES.

(a) APPROVAL OF CERTAIN COURSES.—Section 3672(b)(2)(A) of title 38, United States Code, is amended by striking ''the following'' and all that follows through the colon and inserting the following: ''a program of education is deemed to be approved for purposes of this chapter if a State approving agency determines that the program is one of the following programs:''.

(b) APPROVAL OF OTHER COURSES.—Section 3675 of such title is amended—

(1) in subsection (a)(1)—

(A) by striking ''The Secretary or a State approving agency'' and inserting ''A State approving agency, or the Secretary when acting in the role of a State approving agency,''; and

(B) by striking ''offered by proprietary for-profit educational institutions'' and inserting ''not covered by section 3672 of this title''; and

(2) in subsection (b), by striking ''the Secretary or the State approving agency'' each place it appears and inserting ''the State approving agency, or the Secretary when acting in the role of a State approving agency,''.

SEC. 404. CRITERIA USED TO APPROVE COURSES.

(a) NONACCREDITED COURSES.—Section 3676(c)(14) of title 38, United States Code, is amended by inserting before the period the following: ''if the Secretary, in consultation with the State approving agency and pursuant to regulations prescribed to carry out this paragraph, determines such criteria are necessary and treat public, private, and proprietary for-profit educational institutions equitably''.

(b) ACCREDITED COURSES.—Section 3675(b)(3) of such title is amended by striking ''and (3)'' and inserting ''(3), and (14)''.

(c) APPLICATION.—The amendment made by subsection (a) shall apply with respect to—

(1) criteria developed pursuant to paragraph (14) of subsection (c) of section 3676 of title 38, United States Code, on or after January 1, 2013; and

(2) an investigation conducted under such subsection that is covered by a reimbursement of expenses paid by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to a State pursuant to section 3674 of such title on or after October 1, 2015.

SEC. 405. COMPLIANCE SURVEYS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 3693 of such title is amended—

(1) by striking subsection (a) and inserting the following new subsection (a):

''(a)(1) Except as provided in subsection (b), the Secretary shall conduct an annual compliance survey of educational institutions and training establishments offering one or more courses approved for the enrollment of eligible veterans or persons if at least 20 such veterans or persons are enrolled in any such course. The Secretary shall—

''(A) design the compliance surveys to ensure that such institutions or establishments, as the case may be, and approved courses are in compliance with all applicable provisions of chapters 30 through 36 of this title;

''(B) survey each such educational institution and training establishment not less than once during every two-year period; and

''(C) assign not fewer than one education compliance specialist to work on compliance surveys in any year for each 40 compliance surveys required to be made under this section for such year.

''(2) The Secretary, in consultation with the State approving agencies, shall—

''(A) annually determine the parameters of the surveys required under paragraph (1); and

''(B) not later than September 1 of each year, make available to the State approving agencies a list of the educational institutions and training establishments that will be surveyed during the fiscal year following the date of making such list available.''; and

(2) by adding at the end the following new subsection:

''(c) In this section, the terms 'educational institution' and 'training establishment' have the meaning given such terms in section 3452 of this title.''.

(b) CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—Subsection (b) of such section is amended—

(1) by striking ''subsection (a) of this section for an annual compliance survey'' and inserting ''subsection (a)(1) for a compliance survey'';

(2) by striking ''institution'' and inserting ''educational institution or training establishment''; and

(3) by striking ''institution's demonstrated record of compliance'' and inserting ''record of compliance of such institution or establishment''.

SEC. 406. SURVEY OF INDIVIDUALS USING THEIR ENTITLEMENT TO EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE UNDER THE EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS ADMINISTERED BY THE SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) SURVEY REQUIRED.—By not later than 270 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall enter into a contract with a non-government entity for the conduct of a survey of a statistically valid sample of individuals who have used or are using their entitlement to educational assistance under chapters 30, 32, 33, and 35 of title 38, United States Code, to pursue a program of education or training. The contract shall provide that—

(1) not later than one month before the collection of data under the survey begins, the survey shall be submitted to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and House of Representatives;

(2) the non-government entity shall complete the survey and submit to the Secretary the results of the survey by not later than 180 days after entering into the contract; and

(3) the survey shall be conducted by electronic means and by any other means the non-government entity determines appropriate.

(b) INFORMATION TO BE COLLECTED.—The contract under subsection (a) shall provide that the survey shall be designed to collect the following types of information about each individual surveyed, where applicable:

(1) Demographic information, including the highest level of education completed by the individual, the military occupational specialty or specialties of the individual while serving on active duty as a member of the Armed Forces or as a member of the National Guard or of a Reserve Component of the Armed Forces, and whether the individual has a service-connected disability.

(2) The opinion of the individual regarding participation in the transition assistance program under section 1144 of title 10, United States Code, and the effectiveness of the program, including instruction on the use of the benefits under laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

(3) The resources the individual used to help the individual—

(A) decide to use the individual's entitlement to educational assistance to enroll in a program of education or training; and

(B) choose the program of education or training the individual pursued.

(4) The individual's goal when the individual enrolled in the program of education or training.

(5) The nature of the individual's experience with the education benefits processing system of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

(6) The nature of the individual's experience with the school certifying official of the educational institution where the individual pursued the program of education or training who processed the individual's claim.

(7) Any services or benefits the educational institution or program of education or training provided to veterans while the individual pursued the program of education or training.

(8) The type of educational institution at which the individual pursued the program of education or training.

(9) Whether the individual completed the program of education or training or the number of credit hours completed by the individual as of the time of the survey, and, if applicable, any degree or certificate obtained by the individual for completing the program.

(10) The employment status of the individual and whether such employment status differs from the employment status of the individual prior to enrolling in the program of education or training.

(11) Whether the individual is or was enrolled in a program of education on a full-time or part-time basis.

(12) The opinion of the individual on the effectiveness of the educational assistance program of the Department of Veterans Affairs under which the individual was entitled to educational assistance.

(13) Whether the individual was ever entitled to a rehabilitation under chapter 31 of title 38, United States Code, and whether the individual participated in such a program.

(14) A description of any circumstances that prevented the individual from using the individual's entitlement to educational assistance to pursue a desired career path or degree.

(15) Whether the individual is using the individual's entitlement to educational assistance to pursue a program of education or training or has transferred such an entitlement to a dependent.

(16) Such other matters as the Secretary determines appropriate.

(c) REPORT.—Not later than 90 days after receiving the results of the survey required under this section, the Secretary shall submit to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and House of Representatives a report on the results of the survey and any recommendations of the Secretary relating to such results. Such report shall also include an unedited version of the results of the survey submitted by the non-government entity that conducted the study.

SEC. 407. IMPROVEMENT OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY OF THE VETERANS BENEFITS ADMINISTRATION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) PROCESSING OF CERTAIN EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE CLAIMS.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall, to the maximum extent possible, make such changes and improvements to the information technology system of the Veterans Benefits Administration of the Department of Veterans Affairs to ensure that—

(1) to the maximum extent possible, all original and supplemental claims for educational assistance under chapter 33 of title 38, United States Code, are adjudicated electronically; and

(2) rules-based processing is used to make decisions with respect to such claims with little human intervention.

(b) IMPLEMENTATION PLAN.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to Congress a plan to implement the changes and improvements described in subsection (a).

(c) REPORT.—Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to Congress a report on the implementation of the changes and improvements described in subsection (a).

(d) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is authorized to be appropriated to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs $30,000,000 to carry out this section during fiscal years 2016 and 2017.

SEC. 408. TECHNICAL AMENDMENT RELATING TO IN-STATE TUITION RATE FOR INDIVIDUALS TO WHOM ENTITLEMENT IS TRANSFERRED UNDER ALL-VOLUNTEER FORCE EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM AND POST-9/11 EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE.

(a) TECHNICAL AMENDMENT.—Section 3679(c)(2)(B) of title 38, United States Code, is amended by striking ''or 3319 of this title'' and all that follows and inserting ''of this title or to whom educational assistance is transferred under section 3319 of this title.''.

(b) APPLICABILITY.—The amendment made by subsection (a) shall apply with respect to a course, semester, or term that begins after July 1, 2016.

TITLE V—OTHER MATTERS

SEC. 501. AMOUNT OF LOAN GUARANTEED UNDER HOME LOAN PROGRAM OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) ADJUSTMENT OF LOAN LIMIT.—Section 3703(a)(1) of title 38, United States Code, is amended—

(1) in subparagraph (A)(i)(IV)—

(A) by striking ''the lesser of''; and

(B) by striking ''or 25 percent of the loan''; and

(2) in subparagraph (C), by striking ''Freddie Mac'' and all that follows through the period at the end and inserting ''amount of the loan.''.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by this section shall apply with respect to a loan guaranteed under section 3710 of title 38, United States Code, on or after the date that is 30 days after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 502. LONGITUDINAL STUDY OF JOB COUNSELING, TRAINING, AND PLACEMENT SERVICE FOR VETERANS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 41 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

''§ 4115. Longitudinal study of job counseling, training, and placement service for veterans

''(a) STUDY REQUIRED.—(1) The Secretary shall enter into a contract with a non-government entity to conduct a longitudinal study of a statistically valid sample of each of the groups of individuals described in paragraph (2). The contract shall provide for the study of each such group over a period of at least five years.

''(2) The groups of individuals described in this paragraph are the following:

''(A) Veterans who have received intensive services.

''(B) Veterans who did not receive intensive services but who otherwise received services under this chapter.

''(C) Veterans who did not seek or receive services under this chapter.

''(3) The study required by this subsection shall include the collection of the following information for each individual who participates in the study:

''(A) The average number of months such individual served on active duty.

''(B) The distribution of disability ratings of such individual.

''(C) Any unemployment benefits received by such individual.

''(D) The average number of months such individual was employed during the year covered by the report.

''(E) The average annual starting and ending salaries of any such individual who was employed during the year covered by the report.

''(F) The average annual income of such individual.

''(G) The average total household income of such individual for the year covered by the report.

''(H) The percentage of such individuals who own their principal residences.

''(I) The employment status of such individual.

''(J) In the case of such an individual who received services under this chapter, whether the individual believes that any service provided by a disabled veterans' outreach specialist or local veterans' employment representative helped the individual to become employed.

''(K) In the case of such an individual who believes such a service helped the individual to become employed, whether—

''(i) the individual retained the position of employment for a period of one year or longer; and

''(ii) the individual believes such a service helped the individual to secure a higher wage or salary.

''(L) The conditions under which such individual was discharged or released from the Armed Forces.

''(M) Whether such individual has used any educational assistance to which the individual is entitled under this title.

''(N) Whether such individual has participated in a rehabilitation program under chapter 31 of this title.

''(O) Demographic information about such individual.

''(P) Such other information as the Secretary determines appropriate.

''(b) ANNUAL REPORTS.—(1) By not later than July 1 of each year covered by the study required under subsection (a), the Secretary shall submit to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and House of Representatives a report on the outcomes of the study during the preceding year.

''(2) The Secretary shall include in each annual report submitted under paragraph (1) any information the Secretary determines is necessary to determine the long-term outcomes of the individuals in the groups described in subsection (a)(2).''.

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of such chapter is amended by adding at the end the following new item:

''4115. Longitudinal study of job counseling, training, and placement service for veterans.''.

SEC. 503. LIMITATIONS ON SUBCONTRACTS UNDER CONTRACTS WITH SMALL BUSINESS CONCERNS OWNED AND CONTROLLED BY VETERANS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 8127 of title 38, United States Code, is amended—

(1) by redesignating subsection (l) as subsection (m); and

(2) by inserting after subsection (k) the following new subsection (l):

''(l) LIMITATIONS ON SUBCONTRACTING.—(1)(A) The requirements applicable to a covered small business concern under section 46

of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 657s) shall apply with respect to a small business concern owned and controlled by a veteran with a service-connected disability or a small business concern owned and controlled by a veteran that is awarded a contract that is counted for purposes of meeting the goals under subsection (a).

''(B) For purposes of applying the requirements of section 46 of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 657s) pursuant to subparagraph (A), the term 'similarly situated entity' used in such section 46 includes a subcontractor for a small business concern owned and controlled by a veteran with a service-connected disability or a small business concern owned and controlled by a veteran described in such subparagraph (A).

''(2) Before awarding a contract that is counted for purposes of meeting the goals under subsection (a), the Secretary shall obtain from an offeror a certification that the offeror will comply with the requirements described in paragraph (1)(A) if awarded the contract. Such certification shall—

''(A) specify the exact performance requirements applicable under such paragraph; and

''(B) explicitly acknowledge that the certification is subject to section 1001 of title 18.

''(3) If the Secretary determines that a small business concern that is awarded a contract that is counted for purposes of meeting the goals under subsection (a) did not act in good faith with respect to the requirements described in paragraph (1)(A), the small business concern shall be subject to the penalties specified in—

''(A) section 16(g)(1) of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 645(g)(1)); and

''(B) section 1001 of title 18.

''(4)(A) The Director of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization for the Department, established pursuant to section 15(k) of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 644(k)), and the Chief Acquisition Officer of the Department, established pursuant to section 1702 of title 41, shall jointly implement a process using the systems described in section 16(g)(2) of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 645(g)(2)), or any other systems available, to monitor compliance with this subsection. The Chief Acquisition Officer shall refer any violations of this subsection to the Inspector General of the Department.

''(B) Not later than November 30 of each year, the Inspector General shall submit to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and House of Representatives a report for the fiscal year preceding the fiscal year during which the report is submitted that includes, for the fiscal year covered by the report—

''(i) the number of referred violations received under subparagraph (A); and

''(ii) the disposition of such referred violations, including the number of small business concerns suspended or debarred from Federal contracting or referred to the Attorney General for prosecution.''.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—Subsection (l) of section 8127 of title 38, United States Code, as added by subsection (a) shall apply with respect to a contract entered into after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 504. PROCEDURES FOR PROVISION OF CERTAIN INFORMATION TO STATE VETERANS AGENCIES TO FACILITATE THE FURNISHING OF ASSISTANCE AND BENEFITS TO VETERANS.

(a) PROCEDURES REQUIRED.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall develop procedures to share the information described in subsection (b) regarding veterans with State veterans agencies in electronic data format as a means of facilitating the furnishing of assistance and benefits to veterans.

(b) COVERED INFORMATION.—The information shared with State veterans agencies under subsection (a) regarding a veteran shall include the following:

(1) Military service and separation data.

(2) A personal email address.

(3) A personal telephone number.

(4) A mailing address.

(c) OPT-OUT ELECTION.—A veteran may elect to prevent their information from being shared with State veterans agencies under subsection (a) pursuant to a process that the Secretary shall establish for purposes of this subsection.

(d) USE OF INFORMATION.—The Secretary shall ensure that the information shared with State veterans agencies in accordance with the procedures developed under subsection (a) is only shared by such agencies with county government veterans service offices for such purposes as the Secretary shall specify for the administration and delivery of assistance and benefits.

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

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and to add any extraneous materials on H.R. 3016, as amended.

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

There was no objection?

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

I rise in support of H.R. 3016, as amended, the Veterans Employment, Education, and Healthcare Improvement Act.

This bill, which was introduced by the chairman of our Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity, Congressman WENSTRUP of Ohio, includes a number of provisions relating to veterans' health care, education, and employment benefits.

One provision of the bill would authorize the Department of Veterans Affairs to create a new fourth administration to streamline the oversight of the many VA programs and benefits that assist veterans with transition and that promote their economic welfare. These benefits include vocational rehabilitation and employment, GI Bill education benefits, the verification of veteran-owned small businesses, the VA's portion of the Transition Assistance Program, and the home loan guaranty program.

Another provision of the bill would make needed improvements to education and vocational rehabilitation and employment benefits by, among other things, closing a costly loophole that has allowed some contracted-out flight schools to charge the VA hundreds of thousands of dollars in excessive tuition and fee payments.

Still other provisions would improve the administration of benefits and expand opportunities for the use of the home loan benefit by eliminating the loan limit that caps the amount of money the VA will guarantee under the home loan program. This would help tens of thousands of veterans who are living in high-cost areas to realize the dream that many Americans strive for.

Health-related provisions of the bill would elevate the role of podiatrists in the VA medical facilities, improve care for the newborn children of female veterans, create a pilot program on service dog training for veterans with post-traumatic stress, and require the Government Accountability Office to conduct period audits of the VA's budget.

I am grateful to Dr. WENSTRUP, to Dr. ROE, and to the many other sponsors of these provisions for their hard work and leadership in crafting and in developing this legislation, and I urge all of my colleagues to support it.

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

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

I rise in support of H.R. 3016, as amended, the VA Provider Equity Act.

The provisions of title I directly affect the health of veterans by making podiatrists equal to other doctors in the VA, by making Medal of Honor recipients a top priority in receiving health care at the VA, and by making the newborn babies of servicemembers eligible for VA health care in the first 6 weeks of life, to follow their mothers' eligibility at the VA.

The legislation authorizes a GAO audit of the Veterans Health Administration's budget. I feel that the Veterans Health Administration has been more responsive under the leadership of Dr. David Shulkin, but I agree that everyone would be better informed of how the VHA is working if we are all starting on the same page. I am also pleased that a successful dog training program will be expanded to other parts of the country to help veterans who are recovering from TBI and PTSD.

I am particularly pleased to support provisions in H.R. 3016 which improve the veterans' education and rehabilitation program and which increase limits on the veterans' home loan program while maintaining the VA's strict lending requirements.

H.R. 3016 also contains several important improvements in education and employment programs for veterans. Representative TAKANO will have more to say because he has taken the lead on these as the ranking member of the Economic Opportunity Subcommittee.

I also want to thank Chairman MILLER for compromising on the establishment of a new administration within the VA, called the Veterans Economic Opportunity and Transition Administration.

While I appreciate the chairman's attempt to compromise on another key provision, I want to make it clear that I oppose the policy to cut in half the living stipend for the children of servicemembers who have received their

parents' transferred GI Bill benefits. We promised the men and women who signed up to serve in our Nation's military that they would be able to transfer their entire GI Bill benefits to a dependent spouse or child. It is unfair that we are now breaking part of that promise. While I understand that this change pays for the other essential provisions in this bill, I would have preferred that we would have kept the promise we made to servicemembers while finding other ways to pay for this package.

As this legislation moves forward, I will continue to work with my colleagues to find a different way to pay for these provisions that does not violate the promise we made to our veterans.

I had hoped our Republican colleagues would have brought this bill to the floor under an open rule so as to have given us the opportunity to propose amendments and to debate ways to improve the more controversial provisions of this bill. I am disappointed that we are not able to offer amendments to improve the bill today. Yet I will support this bill overall due to the number of positive improvements.

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

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from the Second District of Ohio (Mr. WENSTRUP), the chairman of the Economic Opportunity Subcommittee and a combat veteran, himself.

Mr. WENSTRUP. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 3016, the Veterans Employment, Education, and Healthcare Improvement Act, as amended.

I am proud to sponsor this bill and am glad to be joined by veteran service organizations in their support, like the VFW and the DAV. It will help ensure that the veterans receive the benefits they have earned.

This veterans' legislation contains over 30 provisions from over a dozen Members of Congress and is the result of countless hours of work amongst the members of the committee. I want to highlight three specific provisions in the bill that improve the benefits our veterans receive.

First is the VA Provider Equity Act, which would strengthen access to the comprehensive, first-class health care that veterans deserve. We all know wait times for health care at the VA remain somewhat unacceptable in many places. This is true, in part, because the VA struggles to employ enough healthcare specialists to meet the needs of veterans.

The VA Provider Equity Act responds to this issue by aligning outdated VA standards more closely with the private sector practices of today. When introduced, every doctor on the Committee on Veterans' Affairs joined as an original cosponsor, understanding that we need to make it easier for the VA to recruit and retain the specialists our veterans so desperately need.

The bill also includes H.R. 2344, the Veterans Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Improvement Act of 2015, which I introduced earlier this year. The VA's Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment program helps disabled veterans to prepare for employment or to live as independently as possible. If a veteran chooses to pursue education or training through this program, current law does not require the courses to be approved for GI benefits. My provision would tighten this requirement to provide additional oversight and protections for our veterans.

We also include the GI Bill Quality Enhancement Act. By giving State Approving Agencies the increased oversight of GI Bill programs, this provision would provide veterans with the information they need to make good choices about education and training programs that offer the best quality.

The Veterans Employment, Education, and Healthcare Improvement Act would make important progress in streamlining veterans' access to their earned benefits. It is one simple step we can take to ensure that our veterans receive the benefits they have earned.

I thank Representative TAKANO for his help in moving this forward, and I urge my colleagues to support it.

Ms. BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. TAKANO).

Mr. TAKANO. I thank Ranking Member CORRINE BROWN for yielding time.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 3016.

While there are parts of this bill that I hope to see changed as it moves forward, it includes numerous provisions that will have a positive impact on our Nation's veteran population, including several provisions I authored.

Section 307 of this bill is the language from my GI Bill Fairness Act, bipartisan legislation to close a gap faced by our National Guardsmen and Reservists who have been repeatedly called to war throughout operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Currently, members of the Guard and Reserve who are wounded in combat are sometimes placed on Active Duty for their recovery, treatment, and rehabilitation. Unfortunately, current Federal law does not recognize such Active Duty orders as eligible for Post-9/11 GI Bill education assistance, meaning that, unlike other members of the military, those who serve in the Guard and Reserve may actually lose benefits for being injured in the line of duty. This provision in H.R. 3016 would end unequal treatment and ensure these guardsmen and reservists are able to accrue GI Bill benefits, when ordered to Active Duty, for the purposes of receiving medical care.

H.R. 3016 also includes my Work-Study for Student Veterans Act, which would reinstate certain VA work-study activities that expired on June 30, 2013. The VA's Student Work-Study Allowance Program allows qualifying student veterans who are in college degree programs or in vocational or professional programs to be paid for working in a variety of capacities on campus, at VA facilities, or at other veteran-centered organizations to assist fellow veterans. The work-study program achieves two important goals: offering student veterans a way to earn a little extra money and providing transitioning veterans with the guidance and assistance of fellow veterans who know firsthand what that transition is like.

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I also strongly support section 306 of the bill, which caps the amount of post-9/11 GI Bill funds available to flight schools—private flight schools—that contract with community colleges at the same amount that the GI Bill caps funds available to private universities.

Due to a current loophole in the GI Bill, student veterans have been able to take pilot training classes with questionable job placement prospects at exorbitant cost to the taxpayers. According to the Los Angeles Times, one flight company charged 12 student veterans over $500,000 each in GI Bill funds.

While it is true that flight training can be more expensive than other vocational or academic programs, VA data shows that while the number of student veterans taking flight training increased by only 9 percent between fiscal years '13 and '14, the total cost to taxpayers for this program grew by 87 percent during this same period, costing $37 million in taxpayer dollars.

The drafters of the GI Bill never intended to create this windfall for the flight school industry. What's more, VFW and the American Legion support the cap, agreeing that this loophole is a disservice to student veterans who would be better served by one of the many flight school programs that cost well under the cap.

I do have serious reservations about section 301 of this legislation, which would cut by half the monthly housing allowance provided to children of servicemembers who will have post-9/11 GI Bill benefits transferred to them. I don't believe that we should be paying for the great provisions in this bill by cutting benefits.

Furthermore, the bill on the House floor today does not include a grandfather clause. That means that some current servicemembers will see the terms that they agreed to when they signed up changed. As this bill advances, I strongly urge the chairman and ranking member to find another pay-for and eliminate section 301.

With that being said, I believe overall, with some tweaks, this legislation will provide valuable support for our veterans, and I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 3016.

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1½ minutes to the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. ABRAHAM), who is

from the Fifth District of Louisiana and is a fine member of our Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

Mr. ABRAHAM. Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank Chairman MILLER, Ranking Member BROWN, Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs Ranking Member TITUS, and all Members who worked so hard to bring this bill to the floor.

There are many provisions in H.R. 677, as amended, that would help improve services for veterans and their families, but I want to focus my remarks on a section that I am proud to have authored.

First, the bill would authorize an automatic COLA for beneficiaries who receive the VA disability compensation. Although the Congress generally approves COLA legislation every year, veterans have to wait until Congress actually acts.

Ms. BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. WALZ).

Mr. WALZ. Mr. Speaker, as you have heard, I associate myself with the remarks of the positive nature of the provisions in this bill. It has been the House Veterans' Affairs Committee that has been in the forefront of improving veterans care, from the post-9/11 GI Bill, to healthcare changes, to job placements. We have been at the forefront of VA improvements, accountability, and reform.

While this bill continues in that vein, as you have heard here, there is one provision in it that, for me personally, I cannot cross. To pay for these programs, an offset has to be found. That is a noble and correct principle; meaning, if we add anything, we need to find the pay-for somewhere else to not add to the debt.

In the case of this, to pay for these absolutely wonderful programs, many which I helped write, we went back and we took a benefit. I am not going to debate whether that benefit was overly generous. I am not going to debate how many are using it.

If one veteran signed up, served this Nation, went overseas and fought for our defense and they were promised a benefit, to pull it back at this time is an egregious breach of trust. At a time when the VA is hurting, at a time when the faith in government is hurting, the faith in the media, our soldiers need to know there are some things that will not be crossed.

So I want to be very clear on this. The motives of the people who worked on this should never be questioned. I have never seen people with more integrity and more care for our veterans. Thought goes into this. Improvements try to be made. And when the American people are frustrated and they see nothing gets done, this committee and the bipartisanship of the care of our veterans is absolutely paramount.

This is a devilish situation. How do we find the pay-for? My question is—and, yes, perhaps it is a chip on my shoulder of an enlisted soldier—why come to the soldiers first? There is nowhere else in the Federal Government that we can find this.

The chairman rightfully pointed out today another egregious waste of money in decorating and bonuses to VA officials who are not fulfilling their duty. My question is: can't we find some way to at least get the people through who were there and, if we want to make the changes, do so? I know every effort in good faith has been made to do that. Yes, it can be argued that this was overly generous and should not have been there in the first place, but it was. It was signed up for and people went. I have stood in front of troops who said: You promised it to me, and I am counting on using it.

It seems to me that as Representatives of the American people, I can go back and ask my constituents, and they will agree on almost nothing. If I ask them, ''Should we do everything necessary to care for our veterans,'' the answer is ''yes.'' If we can't find the offset, then let's have the courage to go back and ask them what would they be willing to do.

I myself will be voting ''no'' on this piece of legislation, but I just urge my colleagues to have to weigh this. I hope over the years that I have proven I am not a person who would get in the way of having the perfect get in the way of the good or not trying to work for compromises. It is a line that I feel, if we cross, the trust gets breached, and it is very difficult to gain it back.

I thank all Members who worked on this.

Ms. BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I have no other speakers at this time.

I yield back the balance of my time.

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

Mr. Speaker, to my good friend from Minnesota (Mr. WALZ), who is a stalwart supporter of veterans on our committee and brings many, many good issues to the forefront for both sides of the aisle to be able to work on together, I do not question his motives in his negative vote against this bill.

I would say that any child who has already had their parents' post-9/11 child benefits transferred to them will not be affected by this change. They would still receive 100 percent of their current living stipend.

It also gives 180 days after enactment before it begins to take effect. So any servicemembers who are eligible to transfer their benefits but have not done so would have 180 days to do so, so their child would still receive 100 percent of their monthly stipend.

I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from the 15th Congressional District of Ohio (Mr. STIVERS).

Mr. STIVERS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman and the folks on the committee for their great work on this bill. I stand today to support the bill and also to recognize one of the sections is the Veterans Dog Therapy Act, which was rolled into H.R. 3016.

We lose 22 of our former servicemembers every day to suicide. This legislation will create a pilot program at three to five of our VA facilities, which is modeled on the Warrior Canine Connection program for getting access to service dogs for our veterans.

Veterans enrolled in this program with service dogs have seen improvements in their PTSD and TBI-related symptoms. Additionally, it is shown that veterans who own service dogs have fewer symptoms of depression, better interpersonal skills, a lowered risk of substance abuse, and better overall mental health. While no one thing can help cure our suicide epidemic among veterans, this is a good start.

I want to thank TIM WALZ for being my cosponsor on this bill. I am glad it is rolled in.

I urge my colleagues to support this provision as well as the entire bill.

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from the Ninth Congressional District of Georgia (Mr. COLLINS).

Mr. COLLINS of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, today I rise in support of H.R. 3016, the Veterans Employment, Education, and Healthcare Improvement Act.

I want to thank the chairman for yielding and his leadership. As we have heard today, this is something that truly does bring us together. As someone who continues to serve in the Air Force and looking at my brothers and sisters in arms, this is something we should be about.

I want to thank my colleague from Ohio (Mr. WENSTRUP) for bringing this important legislation to the floor, including language from my legislation, H.R. 423, concerning VA post-delivery care services.

I also want to thank Dr. ROE from Tennessee for his amendment that would extend the coverage for a female veteran's post-delivery care to 42 days.

Female veterans face unique challenges, especially when many of the services available to them are designed for males. One of the most significant problems female veterans face is access to health care.

Currently, the VA is authorized to provide up to 7 days of post-delivery care for a female veteran's newborn baby. Mr. ROE's amendment will expand coverage to 42 days, the length that the VA currently provides for mothers.

Females represent the fastest growing group of veterans who are enrolling in VA health care, and many of them are mothers or soon will be. It is past time for the VA to expand its care and services to meet the needs of the female veteran. These women have risked their lives to protect our Nation, and our responsibility to them doesn't end when they are no longer serving on Active Duty. In fact, their service to our country may jeopardize the very lives of their future children, meaning our responsibility to them is even greater.

Research shows that having PTSD in the year before delivery increases a

woman's risk of premature delivery by 35 percent. Premature infants typically need longer hospitalizations after they are born. I know what it is like to be the parent of a little baby who needed intensive medical care for an extended period of time from the moment she was born. By the way, she is getting ready to turn 24 right now.

Any new mother who has given selflessly to her country shouldn't have to worry about Congress standing in her way as she tries to give selflessly to her own child.

I thank my colleague and Chairman MILLER for their leadership on this issue, and I would urge the passage of this bill.

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I have no more speakers at this time.

I would encourage all my colleagues to support H.R. 3016, as amended.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 3016, "Veterans Employment, Education, and Healthcare Improvement."

I support this bill because it will benefit our veterans who have suffered debilitating injuries to their lower extremities as a result of their service to the United States.

Specifically, this bill clarifies the role of podiatrists in the Department of Veteran Affairs and increases their pay grade to match other VA physician compensation.

There is a need in the Department of Veteran Affairs to classify podiatrists as physicians.

Our veterans continue to suffer from a variety of foot and lower leg conditions as a direct result of their honorable service which can result from both traumatic and progressive etiologies.

A growing number of our veterans have diabetes, which puts them at risk for other disorders and even amputation.

The VA Podiatry Program Office spends a great deal of its time collaborating with a number of other programs developing and implementing initiatives relative to the prevention and treatment of diabetes and disorders related to diabetes.

Houston, Texas is home to the Michael E. DeBakey Veterans Affairs Medical Center, in one of the nation's greatest medical centers; the MEDMC has 837 medical providers, but no board certified podiatrists.

Our veterans need and deserve specialized treatment and assistance for foot injuries.

My congressional district is home to over 25,000 veterans and as an avid supporter of Veteran Affairs I strongly support this bill.

As a supporter and co-sponsor of numerous bills to assist veterans, such as H.R. 90, the Healthcare Improvement Act, I strongly believe it is our duty to give our veterans the best care when they return home.

It is important we recognize podiatrists, who change the lives of our veterans, to be defined as physicians by the Department of Veteran Affairs, and increase their pay grade to reflect other VA physician compensation.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MILLER) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 3016, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

The title of the bill was amended so as to read: "A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to make certain improvements in the laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs relating to health care, educational assistance, and vocational rehabilitation, to establish the Veterans Economic Opportunity and Transition Administration, and for other purposes.".

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

CAREER-READY STUDENT VETERANS ACT

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 2360) to amend title 38, United States Code, to improve the approval of certain programs of education for purposes of educational assistance provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 2360

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

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Career-Ready Student Veterans Act".

SEC. 2. APPROVAL OF COURSES FOR PURPOSES OF EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS ADMINISTERED BY SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) APPROVAL OF NON-ACCREDITED COURSES.—Subsection (c) of section 3676 of title 38, United States Code, is amended—

(1) by redesignating paragraph (14) as paragraph (16); and

(2) by inserting after paragraph (13) the following new paragraphs:

"(14) In the case of a program designed to prepare an individual for licensure or certification in a State, the program meets any instructional curriculum licensure or certification requirements of such State.

"(15) In the case of a program designed to prepare an individual for employment pursuant to standards developed by a board or agency of a State in an occupation that requires approval or licensure, the program is approved or licensed by such board or agency of the State.".

(b) EXCEPTIONS.—Such section is further amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

"(f)(1) The Secretary may waive the requirements of paragraph (14) or (15) of subsection (c) in the case of a program of education offered by an educational institution if the Secretary determines all of the following:

"(A) The educational institution is not accredited by an agency or association recognized by the Secretary of Education.

"(B) The program did not meet the requirements of such paragraph at any time during the two-year period preceding the date of the waiver.

"(C) The waiver furthers the purposes of the educational assistance programs administered by the Secretary or would further the education interests of individuals eligible for assistance under such programs.

"(D) The educational institution does not provide any commission, bonus, or other incentive payment based directly or indirectly on success in securing enrollments or financial aid to any persons or entities engaged in any student recruiting or admission activities or in making decisions regarding the award of student financial assistance, except for the recruitment of foreign students residing in foreign countries who are not eligible to receive Federal student assistance.

"(2) Not later than 30 days after the Secretary issues a waiver under paragraph (1), the Secretary shall submit to Congress notice of the waiver and the justification of the Secretary for issuing the waiver.".

(c) APPROVAL OF ACCREDITED PROGRAMS.—Section 3675(b)(3) of such title is amended—

(1) by striking "and (3)" and inserting "(3), (14), and (15)"; and

(2) by inserting before the period at the end the following: "(or, with respect to such paragraphs (14) and (15), the requirements under such paragraphs are waived pursuant to subsection (f) of section 3676)".

(d) DISAPPROVAL OF COURSES.—Section 3679 of such title is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

"(d) Notwithstanding any other provision of this chapter, the Secretary shall disapprove a course of education described in section 3676(c)(14) or (15) unless the educational institution providing the course of education publicly discloses any conditions or additional requirements, including training, experience, or exams, required to obtain the license, certification, or approval for which the course of education is designed to provide preparation.".

(e) CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—Section 3672(b)(2)(A)(i) of such title is amended by striking "An accredited" and inserting "Except as provided in paragraphs (14) and (15) of section 3676(c) of this title, an accredited".

(f) APPLICABILITY.—If after enrollment in a course of education that is subject to disapproval by reason of an amendment made by this Act, an individual pursues one or more courses of education at the same educational institution while remaining continuously enrolled (other than during regularly scheduled breaks between courses, semesters or terms) at that institution, any course so pursued by the individual at that institution while so continuously enrolled shall not be subject to disapproval by reason of such amendment.

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

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and to include any extraneous material they may have on H.R. 2360, as amended, in the RECORD.

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

There was no objection.

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

The post-9/11 GI Bill provides student veterans with a wonderful opportunity to educate themselves for a job in the new economy. Thousands of training programs and schools have been approved for use of this program, which has benefited millions of veterans.

Unfortunately, there are some schools that are not simply providing quality education or training that sufficiently prepares students for jobs in their field of study.

The committee has found that, in some cases, students have been caught in a situation where the school they attended is properly accredited, but the program they are using at the school is not. This has led to situations where students have completed a training or a degree program only to find out that this training does not qualify them to receive the necessary credentials or take the necessary tests to practice in the career field for which they used their benefits.

This was clearly not the intention of the GI Bill, and I am glad that this bill would ensure that in order to be eligible for GI Bill benefits, an accredited or nonaccredited program must meet State accreditation, licensure, or certification standards. This requirement would not only protect student veterans but would also protect the integrity of the GI Bill for future generations.

I want to thank Chairman WENSTRUP of our Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity and the author of the bill, Ranking Member TAKANO, for their work on this legislation, which has my full support.

I urge all of my colleagues to support H.R. 2306, as amended.

I reserve the balance of my time.

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

I rise today in support of H.R. 2360, the Career-Ready Student Veterans Act. Mr. Speaker, I do so for two important reasons.

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The first is that it protects veterans using their GI Bill benefits by requiring that all career education programs meet proper accreditation, licensure, and certification requirements in order to be eligible for the GI Bill.

The second reason I am so happy to support H.R. 2360 is that it represents the very best of the legislative process. It is the product of collaboration between the majority and the minority, but it is also a collaboration between Congress and the VSO and academic communities.

I want to give due credit to the bill's original author, Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity Ranking Member MARK TAKANO, and Chairman WENSTRUP and his staff for working so hard to ensure that the bill meets its goal of preparing student veterans for their chosen fields of study.

The Career-Ready Student Veterans Act puts in place a protection for student veterans which already exists for servicemen who use the Department of Defense tuition assistance benefits.

I am pleased that the bill creates this basic fairness and ensures that the GI Bill benefits help veterans earn credit that will lead to meaningful employment.

In addition to ensuring that career-education programs meet proper accreditation requirements, the bill also requires that they publicly disclose any additional steps that the student veteran needs to take to prepare them for entry into their chosen profession.

I understand this legislation has passed out of committee in the Senate and enjoys bipartisan support there. Again, I want to congratulate the bill's original authors on this side and offer my strong support.

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

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Phoenixville, Pennsylvania (Mr. COSTELLO).

Mr. COSTELLO of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to support H.R. 2360, the Career-Ready Student Veterans Act, a straightforward solution that will ensure that career education programs set our veterans on the proper path to their desired employment.

As a proud member of the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity and a cosponsor of this legislation, H.R. 2360 would ensure that GI Bill-eligible career education programs provide our veterans with the accreditation and credentials they need to build a career in the professional field or specialty of their choosing.

This bill requires that career-education programs that accept GI Bill tuition payments must have programmatic accreditation if accreditation is required for employment in the career for which the program is designed to prepare its students.

The bill also requires that career-education programs designed to prepare an individual for licensure or certification in a State must meet the curriculum and instructional requirements set by the State for licensure or certification.

Mr. Speaker, if our veterans invest their time and effort to learn a skill set, they will have the peace of mind to know they are on the right career-education path and the confidence to know that, if they work hard, they will receive the appropriate certification they need to start their desired employment.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to thank Mr. TAKANO for his leadership on this legislation.

I urge my colleagues to support this bipartisan bill.

Ms. BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. TAKANO).

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of my bipartisan legislation, H.R. 2360, the Career-Ready Student Veterans Act. This bill will ensure that our veterans are using their post-9/11 GI benefits at career-education programs that actually do what they say they do: prepare students for entry into a specific career field.

My legislation would require that, in order to be eligible to receive GI Bill benefits, programs have programmatic accreditation, if required by the State for employment in a specific field.

Programs also must prepare students for licensure or certification in a field, if required by the State, and they must meet any State-mandated curricular or instructional requirements.

This closely mirrors language included in the fiscal year 2014 National Defense Authorization Act in relation to military tuition assistance.

We all know the importance of a good job in helping veterans successfully transition out of service and into civilian life. Education and training is often a necessary part of finding that job.

Unfortunately, too many veterans waste their time and hard-earned education benefits at career-education programs that don't actually prepare them for that career field. For example, most States require prospective lawyers to have graduated from a law program accredited by the American Bar Association in order to sit for the bar exam.

As we all know, you must pass the bar to practice law. When veterans unwittingly spend their GI Bill benefits at law programs not accredited by the ABA, they graduate with no prospects of becoming a lawyer in most States. My legislation will make sure that this no longer happens.

I thank Chairman MILLER and Ranking Member BROWN as well as Chairman WENSTRUP and my friend from Pennsylvania (Mr. COSTELLO) for their support.

I urge all my colleagues to vote in favor of the Career-Ready Student Veterans Act.

Ms. BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 2360.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I have no additional speakers at this time. I, too, urge a ''yea'' vote on H.R. 2360, as amended.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, as a senior member of the House Committee on Homeland Security and the Ranking Member of the Judiciary Committee's Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, Homeland Security, and Investigations, I rise in support of H.R. 2360, the "Career-Ready Student Veterans Act of 2015."

This bill encourages new criteria for state approval of applications by educational institutions providing veterans with non-accredited courses.

H.R. 2360 respects the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) educational assistance, provides specific instructions for when the VA can waive requirements by the bill, and instructs the VA to submit to Congress notice of, and justification for, a waiver within 30 days of issuance.

The bill clarifies specific circumstances for when the VA shall disapprove a course of education and when a course shall not be subject to disapproval by reason of this Act.

Specifically, H.R. 2360 achieves these goals by:

1. Requiring programs designed to prepare individuals for state licensure or certification to fulfill any state instructional curriculum licensure or certification requirements

2. Providing conditions for the Department of Veterans Affairs to refer to when waiving requirements or disapproving a course of education

Finally, H.R. 2360 facilitates the approval of certain programs of education for the purposes of enhancing educational assistance provided by the Department of Veteran Affairs.

I am pleased that H.R. 2360 aligns with the significance of legislation I have introduced in the past.

I introduced H.R. 76, Helping to Encourage Real Opportunity for Veterans Transitioning from Battlespace to Workplace Act Of 2015. This bill also enhanced the educational options for veterans by focusing on the necessity to establish opportunities that facilitate the transition for veterans from the hostile armed force environment to school or workplace.

I introduced H.R. 78, New Chance for a New Start in Life Act of 2015. This bill addresses financial awareness pertaining to grants, and employment training programs to assist long-term unemployed persons to reenter the workforce in areas projected to have the highest rates of demand.

Pertaining to educational institutions providing veterans with non-accredited courses, enforcement of the criteria for state approval of applications allows veterans to benefit from the improvement of the approval process.

H.R. 2360 is the first step toward enforcing this implementation strategy and I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting the "Career-Ready Student Veterans Act of 2015."

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MILLER) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 2360, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

LAKE BALDWIN VETERANS AFFAIRS OUTPATIENT CLINIC PROPERTY CONVEYANCE

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 4056) to authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to convey to the Florida Department of Veterans Affairs all right, title, and interest of the United States to the property known as ''The Community Living Center'' at the Lake Baldwin Veterans Affairs Outpatient Clinic, Orlando, Florida, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 4056

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

SECTION 1. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS LAND CONVEYANCE, LAKE BALDWIN VETERANS AFFAIRS OUTPATIENT CLINIC, ORLANDO, FLORIDA.

(a) CONVEYANCE AUTHORIZED.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall convey to the Florida Department of Veterans Affairs all right, title, and interest of the United States in and to the property known as ''The Community Living Center'', including any improvements thereon, which is part of the Lake Baldwin Veterans Affairs Outpatient Clinic, Orlando, Florida, located at 5201 Raymond Street, Orlando, Florida.

(b) CONDITIONS OF CONVEYANCE.—The conveyance under subsection (a) shall be subject to the following conditions:

(1) The recipient shall agree to accept the conveyed real property in its condition at the time of the conveyance.

(2) The recipient shall agree not to apply the small house design model of the Department of Veterans Affairs Office of Construction and Facilities Management Design Guide for Community Living Centers to the conveyed real property.

(c) USE OF PROPERTY.—The deed of conveyance for the parcels of real property conveyed under subsection (a) shall provide that all of the property be used and maintained for the sole purpose of providing nursing home, domiciliary, or adult day health care to veterans.

(d) DESCRIPTION OF PROPERTY.—The exact acreage and legal description of the parcels of real property conveyed under subsection (a) shall be determined by surveys satisfactory to the Secretary.

(e) ADDITIONAL TERMS AND CONDITIONS.—The Secretary may require such additional terms and conditions in connection with the conveyances under subsection (a) as the Secretary considers appropriate to protect the interests of the United States.

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

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and to add any extraneous material they may have on H.R. 4056, as amended.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 4056, as amended, which was introduced by my colleague and fellow Floridian, Congressman MICA.

This bill would authorize the Florida Department of Veterans Affairs to convey The Community Living Center on the Lake Baldwin campus in Orlando to the Florida Department of Veterans Affairs.

This conveyance is in line with the VA's plans to repurpose the Lake Baldwin campus and would save VA from expending money, maintaining the property that the Department has no further use for while allowing this parcel of land to continue to be used in the service of our veterans.

I am grateful to Congressman MICA for sponsoring this legislation.

I would urge my colleagues to support it.

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

Ms. BROWN of Florida. I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation, H.R. 4056, introduced by my colleague from Florida, Mr. JOHN MICA, will authorize the VA to convey to the Florida Department of Veterans Affairs The Community Living Center at the Lake Baldwin Veterans Affairs Outpatient Clinic in Orlando, Florida.

When the Orlando VA center is fully completed, it will include 134 inpatient beds, an outpatient clinic, parking garage, chapel, and central energy plant.

One of the first buildings opened at the Orlando VA Medical Center was the 120-bed Community Living Center and the 60-bed domiciliary. Both are now open and accepting veterans. With the new facilities, it is not necessary for the VA to keep two facilities open in close proximity.

I am pleased that Mr. MICA was able to work with the Florida Department of Veterans Affairs to take over this facility and continue to serve the veterans of central Florida.

Let me just say one other thing. I am just very impressed with the opening of this facility, the domiciliary, and also the clinic. We were able to get that facility open before the hospital opened, and it was taking veterans.

In addition to that, the Department of Defense gave that facility to the Department of Veterans Affairs—institutional memory is very important—and I am just very pleased that we will continue to use this facility for veterans.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank Mr. MICA for bringing this before the House.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from the Seventh District of Florida (Mr. MICA), who authored this piece of legislation.

Mr. MICA. Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to thank Chairman MILLER and also thank Ranking Member BROWN for their strong support in helping to expedite this legislation.

This is a simple measure. It does transfer a vacant 120-bed VA nursing care building in Orlando's VA veteran Baldwin Park facility to the Florida Department of Veterans Affairs, as the chairman described.

As the ranking member mentioned, we actually have opened a 120-bed new facility to the south of Orlando and a 60-bed domiciliary unit also open now for nearly 2 years. Adjacent to that is a new hospital at Lake Nona.

I think Ms. BROWN was with me back in 1999 when this 120-bed nursing care facility was dedicated. The facility is not that old. It was closed 2 years ago when we opened the new facility, and the VA used that building and some of the rooms for transition for training for employment.

Now the new hospital is open. The new 120-bed facility is open to the south and domiciliary unit. We have agreement from the State of Florida to take that facility. You might be interested to know why central Florida would want another veterans facility.

In some areas, there is a declining population. The chief financial officer of the State just announced that we had 1,000 new people come to Florida every day last year. We have now exceeded 20 million. Many of those are veterans, and they are settling in central Florida.

We do have an agreement with the State of Florida to assume this facility. They can open it quicker. They can do it in a cost-effective manner for VA. They can take some of the burden off of the Federal VA, which we know has a full set of challenges right now.

I want to thank VA Secretary McDonald. I also want to thank my colleagues in 2014, the ranking member, Ms. BROWN; Mr. WEBSTER; Mr. GRAYSON; and myself.

We all wrote to Secretary Shinseki, the Secretary at that time, and asked that this be done. It has taken a little bit of time, but we are getting there.

Again, I ask concurrence in passing H.R. 4056. It will expedite and make available the needed nursing homes with our aging veterans population and many thousands of veterans moving to the State of Florida and, particularly, central Florida.

I thank you again for expediting this, and I ask for the House to concur in passing H.R. 4056.

Ms. BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I again thank Mr. MICA for his leadership in this area.

I urge all my colleagues to support H.R. 4056.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I, too, urge my colleagues to support H.R. 4056, as amended.

I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MILLER) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 4056, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

The title of the bill was amended so as to read: ''A bill to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to convey to the Florida Department of Veterans Affairs all right, title, and interest of the United States to the property known as 'The Community Living Center' at the Lake Baldwin Veterans Affairs Outpatient Clinic, Orlando, Florida.''.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

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AMERICAN HEROES COLA ACT OF 2015

Mr. ABRAHAM. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 677) to amend title 38, United States Code, to provide for annual cost-of-living adjustments to be made automatically by law each year in the rates of disability compensation for veterans with service-connected disabilities and the rates of dependency and indemnity compensation for survivors of certain service-connected disabled veterans, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 677

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

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE; TABLE OF CONTENTS.

(a) SHORT TITLE.—This Act may be cited as the ''American Heroes COLA Act of 2015''.

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

Sec. 1. Short title; table of contents.
Sec. 2. Expansion of eligibility for medallions.
Sec. 3. Definitions relating to claims for benefits under laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.
Sec. 4. Quarterly reports on formal and informal claims for benefits under laws administered by Secretary of Veterans Affairs.
Sec. 5. Expedited payment of survivor's benefits.
Sec. 6. Priority for processing claims of the Department of Veterans Affairs.
Sec. 7. Treatment of medical evidence provided by non-Department of Veterans Affairs medical professionals in support of claims for disability compensation.
Sec. 8. Automatic annual increase in rates of disability compensation and dependency and indemnity compensation.
Sec. 9. Improvement of fiduciaries for veterans.
Sec. 10. Board of Veterans' Appeals video hearings.
Sec. 11. Improvements to authority for performance of medical disabilities examinations by contract physicians.
Sec. 12. Pilot program on fully developed appeals.
Sec. 13. Deadline for certification of appeals forms by regional offices of the Department of Veterans Affairs.
Sec. 14. Evaluation of backlog of disability claims and appeals of claims of Department of Veterans Affairs.
Sec. 15. Methods for validating certain World War II Merchant Mariner service considered to be active service by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.
Sec. 16. Designation of American World War II Cities.
Sec. 17. Sense of Congress regarding American veterans disabled for life.
Sec. 18. Extension of pilot program on counseling in retreat settings for women veterans newly separated from service in the Armed Forces.

SEC. 2. EXPANSION OF ELIGIBILITY FOR MEDALLIONS.

Section 2306(d)(4) of title 38, United States Code, is amended to read as follows:

''(4)(A) In lieu of furnishing a headstone or marker under this subsection to a deceased individual described in subparagraph (B), the Secretary may furnish, upon request, a medallion or other device of a design determined by the Secretary to signify the deceased individual's status as a veteran, to be attached to a headstone or marker furnished at private expense.

''(B) A deceased individual described in this subsection is an individual who—

''(i) served in the Armed Forces on or after April 6, 1917; and

''(ii) is eligible for a headstone or marker furnished under paragraph (1) (or would be so eligible but for the date of the death of the individual).''.

SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS RELATING TO CLAIMS FOR BENEFITS UNDER LAWS ADMINISTERED BY THE SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) DEFINITIONS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Section 5100 of title 38, United States Code, is amended to read as follows:

''§ 5100. Definitions

''In this chapter:

''(1) The term 'claimant' means any individual applying for, or submitting a claim for, any benefit under the laws administered by the Secretary.

''(2) The term 'claim' means a communication in writing requesting a determination of entitlement or evidencing a belief in entitlement to a benefit under the laws administered by the Secretary.

''(3) The term 'formal claim' means a claim submitted on an application form prescribed by the Secretary.''.

(2) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of chapter 51 of such title is further amended by striking the item relating to section 5100 and inserting the following new item:

''5100. Definitions.''.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—Section 5100 of title 38, United States Code, as amended by subsection (a), shall take effect on the date of the enactment of this Act and shall apply with respect to a claim submitted on or after such date.

SEC. 4. QUARTERLY REPORTS ON FORMAL AND INFORMAL CLAIMS FOR BENEFITS UNDER LAWS ADMINISTERED BY SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) QUARTERLY REPORTS.—During the five-year period beginning on the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall submit to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and House of Representatives quarterly reports on formal and informal claims submitted to the Secretary. Each such report shall include, for the three-month period covered by the report—

(1) the total number of claims submitted to the Secretary;

(2) the total number of informal claims submitted to the Secretary;

(3) the total number of formal claims submitted to the Secretary;

(4) the total number of forms indicating an intent to file a claim for benefits submitted to the Secretary;

(5) the total number of claims notification letters that included an invitation to the claimant to submit an additional formal claim that was reasonably raised during the adjudication of the claim for which the notification letter is sent;

(6) of the claimants who received notification letters described in paragraph (5), the total number who submitted a formal claim in response to the invitation included in the letter;

(7) the total number of electronically filed claims submitted to the Secretary; and

(8) the total number of fully-developed claims submitted to the Secretary.

(b) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of Congress that the Secretary of Veterans Affairs should develop a designated form for an increase or reopening of a claim that does not require the resubmittal of information previously submitted on a formal claim form.

(c) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

(1) The terms ''claim'', ''claimant'', and ''formal claim'' have the meanings given such terms in section 5100 of title 38, United States Code, as amended by section 4.

(2) The term ''informal claim'' means a communication in writing requesting a determination of entitlement or evidencing a belief in entitlement, to a benefit under the laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs that—

(A) is submitted in a format other than on an application form prescribed by the Secretary;

(B) indicates an intent to apply for one or more benefits under the laws administered by the Secretary;

(C) identifies the benefit sought;

(D) is made or submitted by a claimant, his or her duly authorized representative, a Member of Congress, or another person acting on behalf of a claimant who meets the requirements established by the Secretary for such purpose; and

(E) may include a report of examination or hospitalization, if the report relates to a disability which may establish such an entitlement.

(3) The term ''reasonably raised'' with respect to a claim means that evidence of an entitlement to a benefit under the laws administered by the Secretary is inferred or logically placed at issue upon a sympathetic reading of another claim and the record developed with respect to that claim.

SEC. 5. EXPEDITED PAYMENT OF SURVIVOR'S BENEFITS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 5101(a)(1) of title 38, United States Code, is amended—

(1) by striking ''A specific'' and inserting ''(A) Except as provided in subparagraph (B), a specific''; and

(2) by adding at the end the following new subparagraph:

''(B)(i) The Secretary may pay benefits under chapters 13 and 15 and sections 2302, 2307, and 5121 of this title to a survivor of a veteran who has not filed a formal claim if the Secretary determines that the record contains sufficient evidence to establish the entitlement of the survivor to such benefits.

''(ii) For purposes of this subparagraph and section 5110 of this title, the earlier of the following dates shall be treated as the date of the receipt of the survivor's application for benefits described in clause (i):

''(I) The date on which the survivor of a veteran (or the representative of such a survivor) notifies the Secretary of the death of the veteran through a death certificate or other relevant medical evidence indicating that the death was due to a service-connected or compensable disability.

''(II) The head of any other department or agency of the Federal Government notifies the Secretary of the death of the veteran.

''(iii) In notifying the Secretary of the death of a veteran as described in clause (ii)(I), the survivor (or the representative of such a survivor) may submit to the Secretary additional documents relating to such death without being required to file a formal claim.''.

(b) REPORT.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on benefits paid pursuant to covered claims.

(2) CONTENTS.—The report under paragraph (1) shall include the following:

(A) The number of covered claims adjudicated during the one-year period preceding the date of the report, disaggregated by the following:

(i) Claims in which the claimant claimed entitlement to compensation on the basis of the claimant's status as the spouse of a deceased veteran.

(ii) Claims in which the claimant claimed entitlement to compensation on the basis of the claimant's status as the child of a deceased veteran.

(iii) Claims in which the claimant claimed entitlement to compensation on the basis of the claimant's status as the parent of a deceased veteran.

(B) The number of covered claims that were adjudicated during such period and for which compensation was not awarded, disaggregated by clauses (i) through (iii) of subparagraph (A).

(C) A comparison of the accuracy and timeliness of covered claims adjudicated during such period with non-covered claims filed by survivors of a veteran.

(D) The findings of the Secretary with respect to adjudicating covered claims.

(E) Such recommendations as the Secretary may have for legislative or administrative action to improve the adjudication of claims submitted to the Secretary for benefits under chapters 13 and 15 and sections 2302, 2307, and 5121 of title 38, United States Code.

(3) COVERED CLAIM DEFINED.—In this subsection, the term ''covered claim'' means a claim covered by section 5101(a)(1)(B) of title 38, United States Code, as added by subsection (a).

(c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by subsection (a) shall apply with respect to claims for benefits based on a death occurring on or after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 6. PRIORITY FOR PROCESSING CLAIMS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Subchapter I of chapter 51 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

''§ 5109C. Priority for processing claims

''(a) PRIORITY.—In processing claims for compensation under this chapter, the Secretary shall provide the following claimants with priority over other claimants:

''(1) Veterans who have attained the age of 70.

''(2) Veterans who are terminally ill.

''(3) Veterans with life-threatening illnesses.

''(4) Homeless veterans (as defined in section 2002 of this title).

''(5) Veterans who were awarded the Medal of Honor.

''(6) Veterans who are former prisoners of war.

''(7) Veterans whose claims are being reviewed again in relation to a previously denied claim relating to military sexual trauma.

''(8) Veterans whom the Secretary determines, on a case-by-case basis, are seriously or very seriously injured.

''(9) Veterans whom the Secretary determines, on a case-by-case basis, should be given priority under this section based on an application for good cause established by the Secretary.

''(b) REGULATIONS.—The Secretary shall prescribe regulations to carry out subsection (a).''.

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of such chapter is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 5109B the following new item:

''5109C. Priority for processing claims.''.

SEC. 7. TREATMENT OF MEDICAL EVIDENCE PROVIDED BY NON-DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS IN SUPPORT OF CLAIMS FOR DISABILITY COMPENSATION.

(a) ACCEPTANCE OF REPORTS OF PRIVATE PHYSICIAN EXAMINATIONS.—Section 5125 of title 38, United States Code, is amended—

(1) by striking ''For purposes'' and inserting ''(a) IN GENERAL.—For purposes''; and

(2) by adding at the end the following new subsections:

''(b) SUFFICIENCY OF EVIDENCE.—If a veteran has submitted a medical opinion or report of a medical examination administered by a private physician in support of the veteran's claim, the Secretary may not order a medical examination to be administered by a Department physician unless the Secretary provides the veteran with a thorough explanation of why the medical opinion or report submitted by the veteran was not sufficiently complete and the reason why additional medical evidence is necessary.

''(c) SUFFICIENTLY COMPLETE DEFINED.—For purposes of a medical opinion or report described in subsection (a), the term 'sufficiently complete' means competent, credible, probative, and containing such information as may be required to make a decision on the claim for which the medical opinion or report is provided.''.

(b) APPLICATION.—The amendment made by subsection (a) shall apply with respect to medical evidence submitted after the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act by veterans who have not submitted any claim for disability compensation to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs before such date.

(c) ANNUAL REPORTS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—During the three-year period beginning three years after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives and the Senate an annual report on the implementation of section 5125(b) of title 38, United States Code, as added by subsection (a).

(2) MATTERS INCLUDED.—Each report under paragraph (1) shall include, with respect to the year covered by the report, the following:

(A) The number of veterans who submitted a medical opinion or report of a medical examination administered by a private physician in support of the veteran's claim for disability compensation as described in section 5125(b) of title 38, United States Code, as added by subsection (a).

(B) Of the number of veterans described in subparagraph (A), the number of veterans whose medical opinion or report of a medical examination administered by a private physician was determined by the Secretary to not be sufficiently complete pursuant to such section 5125(b), including the five most frequent reasons for such a determination.

(C) A comparison of the approval rate of claims for disability compensation with respect to—

(i) veterans who submitted medical opinions or reports of a medical examination administered by a private physician in support of the veteran's claim; and

(ii)(I) veterans who did submit such opinions or reports but such opinions or reports were determined by the Secretary to not be sufficiently complete pursuant to such section 5125(b); and

(II) veterans who did not submit such opinions or reports.

SEC. 8. AUTOMATIC ANNUAL INCREASE IN RATES OF DISABILITY COMPENSATION AND DEPENDENCY AND INDEMNITY COMPENSATION.

(a) INDEXING TO SOCIAL SECURITY INCREASES.—Section 5312 of title 38, United

States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

''(d)(1) During the nine-year period beginning on December 1, 2016, whenever there is an increase in benefit amounts payable under title II of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 401 et seq.) as a result of a determination made under section 215(i) of such Act (42 U.S.C. 415(i)), the Secretary shall, effective on the date of such increase in benefit amounts, increase the dollar amounts in effect for the payment of disability compensation and dependency and indemnity compensation by the Secretary, as specified in paragraph (2), as such amounts were in effect immediately before the date of such increase in benefit amounts payable under title II of the Social Security Act, by the same percentage as the percentage by which such benefit amounts are increased.

''(2) The dollar amounts to be increased pursuant to paragraph (1) are the following:

''(A) WARTIME DISABILITY COMPENSATION.—Each of the dollar amounts in effect under section 1114 of this title.

''(B) ADDITIONAL COMPENSATION FOR DEPENDENTS.—Each of the dollar amounts in effect under section 1115(1) of this title.

''(C) CLOTHING ALLOWANCE.—The dollar amount in effect under section 1162 of this title.

''(D) DEPENDENCY AND INDEMNITY COMPENSATION TO SURVIVING SPOUSE.—Each of the dollar amounts in effect under subsections (a) through (d) of section 1311 of such title.

''(E) DEPENDENCY AND INDEMNITY COMPENSATION TO CHILDREN.—Each of the dollar amounts in effect under sections 1313(a) and 1314 of such title.

''(3) Whenever there is an increase under paragraph (1) in amounts in effect for the payment of disability compensation and dependency and indemnity compensation, the Secretary shall publish such amounts, as increased pursuant to such paragraph, in the Federal Register at the same time as the material required by section 215(i)(2)(D) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 415(i)(2)(D)) is published by reason of a determination under section 215(i) of such Act (42 U.S.C. 415(i)).

''(4) Each dollar amount increased under paragraph (1), if not a whole dollar amount, shall be rounded to the next lower whole dollar amount.

''(5) The Secretary of Veterans Affairs may adjust administratively, consistent with the increases made under subsection (a), the rates of disability compensation payable to persons under section 10 of Public Law 85–857 (72 Stat. 1263) who have not received compensation under chapter 11 of this title.''.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—Subsection (d) of section 5312 of title 38, United States Code, as added by subsection (a) of this section, shall take effect on December 1, 2016.

SEC. 9. IMPROVEMENT OF FIDUCIARIES FOR VETERANS.

(a) APPOINTMENT AND SUPERVISION.—

(1) Section 5502 of title 38, United States Code, is amended to read as follows:

''§ 5502. Appointment of fiduciaries

''(a) APPOINTMENT.—Where it appears to the Secretary that the interest of the beneficiary would be served thereby, payment of benefits under any law administered by the Secretary may be made directly to the beneficiary or to a relative or some other fiduciary for the use and benefit of the beneficiary, regardless of any legal disability on the part of the beneficiary.

''(b) APPEALS.—(1) If the Secretary determines a beneficiary to be mentally incompetent for purposes of appointing a fiduciary under this chapter, the Secretary shall provide such beneficiary with a written statement detailing the reasons for such determination.

''(2) A beneficiary whom the Secretary has determined to be mentally incompetent for purposes of appointing a fiduciary under this chapter may appeal such determination.

''(c) MODIFICATION.—(1) A beneficiary for whom the Secretary appoints a fiduciary under this chapter may, at any time, request the Secretary to—

''(A) remove the fiduciary so appointed; and

''(B) have a new fiduciary appointed.

''(2) The Secretary shall comply with a request under paragraph (1) if the Secretary determines that the request is made in good faith and—

''(A) the fiduciary requested to be removed receives a fee from the beneficiary and a suitable volunteer fiduciary is available to assist the beneficiary; or

''(B) the beneficiary provides credible information that the fiduciary requested to be removed is—

''(i) not acting in the interest of the beneficiary; or

''(ii) unable to effectively serve the beneficiary because of an irreconcilable personality conflict or disagreement.

''(3) The Secretary shall ensure that any removal or new appointment of a fiduciary under paragraph (1) does not delay or interrupt the beneficiary's receipt of benefits administered by the Secretary.

''(d) INDEPENDENCE.—A fiduciary appointed by the Secretary shall operate independently of the Department to determine the actions that are in the interest of the beneficiary.

''(e) PREDESIGNATION.—A veteran may predesignate a fiduciary by—

''(1) submitting written notice to the Secretary of the predesignated fiduciary; or

''(2) submitting a form provided by the Secretary for such purpose.

''(f) APPOINTMENT OF NON-PREDESIGNATED FIDUCIARY.—If a beneficiary designates an individual to serve as a fiduciary under subsection (e) and the Secretary appoints an individual not so designated as the fiduciary for such beneficiary, the Secretary shall notify such beneficiary of—

''(1) the reason why such designated individual was not appointed; and

''(2) the ability of the beneficiary to modify the appointed fiduciary under subsection (c).

''(g) PRIORITY OF APPOINTMENT.—In appointing a fiduciary under this chapter, if a beneficiary does not designate a fiduciary pursuant to subsection (e), to the extent possible the Secretary shall appoint a person who is—

''(1) a relative of the beneficiary;

''(2) appointed as guardian of the beneficiary by a court of competent jurisdiction; or

''(3) authorized to act on behalf of the beneficiary under a durable power of attorney.''.

(2) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of chapter 55 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by striking the item relating to section 5502 and inserting the following:

''5502. Appointment of fiduciaries.''.

(b) SUPERVISION.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 55 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by inserting after section 5502, as amended by subsection (a)(1), the following new section:

''§ 5502A. Supervision of fiduciaries

''(a) COMMISSION.—(1)(A) In a case in which the Secretary determines that a commission is necessary in order to obtain the services of a fiduciary in the best interests of a beneficiary, the Secretary may authorize a fiduciary appointed by the Secretary to obtain from the monthly benefits provided to the beneficiary a reasonable commission for fiduciary services rendered, but the commission for any month may not exceed the lesser of the following amounts:

''(i) The amount that equals three percent of the monthly monetary benefits under laws administered by the Secretary paid on behalf of the beneficiary to the fiduciary.

''(ii) $35.

''(B) A commission paid under this paragraph may not be derived from any award to a beneficiary regarding back pay or retroactive benefits payments.

''(C) A commission may not be authorized for a fiduciary who receives any other form of remuneration or payment in connection with rendering fiduciary services for benefits under this title on behalf of the beneficiary.

''(D) In accordance with section 6106 of this title, a commission may not be paid to a fiduciary if the Secretary determines that the fiduciary misused any benefit payments of a beneficiary.

''(E) If the Secretary determines that the fiduciary has misused any benefit or payments of a beneficiary, the Secretary may revoke the fiduciary status of the fiduciary.

''(2) Where, in the opinion of the Secretary, any fiduciary receiving funds on behalf of a Department beneficiary is acting in such a number of cases as to make it impracticable to conserve properly the estates or to supervise the persons of the beneficiaries, the Secretary may refuse to make future payments in such cases as the Secretary may deem proper.

''(b) COURT.—Whenever it appears that any fiduciary, in the opinion of the Secretary, is not properly executing or has not properly executed the duties of the trust of such fiduciary or has collected or paid, or is attempting to collect or pay, fees, commissions, or allowances that are inequitable or in excess of those allowed by law for the duties performed or expenses incurred, or has failed to make such payments as may be necessary for the benefit of the ward or the dependents of the ward, then the Secretary may appear, by the Secretary's authorized attorney, in the court which has appointed such fiduciary, or in any court having original, concurrent, or appellate jurisdiction over said cause, and make proper presentation of such matters. The Secretary, in the Secretary's discretion, may suspend payments to any such fiduciary who shall neglect or refuse, after reasonable notice, to render an account to the Secretary from time to time showing the application of such payments for the benefit of such incompetent or minor beneficiary, or who shall neglect or refuse to administer the estate according to law. The Secretary may require the fiduciary, as part of such account, to disclose any additional financial information concerning the beneficiary (except for information that is not available to the fiduciary). The Secretary may appear or intervene by the Secretary's duly authorized attorney in any court as an interested party in any litigation instituted by the Secretary or otherwise, directly affecting money paid to such fiduciary under this section.

''(c) PAYMENT OF CERTAIN EXPENSES.—Authority is hereby granted for the payment of any court or other expenses incident to any investigation or court proceeding for the appointment of any fiduciary or other person for the purpose of payment of benefits payable under laws administered by the Secretary or the removal of such fiduciary and appointment of another, and of expenses in connection with the administration of such benefits by such fiduciaries, or in connection with any other court proceeding hereby authorized, when such payment is authorized by the Secretary.

''(d) TEMPORARY PAYMENT OF BENEFITS.—All or any part of any benefits the payment of which is suspended or withheld under this section may, in the discretion of the Secretary, be paid temporarily to the person

having custody and control of the incompetent or minor beneficiary, to be used solely for the benefit of such beneficiary, or, in the case of an incompetent veteran, may be apportioned to the dependent or dependents, if any, of such veteran. Any part not so paid and any funds of a mentally incompetent or insane veteran not paid to the chief officer of the institution in which such veteran is a patient nor apportioned to the veteran's dependent or dependents may be ordered held in the Treasury to the credit of such beneficiary. All funds so held shall be disbursed under the order and in the discretion of the Secretary for the benefit of such beneficiary or the beneficiary's dependents. Any balance remaining in such fund to the credit of any beneficiary may be paid to the beneficiary if the beneficiary recovers and is found competent, or if a minor, attains majority, or otherwise to the beneficiary's fiduciary, or, in the event of the beneficiary's death, to the beneficiary's personal representative, except as otherwise provided by law; however, payment will not be made to the beneficiary's personal representative if, under the law of the beneficiary's last legal residence, the beneficiary's estate would escheat to the State. In the event of the death of a mentally incompetent or insane veteran, all gratuitous benefits under laws administered by the Secretary deposited before or after August 7, 1959, in the personal funds of patient's trust fund on account of such veteran shall not be paid to the personal representative of such veteran, but shall be paid to the following persons living at the time of settlement, and in the order named: The surviving spouse, the children (without regard to age or marital status) in equal parts, and the dependent parents of such veteran, in equal parts. If any balance remains, such balance shall be deposited to the credit of the applicable current appropriation; except that there may be paid only so much of such balance as may be necessary to reimburse a person (other than a political subdivision of the United States) who bore the expenses of last sickness or burial of the veteran for such expenses. No payment shall be made under the two preceding sentences of this subsection unless claim therefor is filed with the Secretary within five years after the death of the veteran, except that, if any person so entitled under said two sentences is under legal disability at the time of death of the veteran, such five-year period of limitation shall run from the termination or removal of the legal disability.

''(e) ESCHEATMENT.—Any funds in the hands of a fiduciary appointed by a State court or the Secretary derived from benefits payable under laws administered by the Secretary, which under the law of the State wherein the beneficiary had last legal residence would escheat to the State, shall escheat to the United States and shall be returned by such fiduciary, or by the personal representative of the deceased beneficiary, less legal expenses of any administration necessary to determine that an escheat is in order, to the Department, and shall be deposited to the credit of the applicable revolving fund, trust fund, or appropriation.

''(f) ASSISTANCE.—The Secretary shall provide to a fiduciary appointed under section 5502 of this title materials and tools to assist the fiduciary in carrying out the responsibilities of the fiduciary under this chapter, including—

''(1) handbooks, brochures, or other written material that explain the responsibilities of a fiduciary under this chapter;

''(2) tools located on an Internet website, including forms to submit to the Secretary required information; and

''(3) assistance provided by telephone.''.

(2) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of chapter 55 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 5502 the following new item:

''5502A. Supervision of fiduciaries.''.

(c) DEFINITION OF FIDUCIARY.—Section 5506 of title 38, United States Code, is amended—

(1) by striking ''For purposes'' and inserting ''(a) For purposes''; and

(2) by adding at the end the following new subsection:

''(b)(1) For purposes of subsection (a), the term 'person' includes any—

''(A) State or local government agency whose mission is to carry out income maintenance, social service, or health care-related activities;

''(B) any State or local government agency with fiduciary responsibilities; or

''(C) any nonprofit social service agency that the Secretary determines—

''(i) regularly provides services as a fiduciary concurrently to five or more individuals; and

''(ii) is not a creditor of any such individual.

''(2) The Secretary shall maintain a list of State or local agencies and nonprofit social service agencies under paragraph (1) that are qualified to act as a fiduciary under this chapter. In maintaining such list, the Secretary may consult the lists maintained under section 807(h) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1007(h)).''.

(d) QUALIFICATIONS.—Section 5507 of title 38, United States Code, is amended to read as follows:

''§ 5507. Inquiry, investigations, and qualification of fiduciaries

''(a) INVESTIGATION.—Any certification of a person for payment of benefits of a beneficiary to that person as such beneficiary's fiduciary under section 5502 of this title shall be made on the basis of—

''(1) an inquiry or investigation by the Secretary of the fitness of that person to serve as fiduciary for that beneficiary to be conducted in advance of such certification and in accordance with subsection (b);

''(2) adequate evidence that certification of that person as fiduciary for that beneficiary is in the interest of such beneficiary (as determined by the Secretary under regulations);

''(3) adequate evidence that the person to serve as fiduciary protects the private information of a beneficiary in accordance with subsection (d)(1); and

''(4) the furnishing of any bond that may be required by the Secretary in accordance with subsection (f).

''(b) ELEMENTS OF INVESTIGATION.—(1) In conducting an inquiry or investigation of a proposed fiduciary under subsection (a)(1), the Secretary shall conduct—

''(A) a face-to-face interview with the proposed fiduciary by not later than 30 days after the date on which such inquiry or investigation begins; and

''(B) a background check of the proposed fiduciary to—

''(i) in accordance with paragraph (2), determine whether the proposed fiduciary has been convicted of a crime; and

''(ii) determine whether the proposed fiduciary will serve the best interest of the beneficiary, including by conducting a credit check of the proposed fiduciary and checking the records under paragraph (5).

''(2) The Secretary shall request information concerning whether that person has been convicted of any offense under Federal or State law. If that person has been convicted of such an offense, the Secretary may certify the person as a fiduciary only if the Secretary finds that the person is an appropriate person to act as fiduciary for the beneficiary concerned under the circumstances.

''(3) The Secretary shall conduct the background check described in paragraph (1)(B)—

''(A) each time a person is proposed to be a fiduciary, regardless of whether the person is serving or has served as a fiduciary; and

''(B) at no expense to the beneficiary.

''(4) Each proposed fiduciary shall disclose to the Secretary the number of beneficiaries that the fiduciary acts on behalf of.

''(5) The Secretary shall maintain records of any person who has—

''(A) previously served as a fiduciary; and

''(B) had such fiduciary status revoked by the Secretary.

''(6)(A) If a fiduciary appointed by the Secretary is convicted of a crime described in subparagraph (B), the Secretary shall notify the beneficiary of such conviction by not later than 14 days after the date on which the Secretary learns of such conviction.

''(B) A crime described in this subparagraph is a crime—

''(i) for which the fiduciary is convicted while serving as a fiduciary for any person;

''(ii) that is not included in a report submitted by the fiduciary under section 5509(a) of this title; and

''(iii) that the Secretary determines could affect the ability of the fiduciary to act on behalf of the beneficiary.

''(c) INVESTIGATION OF CERTAIN PERSONS.—(1) In the case of a proposed fiduciary described in paragraph (2), the Secretary, in conducting an inquiry or investigation under subsection (a)(1), may carry out such inquiry or investigation on an expedited basis that may include giving priority to conducting such inquiry or investigation. Any such inquiry or investigation carried out on such an expedited basis shall be carried out under regulations prescribed for purposes of this section.

''(2) Paragraph (1) applies with respect to a proposed fiduciary who is—

''(A) the parent (natural, adopted, or stepparent) of a beneficiary who is a minor;

''(B) the spouse or parent of an incompetent beneficiary;

''(C) a person who has been appointed a fiduciary of the beneficiary by a court of competent jurisdiction;

''(D) being appointed to manage an estate where the annual amount of veterans benefits to be managed by the proposed fiduciary does not exceed $3,600, as adjusted pursuant to section 5312 of this title; or

''(E) a person who is authorized to act on behalf of the beneficiary under a durable power of attorney.

''(d) PROTECTION OF PRIVATE INFORMATION.—(1) A fiduciary shall take all reasonable precautions to—

''(A) protect the private information of a beneficiary, including personally identifiable information; and

''(B) securely conducts financial transactions.

''(2) A fiduciary shall notify the Secretary of any action of the fiduciary that compromises or potentially compromises the private information of a beneficiary.

''(e) POTENTIAL MISUSE OF FUNDS.—(1) If the Secretary has reason to believe that a fiduciary may be misusing all or part of the benefit of a beneficiary, the Secretary shall—

''(A) conduct a thorough investigation to determine the veracity of such belief; and

''(B) if such veracity is established, transmit to the officials described in paragraph (2) a report of such investigation.

''(2) The officials described in this paragraph are the following:

''(A) The Attorney General.

''(B) Each head of a Federal department or agency that pays to a fiduciary or other person benefits under any law administered by such department of agency for the use and

benefit of a minor, incompetent, or other beneficiary.

''(f) BOND.—In determining whether a proposed fiduciary is required to furnish a bond under subsection (a)(4), the Secretary shall consider—

''(1) the existence of any familial or other personal relationship between the proposed fiduciary and the beneficiary; and

''(2) the care the proposed fiduciary has taken to protect the interests of the beneficiary.

''(g) LIST OF FIDUCIARIES.—Each regional office of the Veterans Benefits Administration shall maintain a list of the following:

''(1) The name and contact information of each fiduciary, including address, telephone number, and email address.

''(2) With respect to each fiduciary described in paragraph (1)—

''(A) the date of the most recent background check and credit check performed by the Secretary under this section;

''(B) the date that any bond was paid under this section;

''(C) the name, address, and telephone number of each beneficiary the fiduciary acts on behalf of; and

''(D) the amount that the fiduciary controls with respect to each beneficiary described in subparagraph (C).''.

(e) ANNUAL RECEIPT OF PAYMENTS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Section 5509 of title 38, United States Code, is amended—

(A) in subsection (a)—

(i) by striking ''may require a fiduciary to file a'' and inserting ''shall require a fiduciary to file an annual''; and

(ii) by adding at the end the following new sentence: ''The Secretary shall transmit such annual report or accounting to the beneficiary and any legal guardian of such beneficiary.'';

(B) by adding at the end the following new subsections:

''(c) MATTERS INCLUDED.—Except as provided by subsection (f), an annual report or accounting under subsection (a) shall include the following:

''(1) For each beneficiary that a fiduciary acts on behalf of—

''(A) the amount of the benefits of the beneficiary provided under any law administered by the Secretary accrued during the year, the amount spent, and the amount remaining; and

''(B) if the fiduciary serves the beneficiary with respect to benefits not administered by the Secretary, an accounting of all sources of benefits or other income the fiduciary oversees for the beneficiary.

''(2) A list of events that occurred during the year covered by the report that could affect the ability of the fiduciary to act on behalf of the beneficiary, including—

''(A) the fiduciary being convicted of any crime;

''(B) the fiduciary declaring bankruptcy; and

''(C) any judgments entered against the fiduciary.

''(d) RANDOM AUDITS.—The Secretary shall annually conduct random audits of fiduciaries who receive a commission pursuant to subsection 5502A(a)(1) of this title.

''(e) STATUS OF FIDUCIARY.—If a fiduciary includes in the annual report events described in subsection (c)(2), the Secretary may take appropriate action to adjust the status of the fiduciary as the Secretary determines appropriate, including by revoking the fiduciary status of the fiduciary.

''(f) CAREGIVERS AND CERTAIN OTHER FIDUCIARIES.—(1)(A) In carrying out this section, the Secretary shall ensure that a caregiver fiduciary is required only to file an annual report or accounting under subsection (a) with respect to the amount of the benefits of the beneficiary provided under any law administered by the Secretary—

''(i) spent on—

''(I) food and housing for the beneficiary; and

''(II) clothing, health-related expenses, recreation, and other personal items for the beneficiary; and

''(ii) saved for the beneficiary.

''(B) The Secretary shall coordinate with the Under Secretary for Benefits and the Under Secretary for Health to—

''(i) minimize the frequency with which employees of the Department visit the home of a caregiver fiduciary and beneficiary; and

''(ii) limit the extent of supervision by such Under Secretaries with respect to such a fiduciary and beneficiary.

''(C) In this paragraph, the term 'caregiver fiduciary' means a fiduciary who—

''(i) in addition to acting as a fiduciary for a beneficiary, is approved by the Secretary to be a provider of personal care services for the beneficiary under paragraph (3)(A)(i) of section 1720G(a) of this title;

''(ii) in carrying out such care services to such beneficiary, has undergone not less than four home visits under paragraph (9)(A) of such section; and

''(iii) has not been required by the Secretary to take corrective action pursuant to paragraph (9)(C) of such section.

''(2) In carrying out this section, the Secretary may adjust the matters required under an annual report or accounting under subsection (a) with respect to a fiduciary whom the Secretary determines to have effectively protected the interests of the beneficiary over a sustained period.''; and

(C) by striking the section heading and inserting the following: ''**Annual reports and accountings of fiduciaries**''.

(2) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of chapter 55 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by striking the item relating to section 5509 and inserting the following new item:

''5509. Annual reports and accountings of fiduciaries.''.

(f) REPAYMENT OF MISUSED BENEFITS.—Section 6107(a)(2)(C) of title 38, United States Code, is amended by inserting before the period the following: '', including by the Secretary not acting in accordance with section 5507 of this title''.

(g) ANNUAL REPORTS.—Section 5510 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by striking ''The Secretary shall include in the Annual Benefits Report of the Veterans Benefits Administration or the Secretary's Annual Performance and Accountability Report'' and inserting ''Not later than July 1 of each year, the Secretary shall submit to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives and the Senate a separate report containing''.

(h) REPORT.—Not later than two years after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a comprehensive report on the implementation of the amendments made by this Act, including—

(1) detailed information on the establishment of new policies and procedures pursuant to such amendments and training provided on such policies and procedures; and

(2) a discussion of whether the Secretary should provide fiduciaries with standardized financial software to simplify reporting requirements.

(i) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by this section shall take effect on the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 10. BOARD OF VETERANS' APPEALS VIDEO HEARINGS.

Section 7107 of title 38, United States Code, is amended—

(1) in subsection (d), by amending paragraph (1) to read as follows:

''(1)(A) Upon request for a hearing, the Board shall determine, for purposes of scheduling the hearing for the earliest possible date, whether a hearing before the Board will be held at its principal location or at a facility of the Department or other appropriate Federal facility located within the area served by a regional office of the Department. The Board shall also determine whether to provide a hearing through the use of the facilities and equipment described in subsection (e)(1) or by the appellant personally appearing before a Board member or panel.

''(B) The Board shall notify the appellant of the determinations of the location and type of hearing made under subparagraph (A). Upon notification, the appellant may request a different location or type of hearing as described in such subparagraph. If so requested, the Board shall grant such request and ensure that the hearing is scheduled at the earliest possible date without any undue delay or other prejudice to the appellant.''; and

(2) in subsection (e), by amending paragraph (2) to read as follows:

''(2) Any hearing provided through the use of the facilities and equipment described in paragraph (1) shall be conducted in the same manner as, and shall be considered the equivalent of, a personal hearing.''.

SEC. 11. IMPROVEMENTS TO AUTHORITY FOR PERFORMANCE OF MEDICAL DISABILITIES EXAMINATIONS BY CONTRACT PHYSICIANS.

(a) EXTENSION OF TEMPORARY AUTHORITY.—Subsection (c) of section 704 of the Veterans Benefits Act of 2003 (38 U.S.C. 5101 note) is amended by striking ''December 31, 2015'' and inserting ''December 31, 2017''.

(b) LICENSURE OF CONTRACT PHYSICIANS.—

(1) TEMPORARY AUTHORITY.—Such section 704 is further amended—

(A) by redesignating subsection (d) as subsection (e); and

(B) by inserting after subsection (c) the following new subsection (d):

''(d) LICENSURE OF CONTRACT PHYSICIANS.—

''(1) IN GENERAL.—Notwithstanding any law regarding the licensure of physicians, a physician described in paragraph (2) may conduct an examination pursuant to a contract entered into under subsection (b) at any location in any State, the District of Columbia, or a Commonwealth, territory, or possession of the United States, so long as the examination is within the scope of the authorized duties under such contract.

''(2) PHYSICIAN DESCRIBED.—A physician described in this paragraph is a physician who—

''(A) has a current unrestricted license to practice the health care profession of the physician;

''(B) is not barred from practicing such health care profession in any State, the District of Columbia, or a Commonwealth, territory, or possession of the United States; and

''(C) is performing authorized duties for the Department of Veterans Affairs pursuant to a contract entered into under subsection (b).''.

(2) PILOT PROGRAM.—Section 504 of the Veterans' Benefits Improvement Act of 1996 (38 U.S.C. 5101 note) is amended—

(A) by redesignating subsections (c) and (d) as subsections (d) and (e), respectively; and

(B) by inserting after subsection (b) the following new subsection (c):

''(c) LICENSURE OF CONTRACT PHYSICIANS.—

''(1) IN GENERAL.—Notwithstanding any law regarding the licensure of physicians, a physician described in paragraph (2) may conduct an examination pursuant to a contract entered into under subsection (a) at any location in any State, the District of Columbia, or a Commonwealth, territory, or possession of the United States, so long as the examination is within the scope of the authorized duties under such contract.

''(2) PHYSICIAN DESCRIBED.—A physician described in this paragraph is a physician who—

''(A) has a current unrestricted license to practice the health care profession of the physician;

''(B) is not barred from practicing such health care profession in any State, the District of Columbia, or a Commonwealth, territory, or possession of the United States; and

''(C) is performing authorized duties for the Department of Veterans Affairs pursuant to a contract entered into under subsection (a).''.

SEC. 12. PILOT PROGRAM ON FULLY DEVELOPED APPEALS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall carry out a pilot program to provide the option of an alternative appeals process that shall more quickly determine such appeals in accordance with this section.

(b) ELECTION.—

(1) FILING.—In accordance with paragraph (2), a claimant may elect to file a fully developed appeal under the pilot program under subsection (a) by filing with the Secretary the following:

(A) The notice of disagreement under chapter 71 of title 38, United States Code, along with the written election of the claimant to have the appeal determined under the pilot program.

(B) All evidence that the claimant believes is needed for the appeal as of the date of the filing.

(C) A statement of the argument in support of the claim, if any.

(2) TIMING.—A claimant shall make an election under paragraph (1) as part of the notice of disagreement filed by the claimant in accordance with paragraph (1)(A).

(3) REVERSION.—

(A) At any time, a claimant who makes an election under paragraph (1) may elect to revert to the standard appeals process. Such a reversion shall be final.

(B) A claimant described in subparagraph (A), or a claimant who makes an election under paragraph (1) but is later determined to be ineligible for the pilot program under subsection (a), shall revert to the standard appeals process without any penalty to the claimant other than the loss of the docket number associated with the fully developed appeal.

(4) OUTREACH.—In providing claimants with notices of the determination of a claim during the period in which the pilot program under subsection (a) is carried out, the Secretary shall conduct outreach as follows:

(A) The Secretary shall provide to the claimant (and to the representative of record of the claimant, if any) information regarding—

(i) the pilot program, including the advantages and disadvantages of the program;

(ii) how to make an election under paragraph (1);

(iii) the limitation on the use of new evidence described in paragraph (3) of subsection (c) and the development of information under paragraph (4) of such subsection; and

(iv) the ability of the claimant to seek advice and education regarding such process from veterans service organizations, attorneys, and claims agents recognized under chapter 59 of title 38, United States Code.

(B) The Secretary shall collaborate, partner with, and give weight to the advice of the three veterans service organizations with the most members to publish on the Internet website of the Department of Veterans Affairs an online tutorial explaining the advantages and disadvantages of the pilot program.

(c) TREATMENT BY DEPARTMENT AND BOARD.—

(1) PROCESS.—Upon the election of a claimant to file a fully developed appeal pursuant to subsection (b)(1), the Secretary shall—

(A) not provide the claimant with a statement of the case nor require the claimant to file a substantive appeal; and

(B) transfer jurisdiction over the fully developed appeal directly to the Board of Veterans' Appeals.

(2) DOCKET.—

(A) The Board of Veterans' Appeals shall—

(i) maintain fully developed appeals on a separate docket than standard appeals;

(ii) decide fully developed appeals in the order that the fully developed appeals are received on the fully developed appeal docket;

(iii) except as provided by subparagraph (B), decide not more than one fully developed appeal for each four standard appeals decided; and

(iv) to the extent practicable, decide each fully developed appeal by the date that is one year following the date on which the claimant files the notice of disagreement.

(B) Beginning one year after the date on which the pilot program under subsection (a) commences, the Board may adjust the number of standard appeals decided for each fully developed appeal under subparagraph (A)(iii) if the Board determines that such adjustment is fair for both standard appeals and fully developed appeals.

(3) LIMITATION ON USE OF NEW EVIDENCE.—

(A) Except as provided by subparagraphs (B) and (C)—

(i) a claimant may not submit or identify to the Board of Veterans' Appeals any new evidence relating to a fully developed appeal after filing such appeal unless the claimant reverts to the standard appeals process pursuant to subsection (b)(3); and

(ii) if a claimant submits or identifies any such new evidence, such submission or identification shall be deemed to be an election to make such a reversion pursuant to subsection (b)(3).

(B) Subparagraph (A) shall not apply to evidence developed pursuant to paragraphs (4) and (5). The Board shall consider such evidence in the first instance without consideration by the Veterans Benefits Administration.

(C) The representative of record of a claimant for appeals purposes, if any, shall be provided an opportunity to review the fully developed appeal of the claimant and submit any additional arguments or evidence that the representative determines necessary during a period specified by the Board for purposes of this subparagraph.

(4) PROHIBITION ON REMAND FOR ADDITIONAL DEVELOPMENT.—If the Board of Veterans' Appeals determines that a fully developed appeal requires Federal records, independent medical opinions, or new medical examinations, the Board shall—

(A) in accordance with paragraph (5), take such actions as may be necessary to develop such records, opinions, or examinations in accordance with section 5103A of title 38, United States Code;

(B) retain jurisdiction of the fully developed appeal without requiring a determination by the Veterans Benefits Administration based on such records, opinions, or examinations;

(C) ensure the claimant, and the representative of record of a claimant, if any, receives a copy of such records, opinions, or examinations; and

(D) provide the claimant a period of 90 days after the date of mailing such records, opinions, or examinations during which the claimant may provide the Board any additional evidence without requiring the claimant to make a reversion pursuant to subsection (b)(3).

(5) DEVELOPMENT UNIT.—

(A) The Board of Veterans' Appeals shall establish an office to develop Federal records, independent medical opinions, and new medical examinations pursuant to paragraph (4)(A) that the Board determines necessary to decide a fully developed appeal.

(B) The Secretary shall—

(i) ensure that the Veterans Benefits Administration cooperates with the Board of Veterans' Appeals in carrying out subparagraph (A); and

(ii) transfer employees of the Veterans Benefits Administration who, prior to the enactment of this Act, were responsible for processing claims remanded by the Board of Veterans' Appeals to positions within the office of the Board established under subparagraph (A) in a number the Secretary determines sufficient to carry out such subparagraph.

(6) HEARINGS.—Notwithstanding section 7107 of title 38, United States Code, the Secretary may not provide hearings with respect to fully developed appeals. If a claimant requests to hold a hearing pursuant to such section 7107, such request shall be deemed to be an election to revert to the standard appeals process pursuant to subsection (b)(3).

(d) DURATION; APPLICATION.—The Secretary shall carry out the pilot program under subsection (a) for a five-year period beginning one year after the date of the enactment of this Act. This section shall apply only to fully developed appeals that are filed during such period.

(e) REPORTS.—During each year in which the pilot program under subsection (a) is carried out, the Secretary shall submit to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives and the Senate a report on the pilot program. The first such report shall be submitted by not later than 180 days after the date on which the pilot program commences. Each report shall include the following:

(1) For the period covered by the report—

(A) the number of claimants who filed a fully developed appeal under the pilot program;

(B) the average processing time for each such appeal, measured by each phase of the appeal, and, if the processing time for appeals exceed one year, the reasons for such processing time;

(C) a summary of reasons for which the development of evidence was required under subsection (c)(5);

(D) the number of issues decided, listed by the disposition of the issue;

(E) of the number identified in subparagraph (D), the number of issues for which evidence was not so developed, listed by the disposition of the issue;

(F) of the number of fully developed appeals decided by the Board of Veterans' Appeals, the number of cases from each agency of original jurisdiction, listed by the disposition of the issue;

(G) the number of fully developed appeals appealed to the Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims, listed by the disposition of the case;

(H) the number of reversions made under subsection (b)(3); and

(I) any reasons for why a claimant was determined to be ineligible to participate in the pilot program.

(2) A review, made in conjunction with veterans service organizations, of the efforts of the Secretary to provide clear rating decisions and improve disability rating notification letters, including with respect to—

(A) the opinions of veterans service organizations regarding such efforts; and

(B) how the pilot program improves such efforts.

(3) A recommendation for any changes to improve the pilot program.

(4) An assessment of the feasibility and advisability of expanding the pilot program.

(f) REGULATIONS.—Not later than one day after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall publish interim guidance on the pilot program under subsection (a). Not later than 90 days after such date of enactment, the Secretary shall prescribe regulations to carry out such pilot program.

(g) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

(1) The term ''claimant'' has the meaning given that term in section 5100 of title 38, United States Code.

(2) The term ''compensation'' has the meaning given that term in section 101 of title 38, United States Code.

(3) The term ''fully developed appeal'' means an appeal of a claim for disability compensation that is—

(A) filed by a claimant in accordance with subsection (b)(1); and

(B) considered in accordance with this section.

(4) The term ''standard appeal'' means an appeal of a claim for disability compensation that is not a fully developed appeal.

SEC. 13. DEADLINE FOR CERTIFICATION OF APPEALS FORMS BY REGIONAL OFFICES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall take such steps as may be necessary to ensure that when a regional office of the Department of Veterans Affairs receives a form known as ''VA Form 9, Appeal to Board of Veterans' Appeals'', or any successor form, submitted by a veteran to appeal a decision relating to a claim, the regional office certifies such form by not later than one year after the date of the receipt of the form.

SEC. 14. EVALUATION OF BACKLOG OF DISABILITY CLAIMS AND APPEALS OF CLAIMS OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—There is established a commission or task force to evaluate the backlog of claims within the Department of Veterans Affairs and the appeals process of claims.

(b) STUDIES.—

(1) BACKLOG STUDY.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—The Commission or Task Force, acting through the subcommittee described in subsection (d)(2)(A), shall carry out a study on the backlog of claims, including the current process the Secretary of Veterans Affairs uses to evaluate claims and appeals and the laws and regulations applicable to such claims and appeals. Such study shall be a comprehensive evaluation and assessment of the backlog of claims, an analysis of possible improvements to the procedures used to process such claims, and any related issues that the Commission or Task Force considers relevant.

(B) MATTERS INCLUDED.—In carrying out the study under subparagraph (A), the Commission or Task Force shall examine the following:

(i) The backlog of claims, including an analysis of—

(I) the most effective means to quickly and accurately resolve all claims pending as of the date of the study; and

(II) with respect to the Department, the annual funding, number of full-time employees, workload management practices, and the progress, as of the date of the study, of the strategic plan.

(ii) Possible improvements to the claims process, including an evaluation and recommendations with respect to whether substantive and structural changes to the overall claims process are required.

(iii) In carrying out the evaluation and recommendations under subparagraph (B), an examination of—

(I) options that make no major substantive changes to the claims process;

(II) options that maintain the process but make minor changes; and

(III) options that make broad changes to the process.

(2) APPEALS PROCESS STUDY.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—The Commission or Task Force, acting through the subcommittee described in subsection (d)(2)(B), shall carry out a study on the anticipated increase of appeals of claims, including the current appeals process and the laws and regulations applicable to such appeals. Such study shall be a comprehensive evaluation and assessment of such anticipated increase of appeals claims, an analysis of possible improvements to the procedures used to process such appeals, and any related issues that the Commission or Task Force considers relevant.

(B) MATTERS INCLUDED.—In carrying out the study under subparagraph (A), the Commission or Task Force shall examine the following:

(i) The anticipated surge in appeals of claims, including an analysis of—

(I) the most effective means to quickly and accurately resolve pending appeals and future appeals;

(II) with respect to both the Board and the Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims, the annual funding, number of full-time employees, workload management practices, and the progress, as of the date of the study, of the strategic plan; and

(III) the efficiency, effectiveness, and utility of the Veterans Benefits Management System with respect to appeals operations, including an identification of key changes that may need to be implemented to such system.

(ii) Possible improvements to the appeals process, including an evaluation and recommendations with respect to whether substantive and structural changes to the overall appeals process are required.

(iii) In carrying out the evaluation and recommendations under clause (ii), an examination of—

(I) options that make no major substantive changes to the appeals process;

(II) options that maintain the process but make minor changes;

(III) options that make broad changes to the process;

(IV) the necessity of the multi-tiered levels of appeals at the regional office level, including filing a notice of disagreement, receipt of a statement of the case, supplemental statement of the case (if applicable), and substantive appeal (VA Form 9);

(V) the role of the Board and the Appeals Management Center, including—

(aa) the effectiveness of the workload management of the Board and the Center;

(bb) whether the Board and Center should be regionalized or maintain the centralized structure in the District of Columbia;

(cc) whether Board members should be required to pass the administrative law judges certification examination; and

(dd) whether the Board should continue to require de novo review of appeals; and

(VI) the role of the Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims and the United States Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit, including—

(aa) the continued effectiveness and necessity of a multi-tiered structure of judicial review;

(bb) whether the Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims should have Article I or Article III status;

(cc) expansion of either the Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims or the United States Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit jurisdiction, including by allowing such courts to hear class action lawsuits with respect to claims; and

(dd) the possibility of expanding judicial review of claims to all Federal circuit courts of appeals or allowing judicial review beyond the Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims only by the Supreme Court.

(3) CONSIDERATION.—In carrying out the studies under paragraph (1)(A) and (2)(A) and making any recommendations under this section, the Commission or Task Force shall consider the following:

(A) The interests of veterans, including with respect to accuracy, fairness, and transparency in the claims process of the Department.

(B) The values and requirements of the Constitution, including with respect to compliance with procedural and substantive due process.

(C) The public interest, including with respect to the responsible use of available resources.

(D) With respect to the study conducted under paragraph (1)(A), the importance of the claimant friendly, nonadversarial nature of the claims process.

(E) With respect to the study conducted under paragraph (2)(A), the importance of an appeals process that is efficient and easily understandable by a claimant.

(4) ROLE OF SECRETARY, CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD, AND CHIEF JUDGE.—

(A) INFORMATION.—In carrying out each study under paragraph (1)(A) and (2)(A), at times that the Commission or Task Force determines appropriate, the Commission or Task Force shall submit to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, the Chairman of the Board, and the Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims, as the case may be, information with respect to remedies and solutions that the Commission or Task Force identifies pursuant to such a study.

(B) IMPLEMENTATION.—The Secretary, the Chairman of the Board, and the Chief Judge shall each—

(i) fully consider the remedies and solutions submitted to the Secretary, the Chairman, or the Chief Judge, as the case may be, under subparagraph (A);

(ii) implement such remedies and solutions as the Secretary, the Chairman, or the Chief Judge, respectively, determines appropriate; and

(iii) submit to Congress justification for failing to implement any such remedy or solution.

(C) PLAN.—The Commission or Task Force shall submit to the Secretary, the Chairman of the Board, and the Chief Judge a feasible, timely, and cost-effective plan to eliminate the backlog of appeals of claims based on the remedies and solutions identified pursuant to the study under paragraph (2)(A) and the information submitted under subparagraph (A).

(c) COMPREHENSIVE REPORTS.—

(1) INITIAL COMPREHENSIVE REPORT.—Not later than 60 days after the date on which the Commission or Task Force first meets, the Commission or Task Force shall submit to the President and Congress an initial comprehensive report on the studies conducted under paragraphs (1)(A) and (2)(A) of subsection (b), including—

(A) the findings of the causes of the backlog of claims;

(B) a proposed plan to handle the anticipated surge in appeals of claims; and

(C) the level of cooperation the Commission or Task Force has received from the Secretary and the heads of other departments or agencies of the Federal Government.

(2) INTERIM COMPREHENSIVE REPORTS.—Not later than 90 days after the date on which the Commission or Task Force first meets, and each 30-day period thereafter ending on the date on which the Commission or Task Force submits the final comprehensive report under paragraph (3), the Commission or Task Force shall submit to the President and Congress a comprehensive report on—

(A) the progress of the Secretary with respect to implementing solutions to expedite the elimination of the backlog of claims pursuant to subsection (b)(4)(B)(ii);

(B) the progress of the Secretary, the Chairman of the Board, and the Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims with respect to implementing solutions to complete appeals of claims in a timely manner in a timely manner pursuant to such subsection; and

(C) the level of cooperation the Commission or Task Force has received from the Secretary and the heads of other departments or agencies of the Federal Government.

(3) FINAL COMPREHENSIVE REPORT.—Not later than 180 days after the date on which the Commission or Task Force first meets, the Commission or Task Force shall submit to the President and Congress a comprehensive report on the following:

(A) With respect to the study conducted under subsection (b)(1)(A)—

(i) The findings, conclusions, and recommendations of the Commission or Task Force with respect to the matters referred to in such subsection.

(ii) The recommendations of the Commission or Task Force for revising and improving the backlog of claims and the procedures used to process claims.

(iii) The progress of the Secretary with respect to implementing solutions to expedite the elimination of the backlog of claims pursuant to subsection (b)(4)(B)(ii).

(iv) Other information and recommendations with respect to claims as the Commission or Task Force considers appropriate.

(B) With respect to the study conducted under subsection (b)(2)(A)—

(i) The findings, conclusions, and recommendations of the Commission or Task Force with respect to the matters referred to in such subsection.

(ii) The recommendations of the Commission or Task Force for revising and improving the appeals process;

(iii) The information described in subsection (b)(4)(A).

(iv) The feasible, timely, and cost effective plan described in subsection (b)(4)(C).

(v) The progress of the Secretary, the Chairman of the Board, and the Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims with respect to implementing solutions to provide timely appeals of claims.

(vi) Other information and recommendations with respect to the appeals process as the Commission or Task Force considers appropriate.

(d) MEMBERSHIP.—

(1) NUMBER AND APPOINTMENT.—The Commission or Task Force shall be composed of 15 members, appointed as follows:

(A) Two members appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives, one of whom shall be designated to serve upon the Subcommittee on the Backlog of Claims and one of whom shall be designated to serve upon the Subcommittee on Appeals.

(B) Two members appointed by the minority leader of the House of Representatives, one of whom shall be designated to serve upon the Subcommittee on the Backlog of Claims and one of whom shall be designated to serve upon the Subcommittee on Appeals.

(C) Two members appointed by the majority leader of the Senate, one of whom shall be designated to serve upon the Subcommittee on the Backlog of Claims and one of whom shall be designated to serve upon the Subcommittee on Appeals.

(D) Two members appointed by the minority leader of the Senate, one of whom shall be designated to serve upon the Subcommittee on the Backlog of Claims and one of whom shall be designated to serve upon the Subcommittee on Appeals.

(E) Three members appointed by the President, two of whom shall be designated to serve upon the Subcommittee on the Backlog of Claims and one of whom shall be designated to serve upon the Subcommittee on Appeals.

(F) One member appointed by the Secretary of Defense, whom shall be designated to serve upon the Subcommittee on the Backlog of Claims.

(G) Two members appointed by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, one of whom shall be designated to serve upon the Subcommittee on the Backlog of Claims and one of whom shall be designated to serve upon the Subcommittee on Appeals.

(H) One member appointed by the Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims, whom shall be designated to serve upon the Subcommittee on Appeals.

(2) SUBCOMMITTEES.—The Commission or Task Force shall have two subcommittees as follows:

(A) A Subcommittee on the Backlog of Claims consisting of the eight members designated in accordance with paragraph (1).

(B) A Subcommittee on Appeals consisting of the seven members designated in accordance with paragraph (1).

(3) QUALIFICATIONS.—Each member appointed under paragraph (1) shall be appointed based on the experience of the member as a veteran or on the subject matter expertise or other relevant experience of the member.

(4) ADVISORS.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—In addition to the 15 members appointed under paragraph (1), the Commission or Task Force shall—

(i) have five nonvoting, nonmember advisors, appointed by a majority of the Commission or Task Force, each from a different organization that represents the interests of veterans; and

(ii) seek advice from experts from nongovernmental organizations (including veterans service organizations and military organizations), the Internet technology industry, and the insurance industry.

(B) ADVICE.—Individuals described in clause (i) and (ii) of subparagraph (A) shall provide advice to both subcommittees described in paragraph (2).

(5) CHAIRMAN.—The President shall designate a member of the Commission or Task Force who is appointed by the President and designated to serve upon the Subcommittee on the Backlog of Claims to serve as the chairman of the Commission or Task Force. The chairman may designate a member to serve as the chairman of the Subcommittee on the Backlog of Claims and a member to serve as the chairman of the Subcommittee on Appeals to chair such subcommittees as the designee of the chairman of the Commission or Task Force.

(6) PERIOD OF APPOINTMENT.—Members of the Commission or Task Force shall be appointed for the life of the Commission or Task Force. A vacancy shall not affect its powers.

(7) VACANCY.—A vacancy on the Commission or Task Force shall be filled in the manner in which the original appointment was made.

(8) APPOINTMENT DEADLINE.—The appointment of members of the Commission or Task Force established in this section shall be made not later than 15 days after the date of the enactment of this Act.

(e) MEETINGS.—

(1) INITIAL MEETING.—The Commission or Task Force shall hold its first meeting not later than 15 days after the date on which a majority of the members are appointed.

(2) MEETINGS.—The Commission or Task Force shall meet at the call of the chairman.

(3) QUORUM.—A majority of the members of the Commission or Task Force shall constitute a quorum, but a lesser number may hold hearings.

(f) POWERS OF THE COMMISSION OR TASK FORCE.—

(1) HEARINGS.—The Commission or Task Force may hold such hearings, sit and act at such times and places, take such testimony, and receive such evidence as the Commission or Task Force considers advisable to carry out the purposes of this section.

(2) INFORMATION FROM FEDERAL AGENCIES.—The Commission or Task Force may secure directly from any department or agency of the Federal Government such information as the Commission or Task Force considers necessary to carry out the provisions of this section. Upon request of the chairman, the head of such department or agency shall furnish such information to the Commission or Task Force.

(3) POSTAL SERVICES.—The Commission or Task Force may use the United States mails in the same manner and under the same conditions as other departments and agencies of the Federal Government.

(4) GIFTS.—The Commission or Task Force may accept, use, and dispose of gifts or donations of service or property.

(g) PERSONNEL MATTERS.—

(1) COMPENSATION OF MEMBERS.—Each member of the Commission or Task Force who is not an officer or employee of the United States shall be compensated at a rate equal to the daily equivalent of the annual rate of basic pay prescribed for level IV of the Executive Schedule under section 5315 of title 5, United States Code, for each day (including travel time) during which the member is engaged in the performance of the duties of the Commission or Task Force. All members of the Commission or Task Force who are officers or employees of the United States shall serve without compensation in addition to that received for their services as officers or employees of the United States.

(2) TRAVEL EXPENSES.—The members of the Commission or Task Force shall be allowed travel expenses, including per diem in lieu of subsistence, at rates authorized for employees of agencies under subchapter I of chapter 57 of title 5, United States Code, while away from their homes or regular places of business in the performance of service of the Commission or Task Force.

(3) STAFF.—

(A) APPOINTMENT.—The chairman of the Commission or Task Force may, without regard to the civil service laws and regulations, appoint an executive director and such other personnel as may be necessary to enable the Commission or Task Force to perform its duties. The appointment of an executive director shall be subject to the approval of the Commission or Task Force.

(B) COMPENSATION.—The chairman of the Commission or Task Force may fix the compensation of the executive director and other

personnel without regard to the provisions of chapter 51 and subchapter III of chapter 53 of title 5, United States Code, relating to classification of positions and General Schedule pay rates, except that the rate of pay for the executive director and other personnel may not exceed the rate payable for level V of the Executive Schedule under section 5316 of such title.

(4) DETAIL OF GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES.—Upon request of the chairman of the Commission or Task Force, the head of any department or agency of the Federal Government may detail, on a nonreimbursable basis, any personnel of that department or agency to the Commission or Task Force to assist it in carrying out its duties.

(5) PROCUREMENT OF TEMPORARY AND INTERMITTENT SERVICES.—The chairman of the Commission or Task Force may procure temporary and intermittent services under section 3109(b) of title 5, United States Code, at rates for individuals which do not exceed the daily equivalent of the annual rate of basic pay prescribed for level V of the Executive Schedule under section 5316 of such title.

(h) TERMINATION OF COMMISSION OR TASK FORCE.—The Commission or Task Force shall terminate 60 days after the date on which the Commission or Task Force submits the final comprehensive report under subsection (c)(3).

(i) FUNDING.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall, upon the request of the chairman of the Commission or Task Force, make available to the Commission or Task Force such amounts as the Commission or Task Force may require to carry out the duties of the Commission or Task Force under this section.

(2) AVAILABILITY.—Any sums made available to the Commission or Task Force shall remain available, without fiscal year limitation, until the termination of the Commission or Task Force.

(j) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

(1) The term ''appeals process'' means the process to appeal the determination by the Secretary of a claim beginning with the notice of disagreement filed pursuant to section 7105 of title 38, United States Code, and ending with the review of a decision by the Supreme Court pursuant to section 7292(c) of such title.

(2) The term ''Board'' means the Board of Veterans' Appeals.

(3) The term ''strategic plan'' means the Strategic Plan to Eliminate the Compensation Claims Backlog, published by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs on January 25, 2013.

(k) EFFECTIVE DATE.—This section shall take effect on the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 15. METHODS FOR VALIDATING CERTAIN WORLD WAR II MERCHANT MARINER SERVICE CONSIDERED TO BE ACTIVE SERVICE BY THE SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—For the purposes of verifying that an individual performed service under honorable conditions that satisfies the requirements of a coastwise merchant seaman who is recognized pursuant to section 401 of the GI Bill Improvement Act of 1977 (Public Law 95–202; 38 U.S.C. 106 note) as having performed active duty service for the purposes described in subsection (c)(1), the Secretary of Defense shall accept the following:

(1) In the case of an individual who served on a coastwise merchant vessel seeking such recognition for whom no applicable Coast Guard shipping or discharge form, ship logbook, merchant mariner's document or Z-card, or other official employment record is available, the Secretary shall provide such recognition on the basis of applicable Social Security Administration records submitted for or by the individual, together with validated testimony given by the individual or the primary next of kin of the individual that the individual performed such service during the period beginning on December 7, 1941, and ending on December 31, 1946.

(2) In the case of an individual who served on a coastwise merchant vessel seeking such recognition for whom the applicable Coast Guard shipping or discharge form, ship logbook, merchant mariner's document or Z-card, or other official employment record has been destroyed or otherwise become unavailable by reason of any action committed by a person responsible for the control and maintenance of such form, logbook, or record, the Secretary shall accept other official documentation demonstrating that the individual performed such service during period beginning on December 7, 1941, and ending on December 31, 1946.

(3) For the purpose of determining whether to recognize service allegedly performed during the period beginning on December 7, 1941, and ending on December 31, 1946, the Secretary shall recognize masters of seagoing vessels or other officers in command of similarly organized groups as agents of the United States who were authorized to document any individual for purposes of hiring the individual to perform service in the merchant marine or discharging an individual from such service.

(b) TREATMENT OF OTHER DOCUMENTATION.—Other documentation accepted by the Secretary of Defense pursuant to subsection (a)(2) shall satisfy all requirements for eligibility of service during the period beginning on December 7, 1941, and ending on December 31, 1946.

(c) BENEFITS ALLOWED.—

(1) BURIAL BENEFITS ELIGIBILITY.—Service of an individual that is considered active duty pursuant to subsection (a) shall be considered as active duty service with respect to providing burial benefits under chapters 23 and 24 of title 38, United States Code, to the individual.

(2) MEDALS, RIBBONS, AND DECORATIONS.—An individual whose service is recognized as active duty pursuant to subsection (a) may be awarded an appropriate medal, ribbon, or other military decoration based on such service.

(3) STATUS OF VETERAN.—An individual whose service is recognized as active duty pursuant to subsection (a) shall be honored as a veteran but shall not be entitled by reason of such recognized service to any benefit that is not described in this subsection.

(d) DETERMINATION OF COASTWISE MERCHANT SEAMAN.—The Secretary of Defense shall verify that an individual performed service under honorable conditions that satisfies the requirements of a coastwise merchant seaman pursuant to this section without regard to the sex, age, or disability of the individual during the period in which the individual served as such a coastwise merchant seaman.

(e) DEFINITION OF PRIMARY NEXT OF KIN.—In this section, the term ''primary next of kin'' with respect to an individual seeking recognition for service under this section means the closest living relative of the individual who was alive during the period of such service.

(f) EFFECTIVE DATE.—This section shall take effect 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 16. DESIGNATION OF AMERICAN WORLD WAR II CITIES.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall designate at least one city in the United States each year as an ''American World War II City''.

(b) CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION.—After the designation made under subsection (c), the Secretary, in consultation with the Secretary of Defense, shall make each designation under subsection (a) based on the following criteria:

(1) Contributions by a city to the war effort during World War II, including those related to defense manufacturing, bond drives, service in the Armed Forces, and the presence of military facilities within the city.

(2) Efforts by a city to preserve the history of the city's contributions during World War II, including through the establishment of preservation organizations or museums, restoration of World War II facilities, and recognition of World War II veterans.

(c) FIRST AMERICAN WORLD WAR II CITY.—The city of Wilmington, North Carolina, is designated as an ''American World War II City''.

SEC. 17. SENSE OF CONGRESS REGARDING AMERICAN VETERANS DISABLED FOR LIFE.

(a) FINDINGS.—Congress makes the following findings:

(1) There are at least 3,600,000 veterans currently living with service-connected disabilities.

(2) As a result of their service, many veterans are permanently disabled throughout their lives and in many cases must rely on the support of their families and friends when these visible and invisible burdens become too much to bear alone.

(3) October 5, which is the anniversary of the dedication of the American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial, has been recognized as an appropriate day on which to honor American veterans disabled for life each year.

(b) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—Congress—

(1) expresses its appreciation to the men and women left permanently wounded, ill, or injured as a result of their service in the Armed Forces;

(2) supports the annual recognition of American veterans disabled for life each year; and

(3) encourages the American people to honor American veterans disabled for life each year with appropriate programs and activities.

SEC. 18. EXTENSION OF PILOT PROGRAM ON COUNSELING IN RETREAT SETTINGS FOR WOMEN VETERANS NEWLY SEPARATED FROM SERVICE IN THE ARMED FORCES.

Section 203(d) of the Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act of 2010 (Public Law 111–163; 38 U.S.C. 1712A note) is amended by striking ''December 31, 2016'' and inserting ''December 31, 2021''.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. ABRAHAM) and the gentleman from California (Mr. TAKANO) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Louisiana.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. ABRAHAM. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and add extraneous materials to H.R. 677, as amended.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 677, as amended.

H.R. 677, as amended, contains many important provisions that would help

our Nation's veterans, including provisions to provide an automatic annual COLA, cost-of-living adjustment, for veterans' benefits; expedite the processing of veterans' claims and appeals; improve VA's fiduciary program; expand the official documentation accepted by the Secretary of Defense to grant veteran status with limited benefits to World War II Merchant Marine and Coastwise Merchant Seamen; designate certain cities as American World War II cities; and express the sense of Congress honoring American veterans disabled for life.

I want to recognize the hard work of the Members whose proposals have been incorporated into H.R. 677, as amended. I particularly want to thank my colleagues on the Veterans' Affairs Committee: Chairman MILLER, Ranking Member BROWN, Ms. TITUS, Dr. RUIZ, Mr. WALZ, and Mr. O'ROURKE. In addition, I want to acknowledge the contributions of Representatives JOHNSON, BUTTERFIELD, LATTA, ROUZER, and FRANKEL.

H.R. 677, as amended, incorporates legislation that Chairman MILLER introduced that would expand the eligibility for a medallion provided by VA for private headstones that identify the deceased as a veteran.

These medallions may be attached to privately purchased headstones of veterans who are buried in private cemeteries. They are inscribed with the word ''veteran'' across the top, and the branch of service is inscribed along the bottom. The medallions have proven to be very popular, with many families choosing to use it to honor the service of their loved one.

Unfortunately, current law only authorizes medallions for veterans who died before November 1, 1990. During a Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs Subcommittee hearing, the VA testified that it has been forced to deny 91 percent of applications for medallions because the requests were made by families of veterans who died before November 1, 1990.

H.R. 677, as amended, would allow the VA to provide these medallions to individuals who served in the Armed Forces after April 6, 1917, which is the date the United States entered World War I.

The reason that this proposal limits eligibility to those who served after April 6, 1917, is due to the possibility that attaching a medallion to an older headstone may cause damage. There are also concerns that placing medallions on antique headstones in older cemeteries may alter the appearance of historic cemeteries.

H.R. 677, as amended, would protect historic gravestones and cemeteries, but also recognizes the importance in honoring the service and sacrifice of those who have served our Nation in the Armed Forces.

These medallions ensure that veterans who are buried in private cemeteries and whose graves are marked by privately purchased headstones can easily be distinguished. I hope that when people visit these cemeteries and see these medallions they take a few moments to remember that we all owe our freedom to our Nation's veterans. These patriotic heroes deserve nothing less.

This bill also includes the text of H.R. 1575, a bill that was introduced by Ranking Member BROWN to extend a pilot program on counseling in retreat settings for women veterans who are newly separated from service. This pilot was originally authorized in 2010, and pilot participants have reported unanimously positive experiences and a significant improvement in well-being, stress, and positive coping skills following their participation in the retreats.

I am grateful to the ranking member for sponsoring this provision in recognition of the good work being done in this pilot program and the need to ensure that women veterans continue to have access to it.

There are many provisions in H.R. 677, as amended, that would help improve services for veterans and their families, but I want to focus my remarks on the section that I am proud to have authored.

First, the bill would authorize an automatic annual COLA for beneficiaries who receive VA disability compensation. Although Congress generally approves COLA legislation every year, veterans have to wait until Congress actually acts. This can be very stressful for our veterans and their families who depend on their payments to make ends meet. Our Nation's heroes should not have to wait to know whether they are going to be able to pay their bills or not.

H.R. 677, as amended, would ensure that our Nation's veterans automatically receive the same annual COLA as Social Security recipients. This critical provision will help our Nation's veterans better plan for their financial future, and I urge all Members to support it.

Second, this legislation would help make it more convenient for veterans to schedule disability examinations by extending the temporary authorization that allows the VA to use contract physicians to conduct disability examinations through 2017.

Veterans in rural areas, like the Fifth District which I represent, may have to travel long distances to see a VA examiner for a disability examination. My proposal would make it easier to schedule disability examinations by permitting the VA to contract with any physician with a current, unrestricted license to conduct these examinations in the United States.

Additionally, H.R. 677, as amended, would require the VA to provide Congress with regular types of claims veterans file. This information will help better inform our efforts to reform the VA and ensure veterans receive timely, accurate claims decisions.

Section 4 of H.R. 677, as amended, would also express the sense of Congress that the VA should develop a designated form for an increased rating claim or reopening of a claim that does not require the resubmittal of information previously submitted to the Department.

I am grateful for the ranking member's response in this provision in recognition of the good work being done in this pilot program, and we need to ensure that it is passed. I urge my colleagues to support the legislation.

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

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

I would like to express my appreciation to all the members of our committee who have worked to address these issues in a bipartisan manner, and I truly hope we can stay focused on what is important here, which is helping veterans.

This bill extends a pilot counseling program for women veterans separating from the military and coping with PTSD and other combat-related stress issues. These specialized programs are helping women transition from the military and start the next phase of their lives.

I would also like to highlight an important piece of this legislation that was originally introduced by my friend and colleague, Mr. O'ROURKE, the Express Appeals Act.

As highlighted by my friend and colleague, Representative TITUS, other members of the committee, and even the VA Secretary just 2 weeks ago, the appeals process is in crisis. We in the House have heard the cry for help and have responded.

After passing this bill, we will wait for our friends in the Senate to take action. We encourage them to remember our veterans suffer for our inaction. This action provides a critical and widely supported alternative appeals process.

I applaud Representatives O'ROURKE and COOK, Chairman MILLER, the VA, the Board of Appeals, the DAV, the VFW, PVA, AMVETS, IAVA, and MOAA in working together for almost 2 years to reach broad consensus on an alternative path forward.

The Express Appeals Act, similar to the VA's Fully Developed Claim program, offers veterans an alternative option to do more of the work on their own, with the promise of an expedited decision from the Board of Veterans Appeals.

My friend and colleague, Representative RUIZ's bill, H.R. 2691, the Veterans' Survivors Claims Processing and Automation Act of 2015, is also included in this legislation. This provision would automate claims for the surviving family members of veterans.

I truly believe how we treat our veterans plays a major role in who is willing to fight our wars and defend our Nation.

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

Mr. ABRAHAM. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. COSTELLO).

Mr. COSTELLO of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to support H.R. 677, the American Heroes COLA Act.

There are a lot of very excellent provisions to this bill, not the least of which is the automatic COLA, but I actually want to speak to part of this bill that deals with the claims processing.

The legislation offered by my colleague from Louisiana (Mr. ABRAHAM) would set out to improve the claims processing through several steps. I want to highlight them.

First, it would require the VA to accept medical evidence from medical professionals in the community to support veterans' disability claims. Second, it would establish a commission to independently evaluate the VA's disability claims and appealed claims backlog. Last, it would develop an alternative program to determine appeals for disability claims more quickly.

Each of these steps offers solutions to the current backlog. This bill is a smart, proactive, bipartisan bill that will help reduce the daunting piles of paperwork and delays that many veterans continue to face.

I am very proud to be in support of this bill. It is another step in doing our best to reduce the claims backlog, and I thank Mr. ABRAHAM for his leadership on this.

Mr. ABRAHAM. Mr. Speaker, once again, I encourage all Members to support H.R. 677, as amended.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. BUTTERFIELD).

Mr. BUTTERFIELD. Let me first thank Mr. TAKANO for yielding, and I thank all of you for your advocacy on this bill. This is a very, very important piece of legislation for our veterans.

Mr. Speaker, we are running out of time to finally recognize the critical contributions of a forgotten but critical segment of brave men and women who served our country during World War II. Because we are running out of time, I urge my colleagues to pass H.R. 677, which contains provisions from my bill, H.R. 1288, that would create a pathway for these forgotten individuals to finally be recognized for their service to our country.

I am referring to an overlooked segment of the World War II Merchant Marine, known as Coastwise Merchant Seamen. These men and women, Mr. Speaker, served the vital role of transporting raw materials and supplies between our domestic military installations and production facilities during the war. Their jobs were absolutely essential to the war effort.

To this day, many of these mariners have never been recognized for their service, largely at no fault of their own, but rather because of decisions made by the Federal Government. It has been virtually impossible for many of these mariners to obtain the required documents needed to prove their World War II service due to government orders that either had these documents destroyed or never kept at all.

Even today, government inaction and delay on transferring the surviving documents to the National Archives and Records Administration makes searching for and obtaining the required documents practically impossible. As each day passes, this issue grows more acute due to the advanced age of these mariners.

We must make it possible for these great Americans to receive their due recognition while we still have the chance.

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More importantly, we have to do this now, while these mariners still have the chance to know that their sacrifices were not in vain, and their Nation and government are appreciative of their service.

Mr. Speaker, these mariners are national treasures, and we are here today because of their sacrifices. They deserve, each of them, to be recognized for their service, and I ask my colleagues to join me in this effort by voting ''yes'' on this bill.

I want to thank Chairman MILLER, Ranking Member BROWN, subcommittee Chairman ABRAHAM, and Ranking Member TITUS for working with me and my staff on this issue, and including provisions of my bill in the base text.

I want to thank the committee staff for all of their hard work. I am appreciative of their efforts. This has been a true team effort, and we are now one step closer to finally doing the right thing.

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. FRANKEL).

Ms. FRANKEL of Florida. I thank Mr. TAKANO for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 677, a bill that honors American veterans disabled for life. I thank my friend from Florida, Chairman JEFF MILLER, for cosponsoring this bill with me and shepherding its passage.

As the mother of a United States Marine veteran, I want to first start by thanking all our veterans who have served us. Thankfully for my family, my son returned safely from two wars.

But, sadly, there are many for whom leaving the battlefield does not mark the end of a conflict, for them or their family. Jeff Colaiacovo is one of those people. I am proud to say he is a constituent and one of my heroes.

On his 18th birthday, unlike many young men of his generation, he volunteered for the Army to go to the Vietnam War, and it would be brutal.

A few months into his tour, in 1967, Jeff's tank hit a mine, and shrapnel exploded into his eyes, blinding him. Miraculously, the doctors were able to recover his vision, and soon after, he was back on the battlefield.

Then, on August 30, 1967, Jeff's tank was hit by a rocket-propelled grenade, trapping him inside, his body engulfed in flames. He spent 5 months in burn units around the world.

He left the Army with an honorable discharge. And, again, he was not to be deterred. He got married. He raised children. He started a small business.

The thing is, Mr. Speaker, the injuries he sustained during his service left him disabled for life. And to this day, Jeff is under heavy medication for PTSD. He bears the scars of duty that remind us all of what he and many others gave in serving us.

Now, this bill recognizes that October 5 is the anniversary of the dedication of the Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial, a magnificent memorial that sits just steps away from the Capitol.

On one of its walls reads a quote from Dwight D. Eisenhower: ''Each of you bears upon his body the permanent, honorable scars of dangerous service: service rendered in order that our great nation might continue to live according to the expressed will of its own citizens.''

In honor of Jeff, and so many others, let's pass this bill.

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

As I conclude, I would like to speak about a provision in this bill. Included here is language extending the very successful pilot program run by the Department of Veterans Affairs which provides psychiatric and psychological counseling and support in retreat settings for newly returned women veterans.

A Veterans Health Administration report showed that this limited, 2-year pilot program, run by the Readjustment Counseling Service, produced positive, measurable results helping returning women veterans experiencing post-traumatic stress, depression, sleep disturbances and isolation, many having been evaluated as service-connected for severe PTSD.

In surveys, participants have consistently reported experiencing a marked decrease in stress symptoms and an increase in coping skills, including understanding better how to develop support systems and to access available resources at the VA and in their communities as they reenter civilian life.

Post-9/11 women veterans, often combat veterans, are brought together in groups of about 20, in outdoor settings. These veterans, most of whom are coping with the effects of severe PTSD, some as a result of sexual trauma while in the military, participated in trust-building exercises and worked with counselors and psychological educators to build peer support.

Financial and occupational counseling and conflict resolution training were also offered on an as-needed basis.

I urge support of this provision and the underlying legislation.

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

Mr. ABRAHAM. Mr. Speaker, I continue to urge support of H.R. 677.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 677, the "American Heroes COLA Act."

This bill requires that, whenever there is an increase in benefit amounts payable under title II (Old Age, Survivors and Disability Insurance) of the Social Security Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall increase by the same percentage the amounts payable as veterans' disability compensation.

H.R. 677 does the following:

1. compensates for dependents

2. a clothing allowance for certain disabled adults

3. compensation for surviving spouses and children

This bill requires that veterans are given the correct percentage and benefit amounts from the Social Security Act.

Retired military veterans, VA rates for compensation and pension for disabled veterans and surviving families will be effective December 1, 2015 and will be reflected on the first check to be paid on December 31, 2015.

Congress enacted the COLA provision as part of the 1972 Social Security Amendments, and automatic annual COLAs began in 1975. Before that, benefits were increased only when Congress enacted special legislation.

COLA impacts benefits to about 59 social security recipients, 1.96 million military retirees and 4 million disabled veterans.

This increase in benefit amounts will help alleviate financial stress that millions of our disabled veterans have.

As the sponsor of H.R. 76 "the HERO Transition from Battlespace to Workplace Act," I strongly support our veterans and any bill that helps mitigate soldier to citizen transition.

As Abraham Lincoln stated, "Honor to the soldier and sailor everywhere, who bravely bears his country's cause. Honor, also, to the citizen who cares for his brother in the field and serves, as he best can, the same cause."

H.R. 677 is a positive step forward in increasing in benefit amounts payable as veteran's disability compensation.

I strongly support this bill and urge my colleagues to join me and do the same.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. ABRAHAM) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 677, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

The title of the bill was amended so as to read: "A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to provide for annual cost-of-living adjustments to be made automatically by law each year in the rates of disability compensation for veterans with service-connected disabilities and the rates of dependency and indemnity compensation for survivors of certain service-connected disabled veterans, and for other purposes.".

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

VA MEDICAL CENTER RECOVERY ACT

Mr. ABRAHAM. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 3234) to amend title 38, United States Code, to establish within the Department of Veterans Affairs an Office of Failing Medical Center Recovery, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 3234

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

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "VA Medical Center Recovery Act".

SEC. 2. EVALUATION AND IMPROVEMENT OF MEDICAL CENTERS.

(a) UNDERPERFORMING MEDICAL CENTERS.—(1) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 73 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by inserting after section 7311A the following new section:

"§ 7311B. Evaluation and improvement of medical centers

"(a) IDENTIFICATION OF UNDERPERFORMING MEDICAL CENTERS.—(1) Not later than 15 days after the end of each fiscal quarter, the Secretary shall publish in the Federal Register and on a publically available, searchable Internet website of the Department a compilation of key health metrics for each medical center of the Department.

"(2) On a semiannual basis, the Secretary shall determine, under the key health metrics, whether each medical center of the Department is satisfactory or underperforming.

"(b) RAPID DEPLOYMENT TEAMS.—(1) Not later than 30 days after the date on which the Secretary identifies a medical center as an underperforming medical center under subsection (a)(2), the Secretary shall deploy a rapid deployment team to the medical center to ensure that the medical center achieves satisfactory performance as quickly as practicable.

"(2) Each rapid deployment team deployed to an underperforming medical center under paragraph (1) shall—

"(A) identify the areas of the medical center that require improvement, including with respect to the procedures of the medical center, inefficiencies of the medical center, and whether the medical center follows directives and best practices;

"(B) establish a remediation plan to improve the performance of the medical center;

"(C) review and assesses the status of any—

"(i) disciplinary actions taken at the medical center;

"(ii) recommendations made by the Inspector General of the Department applicable to the medical center; and

"(iii) findings made by the Comptroller General of the United States applicable to the medical center; and

"(D) provide training to the director and staff of the medical center with respect to carrying out such improvements.

"(3) The Secretary shall ensure that—

"(A) the director of each underperforming medical center carries out the remediation plan under paragraph (2)(B); and

"(B) the rapid deployment team has access to all facilities and all electronic systems, records, reports, audits, reviews, documents, papers, or other materials the rapid deployment team determines necessary to carry out this subsection.

"(4) Each rapid deployment team deployed to an underperforming medical center under paragraph (1) shall consist of—

"(A) subject matter experts with experience in—

"(i) customer service training;

"(ii) increasing the efficiency of organizations;

"(iii) clinical care specific to the areas in which the underperforming medical center requires improvement; and

"(iv) any other areas that the Secretary determines appropriate to improve the underperforming medical center; and

"(B) an employee of the Office of the Inspector General of the Department.

"(5) To the extent practicable, each rapid deployment team shall include process improvement subject matter experts from the Veterans Experience Office of the Department.

"(6) The Secretary shall determine the duration of the deployment of a rapid deployment team under paragraph (1).

"(c) INVESTIGATIONS AND WHISTLEBLOWER PROTECTIONS.—(1) The Inspector General of the Department shall prioritize investigations relating to underperforming medical centers.

"(2) The Office of Accountability Review shall prioritize investigations of whistleblower retaliation relating to underperforming medical centers.

"(d) QUARTERLY REPORTS.—On a quarterly basis, the Secretary shall submit to Congress a report that includes, with respect to the quarter covered by the report—

"(1) each identification of an underperforming medical center made by the Secretary;

"(2) the actions taken by the Secretary and rapid deployment teams with respect to improving underperforming medical centers; and

"(3) an update on any progress made by each underperforming medical center, including whether the underperforming medical center is carrying out the remediation plan pursuant to subsection (b)(3)(A).

"(e) RELATIONSHIP TO QUALITY ASSURANCE AND NATIONAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT OFFICER.—The requirements of this section are in addition to any requirements under sections 7311 and 7311A of this title.

"(f) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

"(1) The term 'underperforming medical center' means a medical center of the Department that the Secretary determines is underperforming under subsection (a)(2).

"(2) The term 'key health metrics' means the following:

"(A) The Strategic Analytics Improvement and Learning (commonly referred to as 'SAIL') data used by the Department (or such successor data metric).

"(B) An evaluation system established by the Secretary based on the total data described in subparagraph (A) to determine whether the performance of a medical center is satisfactory or underperforming and requires remediation pursuant to this section.".

(2) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of chapter 73 of such title is amended by adding after the item relating to section 7311A the following new item:

"7311B. Evaluation and improvement of medical centers".

(b) INITIAL KEY HEALTH METRICS PUBLICATION.—The Secretary shall publish the initial key health metrics under section 7311B(a)(1) of title 38, United States Code, as added by subsection (a)(1), by not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act.

(c) INITIAL IDENTIFICATION OF AN UNDERPERFORMING MEDICAL CENTER.—The Secretary shall make the initial identifications under section 7311B(a)(2) of title 38, United States Code, as added by subsection (a)(1), by not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 3. STANDARDIZED TRAINING FOR NURSES.

(a) TRAINING.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall seek to enter into partnerships with recognized schools of nursing to provide undergraduate nursing students enrolled in such schools with standardized training with respect to the following:

(1) The culture of the military and veterans.

(2) Post-traumatic stress disorder.

(3) Traumatic brain injury.

(4) Amputation and assistive devices.

(5) Environmental, chemical, and toxic exposure.

(6) Substance use disorders.

(7) Military sexual trauma.

(8) Suicide.

(9) Homelessness.

(10) Serious illness at the end of life.

(11) Benefits, services, and resources for veterans that are administered by the Federal Government.

(b) DEVELOPMENT.—In developing the training under subsection (a), the Secretary shall consult with appropriate accrediting bodies, schools of nursing, and industry leaders.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. ABRAHAM) and the gentleman from California (Mr. TAKANO) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Louisiana.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. ABRAHAM. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and add extraneous material on H.R. 3234, as amended.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 3234, as amended, the Department of Veterans Affairs VA Medical Center Recovery Act.

This bill would require the VA to publish key health metrics and use these metrics to determine semiannually which VA medical centers are performing satisfactorily and which are underperforming.

If a VA medical center is determined to be underperforming, VA would be required to send a rapid deployment team to the facility within 30 days to establish a remediation plan and provide needed help in problem areas.

The VA would also be required to send regular reports to Congress on which facilities are underperforming and what actions have been taken to improve their performance.

In addition, the bill would require the VA inspector general to prioritize investigations related to underperforming medical centers and the Office of Accountability Review to prioritize investigations of whistleblower retaliation relating to underperforming medical centers.

This bill would also include a provision to strengthen training for undergraduate nurses on veterans unique issues, needs, and benefits.

H.R. 3234, as amended, is sponsored by Congresswoman MARTHA ROBY from Alabama, and I am grateful for her leadership in introducing this legislation.

I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from Alabama (Mrs. ROBY).

Mrs. ROBY. Mr. Speaker, I rise to ask my colleagues to support H.R. 3234, the VA Medical Center Recovery Act.

This bill puts the responsibility for identifying and improving the worst performing VA medical centers squarely on the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, requiring him to deploy teams of experts to turn around failing facilities.

The bill would, for the first time, require the VA to publish key metrics known as SAIL data on the Federal Register and would require the Secretary to report to Congress any medical centers determined to be failing.

Some of my colleagues might wonder why such a bill is necessary, given the VA reform law that we passed more than a year ago. That was a good bill, but it wasn't a silver bullet. Many problems still exist in the VA, and it is our responsibility to address them.

Mr. Speaker, the Central Alabama VA in my district became known as one of the worst in the country. My staff and I worked with whistleblowers and the press to uncover major instances of misconduct, negligence, and mismanagement inside the Central Alabama VA, including:

Widespread manipulation of scheduling data. A nation-leading 57 percent of employees reported that managers instructed them to change appointment times to hide long waits.

More than 1,000 patient X-rays, some showing malignancies, went missing for months and even years.

A pulmonologist was caught twice falsifying more than 1,200 patient records but somehow given a satisfactory review.

An employee took a recovering veteran to a crackhouse, bought him drugs, and paid for prostitutes, all to extort his benefits. When caught, the employee wasn't fired, not until a year later, after our office exposed it publicly.

In the wake of these exposures, the Central Alabama VA Director became the first senior VA manager fired under the new law.

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

Mr. ABRAHAM. I yield the gentlewoman an additional 3 minutes.

Mrs. ROBY. But even after leadership changes, data showed that the Central Alabama VA's two medical centers in Montgomery and Tuskegee were ranked the worst and the second worst in the Nation for delays in patient care.

By any measure, the Central Alabama VA was the definition of a failing VA system. We had a severe problem, and it required immediate attention.

But, Mr. Speaker, getting the attention of the top VA leaders proved difficult. Once our problems left the front page, there wasn't a whole lot of followup.

My veterans in Alabama were subject to some of the worst healthcare service in the country, and no one wanted to take responsibility.

Mr. Speaker, I began to think maybe it was because we were depending on a broken bureaucracy to fix itself, that maybe it was because we were asking VA leaders, rather than requiring them, to intervene.

Mr. Speaker, I decided that it was time that we changed that. So, in July, I filed that legislation and began working with the Veterans' Affairs Committee to get a hearing and a vote.

I don't sit on the Veterans' Affairs Committee, so I want to thank the chairman, JEFF MILLER; the subcommittee chairman, DAN BENISHEK; and all the members of the committee for being receptive and working with me on this bill.

I also want to thank all the committee staff for their hard work.

There is no question this bill represents a major step forward and a foundation to build upon.

It should be noted that almost 2 years after the scandal first broke, we are making progress in central Alabama at the VA. Staffing is up, wait times are down. We are building a Community Veterans Health Network that I believe one day can be an example for the entire Nation. We have a long way to go, and I am truly optimistic about the future.

But, Mr. Speaker, it shouldn't have taken this long and it shouldn't have taken a Member of Congress breathing down the necks of top VA officials to get the attention that our veterans deserve.

You know, sometimes I wonder what would have happened if our courageous whistleblowers hadn't stepped up or if the reporters we worked with didn't think it was a story?

What if the truth about the missing X-rays, the manipulated pulmonology records, and the crackhouse never came out? What if we want exposed all of that?

Would our veterans in central Alabama still be subject to the worst health care in the country? Would we even know?

I don't want what happened in central Alabama to ever happen again anywhere. This bill helps to ensure that by requiring key VA health metrics to be published for everyone to see and making sure that the VA officials at the very top cannot hide behind the layers of bureaucracy when it comes to severely failing centers.

Again, I ask my colleagues to support this bill.

□ 1630

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

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

Mr. Speaker, this legislation, H.R. 3234, as amended, is designed to establish criteria for the evaluation and improvement of VA medical centers. The

bill requires the VA to create key health metrics to measure whether each medical center is satisfactory or underperforming.

The metrics will be published on the VA Web site, and an underperforming medical center will be subject to a rapid deployment team being sent to the facility to create a remediation plan and bring them up to standards. The VA will issue quarterly reports on the underperforming facilities and their progress in the following remediation plan.

Additionally, the bill seeks to require the VA to enter into partnerships with recognized schools of nursing to provide undergraduate nursing students enrolled in such schools with standardized training. The bill lists the 11 areas the training should involve, including PTSD, TBI, and military sexual trauma.

Mr. Speaker, this bill addresses issues the committee has expressed concerns about in the past. I support its passage.

Mr. Speaker, I urge the passage of H.R. 3234, as amended.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. ABRAHAM. Mr. Speaker, I also once again encourage all Members to support H.R. 3234, as amended.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 3234, the Failing VA Medical Center Recovery Act.

I support this legislation because it would establish in the Department of Veterans Affairs an Office of Failing Medical Center Recovery, and the position of Under Secretary for Failing Medical Center Recovery to head the Office.

The Office shall carry out the managerial and day-to-day operational control of each VA failing medical center.

The bill directs that the VA shall: publish in the Federal Register and on a publicly available VA website a compilation of key health metrics for each VA medical center; certify semiannually that each VA medical center ranked as "failing" is subject to managerial and day-to-day operational control by the Office; revoke the certification of a VA medical center as a failing medical center if it achieves a ranking of "satisfactory" or better for three consecutive fiscal quarters; submit to Congress a quarterly report on the Office, including actions taken by the Under Secretary regarding covered failing medical centers; and transfer each covered failing medical center from the direct control of the relevant Veterans Integrated Service Network to the direct control of the Under Secretary.

The bill also ensures that the Inspector General of the VA will prioritize investigations relating to covered failing medical centers, and the Office of Accountability Review will prioritize investigations of whistle blower retaliation relating to such centers.

Mr. Speaker, the reason this important legislation is needed is illustrated by the tragic and heart breaking cases of thousands of veterans who were left waiting for care for serious medical conditions.

In the State of Texas we have 1,099,141 Veterans under the age of 65 and 590,618 who are over the age of 65. There are over 1,689,759 veterans living in our state.

The 18th Congressional District has 20,607 under age 65 and 9,844 Veterans over the age of 65.

The Michael E. Debakey Veterans Hospital Center, located in Houston Texas serves the health care needs of thousands of veterans and their families.

The Debakey Veterans Hospital Center provides support to veterans and their families who are amputees, cancer, spinal cord injuries, traumatic brain injury, and have visual impairments.

The Medical center provides family support services through its Fisher House that provides living suites at no cost to family members of hospitalized Veterans and military members.

Today, with our vote on H.R. 3234, we can renew our commitment to our nation's more than 2 million troops and reservists, their families, and the 22 million veterans who served our nation.

I urge all Members to join me in voting to pass H.R. 3234.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. ABRAHAM) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 3234, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

The title of the bill was amended so as to read: "A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to evaluate the ability of each medical center of the Department to provide quality health care to veterans, to ensure that the Secretary improves such medical centers that are underperforming, and for other purposes.".

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

FEMALE VETERAN SUICIDE PREVENTION ACT

Mr. ABRAHAM. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 2915) to amend title 38, United States Code, to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to identify mental health care and suicide prevention programs and metrics that are effective in treating women veterans as part of the evaluation of such programs by the Secretary, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 2915

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

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Female Veteran Suicide Prevention Act".

SEC. 2. SPECIFIC CONSIDERATION OF WOMEN VETERANS IN EVALUATION OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS MENTAL HEALTH CARE AND SUICIDE PREVENTION PROGRAMS.

Section 1709B(a)(2) of title 38, United States Code, is amended—

(1) in subparagraph (A), by inserting before the semicolon the following: ", including specific metrics applicable to women";

(2) in subparagraph (D), by striking "and" at the end;

(3) in subparagraph (E), by striking the period at the end and inserting "; and"; and

(4) by adding at the end the following new subparagraph:

"(F) identify the mental health care and suicide prevention programs conducted by the Secretary that are most effective for women veterans and such programs with the highest satisfaction rates among women veterans.".

SEC. 3. MENTAL HEALTH TREATMENT FOR VETERANS WHO SERVED IN CLASSIFIED MISSIONS.

(a) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of Congress that veterans who experience combat-related mental health wounds should have immediate, appropriate, and consistent access to comprehensive mental health care.

(b) IN GENERAL.—Subchapter II of chapter 17 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following section:

"§ 1720H. Mental health treatment for veterans who served in classified missions

"(a) ESTABLISHMENT OF STANDARDS.—(1) The Secretary shall establish standards and procedures to ensure that each covered veteran may access mental health care provided by the Secretary in a manner that fully accommodates the obligation of the veteran to not improperly disclose classified information.

"(2) The Secretary shall disseminate guidance to employees of the Veterans Health Administration, including mental health professionals, on the standards and procedures established under paragraph (1) and how to best engage covered veterans during the course of mental health treatment with respect to classified information.

"(b) IDENTIFICATION.—In carrying out this section, the Secretary shall ensure that a veteran may elect to identify as a covered veteran on an appropriate form.

"(c) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

"(1) The term 'classified information' means any information or material that has been determined by an official of the United States pursuant to law, an Executive order, or regulation to require protection against unauthorized disclosure for reasons of national security.

"(2) The term 'covered veteran' means a veteran who—

"(A) is enrolled in the health care system established under section 1705(a) of this title;

"(B) is seeking mental health treatment; and

"(C) in the course of serving in the Armed Forces, participated in a sensitive mission or served in a sensitive unit.

"(3) The term 'sensitive mission' means a mission of the Armed Forces that, at the time at which a covered veteran seeks treatment, is classified.

"(4) The term 'sensitive unit' has the meaning given that term in section 130b(c)(4) of title 10.".

(c) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of such chapter is amended by adding after the item relating to section 1720G the following new item:

"1720H. Mental health treatment for veterans who served in classified missions.".

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. ABRAHAM) and the gentleman from California (Mr. TAKANO) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Louisiana.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. ABRAHAM. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and add extraneous material on H.R. 2915, as amended.

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

There was no objection.

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

I rise in support of H.R. 2915, as amended, the Female Veteran Suicide Prevention Act. This bill would amend the Clay Hunt Suicide Prevention for American Veterans, or the SAV Act, by directing the Department of Veterans Affairs to ensure that the independent third-party evaluation of mental health and suicide prevention programs required in the act identifies programs and metrics that are effective in treating women veterans.

Women are an important and an increasing segment of our Active Duty and veteran populations, and, moving forward, we must ensure that VA takes the unique needs of women veterans into account when conducting program reviews and evaluations.

This is particularly important for mental health and suicide prevention programs, given that recent research has shown that female veterans commit suicide at nearly six times the rate of other women and are five times more likely to commit suicide than male veterans.

H.R. 2915, as amended, would also require the VA to establish and disseminate standards and procedures to ensure that a veteran who has participated in a classified mission or served in a sensitive unit while in the Armed Forces may access VA mental health care in a manner that fully accommodates his or her obligation to not improperly disclose classified information.

Serious concerns have been raised about the mental health care that VA provides to veterans following the suicide death of Sergeant Daniel Somers in 2013. Sergeant Somers served on a number of classified missions during his time in the military.

When he separated from service and sought VA care, he was enrolled in group therapy sessions despite his fear of being unable to participate comfortably in group sessions due to his fear that he may inadvertently share classified information.

Had VA been more responsive to Sergeant Somers' concerns and provided him treatment that was sensitive to has concerns, he may be with us today.

H.R. 2915, as amended, is sponsored by Congresswoman JULIA BROWNLEY of California, the ranking member of the Subcommittee on Health, and incorporates provisions sponsored by Congresswoman KYRSTEN SINEMA of Arizona.

I am grateful to both of them for their work.

I urge all of my colleagues to support H.R. 2915, as amended.

I reserve the balance of my time.

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

I rise today in support of H.R. 2915, a bill to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to identify mental health care and suicide prevention programs that are effective in treating women veterans as a part of the evaluation of such programs by the Secretary.

My friend, the ranking member of the Health Subcommittee, Ms. JULIA BROWNLEY, was integral to identifying the issues affecting women suicides. I commend her leadership in bringing this issue to our attention.

Congress has long recognized the unacceptable rates of suicide among our Nation's veterans. Most recently, Congress passed the Clay Hunt Suicide Prevention for American Veterans Act, Public Law 114–2, which requires an independent third party to evaluate VA mental health care and suicide prevention programs.

VA's most recent suicide data report was released in February of 2013. That report found that 18 to 22 veterans per day commit suicide. In a follow-up report, the VA found an increase in the suicide rate among female veterans who use the VA healthcare system.

This finding echoes recent research that found that female veterans commit suicide nearly six times the rate of other women and that women veterans are five times more likely to be successful in committing suicide than male veterans.

This bill would amend the Clay Hunt Suicide Prevention for American Veterans Act to include within the independent third-party evaluation specific metrics applicable to women and to identify the VA mental health care and suicide prevention programs that are most effective and have the highest satisfaction rates among with women veterans.

Additionally, this legislation includes a provision that my friend, Representative KYRSTEN SINEMA of Arizona, has been working on for years.

This section requires the VA to establish and publish standards and procedures to ensure that a woman who participated in a classified mission or served in a sensitive unit while in the Armed Forces may access VA mental health care without improperly disclosing classified information.

This provision would also require the VA to find alternative methods of mental health treatment for veterans who need to access care without being put in a position where they may reveal information that should not be disclosed.

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

Mr. ABRAHAM. Mr. Speaker, I have no additional speakers. Once again, I encourage all Members to support H.R. 2915, as amended.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. BROWNLEY).

Ms. BROWNLEY of California. Mr. Speaker, first I would like to thank Chairman MILLER and Ranking Member BROWN for their help in moving the Female Veteran Suicide Prevention Act forward.

I would also like to recognize my colleague from Arizona whose bill honoring the memory of her constituent, Army veteran Sergeant Daniel Somers, has been included.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, the women veteran population is more than 2 million and growing quickly. But our understanding of the experience of women in the military and women veterans is not keeping pace with this rapidly changing demographic.

We agree that one of the most pressing and immediate issues we must address, as Members of Congress, is the tragic epidemic of suicide among all of our veterans. Last year Congress passed the Clay Hunt SAV Act, which required the VA to conduct annual evaluations of its suicide prevention and mental health programs.

I am confident that the Clay Hunt bill will save lives. But recently researchers analyzed data from 23 States and the Suicide Repository on more than 170,000 suicides over a 10-year period.

These researchers found data suggesting that female veteran suicide follows very different patterns than male veteran suicide. The statistics are extremely startling. Suicide among women veterans increased by an astounding 40 percent from 2000 to 2010.

The suicide rate among veteran women is nearly six times higher than among nonveteran women. For women ages 18 to 29, the risk of suicide is even higher, at nearly 12 times the rate of nonveteran women.

We don't know whether the reasons are related to the high rate of military sexual assault, gender-specific experiences on the battlefield, or factors that distinguish differing personal backgrounds, which is exactly the point. Without looking more closely at the root causes, we cannot hope to find better solutions.

Last year the Los Angeles Times wrote about this issue describing the heartbreaking case of Army medic Sara Leatherman. Even before her deployment, Sara had experienced depression and attempted suicide.

She was discharged early from her deployment because of a back injury sustained in Iraq. Suffering from posttraumatic stress and experiencing physical pain from her injury, Sara was not able to live by herself and moved in with her grandmother.

Sara was trying to get her life back on track and was attending community college. Although Sara was receiving VA treatment for PTSD, at the very young age of 24, she tragically took her life. Her family has been utterly destroyed by their loss.

While so very distressing, the VA was unable to help Sara. So we must honor Sara's memory and the memory of other women veterans whom we so tragically lost to suicide by doing our very best to better understand the underlying and unique causes that lead women veterans to take their lives over wanting to live their lives.

I introduced the Female Veteran Suicide Prevention Act to do just that by

building upon and improving the Clay Hunt SAV Act. My bill will help identify the different mental health and suicide prevention programs that are most effective for either male or female veterans.

My bill will also require the VA to report to Congress annually on the results of this analysis. Finally, my bill will require that VA's evaluation of its suicide prevention programs include specific performance metrics for women veterans.

The Female Veteran Suicide Prevention Act passed the House Veterans' Affairs Committee proudly with bipartisan support. It is also supported by the Service Women's Action Network, The American Legion, the Military Order of the Purple Heart, Disabled American Veterans, Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Paralyzed Veterans of America, and the Vietnam Veterans of America.

Mr. Speaker, this bill will give us more tools in the toolbox to help save the lives of men and women who have bravely served our country with great honor and distinction. One human life unnecessarily lost is one life too many.

I thank my colleagues on the committee for making the Female Veteran Suicide Prevention Act a priority. I urge all of my colleagues to join me in voting ''yes'' on this important legislation.

THE AMERICAN LEGION,
Washington, DC, September 11, 2015.

Hon. JULIA BROWNLEY,
U.S. House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR REPRESENTATIVE BROWNLEY: On behalf of the over 2 million members of The American Legion, I would like to express our support for H.R. 2915, the Female Veteran Suicide Prevention Act. This bill, as written, would improve female veteran suicide prevention programs within the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) by amending Title 38 directing the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to identify mental health care and suicide prevention programs and metrics that are effective in treating women veterans. This bill also strives to improve suicide prevention programs for female veterans enrolled in the VA healthcare system.

In 2014, The American Legion passed a resolution urging the President and Congress to sign into law the Suicide Prevention for American Veterans Act or similar acts that will expand and improve the care provided to veterans and servicemembers who have mental health issues or are at risk of suicide. Under this Act, the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs would be required to review their mental health care programs on an annual basis to ensure their effectiveness, offer special training on identifying those high risk veterans who are suicidal to their mental health providers, and to improve the process regarding medical records and prescriptions for the purpose of ensuring that there is a seamless health care process for those servicemembers who are transitioning out of the service.

Again, The American Legion supports H.R 2915, the Female Veteran Suicide Prevention Act and applauds your leadership in addressing this critical issue facing our nation's veterans and their families.

Sincerely,

DALE BARNETT,
National Commander.

MILITARY ORDER OF
THE PURPLE HEART,
Springfield, VA, December 15, 2015.

Hon. JEFF MILLER,
Chairman, Committee on Veterans' Affairs,
Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN MILLER: On behalf of the Military Order of the Purple Heart (MOPH), I am pleased to offer support for H.R. 2915, the ''Female Veteran Suicide Prevention Act''. This legislation, if enacted, would help to identify mental health and suicide prevention programs that are the most effective and have the best outcomes among women veterans and would require that the results be reported to both the Senate and House Veterans Committees.

The recent data that has been published is deeply troubling. The data suggests that the suicide rate among women veterans is approximately six times higher than that of women who did not serve in the military.

While the Department of Veterans Affairs is examining why the suicide rate among women veterans is so much higher and how a history of Military Sexual Trauma may be one of the contributing factors, we as a nation must devote the time and resources to support these women who served our country in uniform.

MOPH requests that you bring this legislation before your committee as soon as possible so that America's women veterans understand that this issue will be given a high priority and that their service is appreciated.

Respectfully,

ROBERT PUSKAR,
National Commander.

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, again, I wish to thank my colleagues, Ms. BROWNLEY and Ms. SINEMA, for bringing the issues surrounding the prevention of female suicides in the military to our attention.

I urge passage of this very important bill.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the Female Veteran Suicide Prevention Act (H.R. 2915).

The VA estimates that 22 veterans take their own lives each day, or over 8,000 per year—more than have been killed in action since 9/11. The incidence of suicide among our veteran population is stunning, tragic beyond words, and simply unacceptable.

Too many veterans have returned from fighting our enemies overseas to fighting for their lives at home. As the son of a WW2 combat veteran, I have witnessed the residual wounds of war, the struggle to cope with the post-traumatic stress that can continue for decades and the pain that a lack of access to services can cause for veterans and their families.

Recognizing this great, unmet need, Congress recently enacted the bipartisan ''Clay Hunt Suicide Prevention for American Veterans (SAV) Act,'' legislation targeting the gaps in the VA's mental health and suicide prevention efforts. Among other provisions, the law requires annual, independent third party evaluations of the effectiveness of the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) programs and establishes best practices for caring for at-risk veterans.

While the Clay Hunt Act is a comprehensive and well-designed law—I cosponsored and voted for it twice—there is one area where improvements could be made to maximize its impact and better assist one group of veterans: female veterans.

As the House Veterans' Affairs Committee report states: In 2014, the VA released an update to the survey and found increases in the suicide rate in female users of the VA health care system. Female veterans commit suicide at nearly six times the rate of other women and that women veterans are five times more likely to commit suicide than male veterans. Yet the VA's research focuses primarily on men and little is known about the complex causes and factors that are driving the suicide rate among females who have served.

The bill we are voting on today offers a modest but important step to enhance our understanding of, and hopefully help remedy, these staggering numbers. Specifically, H.R. 2915 directs the VA to identify mental health care and suicide prevention programs that are most effective and have the highest satisfaction rates among women veterans.

We as a nation have a duty and obligation to repay the debt we owe to those who have fought in defense of our nation and our ideals. This bill helps ensure we better address the physical and emotional wounds of all veterans and I urge all members to support it.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, as a proud cosponsor I rise in strong support of H.R. 2915, the ''Female Veteran Suicide Prevention Act,'' which directs the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to implement mental health care and suicide prevention programs and identify metrics that are effective in reducing the incidence of suicide among female veterans.

Over the last decade suicide has become a major issue for the military, but the research has been predominantly focused on men and too much remains unknown about the cause and frequency of suicide among female veterans.

Mr. Speaker, several recent studies show that, unfortunately, female military veterans commit suicide at nearly 6 times the rate of other women.

The suicide rate among female veterans is so high that it approaches that of their male counterparts, a finding that surprises researchers because men generally are far more likely than women to commit suicide.

The highest rates of suicide are found among young female veterans, ages 18–29, who are 12 times more likely to commit suicide as their civilian counterparts.

This is heart breaking, but perhaps not unexpected, since reports indicate that 10% of women serving on active duty are victims of rape and another 13% were subjected to other unwanted sexual contact.

Mr. Speaker, in every other age group, including women who served as far back as the 1950s, suicide rates for female veterans are between 4 and 8 times higher than that of their civilian counterparts.

These trends are so disturbing that it has earned the sobriquet from the Houston Chronicle as ''The Silent National Epidemic.''

The Texas Department of State Health Services lists a decedent's military experience in his or her death record, regardless of whether the deceased was serving in the armed forces at time of death.

While it is not clear what is driving the rates of female veteran suicides, the consistency across age groups suggests that a statistically significant correlation exists between gender and military service but the sad truth is that we lack sufficient data to generate externally valid inferences about causation.

In the general population, women attempt suicide more often than men but succeed less because women usually use pills or other methods that are less lethal than firearms.

Female veterans, however, are more likely than other women to possess firearms, and more likely to use a firearm to commit suicide (40% compared to 34% of civilian women).

H.R. 2915 is intended to make progress in identifying the causes and reducing the incidences of suicide by female veterans.

The bravery and devotion of female veterans, who have provided heroic service to our nation, often at great personal costs, is unquestioned.

We owe it to them to be there when they need our help just as they were there to answer the call when their country needed them.

I urge all Members to join me in voting to pass H.R. 2915, the "Female Veteran Suicide Prevention Act."

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. ABRAHAM) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 2915, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

The title of the bill was amended so as to read: "A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to identify mental health care and suicide prevention programs and metrics that are effective in treating women veterans as part of the evaluation of such programs by the Secretary, and for other purposes.".

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS ILLIANA HEALTH CARE SYSTEM PROPERTY CONVEYANCE

Mr. ABRAHAM. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 3262) to provide for the conveyance of land of the Illiana Health Care System of the Department of Veterans Affairs in Danville, Illinois, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 3262

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

SECTION 1. LAND CONVEYANCE, DANVILLE, ILLINOIS.

(a) CONVEYANCE AUTHORIZED.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs may convey to the Danville Area Community College of Danville, Illinois, all right, title, and interest of the United States in and to certain real property, including any improvements thereon, consisting of approximately .6 acres known as "Building Number 48", which is part of the Illiana Health Care System of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

(b) CONSIDERATION.—As consideration for the conveyance under subsection (a), the Danville Area Community College shall convey to the United States all right, title, and interest of Danville Area Community College in and to certain real property, including any improvements thereon, consisting of approximately 1.06 acres with a gazebo located approximately 293 feet south of the Danville Area Community College Library Building, which is part of the Danville Area Community College.

(c) CONDITION OF CONVEYANCE.—The conveyance under subsection (a) shall be subject to the condition that the recipient accept the conveyed real property in its condition at the time of the conveyance.

(d) DESCRIPTION OF PROPERTY.—The exact acreage and legal description of the parcels of real property conveyed under subsections (a) and (b) shall be determined by surveys satisfactory to the Secretary.

(e) ADDITIONAL TERMS AND CONDITIONS.—The Secretary may require such additional terms and conditions in connection with the conveyances under subsections (a) and (b) as the Secretary considers appropriate to protect the interests of the United States.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. ABRAHAM) and the gentleman from California (Mr. TAKANO) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Louisiana.

□ 1645

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. ABRAHAM. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and to add extraneous material on H.R. 3262.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 3262.

This bill authorizes the Department of Veterans Affairs to convey property on the VA Illiana Health Care System campus in Danville, Illinois, to the Danville Area Community College.

Authorizing this conveyance would allow the VA to dispose of a vacant building for which it has no intended future use and is costly to maintain.

It would also allow the Department to straighten their property line, subsequently shortening the amount of fencing that is required to secure the safety of the medical center campus.

H.R. 3262 is sponsored by my friend and colleague from Illinois, Congressman JOHN SHIMKUS, and I thank him for his leadership in sponsoring and advancing this legislation.

I urge all of my colleagues to support H.R. 3262.

I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 3262 authorizes the VA to convey to the Danville Area Community College of Danville, Illinois, what is known as Building Number 48, which is part of the VA Illiana Health Care System.

In return, the college will convey back to the VA certain lands near the college library building.

We do not have any issues with the legislation, and I urge its passage.

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

Mr. ABRAHAM. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. SHIMKUS).

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

Mr. SHIMKUS. Mr. Speaker, it does take an act of Congress to transfer lands and buildings, and that is kind of what we are doing here today, so I rise in support of this bill.

It is a very simple bill that is going to benefit the VA there in Danville, but also the local community with the Danville Area Community College.

Danville, Illinois, is a small town that has been home to some big names. Dick Van Dyke called Danville home in his childhood. Speaker Joe Cannon, a name we all know in Congress, was from Danville. Today, Danville is home to the VA Illiana Health Care System and the Danville Area Community College, commonly known as DACC.

DACC's president, Dr. Alice Jacobs, is an exceptional leader who has dedicated 45 years to higher education, including the last 16 years leading DACC. She has recently announced her retirement in the coming year, and I thank her for her dedicated service to the students and the community of Danville and wish her the best in the future.

The VA and DACC are an excellent example of how two institutions can work in cooperation to serve our veterans. The location of the VA hospital adjacent to the community college campus allows our veterans returning home to seek their medical care and help with benefits, while the college provides the opportunity for educational and training experiences that can help them transition into civilian life.

However, when the property lines were drawn between these two fine institutions, it wasn't in a straight line. Today, that has created a challenge as the VA explores the option of building a security fence along its boundary. Building that fence along the existing property lines will be more expensive. My bill, H.R. 3262, solves this problem by swapping two small parcels of land that both the VA and DACC have agreed to, creating a straight fence line.

Swapping these parcels is beneficial for the local community as well. In exchange for the land it gives up, DACC will receive a parcel of land with a historic, century-old Carnegie Library. This building has become so deteriorated and expensive to maintain that the VA has stopped using it. Now the building sits vacant while the VA still pays for basic maintenance and utilities. In its testimony to the House Veterans' Affairs Committee's Health Subcommittee, the VA stated that disposing of this building would save an estimated $98,000 over the next 10 years.

Danville and DACC see great potential for the building. Through the generosity of a private donor, DACC plans

to transform the old library into a cultural center, providing the local treasure. Swapping these parcels of land is a win for the VA, saving money on the construction of the fence and maintenance of an unused building, and a win for Danville, providing the community with a historically significant location to host a valuable cultural attraction.

H.R. 3262 is a simple, win-win bill for all parties involved.

Mr. Speaker, I thank Chairman MILLER and Ranking Member BROWN for their support in moving this bill, along with the Veterans' Affairs Committee staff for their work in getting the bill to the floor.

I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting H.R. 3262.

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 3262.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. ABRAHAM. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Once again, I encourage all Members to support H.R. 3262.

I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. ABRAHAM) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 3262.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

9/11 MEMORIAL ACT

Mr. MACARTHUR. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 3036) to designate the National September 11 Memorial located at the World Trade Center site in New York City, New York, as a national memorial, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 3036

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

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the ''9/11 Memorial Act''.

SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.

For purposes of this Act:

(1) ELIGIBLE ENTITY.—The term ''eligible entity'' means a nonprofit organization as defined in section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 (26 U.S.C. 501(c)(3)) in existence on the date of enactment of this Act.

(2) MAP.—The term ''map'' means the map titled ''National September 11 Memorial Proposed Boundary'', numbered 903/128928, and dated June 2015.

(3) NATIONAL SEPTEMBER 11 MEMORIAL.—The term ''National September 11 Memorial'' means the area approximately bounded by Fulton, Greenwich, Liberty and West Streets as generally depicted on the map.

(4) SECRETARY.—The term ''Secretary'' means the Secretary of the Interior.

SEC. 3. DESIGNATION OF MEMORIAL.

(a) DESIGNATION.—The National September 11 Memorial is hereby designated as a national memorial.

(b) MAP.—The map shall be available for public inspection and kept on file at the appropriate office of the Secretary.

(c) EFFECT OF DESIGNATION.—The national memorial designated under this section shall not be a unit of the National Park System and the designation of the national memorial shall not be construed to require or authorize Federal funds to be expended for any purpose related to the national memorial except as provided under section 4.

SEC. 4. COMPETITIVE GRANTS FOR CERTAIN MEMORIALS.

(a) COMPETITIVE GRANTS.—Subject to the availability of appropriations, the Secretary may award a single grant per year through a competitive process to an eligible entity for the operation and maintenance of any memorial located within the United States established to commemorate the events of and honor—

(1) the victims of the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and United Airlines Flight 93 on September 11, 2001; and

(2) the victims of the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center on February 26, 1993.

(b) AVAILABILITY.—Funds made available under this section shall remain available until expended.

(c) CRITERIA.—In awarding grants under this section, the Secretary shall give greatest weight in the selection of eligible entities using the following criteria:

(1) Experience in managing a public memorial that will benefit the largest number of visitors each calendar year.

(2) Experience in managing a memorial of significant size (4 acres or more).

(3) Successful coordination and cooperation with Federal, State, and local governments in operating and managing the memorial.

(4) Ability and commitment to use grant funds to enhance security at the memorial.

(5) Ability to use grant funds to increase the numbers of economically disadvantaged visitors to the memorial and surrounding areas.

(d) SUMMARIES.—Not later than 30 days after the end of each fiscal year in which an eligible entity obligates or expends any part of a grant under this section, the eligible entity shall prepare and submit to the Secretary and Congress a summary that—

(1) specifies the amount of grant funds obligated or expended in the preceding fiscal year;

(2) specifies the purpose for which the funds were obligated or expended; and

(3) includes any other information the Secretary may require to more effectively administer the grant program.

(e) SUNSET.—The authority to award grants under this section shall expire on the date that is 7 years after the date of the enactment of this Act.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. PITTENGER). Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. MACARTHUR) and the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. GRIJALVA) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New Jersey.

GENERAL LEAVE

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

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, I was working in New York City in the fall of 2001 when terrorists tore a hole in our skyline and nearly 3,000 Americans lost their lives. Like many others, I lost people that I knew. For many, they lost their dearest loved ones—their soulmate, mother, father, brother, sister, children, child, friend.

All of us were moved by stories of heroism that followed that event—hundreds of firefighters and police and other first responders who gave their own lives to save others.

In the months that followed, I remember coming around that site every morning as I went to work because I couldn't take the tunnel anymore. It was closed. I would take the ferry from New York to New Jersey. We would come around the tip of Manhattan. Every morning as we passed the World Trade Center site, a hush would fall on that ferry boat, and people would ponder what happened there. That went on as autumn turned into winter and winter turned into spring, month after month, as we watched the seemingly endless restoration of that tragic site.

Mr. Speaker, on September 11, 2011—10 years later—the National September 11 Memorial opened. It was erected to remember those who fell, to recognize the endurance of the survivors, to honor the bravery of those who risked their lives, and often lost their lives, to save others, and, above all, to remember the power of our free Nation to overcome evil with good. It stands as a reminder to every generation that we must never forget and we must never falter.

Mr. Speaker, private citizens with deep concern erected that memorial. I applaud them for their good work. But now it is our part to preserve and protect this hallowed ground and to answer this national tragedy with national support. The National 9/11 Memorial at the World Trade Center Act recognizes this site as a national memorial. It provides for funding for security and operations.

I want to thank the many who have endorsed this bill. Eighty-two Members of this Chamber have cosponsored it. Police organizations have gotten behind it, including the National Association of Police Organizations and the Fraternal Order of Police, veterans organizations, including the Iraq and Afghanistan Vets of America, Governor Chris Christie of New Jersey, Governor Andrew Cuomo of New York, and, most importantly, nearly a dozen family and friend support groups of those that were most deeply impacted by 9/11.

Private donors and concerned citizens have done their part at this site, and they continue to. But now it is our solemn duty, I believe, to honor the fallen and to protect the living.

I urge my colleagues to pass the National 9/11 Memorial at the World Trade Center Act.

I reserve the balance of my time.

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

This bill, as we know, designates the 9/11 Memorial at the World Trade Center as the National September 11 Memorial and authorizes a grant program of up to $25 million per year for the next 7 years to support the operation and the maintenance of the memorial.

The bill was amended at markup to make the grant program available to other September 11 memorials located in the United States. Money for the grant program will be subject to appropriation and come out of the overall budget of the Department of Interior.

I want to thank and congratulate my colleague from New York, Representative NADLER, as the lead Democratic cosponsor. He has diligently guided this bill through the legislative process. It is because of his hard work and advocacy that it has come this far.

September 11 both rattled and united this country like few other events in our history. We still live with the repercussions, and the memorial is a fitting tribute and a solemn reminder.

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

Mr. MACARTHUR. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. CALVERT).

Mr. CALVERT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the National 9/11 Memorial at the World Trade Center Act.

The events of September 11 continue to stir emotions for Americans when we think about that day's tragic losses, remarkable acts of bravery, and the stark reminders that life is precious and evil is real.

As a Nation, we have pledged to ''Never Forget'' what happened on September 11, and today, by passing this legislation, we can put our actions behind that sentiment.

2016 marks the 75th anniversary of Pearl Harbor and the 15th anniversary of 9/11. Just as the USS Arizona provides a place for future generations to understand where—and more importantly how and why—we were attacked in 1941, the National September 11 Memorial gives Americans a place to understand the tragedy of that day and ongoing sacrifices of the United States Armed Forces. Indeed, December 7 and September 11 are now two dates that will live in infamy.

□ 1700

I thank my colleague, TOM MACARTHUR, for introducing this legislation, and I thank everyone from the National September 11th Memorial and Museum for all of their hard work.

I have been to the Memorial and have felt the incredibly emotional effect it has had on each visitor. Unfortunately, many of our enemies see this symbol of our Nation's strength and resolve as a target, and, as such, the Memorial requires a high level of security in order to keep its over 6 million annual visitors safe. This legislation ensures the Memorial will receive the support it needs to provide a safe experience for every visitor who passes through, whether he be His Holiness, Pope Francis, or whether he be the young schoolchild who was not yet been born on September 11, 2001.

I would like to take a moment to recognize a very special person, Rob O'Neill, a former member of SEAL Team 6, who is best known for his actions in the raid that killed Osama bin Laden. The 9/11 Memorial has a special place in his heart, and he has been a strong advocate for this bill. He has told me and others that the site is important to him and to his fellow special operators. It helps signify the cause for which they were fighting. In fact, the shirt he wore on the mission is on display at the museum, along with other artifacts from 9/11 and from the many years since, chronicling how Americans have pulled together to support each other, to secure our Nation, and to rededicate ourselves to liberty and justice. So I thank Mr. O'Neill for his service and for his sacrifice.

Once again, I convey my support for this bill, and I encourage all of my colleagues to pass the 9/11 Memorial Act.

I thank Tricia Evans and Ian Foley, who are on my staff, for their hard work on this bill.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Mr. Speaker, I would be remiss if I did not extend to Representative MACARTHUR my appreciation for his leadership and for bringing the bill to this point as well.

I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from New York (Mr. NADLER), whom I thank for his leadership and hard work in getting this bill to this point.

Mr. NADLER. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, more than 14 years ago, two jet planes were deliberately crashed into the World Trade Center—killing thousands of innocent people. A third plane slammed into the Pentagon, and a fourth plane, likely destined for this very Capitol complex in which we now stand, was brought down by a group of courageous passengers in a field in Shanksville, Pennsylvania.

As I do today, I represented Ground Zero—the World Trade Center area—on September 11, 2001. In the hours immediately after the attack, I left Washington and took the last train back to my home in New York. I will never forget the moment I first saw the ravaged skyline of Lower Manhattan from the train windows. Normally, on the train, while going between Philadelphia and New York, I would look to see the first glimpse I could catch of the Twin Towers. Now what you could see were not the Twin Towers but long, tall, billowing clouds of smoke that were going straight up and then were stretching down the Jersey Shore. The Twin Towers had been replaced by the brutal glow of raging fires and of black, billowing smoke.

The train that left at 10 o'clock arrived at 6 p.m. We had been held up in Baltimore while they walked the tracks, looking for bombs. Coming out of Penn Station at 6 o'clock was like a scene from the movie ''On the Beach'' for those who remember that movie. Nothing was moving. The city at 33rd Street and Eighth Avenue seemed completely empty—no people, no cars, no buses. There was nothing moving as if it were completely depopulated. To get home, I had to call a friend to come pick me up.

When I went down to the World Trade Center the next morning, the scene was absolutely horrible. There was fire, smoke, debris, twisted metal, human remains—total devastation. Yet, even then, there were signs of hope. Firefighters, police, Emergency Medical Technicians, ironworkers, and construction workers of all types rushed to Ground Zero from around the country to offer their help. Messages of support and comfort flooded in from all 50 States. The American people were united and determined to help New York get back on its feet. The attack may have occurred in my district, but it was an attack on our Nation as a whole, and we all recognized that.

In the years since the attacks, America has acted as a Nation to help rebuild New York and to support the responders, survivors, and families of the victims. Last year, Congress reauthorized the James Zadroga 9/11 Health and Compensation Act so as to provide health care and support the 33,000 responders and survivors who now live in all 50 States and in 429 congressional districts. By passing a permanent health program and reauthorizing the Victim Compensation Fund, Congress provided peace of mind for tens of thousands of brave Americans.

In addition to making our responders and survivors whole, Congress invested billions of dollars to help rebuild Lower Manhattan. One World Trade Center now fills the hole that was left in our skyline when the towers fell, and businesses that were shuttered after the attack are reopened and are thriving. In what was once the shadow of the towers, there now stands a comprehensive museum that is dedicated to sharing the stories of September 11th and the bravery of those who risked everything to protect their fellow Americans on that day and on the days following.

In place of the smoking hole that Congressman MACARTHUR and I saw day after day in Lower Manhattan, there now exists a somber and inspiring memorial. It is a site of remembrance and hope—a place for every American to come and reflect as to what happened on that September morning and to renew our promise to never forget the events of that day. It is a national memorial for a national tragedy.

That is why I am pleased to cosponsor the legislation, introduced by my colleague from New Jersey, to provide Federal recognition and support for the memorial. This legislation will help ensure the memorial continues to provide a sacred and inspiring spot for generations to come.

I appreciate the bipartisan support from the members of the Natural Resources Committee and from the House leadership in bringing this bill to the floor today. I look forward to working with my colleagues on the House Appropriations Committee every year to ensure that the National 9/11 Memorial and Museum receives appropriate levels of funding. I will also work with my colleagues to maintain open communications with the Department of the Interior to ensure the money is spent wisely and achieves our shared goal of ensuring the memorial remains a spot of reflection and peace and is accessible to millions of visitors every day.

I urge my colleagues to support this bill and provide the recognition and support this memorial deserves.

Mr. MACARTHUR. Mr. Speaker, I acknowledge Representative NADLER, and I thank him for his support in this process.

I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from New York (Mr. DONOVAN).

Mr. DONOVAN. Mr. Speaker, 15 years ago this September 11th, our country suffered the most deadly and devastating attack since its birth. Terrorists chose the Twin Towers because they stood proud and they stood tall. They stood as symbols of the raw power of people free to pursue their dreams, to live their values, and to practice their faiths.

When the towers fell, they took Americans from every corner of our Nation; and when the President stood atop a fire engine and spoke through a bullhorn to console a broken Nation, he spoke to every man, woman, and child in our United States who was suffering and was saddened by an unimaginable act of hate. Heroes from all over the country came to Lower Manhattan to sift through the rubble and pick up the pieces. It was a site of national tragedy, a site of national heroism, and it must also be the site of a national memorial. It is only fitting that the 9/11 Memorial receives proper funding just like every other national memorial. It is sacred ground, and it must be maintained accordingly. Also, annual security costs run into the millions of dollars as the site remains a top terrorist target.

Mr. Speaker, terrorists may have attacked our country at three locations that day, but they also attacked the spirit inside all of us. I encourage every Member of this body to vote for this legislation and to visit the 9/11 Memorial and Museum to see what I and Representative NADLER see every day.

I thank Representative MACARTHUR for introducing this legislation, and I again thank—always—the heroes of that fateful day.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PASCRELL).

Mr. PASCRELL. I thank the ranking member.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 3036, the National 9/11 Memorial at the World Trade Center Act, which was introduced by my friends Congressmen TOM MACARTHUR and JERRY NADLER—two sentinels of Americans' liberty and freedom.

President Bush traveled to the site with Democrats and Republicans. I have never seen in my experience here no other effort close to it of how we were united. We accomplished so much when we were united, and we learned to respect each other even more. On that day, our lives, our country, and the world changed forever. In the aftermath, Americans came together for a common purpose—to rescue, to rebuild, and to remember those we had lost—friends and neighbors, many of them. They were from all faiths, all persuasions.

This memorial and the museum at the World Trade Center were constructed so that we would never forget those brothers and sisters, children and parents, cousins and colleagues. We called them that at the time; yet the further we get from 9/11 we very seldom refer to ''sisters'' and ''brothers'' except for our relatives and our brave first responders who perished during one of the darkest moments in our Nation's history.

Ensuring this Memorial site will be here for years to come will give millions of people around the world the opportunity to pay tribute to those who were lost and to find inspiration in how our Nation has recovered. As a proud supporter of our National Park Service, I know it will make sure the site remains a sacred place of healing and of hope as a national memorial.

As a result, Mr. Speaker, I urge the swift passage of H.R. 3036 in order to solidify the memorial's standing, to honor the memories of those we lost, and to ensure future generations can learn about that tragic day.

Mr. MACARTHUR. Mr. Speaker, may I inquire as to how much time I have remaining?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from New Jersey has 11½ minutes remaining.

Mr. MACARTHUR. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. STEFANIK).

Ms. STEFANIK. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 3036, the 9/11 Memorial Act.

I thank my colleague, Mr. MACARTHUR, for his leadership on this incredibly important issue.

Fifteen years ago on September 11th, every American will remember where he was when the horrifying news broke of these terrorist attacks. Mr. Speaker, as the youngest Member currently serving in Congress, I was in my high school English class when the horrible news was shared with my classmates from our teacher. I remember my schoolmates, crying, who couldn't get ahold of their older siblings, of their aunts and uncles, of their cousins who worked in the World Trade Center.

On that horrifying day when terrorists attacked our Nation, we also saw true acts of heroism. As the workers of the World Trade Center were running out to escape, our first responders were running up the stairs to save their fellow Americans. Strangers helped fellow strangers escape the buildings. New Yorkers helped others walk miles home to get to their families.

□ 1715

New Yorkers will never forget the horrifying attacks. This Nation will never forget these horrifying attacks. The 9/11 memorial is truly hallowed ground.

I urge all of my colleagues to vote ''yes'' on this legislation.

Mr. GRIJALVA. Mr. Speaker, I have no further speakers. I urge passage of this legislation.

This legislation, this 9/11 National Memorial, no matter what corner of this great Nation of ours we are from, we have a shared legacy here. That shared legacy is about sacrifice, heroism, and indeed loss as well.

We have a shared future from this memorial about determination, resilience, and the very nature of this Nation to be hopeful and to look forward. To one another, we have a shared responsibility. This memorial will remind us of that and keep that thought very much alive in all of us.

Again, let me congratulate and thank the sponsors of the legislation, Mr. NADLER and Mr. MACARTHUR, for their fine work and for bringing this before us today.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. MACARTHUR. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the remarks of my colleagues. Events like 9/11—and the world that it has brought us into—demand that we come together, and I am glad that we have done that on this bill. We have come together to honor the fallen and to protect the living.

I urge my colleagues to join in making this the voice of this Chamber as we vote.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mrs. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 3036, The National 9/11 Memorial at the World Trade Center Act, and thank my colleagues Reps. MACARTHUR and NADLER for their leadership to bring this bill to the House floor.

In the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 attacks, Congress has come together to rebuild New York and the Pentagon and support the responders, survivors, and families of the victims. Last year, we reauthorized the James Zadroga 9/11 Health and Compensation Act, making the health care program essential permanent and extending the Victims Compensation Fund for an additional five years, with full funding.

As a New Yorker, the memory of 9/11 continues to evoke pain and sorrow—and the Memorial at Ground Zero stirs these emotions like no other place. The dramatic reflecting pools are a sanctuary of calm within the bustle of lower Manhattan and a moving tribute to the thousands of innocent Americans lost in the attacks.

This bill affirms our commitment to remember those lost on 9/11 by designating the site

a national memorial and enabling the memorial to access the federal support it needs for security and maintenance. The 9/11 Memorial is now among New York's most popular sites, with over 23 million visitors since it opened in 2011. This designation will ensure that the site continues to welcome everyone who comes to remember those we have lost.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, as a senior member of the House Committee on Homeland Security and the Ranking Member of the Judiciary Committee's Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, Homeland Security, and Investigations, I rise in support of H.R. 3036, the "National 9/11 Memorial at the World Trade Center Act."

This bill will designate the National September 11 Memorial located at the World Trade Center site in New York City, New York, as a national memorial.

H.R. 3036 authorizes the Secretary of Interior to award a grant in an amount not to exceed $25 million each fiscal year to the National September 11 Memorial and Museum at the World Trade Center Foundation for the operation and maintenance of the memorial.

Finally, the bill requires the National September 11 Memorial and Museum to report annually to the Interior Secretary and Congress on (1) the amount of grant funds expended; (2) the purpose for which the funds were used; and (3) any other information the Secretary may require.

As a member of the House Committee on Homeland Security since its creation, and Ranking Member of the Judiciary Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism and Homeland Security, I strongly support this resolution.

I will never forget September 11, 2001, a day on which I stood on the East Front steps of the Capitol on September 11, along with 150 Members of the House of Representatives, singing "God Bless America."

September 11, 2001 remains a tragedy that defines our Nation's history since that fateful day for many reasons.

This year marks the 15th anniversary of the September 11 attacks that killed 2,977 men, women, and children.

At the World Trade Center site in Lower Manhattan, 2,753 people were killed when hijacked American Airlines Flight 11 and United Airlines Flight 175 were intentionally crashed in the North and South towers.

Of those who perished during the initial attacks and the subsequent collapses of the towers, 343 were New York City firefighters, another 23 were New York City police officers and 37 others were officers at the Port Authority.

The victims ranged in age from two to 85 years.

At the Pentagon in Washington, 184 people were killed when hijacked American Airlines Flight 77 crashed into the building.

Near Shanksville, Pennsylvania, 40 passengers and crew members aboard United Airlines Flight 93 died when the plane crashed into a field.

It is believed that the hijackers crashed the plane in that location, rather than their unknown target, after the passengers and crew attempted to retake control of the flight.

The act of those passengers to stop the hijackers likely saved the lives of thousands of their fellow Americans that day.

The heroic work done by the first responders who rushed into the burning Twin Towers and the Pentagon saved lives.

We will forever remember the first responders who lost their lives in the line of duty on September 11.

This Nation shall forever be grateful for the selfless sacrifice shown that day.

That is why the National September 11 Memorial and Museum is so important.

The National September 11 Memorial at the World Trade Center remembers and honors the thousands of innocent lives lost during the September 11th attacks, and the attacks of February 26, 1993.

This Memorial is a testament to the triumph of human dignity over human depravity and affirms an unwavering commitment to the fundamental value of human life.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. MACARTHUR) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 3036, as amended.

The question was taken.

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

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

The yeas and nays were ordered.

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

JOHN H. CHAFEE COASTAL BARRIER RESOURCES BOUNDARIES SYSTEM MAP REVISIONS

Mr. MACARTHUR. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 890) to correct the boundaries of the John H. Chafee Coastal Barrier Resources System Unit P16, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 890

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

SECTION 1. REPLACEMENT OF JOHN H. CHAFEE COASTAL BARRIER RESOURCES SYSTEM MAP.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The maps subtitled ''Cape Romano Unit P15, Tigertail Unit FL–63P'' and ''Keewaydin Island Unit P16'' included in the set of maps entitled ''Coastal Barrier Resources System'' referred to in section 4(a) of the Coastal Barrier Resources Act (16 U.S.C. 3503(a)) and relating to certain John H. Chafee Coastal Barrier Resources System units in Florida are hereby replaced by other maps relating to the units subtitled ''Cape Romano Unit P15/P15P'', ''Keewaydin Island Unit P16/P16P, Tigertail Unit FL–63P'', and ''Keewaydin Island Unit P16/P16P'', respectively, and dated April 10, 2015.

(b) AVAILABILITY.—The Secretary of the Interior shall keep the replacement maps referred to in subsection (a) on file and available for inspection in accordance with section 4(b) of the Coastal Barrier Resources Act (16 U.S.C. 3503(b)).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. MACARTHUR) and the gentleman from New Mexico (Mr. GRIJALVA) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New Jersey.

GENERAL LEAVE

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

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

There was no objection.

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

This bipartisan bill corrects Coastal Barrier Resources System boundary errors in Collier County, Florida. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which administers the coastal barriers system program, has acknowledged the need to correct these errors and has since remapped the area.

The agency sent the new maps to the Congress, which has the sole authority to change the boundaries and codify the correct maps in this case. This is what the bill, as amended, achieves. I urge its adoption.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. GRIJALVA. I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, the Coastal Barrier Resources Act, or CBRA, requires the identification of hazardous areas on the Atlantic and Gulf Coasts and makes Federal subsidies off limits to people who choose to develop these lands.

Particularly in this time of rising sea levels and increased storm surge brought on by global warming, CBRA is critical to protecting American taxpayers and sensitive coastal ecosystems.

H.R. 890 would adjust the boundaries of several Coastal Barrier Resources System units in Florida. These changes have been carefully mapped by the Fish and Wildlife Service and reflect improvements in technology that have allowed us to show with great accuracy which parcels of land do and do not constitute coastal barrier resources under the law.

As a result, numerous properties that were originally included by mistake will be removed, and other properties that have been identified as at risk will be included. These changes to the CBRS are protective of private property rights, the environment, and the taxpayers.

I urge support of this bipartisan legislation.

Mr. Speaker, having no other Members to address this legislation on my side, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. MACARTHUR. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. CLAWSON).

Mr. CLAWSON of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate this opportunity to present H.R. 890, which adopts new Coastal Barrier Resources System maps for the southern part of my district, Florida 19, in southwest Collier County, Florida.

A special thanks to my fellow Members—DON BEYER, MARIO DIAZ-BALART, and Chairman ROB BISHOP—for their support and helping me push this through. I urge support of the passage.

On a personal note, it has been my lifelong concern for the environment and involvement in water quality issues in my hometown of Bonita Springs, Florida, that led me to Congress on an unknowing path really. So introducing this bill, to me, today is really special and personal.

A special note of thanks to those who helped—so many folks—particularly Bob and Jack for their perseverance. Perseverance paid off. Also, I thank Cherie for her abiding inspiration and to Yodi.

The CBRS was created by Congress with the 1982 Coastal Barrier Resources Act. This initiative preserves the ecological integrity of coastal areas while still protecting private property rights. This initiative preserves the ecological integrity of coastal areas that serve as important barriers against wind and tidal forces caused by coastal storms, and reduces further development in these sensitive areas. In other words, it creates a perpetual protected area for our wonderful Gulf wildlife.

These new maps have passed public review, OMB review, and have been released by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

This is the southern part of my district. The new maps correct errors from 40 years ago, which seriously hurt some 1,600 of our constituents and hurt their access to flood insurance, home mortgages, and refinancing.

These new maps also add 17,000 acres in perpetuity to CBRS, 17,000 acres principally in this zone right here, between Naples and Marco Island and also a little bit south. Keewaydin Island—that you see right here, just south of Naples—and Cape Romano are part of the pristine, picturesque Ten Thousand Islands chain that begins 20 miles of Naples. These newly preserved areas highlighted on these charts cover five geographical units, part of now over 40,000 continuous acres that will be permanently protected.

This is government doing something right for all stakeholders and for all the generations that will follow us.

H.R. 890, protecting 15 miles of natural coastal barriers, is sound economics. It is a piece of what needs to be done toward growing southwest Florida's multibillion dollar private and commercial real estate values and south Florida's tourism industry, which brings in over 5 million visitors to my district. It also employs one out of every five people in the local workforce.

I am proud to report that this bill will create the largest grouping of CBRS units nationwide, protecting our unique Florida Everglades and ecosystem, aquatic plants and animals, other wildlife, and also protecting private properties from storms and floods.

Keewaydin Island right here, just south of Naples, is one of the largest, if not the largest, sea turtle nesting areas in Florida and in the United States. Depending on the time of year, these are the nests that we see throughout our district on the beach. Also in this area, we see lots of the beautiful spoonbill that you can't find in too many different places.

The Florida Everglades are a natural treasure. It is home to wildlife and plants that are unique in our Nation: fish, tortoises, reptiles, and insects. It is our duty to protect these species. This bill will have a permanent, positive impact on preserving this fragile ecological area and quality of life.

Three years ago, I waded into the Gulf of Mexico with my folks. They urged me to get involved in local politics, hoping that I could have just a small impact and make a small, positive difference in the health of the waters of southwest Florida. My mom is gone now, but she always hoped that a moment like this would come.

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

Mr. MACARTHUR. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Florida.

Mr. CLAWSON of Florida. Mr. Speaker, this is a moment that we can accomplish something positive for our constituents, positive for our economy, and positive for our waters of south Florida. I am very appreciative to have a small role, and I acknowledge that we have so much more to do to conserve the beauty of southwest Florida for generations to come.

Mr. MACARTHUR. Mr. Speaker, I have no other speakers.

I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. MACARTHUR) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 890, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

The title of the bill was amended so as to read: ''A bill to revise the boundaries of certain John H. Chafee Coastal Barrier Resources System units in Florida.''.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

EXPEDITED REPORTING OF CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT TO STATE CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES

Mr. MACARTHUR. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 3894) to amend title 10, United States Code, to require the prompt notification of State Child Protective Services by military and civilian personnel of the Department of Defense required by law to report suspected instances of child abuse and neglect.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 3894

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

SECTION 1. EXPEDITED REPORTING OF CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT TO STATE CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES.

(a) REPORTING BY MILITARY AND CIVILIAN PERSONNEL OF THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE.—Section 1787 of title 10, United States Code, is amended—

(1) by redesignating subsections (a) and (b) as subsections (c) and (d), respectively; and

(2) by inserting before subsection (c), as so redesignated, the following new subsections:

''(a) REPORTING BY MILITARY AND CIVILIAN PERSONNEL.—A member of the armed forces, civilian employee of the Department of Defense, or contractor employee working on a military installation who is mandated by Federal regulation or State law to report known or suspected instances of child abuse and neglect shall provide the report directly to State Child Protective Services or another appropriate State agency in addition to the member's or employee's chain of command or any designated Department point of contact.

''(b) TRAINING FOR MANDATED REPORTERS.—The Secretary of Defense shall ensure that individuals referred to in subsection (a) who are mandated by State law to report known or suspected instances of child abuse and neglect receive appropriate training, in accordance with State guidelines, intended to improve their—

''(1) ability to recognize evidence of child abuse and neglect; and

''(2) understanding of the mandatory reporting requirements imposed by law.''.

(b) CONFORMING AND CLERICAL AMENDMENTS.—Section 1787 of title 10, United States Code, is further amended—

(1) in subsection (c), as redesignated by subsection (a)(1), by striking ''IN GENERAL.—'' and inserting ''REPORTING BY STATES.—''; and

(2) in subsection (d), as redesignated by subsection (a)(1)—

(A) by striking ''(d) DEFINITION.—In this section, the term'' and inserting the following:

''(d) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

''(1) The term''; and

(B) by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

''(2) The term 'State' includes the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, the Virgin Islands, American Samoa, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau.''.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. STEFANIK) and the gentlewoman from Hawaii (Ms. GABBARD) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from New York.

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. STEFANIK. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and insert extraneous material on the bill under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

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

I rise today in support of H.R. 3894, Talia's law, which would require military and Department of Defense civilian personnel working on a military installation to report instances of child abuse and neglect to State Child Protective Services in addition to their designated Department of Defense point of contact.

□ 1730

Our Nation is extremely proud of our military servicemembers and the sacrifices they endure to protect our national security. Members of our military's Active Duty Reserve component and the National Guard knit the blanket of freedom to keep us safe from those who wish to do us harm.

Standing beside our Nation's brave servicemembers are the spouses and children who bear constant challenges and maintain resiliency throughout the continuous moves and the strain deployments incur on families.

There are approximately 2 million children with one or both parents who serve in the U.S. military, and the support role these children fulfill is beyond significant and should be commended. Our Nation's military dependents face greater academic challenges and emotional stress due to relocation and attending multiple schools.

It is difficult enough growing up and enduring adolescence without having to move every couple of years, face new surroundings, make new friends, and all the while having a mother or father serving our Nation in harm's way.

Military children must rely on their loved ones, family, friends, and their parents to get through the struggles that only a military household can understand.

However, it is when those individuals, those adults who these children trust the most, hurt them in any way. It is inexcusable. Our children are truly our Nation's future, and anyone who abuses or neglects a child is appalling and must be held accountable.

That is why I stand here today in support of H.R. 3894, an imperative piece of legislation which would require a childcare provider located on a DOD installation to report any signs of child abuse or neglect directly to Child Protective Services and the provider's chain of command.

Not only does this bill enforce the reporting procedure, but it also requires those individuals who work with children on an installation receive the necessary training to recognize child abuse as well as fully understand the reporting requirements.

I applaud my Committee on Armed Services colleague and friend, Ms. GABBARD, for her leadership on this issue and encourage the rest of my House colleagues to support this important bill.

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

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

In 2005, 5-year-old Talia Williams was beaten to death by her own father, who was stationed at Schofield Barracks in Hawaii at the time. Talia suffered through months and months of abuse from her father and her stepmother, which ultimately led to her death.

Why didn't someone do something? Why was this allowed to occur? Why didn't someone take action to stop this horrific abuse that was visible to so many who knew Talia? There were multiple reports that were made to military officials, but when it came right down to it, nothing was done to take Talia out of harm's way.

I am rising today to ask my colleagues to support my bill, H.R. 3894, Talia's Law, because more than 10 years after Talia's tragic death, the same gaps in the military's reporting requirements that failed to protect Talia remain unchanged. In fact, over the last decade, there have been 29,000 cases of child abuse and neglect in military homes.

Now, outside of the military, in the civilian world, doctors, psychologists, social workers, teachers, or other professionals who work closely with children are required to report any suspected cases of child abuse and neglect directly to that State's Child Protective Services.

But the military's reporting requirements do not require that direct reporting to State authorities. So reports of Talia's suspected abuse never reached the Hawaii Child Protective Services. Instead, they stayed within the Army's chain of command.

Now, I know there were a lot of people around Talia who had good intentions and who were gravely concerned about the abuse that they were seeing, but the fact remains that Talia was never removed from this abusive environment.

To close this gap and fix this problem, Talia's Law requires the same protections that exist for any other child, whether they are in a military household or not. This bill requires immediate and direct reporting to State Child Protective Services in cases of suspected abuse and neglect.

I recently spoke to Talia's mother, Tarshia, who knows that this bill will not bring Talia back, it cannot right the wrongs that failed to protect Talia.

But what she does know and what she does hope is that the passage of this bill will take an important step forward in helping to better protect the thousands of other children in military families who may be facing this same situation and get them the care and services that they deserve.

Mr. Speaker, I strongly urge my colleagues to honor Talia and all of our children in military families and support H.R. 3894.

I would also like to thank my colleague, the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. STEFANIK) for her very thoughtful remarks on this and for championing Talia's Law to be able to help these children who are facing numerous challenges and who deserve better than to have this kind of abuse.

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

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

Ms. GABBARD. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Hawaii (Mr. TAKAI), my friend and colleague, the distinguished gentleman representing Hawaii's First Congressional District.

Mr. TAKAI. Mr. Speaker, today I rise in favor of a bill my friend and colleague TULSI GABBARD and I have introduced.

H.R. 3894, Talia's Law, gets its name from a 5-year-old girl named Talia Williams who was beaten to death at the hands of her father, an Army soldier stationed at Schofield Barracks in Hawaii.

We in Hawaii and all across the country are so thankful for the sacrifices our servicemen and servicewomen make to protect our freedoms, but we also have a duty to protect the most vulnerable among us, our children. In Hawaii, we call them our keiki.

As a father myself, I am proud to stand up for Talia's Law, which would require prompt reporting of possible abuses not only to a military supervisor, but also prompt reporting of possible abuse and neglect to the State's Child Protective Services. It would strengthen reporting requirements for these allegations and make sure that they are properly investigated.

I hope that, as we deliberate this bill, we also draw attention to the fact that Congress can come together and should come together to provide better access to resources for those in uniform suffering from wounds that may not be visible to the eyes.

I ask for the consideration of this bill and its urgent passage. These children, our keiki, and all the victims of abuse and neglect cannot wait.

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

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

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 3984, legislation requiring military and civilian personnel of the Department of Defense required by law to report suspected instances of child abuse and neglect to do so promptly and directly to State child protective service agencies.

I support this legislation sponsored by Congresswoman TULSI GABBARD of Hawaii, a good friend and veterans of the Armed Services, because no child should have to bear the pain and suffering of abuse or neglect alone.

Mr. Speaker, the reason this important legislation is needed is illustrated by the tragic and heart breaking case of Talia Williams, an innocent and loving 5-year old girl who was beaten to death by her father, an active-duty infantryman stationed in Hawaii.

After investigation and through subsequent legal proceedings, it came to light that before being murdered, precious Talia had suffered through months of torture and abuse by both her father and stepmother.

Even worse, Mr. Speaker, it was revealed that multiple federal employees, including military police and workers at her on-base child

care facility, failed to report suspected signs of Talia's abuse.

But the shocking case of Talia Williams is not isolated; it is estimated that more than 29,000 children have been abused in military homes over the past decade.

The system failed Talia Williams but it is not too late to save other children at risk by passing H.R. 3894.

Under current law, Family Advocacy Programs operated by the Armed Forces are to identify individuals who are mandated to report known or suspected cases of child abuse to designated "points of contact," who then are to conduct an assessment investigation into the reported abuse and to communicate with State child protective services agencies.

H.R. 3894 amends current law and requires DoD professionals who come into contact with children such as physicians, psychologists, social workers, and teachers to report suspected instances of abuse or neglect directly to the State child protective services agencies in addition to Defense Department points of contact or chain of command.

H.R. 3894 also requires these "mandated reporters" to receive training in accordance with state guidelines in order to improve their ability to recognize evidence of child abuse and neglect and understand mandatory reporting requirements imposed by law.

Mr. Speaker, it is too late to save Talia Williams but out of the horrific tragedy that claimed her life, it is possible to identify and save other children from a similar fate.

H.R. 3894 will help ensure that instances of child abuse and neglect are recognized and reported immediately by empowering appropriate military and civilian personnel in the Department of Defense with the skills and training need to recognize evidence of child abuse and neglect and to place on them an affirmative duty to report instances of suspected abuse or neglect promptly and directly to child protective agencies.

I urge all Members to join me in voting to pass H.R. 3894.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. STEFANIK) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 3894.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until approximately 6:30 p.m. today.

Accordingly (at 5 o'clock and 38 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1830

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. COSTELLO of Pennsylvania) at 6 o'clock and 30 minutes p.m.

9/11 MEMORIAL ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, proceedings will resume on the motion to suspend the rules previously postponed.

The unfinished business is the vote on the motion to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 3036), as amended, on which the yeas and nays were ordered.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. MACARTHUR) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, as amended.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 387, nays 12, not voting 34, as follows:

[Roll No. 64]

YEAS—387

Abraham
Adams
Aderholt
Aguilar
Allen
Amodei
Ashford
Babin
Barletta
Barr
Barton
Bass
Beatty
Becerra
Benishek
Bera
Bilirakis
Bishop (GA)
Bishop (MI)
Bishop (UT)
Black
Blackburn
Blum
Blumenauer
Bonamici
Bost
Boustany
Boyle, Brendan F.
Brady (PA)
Brady (TX)
Bridenstine
Brooks (IN)
Brown (FL)
Brownley (CA)
Buchanan
Bucshon
Bustos
Butterfield
Calvert
Capps
Cárdenas
Carney
Carson (IN)
Carter (GA)
Carter (TX)
Cartwright
Castor (FL)
Chabot
Chaffetz
Chu, Judy
Cicilline
Clark (MA)
Clarke (NY)
Clawson (FL)
Cleaver
Clyburn
Coffman
Cohen
Cole
Collins (GA)
Collins (NY)
Comstock
Conaway
Connolly
Conyers
Cook
Cooper
Costello (PA)
Courtney
Crawford
Crenshaw
Cuellar
Culberson
Cummings
Curbelo (FL)
Davis (CA)
Davis, Danny
Davis, Rodney
DeFazio
DeGette
Delaney
DeLauro
DelBene
Denham
Dent
DeSantis
DeSaulnier
DesJarlais
Deutch
Diaz-Balart
Dingell
Doggett
Dold
Donovan
Doyle, Michael F.
Duckworth
Duffy
Duncan (TN)
Edwards
Ellison
Ellmers (NC)
Emmer (MN)
Engel
Eshoo
Esty
Farenthold
Farr
Fattah
Fitzpatrick
Fleischmann
Fleming
Forbes
Fortenberry
Foster
Frankel (FL)
Franks (AZ)
Fudge
Gabbard
Garamendi
Garrett
Gibbs
Gibson
Goodlatte
Graham
Granger
Graves (LA)
Graves (MO)
Grayson
Green, Al
Griffith
Grijalva
Grothman
Guinta
Guthrie
Gutiérrez
Hahn
Hardy
Harper
Harris
Hartzler
Hastings
Heck (NV)
Heck (WA)
Hensarling
Hice, Jody B.
Higgins
Hill
Hinojosa
Holding
Honda
Hoyer
Huelskamp
Huffman
Hultgren
Hunter
Hurd (TX)
Hurt (VA)
Israel
Issa
Jackson Lee
Jeffries
Jenkins (KS)
Jenkins (WV)
Johnson (GA)
Johnson (OH)
Johnson, E. B.
Johnson, Sam
Jolly
Jones
Jordan
Joyce
Kaptur
Katko
Keating
Kelly (IL)
Kelly (MS)
Kelly (PA)
Kennedy
Kildee
Kilmer
Kind
King (IA)
King (NY)
Kinzinger (IL)
Kirkpatrick
Kline
Knight
Kuster
Labrador
LaHood
LaMalfa
Lamborn
Lance
Langevin
Larsen (WA)
Larson (CT)
Latta
Lawrence
Lee
Levin
Lewis
Lieu, Ted
Lipinski
LoBiondo
Loebsack
Lofgren
Long
Loudermilk
Love
Lowenthal
Lowey
Lucas
Luetkemeyer
Lujan Grisham (NM)
Luján, Ben Ray (NM)
Lummis
Lynch
MacArthur
Maloney, Carolyn
Marchant
Matsui
McCarthy
McCaul
McClintock
McCollum
McDermott
McGovern
McHenry
McKinley
McMorris Rodgers
McNerney
McSally
Meadows
Meehan
Meeks
Meng
Messer
Mica
Miller (FL)
Miller (MI)
Moolenaar
Mooney (WV)
Moore
Moulton
Mulvaney
Murphy (FL)
Murphy (PA)
Nadler
Napolitano
Neal
Neugebauer
Newhouse
Noem
Nolan
Norcross
Nugent
Nunes
O'Rourke
Olson
Palazzo
Pallone
Pascrell
Paulsen
Payne
Pearce
Pelosi
Perlmutter
Perry
Peters
Peterson
Pingree
Pittenger
Pitts
Pocan
Poe (TX)
Poliquin
Polis
Pompeo
Posey
Price (NC)
Price, Tom
Quigley
Rangel
Ratcliffe
Reed
Reichert
Renacci
Ribble
Rice (NY)
Rice (SC)
Rigell
Roby
Roe (TN)
Rogers (AL)
Rogers (KY)
Rohrabacher
Rokita
Rooney (FL)
Ros-Lehtinen
Roskam
Ross
Rothfus
Rouzer
Roybal-Allard
Royce
Ruiz
Ruppersberger
Russell
Ryan (OH)
Salmon
Sánchez, Linda T.
Sarbanes
Scalise
Schakowsky
Schiff
Schrader
Schweikert
Scott (VA)
Scott, Austin
Scott, David
Serrano
Sessions
Sewell (AL)
Sherman
Shimkus
Shuster
Simpson
Sinema
Slaughter
Smith (MO)
Smith (NE)
Smith (NJ)
Smith (TX)
Speier
Stefanik
Stewart
Stivers
Swalwell (CA)
Takai
Takano
Thompson (CA)
Thompson (MS)
Thompson (PA)
Thornberry
Tiberi
Tipton
Titus
Tonko
Torres
Trott
Tsongas
Turner
Upton
Valadao
Van Hollen
Vargas
Veasey
Velázquez
Visclosky
Wagner
Walberg
Walden
Walker
Walorski
Walters, Mimi
Walz
Wasserman Schultz
Waters, Maxine
Watson Coleman
Weber (TX)
Webster (FL)
Welch
Wenstrup
Westerman
Whitfield
Williams
Wilson (FL)
Wilson (SC)
Wittman
Womack
Woodall
Yoder
Young (AK)
Young (IA)
Young (IN)
Zeldin
Zinke

NAYS—12

Amash
Brat
Brooks (AL)
Buck
Burgess
Duncan (SC)
Foxx
Gosar
Massie
Palmer
Sanford
Sensenbrenner

NOT VOTING—34

Beyer
Byrne
Capuano
Castro (TX)
Clay
Costa
Cramer
Crowley
Fincher
Flores
Frelinghuysen
Gallego
Gohmert
Gowdy
Graves (GA)
Green, Gene
Hanna
Herrera Beutler
Himes
Hudson
Huizenga (MI)
Maloney, Sean
Marino
Mullin
Richmond
Rush
Sanchez, Loretta
Sires
Smith (WA)
Stutzman
Vela
Westmoreland
Yarmuth
Yoho

□ 1850

Ms. CLARKE of New York and Mr. HINOJOSA changed their vote from "nay" to "yea."

So (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

Stated for:

Mr. YOHO. Mr. Speaker, on rollcall No. 64, had I been present, I would have voted "yes."

Mr. GRAVES of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I was absent today to attend the funeral of a family member. Had I been present, on rollcall No. 64, I would have voted "yes."

Mr. CASTRO of Texas. Mr. Speaker, my vote was not recorded on rollcall No. 64 on H.R. 3036—9/11 Memorial Act. I am not recorded because I was absent due to the birth of my son in San Antonio, Texas. Had I been present, I would have voted "aye."

COMBATTING THE SPREAD OF INVASIVE SPECIES

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

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, last week, I visited Penn State University, which is located in Pennsylvania's Fifth Congressional District, for a discussion on the effect that invasive species are having on forests across our Commonwealth. I was joined by several experts in the field of entomology—from the university and from Pennsylvania's Department of Conservation and Natural Resources.

Among the insects discussed were the spotted lanternfly, the gypsy moth, and the emerald ash borer. These experts discussed at length the challenges each species presents as well as the ongoing efforts to combat the devastating impact and spread.

As chairman of the House Agriculture Subcommittee on Conservation and Forestry, I know that my State is not alone and that the effects of these pests are being felt all across the Nation.

I applaud the research being done at Penn State University and by foresters and entomologists around the Nation. Research and applying that science will go a long way in preventing these species from spreading further and causing more destruction on our forests.

I remain hopeful that we can all work together to ensure that our forests remain healthy, both ecologically and economically.

AMERICAN HEROES COLA ACT

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

Ms. TITUS. Mr. Speaker, this afternoon, the House passed H.R. 677, the American Heroes COLA Act, legislation I introduced with Dr. ABRAHAM from Louisiana. This legislation will ensure that veterans receive automatic cost-of-living increases annually based on the consumer price index.

Unlike with Social Security, Congress must act each year to provide veterans with the COLA increases they need and deserve. Now, by permanently adjusting benefits to include cost-of-living increases, we are providing critical peace of mind to those who have so heroically served our country.

Furthermore, this legislation includes two provisions to address the VA appeals problem, which currently has 440,000 claims backlogged. The first, authored by Congressman O'ROURKE, creates a fully developed appeals pilot program. The second I introduced with Chairman MILLER to create a task force to examine the appeals process and make recommendations for improvements before the situation gets worse.

H.R. 677 and some of the other bills that we passed today take important steps towards ensuring that our veterans are able to get the benefits they have earned and deserve.

MARIA KELLER AND ZAKRIA GHANI RECEIVE YOUTH VOLUNTEER AWARDS

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

Mr. PAULSEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor Maria Keller of Plymouth and Zakria Ghani of Maple Grove for being recognized as Minnesota's top youth volunteers by the Prudential Spirit of Community Awards.

Maria, a sophomore at Orono High School, was awarded the top prize after setting up a program called ''Read Indeed,'' which has collected more than 1.7 million books and has provided them to underprivileged children. It is estimated that 800,000 students have received books from the organization.

Zakria, a senior at Al-Amal School, was a finalist for raising critical money for the victims of a devastating fire in Minneapolis. His efforts resulted in raising $8,500 within one week after the fire in order to help the affected victims and residents.

Mr. Speaker, the work and service by these young people to serve and assist others should be inspiring to us all, and thanks to their actions, countless people have been helped. Their selflessness will serve them and their communities well in the future, and these accolades are well deserved.

Congratulations to Maria and Zakria.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

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

Mr. FOSTER. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor St. Elmo Brady. He was the first African American to obtain a Ph.D. degree in chemistry in the United States. He received a Ph.D. in chemistry at the University of Illinois in 1916 for work done at the Noyes Laboratory. Dr. Brady was a pioneer in the teaching of science at both Tuskegee University and at Howard University in Washington, D.C.

His research included work on determining the structure of organic acids, methods of determining properties of alkaloids and infrared spectroscopy. This later research resulted in the formation of the Fisk Infrared Spectroscopy Research Laboratory and the Fisk Infrared Institute. In conjunction with faculty from the University of Illinois, Dr. Brady also established a summer program in infrared spectroscopy, which was open to faculty from all colleges and universities.

Dr. Brady is just one of the many African American pioneering scientists whose work should be lifted up as the role model that it is, not just during Black History Month, but all year round.

□ 1900

IMPORTANCE OF THE MOX FACILITY

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

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, today in the President's budget proposal, sadly, the President terminated funding to the Mixed Oxide Fuel Fabrication Facility (MOX) at the Savannah River site. I am disappointed the President has not acknowledged how crucial MOX is to environmental cleanup and promoting nonproliferation.

Support for MOX is bipartisan, as shown by former New Mexico Governor and Secretary of Energy Bill Richardson, along with former Senator Richard Lugar. Both are experts who advocate the completion of the facility. Today, MOX is 70 percent completed, and there is no viable alternative for eliminating plutonium. What is more, closing MOX would make South Carolina and Georgia a permanent repository for nuclear waste.

MOX is also critical to upholding our nonproliferation agreement with the Russian Federation.

I am grateful for the leadership of Governor Nikki Haley along with Attorney General Alan Wilson, who have already filed a lawsuit against the Department of Energy to enforce the law for South Carolina's agreement with the Federal Government.

In conclusion, God bless our troops, and may the President, by his actions, never forget September the 11th in the global war on terrorism.

Thank you, Navy SEAL Rob O'Neill, for eliminating Osama bin Laden.

REHABILITATION RESEARCH IMPROVEMENT BILL

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

Mr. LANGEVIN. Mr. Speaker, earlier today, the Senate HELP Committee passed by voice vote S. 800, the Enhancing the Stature and Visibility of Medical Rehabilitation Research at NIH Act.

As the lead sponsor of this legislation in the House of Representatives, with my good friend and colleague Congressman GREGG HARPER, I am very encouraged to see progress on efforts to advance the state of rehabilitation science at the National Institutes of Health and improve the care provided

to people with disabling injuries, illnesses, and conditions.

Millions of people across the country require medical rehabilitation to restore, maintain, or prevent deterioration of function. And this legislation will play an important role in the provision of that care.

I commend Senator KIRK for championing this important bill, and I look forward to its swift passage in the Senate and urge its subsequent consideration in the House.

NORTH KOREA IS A ROGUE STATE LUSTING FOR INTERNATIONAL MISCHIEF

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

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, as Peyton Manning and the Denver Broncos celebrated their Super Bowl win, around 8:27 California time, a North Korean satellite passed in space over the stadium.

What is next? Before long, it could be an intercontinental ballistic missile with a nuclear warhead headed for some American city.

Mr. Speaker, this is not some wacky idea out of a Hollywood movie. On January 6, the North Koreans tested a more advanced nuclear bomb that could kill even more people than the nuclear bomb they already have. Last Saturday, North Korea conducted a rocket launch to try to develop a ballistic missile that could hit the United States.

The North Koreans also support Hezbollah, work with Iran on missile development, hacked Sony Entertainment, kidnapped an American college student and put him in jail, and there is much more.

Mr. Speaker, North Korea is a rogue state lusting for international mischief. It is time to put them back on the State Sponsors of Terrorism list before Super Bowl LI takes place in my hometown of Houston, Texas.

And that is just the way it is.

BOKO HARAM

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

Ms. WILSON of Florida. Mr. Speaker, tomorrow is Wear Something Red Wednesday to bring back our girls.

Boko Haram is burning children alive. This heartbreaking and, yes, unsettling picture is of Sani, a victim of Boko Haram's terror.

Sani's home was destroyed when Boko Haram set his village on fire, killing his parents. The rest of Sani's family survived only to be viciously gunned down in front of him. Sani represents the millions of children and women who are being raped, kidnapped, mutilated, and killed by the world's deadliest terrorist organization, Boko Haram. If you are not outraged, then you are not paying attention.

Africans killing Africans: the world has ignored this unparalleled level of violence.

I pray that our country and this Congress awaken to these unquestionably horrific acts and take up efforts to defeat Boko Haram.

Please continue to tweet, tweet, tweet #bringbackourgirls. Please wear red tomorrow and every Wednesday. Tweet, tweet, tweet #bringbackourgirls, #joinRepWilson.

CONGRATULATING OKEECHOBEE HIGH SCHOOL

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

Mr. ROONEY of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Okeechobee High School, home of the Fighting Brahmans of Okeechobee, Florida, for receiving a Wilson Golden Football from the National Football League to commemorate the 50th year of the Super Bowl.

As part of the nationwide Super Bowl 50 celebration, the NFL started the Super Bowl High School honor roll program to acknowledge high schools and communities that have directly influenced Super Bowl history and impacted the game of football for the better. High schools across the country were chosen to honor each player or head coach who graduated from the school and was on an active Super Bowl roster.

Okeechobee High School was chosen because of its esteemed alumni, Jimmie Jones, who played in both Super Bowls XXVII and XXVIII with the Dallas Cowboys. Interestingly, after the victory of Super Bowl XXVII, Jimmie chose to be in Okeechobee for a parade rather than a parade through Dallas with his team. We are all proud to call him one of our own.

It is my honor to represent Okeechobee in the House of Representatives.

WATER CRISIS IN FLINT, MICHIGAN

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

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, this past weekend I had the opportunity to travel with Congressman DAN KILDEE, Congresswoman BRENDA LAWRENCE, Congressman SANDER LEVIN, and Congresswoman DEBBIE DINGELL—we were joined by other Members of Congress, SHEILA JACKSON LEE, for example—to see firsthand the water crisis in Flint, Michigan.

I just want to report to Members of the House and the people of this country that what I saw was appalling. At this point, so many weeks after the lead crisis was identified, to have no central medical team examining those children is a sacrilege. To have no water buffalo supplied by the National Guard with pressurized PVC tubing taking water to people's homes, rather than just this bottle delivery; to have no hot showers that are portable, which the military has, that they could put in the schools in that community, to me, was absolutely appalling.

I was told that the Governor of that State had not even met with the people of the community. He had come in for a press conference. Is that what this is about?

I met children who had hemorrhages and ulcers from drinking that water, who had black rashes all over their bodies with pus.

Our country has a responsibility to the citizens of this country. There ought to be a central coordinator. If that Governor can't appoint one, the President of the United States should. Those children and the citizens of that city ought to be taken care of.

CURTIS FOLTZ' RETIREMENT AS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF GEORGIA PORTS AUTHORITY

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

Mr. CARTER of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Curtis Foltz and his retirement as executive director from the Georgia Ports Authority.

Over the past 5 years, Mr. Foltz has done an exceptional job overseeing all Georgia Ports Authority activity, including the expansion and maintenance of the deepwater ports of Savannah and Brunswick.

Since his promotion to executive director in 2010, Mr. Foltz led Georgia Ports Authority to achieve record cargo growth, modernize its terminals, increase efficiency, improve safety, and promote environmental stewardship.

I am honored and grateful for Mr. Foltz' leadership as Georgia Ports Authority's executive director and wish him all the best in his future endeavors.

I would also like to wish the incoming executive director, Griff Lynch, and the Georgia Ports Authority continued growth and success for years to come.

SOCIAL SECURITY

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. HURD of Texas). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2015, the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. FORTENBERRY) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. FORTENBERRY. Mr. Speaker, I want to share a story with everyone tonight. Although I live in Nebraska, I keep an old family van here in Washington, D.C., which is particularly helpful when our children are visiting.

On one particular occasion, the van was very messy. My children were smaller then, and I had not had the time to clean it. I was actually parking the van in a downtown garage here in

the city, and somewhat embarrassingly, I handed the keys to the attendant and said to him: Sorry, I have five children.

He looked at me and smiled. He says: Oh, don't worry. I have seven children, and they are going to take care of me when I am old.

I looked back at him, and I also smiled. I said: You know what that is called? That is called social security.

He then said: I like that. Could I say that?

I said: You can say it all that you like.

Mr. Speaker, while we think of Social Security as that important retirement security program, which is so essential to so many people, I want to take a moment to just explore a broader understanding of how we find our security together as a people, as a Nation.

I want to re-imagine this term ''Social Security'' in a wider sense of the phrase, what it means to find belonging, protection, and mutual support. Ultimately, society depends upon a binding set of narratives and an agreement with one another about one fundamental fact: the agreement that we should care about each other, that we are committed to one another, and that we have a common vision.

Now, Mr. Speaker, Americans are continuing to confront a number of longstanding challenges to our country's well-being. Let's be honest. There is widespread distrust of government, and the economy's capacity is sadly deepening a sense of division and further fracturing our society as more and more people seem to feel left out.

Fortunately, Mr. Speaker, our Nation still does have great character and great strength, found first and foremost in durable values that keep us resilient with the ability to adapt and change, even in the most turbulent of times. So although there is justifiable anxiety and anger at the present moment—in fact, they are a hallmark of the present moment—Americans do desire a new settlement of both security and opportunity.

Mr. Speaker, here is the dilemma: a constant focus on a Washington-based solution offers a false sense of solidarity and is no substitute for community. Technocratic management through centralized government cannot rekindle the vibrancy of our society. And far from healing our wounded culture, the government simply cannot fix everything that is wrong. Doing so, attempting to do so will simply recalculate winners and losers. This is especially true when America's political system suffers from so much discord and dysfunction.

So here is the answer: a hopeful politics and a truly good society are ultimately relational. For instance, although we are not immune from harsher downward trends where I live, we have, in my State of Nebraska, to some degree, I believe, safeguarded the importance of community, the necessity and integrity of the family, and the quality of care for ourselves as well as those around us.

□ 1915

I am proud of this fact, Mr. Speaker. I often refer to it as the Nebraska model. Such social vibrancy reduces the necessity for government intervention and actually creates happier outcomes.

Mr. Speaker, the Social Security program itself is so critical to protecting the well-being of America's seniors. I believe strongly in this program, as so many others do.

In fact, when I was a child, I received Social Security myself due to the premature death of my father when I was 12 years old. It helped get the family through. This is an important program for America's security and for peace of mind of so many of our elder citizens.

But I think a broader view of this concept, this ideal, of Social Security demands that we regrasp the ideals of community and interdependency with one another. Proper progress in our Nation recognizes that our individual liberty is not merely a license to do whatever we want.

A hyper sense of individualism can obscure the foundational truth of our shared humanity, which longs for community. It inhibits the common endeavors necessary for advancing a brighter future together as a nation, as one people.

Liberty and, therefore, human happiness are inextricably intertwined with our society, with our responsibility to one another, and that is what gives fullness to the meaning of Social Security.

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

CONTAMINATED WATER IN AMERICA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2015, the gentleman from California (Mr. GARAMENDI) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. GARAMENDI. Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about the cities of America—at least many of the cities of America.

While I was waiting for the opportunity to speak to the House and people of America, I went into the cloakroom and pulled out today's Roll Call, one of what we call the Hill rags. These are one of the newspapers around the Hill.

It says ''Lead in the Water, Way Beyond Flint,'' and it talks about the issue of contamination in our water supplies. Indeed, they are quite correct.

This would be one of maybe 20 different slides I could put up here. What do these cities of America have in common: Flint, Michigan; Toledo, Ohio; Sebring, Ohio; Baltimore, Maryland; Brick Township, New Jersey; Washington, D.C.; Wayne County, North Carolina; Greenville, North Carolina; Lakehurst Acres, Maine; Chicago, Illinois; Porterville, California? The list goes on and on and on. These are cities that have or have had contaminated water in the last couple of years. Some of these are ongoing.

We hear a lot of discussion about Flint, Michigan, and the tragedy of the water supply in Flint, Michigan, the lead contamination, the 8,000 or 9,000 children who have been inflicted with lead poisoning, and the incredible, awful effect that that will have on the development of their brain and of their future.

This issue is one that we are becoming aware of. Actually, we have been aware of it for a long, long time. The problem is that we haven't done anything about it or we have done very, very little about it.

Tonight we are going to talk about contaminated water in America, America's cities and towns that are providing water that is not fit to drink.

So what to do? Well, we are going to have to deal with the realities of 8,000 to 9,000 children, their development, the potential problems that they face in their lives ahead. That will be basically dealing with the fact that we had contaminated water in Flint, Michigan, and in a host of other cities.

We can't live without water. The human body requires it. If you don't get it, you are going to die very, very quickly. The fact of the matter is I am not at all sure you can live with contaminated water.

That is the actual water that was available to residents of Flint, Michigan: yucky, yellow, contaminated, polluted water. Not just lead, but yuck. Why would you want to drink that? Well, it is all you have. So you don't want to, but you really don't have any choice. Contaminated water, what to do?

Tonight we are going to discuss this issue. I guess one thing you can do is what California did. In Porterville, California, when the wells went dry, they brought a cattle water trough similar to what I have on my ranch to provide water for my cattle. This water trough provided water for the children of Porterville, California.

Now, there is a solution to the water crisis in California. Porterville isn't the only city or town in the San Joaquin Valley. In fact, there are dozens of towns in the San Joaquin Valley of California, the largest State, the richest State.

We like to think of California, my home State, as being ahead of everything. I guess we are ahead in providing cattle water troughs to provide water for children in California. We ought to be ashamed.

What are we going to do about it? There are 435 people here in the House of Representatives, and I guess there is another 100 Senators across the way, a President, and all the administration. What are we going to do about it? I guess we can look at our report card.

This is from the American Society of Civil Engineers. Let's see. The 2013 report card for America's infrastructure: Aviation, D; bridges, C plus; dams, D; down here, schools, D; roads, railroads, Cs; water—oh, here we are—water, a D.

We asked them about this. We said: Why a D?

They said: We would give them an F, but it is too much trouble to try to figure out how to do an F. So we just go to the lowest, which is D.

You don't get any lower than a D from the American Society of Civil Engineers. That is our report card in America, folks. It is not just water. It is the entire infrastructure system.

You are wondering why. Why does that happen? Take a look at this little chart. A sharp drop in government infrastructure spending. Let's see. That is 2002.

In 2002, $330 billion spent on all infrastructure: roads, bridges, airports, water systems, sanitation systems. $325 billion in 2002.

And in real 2014 dollars, nondefense spending on infrastructure, here we are in 2012, 2013. We are down to about $200 billion, about $125 billion less spent on infrastructure of all kinds.

Oh. Back to water. What about water? Where did we go with water? Spending on clean water and drinking water infrastructure in 2014 deflated dollars, go back to 1973.

In 1973, the Vietnam war was still going on. Let's see. That would be somewhere around $10 billion in 2014 dollars in 1973. In 2016, we are down to $2 billion.

Don't be surprised when you see a list such as I put up a moment ago of cities in the United States that have water problems. Aging infrastructure, lead pipes.

Here is a picture of a lead pipe. Corroded. You wonder why kids get lead poisoning. If you don't spend money on infrastructure, you are going to wind up with sick kids, you are going to wind up with bridges that collapse, you are going to wind up with a second-rate economy and a third-world water situation.

By the way, that is the bridge on Interstate 5, the road from Canada to Mexico down the Pacific coast. The bridge collapsed.

What happens when you don't spend money on infrastructure? Your economy fails, your kids get sick, and they are forced to drink water out of a water trough. This is not the America we want to live in. This is not the America the public sent us here to provide for them.

We like to think of ourselves as the strongest, biggest, best country in the world, and we are in many respects, but when it comes to providing for the fundamentals of life—water—we get a D rating.

We get kids getting their water supply out of a water trough. We get kids in Flint, Michigan, who are poisoned with lead. That is not the only city. It is across the United States, city after city.

In the Central Valley of California, it is arsenic, it is lead, it is other contaminants. Huh-uh. We have got work to do here in the House of Representatives. It is our responsibility. It is our task. We can't toss it off to somebody else.

So, yeah, Roll Call, you are correct: ''Lead in the Water, Way Beyond Flint.'' Arsenic in the water. Fecal contamination in the water. You name it. City after city, ancient systems, more than 100 years old, lead pipes which were put in the ground a century ago, leaching lead into the food supply. That is America.

What would it cost? About $348 billion just for the water systems. How can we pay for it? Well, there is a way.

Oh, America, are you aware that we are into a new nuclear arms race? We are. In the next 25 years, a trillion dollars of your tax money is going to be spent on a total rearmament of our nuclear weapons systems: intercontinental ballistic missiles, cruise missiles, submarines, stealth aircraft. A trillion dollars.

City after city in America limps along, poisoning its children with 100-year-old water systems. We have got some choices to make here. What are we going to spend your tax money on? New nuclear bombs or new water pipes? Choices.

Joining me tonight to discuss these sets of issues are some of my dear friends. PAUL TONKO and I have been working on this infrastructure issue for 5 years now, what we call the East Coast-West Coast. I am going to ask Paul if he would wait just a few moments.

SHEILA JACKSON LEE, you were in Flint, Michigan, last week—I guess yesterday, actually, for a discussion in Flint, Michigan. Share with us briefly, if you would, your reflections on what you saw there.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Thank you very much. And I thank the gentleman from New York for his kindness in my brief support of all of you on the floor.

Let me first of all acknowledge, as I indicated, your potent and powerful question to America of $348 billion to solve our problem and are our children that valuable or are our children worth it. My answer is yes.

Let me add my appreciation, though I know that he would not want to be in this predicament, to Congressman KILDEE and the entire Michigan delegation who were there on Saturday.

They stood arm in arm listening to Flint residents just to see how painful it is to hear a mother talk about a child with spots all over his body and to have her point to other children and say, ''They are getting sick, and I have lost my hair'' or a teacher say, ''I have children coming to school with pus sores.''

□ 1930

So, let me say a few points. I sit on the Judiciary Committee. And also have the privilege of sitting on the Oversight and Government Reform Committee as a guest. I just want to say that we need to hold someone accountable, which will then generate into what the solution is.

April 2014, a nonscientist—I just came out of the Rules Committee on science legislation—made a decision to go to Flint River. He had no anti-corrosion plan. Really, there lies the source of problems throughout a number of these cities that you have indicated. You had one with non-toxins. They were just breaking the law and suffering because of lack of money. Saving $5 million has resulted in spending multiple millions of dollars—maybe $1 billion-plus—to try and salvage this great city.

With Governor Snyder, of course, there is no accountability. Just to show you an example, it is very difficult to read these emails that were released. The Governor indicates that this was not relevant to the issue.

The main point is that while we are talking about the infrastructure—and I do support Mr. KILDEE's effort as well as our colleagues in the Senate to help this city of 765 million, we must also hold ourselves accountable—this body of Republicans and Democrats who know that we must invest in infrastructure.

As a member of the Judiciary Committee, I sent a letter early in January asking for an investigation by the Department of Justice. The FBI is now investigating. We want to make sure there is a review of whether there is malfeasance.

So, I come to the floor today to say there are many questions and there must be many answers. I want to make sure there is an accountable standard. I want to say to the American people that we can't have a city like Flint, where decisions are made—General Motors, by the way, stopped using the water—that we have no anticorrosion plan. This is happening across America, partly, because cities are broke and because we have not invested in the overall infrastructure of America, as you, Mr. GARAMENDI have said on the floor over and over again.

So, I wanted to come to the floor to thank my colleagues. Knowing how painful it is to represent that area, I thank Congressman KILDEE for his leadership. Congresswoman LAWRENCE, who is a neighbor, is working with him. Congressman CONYERS, Congresswoman DINGELL, SANDY LEVIN, and some Senators have all been working so hard on this issue.

Count me in as a collaborator as we stand before the American people and say: Send me. We are prepared to fight for more infrastructure to help cities across America.

Mr. GARAMENDI. I thank the gentlewoman from Texas. I know that your concerns are very real. You traveled to Flint, and you have been working on these issues for many, many years. Thank you for your participation.

Tomorrow, the Democrats are holding their own committee hearing on this issue. I am certain that we will go through the issues that you talked about: what actually happened and who is actually responsible. So, that will be a discussion for tomorrow. Perhaps we will cover it on the floor tonight.

Let me now turn to my colleague from New York, Mr. PAUL TONKO, for the continuation of the East-West show.

Mr. TONKO. Thank you, Representative GARAMENDI, for leading us in what is a very important bit of discussion.

In a broad term, infrastructure is something that needs our immediate attention because of years of neglect, but it comes to that water infrastructure that has been highlighted of late. I like to call it the hidden infrastructure. It can't be out of sight, out of mind. That would be a very painful outcome if that is the approach that is taken by certainly us as legislators or by society at large.

You are right: for a number of years, we have been discussing infrastructure. I have made it my goal to invest in water infrastructure for a number of reasons, but also because of my assignment on the Energy and Commerce Committee as ranking—the lead Democrat—on the Subcommittee on Environment and the Economy, which reports to the Energy and Commerce Committee. It is through that subcommittee that the assignment of the Safe Drinking Water Act is housed. So it is important for us to maintain a vigilance, if you will, for the outcomes that are deemed acceptable—and that is that we do not receive a D on our report card for water infrastructure.

When you shared that information, Representative GARAMENDI, I thought to myself that if any of us brought home a D on a report card, there would be a little bit of a challenge offered our way to improve that report card with the next semester. So, I believe that we have failed in this effort to maintain a strong Federal partnership.

There has been a lot of finger pointing going on since the Flint, Michigan, issue arose in the public's awareness as a national issue. That finger pointing won't solve anything. But if we are going to finger point, we need to also internalize that. We need to look at Congress and what it has done.

When you talked about the levels of funding, in the early seventies, I came onto my county board in 1976, in Montgomery County in upstate New York. I can vividly recall that we had a very lucrative revenue flow from the Federal Government for our water systems.

Today, what we look at is something like a 4 percent investment coming from the Federal Government on the total bill. That is grossly inadequate. The fact that we can turn our backs on this infrastructure and allow situations like Flint, Michigan; Sebring, Ohio; Troy, New York; or Los Angeles, California, to grip us, to shock our senses and not respond, leaves us in a very pitiful state, I believe.

We need to do better than that. We need to form a plan of action. That plan of action must include a stronger investment in the water infrastructure of this country.

Now, some of that also requires, I think, an enhancement of the investment made in the drinking water SRF, or the State Revolving Fund. That fund has not been reauthorized since 2003. So we need to go forward and reauthorize and enhance the SRF so that our States, as partners with the Federal Government, can then go forward and have some relief in responding to the strapped cities that are really impacted by a declining tax base, in many cases, and the very small bit of population in some of our rural communities that are trying to maintain systems that want to speak to public health and public safety and to offer a commodity that is not only important, but essential.

It is essential for the quality of life in our homes, it is essential for small businesses, it is essential for our manufacturing base, it is essential for our farming community. All of this requires water. Many suggest that we are transitioning from an oil-based economy to a water-based economy.

So, if we are anticipating greater use and reliance on water as a commodity, let's put our act into working order. That means that you invest not like we did last year, where the outcome was at some $843 million, which was some $43 million worth of a cut. That is completely going in the wrong direction. That is not listening to the needs of local government or to the basic, core essential need of sound drinking water, clean drinking water.

It is blue infrastructure. That is what we need to invest in—making certain that we have an abundance and an essential supply of clean drinking water. It is absolutely mandatory in a modern economy. If we are going to compete effectively in an innovation economy, we need to provide the essentials, including water, to the business, residential, and ag community.

When I look at some of the neglect, it is so interesting to see that we wait for crises like that of Flint. Does Flint require Federal investment? Absolutely. I stand ready and willing to assist Flint. I would rank what happened there as immoral.

So, we need to move forward and assist Flint, but the saga shouldn't begin and end there. We need to create a national response that empowers our communities across the country. We need to have interaction and dialogue at the table to best understand where we have fallen down, where we have failed.

We need to have officials from Flint, Michigan, and from the State of Michigan here to testify. I don't think it is appropriate for Governor Snyder of that State to walk away from that invitation.

It is important for us to go forward with the sort of communication, the dialogue, that will build the soundest response. And if we do not respond out of necessity to Flint, Michigan; Troy, New York, Sebring, Ohio; and Los Angeles, and the list continues to grow, we will then just see these issues keep rising in our communities.

When I last saw Troy, New York's dilemma, they were repairing things in the worst weather—conditions that were near zero, where they needed to heat the site in order to weld the materials that were completing the project. A major line, Representative GARAMENDI, broke. It was their main line. A 33-inch pipe was shooting water 100 feet into the air. Ten million gallons of water went into the street.

Are we going to sit back and say that is acceptable in a Nation like this—a Nation of abundance—that considers itself a world leader? No world-leading nation can ignore its infrastructure like we have ignored the water infrastructure.

Blue infrastructure is what we should be about: providing that clean drinking water. We have nearly a quarter of a million breaks annually in the systems from coast-to-coast. A quarter of a million. There are 700-some breaks per day.

Think about it. That wouldn't be acceptable to an ordinary business plan of any type. It should not be acceptable to the Federal Government plan in assisting communities with the sound commodity of drinking water.

So, Representative GARAMENDI, I am just thrilled to join you this evening to continue to carry the message forward that we need action, we need a plan of action, we need commitment, and we need resources. It begins now. Every missed opportunity here will perhaps cause the opportunity for yet another tragedy in a community that just should not happen.

Again, it is about investing soundly, effectively, and appropriately, in what it is an essential commodity: water for our communities.

Mr. GARAMENDI. Mr. TONKO, thank you so very, very much. You brought to this issue enormous facts and passion. Your work as the ranking member on the subcommittee of the Energy and Commerce Committee positions you in a very, very important place. Your passion and knowledge should help carry the day on this.

Mr. TONKO, if you can stick around, we will come back to this one more time.

I would like now to call on my colleague from California, Mr. TED LIEU from Los Angeles.

Mr. TED LIEU of California. Thank you, Representative GARAMENDI, for your work on clean water and for highlighting this issue in Flint, as well as in communities across America.

I sit on the Oversight Committee. On February 3, we held a hearing on the Flint water crisis. Based on the information presented, it is clear to me that

what happened in Flint was a crime of epic proportions. Tens of thousands of women, children, and men were poisoned when lead leached from lead pipes into the drinking water. Those who were most responsible know who they are. They should resign. Some of them should be prosecuted.

We need to make sure that we do what is right for the residents of Flint, as well as other communities across America, and make sure this never happens again. It is clear that this is not an issue just in Flint, but the problem with toxic water is an issue across our Nation.

□ 1945

Washington, D.C., had elevated levels of lead in 2000. Sebring, Ohio, now has elevated levels of lead. And there was a report by the Natural Resources Defense Council in 2011 that showed 19 cities had toxic issues with their drinking water.

There are a variety of solutions. First of all, we need to fund the CDC lead abatement program that had been cut by the Republican legislature in 2002. We need to restore funding and fully fund that program.

We need to also make a strong investment in improving our water infrastructure. I sit on the Budget Committee. I will be putting in amendments to make sure that we increase funding to water infrastructure across America.

And we need to look at alternatives to lead pipes. An article in Salon noted that we have many cities across America now using PVC pipes, also known as plastic pipes, as an eco-friendly alternative.

Canadian and American cities have had success with these pipes. They last longer than metal pipes, over 100 years. They do not corrode. They do not leach, and they do not contain lead.

What is happening in Flint, they are looking at a short-term solution, which is to recoat their lead pipes. I believe that is not acceptable. I believe the Governor needs to come in and replace all the lead pipes with a nonlead alternative.

The mayor of Flint has called for full replacement. I support that. I know Representative GARAMENDI and others support that.

I want to give great credit to the great work by Representative KILDEE for his constituents in Flint.

I also want to note that if we don't do something now, who knows whether your children or your grandchildren will be poisoned by lead in your drinking water.

It is very important that we make enormous infrastructure investments, and the time to do that is now.

Thank you again, Representative GARAMENDI, for highlighting this issue.

Mr. GARAMENDI. Mr. LIEU, you said you are on the Oversight and Government Reform Committee. You had the hearing last week and began the process of developing an understanding of what happened and who was responsible. Critically important.

You also said you are on the Budget Committee. So if I might just lobby you for a moment—

Mr. TED LIEU of California. Absolutely.

Mr. GARAMENDI. Let me just lobby you. You are going to be taking up the budget—I think tomorrow, actually.

Mr. TED LIEU of California. We have various markups coming up. That is correct.

Mr. GARAMENDI. Okay. So the budget is going to be coming up, and that is the allocation of the $4 trillion that the Federal Government will spend. We will be spending it on education. We will be spending it on roads, on the military and the like.

Let me just toss you some numbers for your consideration. Now, these are adjusted 2015 dollars, so we are keeping equal-value dollars.

In 2007, the State Revolving Fund for Drinking Water, which Mr. TONKO talked about, had $957 million for that program. That goes to the States to repair their water systems. And it stayed around $900 million the next year.

And then we had the stimulus bill in 2009, and we spent $3 billion. Then we went back down, $1.5 billion, $1 billion, $947 million, and we stayed somewhere in the range of $900 million through 2016. So that is the current year. And that is $863 million that we are spending this year on the State Revolving Fund.

Keep in mind that it is estimated that we need $328 billion to repair all the pipes.

Now, the President's budget has $1.2 billion for the coming year. He just introduced that today.

Mr. TED LIEU of California. Right.

Mr. GARAMENDI. Okay. Also, in the President's budget, he has $1.36 billion for the new Long Range Strike Bomber; $113 million for a ground-based strategic deterrence; $1.4 billion for the Ohio class submarine—those are nuclear submarines; the new long-range cruise missile, $995 million; to rebuild the B61 bomb, $137 million; and the total amount that the National Nuclear Security Administration is spending this new year, 2017, $9.24 billion.

Now, it would seem to me that this is just in the nuclear enterprise. These are our nuclear weapons.

So my lobbying is this: When you put together the budget, could you somehow squeeze out of the nuclear arms race that we are engaged in about a billion dollars so that we can stop poisoning our children?

Mr. TED LIEU of California. You made some very good points. And, as you know, America is the leading economy in the world. Our GDP is greater than the next two countries combined. We certainly have the resources to make sure we don't poison our kids with lead in their water or other toxic material.

Mr. GARAMENDI. Just double, if you would, just double the amount we are spending for the clean drinking water programs at the Federal level from about $1 billion to, let's say, $2 billion, or maybe even $3 billion, by squeezing some of the expenditures that we find in other accounts.

My particular target is the nuclear weapons account, which will in the next 25 years cost the American taxpayers $1 trillion. So when you go to the hearing, keep that in mind.

Mr. TED LIEU of California. Thank you for raising that issue. I will absolutely look into it. I am glad you brought it up. So let me look into that issue.

I do want to say something about what Representative TONKO mentioned, which is the hundreds of water main breaks we have daily. That just shows a crumbling infrastructure. In America, in the 21st century, that should not be happening.

What we saw in Flint and we are seeing in other cities across America is a result of disinvestment in our government, in cities and municipalities. You get what you pay for, and right now, we are getting children that are being poisoned with lead. So we need to increase investment.

I will look into the issues you raised, Representative GARAMENDI. Thank you for highlighting these issues.

Mr. GARAMENDI. I appreciate the opportunity to lobby you. You are in a very important position, as are all of us; 435 of us are going to make choices about what is important and how we spend our constituents' tax money. And these are choices we are going to make.

We often don't really look at it, but the budget that will be forthcoming, the President's budget, and then the response of this House to that budget, will allocate that $4 trillion across a whole variety of programs.

We really do have the opportunity here, as we put together the budget and then the appropriations following, to take up the challenge that Mr. TONKO put before us in the State Revolving Fund.

Mr. LIEU, thank you so very much for joining us.

Mr. TED LIEU of California. Thank you. I look forward to working with you and Representative TONKO and others to make sure we invest in America.

Mr. GARAMENDI. We appreciate you being here. Thank you so very much.

Well, Mr. TONKO, lead pipes.

Mr. TONKO. Lead pipes. The $863 million in the Drinking Water SRF of which I spoke is a lot of money. But when you put it into context of maybe 10 million lead service lines in the country, when you think of infrastructure that is beyond 100 years old—when I did tours—I have been doing tours in my district of the water systems, and I have found systems as old as 145 years. That is when Rutherford B. Hayes was in the White House.

And I saw pipes that were 8-inch in diameter reduced to 4-inch flow because of calcification. I saw pipes removed because of corrosion by the acidity of soils that has taken its toll.

You think of new technology, invention, innovation, gauges that can be utilized, liners that can be put in certain pipes for extending the useful life, things that we can be doing that provide for preventative maintenance and speak to public health and public safety.

You know, it is a bit of wonderment, isn't it, that we will trade our cell phones every other year, or perhaps every year, because they have got a new product on the shelf; or will trade in our screens, our TV screens, because they are simply not big enough; or the car has got too many miles or we just came to dislike the color, and so we trade in the automobile every three, 4 years. But we are content to live with water pipes for 145 years. It defies human logic. Why do we accept that?

Why don't we dig into this hidden infrastructure and invest in a way that will avoid thousands of families being impacted by contamination of lead?

Children, innocent children impacted by societal neglect. Investment that ought to be highest priority, not put on the back burner.

Well, the response, as we know, is: How are you going to pay for it? What is the cost?

What is the cost of doing something? Let's contrast that with the cost of not doing something.

What are the bills going to be?

For Flint, Michigan, alone, we don't think people are going to stay silent with this tragedy in their lives. What is the impact to industry?

When I saw these lines burst in the city of Troy, New York, this winter, businesses were shut down. Schools were shut. They were closed for days. Families didn't have water in their homes.

What is the cost? What is the price tag?

So it needs to be a framework that is large enough to calculate the human impact, the financial impact, societal impact, the economic consequences. These are real.

Again, we are a country, a people that can claim the pioneer spirit within our DNA. How do we dare say ''no'' to what ought to be a sound investment, to grow jobs, maintain jobs, to compete effectively on a global scale in an innovation economy?

We can do better. We must do better.

And when we look at the situations out there where we have convinced ourselves that we are not worthy of investment, that is not leadership. We are trying to stall and pass it on to the next generation.

Well, this generation that will be that next generation of leaders is being impacted healthwise as we speak. Unacceptable. Immoral. We can do better.

Representative GARAMENDI, I know there are voices that really want to produce here and do this progressive bit of investment that will strengthen our communities.

Mr. GARAMENDI. As you were talking, I think back when I was growing up, and we used to call this, not infrastructure, we used to call this ''public works.'' Public works.

This is for the public. It is infrastructure, but this is the public investment in the things that an individual, even a private company, cannot do. This is something that we do as a community in the public domain.

It is work. We are talking, if we were to invest $2 billion this coming year in these community water systems, we would actually generate thousands of jobs, and we would increase the economic growth immediately.

It has been estimated that for every dollar you put into public works, infrastructure, you immediately increase the economy by $1.3, $1.4. So this is a way of investing immediately, putting people to work in good, middle class jobs, and laying in the public works for future economic growth and, as you just said so eloquently, protecting our health, our children's health. So this is absolutely essential.

We are at a very propitious moment. The President proposed today the budget for the United States of America's next fiscal year, beginning October 1, 2016.

□ 2000

It is his proposal on how to spend about $4 trillion of taxpayer money and debt. We, as the representatives of the people of the United States, will take that and modify it.

What if we just made one modification in that $4 trillion and said: We are going to spend an additional billion dollars or an additional $2 billion on public works water systems? What would it mean?

The 140-year-old pipes that you talked about, could they be replaced? Could the 250,000 water main breaks across the United States be reduced to maybe just 200,000?

People going to work, engineers designing the system, financiers figuring out how to put together the local money, the State money, and the Federal money, generating jobs, growing our economy, and stopping the poisoning of our children.

The President proposed his budget today. Tomorrow our colleagues take up the budget and begin to decide how to move that money to things that are a priority. Here we are.

Mr. TONKO. Representative GARAMENDI, when we talk about the infrastructure hidden beneath the surface of the streets and scape of our communities, it is hard to imagine wooden pipes along with those decrepit 145-year-old pipes in calcification galore.

The enormity of the situation needs to be perhaps graphically shared. Under the city of Albany, the capital of New York, which is part of the 20th Congressional District that I represent, happens to lie 317 miles of pipe, drinking water infrastructure.

You could travel from Albany, New York, to Baltimore, Maryland. That is the sort of linear responsibility associated with that system. Should we anticipate rightfully that there may be some bumps along the road of that 317-mile stretch in any given year?

Mr. GARAMENDI. A pothole, maybe?

Mr. TONKO. Absolutely. So let's think of it in those sorts of terms so that we can have a better understanding and awareness of an aged infrastructure, which, by the way, is also accompanied by a discontinued inventory in many cases.

Valves that are required are no longer manufactured. So we have to come up with some innovative response when there is a break.

While we have talked a lot about capital improvements, capital infrastructure, and physical infrastructure that is required to pay for and build back these systems, there is also that third leg of the stool: human infrastructure.

When I tour these water systems in my district, one of the learning curves is the declining effort of professionals—not their effort—the declining numbers of professionals who have the awesome responsibility of operating and maintaining these systems.

So the education, the training, the retraining, the higher education, and the certification of individuals who makes these systems work and provide for that water when you turn on the tap, they are there.

But there is an aging out because I think we have ignored this. So career paths have not been developed in the minds of students to go into this sort of science. And it is an important, awesome responsibility.

Will that institutional knowledge be passed on or will we just go without? So the human infrastructure is an important piece of this puzzle, also, to have the qualified women and men conducting their professionalism to serve the community.

So when you turn that tap on and anticipate—rightfully again—that clean drinking water is the result, think of all the decisionmaking, think of all the investment, think of the stewardship, and the operating know-how that is required. It is awesome.

It is also a system, as we have been shown, that, when there is failure, you can have a large number of people impacted and in severe measure.

So I believe that this Nation cares about its drinking water capacity and state of purity and sound condition. They want that abundant supply of clean water, and we need stronger partnership from the Federal level being more committed, more lucrative funding streams to the States, and then the States incorporating with their local communities to come up with innovative concepts.

My gosh, we are producing new materials that perhaps won't corrode as easily or that can retrofit the given systems. We have gauges that can tell us where the next break may come. So you are dealing with the know-how that provides for the most effective and

efficient outcome from a taxpayer perspective.

All of this technology with software to accompany it is available. But, again, the technical assistance, the grants, the loans—affordable loans—that we can advance to the communities are important steps in the process of providing for a 21st-century infrastructure.

We shouldn't be content with a D on our report card. D means devastating. D means dangerous. D means in decline. Let's move forward and advance for that A on the report card.

I know you wanted those As on your report card, Mr. GARAMENDI. I wanted them on mine.

Mr. GARAMENDI. The art of the possible. The art of the possible is what we have here.

Mr. TONKO, I don't know where you were when I brought this up. This is the drinking water in Flint, Michigan. That is a recent photo from a water tap in Flint, Michigan. Unacceptable. The bottom line is it is unacceptable. Not only is it dirty, it is poisonous.

Mr. TONKO. And frightening.

Mr. GARAMENDI. It is poisonous.

So we are going to make some choices. My plea to my colleagues here—and it echoes what you said—you can talk about it in terms of jobs. Thousands and thousands of jobs would be created if we invested in our infrastructure, our public works, and the water systems.

Is the money available to do it? If we make the right choice, it is. If we make the right choice to invest in ending the poisoning of our children, it is there. We can move $4 trillion around in one way or another and build modern infrastructure. We could do that.

We are going to do it now. We are going to do it now. The issue of the budget begins today. In the United States Congress, 535 American citizens are brought to this Capitol to make decisions about the health and the safety of their children. We have been given that responsibility.

God knows there is enough money around $4 trillion to find a way to spend the money to build the water systems to stop the poisoning of our children. It is just a matter of choices.

What do we choose to do? Refurbish a nuclear bomb that, God willing, we would never ever even think about using? That is our choice. It is our choice.

As your representatives, we can move money into providing the public works to meet the fundamental human need, in this case, drinkable, potable, safe water. It is fundamental.

You cannot live but 3 days without water, and the last 2 days aren't worth living anyway because you are comatose. Water. Choices. Public works. Investment in the future. Jobs today. Engineers, as you talked about. Financial. All of that.

It is disheartening. I hear my colleagues like SHEILA JACKSON LEE come in and talk about going to Flint, Michigan. I will never forget Mr. KILDEE on the floor last Thursday.

I asked him to talk to me about that young child that you saw in your community that you represent. He said the kid turned to him and said: I am not going to be smart enough. We make choices.

Mr. TONKO. Think of the reduction in the quality of life there. We commend Representative KILDEE, Representative LAWRENCE, and all of the members of the Michigan delegation for the work that they have done.

Again, to the price tag, the cost, let's look at the other side. Earlier I talked about 7 billion—7 billion—gallons of water lost with these main breaks, with these breaks of any kind. 7 billion gallons.

Mr. GARAMENDI. Can we talk about the California drought in this context?

Mr. TONKO. Exactly. Can you ill afford any waste of water? But it is not just water coming through those pipes. It is tax dollars flowing with that water. It is treated water.

So it is foolish for us to continue along this path of hidden infrastructure mentality because, when it is not addressed, water and tax dollars—hard-earned constituent money—are flowing out of those pipes.

Before I came here, Representative GARAMENDI, you know that I worked at NYSERDA, the New York State Energy, Research, and Development Authority.

We got national awards for energy efficiency incorporated at water treatment facilities. So we took that effort to reduce the price tag of day-to-day operational costs.

There are ways to save money. A broken pipe is pouring money down the drain. So let's stop that foolish expenditure and go wisely to the investment that enables us with our intellect, our passion, and our sense of virtue to get things done correctly.

Generations before us had that vision. Pioneers built this country. People came here as immigrants and tethered their American Dream.

They climbed the ladder of opportunity and built strong communities based on that American Dream, and we in our present moment can't find it within ourselves to address those basic core needs?

We pride ourselves on being a modern society and having the luxury of clean water. The blue infrastructure moment is now. Let's invest in that clean water infrastructure. Let's not torture our communities. Let's not disrespect our children. We are better than that.

We have the engineering savvy. We have the academic prowess. We have the intellectual capacity. Now do we have the will? I believe we do.

I believe this country, if asked: ''Do you want to invest in America's drinking water systems?'' would say a resounding yes. Flint, Michigan; Sebring, Ohio; Los Angeles, California; Troy, New York—the list goes on and on.

If we do nothing, we should anticipate that this list will continue to make a growing, passionate statement that we are dragging our feet. We are allowing a hidden infrastructure to be truly that, hidden, out of sight and out of mind.

Don't burden us with the responsibility. Don't share the facts. It is too painful. I don't want to hear that it is going to cost us something.

We see what the cost is. Representative GARAMENDI held up the photo of that polluted water, that poisonous water. That is unacceptable in a country as great as America. Unacceptable.

We have invested in the soundness of education, research, and innovation, and to not utilize the byproducts of those investments is sheer foolishness. It is not exercising the love of country that needs to be engaged in this Chamber and across the country.

We can get this done. I am a firm believer—firm believer—that, with voices resonating in chorus about this issue and the connected tragedies of disinvestment, we will get it done. We will get it done.

Representative GARAMENDI, I appreciate the efforts you make to bring these issues to the attention of the American public.

For those who listen at home and watch at home, encourage your representatives to get on board with the investment in our clean drinking water infrastructure. It is so critical.

This moment can bring us together. This isn't about a partisan issue. We didn't ask those children what party their families may be assigned, have chosen. This serves us all.

Let's go forward united in the voice and the passion to get it done, the determination and the integrity to say that we had a challenge and, in the old American way, we responded to it and succeeded.

Again, thank you for bringing us together.

□ 2015

Mr. GARAMENDI. Mr. TONKO, I wasn't in Flint, Michigan when Representative KILDEE spoke to that young child—I think he was probably 4 or 5—who had been drinking this lead contaminated water, and was aware that he had been drinking the water. When that young kid turned to Mr. KILDEE and said: I am afraid I won't be smart enough, I visualize it.

My question to you, to myself, and to my colleagues here in the House of Representatives and across the way in the Senate is: Will we be smart enough to protect our children? I think we must be smart enough to do that.

Mr. TONKO. When it comes to smart, incorporating this work with the appropriate agencies—the EPA and the DEC in my home State of New York—there is a situation very close to my district in Hoosick Falls that is going through a similar contaminated water situation critical to their quality of life and their public health.

We need to advance that partnership, that soundness of checks and balances,

that will make certain that every bit of the way it is based on responsibility and professionalism and good faith efforts.

Mr. GARAMENDI. I was just thinking about your community that you mentioned, Albany and the like. I represent the University of California, Davis, in Davis, California. I think they have got maybe 12 wells that provide most of the water. About half of those wells are contaminated. They are building a new water system, and it should go online in the next few months, or maybe a year, or maybe sooner. They are investing. Perhaps they got some of this money from the State revolving fund.

It is an example of a community that wrestled with this for about a decade. They turned out to be smart enough to address it. They did it with their neighboring community of Woodland. A new water system is going into place. They will have safe drinking water.

There are other communities spread throughout California that don't have the same opportunity. It is our task to address this. I think we are smart enough to do so. I think there is enough money in the system to do it.

Mr. TONKO, would you like to do a quick 15 second wrap?

Mr. TONKO. I thank the speaker for the opportunity to share thoughts on the floor here this evening.

Blue infrastructure, let's get it done. Let's provide America one of her core basic needs.

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

REPORT ON RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 3442, DEBT MANAGEMENT AND FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY ACT OF 2015, AND PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 3293, SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH IN THE NATIONAL INTEREST ACT

Mr. SESSIONS (during the Special Order of Mr. GARAMENDI), from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 114–420) on the resolution (H. Res. 609) providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 3442) to provide further means of accountability of the United States debt and promote fiscal responsibility, and providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 3293) to provide for greater accountability in Federal funding for scientific research, to promote the progress of science in the United States that serves that national interest, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mr. HUDSON (at the request of Mr. MCCARTHY) for today on account of illness.

ENROLLED BILL SIGNED

Karen L. Haas, Clerk of the House, reported and found truly enrolled a bill of the House of the following title, which was thereupon signed by the Speaker:

H.R. 3033. An act to require the President's annual budget request to Congress each year to include a line item for the Research in Disabilities Education program of the National Science Foundation and to require the National Science Foundation to conduct research on dyslexia.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. TONKO. Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

The motion was agreed to; accordingly (at 8 o'clock and 18 minutes p.m.), under its previous order, the House adjourned until tomorrow, Wednesday, February 10, 2016, at 10 a.m. for morning-hour debate.

EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS, ETC.

Under clause 2 of rule XIV, executive communications were taken from the Speaker's table and referred as follows:

4281. A letter from the Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting the Department's Annual Report of Interdiction of Aircraft Engaged in Illicit Drug Trafficking, pursuant to 22 U.S.C. 2291-4(c); Public Law 103-337, Sec. 1012 (as amended by Public Law 107-108, Sec. 503); (115 Stat. 1405); to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

4282. A letter from the Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting a certification, Transmittal No.: DDTC 15-129, pursuant to 22 U.S.C. 2776(c)(2)(C); Public Law 90-629, Sec. 36(c) (as added by Public Law 94-329, Sec. 211(a)); (82 Stat. 1326); to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

4283. A letter from the Secretary, Department of the Treasury, transmitting a six-month periodic report on the national emergency with respect to Ukraine that was declared in Executive Order 13660 of March 6, 2014, pursuant to 50 U.S.C. 1641(c); Public Law 94-412, Sec. 401(c); (90 Stat. 1257) and 50 U.S.C. 1703(c); Public Law 95-223, Sec 204(c); (91 Stat. 1627); to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

4284. A letter from the Secretary, Department of the Treasury, transmitting a six-month periodic report on the national emergency with respect to persons undermining democratic processes or institutions in Zimbabwe that was declared in Executive Order 13288 of March 6, 2003, pursuant to 50 U.S.C. 1641(c); Public Law 94-412, Sec. 401(c); (90 Stat. 1257) and 50 U.S.C. 1703(c); Public Law 95-223, Sec 204(c); (91 Stat. 1627); to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

4285. A letter from the Secretary, Department of the Interior, transmitting the Annual Operating Plan for Colorado River System Reservoirs for 2016, pursuant to 43 U.S.C. 1552(b); Public Law 90-537, 602(b); (82 Stat. 900) and Public Law 102-575, Sec. 1804(c)(2); (106 Stat. 4671); to the Committee on Natural Resources.

4286. A letter from the Chief, Publications and Regulations Branch, Internal Revenue Service, transmitting the Service's IRB only rule — Permitted disparity in employer-provided contributions or benefits (Rev. Rul. 2016-05) received February 5, 2016, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Added by Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Ways and Means.

4287. A letter from the Chief, Publications and Regulations Branch, Internal Revenue Service, transmitting the Service's final and temporary regulations — Allocation of Creditable Foreign Taxes [TD 9748] (RIN: 1545-BM57) received February 5, 2016, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Added by Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Ways and Means.

4288. A letter from the Chief, Publications and Regulations Branch, Internal Revenue Service, transmitting the Service's IRB only rule — Expatriate Heath Plans Under the Affordable Care Act, Sec. 9010 (Notice 2016-14) received February 5, 2016, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Added by Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); jointly to the Committees on Ways and Means, Energy and Commerce, and Education and the Workforce.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES ON PUBLIC BILLS AND RESOLUTIONS

Under clause 2 of rule XIII, reports of committees were delivered to the Clerk for printing and reference to the proper calendar, as follows:

Mr. BISHOP of Utah: Committee on Natural Resources. H.R. 3036. A bill to designate the National September 11 Memorial located at the World Trade Center site in New York City, New York, as a national memorial, and for other purposes, with an amendment (Rept. 114–416). Referred to the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union.

Mr. BISHOP of Utah: Committee on Natural Resources. H.R. 890. A bill to correct the boundaries of the John H. Chafee Coastal Barrier Resources System Unit P16; with an amendment (Rept. 114–417). Referred to the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union.

Mr. CHAFFETZ: Committee on Oversight and Government Reform. S. 1698. An act to exclude payments from State eugenics compensation programs from consideration in determining eligibility for, or the amount of, Federal public benefits (Rept. 114–1418). Referred to the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union.

Mr. CHAFFETZ: Committee on Oversight and Government Reform. H.R. 4180. A bill to improve Federal agency financial and administrative controls and procedures to assess and mitigate fraud risks, and to improve Federal agencies' development and use of data analytics for the purpose of identifying, preventing, and responding to fraud, including improper payments (Rept. 114–419). Referred to the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union.

Mr. SESSIONS: Committee on Rules. House Resolution 609. Resolution providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 3442) to provide further means of accountability of the United States debt and promote fiscal responsibility, and providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 3293) to provide for greater accountability in Federal funding for scientific research, to promote the progress of science in the United States that serves that national interest (Rept. 114–420). Referred to the House Calendar.

PUBLIC BILLS AND RESOLUTIONS

Under clause 2 of rule XII, public bills and resolutions of the following titles were introduced and severally referred, as follows:

By Mr. CHABOT (for himself, Ms. SINEMA, Mr. HURT of Virginia, and Mr. TAKAI):

H.R. 4498. A bill to clarify the definition of general solicitation under Federal securities law; to the Committee on Financial Services.

By Mr. MOONEY of West Virginia (for himself, Mr. ROGERS of Kentucky, Ms. KUSTER, Mrs. COMSTOCK, Mr. RYAN of Ohio, Mr. GUINTA, and Mr. LYNCH):

H.R. 4499. A bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to remove consideration of certain pain-related issues from calculations under the Medicare hospital value-based purchasing program, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Ways and Means.

By Mr. HULTGREN (for himself, Ms. SEWELL of Alabama, and Mr. LUETKEMEYER):

H.R. 4500. A bill to amend the Federal Deposit Insurance Act to permit certain depository institutions to use a short form call report, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Financial Services.

By Mr. SALMON (for himself, Mr. SHERMAN, Mr. ROYCE, Mr. ENGEL, Mr. CONNOLLY, and Mr. KELLY of Pennsylvania):

H.R. 4501. A bill to amend the North Korean Human Rights Act of 2004 to authorize further actions to promote freedom of information and democracy in North Korea, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

By Mrs. BLACK (for herself and Mr. BISHOP of Utah):

H.R. 4502. A bill to amend title 28, United States Code, to allow for a stay of Federal district court actions pending resolution of unsettled and ambiguous questions of State law, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. POE of Texas:

H.R. 4503. A bill to allow for additional markings, including the word ''Israel'', to be used for country of origin marking requirements for goods made in the geographical areas known as the West Bank and Gaza Strip; to the Committee on Ways and Means.

By Mr. BURGESS:

H.R. 4504. A bill to repeal Federal energy conservation standards, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

By Mr. CICILLINE (for himself, Mr. REED, Mr. RYAN of Ohio, Mr. HANNA, Mr. DOGGETT, Mr. KATKO, Mrs. BUSTOS, and Mr. GARAMENDI):

H.R. 4505. A bill to improve the competitiveness of United States manufacturing by designating and supporting manufacturing communities, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Financial Services.

By Mr. FORTENBERRY:

H.R. 4506. A bill to amend the Public Health Service Act to help health care consumers comparison shop for medical services based on quality and cost; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

By Mr. LOWENTHAL (for himself and Ms. MCCOLLUM):

H.R. 4507. A bill to establish the Bureau of Land Management Foundation as a charitable, nonprofit corporation, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Natural Resources.

By Mr. NORCROSS (for himself, Mr. PALLONE, and Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN):

H.R. 4508. A bill to provide for increases in the Federal minimum wage and to provide a credit against the employment taxes of certain employers who pay more than the Federal minimum wage; to the Committee on Education and the Workforce, and in addition to the Committee on Ways and Means, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Mr. PAYNE:

H.R. 4509. A bill to amend the Homeland Security Act of 2002 to clarify membership of State planning committees or urban area working groups for the Homeland Security Grant Program, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Homeland Security.

By Mr. POLIS (for himself, Mr. LAMBORN, and Mr. TIPTON):

H.R. 4510. A bill to insure adequate use and access to the existing Bolts Ditch headgate and ditch segment within the Holy Cross Wilderness in Eagle County, Colorado, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Natural Resources.

By Mr. SMITH of New Jersey (for himself, Ms. JENKINS of Kansas, and Mr. MACARTHUR):

H.R. 4511. A bill to amend the Veterans' Oral History Project Act to allow the collection of video and audio recordings of biographical histories by immediate family members of members of the Armed Forces who died as a result of their service during a period of war; to the Committee on House Administration.

By Mr. SMITH of Washington:

H.R. 4512. A bill to amend the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985 to eliminate the section 251A sequestrations; to the Committee on the Budget.

By Mr. ZELDIN (for himself and Miss RICE of New York):

H.R. 4513. A bill to authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to make grants to State and local entities to carry out peer-to-peer mental health programs; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

By Mr. BOUSTANY:

H. Con. Res. 112. Concurrent resolution expressing the sense of Congress opposing the President's proposed $10 tax on every barrel of oil; to the Committee on Ways and Means.

By Mr. POSEY (for himself and Mr. PIERLUISI):

H. Con. Res. 113. Concurrent resolution authorizing the use of Emancipation Hall in the Capitol Visitor Center for a ceremony to present the Congressional Gold Medal collectively to the 65th Infantry Regiment, known as the ''Borinqueneers''; to the Committee on House Administration.

By Mrs. BEATTY (for herself, Mr. BISHOP of Georgia, Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN, Mr. CLAY, Ms. ADAMS, Ms. NORTON, Ms. EDWARDS, Ms. LEE, Mr. HASTINGS, Mr. DAVID SCOTT of Georgia, Mr. RYAN of Ohio, Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas, Ms. MOORE, Mr. YARMUTH, Mr. RUSH, Mr. BUTTERFIELD, Mr. RANGEL, Mr. ASHFORD, Ms. PLASKETT, Mr. MEEKS, Mr. CLEAVER, Ms. FUDGE, Mr. LEVIN, Mr. HINOJOSA, Ms. BROWN of Florida, Ms. KAPTUR, Ms. JACKSON LEE, Mr. CAPUANO, Mr. COHEN, Mr. GRAYSON, Mr. SEAN PATRICK MALONEY of New York, Mr. JEFFRIES, Mr. LARSON of Connecticut, Mr. CONYERS, Mr. HONDA, Mr. BLUMENAUER, Mr. SERRANO, Mr. VAN HOLLEN, and Mr. STIVERS):

H. Res. 610. A resolution supporting the goals and ideals of Black History Month and honoring the outstanding contributions of African-American Medal of Honor recipients; to the Committee on Armed Services.

CONSTITUTIONAL AUTHORITY STATEMENT

Pursuant to clause 7 of rule XII of the Rules of the House of Representatives, the following statements are submitted regarding the specific powers granted to Congress in the Constitution to enact the accompanying bill or joint resolution.

By Mr. CHABOT:

H.R. 4498.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Article 1, Section 8, Clause 3 of the United States Constitution

By Mr. MOONEY of West Virginia:

H.R. 4499.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Article One, Section 8, Clause 18 of the U.S. Constitution: The Congress shall have Power To . . . make all Laws which shall be necessary and proper for carrying in Execution the foregoing Powers, and all other Powers vested by this Constitution in the Government of the United States, or in any Department or Office thereof.

By Mr. HULTGREN:

H.R. 4500.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Article 1, Sec 8, Clause 3

Article 1, Sec 8, Clause 18

This legislation proposes a necessary and proper reporting requirement for the FDIC to regulate such entities under the Federal Deposit Insurance Act

By Mr. SALMON:

H.R. 4501.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Article 1, Section 8 of the U.S. Constitution.

Mrs. BLACK:

H.R. 4502.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Article I, Section 8, Clause 1 of the United States Constitution.

By Mr. POE of Texas:

H.R. 4503.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Article 1, Section 8, Clauses 3

By Mr. BURGESS:

H.R. 4504.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

This legislation would repeal existing federal law, which was passed under the claimed constitutional authority of Article I, Section 8, Clause 3, often referred to as the ''Commerce Clause.''

By Mr. CICILLINE:

H.R. 4505.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Article 1, Section 8

By Mr. FORTENBERRY:

H.R. 4506.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Article I, Section 8, Clause 1 of the United States Constitution.

By Mr. LOWENTHAL:

H.R. 4507.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Article 4, Section 3, Clause 2—''The Property Clause''

Article 1, Section 8 Clause 18—''The Necessary and Proper Clause''

By Mr. NORCROSS:

H.R. 4508.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Article 1, Section 8

By Mr. PAYNE:

H.R. 4509.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

The U.S. Constitution including Article 1, Section 8.

By Mr. POLIS:

H.R. 4510.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Article I, Section 8 of the United States Constitution, specifically clause 1 relating to the power of Congress to provide for the general welfare of the United States) and clause 18 (relating to the power to make all laws necessary and proper for carrying out the powers vested in Congress), and Article IV, section 3, clause 2 (relating to the power of Congress to dispose of and make all needful rules and regulations respecting the territory or other property belonging to the United States).

By Mr. SMITH of New Jersey:

H.R. 4511.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Article 1, Section 8

By Mr. SMITH of Washington:

H.R. 4512.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Article 1, Section 8, Clause 1, 2, 14, 18

By Mr. ZELDIN:

H.R. 4513.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Article 1, Section 8 of the United States Constitution.

ADDITIONAL SPONSORS

Under clause 7 of rule XII, sponsors were added to public bills—and resolutions, as follows:

H.R. 24: Mrs. HARTZLER, Ms. HERRERA BEUTLER, and Mr. MICA.

H.R. 27: Mr. KING of Iowa, Mr. MASSIE, and Mr. BROOKS of Alabama.

H.R. 135: Mr. WEBER of Texas and Mr. HARRIS.

H.R. 178: Mr. RODNEY DAVIS of Illinois.

H.R. 241: Mr. HARRIS and Mr. ASHFORD.

H.R. 244: Mr. VELA.

H.R. 472: Mr. VELA.

H.R. 494: Mr. STUTZMAN, Mr. ABRAHAM, Mr. SMITH of Texas, Mrs. LUMMIS, Mr. DUNCAN of South Carolina, Mr. BUCK, and Mr. KING of Iowa.

H.R. 541: Mr. ASHFORD.

H.R. 581: Mr. KILDEE.

H.R. 583: Mr. FLORES.

H.R. 662: Mr. MESSER.

H.R. 664: Mr. MOULTON.

H.R. 703: Mr. BARR.

H.R. 775: Mr. GIBSON, Ms. KAPTUR, Ms. BORDALLO, Ms. DEGETTE, Mrs. DAVIS of California, Mr. NADLER, and Mr. CAPUANO.

H.R. 842: Mr. CALVERT.

H.R. 942: Mr. MULVANEY.

H.R. 969: Ms. SPEIER and Mr. PAYNE.

H.R. 1000: Mr. MCGOVERN and Mr. JEFFRIES

H.R. 1062: Mr. BISHOP of Georgia.

H.R. 1089: Mr. HUFFMAN.

H.R. 1095: Mr. DEUTCH and Ms. EDWARDS.

H.R. 1111: Ms. CLARKE of New York.

H.R. 1116: Mr. RODNEY DAVIS of Illinois.

H.R. 1150: Mr. TIPTON.

H.R. 1258: Mr. MEEKS and Mr. JEFFRIES.

H.R. 1274: Ms. BONAMICI.

H.R. 1292: Mr. KIND.

H.R. 1309: Mr. FRANKS of Arizona.

H.R. 1391: Ms. PINGREE and Mrs. BEATTY.

H.R. 1431: Mr. GOSAR.

H.R. 1432: Mr. GOSAR.

H.R. 1453: Mr. BERA.

H.R. 1457: Mr. DEUTCH.

H.R. 1475: Mr. BECERRA and Mr. QUIGLEY.

H.R. 1486: Mr. LUCAS and Mr. AUSTIN SCOTT of Georgia.

H.R. 1548: Mr. PERLMUTTER.

H.R. 1752: Ms. ESHOO.

H.R. 1769: Mr. DAVID SCOTT of Georgia and Mr. PAYNE.

H.R. 1818: Mrs. NAPOLITANO.

H.R. 1887: Mr. BEYER.

H.R. 1942: Mr. CLYBURN and Mr. JEFFRIES.

H.R. 1944: Mr. KING of Iowa.

H.R. 1945: Ms. EDWARDS and Ms. BONAMICI.

H.R. 1995: Mr. ROHRABACHER.

H.R. 2016: Mr. LANGEVIN and Mr. MURPHY of Florida.

H.R. 2114: Mr. RYAN of Ohio.

H.R. 2132: Mr. FITZPATRICK.

H.R. 2167: Ms. ROYBAL-ALLARD.

H.R. 2236: Mr. HASTINGS, Mr. CONNOLLY, Mr. GRAYSON, Ms. JACKSON LEE, Ms. LEE, and Ms. SPEIER.

H.R. 2264: Mr. PIERLUISI, Mr. PRICE of North Carolina, Mr. BEN RAY LUJÁN of New Mexico, Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania, and Mr. RENACCI.

H.R. 2278: Mr. FLORES and Mr. KING of Iowa.

H.R. 2342: Ms. SCHAKOWSKY, Ms. BORDALLO, and Mrs. DAVIS of California.

H.R. 2355: Mr. NORCROSS.

H.R. 2411: Ms. TITUS.

H.R. 2540: Mr. FRELINGHUYSEN and Mr. ABRAHAM.

H.R. 2613: Mrs. LOWEY.

H.R. 2656: Mr. BLUMENAUER and Ms. CLARK of Massachusetts.

H.R. 2715: Mr. MURPHY of Florida and Mrs. BEATTY.

H.R. 2752: Mr. WALBERG.

H.R. 2858: Mr. MEEKS and Mr. JEFFRIES.

H.R. 2957: Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN.

H.R. 2962: Mrs. BEATTY.

H.R. 3036: Mr. CICILLINE, Mr. SHUSTER, Mr. GRAVES of Missouri, Ms. DUCKWORTH, Mr. HIGGINS, Ms. VELÁZQUEZ, Mr. ROYCE, and Mr. SERRANO.

H.R. 3068: Mr. GALLEGO.

H.R. 3070: Mr. GOSAR.

H.R. 3071: Ms. BROWN of Florida, Mrs. LAWRENCE, Mr. HASTINGS, Mr. ENGEL, Mr. TAKAI, Mrs. KIRKPATRICK, and Mr. PALLONE.

H.R. 3074: Mr. FLEISCHMANN and Mr. COLLINS of Georgia.

H.R. 3135: Mr. GUTHRIE and Mr. MULVANEY.

H.R. 3209: Mrs. NOEM and Mr. REED.

H.R. 3222: Mr. WENSTRUP.

H.R. 3225: Mrs. BUSTOS.

H.R. 3299: Mr. STEWART, Mr. VARGAS, and Mr. BUCSHON.

H.R. 3323: Mrs. DAVIS of California.

H.R. 3390: Mr. COSTELLO of Pennsylvania.

H.R. 3515: Mr. CRAMER.

H.R. 3520: Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas and Mrs. NAPOLITANO.

H.R. 3535: Mr. DELANEY.

H.R. 3541: Mr. CLAY.

H.R. 3546: Mr. ISRAEL, Mr. SIRES, Mrs. LOWEY, Mr. LOWENTHAL, Ms. SPEIER, and Mrs. CAPPS.

H.R. 3582: Mr. HONDA and Mr. RYAN of Ohio.

H.R. 3643: Mr. PETERS.

H.R. 3687: Mr. SMITH of Missouri.

H.R. 3691: Ms. SCHAKOWSKY.

H.R. 3706: Ms. WILSON of Florida and Mr. RODNEY DAVIS of Illinois.

H.R. 3713: Mr. VARGAS.

H.R. 3720: Ms. KAPTUR.

H.R. 3779: Mr. JEFFRIES and Mr. GARRETT.

H.R. 3804: Mr. RIGELL.

H.R. 3808: Mr. ROTHFUS and Mr. WALKER.

H.R. 3870: Mr. COFFMAN.

H.R. 3929: Mrs. WAGNER, Mr. MEEHAN, Mr. JOHNSON of Ohio, Mr. ROYCE, and Mr. COFFMAN.

H.R. 3948: Ms. BORDALLO.

H.R. 3952: Mr. ABRAHAM.

H.R. 3981: Ms. SPEIER.

H.R. 3990: Ms. LOFGREN.

H.R. 3998: Mr. PAYNE.

H.R. 4007: Mr. AUSTIN SCOTT of Georgia.

H.R. 4013: Mr. LEVIN and Ms. SCHAKOWSKY.

H.R. 4029: Mr. GRIFFITH and Mr. COHEN.

H.R. 4043: Mr. MCGOVERN and Mr. POLIS.

H.R. 4061: Ms. SCHAKOWSKY.

H.R. 4062: Ms. MENG.

H.R. 4063: Mrs. NAPOLITANO.

H.R. 4065: Mr. DEUTCH and Mr. HASTINGS.

H.R. 4073: Ms. BORDALLO and Mr. ASHFORD.

H.R. 4083: Mr. CARTER of Georgia.

H.R. 4087: Mr. LOWENTHAL.

H.R. 4144: Mr. JEFFRIES and Mr. TONKO.

H.R. 4177: Mr. CALVERT, Mr. MURPHY of Pennsylvania, and Mr. CRAMER.

H.R. 4185: Mr. COURTNEY and Mrs. KIRKPATRICK.

H.R. 4211: Mr. MEEKS.

H.R. 4229: Mr. LANGEVIN, Ms. KUSTER, and Mr. MEEHAN.

H.R. 4249: Ms. NORTON.

H.R. 4262: Mr. ROUZER.

H.R. 4305: Mr. SCHIFF and Mrs. NAPOLITANO.

H.R. 4333: Mr. FITZPATRICK.

H.R. 4334: Mr. LOWENTHAL.

H.R. 4336: Mrs. ROBY, Mr. TAKANO, Mr. BILIRAKIS, Mr. GARRETT, Ms. SLAUGHTER, Mr. YOHO, and Mr. SESSIONS.

H.R. 4342: Mr. BUCSHON.

H.R. 4348: Mr. MOONEY of West Virginia.

H.R. 4362: Mr. TROTT.

H.R. 4371: Mr. BRAT, Mr. MULVANEY, and Mr. WESTMORELAND.

H.R. 4376: Ms. BONAMICI.

H.R. 4381: Mr. TAKAI and Mr. COLE.

H.R. 4386: Ms. MENG, Mr. SARBANES, and Mr. POLLS.

H.R. 4396: MR. LOEBSACK, MR. TONKO, MS. CLARKE OF NEW YORK, MR. BEN RAY LUJÁN OF NEW MEXICO, MR. ASHFORD, MS. MATSUI, AND MR. KENNEDY.

H.R. 4400: Mr. ROSS, Mr. MEEKS and Mr. PAYNE.

H.R. 4404: Mr. LANCE.

H.R. 4406: Mr. SMITH of New Jersey.

H.R. 4410: Mr. HASTINGS.

H.R. 4420: Mr. ROKITA, Mr. RUSSELL, and Mr. MICA.

H.R. 4428: Mr. GRAVES of Louisiana.

H.R. 4438: Mr. RUSH and Mr. RANGEL.

H.R. 4442: Mr. BLUMENAUER, Ms. MATSUI, Ms. GABBARD, and Mr. JOHNSON of Ohio.

H.R. 4443: Mr. RIBBLE.

H.R. 4461: Mr. LOUDERMILK, Mr. SCHWEIKERT, Mr. BRIDENSTINE, and Mr. GOODLATTE.

H.R. 4462: Mr. ISRAEL, Mr. NOLAN, Mr. CONNOLLY, and Ms. WILSON of Florida.

H.R. 4470: Ms. KAPTUR, Mrs. KIRKPATRICK, Mr. VARGAS, Mr. HUFFMAN, Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN, Mr. VAN HOLLEN, Ms. NORTON, Ms. JACKSON LEE, Mr. CROWLEY, Ms. DUCKWORTH, Mr. DANNY K. DAVIS of Illinois, Mr. CASTRO of Texas, Mr. GARAMENDI, Mr. COLLINS of New York, Mr. RANGEL, Mrs. BEATTY, Ms. LEE, Mr. QUIGLEY, Mr. GRIFFITH, Ms. SCHAKOWSKY, Mr. GALLEGO, Ms. HAHN, Mr. THOMPSON of California, Mr. PETERS, Mr. COURTNEY, Ms. MATSUI, Mr. NOLAN, Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas, Mr. SWALWELL of California, Mr. BRENDAN F. BOYLE of Pennsylvania, Mr. COHEN, Ms. BASS, Mr. CUMMINGS, Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas, Mr. DOLD, Mr. WELCH, Ms. ESTY, Ms. PLASKETT, Mr. ISRAEL, Mr. GUTIÉRREZ, Mr. SARBANES, Mr. DESAULNIER, Mr. SCHIFF, Mr. GIBSON, Ms. MENG, Mr. SEAN PATRICK MALONEY of New York, Mr. BLUMENAUER, Mr. RICHMOND, Mr. SHERMAN, Mr. BUTTERFIELD, Mr. POCAN, Mr. CARTWRIGHT, Mr. HONDA, and Ms. BONAMICI.

H.R. 4474: Mr. CRAMER.

H.R. 4476: Mr. DESANTIS.

H.R. 4479: Mr. TED LIEU of California, Mr. LEVIN, Mrs. DINGELL, Mr. CROWLEY, Ms. JACKSON LEE, Mr. ISRAEL, Mr. BUTTERFIELD, Mr. RANGEL, Ms. LEE, Mr. QUIGLEY, Ms. HAHN, Mrs. KIRKPATRICK, Mr. O'ROURKE, Mr. SCHIFF, Ms. BASS, Mr. DANNY K. DAVIS of Illinois, Mr. CÁRDENAS, and Mr. GUTIÉRREZ.

H.R. 4482: Mr. CULBERSON.

H.R. 4490: Ms. HAHN and Ms. JACKSON LEE.

H. J. Res. 55: Mr. ROKITA.

H. J. Res. 74: Mr. BUCSHON.

H. Con. Res. 75: Mr. BRIDENSTINE, Mr. CARTER of Texas, Mr. MARCHANT, Mrs. WALORSKI, Mr. HURT of Virginia, and Mr. CHAFFETZ.

H. Res. 12: Mr. CALVERT and Mr. SHIMKUS.

H. Res. 14: Mr. TED LIEU of California.

H. Res. 148: Mr. MURPHY of Florida, Mr. BILIRAKIS, Ms. MENG, Mr. HASTINGS, Ms. FRANKEL of Florida, Mr. WEBER of Texas, Mr. MEADOWS, Mr. MICA, Mr. CRENSHAW, Mr. GRAYSON, Mr. CURBELO of Florida, Mr. CICILLINE, Mr. VARGAS, Mr. SCHWEIKERT, Mr. ISRAEL, Mr. VAN HOLLEN, Mr. HIGGINS, Mr. SIRES, Ms. CASTOR of Florida, Mr. TROTT, and Mr. BRENDAN F. BOYLE of Pennsylvania.

H. Res. 266: Mr. CRAMER.

H. Res. 509: Mr. CHABOT and Mr. HASTINGS.

H. Res. 540: Mr. BLUMENAUER, Mr. BEYER, and Mr. MCGOVERN.

H. Res. 552: Mr. PETERS.

H. Res. 567: Mr. BISHOP of Michigan and Mr. DONOVAN.

H. Res. 591: Mrs. MILLER of Michigan, Mr. KEATING, Mr. NUNES, Mr. BENISHEK, Ms. PINGREE, Ms. KUSTER, Mr. MESSER, Ms. MICHELLE LUJAN GRISHAM of New Mexico, Mr. WALZ, Mr. GRIFFITH, Mr. LUETKEMEYER, Mrs. HARTZLER, Mr. THOMPSON of California, Mrs. MCMORRIS RODGERS, Mr. BARR, Mr. WELCH, Ms. DEGETTE, Mr. CRAMER, Mr. BISHOP of Utah, and Mr. LOBIONDO.

United States of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 114th CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

Vol. 162 WASHINGTON, TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 2016 No. 23

Senate

The Senate met at 11 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. HATCH).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

O God, our help in ages past, our hope for years to come, thank You for our Nation and for the freedoms we enjoy. Lord, thank You also for the men and women who gave their lives that we might be free.

Forgive us when our preoccupation with selfish dreams keeps us from surrendering to Your will. Help us to strive each day to give You our best.

Guide our Senators. May nothing deter them from doing Your will. Lord, give them faith to meet each challenge with Your wisdom. Help them to give themselves completely to You, permitting Your peace to guard their hearts.

We pray in Your sacred Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. FLAKE). The majority leader is recognized.

THE PRESIDENT'S BUDGET

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, the President released a budget today. Congress will review his final set of proposals and priorities—his call for new taxes, new spending, and more debt.

ZIKA VIRUS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, just this morning, local health departments confirmed two cases of the Zika virus in two States bordering Kentucky—Indiana and Ohio.

Americans want a better understanding of the administration's efforts to fight this virus and its spread. Americans want to know what the administration's funding priorities are for combatting Zika in a time of limited Federal resources. We appreciate Secretary Burwell coming today to help explain all of this. She and her team will provide a briefing to Senate leaders, committee chairs, and ranking members about a virus Americans are rightly concerned about. Keeping Americans safe and healthy is a top priority for all of us. I am looking forward to hearing what she has to say.

THANKING AMBASSADOR DEREK MITCHELL

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, turning to the nomination we will consider today, our Ambassador to Burma, Derek Mitchell, has staunchly pursued America's interests in an important post. He helped guide our relationship with Burma through a historic transition to elected government. He also served as a trusted and valuable partner in understanding how best to measure the pace and viability of reform within Burma.

I have gotten to know Derek pretty well over the last few years. I offer to him sincere gratitude for all of his advice and counsel. He will be missed. He is a genuine expert on that country. And while he leaves big shoes to fill, I intend to support the man nominated to succeed him.

NOMINATION OF SCOT MARCIEL

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, Scot Marciel has served as the Principal Deputy Executive Secretary since August 2013, following time in Jakarta as our Ambassador to Indonesia for 3 years. He served as Ambassador for ASEAN Affairs and as Deputy Assistant Secretary for the East Asia and Pacific bureau, responsible for relations with Southeast Asia. Earlier in his career, he served in Vietnam, the Philippines, Hong Kong, Brazil, and Turkey, as well as in the Economic Bureau's Office of Monetary Affairs.

Ambassador Marciel will represent us as a new government is formed in Burma and as America's policies adjust to those changes on the ground. He obviously has a lot of experience. I think it will prove valuable as he works to represent our Nation at a time of truly consequential change in Burma.

Burma's transition to a democratically elected government is an important mark of reform in a country with a long and very troubled history. We know there is more to be done, but the administration can take credit for its efforts, and so can Members of Congress in both parties. Hopefully we can build on that momentum working together.

NORTH KOREA SANCTIONS AND POLICY ENHANCEMENT BILL

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, on one final matter, the regime in North Korea presents serious threats to regional stability, to the security of Americans, to the safety of our allies, and to the well-being of North Koreans themselves.

Pyongyang regularly threatens neighbors, such as South Korea and Japan. It routinely engages in cyber warfare. It repeatedly commits gross human rights violations against its own people and continues to develop a nuclear program that threatens peace in the region and throughout the world. The regime's most recent display of belligerent behavior only underlines that the administration's approach has certainly not worked. Let's

● This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.

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work together to change that. Let's vote to move America's policy in a better and more successful direction.

Last month the House of Representatives voted to pass comprehensive sanctions legislation on a bipartisan basis. Tomorrow the Senate will turn to comprehensive sanctions legislation that builds on what the House passed, and we should pass that measure on a bipartisan basis as well.

The North Korea Sanctions and Policy Enhancement Act was written by a Republican from Colorado, Senator CORY GARDNER, and a Democrat from New Jersey, Senator BOB MENENDEZ, and reported from the Foreign Relations Committee. It would strengthen congressional oversight. It would give the President more tools to take action against North Korea's growing aggression and require him to do so. It would also reassure our regional allies that we have not despaired in taking any action against North Korea—with or without help from China.

The kind of belligerence we have seen from Pyongyang must not be ignored. Let's work together to make our country and our world safer by passing this bipartisan bill.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

ZIKA VIRUS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I said yesterday and I say again today that I appreciate very much the Republican leader scheduling the meeting to talk about the Zika virus today. As I indicated yesterday, things crop up. I have been called to the White House at that same time, so I personally won't be at the meeting, but I will have people there to make sure that if there is anything I missed, I will be brought up to date on that. Again, I appreciate the Republican leader scheduling that meeting.

NOMINATIONS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I am pleased that we are going to be considering the Ambassador to Burma. Everyone knows the personal attention Senator MCCONNELL has shown to the country of Burma for many years. I am pleased we are going to get an Ambassador to Burma.

I hope everyone understands we are really shortchanging the State Department. We have numerous people held up. The Secretary of State has called me on several occasions lamenting the fact that he is having trouble getting the work done because we don't have the people to do the work.

Fifteen foreign policy nominations are being held up by Republicans, and we have a number of Ambassadors who are being held up: Sweden, Norway, Luxembourg, and Trinidad—a number of countries that are extremely important to what we are doing here. It is a shame that they are being held by Republicans. It is very unfortunate.

FLINT, MICHIGAN, WATER CRISIS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, the people in Flint, MI, continue to suffer through a catastrophic series of problems. Basically, it is their water. It is heavily contaminated. Their nightmare, which began almost 2 years ago, is an emergency that requires a Federal response, and that is what we have been trying to do. In the case of emergencies like this, we must act to help Americans dealing with a public health crisis.

For weeks now, we have called on Republicans to work with us to provide assistance for the people of Flint—100,000 people. Nine thousand children under the age of 6 have been poisoned in that little city in Michigan. It is very large by Nevada standards, but by Michigan standards, that city is not one of the bigger ones, but they need help. We need help from the Republicans. Nothing is happening because we haven't had enough Republican support. In the meantime, the people of Flint, MI, are using bottled water to bathe, to drink, to brush their teeth, and to cook with. That is really too bad.

This should not be a partisan issue. This is drinking water we are talking about. Everyone is entitled to pure, clean drinking water, and access to safe water is a right every American deserves. Whether you live in Michigan, Texas, Florida, Arizona, Nevada, Illinois—it doesn't matter where you live, you shouldn't be afraid to drink the water that comes out of your faucet. No one should have to suffer, but the people of Flint, MI have suffered.

Yesterday the American Academy of Pediatrics wrote a long letter to me and to Senator MCCONNELL. In this letter they said that this organization representing 65,000 pediatricians and other pediatric specialists believes something needs to be done with the water in Flint.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD the letter from the American Academy of Pediatrics.

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

AMERICAN ACADEMY OF PEDIATRICS,
Elk Grove Village, IL, February 8, 2016.

Hon. MITCH MCCONNELL,
Majority Leader, U.S. Senate,
Washington, DC.

Hon. HARRY REID,
Minority Leader, U.S. Senate,
Washington, DC.

DEAR LEADERS MCCONNELL AND REID: On behalf of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), a non-profit professional organization of 64,000 primary care pediatricians, pediatric medical sub-specialists, and pediatric surgical specialists dedicated to the health, safety and well-being of infants, children, adolescents, and young adults, I write regarding Congressional efforts to respond to the tragedy in Flint, Michigan and the exposure of its citizens to lead, a potent neurotoxin, through their drinking water.

The AAP supports federal efforts to provide immediate funding and other assistance to the people of Flint, including the amendment offered by Senators Stabenow and Peters. While their proposal is a vitally important first step, we would urge the Senate to provide additional funding for long-term educational, early literacy, nutrition, medical, behavioral, and other assistance to this community. This includes, but should not be limited to: support for Head Start and Early Head Start; quality child care; literacy programs; Medicaid and Children's Health Insurance Program enrollment; the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children; school meals and after-school feeding programs; and mental health screening and treatment.

There is no safe level of lead exposure for children. Lead damage can be permanent and irreversible. Lasting decreases in cognition have been documented in children with blood levels as low as 5 micrograms per deciliter of lead in blood.' It is therefore clear that the children and families of Flint will need comprehensive assistance in both the short- and long-term.

The AAP is eager to assist this community, and federal policymakers, in both immediate and longer-term solutions to this public health tragedy. Thank you for your consideration. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Ami Gadhia in our Washington, D.C. office.

Sincerely,

BENARD P. DREYER, MD, FAAP,
President.

Mr. REID. I will only read a short phrase or two out of the letter, which says it all:

> The AAP supports federal efforts to provide immediate funding and other assistance to the people of Flint, including the amendment offered by Senators Stabenow and Peters.

The letter goes on to say:

> There is no safe level of lead exposure for children. Lead damage can be permanent and irreversible. Lasting decreases in cognition have been documented in children with blood levels as low as 5 micrograms per deciliter of lead in blood. It is therefore clear that the children and families of Flint will need comprehensive assistance in both the short- and long-term.

This is a letter from the American Academy of Pediatrics. These are people who deal with children. They are not politicians. They are willing to tell us that these children have been poisoned.

In order to do something for the children of Flint and other families, we need help from my Republican colleagues. Despite harsh words from several Members of the Republican caucus who have no interest in resolving the crisis in Flint, some Republicans are willing to help. For example, the senior Senator from Oklahoma has been working with Senator STABENOW all weekend to put together an aid package that includes immediate funding for the people of Flint. Now we are once again waiting on Republicans to step forward and to support the chair of the Environment and Public Works Committee. It is incumbent upon the Republican majority to get to ''yes'' to

help the people of Flint end this man-made emergency that is simply beyond their control.

All Americans deserve safe, clean drinking water, not just some of them. I hope my Republican colleagues will choose to help us to pass legislation to resolve this crisis, sending emergency funds to the people of Flint now.

Mr. President, would the Chair announce the business of the day.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The assistant Democratic leader.

NATIONAL SECURITY SATELLITE LAUNCHES

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I wish to address an issue of vital importance to America's national security. It is the issue of reliable rocket launches—launches which the Department of Defense and the national intelligence agencies count on on a regular basis to launch satellites to keep America safe.

There is a separate area of launches with NASA involving the civilian side, but this morning I want to focus primarily on the Department of Defense rocket launches.

We made a decision about 10 years ago that was wrong. Two companies that were competing at that time, Boeing and Lockheed, came forward to the Federal Government and said: We have a plan. Instead of our companies competing, we will join together. We will become one company—Boeing and Lockheed—for this purpose, under the term United Launch Alliance. They argued, convincingly at the time, that this was the best way to come up with affordable, reliable launches. Well, that was true for half of the projection. They were reliable.

In the last 10 years, the United Launch Alliance has been a reliable partner with the Department of Defense in launching satellites and other things into space which are critical for our national security. But, unfortunately, because they became a monopoly, with no competition, they became increasingly more expensive and we had no place to turn.

Recently, there have been new entries in this market in terms of launching satellites. One of the most promising is SpaceX. SpaceX, from its infancy, has matured into a company that could play an important role in the future of satellite launches in the United States. I noted this fact, and as chairman of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense, I did something that doesn't happen around here very often. I had a hearing scheduled and brought together the CEOs of United Launch Alliance, the traditional partner of the Department of Defense in launching satellites, and this new company, SpaceX. I invited the CEOs from both companies to sit at the same table and to answer questions from the Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense. Then, at the end of the hearing, I did something that I thought might be positive and constructive. I said to each CEO: I would like each of you to write 10 questions that should be in the record answered by your partner at the table there. If we haven't covered everything to give a fair exposition of where this issue stands today, now is your chance.

That was in January 2014. It was the first time anybody had brought together two potentially competing companies and let them plead their case before the Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense. But I felt this was the best way to give SpaceX a chance to tell its story as a new entrant into this competition and for ULA to defend its position.

We then decided there was another element that was important. United Launch Alliance has several engines that can take a satellite into space. The most economical one is built by the Russians, the RD–180. I happen to believe that it is not in our best security interest to be dependent on the Russians to supply us with a rocket engine for vital satellites to be launched into space. So I started pushing in the Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense to put money into a competition for an American-made, American-built rocket engine to replace the Russian RD–180. For 2 successive years we have appropriated more money for this competition than the defense authorizing committee.

It turns out that we are on the right track, but the timing is challenging. What we have been told is that replacing the Russian engine with an American-made engine will take up to 5 years. Who is the source of that statement? The Secretary of the Air Force. So the obvious question is, If we can't cut off the Russian engine today without jeopardizing our national security, what should we do? We decided in the current appropriations bill to extend the authority to the Department of Defense to take bids on rockets launched by the Russian engine from ULA through this fiscal year. I thought this was a prudent thing to do—to wean ourselves from dependence on Russian-made engines—but to do it in a thoughtful, sensible way that gave the Department of Defense some options. This request, incidentally, for options and flexibility came not just from the Secretary of the Air Force, but it came from the Director of National Intelligence as well as the Secretary of Defense. They said they needed these options to keep America safe.

That was the state of play until the senior Senator from Arizona decided he was going to come to the floor repeatedly and challenge this conclusion by the Appropriations subcommittee, then leading to an op-ed which he published yesterday in the Wall Street Journal. I come to the floor this morning to address that op-ed by the senior Senator from Arizona. It is titled: ''Congress's Cynical Crony-Capital Gift to Putin.''

The senior Senator from Arizona referenced me by name in this article, as he has repeatedly on the floor of the Senate, though many would argue that violates the Senate rules. Notwithstanding that personal aspect of this, I want to address the issue that is before us.

Why does the senior Senator from Arizona continue to single me out personally? It is because I happen to agree with the Secretary of Defense, the Director of National Intelligence, and the Secretary of the Air Force about a vital, important national security issue. The senior Senator from Arizona disagrees with them.

The issue is deadly serious, despite the name-calling by my colleague. It is about competition for launching defense satellites into space. Here are the facts. One company, United Launch Alliance, or ULA, held a monopoly for nearly 10 years. The cost of launches rose out of control. Today, there is finally an opportunity for competition. A new company I mentioned earlier, SpaceX, has entered space launch. They are challenging ULA. As I said earlier, in January 2014, I recognized this option—this possibility, this opportunity—and held a hearing with the CEOs of both companies testifying under oath. The result of this competition is that costs are dropping, exactly what we wanted to achieve, and the taxpayer is beginning to see savings. However, as I mentioned earlier, the ULA rocket most often uses a Russian-built rocket engine, the RD–180. After the Russian invasion of Crimea and eastern Ukraine, the Department of Defense and Congress agreed it was time for us to phase out any dependence on this Russian-made engine and to make an American product as soon as possible. I couldn't agree with that more.

Developing and testing a new, American-made rocket takes time—more time than I imagined. The Secretary of the Air Force, testifying before the committee of the senior Senator from Arizona, estimated that it would take to at least 2021 or 2022 until there was an American-made rocket engine that can replace the Russian engine that is being used today. However, the senior Senator from Arizona doesn't want to wait that long to replace the Russian engine. In his Wall Street Journal diatribe, he writes that ''we don't need to buy any more.'' And he is apparently considering a total ban on the Department of Defense using these Russian engines, despite the fact that we have received, in writing, from the Secretary of Defense and the Director of

National Intelligence a warning that doing this would in fact create a gap which could endanger our national security.

In May 2015, the Secretary of Defense and the Director of National Intelligence wrote to the chairman of the defense authorization committee, and they shared his goal of replacing this Russian engine. But they warned the senior Senator from Arizona that if he followed his own plan, it could harm U.S. national security. They were alarmed, in this letter, of the proposed cutoff of access to Russian engines before an American replacement was ready. Secretary Carter and Director Clapper do not want to trade one launch monopoly, ULA, for another launch monopoly, SpaceX. They are encouraging and standing for competition. They want to keep them competing so they can have lower costs and options if one of the companies, for whatever reason, is unable to meet its obligations.

Also, our defense and intelligence satellites must not be dependent on one type of rocket. A SpaceX launch failed last summer, and it took 6 months before they could return to launches. With only one supplier of rockets, a crash could stop vital satellite launches for months, endangering America's national security.

The senior Senator from Arizona ignored the arguments being made by the Secretary of Defense and the Director of National Intelligence. After all, it is hard for a Senator to argue with the senior national security leader, Secretary Carter, whose doctorate is in theoretical physics, and it would be unconscionable to call our Nation's highest intelligence official—a former Air Force pilot and career civil servant—a ''Putin crony.''

But I take warnings from our top national security experts seriously. My Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense has been working to address these issues the right way, the safe way. Rather than attack fellow Senators in the press, the senior Senator from Arizona should face the facts.

When the Defense appropriations bill was marked up in June of 2015, the bill included a bipartisan provision to allow the Department of Defense to conduct full and open competitions for rocket launches for 1 year. An amendment was offered by the Republican senior Senator from the State of South Carolina to strike that provision. But after a full debate, he withdrew his amendment when it was clear there was bipartisan support for the bill. The provision was modified in conference, but the effect of the provision remains the same—to make sure that the Department of Defense and the Director of National Intelligence have some answer to their concerns about a launch monopoly.

The senior Senator from Arizona has proposed another solution—that ULA offer another rocket called the Delta IV, which, of course, is not a Russian engine. According to the Pentagon's top weapons buyer and ULA, each of those rockets endorsed by the senior Senator from Arizona costs about 30 percent more than the Atlas rockets with Russian engines. So if that figure is correct, the plan of the senior Senator from Arizona requires American taxpayers to pay approximately $1 billion more in launch costs over the next 6 years. This Senator, who comes to the floor frequently telling us that he is such a budget hawk, is proposing a plan that will cost us at least $1 billion more over the next 6 years. That figure could be higher. His plan could triple the cost of launches for some satellites that are too heavy to be launched on a single rocket.

Under the plan of the senior Senator from Arizona, the taxpayers would foot the bill for a new government-created monopoly. It is in fact a $1 billion windfall and gift to one defense contractor in California if we follow the plan of the senior Senator from Arizona, and it would also put our national security at risk if there is a technical failure.

If spending $1 billion of taxpayers' money to increase the risk that the United States won't be able to launch a satellite to keep track of Russia sounds like a counterproductive and questionable idea, you would be right. Last year, the chairman of the Armed Services Committee said many times that the Defense authorization bill isn't a budget bill. Now, as vice chairman of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense—the subcommittee that has to make the math work—I can say that spending an extra $1 billion at this moment in the history of the Department of Defense doesn't make sense.

There is another aspect to this. I don't know if the senior Senator from Arizona is going to look into it or attack it as well. When it comes to supplying the space station, we are reliant on Russian-made engines. If the senior Senator from Arizona wants to cut off access of NASA to these Russian-made engines, it will be a dangerous proposal. There are a variety of NASA missions ahead that rely on this Atlas rocket. These include multiple resupply missions to the International Space Station, a mission to take samples from a nearby asteroid, a new Mars lander, a probe to study the sun, and several weather satellites.

If there is the will to ignore the national security concerns of the Secretary of Defense and the Director of National Intelligence about access to space for national security, we had best take care. The senior Senator from Arizona will now say that supplying the space station is somehow a sellout to Vladimir Putin.

We have appropriated $448 million to develop all-American engines, which is more than the Armed Services Committee has authorized. In a few years, we will have real competition for space launches that will help lower costs for a long time to come—but only if we listen to our top defense and intelligence leaders, who favor a responsible transition to the next rocket in the interest of national security and oppose the plans put forward by the senior Senator from Arizona.

One aspect of this article in the Wall Street Journal that troubles me the most is the suggestion that I take lightly the adventurism of Vladimir Putin and his bloody invasion of Ukraine. I am proud to be the cochair of the Ukrainian Caucus with Senator PORTMAN of Ohio. We have a large Ukrainian population in my State. I have spoken to them many times, and I have visited Ukraine many times to make it clear that I detest what Putin has done in invading their country and threatening their sovereignty. The irony is the senior Senator from Arizona personally invited me to accompany him to Ukraine, where we both protested Putin's actions. To suggest my position on these rocket engines is somehow a give-in to Putin is shameless and wrong. I think my statements—public and otherwise—have made it clear.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority whip.

THE PRESIDENT'S BUDGET

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, this morning at 11 a.m., the President released the budget, his final budget for his Presidency. Unfortunately, rather than something that sends a signal that he wants to work with Congress, it is basically more of the same—a $4 trillion budget that is unserious, partisan, and contains reckless spending. In it, he does include several new proposals, proposals he knows will be dead on arrival here in the U.S. Congress.

From my perspective, coming from an energy State, one pretty astounding measure he suggested was putting a $10 tax on each barrel of oil. What that would do is translate into 25 cents a gallon more for consumers at the pump. How in the world would that help American families who are suffering as a result of stagnant wages due to slow economic growth in this country as well as additional costs, such as ObamaCare, that have been imposed upon them by the administration? The simple fact is that it doesn't help the average American family get by. It is the opposite.

At a time when our country is producing more energy domestically than it ever has and just beginning to export that energy to our friends and allies around the world, the President's budget reveals that he has little interest in growing our energy independence and little interest in jump-starting our economy.

All he has to do is look at Texas, North Dakota, Pennsylvania, and other places to see how our domestic energy production has helped create thousands of jobs and helped grow the economy. Instead, the President makes these job-

killing proposals, which will further burden hard-working American families, along with the tepid growth that we have seen here in our own economy—0.7 percent just this last quarter. The President's budget adds further insult to injury by adding to our national debt, which is already $19 trillion.

Somebody is going to have to pay that back. In the meantime, what we will have to do is pay interest on that debt, which will continue to crowd out spending in other areas like national security where there is a national consensus. This is the number one priority for the American people.

Strangely, but unfortunately predictably, rather than deciding to work with Congress and to listen to the concerns that are raised by those hard-working American families, President Obama went ahead and submitted a budget with no apparent interest in finding any kind of common ground. It is a sad testament to his go-it-alone legacy, which has been more ideological than actually solution oriented.

We are here to try to solve problems, and the only way we do that is by working together to find consensus where we can. Understanding that there are people who serve in the Senate and the House from different points of view all across the ideological spectrum, it is only by working together—and that includes not just Congress but the President, too—that we can actually begin to help grow the economy to help create jobs, to help make America more secure.

Given the fact that the President has decided to take the tack he has, I hope that Congress will lead the charge against this request for irresponsible spending and try to help get our economy back on track, to begin the process of reducing our debt and strengthening the hand of the American family.

MENTAL HEALTH REFORM

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, on another note, I wish to spend a few minutes talking about a very important hearing that we will be having tomorrow in the Senate Judiciary Committee, something that I feel very passionately about, and that is finding a way forward on mental health reform. As shocking as it is, our jails and our streets have become places where people suffering from mental illness basically are left without treatment and without recourse.

Tomorrow I will have the honor of chairing that hearing where we will discuss the intersection of our mental health system such as it is and our criminal justice system, and hopefully we will be able to find a way forward to push toward real reform. The goal of the hearing is to better understand how to bring help and support for those who struggle with mental illness.

This is an area where we can and we must do better. Too often, after the fact, we find out that families faced with the choice of allowing their loved ones' mental health to continue deteriorating, letting their illness spiral out of control until they become a danger to themselves or others—there are very few choices available to families whose loved ones are becoming more and more ill. True, they could go to court and seek a court order, seeking a temporary commitment to a mental institution, but that frequently exacerbates frayed relations among family members, and it stigmatizes the individual who is suffering from mental illness issues.

We need to give those families more and better choices on how to deal with their loved ones, hopefully to keep them from becoming a danger to themselves and to the community. Thanks to the marvels of modern medicine, for many people suffering from mental illness, if they will just follow doctors' orders and take the medication that has been prescribed for them—frequently under some doctor's supervision—many of them can get much better and become more productive in society.

One of our witnesses tomorrow will be Pete Earley who wrote a book called ''Crazy.'' He is not talking about a person. He is talking about our so-called system of mental health treatment. Pete Earley wrote this book because, as an accomplished journalist and writer, he knew of no other way than to write about the issue to help his very own son who had encounter after encounter with the criminal justice system because he had untreated mental illness.

Sadly, the failure to adequately address mental health in the United States has led to a drastic increase in the number of mentally ill individuals being locked up in prisons and jails, still without adequate treatment. I don't think anyone would support the idea of turning our prisons and our jails into warehouses for the mentally ill, but that is what has happened by default.

We need to provide better choices to law enforcement officials, to families, and to the individuals who suffer from mental illness. So often many of them will self-medicate with drugs and alcohol, compounding their problems, creating more and more of this turnstile effect within the criminal justice system where no one ever gets better and the illness never gets treated.

As criminologists and mental health experts will tell you, locking up people with mental illness without treatment will make them only more dangerous and increase the risk of crisis, but unfortunately this is an all-too-common practice across our country.

This is a shocking number to me when I read it, but one estimate suggests there are as many as 400,000 current inmates in our prisons across America who suffer from some form of mental illness. That is because, at least in part, the United States has witnessed a rapid decline in psychiatric and mental health hospitals over the past decades. The idea was that you couldn't institutionalize people so you had to let them out. Unfortunately, just letting them out without finding a way forward to help them deal with their mental illness resulted in many of them becoming homeless, living on our streets or in our jails and our prisons when they commit petty crimes such as trespassing and the like.

Since 1960, more than 90 percent of State psychiatric beds have been eliminated—90 percent. But prison is a poor and often very harmful replacement for a treatment facility. Our goal in the hearing tomorrow is to work toward another solution, one that would give families greater flexibility, including actual treatment options for the people they love.

A bill I introduced, the Mental Health and Safe Communities Act, offers one proven approach to treating mental illness. It borrows from a successful model of reform, put into place in my hometown in Bexar County, TX, more than a decade ago.

Let me say a word about borrowing from these successful local and State models as opposed to imposing a one-size-fits-all approach at the national level, not knowing whether it would actually work in this big and diverse country we live in. I believe that taking successful examples of best practices at the local and State level—those are the best subject matter for us to look at in terms of scaling these up on a national level where appropriate.

The Bexar County sheriff, Susan Pamerleau, a champion of mental health reform in San Antonio, will testify tomorrow about the San Antonio story. Bexar County's mental health program focuses on treatment of the mentally ill instead of just putting them behind bars and leaving them untreated. The results have been very impressive.

These reforms have reduced the size of our overcrowded jails, which has been a perennial problem. It has saved tax dollars, and it has improved the lives of people who otherwise would be put behind bars and left to their own devices.

I look forward to hearing from Sheriff Pamerleau tomorrow. I bet other members of the Senate Judiciary Committee and anyone else who cares to listen will learn a lot about how we can bring these reforms to the rest of the country.

Another part of this is to help equip law enforcement, teachers, judges, and people who work in the courts with the knowledge and skill set they need to spot mental illness early on. Wouldn't it be more helpful if teachers, parents, and counselors were empowered to help identify people who need help early on in school? Doesn't it make sense to train our law enforcement officials how to deal with a person suffering from a mental health crisis? Do you slap the cuffs on them? Do you get engaged in a violent confrontation? Or do you try to deescalate the incident in a way that is

safer for the law enforcement official as well as the person being confronted?

There are better ways for us to respond effectively at the early signs and help to train the people who are in the best position to identify people who need help early on. This legislation includes specialized training for those on the frontlines, such as law enforcement and judicial officials, so they are ready to respond and can react swiftly and safely should a mental health crisis erupt.

The truth is that this is a difficult issue and one that raises hard questions. But I am grateful to Chairman GRASSLEY of the Senate Judiciary Committee for not shying away from this topic but embracing it and having witnesses such as those we will have tomorrow who I think will open the eyes of many people to something they perhaps don't encounter in their daily lives because they don't go to our jails or our prisons or they don't have a loved one who suffers from mental illness. I think this will open a lot of eyes, and it will help us continue the conversation so we can find some common ground and work toward real solutions.

Reform is long overdue. All you need to do is visit our jails, as I have done in Harris County, Bexar County, and Dallas County, to see that too often our jails are occupied by people who—yes, they may have committed petty crimes, nonviolent crimes, but they really need some help. If we give them the help, they can turn their lives around and become more productive.

It will save taxpayers money, and I think it will be a much more humane and efficient system of dealing with people suffering with a mental health crisis. I am hopeful we can advance substantive legislation to help those struggling with mental illness and their families and, as a result, make our communities safer.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

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

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

NORTH KOREA SANCTIONS ENFORCEMENT BILL

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I rise to discuss the bill that will be coming before the Senate this week, the North Korea Sanctions Enforcement Act, which seeks to curb North Korea's unacceptable behavior through the implementation of targeted sanctions.

On January 6 of this year, North Korea tested a nuclear weapon in open violation of numerous U.N. resolutions. This is the fourth time North Korea has conducted a nuclear weapons test, and it is estimated the country may have as many as 20 nuclear warheads in its arsenal.

Just this past weekend, while many Americans were getting ready to watch the Super Bowl, North Korea conducted a missile test, putting a satellite into orbit. This missile test, which has already been condemned by the U.N. Security Council, served as a demonstration of the threat posed by North Korea's long-range missile program. In fact, just a few hours later, the satellite launched by the North Korean missile passed over the site of the Super Bowl in Santa Clara, CA.

If equipped with a nuclear warhead, a missile similar to the one launched this weekend could potentially threaten the United States and our allies, and North Korea is actively seeking to market this same missile technology, as well as its nuclear weapons technology, to other rogue regimes.

North Korea's history of aggressive behavior is already well known and well documented. In March of 2010, a North Korean torpedo sank the South Korean naval vessel *Cheonan*, killing 46 sailors. In November of 2010, North Korea fired artillery on the island of Yeonpyeong, killing two soldiers and injuring an additional 15 soldiers and 2 civilians.

North Korea's dictator Kim Jong Un continues to spout threats against the United States and our allies. This past year, when South Korean citizens sent leaflets with unfiltered information into North Korea, the regime responded with threats to turn the whole of South Korea into a ''sea of fire.'' After the January nuclear test, a North Korean spokesman said: ''North Korean scientists are in high spirits.'' The statement went on to claim that North Korea detonated an H-bomb, which we now know to be untrue, and added that the bomb was ''capable of wiping out the whole territory of the U.S. all at once.'' These threats are so common now that they barely make the news.

North Korea is not only a threat to the United States, it is also a threat to its own people. It is estimated that 150,000 to 200,000 North Koreans are imprisoned in concentration camps. We can confirm the existence of these camps from satellite photographs and firsthand accounts. These are not camps for what we would consider criminals but for individuals deemed disloyal to the regime. The ''crime'' of a single family member—which can be something as simple as accidentally tarnishing the photo of a member of North Korea's hereditary dictatorship—can lead to an entire North Korean family being sent away to a labor camp.

The brutality of these camps has been confirmed by those who have made it out. To date, more than 28,000 North Korean defectors have escaped and made it to South Korea. Tens of thousands more are still in China, often working as cheap laborers who become victims of human trafficking.

The stories of those who have escaped Kim Jong Un's regime carry a common theme: starvation, imprisonment, torture, and the execution of family members. And this is everyday life for the people of North Korea.

The bill we are considering this week seeks to curb North Korea's aggressive behavior through the use of targeted sanctions. The bill restricts access to financial resources and raw materials that North Korea uses to support its nuclear weapons program and operate its political prison and forced labor camps. It levels mandatory sanctions against individuals who contribute to North Korea's ballistic missile development and targets luxury goods the regime uses to maintain the loyalty of party elites. It also puts in place sanctions against any entity determined to be enabling North Korea's ability to censor information, as well as those engaged in money laundering, narcotics trafficking, and counterfeiting. The bill also includes discretionary sanctions that the U.S. President could use to target entities assisting North Korea in misappropriating funds for the benefit of North Korean officials. The President would have to justify any waivers of these sanctions on a case-by-case basis. The bill also codifies into law the Presidential Executive orders issued in 2015 following the cyber attack on Sony Pictures.

This is a multifaceted bill designed to target North Korea's weapons programs, human rights abuses, and the finances of government elites. And it will do so with minimal impact on the lives of everyday North Koreans who continue to suffer at the hands of their own government.

Last week I introduced legislation addressing another threat posed by North Korea. As I stated before, North Korea is actively seeking to market its nuclear weapons technology to other rogue regimes. In fact, the Syrian nuclear reactor destroyed in 2007 is based on a North Korean design. My bill would ensure that North Korea can't sell its technology to another rogue regime—Iran.

Although President Obama's nuclear deal seeks to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon, many of us remain skeptical. And with the North Korean regime strapped for cash, its nuclear weapons and missile technology are some of the few commodities it can offer, and it actively tries to market them to other rogue regimes.

My bill seeks to prevent Iran from becoming a potential customer for North Korea's nuclear weapons technology. Under my legislation, if Iran attempts to acquire nuclear weapons technology from North Korea, all sanctions waived or suspended as a result of the President's nuclear deal would be reinstated immediately. A nuclear armed Iran is unacceptable.

Regardless of what the President claims his Iran nuclear deal has achieved, we must remain vigilant and ensure that Iran keeps its end of the agreement and does not go after a nuclear weapon.

I am glad the Senate is addressing the threat posed by North Korea. A similar version of the North Korea sanctions bill that we are addressing this week recently passed the House of Representatives by a vote of 418 to 2. I hope we will see similar bipartisan support for the bill here in the Senate. We should not compromise the national security of the United States with disputes between our political parties. I hope my colleagues on both sides of the aisle feel the same and will join me in moving this bill forward.

Mr. President, 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.

BUDGET REFORM

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. President, today the President of the United States unveiled the last budget of his Presidency: $4.1 trillion. Of that, $1.1 trillion is discretionary spending, which is the amount Congress will discuss over the next few months.

It is no big secret that Presidential budgets typically are dead on arrival—this one especially so, obviously, as it is the last one of the President's term. It is a requirement of the 1974 Budget Act. The President turns in his budget by the first Monday of February. It is actually now into the second week. It is a week late, but it is closer to on time than the budgets of other Presidents have been in the last few years.

There are a lot of wish list items in the President's budget. It also includes about $3.4 trillion in new taxes over the next 10 years. It increases spending by $2.5 trillion over the next 10 years, including next year. The challenge in the President's spending plan is that he increases spending so much that we also continue to increase the deficit, the debt, and our interest payments.

This body should realize that on the current track, the Congressional Budget Office and the President's budget that he released today forecast that within the next 10 years, the United States of America will spend more on interest on our debt than we spend on national defense. I want everyone to soak that in. Within 10 years, the Federal taxpayer will spend more on interest on our debt—our debt payments—than we spend on national defense.

When the President came into office, there was $10.6 trillion in total debt. The President's budget lays out a plan that by the end of his budget, there will be $27.4 trillion in total debt. This is an issue for us, and it continues to accelerate. And until this body and until the House and until the White House agree this is a problem, it will not be solved.

I don't want to say this flippantly; the President and I have had this conversation. He does not believe that increasing deficits—that is, overspending what we bring in—is a problem. He believes, as he has shared with me and with the American people publicly, that if the government overspends a little bit, that stimulates the economy. Well, that might be true in some economic formula, but when our interest payments are larger than total what we spend for defense, we are in a spiral that we cannot sustain.

We cannot keep saying we will add more debt every year and there is no reckoning for that. Our total debt right now exceeds our gross domestic product. Literally, if we took from every single American in the entire country all of their income for the entire year we could not pay off our debt.

We are very much at a tipping point. The problem Congress faces is Congress never seems to act until we have to, and, in this time, in an economic crisis, when we have to, it is too late. How do we get on top of that? How do we stop bragging about how much the deficit has been cut and actually start reducing our debt? Many Americans don't hear the difference between the debt and the deficit because they don't live in this world of all of these different terms. Deficit is how much we overspend in any one year; debt is the accumulation of all of those deficits.

Washington continues to talk about how in the last 6 years we have cut the deficit by $1 trillion. And that is a good thing, but the problem is that in the last 10 years, the debt has also doubled as deficits are still so large every single year, and that is a problem.

So what do we do with this? I would say there are multiple things. No. 1, we are not going to get out of this in any one time period. This body needs to understand that this is not a car payment we are paying off. This is a really big jumbo mortgage. We are not going to pay this off in 1 year, and we are not going to fix it in one stroke. This is going to take multiple years of picking away at this.

I have reminded several of my colleagues of one sobering fact: If we were to balance our budget and set this 10-year time period to actually balance the budget, if the next year after the balanced budget we had a $50 billion surplus as a nation, it would take 460 years in a row of $50 billion surpluses to pay off our debt. For twice as long as we have been a country, if we had a $50 billion surplus every year, we could pay off our debt. At some point we have to admit this is a really big issue.

CBO, the Congressional Budget Office, as all of us know in this room, continues to rattle us and remind us that this debt is continuing to grow and we do not have the resources to do it. For the first time since 2009, our deficit will rise again next year to $544 billion. That is up 24 percent from just this last fiscal year. As we continue to have more individuals who retire and use Medicare and Social Security, which they have set aside their entire life to go into, and as that number continues to rise and as discretionary spending continues to stay fairly capped, we are not getting on top of the big issues that we face.

Where do we go from here? In 1974 this Congress created the Congressional Budget Act, which set up the process of how we would actually do our budget every year. It is a very interesting process with the House and Senate passing budgets, putting them together, going through the process and getting everything to the President. All the timing and everything was set up with appropriations bills and how they would be done with all the deadlines. Interestingly, since 1979, the Congressional Budget Act, in the way that it was set up, has only worked two times—twice since 1979. Would anyone else admit that there is a problem with that setup? Coming out of Watergate in 1974, they wanted more transparency and an open process doing the budget. So they created this process that is so cumbersome that since 1979 it has only worked twice.

To give more up-to-date details, in the last 10 years we should have passed 118 appropriations bills. Of the 118 appropriations bills, only 7 of those individual bills were passed on time. We have a problem just in basic process.

So allow this Senator to just throw out a few ideas to recommend to this body that we consider. If we are going to fix our debt and deficit, we have to look at the process of executing our budget to fix it.

Here are a few thoughts. A biennial budget—if we don't do a budget every year, we should do a budget every 2 years. We are dealing with trillions of dollars. We should do a little bit of advanced planning. We should be able to do that at least 2 years in advance to be able to lay out how we are actually going to do the spending. We could do appropriations every single year to be able to provide the accountability, but at least the major budget process we should do every 2 years.

We should get rid of the budget gimmicks that dominate this body in how we ''balance our budget.'' Budget gimmicks such as pension smoothing, corporate timing shifts, and all of our favorites—CHIMPS, or changes in mandatory programs, which everyone outside of this city thinks is a monkey, and everyone inside this city knows it is a great budgeting technique.

Here is how some of these work. Here is an example from October's budget agreement. A pension payment acceleration in section 502 changed the due date for pension premiums from October 15, 2025, to September 15, 2025, in order to get $2.3 billion into the ten-year window. Now what just changed there? They moved the payment time 30 days forward and so that is when it is due. Since they moved it 30 days forward 10 years from now, suddenly that is another $2 billion into the Federal

budget. If our Federal budget was not 10 years, but 10 years and 2 weeks, it would have been $2 billion short. Because they moved the payment over a month and made it earlier, suddenly the budget picked up $2 billion. It is not real. It is a gimmick.

There are the changes in mandatory programs that go out, such as the Crime Victims Fund. That is a fund of money that is expected to be spent, but should we actually not spend part of it, they will say: Great, we can take that part we were ''expected to spend'' and actually spend it this year. Then guess what; next year you spend it again, and next year you spend it again. It is a gimmick. That should be struck. We shouldn't have gimmicks like that. Those things make Congress look good but don't actually deal with our deficit and debt. There are rules that are internal that need to be fixed. We need to get real numbers and be able to have agreeable real numbers.

Right now there is a big argument all the time saying: How does the budget balance against the President's budget—this particular baseline and that particular baseline? How about this: We have a lot of programs that have not been authorized—some of them for more than a decade—though we continue to allocate money for them every single year. Authorizing programs as we do for national defense every single year is important, and we should actually do the work with that to be able to bring bills to the floor and to be able to get it done.

We have reports from the GAO and from the IG that come out every year showing waste, yet many of those no one ever acts on. Three folks I see on the floor right now—Senator FLAKE and Senator MCCAIN from Arizona and my office—have all put out waste reports in the past 5 months detailing billions of dollars in waste. We can identify these areas, and the inspector general's office and the GAO can identify these areas. We need to set a process in place to actually solve those issues. Then we can do more than talk about it. We can move it from just a messaging moment to solutions on our debt and our deficit.

I recommend a measure such as the Government Shutdown Prevention Act that says we don't have a government shutdown. I understand some are very romantic about government shutdowns and what they would accomplish. Government shutdowns always cost more money for the taxpayer than they save. They cost a tremendous amount of turmoil in the Federal workforce and multiple places.

There is an easier way for us to handle this. Congress only acts when we have to. When we have a government shutdown, we suddenly have to act. How about if we do something simple and straightforward, and we put in place something that at the end of the budget year, if we do not have a budget in place and do not have proper appropriations done, we have a short-term continuing resolution for 30 days that automatically puts into place in all legislative offices and the Executive Office of the White House a funding haircut to create the incentive that we need to act? If 30 days later we still don't have the appropriations done, the Executive Office of the White House, the House, and the Senate get another haircut, and we continue to press. There are ways that we can add pressure to ourselves that won't actually damage what is happening in the rest of the Nation.

Why don't we pass a balanced budget amendment, which we have talked about forever and which we voted on in 2011 and has not come up again? We will never get to some of these measures until Congress is compelled to do the right thing. Let's put some processes in place beginning with our budget process, with real reform in how we do the budget and real structural changes to actually push this body to do what everyone outside of this body says needs to be done.

In the days ahead when we are spending more on interest than we are on national defense, this body should hang its head in shame. But before that occurs, we should fix it so that never happens and we get on top of our debt and deficit with a straightforward process that actually gets us back to work.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to address the Senate in morning business and be allowed to complete my remarks, which won't be too long.

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

WATERBOARDING

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, today is the 100th New Hampshire Presidential primary. Regardless of who wins, this is a celebration of our vibrant democracy of engaged citizens putting candidates to the test and demanding answers on the tough issues the next President will confront.

It is also another important step in choosing our next Commander in Chief, and the stakes couldn't be higher. As we heard from the Director of National Intelligence this morning, the threats to our Nation are growing more diverse, more complex, and more dangerous. More than ever we need a Commander in Chief with a clear vision, a steady hand, sound judgment and confidence—not only in our Nation's power but in the values and ideals that generations of American heroes have fought for and died defending.

That is why it has been so disappointing to see some Presidential candidates engaged in loose talk on the campaign trail about reviving waterboarding and other inhumane interrogation techniques. It might be easy to dismiss this bluster as cheap campaign rhetoric, but these statements must not go unanswered because they mislead the American people about the realities of interrogation, how to gather intelligence, what it takes to defend our security, and at the most fundamental level, what we are fighting for as a nation and what kind of a nation we are.

It is important to remember the fact that these forms of torture not only failed their purpose to secure actionable intelligence to prevent further attacks on the United States and our allies, but they compromised our values, stained our national honor, and did little practical good. While some have shamefully sought to minimize the practice of waterboarding, it is clear to me that this practice, which is a simulated execution by drowning, amounts to torture as any reasonable person would define it and how the Geneva Conventions on the treatment of prisoners of war, of which we are signatories, define it.

The use of these methods by the United States was shameful and unnecessary because the United States has tried, convicted, and executed foreign combatants who employed methods of torture, including waterboarding, against American prisoners of war. Following World War II, Japanese generals were tried, convicted, and hung. One of the charges against them was that they practiced waterboarding. Contrary to assertions made by some of the defenders, it provided little useful intelligence to help us track down the perpetrators of the September 11 attacks or to prevent new attacks and atrocities.

This Senator knows from personal experience that the abuse of prisoners will produce more bad than good intelligence. I know that victims of torture will offer intentionally misleading information if they think their captors will believe it. I know they will say whatever they think their torturers will want them to say if they believe it will stop their suffering. Most of all, I know that the use of torture compromises that which most distinguishes us from our enemies—our belief that all people, even captured enemies, possess basic human rights that are protected by international conventions the United States not only joined but for the most part authored.

I understand that in the aftermath of the worst terrorist attacks on our homeland, those who approved harsh interrogation methods and those who used them were sincerely dedicated to securing justice for the victims of terrorist attacks and protecting Americans from further harm. I know that in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks in Paris and San Bernardino, many Americans feel again the grave urgency that we felt 15 years ago. But I dispute wholeheartedly that it was right for our Nation to use these interrogation methods then or that it is right for our Nation to use them now.

Waterboarding, as well as any other form of torture, is not in the best interest of justice, security or the ideals

we have sacrificed so much blood and treasure to defend.

It is the knowledge of torture's dubious efficacy and the strong moral objections to the abuse of prisoners that have forged broad bipartisan agreement on this issue. Last year, the Senate passed in an overwhelming vote of 91 to 3 the National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2016, legislation that took a historic step forward to ban torture once and for all by limiting U.S. Government interrogation techniques to those in the Army Field Manual. That vote was 91 to 3. There was debate and discussion about it in the Armed Services Committee and on the floor of this Senate. The vote was 91 to 3.

Now candidates are saying they will disregard the law. I thought that was our complaint—Republicans' complaint—with the present President of the United States.

The U.S. military has successfully interrogated more foreign terrorist detainees than any other agency of our government. The Army Field Manual, in its current form, has worked for the U.S. military—including on high-value terrorist detainees in Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere—and it reflects current best thinking and practices on interrogation.

Moreover, the Army Field Manual embodies the values Americans have embraced for generations, preserving the ability of our interrogators to extract critical intelligence from our adversaries while recognizing that torture and cruel treatment are ineffective interrogation methods.

Some of the Nation's most respected leaders from the U.S. military, CIA, and FBI supported this legislation, as well as numerous human rights organizations and faith groups, including the National Association of Evangelicals and the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

GEN David Petraeus, a military leader whom I admire more than literally any living military leader, said he supported the use of the Army Field Manual because ''our Nation has paid a high price in recent decades for the information gained by the use of techniques beyond those in the field manual—and, in my view, that price far outweighed the value of the information gained through the use of techniques beyond those in the manual.'' Obviously, that includes waterboarding.

Why don't we listen to people like GEN David Petraeus, who has had vast experience in Iraq and Afghanistan with detainees, the information we have gotten from them, and our practices. If General Petraeus were here, he would tell you the most effective method of gaining information is establishing a friendly relationship with the detainee.

Obviously, we need intelligence to defeat our enemies, but we need reliable intelligence. Torture produces more misleading information than actionable intelligence. What the advocates of harsh and cruel interrogation methods have never established is that we couldn't have gathered as good or more reliable intelligence from using humane methods. The most important lead we got in the search for bin Laden came from using conventional interrogation methods. I think it is an insult to many of the intelligence officers who have acquired good intelligence without hurting or degrading prisoners to assert that we cannot win this war on terrorism without such methods. Yes, we can and we will.

In the end, torture's failure to serve its intended purpose isn't the main reason to oppose its use. I have often said and will always maintain that this question isn't about our enemies, it is about us. It is about who we were, who we are, and whom we aspire to be. It is about how we represent ourselves to the world.

We have made our way in this often dangerous and cruel world, not by just strictly pursuing our geopolitical interests but by exemplifying our political values and influencing other nations to embrace them. When we fight to defend our security, we fight also for an idea that all men are endowed by their Creator with inalienable rights; that is, all men and women. How much safer the world would be if all nations believed the same. How much more dangerous it can become when we forget it ourselves, even momentarily, as we learned from Abu Ghraib. Our enemies act without conscience. We must not. It isn't necessary, and it isn't even helpful in winning this strange and long war we are fighting.

Our Nation needs a Commander in Chief who understands and affirms this basic truth. Our Nation needs a Commander in Chief who will make clear to those who fight on our behalf that they are defending this sacred ideal and that sacrificing our national honor and our respect for human dignity will make it harder, not easier, to prevail in this war. Our Nation needs a Commander in Chief who reminds us that in the worst of times, through the chaos and terror of war, when facing cruelty, suffering, and loss, that we are always Americans—different, stronger, and better than those who would destroy us.

I yield the floor.

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:36 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. PORTMAN).

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to consider the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Scot Alan Marciel, of California, a Career Member of the Senior Foreign Service, Class of Career Minister, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Union of Burma.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arkansas.

Mr. COTTON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for up to 2 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Maryland

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for 2 minutes also.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Will the Senator so modify his request?

Mr. COTTON. I do modify my request.

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

Mr. COTTON. Mr. President, I rise today in support not only of the nomination of Scot Marciel to be our Ambassador to Burma but to celebrate the remarkable change Burma is undergoing.

I recently traveled to Burma, leading a congressional delegation hosted by our Embassy there, Ambassador Derek Mitchell, and Deputy Chief of Mission Kristen Bauer.

Burma has undergone a remarkable transition. After 50 years of a brutal military dictatorship, Nobel Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi and her party won a landslide election in November. The military is still entrenched in power, but gradual change is occurring, in part thanks to U.S. policies. It is change we should continue to support.

Sitting at the intersection of China and India, Burma is a geostrategically critical country. Sitting, as it does, between the crossroads of Southeast Asia and the Middle East, it is critical to the War on Terror. Burma can be a potent trading partner because of its largely untapped natural resources and is a shining example of the strategic impact of U.S. moral leadership in the world.

Those elections were not the end of the work, though; they are only the beginning of the work. The military still has a deep role in the Constitution. The National League for Democracy needs to transition from an opposition party to a governing party. Burma must address its internal ethnic conflicts, and, like most countries, it needs to address corruption and economic reforms as well. Our mission team in Rangoon is working on all these matters and more. I know that

Ambassador Marciel looks forward to leading that team and continuing to strengthen the U.S.-Burma relationship.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I rise to join Senator COTTON in urging our colleagues to vote for the confirmation of Scot Marciel to be Ambassador to Burma for the reasons Senator COTTON pointed out.

There are exciting things happening in Burma. It is a country in transition. We have seen some promise. There are still major challenges in that country. We clearly need a confirmed ambassador. It is important that the Senate act, and I am glad to see we will be acting in a few moments.

We couldn't have a more qualified person to take on the ambassadorship of Burma than Scot Marciel. He currently serves as the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia and Pacific Affairs. I got to know him very well in that capacity in the last Congress when I chaired the subcommittee of the Senate Foreign Relations on East Asia and the Pacific. He is a career diplomat who has taken on some of the most challenging positions in Foreign Service, including being the Chief of Mission in Indonesia. He has devoted his life to these challenges. I know he will do an excellent job representing U.S. interests in Burma.

I urge our colleagues to support the nomination.

Mr. President, I yield back the time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Marciel nomination?

Mr. MENENDEZ. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Texas (Mr. CRUZ), the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. GRAHAM), the Senator from Idaho (Mr. RISCH), the Senator from Florida (Mr. RUBIO), the Senator from Nebraska (Mr. SASSE), the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. TOOMEY), and the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. VITTER).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Maryland (Ms. MIKULSKI), the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS), and the Senator from New Hampshire (Mrs. SHAHEEN) are necessarily absent.

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

The result was announced—yeas 90, nays 0, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 19 Ex.]

YEAS—90

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

NOT VOTING—10

Cruz	Rubio	Toomey
Graham	Sanders	Vitter
Mikulski	Sasse	
Risch	Shaheen	

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Dakota.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

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

Under the previous order, the President will be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume legislative session.

The Senator from South Dakota.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, 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. MCCAIN. 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. MCCAIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak in morning business.

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

(The remarks of Mr. MCCAIN pertaining to the introduction of S. 2519 are printed in today's RECORD under ''Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.'')

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. LANKFORD). Without objection, it is so ordered.

COMPREHENSIVE ADDICTION AND RECOVERY ACT

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, I rise today to simply say to Chairman GRASSLEY and the Judiciary Committee: Thank you for being willing this week to have a markup and to legislate and report out a bill with regard to the prescription drug and heroin epidemic we now face around our country. The legislation is called the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act, or CARA. It focuses on several areas. One is prevention and education to try to keep people from making the wrong decision and going down the road to addiction, but another is to encourage States and provide incentives to local governments and nonprofits to use evidence-based treatment and recovery that has been proven to work to try to deal with this epidemic.

Today we have unfortunately higher levels of death from drug overdoses than we do any other accidental cause of death—more than car accidents, for instance. In my own home State of Ohio, this has been true for the last couple of years. We lost over 2,400 Ohioans last year to drug overdoses. Part of the legislation also addresses this issue directly by providing our law enforcement and other first responders—firefighters, EMS—with Narcan, also known as naloxone, which is a miracle drug to bring people back if they overdose.

Finally, the legislation helps to get prescription drugs out of the hands of the wrong people. There has been overprescribing over the years, and so our legislation encourages getting these drugs off the bathroom shelves so they can't be used and having a drug-monitoring program to tell if someone has been prescribing these drugs. It would be national in scope, so if someone can't get prescription drugs in one location, they don't go across the State line to get them somewhere else. Sadly, these narcotic painkillers have caused a lot of the concern out there because sometimes they are given appropriately—maybe for pain—but they are overprescribed, and then someone uses them to the point that they become addicted and later turn to heroin because heroin is so much less expensive.

This is an issue that affects the whole country. In my own State, it

looks as if the per capita use in the rural areas is higher than it is anywhere else, including the inner city or our suburban areas. But no ZIP Code is immune from this; we are all affected by it. In Ohio, over the last week, there have been two incidents where people have overdosed while behind the wheel. In one just a couple of days ago, someone overdosed on heroin while his kids were in the backseat, and he had a bad crash. Luckily, the children were not injured badly. This continues to happen again and again. And of course much crime is being committed to pay for the habit.

This is an effort at the Federal Government level to work with State and local governments and with nonprofits to address this growing problem, the epidemic of prescription drugs and heroin abuse.

I encourage the Judiciary Committee to move swiftly with this legislation. There is a markup scheduled on Thursday so we can move this legislation to the floor of the Senate, get it to the House, and get it to the President for his signature.

There seems to be not only bipartisan but nonpartisan support for this legislation. In other words, this is not a political issue but something that affects us as fathers, mothers, brothers, and sons. I hope the Senate will take on this issue.

I was in Ohio yesterday meeting with some women who are recovering addicts, and they told me their stories. Many of them started on prescription drugs sometimes because of an accident. They talked to me about how the grip of addiction is so great that it requires real courage and real resilience to be able to come through it. We want those women and others to be able to live out their God-given abilities and not to be afflicted by this addiction, which is really a disease. This legislation we have before us is a step in the right direction.

I encourage my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to support it and to move it to the President so we can begin to help local communities, neighborhoods, and our States be able to address this growing problem.

I yield back my time, Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia.

PRESCRIPTION DRUG ADDICTION

Mr. MANCHIN. Mr. President, first, I say to my colleague from Ohio—Senator PORTMAN, who is a dear friend—that we all have it; you are right, it is nonpartisan. This has no home. This has affected every American family one way or another. There is not a person I know in my State or in the good State of Ohio that doesn't have a family member—immediate family, extended family—or close friend who hasn't been affected by legal prescription drug abuse. We are looking at a whole cultural change that needs to go on, and I am on the floor to share letters with you.

Senator PORTMAN, I am sure you are getting the same letters. I would encourage all our colleagues to read just one letter a week from a family whose lives have been changed. They have lost a husband, they have lost their childhood, or they have lost a dear family member. It has destroyed their family life as they knew it. They can't get a job—a first-time felony offense, and they are out of the workforce now.

If you talk to law enforcement, there is not a law enforcement agency in America today that will not tell you that 80 percent of their crimes are drug related. Theft, arson, robbery—whatever it may be, it is around drug abuse.

So I come to the floor to continue to share the story of millions of Americans—most importantly, of some of my very dear West Virginia family members—who have had this.

I applaud the good Senator from Ohio. All of us are working. This will go through a normal process, I hope. It will be an open amendment process, and we are all going to make a piece of legislation and maybe for the first time start changing the culture in America, starting right here in Washington, DC, with the Food and Drug Administration. I will talk about that too.

West Virginia has been hit the hardest per capita. Just this past year, 600 West Virginians have died—in a State with less than 2 million people. The American people are drowning under the weight of prescription opioid abuse. Nationally, more than 51 people die every day—in my State, Oklahoma, Ohio, all across this great Nation.

The FDA must get serious about the dangers—we have been speaking about this—of prescription drugs, and this will not be accomplished without a significant change in the culture. It starts with them.

Although the FDA announced that the agency will be taking steps in the right direction to address these problems, it is not enough and more needs to be done. Let me explain why. The FDA's No. 1 priority must be public health and well-being—nothing else. Yet time and again the FDA has stood in the way of efforts to address the opioid abuse epidemic and improve public health.

The FDA plays a critical role in the epidemic as the agency overseeing the approval. Let me make sure we understand. This starts with a prescription. A legally licensed company makes medicine for pain reduction, if you will, pain suppressant, an opiate, and then they bring that to the FDA, and the FDA goes through a process of evaluating it to see if it should go on the market. They go through an evaluation—or their committee, basically an oversight committee—and then they say this is a product that should be on the market or should not. Many times the FDA has gone against the advice of their own advisory committee.

These are things we have to protect the American public from. Why?

So last week they decided to slightly improve the agency's response to the opioid epidemic. I am pleased at this small step, but let me tell you about this small step. They said that now they are going to be serious about the dangers of prescription drugs, and they said they are going to finally start listening—mind you, listening—to the advice of their advisory committee. Oh, that is wonderful; they are going to listen to them now. That means they haven't really been listening to them up until now, but they are going to start now.

What they don't tell you is they are not going to be required to take the recommendation of their experts. A perfect example is Zohydro. It took us 3 years to get all opiates—Vicodin and Lortab, which are the most prescribed pain relievers and pain pills in the country—3 years to get the FDA to change that from a schedule III to a schedule II, even after I went personally, when I was first in the Senate 5 years ago, to the advisory committee and they voted overwhelmingly that, yes, this should be a schedule II. Within the bureaucracy, the FDA took 3 years. The day they did that and made that piece of legislation or that rule saying that now it will be schedule II, we saw the immediate effect. It took 1.1 billion—billion with a ''b''—pills off the market. Twenty-two percent of the amount of opioids on the market were reduced immediately within the first year. Within a week of their finally agreeing to go from a schedule III to a schedule II, which controlled the prescriptions, they came out and approved Zohydro against the wishes of their advisory committee, 11 to 2. Now you tell me why that product came to market.

So I have legislation that says: Listen, when you are not going to take their advice and you don't recommend or you don't basically agree with your advisory committee, you have to come to the people's representatives—that is us—and tell us why you think this addictive drug needs to be on the market.

I believe we have to do things and take important steps. What we have basically turned a blind eye to is unbelievable.

Let me explain what I think goes on and what goes on. This is of such an epidemic proportion that we are afraid to talk about it. If you have a child in your family who is addicted, if your mother or father or maybe you or your wife is addicted, you are afraid to talk about it. It is kind of a shame, so we kind of try to take care of it. Guess what. We can't even find treatment centers to help people. And then you can't afford it if you can find it—most people in America—and most of the times you can't.

So there are two things that have to be done. First, and I am as guilty as anybody here—the last 20 years I thought: Boy, if you are going to use these drugs and abuse them, that is a crime. I am going to put you in jail. You are going to pay the fine for that, a penalty.

Well, guess what. It hasn't worked. They go in addicted and come out addicted. All we did by convicting them and putting them in jail is give them a felony. Now they can't get a job. Now they are out of the workforce. Next, they come out more addicted than when they went in.

As Americans, we must say: Listen, this is an illness, and an illness must be treated. You can't just throw them in the jail and say out of sight, out of mind; it will take care of itself. So once we change that—and we have enough courage here politically to do that—then we will start moving in a cultural change that will basically be able to take on this epidemic.

We are fighting on that. I continue to go into all of this, but I have always come here and I have said: Listen, all of you in the State of West Virginia, please get on my Web site, manchin.senate.gov. It is very simple. And all of us have our Senate Web sites. Share with me your life-altering letter. Tell me what happened.

We have been getting them by the hundreds. They are coming from all over my State, and they are in every State. I am sure Oklahomans will send the Presiding Officer theirs too.

I am going to read two stories. This brings to light everything we are talking about and why we must be successful in fighting this horrific epidemic.

This is Kylie's story:

In 1994 my dad broke his shoulder.

We all have accidents in our families.

He had to have surgery. He was on prescription narcotics from 1994–1996—

Now you tell me why he was allowed to be on them and why the doctor kept prescribing them for 2 years. That is the biggest problem—

he became addicted in those 2 years. After the doctor would no longer prescribe—

Finally, maybe the doctor came to his senses—

him pain medication, he'd illegally purchase them off of the street. His life literally revolved around his pain medication. His pain medication money came before our bills.

There were a few times we could not have Christmas or Easter because he used all of our money to purchase these drugs. I have 2 sisters. Eventually, he started buying more potent drugs when he couldn't find anyone to buy prescription pain pills off of. Heroin, Cocaine, you name it, he'd buy it. My mother eventually filed for a divorce and that made him so much worse. He started using more and more.

He used more because of depression on top of that addiction.

On February 23, 2007, I stayed home from school, I was a junior in High school in Clarksburg. I woke up at 10am, went to check on my dad who had been having drug withdrawals, I found him dead. He'd found drugs and overdosed while I was asleep, leaving me there to find him. It's something I carry with me everyday. I don't have many memories of my father interacting with us kids as a father should. I only have the bad memories of him going above and beyond for drugs. Even back then, if the prescription drug problem wouldn't have been so bad, I feel like he'd still be here today.

I remember exactly how he was laying when I found him. I remember everything. It's my first thought in the mornings and my last thought at night. It changed my life, taught me alot of life lessons but it also left me with alot of heartache.

And unanswered questions—as I told you, the rescheduling took 2 years. Basically, you could get Vicodin and Lortab that were schedule III at this time, and all you had to do was keep calling in. You never had to see the doctor after the first visit. They can give them to you 90 days at a time or even longer. They were like M&M's. So when we went from schedule III to schedule II, that knocked it down. It took at least a billion that we know of off the market, and we are hoping maybe even more. So that is what happened.

This is Helen's story:

My husband and I were married for over 21 years. We had two daughters together and I expected to grow old with him and enjoy our grandchildren. He worked in a factory for over 18 years. Part of his job was moving 55 gallon drums of different types of fluids. He worked full time. Sometimes 6 days a week.

He sprained his back and was prescribed pain medicine. The doctor he was going to gave him the maximum amount—

At that time it would have been more than 90 days probably, and he didn't have to go back because it felt so good—

allowed by law for about six years.

As time went on, he needed a higher dose for it to be effective. Taking more caused him to run out before the next refill. He started going through withdrawals. Instead of going to the emergency room to get help, he took his life. Now I have no husband, my children have no father and my grandchildren do not have a grandpap.

The stigma surrounding all of this is what kept him from getting the help he needed to get off those pills.

We have said it is a silent killer. They were afraid to talk about it. They couldn't go to anybody, didn't know where to turn, and didn't have any types of treatment centers that would bring him off of that.

The Friday before he ended his life, I spoke with a doctor and told him he needed to get off those pills and get dried out. He didn't want to be admitted and they let him go.

They knew he was desperately hooked.

Why do pharmaceutical companies market drugs that cause normal people to give up on their families and life? Why do doctors allow their patients to take something so long and build up such a tolerance for it? I will never find the answers to these questions and it is too late for him now.

It sickens me to read of others going through this and there just doesn't seem to be an end to it.

This is why I am standing here. I face it every day. I go home. There is not a person who doesn't come up to me knowing that basically their lives have been changed and knowing now that they can speak to somebody. I am making it a point to give them the comfort of speaking to me. I protect their identity. I try to get them help.

There has to be a way. As my good friend from Ohio and the Presiding Officer, my good friend from Oklahoma—this is not partisan. This should not be bogged down because of who gets credit, who doesn't get credit, or whose fault it is. We are all to blame, and we all can share in changing the culture of drugs in America—legal drugs.

Most drug addicts today—people who are addicted—will tell you if they are on heroin or illicit, harder drugs, they started with legal drugs that were in their prescription cabinet, in the medicine cabinet that their mom had or that they had. This is what has to change. This is why—Dr. Robert Califf is being recommended by the President; he is a good man with a stellar resume, a stellar performance, very honorable. But the culture that he comes from is basically from a research institution and a research university that has been funded by the pharmaceutical industry. That is just the way they say it is done. So they are funding the clinical research, and then we are expecting Mr. Califf to come into this industry, into the FDA, and make the wholesale changes.

I need—and I think we all need—for America to find somebody who has gone through a life-changing event and who has all of the experience and all of the education to be able to go into that agency and say: Listen, we are not going to give you a prescription just as a frontline in the first line of defense because I know the chances of it changing your life are greater than my helping you and giving you relief.

Until we have that and until that permeates clear down through, it will not change. Tell me how the CDC—the Centers for Disease Control within the agency of DHHS—is able to start responsibly recommending guideline changes for how we are going to prescribe and how doctors should be trained before they prescribe these life-altering drugs. Then, within the FDA they are fighting against it, and they are within the same agency of the HHS. So it is deep-rooted, and it has to be culturally changed from the top. It doesn't change from the bottom within.

So if this good man would withdraw his name and let us move on, I would be tickled to death, because he is a good person and he can be very helpful in his knowledge. But I don't think he can drive the change that needs to be done for us to save the families and children and moms and dads across America.

I yield the floor.

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. ALEXANDER. 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. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business, and will the Presiding Officer advise me when 20 minutes has expired.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator will be so notified.

INNOVATION PROJECT

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, today I would like to report some good news about the work of the Senate that should be of interest to every single American family; that is, that we are moving ahead in the Senate on a package of 50 bipartisan proposals that will help move medical devices, medical cures, and medical drugs through the long, expensive, regulatory process and into medicine cabinets and doctors' offices, where they can help patients. We call this our Innovation Project. It is a companion to work that has been done in the House of Representatives already that they call their 21st Century Cures Act. It is also work that President Obama has talked about in important ways. The reason that the House has already done its work, that the President has talked about this in his State of the Union Address, and that we in our HELP Committee in the Senate have been working for a year to develop 50 bipartisan proposals that we hope to bring to the floor of the Senate is because we have never had a more exciting time in biomedical research in America than today. We are talking about actually curing some cancers, not just treating cancers. We are talking about using 3–D printing to actually help replace knees.

I was in a medical device office in Memphis a few weeks ago, and that company told me that in one-third of the cases where it sells knee replacement equipment, it also sells a tool to the doctor made with 3–D printing so that if he or she—the doctor—is replacing the knee of the Senator from Oklahoma, the doctor uses this tool that is just made especially for the knee of the Senator from Oklahoma and virtually eliminates the possibility of a mistake by the doctor in that surgery. The company told me it not only uses 3–D printing in one-third of the cases but that it could easily do it in all of the cases and expects it will soon.

At our hearing about 3 weeks ago, I asked Janet Woodcock, the head of the Center for Drug Evaluation and Research at the Food and Drug Administration, if there had ever been a case of a 3–D of printing of a drug, and she said, yes, there had been one. They have used 3–D printing to manufacture a medicine for epilepsy.

That is not all. Last year when the President announced his Precision Medicine Initiative, he introduced a young man whose cystic fibrosis had been cured by a new medicine, which he takes every day. While that only benefits some cystic fibrosis patients, the drugs that are used to cure that number of patients are the same kind of drugs they believe eventually will cure every patient with cystic fibrosis.

On that day, the President announced what he calls his Precision Medicine Initiative and that he wanted to assemble 1 million human genomes so that if my doctor is prescribing for me a medicine by knowing what my genome is and what that medicine has done in other genomes, he can make a very specific sort of prescription, one that is more likely to help me and less likely ever to hurt me.

I attended the President's ceremony. I told him afterward that we would do our best to incorporate his Precision Medicine Initiative into our work in the Senate on our Biomedical Innovation Project.

The House was making good progress on its 21st Century Cures project. So I told the President: Mr. President, I can't imagine why we can't get a result in this Congress.

Since that time, the President has announced a cancer task force that Vice President BIDEN is leading to work to speed up treatments and cures for cancer. The House has passed its 21st Century Cures Act. In our committee in the Senate during the past year we have held 10 bipartisan hearings, including 6 on how to improve the electronic medical records systems that hospitals and doctors are using. We have had five bipartisan staff working groups that have met or held briefings more than 100 times in the last year, and the result of their work has been 50 bipartisan legislative proposals. As I said, every single one of those has support from Democrats as well as Republicans on the committee.

Today in our committee we debated and approved the first 7 of these bills, which included 12 of the 50 bipartisan proposals I just mentioned. We had an open process. Any Senator who wished to could have offered an amendment. The bills have had so much work on them that there weren't any amendments, but they were important pieces of work.

Our committee probably is the most diverse in the Senate. I know that is saying a lot, but if you look up and down the Democratic and Republican aisle, we span the whole spectrum. Last year we worked together, despite our differences of opinion, and produced a bill to fix No Child Left Behind. A lot of people thought we couldn't do that. I expect the same sort of bipartisan effort led by Senator MURRAY, the senior Democrat on her side, and me as chairman, to work well for us again.

We have a second markup of legislation scheduled for March 9 and a third for April 6. My expectation is that after we meet these 3 times and consider 50 legislative proposals, when we are finished it will all add up to bipartisan companion legislation to the House's 21st Century Cures legislation, and our legislation will include important elements of the President's Precision Medicine Initiative in his Cancer Moonshot.

The 21st Century Cures Act, the House bill, includes $9.3 billion in so-called mandatory funding over 5 years, mostly for the National Institutes of Health. Several of President Obama's other proposals in his new budget involve mandatory funding, and several Members of our committee have talked to me about mandatory funding for some of the work we need to do.

Here is my view about mandatory funding: I don't want to get the cart before the horse. When I was Governor of Tennessee and we needed a new road system, people would say to me: Are you going to raise the gas tax? I said we are not going to talk about the gas tax. There are lots of different ways to pay for the road. You can borrow the money. You can use discretionary money. You can raise the fuel tax. You can build a toll road. We are not going to talk about any of that. First, we are going to decide on what we want to do. What we decided to do was to have three big road programs to attract the auto industry suppliers to Tennessee, and it worked.

The decision we made after we decided what we wanted to do was in that case to raise the fuel tax three times because we didn't want any road debt. We have among the best roads in the country and zero road debt, and we have the auto industry. That worked out pretty well for us 30 years ago. I would like to apply the same sort of thinking here.

I don't want to talk about how we pay for something before I decide what the something is. Here is the something I am thinking about. I am thinking about something called the NIH—National Institutes of Health—Innovation Projects Fund; five areas, in addition to the things we normally fund and do that require extraordinary support, one-time support for ideas that have a start and a finish. In other words, they are not built into the budget for a long period of time.

The National Institutes of Health Director would have the authority to direct allocations of this fund to specific areas of importance. The five areas of importance I have in mind are helping the President launch his Precision Medicine Initiative and an American Young Investigators Corps.

We have heard from Dr. Collins, the head of NIH, and many others how important it is to have young investigators have enough money to give them the money to do their research. The BRAIN Initiative, all of us are staggered by the prospect of the personal anguish that Alzheimer's and other brain diseases will cause individuals and their families, and we are excited about the prospect of relieving that anguish. We know how much this is going to cost us—in the tens and tens of billions of dollars. If we can find a way to develop new understandings of neurological disorders, which help discourage Alzheimer's disease or prevent it or deal with it, it saves money as well as saving anguish. A Big Biothink Award—Dr. Collins had suggested this in some of his testimony. During this exciting time, let's let each of the 24 Institutes that fund grant awards at

the National Institutes of Health issue a challenge and let them identify the most promising big ideas in the country in their areas and fund it; for example, cancer, mental health. Let's see what comes out of this remarkable country of ours when we challenge them in that way. Then the Cancer Moonshot—now that the President and the Vice President are involved in this way, we want to make sure we do all we can to take advantage of curing some cancers as well as treating some cancers. There may be some aspects of that effort that have a start and a finish that could be part of what I call NIH Innovation Projects Fund.

I go into some detail about my Innovation Projects Fund proposal because we may be able to fund these needs in the regular appropriations process, but I am willing to consider using mandatory funding for these five areas because, No. 1, they have a start and a finish. They help jump-start. They are limited. In that sense, they are not subject to being appropriated forever, as appropriations often are. No. 2, I believe we should reduce other mandatory funding in order to use this mandatory funding. We should be about setting priorities in the Senate. I cannot think of a more important priority than biomedical research.

I mentioned we have 50 legislative proposals for which we have bipartisan support, but we do not have bipartisan agreement in the Senate committee on how to deal with any of these items that are paid for by mandatory funding, and neither do we have enough money within the jurisdiction of our committee to deal with it. So we will deal with both the Innovation Projects Fund and the mandatory funding—if that is what it turns out to be to pay for it—once the bill comes to the floor.

We have to decide first what programs we want and then how to pay for them. We should do that on the floor. We know we will have to have 60 votes to do it in that way that includes mandatory funding. We had some experience with that.

Last year we had some very difficult issues with the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. I had one of them that had to do with vouchers. That drives some people on the other side of the aisle up the wall. If I insisted on putting the scholarships for kids proposal that I had on the bill in the committee, the bill may never have gotten to the floor. Senator FRANKEN, on the other hand, had an important piece of legislation to him on discrimination, but if he had gotten that on the bill in the committee, it would never have gotten to the floor. We agreed, since we needed 60 votes to get a result—and a result is what we want and the American people expect us to get—that we would withhold our controversial amendments until the floor and see if we could develop bipartisan support on the floor to have at least 60 votes and get a result.

We followed, in our Education bill, the rule that the late Senator Kennedy and Senator ENZI followed when they were the ranking members of this committee, and that was let's find the 80 percent we agree on and work on that first, and let's take the things we disagree on and do those later, but most important, just as Senator Kennedy did with Senator ENZI, just as the full Senate did last year on fixing No Child Left Behind, we kept in our mind getting a result.

I said on the floor many times last year that if all you want to do is make a speech or assert your point of view, you can stay home. You can get your own radio program. You don't have to travel as much. There is no need for you to come to the U.S. Senate. You can have your say here, but if you really want to do your job here, you can work with other people and see if we can get a result, especially when we are talking about issues that affect every American family in such an important way.

I am determined to get a result. I am delighted I have the opportunity on this committee to work with the Senator from Washington, Mrs. PATTY MURRAY. She is a strong Democrat. She is the leader of the Democratic caucus, but because of her leadership and her interest in getting a result, we were able to succeed last year. I believe, working with her and the other Members of our committee, we will be able to succeed this year.

The House of Representatives has done its work. It has passed the 21st Century Cures legislation. The President has made his proposals for precision medicine and for a cancer moonshot. He talked to all of us during his State of the Union Address in the last two sessions. We have worked for a year in our committee to produce 50 bipartisan legislative proposals that should go through the committee and be ready in early April to come to the floor.

The majority leader, Senator MCCONNELL, has said to me, and he has said to all of us, that even though this is a Presidential year and we have less time here, he is still looking for important ideas that benefit a large number of Americans that have bipartisan support and that the President will sign into law. I can't think of a single piece of legislation that the Senate could consider this year that fits that definition better than our companion legislation to the House of Representatives' 21st-Century Cures legislation.

I wish to say a word about the legislation we passed today. As I mentioned, these were all bipartisan pieces of legislation. The first one was introduced by Senator BENNET, Senator WARREN, Senator BURR, and Senator HATCH. It had to do with rare diseases such as cystic fibrosis.

This is what Senator SUSAN COLLINS of Maine said about that piece of legislation during the debate in our committee:

> If you ask the parents of sons or daughters—primarily sons—with muscular dystrophy who suffer from Duchenne's, a very rare kind of muscular dystrophy, whether the bill we just approved is important, believe me they will tell you that it is.

We approved it unanimously, and it is ready for the Senate to consider.

Senator BURR, a Republican, and Senator FRANKEN, a Democrat, offered the FDA Device Accountability Act of 2015. This legislation would help move innovative medical devices ahead—such as artificial knees, insulin pumps for people with diabetes, stents for people who have suffered a heart attack—and new surgical tools that can get bogged down in the FDA. In other words, we want to keep the safe and effective gold standard, but we want to get these devices through the system as rapidly as we can, at the lowest cost we can, so people can afford and use them.

Senator BALDWIN and Senator COLLINS—Democrat and Republican—offered a bill called the Next Generation Researchers Act. We know that biomedical research is our best weapon against diseases, illness, and death, and we can't afford to lose young scientists to other countries, so this bill helped to attract young scientists by promoting opportunities at the National Institutes of Health.

This is what Senator COLLINS had to say about that:

> If you asked Dr. Francis Collins—the head of NIH—whether the bill that Senator BALDWIN and I have sponsored is important to attracting and keeping young researchers, believe me he would say yes.

Senator KIRK, a Republican, Senator BENNET, a Democrat, along with Senator HATCH, Senator MURKOWSKI, Senator ISAKSON, and Senator COLLINS, introduced another piece of legislation, S. 800. This bill will help millions of Americans with disabilities, illnesses, and chronic conditions that require them to go to medical rehabilitation. Senator KIRK, a stroke victim, spoke movingly about the importance of that bill.

This morning, Senator COLLINS said:

> If you ask stroke victims whether the rehabilitation bill that we passed is important, they would say yes.

There were four other bills we enacted. The one by Senator ISAKSON—we didn't enact it—we approved it by committee. Senator ISAKSON and Senator MURPHY had legislation on advancing research for neurological diseases.

This is what Senator COLLINS said about that one:

> If you asked families that are struggling with neurological diseases such as Parkinson's, MS, or Alzheimer's, whether the bill that is on the agenda today is important, they would say yes.

Senator MURRAY offered the Preventing Superbugs and Protecting Patients Act, which is based on incidents that happened in her home State of Washington.

Finally, Senator MURRAY and I offered legislation to improve electronic medical records. Our committee did not set out to deal with electronic

medical records, but the more we got into our discussion——

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator has used 20 minutes of his time.

Mr. ALEXANDER. We have used 20 minutes?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Yes, sir. The Senator asked to be notified when he reached 20 minutes, and he has reached 20 minutes. The Senator still has the floor.

Mr. ALEXANDER. I thank the Presiding Officer very much. I will complete my remarks. I see the Senator from Florida is here.

Before I yield the floor, I wish to make a brief statement about the legislation Senator MURRAY and I introduced. The electronic medical record system in this country is in a ditch. Doctors and hospitals that use it have come to dread it.

The administration recognizes that there are problems. They haven't taken all of my advice about what to do about it, but I do give them credit. I thank Secretary Burwell, Dr. Karen DeSalvo, the National Coordinator for Health Information and Technology, and the head of CMS, Andy Slavitt, for working with our committee, Senator MURRAY and me, to try to find ways to make the electronic medical record system something that genuinely helps patients and that doctors look forward to instead of dreading. We have to do this because almost every advance we need to make in biomedical innovation depends upon this. Certainly the President's Precision Medicine Initiative absolutely depends upon our getting electronic medical records right. Perhaps the most important piece of legislation we approved today, among those seven pieces of legislation, was doing what we could do in legislation to get the electronic medical record system out of the ditch and onto a better track so that doctors use it rather than dread it. We are counting on the administration to continue to work with us to finish that job.

I believe this is good news for the American people. It means we are on a path, step by step, to do our part of the job.

There was some debate in our committee about whether the bills we were passing were important.

I ask unanimous consent that following my remarks, Senator COLLINS' comments, which remind us why each of the seven pieces of legislation is important, be printed in the RECORD.

There was some talk about the fact that we disagreed about the level of mandatory funding or whether to do it at all. We disagreed about that. We don't have bipartisan consensus on it, but we do have bipartisan consensus on 50 legislative proposals that we need to move ahead, and we will move ahead with them. Twelve of the 50 were done today, and the rest will be done in early March and early April.

My hope is that by early April, the Senate will be able to join the House of Representatives and President Obama and say: Here is our contribution to the most important step we can take to make the quality of health better for virtually every American family by passing our companion legislation to 21st-century cures.

Mr. President, I also ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD, following my remarks, the summary of each of the seven bills our committee approved today.

I thank the Presiding Officer, and I yield the floor.

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

SENATOR COLLINS REMARKS AT INNOVATION MARK-UP

Before I turn to the bill that I am honored to cosponsor with Senator Baldwin, which addresses a real problem of keeping our young researchers at NIH, I do want to respond to some of the earlier comments that have been made about the approach we are taking today.

First—I want to commend the Chairman and the Ranking Member for scheduling these important bills for markup by this committee.

If you ask the parents of sons and daughters—primarily sons—with muscular dystrophy who suffer from Duchenne's, a very rare kind of muscular dystrophy, whether the bill that we just approved is important, believe me they will tell you that it is.

If you ask stroke victims whether the rehabilitation bill that we passed is important, they would say yes. If you asked families that are struggling with neurological diseases such as Parkinson's, MS, or Alzheimer's, whether the bill that is on the agenda today is important, they would say yes.

If you asked Dr. Francis Collins—the head of NIH—whether the bill that Senator Baldwin and I have sponsored is important to attracting and keeping young researchers, believe me he would say yes.

And the fact is that this congress has come together and approved a much needed $2 billion dollar funding increase for NIH—that is the largest increase for NIH's budget since 2003 we also approved, and I know this well because I was Chairman of it as part of the bipartisan Alzheimer's task force—nearly a 60% increase in Alzheimer's funding bringing us to $936 million. Is it enough? Given that we spend billions caring for people with Alzheimer's—no.

The National Advisory Council on Alzheimer's says we need to spend $2 billion per year. But to imply that a 60% increase in funding for Alzheimer's research is nothing; is just not accurate. There is widespread bipartisan support for biomedical research because there simply is no investment that promises greater returns for Americans than that investment.

It not only leads to discoveries and the developments of effective new treatments for families who are coping with these diseases but it also can have a dramatic impact on the budgets of families, states and the federal government. I am pleased with the progress we are making, I support the approach that the chairman has taken and I believe that the bills that we are considering at this markup and at the upcoming March 9 markup are important bills that will make a real difference to American families.

INNOVATION BILLS APPROVED TODAY BY THE SENATE HEALTH COMMITTEE

SENS. BENNET (D–COLO.), WARREN (D–MASS.), BURR (R–N.C.), AND HATCH (R–UTAH)—THE ADVANCING TARGETED THERAPIES FOR RARE DISEASES ACT OF 2015 (S. 2030)

Many rare diseases, like Cystic Fibrosis, have multiple genetic mutations, making it difficult for researchers to find enough patients with the same mutation for a clinical trial. This bill will help expand the successful treatment of people suffering from rare diseases like this.

SENS. BURR (R–N.C.) AND FRANKEN (D–MINN.)—THE FDA DEVICE ACCOUNTABILITY ACT OF 2015 (S. 1622)

These innovative medical devices, items like artificial knees, insulin pumps for people with diabetes, or stents for people who have suffered a heart attack, or new surgical tools to minimize scarring and reduce post-surgery complications, can get bogged down at the FDA. This bill reduces unnecessary regulations while maintaining the gold standard of safety and efficacy to keep us safe.

SENS. BALDWIN (D–WISC.) AND COLLINS (R–MAINE)—THE NEXT GENERATION RESEARCHERS ACT (S. 2014)

Biomedical research is our best weapon against disease, illness and death and we can't afford to lose young scientists to other countries or professions because they're frustrated by the lack of opportunity or funding—so this bill helps attract talented young scientists by promoting opportunities at the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

SENS. KIRK (R–ILL.), BENNET (D–COLO.), HATCH (R–UTAH), MURKOWSKI (R–ALASKA), ISAKSON (R–GA.), AND COLLINS (R–MAINE)—THE ENHANCING THE STATURE AND VISIBILITY OF MEDICAL REHABILITATION RESEARCH AT NIH ACT (S. 800)

This bill will help millions of Americans with disabilities, illnesses and chronic conditions that require them to go to medical rehabilitation and prevension. For example, this is important to people who have suffered from strokes, 800,000 happen every year in the U.S. according to the Centers for Disease Control. This bill ensures that the NIH is focusing on research into helping these people, and others who suffer from debilitating illnesses each year.

SENS. ISAKSON (R–GA.) AND MURPHY (D–CONN.)—THE ADVANCING RESEARCH FOR NEUROLOGICAL DISEASES ACT OF 2015 (S. 849)

This bill will help people with neurological diseases like Parkinson's, Multiple Sclerosis, and Alzheimer's by helping to advance our understanding of these diseases and helping researchers access data on these diseases in order to discover new therapies and cures.

SEN. MURRAY (D–WASH.)—THE PREVENTING SUPERBUGS AND PROTECTING PATIENTS ACT (S. 2503)

If you would ask patients and families or anyone who has undergone a procedure in a hospital or outpatient facility that involve reusable medical devices—and if you asked the people of the states of Washington and Illinois—whether they thought this legislation was important, they would say yes.

There was a tragic outbreak of antibiotic-resistant infections linked to contaminated scope devices in Sen. Murray's home state of Washington, where the devices were not being properly disinfected between operations, and this bill helps FDA in its work to ensure that reusable devices like these are safe for patients.

SENS. ALEXANDER (R–TENN.) AND MURRAY (D–WASH.)—THE IMPROVING HEALTH INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY ACT (S. 2511)

If you asked doctors, hospitals, or patients who want access to complete and useful patient records to both deliver care and understand more about their own health—and I think that's most Americans—whether they think this bill is important, they would say yes.

This bill takes several steps to get health records flowing between doctors, hospitals, and patients to help realize the promise of health information technology by turning these systems from something that doctors and hospitals dread into something that actually helps patients.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

Mr. NELSON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for up to 20 minutes.

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

THE PRESIDENT'S SPACE PROGRAM BUDGET

Mr. NELSON. Mr. President, I come to the floor to speak about the President's proposal with regard to our space budget, the civilian space program, and NASA. Of course we have many other space programs, primarily national security, but now there is a commercial space program. We are seeing the burgeoning commercial space industry in the NASA budget. We are amazed by the rockets which can take the first stage—instead of throwing it away when it lands in the Atlantic Ocean after a launch from Cape Canaveral—under powered flight, even without parachutes, can come back and land on a specific spot, just as SpaceX did in its first stage in a launch about 2 months ago. We are seeing commercial space.

The fact that these things we carry around in our pockets that we loosely refer to as phones that know exactly where we are at any time is as a result of a constellation of satellites up there called GPS that triangulate and calculate exactly where we are. It is absolutely amazing to me that my latest gadgetry acquisition—a Fitbit—can so sensitively understand what my heart rate is at any moment, can measure distance, and gives me all kinds of information about the functioning of the human body.

Well, this didn't just accidentally appear. Where in the world did a lot of this come from? It came from the space program. I wish to talk about that, but first I want to underscore something. Other than its pioneering, for example, of increased investments in aeronautics, which is the first ''A'' in ''NASA''—the National Aeronautics and Space Administration—there are other parts of the President's proposal that have been left behind in the visionary appropriations bill we passed back in the middle of December which has sent us on a course that we are going to Mars. We are preparing to go to Mars, and that is a long way. In order to sustain human life and go all the way there—land, survive, reignite off the surface of Mars—and, by the way, I commend the Matt Damon movie ''The Martian.'' The author of the book which the movie came from actually consulted with a number of folks, including one of my crewmates, on the propulsion, how to get to Mars a lot quicker. That propulsion uses magnets and plasma as its fuel and thrust to get us to Mars, and instead of the conventional 8 to 10 months, we could get there in as little as 39 days. But those are to-be-developed technologies.

Let me mention a couple of things we are developing. Folks often argue about the NASA budget, which back in the lunar days the Apollo Program was as much as 4 percent of the entire Federal budget. Now it is about one-half of 1 percent. In the process of divvying up the dollars out here, we pull and tug because people will ask: Why do we need to go to Mars? Why do we need to go to an asteroid in preparation to go to Mars? Why do we need a space program when we have so many needs here on Earth? That is a legitimate question. What is the legitimate answer? Do you appreciate the fact that we have MRIs and CT scans? MRIs—magnetic resonance imaging—and CT scans—computer-aided tomography—technologies that are used routinely today to help us so much in a diagnosis of what is wrong or what is right in our own human bodies and is part of this medical miracle that we know as modern medicine—they came straight out of the space program.

In the 1960s, NASA had to find a safe landing spot for the Apollo lunar lander amid all of that Moon surface and all of that dust. So what happened was the engineers at JPL out in California developed a digital scanning process using high-frequency sound waves, magnets, and computers. In addition to making six successful Moon landings, this technology was tweaked, adapted, improved, and it led to CT scans and MRIs.

How about robots in the use of modern medicine? How about robots in the use of the manufacturing process? Well, my colleagues will remember the one thing on the space shuttle that had the name of another country; it was the Canadarm. It was the robotic arm that was birthed in the cargo bay of the space shuttle. It was used to deploy, maneuver, and capture payloads. It has now been the forerunner of the neuroArm, a surgical device that has successfully performed dozens of tumor removals by robotic surgery.

Now, any of the males around here over the age of 50 ought to be concerned about prostate cancer. They have a robot named DA Vinci that is built in California, even though it is named after Leonardo da Vinci, and this robotic device, with a small incision—six times—can go in and, with some of this precise photography that was developed for these cameras, robotically remove, in this case, the prostate cancer by removing the prostate without damaging the nerves and without cutting the human body open, which takes so much more time to heal, instead of just sticking six holes in. That came directly out of the space program. It is being used to develop an image-guided autonomous robot for use in the early detection of breast cancer.

Let me give my colleagues another idea. When we get on a modern airliner today and we look out the window and we look at that swept-back wing, what do we see out there on the tip of the wing? The wing doesn't just stop as it normally does; it curves up. This is called a winglet. The winglets have these upturned features. They save billions of dollars in fuel costs.

Now, with NASA technology at the Langley Research Center and now the tests conducted at the Dryden Flight Center—now named, after the first astronaut on the moon, the Armstrong Flight Center—this winglet technology was released to Boeing, and it has saved the airline industry more than 2 billion gallons of jet fuel, and it has saved more than $4 billion in jet fuel costs and a reduction of almost 21.5 million tons of carbon dioxide emissions, just by the design of the wing. That technology came directly out of NASA.

Here is another example. All of this is coming back to this: Why go to space? Well, we go to space because our nature is that we are explorers and adventurers. We go there because we haven't been there. We go there to explore. Our nature is one of pioneers. The frontier is now not westward, as it was in the beginning of this country, but upward. So that is certainly a reason to have the space program, but let me tell my colleagues more of how it applies to our daily lives.

How about fortified baby formula? Early 1980s research on regenerative ecosystems led to a method of algae-based food supplements that provide the long-chain polysaturated fatty acids that support brain and eye development and function. So this led to a spinoff product called Formulaid, which was patented in 1996. It can now be found in over 90 percent of infant formula sold in the United States as well as those sold around the world.

I will give another example: image sensors—image sensors to enhance cell phone cameras. In the 1990s, a NASA team had been improving digital image sensors in order to miniaturize cameras on spacecraft while maintaining the scientific image quality. So this was spun off into commerce, and the company that commercialized the technology has shipped over 1 billion sensors for use in applications such as—now, does this sound familiar—digital cameras, camera phones, web cameras, automotive cameras. They are even developing something where you will swallow a pill; only it is not a pill. It is an ingestible camera for imaging the patient's gastrointestinal tract.

Let me tell my colleagues about another one. I had a visit from Tallahassee Community College today. They showed me what they could do with a 3–D printer. I ask unanimous consent to show this in front of the Senate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. AYOTTE). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. NELSON. We are doing this on the space station right now. We are putting together tools so that if we don't have a tool in space or if we were on the long journey to Mars and we did not have a tool that we needed to repair something, we could send the messages up to the spacecraft and 3–D print the tools that we need. So long-term space missions like the one to Mars are going to benefit from this onboard manufacturing capability.

Spare parts—what happens if we get up there and we don't have enough? Well, we can print it. Engineers are even experimenting with creating a completely 3–D printed high-performance rocket engine. Can my colleagues believe that? So that would advance manufacturing technologies that could benefit a number of us right here on the face of the Earth.

So the excitement of this—even though some would look at the President's request for NASA and see that it is $600 million over what he requested last year, but it is actually almost flatline to what we actually appropriated. Don't be discouraged by that because in this sense the excitement is gathering as we are about to launch humans—Americans on American rockets. That is going to occur next year, as we send crews to and from the International Space Station. As a result, we therefore do not have to rely on the proven Russian Soyuz that gets our crews to and from today. Now we will have the capability of not only transporting cargo to and from but our American astronauts.

Even though the President's request falls short in some areas, I think the President's request has been overcome with what we have done here in the Congress, with a substantial increase in this current fiscal year over and above last year and with the excitement of human space flight again within our grasp on American rockets, as well as this excitement of defining, creating, and manufacturing new technologies for space flight that will benefit us here on the face of the Earth.

If it sounds like I am a cheerleader, indeed I am a cheerleader. When I see the miracles of modern medicine, when I see the increased capabilities of exploring the heavens and now almost back to the original light emitted from the big bang, and when we start to uncover the new discoveries that expand our horizons, indeed, I am a cheerleader. For that, I am grateful.

I commend the Senate to keep this space program going at a fast pace as we increasingly get back into the total business, both manned and unmanned, of space exploration.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arkansas.

(The remarks of Mr. COTTON pertaining to the introduction of S. 2123 are printed in today's RECORD under ''Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.'')

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

GUN VIOLENCE

Mr. MURPHY. Madam President, over the course of the last year and a half, I have come down to the floor fairly regularly to tell some simple stories about victims of gun violence all across the country. The idea is that if the overwhelming data of those killed through gun violence—31,000 a year; 2,600 a month; 86 a day—if these mind-numbing numbers don't move this body to action, then maybe the voices of the victims, the stories of the victims of gun violence may eventually thaw the ice of this Congress and cause us to act in some way, shape or form to reduce this scourge of gun violence—whether it be tightening the Nation's gun laws, which are the loosest in the world, whether it be to pass mental health legislation that will address those who are wrestling with demons manifested eventually in gun homicides or whether it be giving more resources to gun enforcement to simply enforce the laws on the books. We have done nothing. We have done nothing since the murders of Sandy Hook, CT, to address this epidemic of gun violence. It is about time that we do.

On New Year's Eve, I spent most of that day tweeting out the 370-plus instances of mass shootings over the course of 2015. Think about that for a second. There were more mass shootings in 2015 then there were days in the year. Just to be honest, I will tell you what I believe to be a mass shooting. I am talking about a shooting in which there were more than four people shot. If there were more than four people shot in your neighborhood, that would probably be something you would be talking about, that would probably rise to the level of being something serious enough to change behavior or to call for a change in policy. There were 370 instances in 2015 where more than 4 people were shot at one given time—more than one per day. So I tweeted out to every single one of them on the day before the year turned to 2016 just to give people a sense all in one place of how big this problem of mass shootings is. Of course, that is only the tip of the iceberg.

If on the average day there are 4, 5, 6 or 7 people being shot in episodes of mass violence, there are another 80 that are killed through other episodes of gun violence. Many of those are suicides, but many of those are just the day-to-day gun violence incidents that happen across this country, most of which happen in our cities.

So I want to share a few of those stories here with you today.

A lot of attention gets paid to those who die in episodes of mass violence. This is a binder that is basically full of the stories of the individuals who were killed in mass shootings over the past couple of years. This doesn't even begin to account for the individuals who are killed every day on the streets of Chicago and New Haven and Los Angeles and New Orleans, people such as Jonathan Aranda, who was 19 years old when he was killed just before Christmas of 2015. He was killed in the morning hours of December 8. He had just graduated from Eli Whitney Technical High School, which is located in Hamden, CT.

His cousin said:

> He was getting out of work, stopped at a friend's house to talk about cars and this senseless act of violence happened. He was quick to lend a hand when you needed help without asking for anything in return. He worked a third shift job to come home, rest and help at home.

His younger sister, Genisis, said that her brother was ''a humble and loving person, he was a person who never picked fights. He was quick to lend a hand when you needed help without asking for anything in return.''

Jonathan's cousin Edgar said he was a ''very, very likeable kid. . . . He didn't have a problem with anybody.''

The community has been devastated by this loss. He was liked by everybody. He cared deeply for his family. Jonathan was 19 years old when he was killed after stopping at a friend's house—after getting off of work—to talk about cars.

Treesa Wiley was killed just a few days ago in Rockford, IL. She was fatally shot while she was visiting a friend in her home. An unknown person forced entry into the home and shot Wiley and her friend. She lived paycheck to paycheck, but she was still immensely generous with her friends and family, showering them with love, attention, and gifts.

Her uncle said of Treesa:

> She didn't have children herself, but every child that she met was her child. That's why she enjoyed that work so much. She enjoyed giving back to the community because it had given her so much.''

Her friends described her as ''bubbly,'' ''angelic,'' and ''lovable.'' Her favorite color was purple. Her favorite team was the Green Bay Packers. She loved red lipstick. She had overcome a learning disability to get a 2-year degree. She was killed while she was studying to get her bachelor's degree.

A friend said:

> She was the most loving and honest friend you could hope for. . . . I can't think of one person who didn't like Treesa.

Raven White was 16 years old when about a month ago she was killed in Birmingham, AL. She was fatally shot in her car in the early morning hours of January 8. It looks as if it was a robbery. She was a junior in high school, and she was 6 months pregnant.

Her mother said Raven was very outgoing.

I know she loved school. Even after getting pregnant, she made good grades and didn't miss a day of school.

She was planning to go back to the volleyball team that she played on after giving birth. She had just gotten off work at Walmart hours before the shooting. ''All I want is to hold my grandbaby once, but I can't,'' said Raven's mother, Tangee Dixon.

Miguel Arguelles was 22 when he was killed in Bridgeport, CT. He was shot in the neck and the shoulder during a shooting at the Charles F. Greene Homes housing complex. Police say he wasn't a target, but he was hit by stray bullets. He was 22 years old. At the hospital, Miguel's mother pounded his chest, urging him to come back to life, saying: ''Mommy's here. C'mon, baby, c'mon, baby. Mommy's here.''

A veteran officer said the nurses were crying, the priest was crying, and even the police were crying while watching this.

It was one of the saddest things I've seen. You feel so helpless.

His mother said he lit up the room when he walked in.

You saw his teeth every time he smiled—he brought a smile to your face. . . . I just want to hug him. I just want to tell him I love him.

''He was my protector,'' said his sister. ''He loved to make people laugh.''

Jabari Saunders was 30 when he was killed in December of 2015 in Wilmington. He was shot on the very same street on which he used to walk his children to school every morning. He was a devoted father of four. His life revolved around his kids. The neighbors said the only time they would see him is with his kids. He was always smiling. It is sad. You can't even let your kids walk to school—walk to after-school stuff now.

When a neighbor's son was shot, irony of all ironies, the victim's mother recalls that Jabari visited her home every single day the week after the shooting.

He just came to pay respect. . . . I know the love he showed me when my son was killed.

Another neighbor said:

I can't say anything bad about him. He was just a nice guy.

That is 5 stories out of 2,600 a month. There is no antidote to this epidemic. There is no one law that we can pass that makes it all better, that makes this all go away. But that can't be the excuse. The excuse cannot be that because there is no panacea legislatively, we shouldn't even try. The excuse can't be that because it is impossible to erase gun violence, we shouldn't take some commonsense steps to make it all better. The excuse also can't be that laws don't make a difference, because they do.

I will leave you with this because my point really is to tell the stories of these victims, not to expound on the data, but the data is pretty irrefutable. Here are all the States where background checks are required in order to buy a gun through a private gun sale. That is a purchase at a gun store or a purchase at a gun show. Here are all the States with no additional background check laws besides the Federal floor. The data is pretty irrefutable. On average, there is 1 additional death per 100,000 in the States with no additional background check laws than there are in the States that have additional background check laws. It is a 30-some-odd percent increase for the States that don't take extra steps to make sure criminals don't get guns.

So when people say that we shouldn't pass a background check law that 90 percent of the American public support because it won't make a difference, the data doesn't tell us that. The data actually tells us that if we take steps to make sure criminals don't get guns, fewer criminals will get guns and fewer people will be killed, because I will assure you that one of these five people whom I just listed was killed with a gun that was purchased legally. It might have been purchased in a gun show, put in the back of a van, and sold on the streets of Wilmington, Bridgeport, or New Haven.

Laws won't save all 31,000 of these lives, but they certainly will save a handful. And for the individuals, the nurses, the clergy, and the police officers who witnessed Miguel Arguelles's mother pressing on his heart trying to get him to come back to life—simply one less death would make a debate on the Senate floor worth it.

I hope that we take some steps this year, perhaps, to pass a mental health reform bill. I hope we get to where 9 out of 10 of our constituents are and pass legislation that keeps guns out of the hands of criminals. If we don't do it because of the statistics, maybe we will do it because we will start to hear the real voices of these victims.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to speak in morning business for up to 20 minutes.

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

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Madam President, investigative author Jane Mayer has written an important piece of journalism—her new book, ''Dark Money''—about the secret but massive influence-buying rightwing billionaires led by the infamous Koch brothers. Jane Mayer's book catalogs the rise and the expansion into a vast array of front groups of this operation and the role in it of two of America's more shameless villains: Charles and David Koch. Some have called this beast they have created the Kochtopus because it has so many tentacles.

The Presiding Officer may be wondering why I am talking about secret influence-buying in my climate speech. The reason is that the story of dark money and the story of climate change denial are the same story—two sides of the same coin, as it were.

Two strategies of that Koch-led, influence-buying operation particularly bear on climate change. Indeed, they are probably the major reason we don't have a comprehensive climate bill in Congress and instead have this present little mouse of a bipartisan energy efficiency bill. ''Oh, there goes Whitehouse,'' I am sure some listeners are saying, ''off his rocker, trying to connect the Koch brothers to this climate change.'' Well, it is not just something I am saying; it is what the Koch brothers' own operatives say when they are crowing about their influence-buying success.

I will get to that later, but first the two strategies. One strategy is to mimic real science with phony science. Real science wants to find the truth. This phony science has no interest whatsoever in the truth. It wants to look like science, sure, but it is perfectly content to be wrong. There is an apparatus, a whole array of front groups through which this phony science is perpetrated. This machinery of phony science has been wrong over and over. It was wrong about tobacco, wrong about lead paint, wrong about ozone, wrong about mercury, and now it is wrong about climate change. They are the same organizations, the same strategies, the same funding sources, even in some cases the same people—always wrong. You would think that if they cared a hoot about right from wrong, they would change their methodology after such an unblemished record of being wrong every time. But they don't care. Truth is not their object; truth is actually their adversary.

This isn't science; it is public relations dressed up in a lab coat. It masquerades as science. But, as a visiting university president from Rhode Island recently said to me, ''it uses the language of science, but its purpose is to undermine actual science.'' To pull off this masquerade, you have to trick people. You have to do what Ms. Mayer describes a Koch brothers associate saying as this whole scheme was being developed. It is perhaps the most telling quote in her book. Here is what the man said. ''It would be necessary,'' he said, to ''use ambiguous and misleading names, obscure the true agenda, and conceal the means of control.''

The next quote in her book is this: ''This is the method that Charles Koch would soon practice in his charitable giving, and later in his political actions.''

Did he ever. Misleading names. How about the John Locke Foundation, the Ethan Allen Institute. The pages listening will know these names from history: the James Madison Institute for Public Policy; the Thomas Jefferson Institute; the Franklin Center for Government & Public Integrity, with a little profile of old Ben Franklin on its letterhead; the George C. Marshall Institute, named after the hero of World

War II and the European recovery that followed. None of them have a thing to do with their illustrious namesakes; they just took the famous names to put on a veneer of legitimacy.

The George C. Marshall Institute—it sounds impressive. You might fool the occasional editorial page editor. Who does that? Maybe someone trying to hide something, ''obscure the true agenda.''

Take the Mercatus Center, which the Washington Post described as a ''staunchly anti-regulatory center funded largely by Koch Industries Inc.'' In ''Dark Money,'' journalist Jane Mayer wrote that Clayton Coppin, a professor at George Mason who reviewed Bill Koch's political activities, concluded Mercatus to be ''a lobbying group disguised as a disinterested academic program.'' And conceal the means of control—a large portion of the funding behind this special interest apparatus is simply not traceable. Why? Because money is funneled through organizations that exist to conceal donor identity. That is their purpose. The biggest identity-laundering shops are Donors Trust and Donors Capital Fund. Indeed, they are by far the biggest sources of funding in the web of climate-change front groups that have been stood up.

Dr. Robert Brulle of Drexel University, who studies the network of fossil fuel-backed climate denial, reports the Donors Trust and Donors Capital Fund operations are the ''central component'' and ''predominant funder'' of the denier apparatus; and at the same time he continues it is the ''black box that conceals the identity of contributors.''

Jane Mayer reports in her book: ''Between 1999 and 2015, Donors Trust redistributed some $750 million from the pooled contributions to myriad conservative causes under its own name.'' There were $750 million laundered into anonymity with no telltale fossil fuel fingerprints.

This is no small operation. There are over 100 groups involved, all beholden to the same master: the fossil fuel industry. Setting up or supporting over 100 front groups may seem unduly complicated, but remember, an internal combustion engine has more than 500 parts, and we are totally comfortable with that mechanism.

According to the International Monetary Fund, this apparatus is defending a $700 billion—billion with a ''b''—effective subsidy, just in the United States of America, every year. How much work would you do—how much complication would you be willing to create—to defend $700 billion per year? To use Jane Mayer's telling phrase, this is a new device. Put it all together and what do you have? ''The think tank as disguised political weapon.'' Who is behind this elaborate scheme? I will quote from ''Dark Money.''

> [T]he director of research at Greenpeace . . . spent months trying to trace the funds flowing into a web of nonprofit organizations and talking heads, all denying the reality of global warming as if working from the same script. What he discovered was that from 2005 to 2008, a single source, the Koch [brother]s, poured almost $25 million into dozens of different organizations fighting climate reform. The sum was staggering. His research showed that Charles and David [Koch] had outspent what was then the world's largest public oil company, ExxonMobil, by a factor of three. In a 2010 report, Greenpeace crowned Koch Industries, a company few had ever heard of at the time, the ''kingpin of climate science denial.''

By the way, I should say that ExxonMobil has been actively involved in this as well, as a lot of very good recent reporting has showed. But they were outshone and outdone by the Koch brothers.

I will quote again from ''Dark Money.''

> The first peer-reviewed academic study on the topic added further detail. Robert Brulle, a Drexel University professor of sociology and environmental science, discovered that between 2003 and 2010 over half a billion dollars was spent on what he described as a massive ''campaign to manipulate and mislead the public about the threat posed by climate change.'' The study examined the tax records of more than a hundred nonprofit organizations engaged in challenging the prevailing science on global warming. What it found was, in essence, a corporate lobbying campaign disguised as a tax-exempt, philanthropic endeavor. Some 140 conservative foundations funded the campaign, Brulle found. During the seven-year period he studied, these foundations distributed $558 million in the form of 5,299 grants to ninety-one different nonprofit organizations.

It is quite a ''Kochtopus.''

> The money went to think tanks, advocacy groups, trade associations, other foundations, and academic and legal programs. Cumulatively, this private network waged a permanent campaign to undermine Americans' faith in climate science to defeat any effort to regulate carbon emissions.

The bottom line is if your faith in climate science is undermined, you have been had by a well-funded, complex, sophisticated scheme of disinformation.

Back to ''Dark Money'' again.

> The cast of conservative organizations identified by Brulle was familiar to anyone who had followed the funding of the conservative movement. Among those he pinpointed as the largest bankrollers of climate change denial were foundations affiliated with the Koch and Scaife families, both of whose fortunes derived partly from oil. Also heavily involved were the Bradley Foundation and several others associated with hugely wealthy families participating in the Koch donor summits, such as the foundations run by the DeVos Family, Art Pope, the retail magnate from North Carolina, and John Templeton, Jr., a doctor and heir to the fortune of his father John Templeton, Sr., an American mutual fund pioneer who eventually renounced his U.S. citizenship in favor of living in the Bahamas, reportedly saving $100 million on taxes. Brulle found that as the money was dispersed, three-quarters of the funds from these and other sources financing what he called the ''climate change counter-movement'' were untraceable.

Brulle's conclusion, as reported by Ms. Mayer, is this:

> Powerful funders are supporting the campaign to deny scientific findings about global warming and raise public doubts about the roots and remedies of this massive global threat. At the very least, American voters deserve to know who is behind these efforts.

But it wasn't enough for the Koch brothers to have the paid-for, phony science masquerade. You also had to drive politicians to accept the phony science. You had to make politicians willing to participate in the masquerade and put on the phony science costume. To do that, they turned to the mother's milk of politics: money.

The money was set loose by five Republican justices on the Supreme Court when they decided Citizens United. Citizens United is described in ''Dark Money'' as ''the polluters['] triumph.'' Mayer quotes a defeated candidate the Kochs went after:

> There was a huge change after Citizens United, when anyone could spend any amount of money, without revealing who they were, by hiding behind amorphous-named organizations, the floodgates opened. The Supreme Court made a huge mistake. There is no accountability. Zero.

The money got loaded into political organizations like Americans for Prosperity, the leading Koch brothers-backed political front group. They waved that money around like a club, touting how they were going to spend $750 million just in this 2016 election. They told Republicans they would be so ''severely disadvantaged'' if they crossed them on climate change that they would be in political peril. Do the math. How much more obvious could you get?

Here is how Jane Mayer quotes their own official crowing about their victory. Remember what I said earlier? This is not me making wild allegations. This is them taking credit for what they did.

> Tim Phillips gladly took credit for the dramatic spike in expressed skepticism. ''If you look at where the situation was three years ago and where it is today, there's been a dramatic turnaround,'' he told the National Journal. . . .
>
> We've made great headway. What it means for candidates on the Republican side is ''if you . . . buy into green energy or you play footsie on this issue, you do so at your political peril. And that's our influence. Groups like Americans for Prosperity have done it.''

That is what they say about what they are doing. And don't think we don't see that effect in this Chamber. The Koch brothers have had their day, doing their dirty work in the dark. I will give them that. It has been quite a racket, but the truth will come out. It always does.

Jane Mayer is not alone. Academic researchers like Robert Brulle at Drexell, Riley Dunlap at Oklahoma State University, Justin Farrell at Yale University, and Michael Mann at Penn State University are exposing the precise dimensions and functions of this denial machine. Investigative writers like Naomi Oreskes, Erik Conway, Naomi Klein, and Steve Coll are on the hunt. ''Merchants of Doubt'' is already a movie. Jeff Nesbit's forthcoming book, ''Poison Tea,'' about how these big money boys suckered the tea

party down this road, should be illuminating. On the official side, two attorneys general appear to be looking into Exxon's role in this climate denial scheme. In short, what could well be the biggest scam to hit politics since Teapot Dome and Watergate is being unraveled and exposed.

The dirty fossil fuel money has deliberately polluted our American politics, just as their carbon emissions have polluted the atmosphere and oceans. Justice cannot come too soon for these people.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. GARDNER). The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

ENERGY POLICY MODERNIZATION BILL

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I was in the cloakroom listening to my colleague from Rhode Island talk about the issue he is clearly very passionate about relating to our climate and recognizing that in that space, as we think about energy and our energy needs as a nation, our economic security, our energy security, our national security, how that is all tangled and intertwined, I can't help but think we have colleagues from very different perspectives who have stood on this floor over the course of the past couple of weeks, and it seems that one thing we have found some level of consensus on is that it is time to update our energy policies. It has been over 8 years now since we have seen any energy policies that do anything to move us forward as a nation, that work to help us be more energy efficient, be more energy independent, move toward a cleaner energy future, embrace the technologies we have available to us. There is a recognition we need to act together to update our energy policies.

I have come to the floor this evening to speak to where we are in this process of successfully moving an energy modernization bill across the floor of the Senate. We took this up some 2 weeks ago now. I wanted to comment on some of the comments that were actually made on the floor this morning. There was a comment that was made that as Republicans we need to ''get to yes'' on assistance for Flint.

I have stood on the floor and have made clear there is no doubt in my mind that Flint is the site of a tragedy that should have been, could have been avoided. There is no doubt in my mind that Federal assistance could be provided to help with the city's ongoing crisis, but there is also no doubt in my mind but that this is something where we need to get to yes on a number to help Flint out. We need to get to yes, and we need to figure out what that right amount is.

It sounds easy, and those of us who are committed to not only addressing the situation, the urgent situation we see in Flint, there is a recognition that there is a broader problem at play when we think about our Nation's infrastructure and our water infrastructures. I wanted to take a few minutes this evening to speak to that and where we are in this process and why this ''getting to yes'' has perhaps been more problematic than most had hoped.

I remind my colleagues that what we have been debating on the floor is an energy bill. It is a bill that was written by myself as the chairman of the Energy Committee, along with Senator CANTWELL from Washington as my ranking member. It included the Presiding Officer as a member of the committee, along with dozens of other members who serve on the Energy Committee. It has been the result of more than a year of regular process, regular order, within the committee, where we worked to consider ideas from all over the board.

We undertook an effort that some would say you just don't see around here anymore. We started with an agreement, an agreement between the chairman, myself, and the ranking member, and asked: Do we want to send a message this year about what we need to do with energy and our energy policies or do we want to bring about some change? Is it time to update our energy policies after 8 years?

The two of us agreed we wanted to make that change. We recognized that in order to do that, in order to get it through the committee with a good bipartisan vote, in order to get it to the floor, we were going to have to work together. We made that commitment, our staffs made that commitment, and we not only said we were going to do it, we did it.

We started off with a series of oversight hearings that we had in Washington, DC, and around the country, bringing people in, soliciting their ideas. After the oversight hearings, we had six legislative hearings before the committee, going through a host of different initiatives. There were 114 bills, separate bills—some from members of the committee, some from Members who were not serving on the Energy Committee but who had good ideas, and we reviewed them all, considered them as part of the bill we were building, and then we had our markup. We went into 3 days of markup before the Energy Committee. We considered over 50 different measures, 50 different measures from folks within the committee and outside the committee, Republicans and Democrats, urban and rural.

In the committee process, it was full-on. It was an open exchange. It was any good idea, any amendment that you have, if you think you have the votes, let's run it. If you think you don't and you still want to run it anyway, let's work it. We worked that committee process. We considered 59 amendments within the committee. It was a good process, and because it was good process and it was so inclusive, we got a bill that moved out of the committee 18 to 4. The four dissenting votes were interesting. We had two Republicans who dissented and two Democrats. Even the opposition was bipartisan.

I say this by laying the groundwork for what we have built because I want colleagues to appreciate the substance of the measure we have before us with the Energy Policy Modernization Act. We then came to the floor the first of the year, the first big bill to come to the floor and take up valuable floor time, and I am pleased we were able to come to the floor early. In the time that we have been to the floor, we have dispensed with 38 amendments. Most of those have gone by voice, not because it has been a take-this-or-leave-it approach. A voice vote means it comes by unanimous consent. You have to get consent to get these before the body. We worked through a host of different issues, all over the board—whether it related to advanced nuclear or whether it related to coal research or whether it related to issues as they relate to our public lands. We have been working this throughout this process.

In fact, I think it is important to recognize that even during this time period where it has been quiet on the floor, we haven't heard people talking much about where we are with the Energy bill. Our staffs on the majority side and the minority side have been working together to clear even more amendments that have that support that we could move by voice, almost 30 additional amendments on top of what we have already done.

We are not letting the moss collect and gather as we are trying to deal with the situation that has detracted and distracted this Energy bill, and that is the nature of the Flint issue. I don't want people to think the basis of the bill which brought us here, a bill that would modernize our energy policies, a bill that would help America produce more energy, a bill that would help Americans save money, a bill that would help our Nation with our national security, our energy security, and our economic security, a bill that would help to cement our status as a global energy superpower—it is important we remember why we are here.

Others are remembering that when we left the floor on Thursday with an indeterminate path forward into how we were going to advance the Energy bill, those groups that have been interested in following this debate come to us with concern saying: Wait. Don't stop that forward movement. The Bipartisan Policy Center has sent out a letter urging us to move forward with this Energy Policy Modernization Act. ClearPath has urged us: Please, this is important to us from a clean energy perspective. Bill Gates has put out a

letter on his blog post urging us: Please don't forget that as we are talking about how to resolve this situation for Flint, MI, that we don't forget the importance of the underlying bill we are debating, which is the Energy Policy Modernization Act.

The progress we have made on this bill is critically important. Again, we are working with the ranking member to keep plugging along on all of those issues we have outstanding. We believe we have a path forward for a bipartisan bill, a bill that so many Members of this body have come to the floor and said that this is good, this is important, this is something we need to do.

We are not going to forget that, but in the meantime, what we are dealing with is this plea for assistance, Federal assistance by the people of Flint, MI. As I said last week, I don't fault that request. Coming from a State like Alaska, which has considerable needs of its own when it comes to water infrastructure, in far too many of my communities it is not a situation of aging infrastructure. It is a situation of no infrastructure, no clean water, no safe drinking water.

I understand, but I am increasingly frustrated by where we are now and how the decisions that have been made to date are effectively stopping all activity on an energy bill, even as it becomes perhaps increasingly obvious or clear that the issue related to Flint, the urgency of Flint's situation—the bigger issue we see looming when it comes to our Nation's water infrastructure, that is a problem that demands a level of scrutiny and attention that we as a Congress should give—but is the Energy Policy Modernization Act the right vehicle for what is being sought right now?

I want to make sure that not only colleagues know but people who have been following this issue know that we have been working in good faith toward a solution that will help address the situation in Flint. Many of my Republican colleagues are working with the Senators from Michigan to try to find a good-faith solution. I have been engaged in this from the very get-go. I have been working on this issue, as have many Republican members.

We found some programs out there that make sense for providing assistance. The State revolving fund is one we have looked to and have, along with our staffs, spent considerable hours debating the merits of different approaches and drafting language for them in the hope of being able to resolve scoring issues and generally trying to seek a path forward.

While others were enjoying the Super Bowl on Sunday, my staff was not. Actually, the Senator from Washington and I happened to be on the same airplane when we were coming back from the west coast so we could be here to work on this bill, and we missed the game as well. Our staffs were going back and forth with CBO to determine if the solutions that we had laid down were going to work. Were they going to meet the scoring issues? Were they going to avoid the blue slip issues? Was it going to be a viable path forward? We have been doing this since day one.

I think it is important to outline these issues to people so that when someone suggests that somehow or other we just need to ''get to yes'' quickly, they know that there is a range of factors that have complicated our efforts. It doesn't help that the Energy bill that has drawn widespread acclaim for having a very open process has to now try and deal with the situation in Flint, so there hasn't been an open process. In fact, there hasn't been a process. I think that is part of what is complicating this situation.

This is a big issue. There is an urgency to address Flint's situation, which is maybe more specific, but again, this is bigger than Flint. We heard from colleagues on both sides of the aisle about the issues around their respective States and around our country which we are going to have to be dealing with.

We have an amazing, complete process with the Energy bill that we have methodically and consistently—almost over the top—gone through a process, and now we have something that is kind of been airdropped in, to use an expression around here, that is not as easy as people would suggest. It is not something where you can say: Just throw some money at it. We are not helped by attempts to federalize the process, regardless of the Federal Government's share of the responsibility in it. I believe there is a proportionate share where we have to be there to help.

We are not helped by the President's decision not to issue a disaster declaration but instead to grant a much more limited emergency declaration, and then we are not necessarily helped by the President's budget that he laid down today. He didn't request funding for Flint in this massive budget proposal. In fact, the level of funds that we have been looking at that could help Flint—the State revolving funds—have not increased. What we have actually seen is a decrease in the Clean Water Fund. That is not going to help us because we recognize that we have to address those issues as well. Also, we are not helped when they ask for far more Federal dollars than the city of Flint may be capable of spending over the next year. We have been trying to identify and discern what would help.

I had a conversation with the Governor of Michigan to try to discern it. I have talked to the Senators from Michigan, and I have talked to the House Members from Michigan. We have at least four Flint-related amendments that are pending to the Energy bill from the Michigan delegation alone, but again, in terms of the extent of the repairs that need to be made, does it include all of the pipes in Flint? Are they trying to get a corrosion control system in place? Is that it? Do we have a final estimate for what those repairs will cost and the plan of action that will be required?

I appreciate the response of the Senator from Michigan when there was a little bit of back and forth with the Senator from Texas, saying that in her bill there is a requirement to detail how the money will be spent. I truly appreciate that part of it. We are being put in a situation where we are trying to define the right amount here, and it is important that we get that right. As important as it is for us to get to yes and figure out what we can do to help Flint in a way that is fair to Flint and fair overall, we have to get it right as well.

Again, I was reading some newsclips last night. The New York Times had an article about how all around the country we are seeing other States that are setting up an alarm in terms of situations within their communities—from Pennsylvania to Ohio to California—where there is a need to not only improve the current infrastructure, but there are issues in these communities that have raised a level of concern that we should all be concerned and care about. So how we approach this issue and how we make sure that—in an effort to kind of rush money out the door to Flint alone—we don't put ourselves in a place where we commit to a course of action where the Federal Government pays for all of the costs for local water systems. We can't legislate crisis by crisis, community by community, or pretend that the Federal Government is not already $19 trillion in debt. We have to do right by this. We want to address the urgency—I want to address the urgency—for the people in Flint, but I also want to make sure we do it right.

I think most Members recognize that our solution is going to have to be national in scope because there are other communities in other States that may also need help. Most Members know that our answers must be responsible in light of our already difficult fiscal situation, and most Members are at least willing to consider the legislation that provides assistance so long as it doesn't violate our Senate rules, the Constitution, or add to the Federal deficit. Again, that is why we are kind of sitting here today, Tuesday evening.

There are a couple of plans that have been viewed as viable because they meet that criteria. They meet the criteria in terms of not adding to the Federal deficit, not violating the rules of the Senate, and not violating our Constitution, and it is interesting that both of those measures are actually measures that come from this side of the aisle.

I note that the majority leader is on the floor, and I will defer to him at his convenience; otherwise, I will continue with my comments.

I laid down an offer last week. The offer would make $550 million available, $50 million would be made available through State-revolving grants.

This money could help the people of Flint and other communities that have contaminated drinking water. It gives access to $500 million in loans. It is fully paid for. It is one of the few viable offsets that we have found within the jurisdiction of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee where I am the chairman, and I think that is part of the issue that we need to be discussing here. It is so important to make sure—as we look to these pay-fors—we can make an agreement on the pay-fors, and I believe this one is viable because I believe it is one we can agree on.

Last week I asked unanimous consent to have this amendment pending for a vote, but that was rejected. The second proposal was one made by Chairman INHOFE, who is the chairman of the Environment and Public Works Committee, which is the committee of jurisdiction, and last week he also introduced an amendment that was fully paid for. He used funds that are available from an all-but-dormant loan program at the Department of Energy which is used to subsidize the auto industry. We can go back and forth about the merits of that fund, but the fact remains that it would have been a viable pay-for for the measure that Senator INHOFE laid down. It, too, was rejected even though it was effectively an offer to prioritize assistance for the families and the children in Flint over some of the major corporations, and we were told no. That is kind of where we are right now. If you want to know why the negotiations aren't proceeding as quickly and as smoothly as they had hoped, I think that is one of the reasons we are where we are.

The fact is, many of us are willing and trying valiantly, and in many cases desperately, to get to yes, but we can't get to yes on just anything. We cannot accept something that is not paid for. Quite honestly, we can't do something that would jeopardize and doom the underlying Energy bill, and I think we can't get to yes on something that provides more funding than could reasonably be used in the short term or ignores the problems that we are facing in other parts of the country.

We have looked at how we can separate this and how we can work it out as a stand-alone measure. I think it needs to be made a priority. I think Chairman INHOFE, who is on the EPW, has made it one, but I think it needs to be separate and apart from what we are doing on this bipartisan Energy bill which already includes priorities from over 62 Members of the Senate.

I don't think it is too much to ask that our Energy bill be allowed to move forward in the meantime. If we had been able to move forward as we had planned, we would have tucked this legislation away last Thursday, and we would have had a full week to buckle down and figure out a path forward for Flint and for the Nation. Instead, here we are on a Tuesday, we have a recess coming up at the end of the week, and we haven't had an opportunity to approve these almost 30 amendments that could go by voice. We are kind of at a stall spot.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, will the Senator yield for a comment?

Ms. MURKOWSKI. I will.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I just want to assure the chairman of the Energy Committee that we are not giving up on this bill. It has too much support on a bipartisan basis for us to walk away from it, and I know all of our colleagues on both sides of the aisle appreciate the ongoing efforts the Senator has made to deal with the other issue that has arisen here, regrettably right when she was on the verge of achieving an agreement here. I know the Senator from Alaska will stick with it, and I am behind this effort all the way.

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I appreciate those comments, and I appreciate the support of the majority leader. I had an opportunity to speak with the minority leader earlier today, and he reiterated the priority of this Energy bill. To my colleagues and those who have been urging us to carry on and continue, know that we are doing exactly that and that I remain committed to not only the Energy Policy Modernization Act, but I am committed to finding a path forward as we deal with the important issue that relates to Flint and also relates to the rest of the Nation when it comes to the security and safety of our water supply.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

INTERNET TAX FREEDOM FOREVER ACT

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, on an entirely different matter, I think many Americans would agree with the following statement: The Internet should remain open and free. Politicians should certainly not try to tax it.

Congress passed a temporary ban on Internet taxes back in 1998. It was an important bipartisan win for the American people, but Congress has never made that ban permanent. In fact, there have been eight different short-term extensions of the Internet tax ban. It is time we made it permanent. It is time we made it permanent.

The bipartisan Internet Tax Freedom Forever Act has 51 cosponsors. It was introduced by the top Republican on the Commerce Committee and the top Democrat on the Finance Committee. In my office we have received many, many messages from Kentuckians who support this measure.

Here is what the bipartisan Internet Tax Freedom Forever Act would do. It would ensure any existing Internet taxes are phased out permanently. It would ensure any new attempts to tax the Internet are prohibited permanently. It would ensure Americans' access to information and online communications remain open and free permanently.

The House already passed this kind of commonsense bipartisan legislation to make the ban on Internet taxes permanent. It is time we did it here in the Senate. The action I am about to take will allow us to have that chance on Thursday of this week.

TRADE FACILITATION AND TRADE ENFORCEMENT ACT OF 2015—CONFERENCE REPORT

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask that the Chair lay before the Senate the conference report accompanying H.R. 644.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair lays before the Senate the conference report to accompany H.R. 644, which will be stated by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The committee of conference on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses on the amendment of the House to the amendment of the Senate to the bill (H.R. 644), to reauthorize trade facilitation and trade enforcement functions and activities, and for other purposes, having met, have agreed that the Senate recede from its disagreement to the amendment of the House to the amendment of the Senate and agree to the same with an amendment and the House agree to the same, signed by a majority of the conferees on the part of both Houses.

Thereupon, the Senate proceeded to consider the conference report.

(The conference report is printed in the House proceedings of the RECORD of December 9, 2015.)

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

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 conference report to accompany H.R. 644, an act to reauthorize trade facilitation and trade enforcement functions and activities, and for other purposes.

Mitch McConnell, David Perdue, Pat Roberts, Roy Blunt, Chuck Grassley, Shelley Moore Capito, Richard Burr, Mike Crapo, Thad Cochran, John Thune, John Hoeven, Tim Scott, Lisa Murkowski, Rob Portman, Kelly Ayotte, Tom Cotton, Orrin G. Hatch.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum call be waived with respect to the cloture motion.

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

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I just filed cloture on the Customs conference report. The House has passed this commonsense bipartisan bill, and it is time for the Senate to do it as well.

MORNING BUSINESS

''I WANT TO LIVE''

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, over nearly four decades of public service, I have long endeavored to protect the rights of the unborn. As I have fought to uphold pro-life values in Congress, I have been inspired by countless individuals who are equally committed to the cause.

Last month, I was particularly moved when I listened to a recording of ''I Want to Live''—a song composed by singer-songwriter Russ Marsh. Marsh writes this song from the perspective of an unborn child eager to live and be loved. The lyrics underscore a truth too often overlooked in the debate over abortion—that each unborn child is a living soul.

I ask unanimous consent that this song be printed in the RECORD.

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

''I WANT TO LIVE''—MUSIC AND LYRICS BY RUSS MARSH

VERSE 1

I want to live. Can't you see my life's begun? Don't you think I feel the pain? I'm the helpless one. I want to live to feel the gentle rain fall upon my face. And to see the light of day.

I want to live to see your smiling face, have you hold me in your arms. Don't leave me here to die. Please take me home. Won't you give me a chance to have the things you have

And a life that's full of love.

CHORUS

I want to live to see the morning sun. I want to live to see my Mommy and Daddy. Let me live. Don't take my life away. I want to live to be all that I can be.

VERSE 2

I want you to live. Can't take your life away; 'cause I would feel the pain if you're not here with me. I want you to live. Forgive me, won't you please.

You will see the light of day and I'll take you home with me.

The years have passed. You've seen all that I have done. My life's a happy one. And I want to Thank You Mom.

CHORUS

You let me live to see the morning sun. You let me live to see my Mommy and Daddy. You let me live. Didn't take my life away. You let me live to be all that I can be.

CHILDREN'S CHORUS

I want to live to see the morning sun. I want to live to see my Mommy and Daddy. Let me live. Don't take my life away. I want to live to be all that I can be.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

REMEMBERING RAY BISHOP

• Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, today I wish to honor the life of a great Wyoming citizen: Col. Raymond ''Ray'' Corbett Bishop, retired. Col. Bishop was an experienced leader who devoted his life to serving the country and State he loved.

Ray grew up as part of a military family originally from Douglas, WY. His formative years were spent in a number of States, including Hawaii and Utah. Though he traveled extensively with his parents, Loren and Eleanor, and his two siblings, John and Helen, Ray's roots were firmly planted on Wyoming soil. He returned to the State to attend college at the University of Wyoming. In 1970, he graduated with his bachelor of science degree in ecology and received his commission from the U.S. Air Force ROTC program. This distinct honor became the first in a long line of achievements earned while serving his country.

Ray had a successful career in the U.S. Air Force. He was driven and focused and honorably served his country for over 25 years. He had a distinct talent for flying. Throughout his service, Ray completed two combat tours in Vietnam and logged over 4,100 hours of flight time piloting B–52 and C–7A aircraft. Ray continued his record of leadership with a number of other assignments. He was commander at a number of bases, including 325th Bomb Squadron Commander at Fairchild Air Force Base, Operations Commander at Anderson Air Force Base, and Wing Commander at Castle Air Force Base. He was also a skilled educator, providing training for T38 pilots and serving as the Strategic Air Command Chair at the Air War College in Alabama.

Ray met each new assignment with enthusiasm and fortitude. He earned many accolades during his years of service. In addition to the Air Force Commendation Medal, he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross and numerous other Meritorious Service Medals. These accomplishments and his Active-Duty service highlight his extraordinary patriotism.

Following his military career, Ray continued his service in the aviation industry as the director of airports for Kern County, California. He served in this position until 2006, when Wyoming welcomed his return. Settling in Jackson, he became the director of the Jackson Hole Airport. He successfully rose to the challenge of directing the only commercial airport located in a national park. In the years he served as director, Ray brought the airport to new heights of success. Under his guidance, the airport experienced over $80,000,000 in capital improvements, including a complete renovation and expansion of the main terminal.

Safety was Ray's first priority, and the runway was improved with several safety features that many larger airports have yet to implement. During his tenure, the airport received both airline and FAA accolades and national recognition for the terminal updates. Ray loved Grand Teton National Park, and he was proud of the strong working relationship between the park and the airport's board members that made the airport renovations possible.

Ray retired in late 2014 and decided to remain in the area so that he could continue to enjoy the scenic beauty of the Jackson Hole area. According to friends, Ray was most at peace when he was in his boat on Jackson Lake. In addition, he was a seasoned triathlete and had been training to run in an international marathon.

Ray is survived by his wife, Debbie, and his children, Brian and Kristina Bishop, Abbey and Mike Donley, and Clark and Christine Bishop. He loved his grandchildren, Megan Bishop, Elise Bishop, and William Donley; his sister, Helen Thompson, and her husband, Fred.

Wyoming flies a little higher because of Ray Bishop's service. We thank Ray for his service to our Nation and Wyoming. We will miss him, but we are confident that his legacy lives on and can be seen by all who visit the Jackson Hole Airport.•

REMEMBERING CLAYTON JAMES

• Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, today I wish to remember the life of a great Wyoming citizen, Clayton James. A longtime Jackson Hole resident, Clay was well-loved by all in the community. I am honored to recognize Clay's lifetime of accomplishments.

Born in St. Louis, Clay first felt the call of the West in college. He attended Arizona State University, eventually graduating with a bachelor of science degree in business. He held several jobs during the academic year, but his summers were reserved for the great beauty of Grand Teton National Park. It was here that he first began working for the Grand Teton Lodge Company. During this time, he learned to appreciate the natural beauty of the park, while also gaining firsthand experience in the hospitality industry.

This experience proved useful upon his graduation. He returned to the Grand Teton Lodge Company as a full-time employee. The company was part of the Rockefeller RockResort Company, owned by Laurance Rockefeller. Clay's career in the resort management and development sector was largely the result of his relationship with Rockefeller. Shortly after being hired, he was selected to open a new Rockefeller resort in the British Virgin Islands; thus began a nearly 20-year career of opening, operating, and managing resorts and hotels.

Clay was an outstanding representative for Wyoming's tourism industry. In working with the RockResort Company, Clay travelled extensively, opening resorts across the United States. During one such assignment in Hawaii, he met his future wife, Shay. They were married in 1966. And although they traveled frequently, often with family in tow, Clay never lost his love for the Teton Mountain Range. In 1984, they settled in Jackson Hole permanently, and he again returned to the Grand Teton Lodge Company as the general manager. His love for the resort and his staff was truly remarkable. When he retired in 2006, Clay was

the well-admired president of the company.

Clay was deeply passionate about conservation. He believed that it was possible to preserve the diverse ecosystem in Grand Teton National Park while also welcoming the millions of visitors who came to enjoy its splendors each year. This guiding principle led to his involvement in the transfer of the historic JY Ranch to the National Park Service. Owned by the Rockefeller Estate, the JY Ranch was a parcel of about 33,000 acres that was originally purchased by John Rockefeller, Jr., in the early 20th century. In 2007, Laurance Rockefeller asked Clay to manage this important transition. The project was completed in 2008, and the Laurance S. Rockefeller Preserve was opened in Grand Teton National Park for the public to enjoy. Clay was especially proud of this achievement because it brought so many of his passions together.

Clay's extensive background in hotel management, as well as his experience as a concessionaire in Grand Teton National Park, was especially useful during his service on the Jackson Hole Airport's board of directors. This experience, coupled with his unique perspective, made Clay an effective liaison between the National Park Service and the Jackson Hole Airport. He was instrumental in the design and construction of the airport's terminal renovation and expansion project. With Clay's advocacy, the airport was able to complete all renovations while working with the Park Service to maintain the environmental integrity of Grand Teton National Park.

Clay's penchant for giving back to the community was incredible. He devoted his free time to serving on several local and State boards and committees, each as different as his wide range of interests. He was a proud member of the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve and also served in the Army National Guard. He always strove to improve the quality of life for his family, friends, and the community of Jackson, and his impact will be felt for years to come.

Clay is survived by his wife of 49 years, Shay Orlin James, and his children and their spouses, Scott and Jennifer James and McKenzie and Robert Hammond. He loved his grandchildren Emma and Cole James and Rigdon and Riley Hammond. He also is survived by his brothers and their spouses, several nieces and nephews, and many close family friends.

It is an honor to celebrate Clay James and his extraordinary legacy of community service. He was kind, personable, and a natural leader. I know that the community of Jackson shines brighter because of his special contributions.●

REMEMBERING A. DAVID HAMILL

● Mrs. CAPITO. Mr. President, today I wish to celebrate the life of Ranson Mayor A. David Hamill, who recently passed away at the age of 71. I first met Dave following my election to the U.S. House of Representatives in 2000, and I came to know him as a passionate advocate for the city of Ranson. We began working together very early in my House tenure, revitalizing Ranson through Federal Brownfields initiatives.

With his height, his booming voice, and his mischievous sense of humor, he certainly cut an impressive figure. And while he was in many ways a larger-than-life persona, his greatest strength was his willingness to listen. He tried to genuinely understand the needs of his constituents and the people with whom he worked. Indeed, his humility was evident in an excerpt from the open letter he wrote to the city last month, sharing his worsening prognosis. He wrote, ''I have tried to do what is best for the City of Ranson—sometimes my result may not have been successful as I planned, but it was not for my lack of passion or desire to do the right thing.''

Born in Kitchener, Ontario, Dave met his wife, Helen, while working in Macon, GA. Although they married in Canada, Dave would always submit job applications to local employers when he and Helen would return to her hometown of Ranson, WV. They would return to Ranson for good in 1979 when Dave was hired at Abex, in nearby Winchester, VA. Dave rose to become a certified purchasing manager and negotiated purchasing contracts for the company's eight factories in its North American division. When Dave became a U.S. citizen, he almost immediately began his public service career. Beginning with the planning commission, Dave soon became a member of Ranson's city council. In 1987, he was appointed mayor and was subsequently reelected seven consecutive times, most recently in 2013.

Dave will be celebrated for his many accomplishments as mayor, including his work with the Brownfields initiative, the redevelopment surrounding the American Public University System campus, Ranson's annexations for future growth, the city's streetscape projects, Ranson's youth football field, and the Fairfax Boulevard extension project. The list could certainly go on, but to highlight only the accomplishments of the man would be to overshadow Dave's spirit and his dedication to the city he served.

In addition to his wife, Helen, Dave is survived by his three children: Cindy, Melissa, and James; and nine grandchildren. In addition to his public service, Dave was also very active in the United Methodist Church, where he was a lay speaker and lay member to the Methodist Annual Conference.

I will miss Mayor Dave Hamill, as will all who knew him. I am honored to have worked with this talented individual and am proud to have called Dave my friend for more than 15 years. Today I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring the memory of ''Ranson's Champion.''●

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

A message from the President of the United States was communicated to the Senate by Mr. Williams, one of his secretaries.

PRESIDENTIAL MESSAGE

BUDGET OF THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2017—PM 41

The PRESIDING OFFICER laid before the Senate the following message from the President of the United States, together with accompanying reports and papers; which was referred jointly, pursuant to the order of January 30, 1975 as modified by the order of April 11, 1986; to the Committees on the Budget; and Appropriations:

THE BUDGET MESSAGE OF THE PRESIDENT

To the Congress of the United States:

As I look back on the past seven years, I am inspired by America's progress—and I am more determined than ever to keep our country moving forward. When I took office, our Nation was in the midst of the worst recession since the Great Depression. The economy was shedding 800,000 jobs a month. The auto industry was on the brink of collapse and our manufacturing sector was in decline. Many families were struggling to pay their bills and make ends meet. Millions more saw their savings evaporate, even as retirement neared.

But thanks to the grit and determination of the American people, we rescued our economy from the depths of the recession, revitalized our auto industry, and laid down new rules to safeguard our economy from recklessness on Wall Street. We made the largest investment in clean energy in our history, and made health care reform a reality. And today, our economy is the strongest, most durable on Earth.

Our businesses have created more than 14 million jobs over 70 months, the longest streak of job growth on record. We have cut our unemployment rate in half. Our manufacturing sector has added nearly 900,000 jobs in the last six years—and our auto industry just had its best year of sales ever. We are less reliant on foreign oil than at any point in the previous four decades. Nearly 18 million people have gained health coverage under the Affordable Care Act (ACA), cutting the uninsured rate to a record low. Our children are graduating from high school at the highest rate ever. And we managed to accomplish all of this while dramatically cutting our deficits by almost three-quarters and setting our Nation on a more sustainable fiscal path. Together, we have brought America back.

Yet while it is important to take stock of our progress, this Budget is

not about looking back at the road we have traveled. It is about looking forward. It is about making sure our economy works for everybody, not just those at the top. It is about choosing investments that not only make us stronger today, but also reflect the kind of country we aspire to be—the kind of country we want to pass on to our children and grandchildren. It is about answering the big questions that will define America and the world in the 21st Century.

My Budget makes critical investments while adhering to the bipartisan budget agreement I signed into law last fall, and it lifts sequestration in future years so that we continue to invest in our economic future and our national security. It also drives down deficits and maintains our fiscal progress through smart savings from health care, immigration, and tax reforms. And, it focuses on meeting our greatest challenges not only for the year ahead, but for decades to come.

First, by accelerating the pace of American innovation, we can create jobs and build the economy of the future while tackling our greatest challenges, including addressing climate change and finding new treatments—and cures—for devastating diseases.

The challenge of climate change will define the contours of this century more dramatically than any other. Last year was the hottest on record, surpassing the record set just a year before. Climate change is already causing damage, including longer, more severe droughts and dangerous floods, disruptions to our food and water supply, and threats to our health, our economy, and our security.

We have made great strides to foster a robust clean energy industry and move our economy away from energy sources that fuel climate change. In communities across the Nation, wind power is now cheaper than dirtier, conventional power, and solar power is saving Americans tens of millions of dollars a year on their energy bills. The solar industry employs more workers than the coal industry—in jobs that pay better than average.

Despite these advances, we can and must do more. Rather than shrinking from the challenge, America must foster the spirit of innovation to create jobs, build a climate-smart economy of the future, and protect the only planet we have. To speed our transition to an affordable, reliable, clean energy system, my Budget funds Mission Innovation, our landmark commitment to double clean energy research and development funding. It also calls for a 21st century Clean Transportation initiative that would help to put hundreds of thousands of Americans to work modernizing our infrastructure to ease congestion and make it easier for businesses to bring goods to market through new technologies such as autonomous vehicles and high-speed rail, funded through a fee paid by oil companies. It proposes to modernize our business tax system to promote innovation and job creation. It invests in strategies to make our communities more resilient to floods, wildfires, and other effects of climate change. And, it protects and modernizes our water supply and preserves our natural landscapes. These investments, coupled with those in other cutting-edge technology sectors ranging from manufacturing to space exploration, will drive new jobs, new industries, and a new understanding of the world around us.

Just as a commitment to innovation can accelerate our efforts to protect our planet and create a sustainable economy, it can also drive critical medical breakthroughs. The Budget supports a new ''moonshot'' to finally cure cancer, an effort that will be led by the Vice President and will channel resources, technology, and our collective knowledge to save lives and end this deadly disease. It also supports the Precision Medicine Initiative to accelerate the development of customized treatments that take into account a patient's genes, environment, and lifestyle, as well as the BRAIN Initiative, which will dramatically increase our understanding of how the brain works.

Second, we must work to deliver a fair shot at opportunity for all, both because this reflects American values and because, in the 21st Century global economy, our competitiveness depends on tapping the full potential of every American. Even as we have rebounded from the worst economic crisis of our lifetimes, too many families struggle to reach the middle class and stay there, and too many kids face obstacles on the path to success.

Real opportunity begins with education. My Budget supports the ambitious goal that all children should have access to high-quality preschool, including kids from low-income families who too often enter kindergarten already behind. It also supports States and cities as they implement a new education law that will place all students on a path to graduate prepared for college and successful careers. The bipartisan Every Student Succeeds Act sets high standards for our schools and students, ensures that States are held accountable for the success of all students, including those in the lowest performing schools, spurs innovation in education, helps schools recruit and support great teachers, and encourages States to reduce unnecessary testing. And because jobs in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics are projected to grow faster than other jobs in the years ahead, the Budget makes critical investments in math and science. Through a new Computer Science for All initiative, the Budget will expand the teaching and learning of these important concepts across America's schools, better preparing our Nation's students for today's innovation economy.

Higher education is the clearest path to the middle class. By 2020, two-thirds of jobs will require some education beyond high school. For our students and for our economy, we must make a quality college education affordable for every American. To support that goal, the Budget strengthens Pell Grants to help families pay for college by increasing the scholarships available to students who take enough courses to stay on track for on-time graduation, allowing students making progress toward their degrees to get support for summer classes, and providing scholarships to help incarcerated Americans turn their lives around, get jobs, and support their families. It also offers two years of free community college to every responsible student and strengthens the American Opportunity Tax Credit.

In addition to preparing students for careers, we must help workers gain the skills they need to fill jobs in growing industries. My Budget builds on the progress we have made to improve the Nation's job training programs through implementation of the bipartisan Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. It funds innovative strategies to train more workers and young people for 21st Century jobs. And it doubles down on apprenticeships—a proven pathway to the middle class—and supports a robust set of protections for the health, safety, wages, working conditions, and retirement security of working Americans.

Even as we invest in better skills and education for our workforce, we must respond to dramatic changes in our economy and our workforce: more automation; increased global competition; corporations less rooted in their communities; frequent job changes throughout a worker's career; and a growing gap between the wealthiest and everyone else. These trends squeeze workers, even when they have jobs, even when the economy is growing. They make it harder to start a career, a family, a business, or retirement.

To address these changes and give Americans more economic security, we need to update several key benefit structures to make sure that workers can balance work and family, save for retirement, and get back on their feet if they lose a job. The Budget supports these priorities by funding high-quality child care, encouraging State paid leave policies, extending employer-based retirement plans to part-time workers, putting us on a path to more portable benefit models, and providing a new tax credit for two-earner families. It also modernizes the unemployment insurance system, so that more unemployed workers receive the unemployment benefits they need and an opportunity to retrain for their next job. And, if that new job does not pay as much initially, it offers a system of wage insurance to encourage workers to rejoin the workforce and help them pay their bills. The Budget includes tax cuts for middle-class and working families that will make paychecks go further in meeting the costs of child care,

education, and saving for retirement. It builds upon the demonstrated success of the Earned Income Tax Credit by expanding it for workers without children and non-custodial parents.

Providing opportunity to all Americans means tackling poverty. Too many Americans live in communities with under-performing schools and few jobs. We know from groundbreaking new research that growing up in these communities can put lifelong limits on a child's opportunities. Over the past few years, we have made progress in supporting families that were falling behind. For example, working family tax credits keep more than 9 million people—including 5 million children—out of poverty each year, and the ACA provides access to quality, affordable health care to millions. Nevertheless, we need to do more to ensure that a child's zip code does not determine his or her destiny. Improving the opportunity and economic security of poor children and families is both a moral and an economic imperative.

The Budget funds innovative strategies to support this goal, including helping families move to safer neighborhoods with better schools and more jobs, revitalizing distressed communities to create more neighborhoods of opportunity, preventing families experiencing a financial crisis from becoming homeless, and ensuring that children have enough to eat when school is out for the summer. It also supports efforts to break the cycle of poverty and incarceration through criminal justice reform.

Finally, as we work to build a brighter future at home, we must also strengthen our national security and global leadership. The United States of America is the most powerful nation on Earth, blessed with the finest fighting force in the history of the world.

Still, this is a dangerous time. We face many threats, including the threat of terrorist attacks and violent extremism in many forms. My highest priority is keeping the American people safe and going after terrorist networks. That is why my Budget increases support for our comprehensive strategy to destroy the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), in partnership with more than 60 other countries, by eliminating its leadership, cutting off its financing, disrupting its plots, stopping the flow of terrorist fighters, and stamping out its vicious ideology. If the Congress is serious about winning this war and wants to send a message to the troops and the world, it should specifically authorize the use of military force against ISIL.

The Budget also sustains and builds the strength of our unmatched military forces, making the investments and reforms that will maintain our Nation's superiority and ensure our advantage over any potential adversary. It also makes investments to ensure that our men and women in uniform, who sacrifice so much to defend our Nation and keep us safe, get the support they have earned to succeed and thrive when they return home.

Cybersecurity is one of our most important national security challenges. As our economy becomes increasingly digital, more sensitive information is vulnerable to malicious cyber activity. This challenge requires bold, aggressive action. My Budget significantly increases our investment in cybersecurity through a Cybersecurity National Action Plan This Plan includes retiring outdated Federal information technology (IT) systems that were designed in a different age and increasingly are vulnerable to attack, reforming the way that the Federal Government manages and responds to cyber threats, and recruiting the best cyber talent. It will also help strengthen cybersecurity in the private sector and the digital ecosystem as a whole, enhancing cyber education and making sure companies and consumers have the tools they need to protect themselves. But many of our challenges in cybersecurity require bold, long-term commitments to change the way we operate in an increasingly digital world. That is why, to complement these steps, I am also creating a commission of experts to make recommendations for enhancing cybersecurity awareness and protections inside and outside of Government, protecting privacy and empowering Americans to take better control of their digital security.

To ensure security at home, we must also demonstrate leadership around the world. Strong leadership means not only a wise application of military power, but also rallying other nations behind causes that are right. It means viewing our diplomacy and development efforts around the world as an essential instrument of our national security strategy, and mobilizing the private sector and other donors alongside our foreign assistance to help achieve our global development and climate priorities. The Budget supports this vision with funding for effective global health programs to fight HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other illnesses; assistance for displaced persons and refugees, including from Syria; and expanding educational opportunities for girls, among many other critical development initiatives.

As we make these investments to meet our greatest challenges, we are also working to build a 21st Century Government that delivers for the American people. The Budget supports efforts to make the Federal Government more efficient and effective, through smarter IT delivery and procurement, improving digital services, eliminating outdated regulations, and recruiting and retaining the best talent. It also invests in a new approach to working in local communities, one that disrupts an outdated, top-down approach, and makes our efforts more responsive to the ideas and concerns of local citizens. The Budget supports the use of data and evidence to drive policymaking, so the Federal Government can do more of what works and stop doing what does not.

The Budget is a roadmap to a future that embodies America's values and aspirations: a future of opportunity and security for all of our families; a rising standard of living; and a sustainable, peaceful planet for our kids. This future is within our reach. But just as it took the collective efforts of the American people to rise from the recession and rebuild an even stronger economy, so will it take all of us working together to meet the challenges that lie ahead.

It will not be easy. But I have never been more optimistic about America's future than I am today. Over the past seven years, I have seen the strength, resilience, and commitment of the American people. I know that when we are united in the face of challenges, our Nation emerges stronger and better than before. I know that when we work together, there are no limits to what we can achieve. Together, we will move forward to innovate, to expand opportunity and security, and to make our Nation safer and stronger than ever before.

BARACK OBAMA.

THE WHITE HOUSE, *February 9, 2016*.

EXECUTIVE REPORTS OF COMMITTEE—TREATIES

The following executive reports of committee were submitted:

By Mr. CORKER, from the Committee on Foreign Relations:

Treaty Doc. 112–1: Protocol Amending Tax Convention with Swiss Confederation (Ex. Rept. 114–1);

Treaty Doc. 113–4: The Protocol Amending the Tax Convention with Spain (Ex. Rept. 114–2);

Treaty Doc. 113–5: Convention on Taxes with the Republic of Poland (Ex. Rept. 114–3);

Treaty Doc. 112–8: Tax Convention with Chile (Ex. Rept. 114–4);

Treaty Doc. 114–1: Protocol Amending the Tax Convention with Japan (Ex. Rept. 114–5);

Treaty Doc. 111–8: Protocol Amending Tax Convention with Luxembourg (Ex. Rept. 114–6);

Treaty Doc. 111–7: Tax Convention with Hungary (Ex. Rept. 114–7); and

Treaty Doc. 112–5: Protocol Amending the Convention on Mutual Administrative Assistance in Tax Matters (Ex. Rept. 114–8).

The text of the committee-recommended resolutions of advice and consent to ratification are as follows:

[Treaty Doc. 112–1 Protocol Amending Tax Convention with Swiss Confederation]

Section 1. Senate Advice and Consent Subject to a Declaration

The Senate advises and consents to the ratification of the Protocol Amending the Convention between the United States of America and the Swiss Confederation for the Avoidance of Double Taxation With Respect to Taxes on Income, signed at Washington October 2, 1996, signed September 23, 2009, at Washington, with a related agreement effected by an exchange of notes September 23, 2009, as corrected by an exchange of notes effected November 16, 2010 (the ''Protocol'') (Treaty Doc. 112–1), subject to the declaration of section 2.

Section 2. Declaration

The advice and consent of the Senate under section 1 is subject to the following declaration:

The Protocol is self-executing.

Section 3. Conditions

The advice and consent of the Senate under section 1 is subject to the following conditions:

(1) Not later than 2 years after the Protocol enters into force and prior to the first arbitration conducted pursuant to the binding arbitration mechanism provided for in the Protocol, the Secretary of the Treasury shall transmit to the Committees on Finance and Foreign Relations of the Senate and the Joint Committee on Taxation the text of the rules of procedure applicable to arbitration panels, including conflict of interest rules to be applied to members of the arbitration panel.

(2)(A) Not later than 60 days after a determination has been reached by an arbitration panel in the tenth arbitration proceeding conducted pursuant to the Protocol or any of the treaties described in subparagraph (B), the Secretary of the Treasury shall prepare and submit to the Joint Committee on Taxation and the Committee on Finance of the Senate, subject to laws relating to taxpayer confidentiality, a detailed report regarding the operation and application of the arbitration mechanism contained in the Protocol and such treaties. The report shall include the following information:

(i) For the Protocol and each such treaty, the aggregate number of cases pending on the respective dates of entry into force of the Protocol and each treaty, including the following information:

(I) The number of such cases by treaty article or articles at issue.

(II) The number of such cases that have been resolved by the competent authorities through a mutual agreement as of the date of the report.

(III) The number of such cases for which arbitration proceedings have commenced as of the date of the report.

(ii) A list of every case presented to the competent authorities after the entry into force of the Protocol and each such treaty, including the following information regarding each case:

(I) The commencement date of the case for purposes of determining when arbitration is available.

(II) Whether the adjustment triggering the case, if any, was made by the United States or the relevant treaty partner.

(III) Which treaty the case relates to.

(IV) The treaty article or articles at issue in the case.

(V) The date the case was resolved by the competent authorities through a mutual agreement, if so resolved.

(VI) The date on which an arbitration proceeding commenced, if an arbitration proceeding commenced.

(VII) The date on which a determination was reached by the arbitration panel, if a determination was reached, and an indication as to whether the panel found in favor of the United States or the relevant treaty partner.

(iii) With respect to each dispute submitted to arbitration and for which a determination was reached by the arbitration panel pursuant to the Protocol or any such treaty, the following information:

(I) In the case of a dispute submitted under the Protocol, an indication as to whether the presenter of the case to the competent authority of a Contracting State submitted a Position Paper for consideration by the arbitration panel.

(II) An indication as to whether the determination of the arbitration panel was accepted by each concerned person.

(III) The amount of income, expense, or taxation at issue in the case as determined by reference to the filings that were sufficient to set the commencement date of the case for purposes of determining when arbitration is available.

(IV) The proposed resolutions (income, expense, or taxation) submitted by each competent authority to the arbitration panel.

(B) The treaties referred to in subparagraph (A) are—

(i) the 2006 Protocol Amending the Convention between the United States of America and the Federal Republic of Germany for the Avoidance of Double Taxation and the Prevention of Fiscal Evasion with Respect to Taxes on Income and Capital and to Certain Other Taxes, done at Berlin June 1, 2006 (Treaty Doc. 109–20) (the ''2006 German Protocol'');

(ii) the Convention between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the Kingdom of Belgium for the Avoidance of Double Taxation and the Prevention of Fiscal Evasion with Respect to Taxes on Income, and accompanying protocol, done at Brussels July 9, 1970 (the ''Belgium Convention'') (Treaty Doc. 110–3);

(iii) the Protocol Amending the Convention between the United States of America and Canada with Respect to Taxes on Income and on Capital, signed at Washington September 26, 1980 (the ''2007 Canada Protocol'') (Treaty Doc. 110–15);

(iv) the Protocol Amending the Convention between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the French Republic for the Avoidance of Double Taxation and the Prevention of Fiscal Evasion with Respect to Taxes on Income and Capital, signed at Paris August 31, 1994 (the ''2009 France Protocol'') (Treaty Doc. 111–4).

(3) The Secretary of the Treasury shall prepare and submit the detailed report required under paragraph (2) on March 1 of the year following the year in which the first report is submitted to the Joint Committee on Taxation and the Committee on Finance of the Senate, and on an annual basis thereafter for a period of five years. In each such report, disputes that were resolved, either by a mutual agreement between the relevant competent authorities or by a determination of an arbitration panel, and noted as such in prior reports may be omitted.

(4) The reporting requirements referred to in paragraphs (2) and (3) supersede the reporting requirements contained in paragraphs (2) and (3) of section 3 of the resolution of advice and consent to ratification of the 2009 France Protocol, approved by the Senate on December 3, 2009.

[Treaty Doc. 113–4 The Protocol Amending the Tax Convention with Spain]

Section 1. Senate Advice and Consent Subject to a Declaration

The Senate advises and consents to the ratification of the Protocol Amending the Convention between the United States of America and the Kingdom of Spain for the Avoidance of Double Taxation and the Prevention of Fiscal Evasion With Respect to Taxes on Income and its Protocol, signed at Madrid on February 22, 1990, and a related Memorandum of Understanding signed on January 14, 2013, at Madrid, together with correcting notes dated July 23, 2013, and January 31, 2014 (the ''Protocol'') (Treaty Doc. 113–4), subject to the declaration of section 2 and the conditions of section 3.

Section 2. Declaration

The advice and consent of the Senate under section 1 is subject to the following declaration:

The Protocol is self-executing.

Section 3. Conditions

The advice and consent of the Senate under section 1 is subject to the following conditions:

(1) Not later than 2 years after the Protocol enters into force and prior to the first arbitration conducted pursuant to the binding arbitration mechanism provided for in the Protocol, the Secretary of the Treasury shall transmit to the Committees on Finance and Foreign Relations of the Senate and the Joint Committee on Taxation the text of the rules of procedure applicable to arbitration panels, including conflict of interest rules to be applied to members of the arbitration panel.

(2)(A) Not later than 60 days after a determination has been reached by an arbitration panel in the tenth arbitration proceeding conducted pursuant to the Protocol or any of the treaties described in subparagraph (B), the Secretary of the Treasury shall prepare and submit to the Joint Committee on Taxation and the Committee on Finance of the Senate, subject to laws relating to taxpayer confidentiality, a detailed report regarding the operation and application of the arbitration mechanism contained in the Protocol and such treaties. The report shall include the following information:

(i) For the Protocol and each such treaty, the aggregate number of cases pending on the respective dates of entry into force of the Protocol and each treaty, including the following information:

(I) The number of such cases by treaty article or articles at issue.

(II) The number of such cases that have been resolved by the competent authorities through a mutual agreement as of the date of the report.

(III) The number of such cases for which arbitration proceedings have commenced as of the date of the report.

(ii) A list of every case presented to the competent authorities after the entry into force of the Protocol and each such treaty, including the following information regarding each case:

(I) The commencement date of the case for purposes of determining when arbitration is available.

(II) Whether the adjustment triggering the case, if any, was made by the United States or the relevant treaty partner.

(III) Which treaty the case relates to.

(IV) The treaty article or articles at issue in the case.

(V) The date the case was resolved by the competent authorities through a mutual agreement, if so resolved.

(VI) The date on which an arbitration proceeding commenced, if an arbitration proceeding commenced.

(VII) The date on which a determination was reached by the arbitration panel, if a determination was reached, and an indication as to whether the panel found in favor of the United States or the relevant treaty partner.

(iii) With respect to each dispute submitted to arbitration and for which a determination was reached by the arbitration panel pursuant to the Protocol or any such treaty, the following information:

(I) In the case of a dispute submitted under the Protocol, an indication as to whether the presenter of the case to the competent authority of a Contracting State submitted a Position Paper for consideration by the arbitration panel.

(II) An indication as to whether the determination of the arbitration panel was accepted by each concerned person.

(III) The amount of income, expense, or taxation at issue in the case as determined by reference to the filings that were sufficient to set the commencement date of the case for purposes of determining when arbitration is available.

(IV) The proposed resolutions (income, expense, or taxation) submitted by each competent authority to the arbitration panel.

(B) The treaties referred to in subparagraph (A) are—

(i) the 2006 Protocol Amending the Convention between the United States of America and the Federal Republic of Germany for the Avoidance of Double Taxation and the Prevention of Fiscal Evasion with Respect to Taxes on Income and Capital and to Certain Other Taxes, done at Berlin June 1, 2006 (Treaty Doc. 109–20) (the ''2006 German Protocol'');

(ii) the Convention between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the Kingdom of Belgium for the Avoidance of Double Taxation and the Prevention of Fiscal Evasion with Respect to Taxes on Income, and accompanying protocol, done at Brussels July 9, 1970 (the ''Belgium Convention'') (Treaty Doc. 110–3);

(iii) the Protocol Amending the Convention between the United States of America and Canada with Respect to Taxes on Income and on Capital, signed at Washington September 26, 1980 (the ''2007 Canada Protocol'') (Treaty Doc. 110–15); or

(iv) the Protocol Amending the Convention between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the French Republic for the Avoidance of Double Taxation and the Prevention of Fiscal Evasion with Respect to Taxes on Income and Capital, signed at Paris August 31, 1994 (the ''2009 France Protocol'') (Treaty Doc. 111–4).

(3) The Secretary of the Treasury shall prepare and submit the detailed report required under paragraph (2) on March 1 of the year following the year in which the first report is submitted to the Joint Committee on Taxation and the Committee on Finance of the Senate, and on an annual basis thereafter for a period of five years. In each such report, disputes that were resolved, either by a mutual agreement between the relevant competent authorities or by a determination of an arbitration panel, and noted as such in prior reports may be omitted.

(4) The reporting requirements referred to in paragraphs (2) and (3) supersede the reporting requirements contained in paragraphs (2) and (3) of section 3 of the resolution of advice and consent to ratification of the 2009 France Protocol, approved by the Senate on December 3, 2009.

[Treaty Doc. 113–5 Convention on Taxes with the Republic of Poland]

Section. 1. Senate Advice and Consent Subject to a Declaration

The Senate advises and consents to the ratification of the Convention between the United States of America and the Republic of Poland for the Avoidance of Double Taxation and the Prevention of Fiscal Evasion with Respect to Taxes on Income, signed on February 13, 2013, at Warsaw (the ''Convention'') (Treaty Doc. 113–5), subject to the declaration of section 2.

Section 2. Declaration

The advice and consent of the Senate under section 1 is subject to the following declaration:

The Convention is self-executing.

[Treaty Doc. 112–8 Tax Convention with Chile]

Section 1. Senate Advice and Consent Subject to a Declaration

The Senate advises and consents to the ratification of the Convention Between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the Republic of Chile for the Avoidance of Double Taxation and the Prevention of Fiscal Evasion with Respect to Taxes on Income and Capital, signed at Washington February 4, 2010, with a Protocol and a related agreement effected by exchange of notes February 4, 2010, as corrected by exchanges of notes effected February 25, 2011, and February 10 and 21, 2012 (the ''Convention'') (Treaty Doc. 112–8), subject to the declaration of section 2.

Section 2. Declaration

The advice and consent of the Senate under section 1 is subject to the following declaration:

The Convention is self-executing.

[Treaty Doc. 114–1 Protocol Amending the Tax Convention with Japan]

Section 1. Senate Advice and Consent Subject to a Declaration

The Senate advises and consents to the ratification of the Protocol Amending the Convention between the United States of America and the Government of Japan for the Avoidance of Double Taxation and the Prevention of Fiscal Evasion with Respect to Taxes on Income and a related agreement entered into by an exchange of notes (together with the ''proposed protocol''), both signed on January 24, 2013, at Washington, together with correcting notes exchanged March 9 and March 29, 2013 (the ''Protocol'') (Treaty Doc. 114–1), subject to the declaration of section 2 and the conditions of section 3.

Section 2. Declaration

The advice and consent of the Senate under section 1 is subject to the following declaration:

The Convention is self-executing.

Section 3. Conditions

The advice and consent of the Senate under section 1 is subject to the following conditions:

(1) Not later than 2 years after the Protocol enters into force and prior to the first arbitration conducted pursuant to the binding arbitration mechanism provided for in the Protocol, the Secretary of the Treasury shall transmit to the Committees on Finance and Foreign Relations of the Senate and the Joint Committee on Taxation the text of the rules of procedure applicable to arbitration panels, including conflict of interest rules to be applied to members of the arbitration panel.

(2)(A) Not later than 60 days after a determination has been reached by an arbitration panel in the tenth arbitration proceeding conducted pursuant to the Protocol or any of the treaties described in subparagraph (B), the Secretary of the Treasury shall prepare and submit to the Joint Committee on Taxation and the Committee on Finance of the Senate, subject to laws relating to taxpayer confidentiality, a detailed report regarding the operation and application of the arbitration mechanism contained in the Protocol and such treaties. The report shall include the following information:

(i) For the Protocol and each such treaty, the aggregate number of cases pending on the respective dates of entry into force of the Protocol and each treaty, including the following information:

(I) The number of such cases by treaty article or articles at issue.

(II) The number of such cases that have been resolved by the competent authorities through a mutual agreement as of the date of the report.

(III) The number of such cases for which arbitration proceedings have commenced as of the date of the report.

(ii) A list of every case presented to the competent authorities after the entry into force of the Protocol and each such treaty, including the following information regarding each case:

(I) The commencement date of the case for purposes of determining when arbitration is available.

(II) Whether the adjustment triggering the case, if any, was made by the United States or the relevant treaty partner.

(III) Which treaty the case relates to.

(IV) The treaty article or articles at issue in the case.

(V) The date the case was resolved by the competent authorities through a mutual agreement, if so resolved.

(VI) The date on which an arbitration proceeding commenced, if an arbitration proceeding commenced.

(VII) The date on which a determination was reached by the arbitration panel, if a determination was reached, and an indication as to whether the panel found in favor of the United States or the relevant treaty partner.

(iii) With respect to each dispute submitted to arbitration and for which a determination was reached by the arbitration panel pursuant to the Protocol or any such treaty, the following information:

(I) In the case of a dispute submitted under the Protocol, an indication as to whether the presenter of the case to the competent authority of a Contracting State submitted a Position Paper for consideration by the arbitration panel.

(II) An indication as to whether the determination of the arbitration panel was accepted by each concerned person.

(III) The amount of income, expense, or taxation at issue in the case as determined by reference to the filings that were sufficient to set the commencement date of the case for purposes of determining when arbitration is available.

(IV) The proposed resolutions (income, expense, or taxation) submitted by each competent authority to the arbitration panel.

(B) The treaties referred to in subparagraph (A) are—

(i) the 2006 Protocol Amending the Convention between the United States of America and the Federal Republic of Germany for the Avoidance of Double Taxation and the Prevention of Fiscal Evasion with Respect to Taxes on Income and Capital and to Certain Other Taxes, done at Berlin June 1, 2006 (Treaty Doc. 109–20) (the ''2006 German Protocol'');

(ii) the Convention between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the Kingdom of Belgium for the Avoidance of Double Taxation and the Prevention of Fiscal Evasion with Respect to Taxes on Income, and accompanying protocol, done at Brussels July 9, 1970 (the ''Belgium Convention'') (Treaty Doc. 110–3);

(iii) the Protocol Amending the Convention between the United States of America and Canada with Respect to Taxes on Income and on Capital, signed at Washington September 26, 1980 (the ''2007 Canada Protocol'') (Treaty Doc. 110–15); or

(iv) the Protocol Amending the Convention between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the French Republic for the Avoidance of Double Taxation and the Prevention of Fiscal Evasion with Respect to Taxes on Income and Capital, signed at Paris August 31, 1994 (the ''2009 France Protocol'') (Treaty Doc. 111–4).

(3) The Secretary of the Treasury shall prepare and submit the detailed report required under paragraph (2) on March 1 of the year following the year in which the first report is submitted to the Joint Committee on Taxation and the Committee on Finance of the Senate, and on an annual basis thereafter for a period of five years. In each such report, disputes that were resolved, either by a mutual agreement between the relevant competent authorities or by a determination of an arbitration panel, and noted as such in prior reports may be omitted.

(4) The reporting requirements referred to in paragraphs (2) and (3) supersede the reporting requirements contained in paragraphs (2) and (3) of section 3 of the resolution of advice and consent to ratification of

the 2009 France Protocol, approved by the Senate on December 3, 2009.

[Treaty Doc. 111–8 Protocol Amending Tax Convention with Luxembourg]

Section 1. Senate Advice and Consent Subject to a Declaration

The Senate advises and consents to the ratification of the Protocol Amending the Convention between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg for the Avoidance of Double Taxation and the Prevention of Fiscal Evasion with Respect to Taxes on Income and Capital, signed on May 20, 2009, at Luxembourg with a related agreement effected by exchange of notes also signed on May 20, 2009 (the ''Protocol'') (Treaty Doc. 111–8), subject to the declaration of section 2.

Section 2. Declaration

The advice and consent of the Senate under section 1 is subject to the following declaration:

The Convention is self-executing.

[Treaty Doc. 111–7 Tax Convention with Hungary]

Section 1. Senate Advice and Consent Subject to a Declaration

The Senate advises and consents to the ratification of the Convention between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the Republic of Hungary for the Avoidance of Double Taxation and the Prevention of Fiscal Evasion with Respect to Taxes on Income, signed at Budapest February 4, 2010, with a related agreement effected by exchange of notes on February 4, 2010 (the ''Convention'') (Treaty Doc. 111–7), subject to the declaration of section 2.

Section 2. Declaration

The advice and consent of the Senate under section 1 is subject to the following declaration:

The Convention is self-executing.

[Treaty Doc. 112–5 Protocol Amending the Convention on Mutual Administrative Assistance in Tax Matters]

Section 1. Senate Advice and Consent Subject to a Declaration

The Senate advises and consents to the ratification of the Protocol Amending the Convention on Mutual Administrative Assistance in Tax Matters, done at Paris May 27, 2010 (the ''Protocol'') (Treaty Doc. 112–5), subject to the declaration of section 2.

Section 2. Declaration

The advice and consent of the Senate under section 1 is subject to the following declaration:

The Convention is self-executing.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

The following bills and joint resolutions were introduced, read the first and second times by unanimous consent, and referred as indicated:

By Mr. COTTON (for himself, Mr. SESSIONS, Mr. HATCH, and Mr. PERDUE):

S. 2514. A bill to require the Bureau of Justice Statistics to report on recidivism rates of Federal prisoners who are released early, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. BURR (for himself and Mrs. BOXER):

S. 2515. A bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to ensure criminal background checks of employees of the military child care system and providers of child care services and youth program services for military dependents; to the Committee on Armed Services.

By Mr. KIRK (for himself, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. GRASSLEY, and Mrs. ERNST):

S. 2516. A bill to revitalize Army arsenals, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Armed Services.

By Mr. JOHNSON (for himself and Mrs. ERNST):

S. 2517. A bill to require a report on United States strategy to combat terrorist use of social media, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

By Mr. JOHNSON:

S. 2518. A bill to authorize the use of Ebola funds for Zika response and preparedness; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. MCCAIN (for himself and Mr. PERDUE):

S. 2519. A bill to provide for incentives to encourage health insurance coverage, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

By Ms. KLOBUCHAR (for herself and Mr. TILLIS):

S. 2520. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to improve the care provided by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to newborn children; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

By Mrs. ERNST (for herself, Mr. GRAHAM, Mr. KIRK, Mrs. MCCASKILL, and Ms. MIKULSKI):

S. 2521. A bill to amend the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014 to improve the treatment at non-Department of Veterans Affairs facilities of veterans who are victims of military sexual assault, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

By Mr. CARPER:

S. 2522. A bill to amend the Homeland Security Act of 2002 to build partnerships to prevent violence by extremists; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

By Mr. PAUL:

S. 2523. A bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to provide for continued energy self-sufficiency at Fort Knox, Kentucky; to the Committee on Armed Services.

By Mr. GARDNER (for himself and Mr. BENNET):

S. 2524. A bill to insure adequate use and access to the existing Bolts Ditch headgate and ditch segment within the Holy Cross Wilderness in Eagle County, Colorado, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

By Ms. STABENOW (for herself and Mr. BLUNT):

S. 2525. A bill to increase the number of States that may conduct Medicaid demonstration programs to improve access to community mental health services; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mrs. GILLIBRAND (for herself, Mr. KIRK, Mr. MORAN, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, and Mr. COONS):

S. 2526. A bill to improve the competitiveness of United States manufacturing by designating and supporting manufacturing communities, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

SUBMISSION OF CONCURRENT AND SENATE RESOLUTIONS

The following concurrent resolutions and Senate resolutions were read, and referred (or acted upon), as indicated:

By Mr. KAINE (for himself, Mr. PORTMAN, Ms. BALDWIN, Mr. ISAKSON, Mr. WARNER, Mrs. MURRAY, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mr. FRANKEN, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Mr. ENZI, Mrs. SHAHEEN, Mr. WYDEN, Ms. CANTWELL, Ms. AYOTTE, Mr. COONS, Mr. THUNE, Mr. BOOZMAN, Mrs. CAPITO, Ms. MIKULSKI, Mr. CASEY, and Mr. DURBIN):

S. Res. 367. A resolution supporting the goals and ideals of Career and Technical Education Month; considered and agreed to.

By Mr. CARDIN (for himself, Mr. CORKER, and Mr. KAINE):

S. Res. 368. A resolution supporting efforts by the Government of Colombia to pursue peace and the end of the country's enduring internal armed conflict and recognizing United States support for Colombia at the 15th anniversary of Plan Colombia; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

By Mr. DAINES (for himself and Mr. BLUMENTHAL):

S. Res. 369. A resolution affirming the importance of student data privacy and recognizing Digital Learning Day; considered and agreed to.

ADDITIONAL COSPONSORS

S. 134

At the request of Mr. WYDEN, the name of the Senator from Hawaii (Mr. SCHATZ) was added as a cosponsor of S. 134, a bill to amend the Controlled Substances Act to exclude industrial hemp from the definition of marihuana, and for other purposes.

S. 524

At the request of Mr. WHITEHOUSE, the name of the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. UDALL) was added as a cosponsor of S. 524, a bill to authorize the Attorney General to award grants to address the national epidemics of prescription opioid abuse and heroin use.

S. 682

At the request of Mr. DONNELLY, the name of the Senator from Arizona (Mr. MCCAIN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 682, a bill to amend the Truth in Lending Act to modify the definitions of a mortgage originator and a high-cost mortgage.

S. 795

At the request of Mrs. MCCASKILL, the name of the Senator from Wisconsin (Mr. JOHNSON) was added as a cosponsor of S. 795, a bill to enhance whistleblower protection for contractor and grantee employees.

S. 849

At the request of Mr. ISAKSON, the name of the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. ALEXANDER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 849, a bill to amend the Public Health Service Act to provide for systematic data collection and analysis and epidemiological research regarding Multiple Sclerosis (MS), Parkinson's disease, and other neurological diseases.

S. 901

At the request of Mr. MORAN, the names of the Senator from Colorado (Mr. BENNET), the Senator from Maine (Ms. COLLINS), the Senator from Minnesota (Mr. FRANKEN) and the Senator from California (Mrs. FEINSTEIN) were added as cosponsors of S. 901, a bill to establish in the Department of Veterans Affairs a national center for research on the diagnosis and treatment of health conditions of the descendants of veterans exposed to toxic substances

during service in the Armed Forces that are related to that exposure, to establish an advisory board on such health conditions, and for other purposes.

S. 1074

At the request of Ms. BALDWIN, the name of the Senator from Minnesota (Mr. FRANKEN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1074, a bill to clarify the status of the North Country, Ice Age, and New England National Scenic Trails as units of the National Park System, and for other purposes.

S. 1110

At the request of Mr. ENZI, the names of the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. INHOFE) and the Senator from Michigan (Mr. PETERS) were added as cosponsors of S. 1110, a bill to direct the Secretary of Agriculture to publish in the Federal Register a strategy to significantly increase the role of volunteers and partners in National Forest System trail maintenance, and for other purposes.

S. 1607

At the request of Mr. PORTMAN, the name of the Senator from Illinois (Mr. KIRK) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1607, a bill to affirm the authority of the President to require independent regulatory agencies to comply with regulatory analysis requirements applicable to executive agencies, and for other purposes.

S. 1775

At the request of Mr. MURPHY, the name of the Senator from New Hampshire (Mrs. SHAHEEN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1775, a bill to direct the Secretary of Homeland Security to accept additional documentation when considering the application for veterans status of an individual who performed service as a coastwise merchant seaman during World War II, and for other purposes.

S. 1890

At the request of Mr. HATCH, the names of the Senator from Montana (Mr. DAINES) and the Senator from Kansas (Mr. ROBERTS) were added as cosponsors of S. 1890, a bill to amend chapter 90 of title 18, United States Code, to provide Federal jurisdiction for the theft of trade secrets, and for other purposes.

S. 2014

At the request of Ms. BALDWIN, the name of the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. ALEXANDER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2014, a bill to demonstrate a commitment to our Nation's scientists by increasing opportunities for the development of our next generation of researchers.

S. 2071

At the request of Mr. CRAPO, the name of the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. CASSIDY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2071, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to modernize payments for ambulatory surgical centers under the Medicare program, and for other purposes.

S. 2119

At the request of Mr. CARDIN, the name of the Senator from Wisconsin (Ms. BALDWIN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2119, a bill to provide for greater congressional oversight of Iran's nuclear program, and for other purposes.

S. 2185

At the request of Ms. HEITKAMP, the names of the Senator from Minnesota (Mr. FRANKEN) and the Senator from New York (Mr. SCHUMER) were added as cosponsors of S. 2185, a bill to require the Secretary of the Treasury to mint coins in recognition of the fight against breast cancer.

S. 2268

At the request of Mr. CORNYN, the name of the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. COTTON) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2268, a bill to award a Congressional Gold Medal to the United States Army Dust Off crews of the Vietnam War, collectively, in recognition of their extraordinary heroism and lifesaving actions in Vietnam.

S. 2311

At the request of Mr. HELLER, the name of the Senator from Illinois (Mr. KIRK) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2311, a bill to amend the Public Health Service Act to authorize the Secretary of Health and Human Services, acting through the Administrator of the Health Resources and Services Administration, to make grants to States for screening and treatment for maternal depression.

S. 2322

At the request of Mr. SCHUMER, the name of the Senator from Massachusetts (Ms. WARREN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2322, a bill to amend the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 to provide that over-the-road bus drivers are covered under the maximum hours requirements.

S. 2449

At the request of Mrs. BOXER, her name was added as a cosponsor of S. 2449, a bill to amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to remove limitations on the ability of certain dual citizens from participating in the Visa Waiver Program.

S. 2450

At the request of Mr. TESTER, the name of the Senator from Missouri (Mrs. MCCASKILL) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2450, a bill to amend title 5, United States Code, to address administrative leave for Federal employees, and for other purposes.

S. 2473

At the request of Mr. SULLIVAN, the name of the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MORAN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2473, a bill to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to carry out a pilot program to provide veterans the option of using an alternative appeals process to more quickly determine claims for disability compensation, and for other purposes.

S. 2474

At the request of Mr. COTTON, the names of the Senator from Illinois (Mr. KIRK) and the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. TOOMEY) were added as cosponsors of S. 2474, a bill to allow for additional markings, including the words ''Israel'' and ''Product in Israel,'' to be used for country of origin marking requirements for goods made in the geographical areas known as the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

S. 2483

At the request of Mr. UDALL, the name of the Senator from Minnesota (Mr. FRANKEN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2483, a bill to prohibit States from carrying out more than one Congressional redistricting after a decennial census and apportionment, to require States to conduct such redistricting through independent commissions, and for other purposes.

S. 2487

At the request of Mrs. BOXER, the names of the Senator from Montana (Mr. TESTER) and the Senator from Hawaii (Ms. HIRONO) were added as cosponsors of S. 2487, a bill to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to identify mental health care and suicide prevention programs and metrics that are effective in treating women veterans as part of the evaluation of such programs by the Secretary, and for other purposes.

S. 2497

At the request of Mr. BLUNT, the name of the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. ALEXANDER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2497, a bill to amend the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 to provide protections for retail customers, and for other purposes.

S. 2505

At the request of Mr. KIRK, the name of the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. ALEXANDER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2505, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to ensure that retirement investors receive advice in their best interests, and for other purposes.

S. 2506

At the request of Mr. LEAHY, the name of the Senator from Massachusetts (Ms. WARREN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2506, a bill to restore statutory rights to the people of the United States from forced arbitration.

S.J. RES. 18

At the request of Mr. DONNELLY, the name of the Senator from Montana (Mr. TESTER) was added as a cosponsor of S.J. Res. 18, a joint resolution proposing a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution of the United States.

S. RES. 99

At the request of Mr. NELSON, the name of the Senator from Delaware (Mr. COONS) was added as a cosponsor of S. Res. 99, a resolution calling on the Government of Iran to fulfill its promises of assistance in the case of Robert Levinson, the longest held United States civilian in our Nation's history.

S. RES. 349

At the request of Mr. ROBERTS, the name of the Senator from Colorado

(Mr. GARDNER) was added as a cosponsor of S. Res. 349, a resolution congratulating the Farm Credit System on the celebration of its 100th anniversary.

AMENDMENT NO. 3107

At the request of Ms. BALDWIN, the name of the Senator from Minnesota (Mr. FRANKEN) was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 3107 intended to be proposed to S. 2012, an original bill to provide for the modernization of the energy policy of the United States, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 3120

At the request of Mr. KING, the name of the Senator from Oregon (Mr. MERKLEY) was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 3120 intended to be proposed to S. 2012, an original bill to provide for the modernization of the energy policy of the United States, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 3133

At the request of Ms. HIRONO, the name of the Senator from Montana (Mr. DAINES) was added as a cosponsor of amendment No. 3133 intended to be proposed to S. 2012, an original bill to provide for the modernization of the energy policy of the United States, and for other purposes.

STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

By Mr. COTTON (for himself, Mr. SESSIONS, Mr. HATCH, and Mr. PERDUE):

S. 2514. A bill to require the Bureau of Justice Statistics to report on recidivism rates of Federal prisoners who are released early, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

Mr. COTTON. Mr. President, today I wish to discuss the Sentencing Reform and Corrections Act that has been voted out of the Judiciary Committee.

There is much debate about the wisdom of this bill. That is, like most bills we discuss in this Chamber, a judgment call. But there cannot be debate over the facts of this bill. We have to be very clear on what this bill, by its own text, is designed to do.

Proponents of the bill often invoke four phrases to describe the felons to be released under the terms of the bill: ''first-time,'' ''nonviolent,'' ''low-level,'' ''drug possession'' offenders. Yet none of these four terms is accurate.

By its text, the bill will apply sentence reductions not to first-time offenders but to repeat offenders—some many times over. These are felons who have made the conscious choice to commit crimes over and over.

By its text, the bill will not just apply to so-called ''nonviolent offenders'' but to thousands of violent felons and armed career criminals who have used firearms in the course of their drug felonies or crimes of violence.

By its text, the bill will reduce sentences not for those convicted of simple possession but for major drug traffickers—ones who deal in hundreds of thousands of dollars' worth of heroin and thousands of pounds of marijuana. And let's be clear. Drug trafficking is not nonviolent, as the bill's proponents often claim. It is built on an entire edifice of violence, stretching from the narcoterrorists of South America to the drug-deal enforcers on our city streets. If you think dealing drugs on a street corner while armed with a gun is a nonviolent offense, you probably live in a rich suburb or a gated community.

By its text, this bill will apply to felons convicted as juveniles of murder, rape, assault, and other crimes for which they were justly tried as adults.

By its text, this bill will apply to repeat felons whose past crimes include kidnapping, carjacking, armed robbery, and other violent crimes.

By its text, this bill will make eligible for early release into America's communities thousands of drug traffickers and other violent felons. And when we catch such criminals going forward, we will not be able to keep them locked up for the same sentences.

It has been reported that the bill's sponsors are preparing to release a revised bill, one that would address some of the many shortcomings. Regarding this news, I thank the sponsors for acknowledging that the bill as passed by committee does, in fact, apply to serious drug traffickers and other violent felons. I look forward to evaluating the new legislative text, and I hope it addresses these problems. Until then, though, we can only examine more closely the bill as passed by the committee and its consequences.

Make no mistake, the consequences of this bill are all too predictable. Sadly, more than half of released prisoners are rearrested within 1 year, and 77 percent are rearrested within 5 years. We can be sure, then, that we will see more crimes committed by those who might be released early—thanks to this bill. That is indisputable. Those new crimes will wreak havoc on the citizens, families, and communities in each of our States.

This risk is not hypothetical. Sterile statistics do not adequately convey the severity of the threat of mass recidivism. Last month in Columbus, OH, a man named Wendell Callahan brutally killed his ex-girlfriend and her two young daughters. In what was described as a ''stabbing rampage,'' Callahan murdered Erveena Hammonds, her 10-year-old daughter Anaesia, and Anaesia's little sister, 7-year-old Breya.

These murders were an atrocity, and they were completely avoidable. Wendell Callahan walked out of Federal prison in August 2014, but his original sentence should have kept him in jail until 2018. If he had been in jail instead of on the streets, a young family would still be alive today.

Callahan walked out of jail early because the U.S. Sentencing Commission reduced sentences retroactively for hardened violent criminals like him. The Commission first reduced sentencing guidelines in 2007. It did so again in 2010 and again in 2014. That is three major systemic sentencing reductions in the span of a mere 7 years. The result is that 46,000 Federal convicts will walk from jail early. Wendell Callahan was one among that 46,000. There will be many more like him. While we pray against all odds that none of them go on to commit a triple-murder like Wendell Callahan did—or any other heinous crime—I am afraid our prayers will go unanswered, at least in part.

The U.S. Sentencing Commission is an independent judicial agency that provides uniform sentencing guidelines to judges. Congress didn't have a hand in those sentencing reductions, but with the Sentencing Reform and Corrections Act, the Senate would impose a fourth major sentencing reduction within 8 years—one that is deeper and broader than the reductions imposed by the U.S. Sentencing Commission.

This is badly misguided. The Senate would be launching a massive social experiment in criminal leniency without knowing the full consequences of the first three reductions imposed by the Sentencing Commissions. This experiment threatens to undo the historic drops in crime that we have seen over the last 25 years.

That drop in crime rate was no accident. It was the result of higher mandatory minimums put in place in the 1980s, coupled with vigilant policing strategies pioneered by scholars like Jim Wilson and practiced by elected leaders like Rudy Giuliani and other American mayors and law enforcement officials. The combination of mandatory minimums and innovative policing is not a haphazard anticrime strategy. It is one that was reached through tough trial-and-error performed at local, State, and, eventually, the Federal levels. It is one that arose from advocacy that originated in the communities and cities that were hardest hit by the drug trade. It is one that has a proven record of success, not in terms of crime rates but in terms of lives saved, families protected, and communities healed.

The connection between higher mandatory minimums and lower crime is often lost on those unfamiliar with this history or blinded by ideology. For example, in 1997 the New York Times reported: ''Crime Keeps On Falling, but Prisons Keep On Filling.'' One year later, in 1998, the Times added: ''Prison Population Growing Although Crime Rate Drops.'' In 2004 the Times reiterated yet again, just for good measure: ''Despite Drop In Crime, An Increase In Inmates.'' You can't make this stuff up, yet it is real and appears to be all too soon forgotten.

Like most conservative achievements, the reduction in crime over the past generation is built on the hard lessons of experience. We should not lightly abandon the criminal justice wisdom accumulated over decades to the passing fashions of current thinking. We

should not blithely move from a proven strategy of accountability and vigilance to an experimental theory of leniency. We should not trade away concrete, hard-won gains when the results may be devastating to American communities.

The Senate and the American people need to consider any change to our sentencing laws with full information. We need to know if this sentencing leniency bill will return us closer to the days of the 1970s and 1980s, when our cities were besieged by the drug trade and whole communities were being rotted out as a result. We need to debate sentencing changes with all the data available to us, and we need to do this with eyes wide open.

That is why today, together with Senators HATCH, SESSIONS, and PERDUE, I am introducing the Criminal Consequences of Early Release Act. This is a simple but very needed bill. It will require the Federal Government to report on the recidivism rates of the 46,000 Federal inmates to be released early under the Sentencing Commission's reductions, and it will require the same reporting for any prisoners released early under any future reductions mandated by Congress.

The report required by this bill will make clear how many crimes are being committed by released felons who would otherwise still be in prison. It will make clear what types of crimes—from drug trafficking to assault to robbery to murder—are being committed by these felons. It will make clear in which States these crimes are occurring.

Currently this type of data is extremely hard to compile. It is not reported by the Bureau of Justice Statistics, and any information we do have comes mostly through anecdotes and sporadic media reports. Full information on the criminal consequences of early release must be published in detail. Before voting on any bill to reduce sentences, Senators need to understand fully the criminal consequences of prior sentence reductions.

To hold Senators accountable for their votes, the American people need to understand how their communities are being affected. When the Federal Government decides to release thousands of violent criminals onto the streets, no legislator or official should be able to plead ignorance. If people are being killed, drugs trafficked, property stolen, and children kidnapped by felons who should have been in prison but instead are out on the streets, then the people in our States and communities deserve to know that.

I want to be clear. To those who support the Sentencing Reform Corrections Act, we are not in full disagreement. Like you, I oppose jail for first-time drug users with no prior record. It is vanishingly rare for such offenders to be prosecuted and jailed in the Federal system, of course, but it remains true that the better option for them—particularly if they are addicts—would be drug treatment. Like you, I believe that our prisons should not be an anarchic jungle that is a danger to both prisoners and corrections officers. Like you, I believe that those prisoners who will someday complete their sentences and reenter society should be given a chance to rehabilitate and redeem themselves while in prison so they do not commit additional new crimes once they are out of prison. Like you, I do believe there exists a possibility of a manifestly unjust sentence.

So I suggest: Let's work on that bill. Let's work on a bill that identifies and addresses all first-time drug possession inmates in the Federal system but keeps drug traffickers and other violent offenders in prison to finish their sentences. Let's improve prison conditions and give prisoners a shot at redemption and a better life while protecting our communities. If you wish, let's work on a bill to speed the consideration of commutation and pardon applications because, if you want to undo manifestly unjust sentences, we can help the President use his constitutional power of pardon and commutation as a precise scalpel to identify and remedy those very rare cases of manifestly unjust sentences. What we should not do is use the blunt instrument of releasing thousands of violent felons and major drug traffickers back onto our streets early.

The President has a constitutional power to remedy unjust sentences, but you know what power he doesn't have? The power to bring back to life the victims who are murdered by prisoners released early or sentenced inadequately.

In the discussion about the Sentencing Reform and Corrections Act, there is much talk about legacy, and, in particular, a legacy of President Obama after he leaves office. If considerations of legacy should factor into the debate, I would close with this observation. Legacies are not necessarily positive. They can be negative and deeply tragic. If supporters of this bill and President Obama are wrong, if this grand experiment in criminal leniency goes awry, how many lives will be ruined and how many dead? How much of the anticrime progress of the last generation will be wiped away for the next?

Those are the questions we must ask as we consider this bill. If we ask them honestly, soberly, and with full information, we will invariably be led to one conclusion: We should not grant early release to thousands of drug traffickers and other violent criminals nor should we shorten their sentences in the future.

By Mr. MCCAIN (for himself and Mr. PERDUE):

S. 2519. A bill to provide for incentives to encourage health insurance coverage, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, it has been more than 5 years since ObamaCare was signed into law. Since then, the American people have only seen higher health care costs, less access, decreased quality of care, and fewer choices.

Every day I hear from Arizonans who have been forced to give up the health insurance plans they liked and now face skyrocketing monthly premiums and never-ending wait times for appointments. Moreover, I have spoken with small business owners across my State who have been forced to choose between complying with costly government mandates, laying off employees or, worse, closing their doors.

For 5 long years, the American people have been unfairly burdened by this failed law, and the negative effects are only expected to grow. According to the Department of Health and Human Service's own data, 24 insurance plans in the ObamaCare exchanges were expected to see double-digit rate hikes in 2016, while residents of Phoenix, AZ, were expected to see their premiums increase by roughly 19 percent. The highest average premium increase in Arizona was projected to reach a whopping 78 percent.

ObamaCare's numerous failures are well established. Take, for example, the President's broken promise that Americans who liked their health care plans and doctors could keep them; skyrocketing premiums and deductibles; 21 tax increases that both the CBO and the Joint Committee on Taxation predict would be passed on to the consumer; over $1 billion wasted on failed ObamaCare-established health care co-ops; and an estimated 2 million full-time equivalent workers expected to lose their jobs by 2024, according to the Congressional Budget Office.

For these reasons, a majority of Americans today oppose the President's failed health care law. They are counting on us, their elected representatives in Congress, to fight to fully repeal and replace it. That is why I was proud to partner with my Republican colleagues in sending the first ObamaCare repeal to the President's desk. That is also why I am proud to stand before the Congress today to reintroduce the Empowering Patients First Act along with my friend, the Senator from Georgia, Mr. PERDUE, to replace the President's failed law with health care reform that puts patients and physicians back in charge of their health care decisions. The Empowering Patients First Act is companion legislation to a bill introduced in the House of Representatives by Congressman TOM PRICE that would fully repeal the Affordable Care Act and replace it with solutions that put patients, families, and doctors back in charge of their medical decisions—not Washington bureaucrats.

It is past time for my colleagues on the other side of the aisle to wake up to the reality that ObamaCare is the wrong solution to health care reform. Just consider a recent report by the Galen Institute which notes that since the President's health care law was

passed in 2010, it has undergone 70 significant changes through either acts of Congress, administrative actions, or the U.S. Supreme Court. Let me repeat that. ObamaCare has been changed a total of 70 times—in many cases through unilateral action—in order to protect the American people from its damaging effects.

I am as convinced today as I was 7 years ago when I stood on this floor to propose the first Republican amendment to ObamaCare that this law is the wrong approach to health care reform.

The bill I am reintroducing today would create policies that empower patients and doctors to take charge of their health care decisions, including by ensuring no one is priced out of the market, including individuals with preexisting conditions; building on and expanding health savings accounts and other models to drive down costs; establishing age-adjusted tax credits for health insurance; equalizing tax treatment of employer-sponsored plans and plans purchased by individuals by letting individuals buy health insurance with pretax dollars; enhancing coverage options by letting small business owners band together across State lines through association health plans to create more affordable and comprehensive health care; letting consumers buy insurance across State lines; curbing defensive medicine and lawsuit abuse through tort reform; and making coverage more affordable by enabling individuals to own their insurance, like a 401(k) plan, so they can take it with them across State lines and if they change jobs. That only makes sense.

Americans deserve an alternative to the mandates, high costs, and bureaucratic mess that have been created by ObamaCare. The Empowering Patients First Act would repeal ObamaCare once and for all and replace it with health care reform that gives patients, families, and doctors the power to make medical decisions—not bureaucrats in Washington.

SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS

SENATE RESOLUTION 367—SUPPORTING THE GOALS AND IDEALS OF CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION MONTH

Mr. KAINE (for himself, Mr. PORTMAN, Ms. BALDWIN, Mr. ISAKSON, Mr. WARNER, Mrs. MURRAY, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mr. FRANKEN, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Mr. ENZI, Mrs. SHAHEEN, Mr. WYDEN, Ms. CANTWELL, Ms. AYOTTE, Mr. COONS, Mr. THUNE, Mr. BOOZMAN, Mrs. CAPITO, Ms. MIKULSKI, Mr. CASEY, and Mr. DURBIN) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 367

Whereas a competitive global economy requires workers who are trained in skilled professions;

Whereas, according to the National Association of Manufacturers, 80 percent of respondents indicated a moderate to severe shortage of qualified skilled production employees, including front-line workers such as machinists, operators, craft workers, distributors, and technicians;

Whereas career and technical education (referred to in this preamble as ''CTE'') ensures that competitive and skilled workers are ready, willing, and capable of holding jobs in high-wage, high-skill, and in-demand career fields such as science, technology, engineering, mathematics, nursing, allied health, construction, information technology, energy sustainability, and many other career fields that are vital in keeping the United States competitive in the global economy;

Whereas CTE helps the United States meet the very real and immediate challenges of economic development, student achievement, and global competitiveness;

Whereas approximately 14,000,000 students are enrolled in CTE across the country with CTE programs in nearly 1,300 public high schools and 1,700 2-year colleges;

Whereas of the 20 fastest growing occupations—

(1) 10 require an associate's degree or a degree with fewer requirements;

(2) 13 with the largest numbers of new jobs projected require on-the-job training, an associate's degree, or a certificate; and

(3) nearly all require real-world skills that can be mastered through CTE;

Whereas CTE matches employability skills with workforce demand and provides relevant academic and technical coursework leading to industry-recognized credentials for secondary, postsecondary, and adult learners;

Whereas CTE affords students the opportunity to gain the knowledge, skills, and credentials needed to secure careers in growing, high-demand fields;

Whereas CTE students were significantly more likely than non-CTE student to report having developed problem-solving, project completion, research, math, college application, work-related, communication, time management, and critical thinking skills during high school; and

Whereas students at schools with highly integrated rigorous academic and CTE programs have significantly higher achievement in reading, mathematics, and science than students at schools with less integrated programs: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) designates February 2016 as ''Career and Technical Education Month'' to celebrate career and technical education across the United States;

(2) supports the goals and ideals of Career and Technical Education month;

(3) recognizes the importance of career and technical education in preparing a well-educated and skilled workforce in the United States; and

(4) encourages educators, counselors, and administrators to promote career and technical education as an option to students.

SENATE RESOLUTION 368—SUPPORTING EFFORTS BY THE GOVERNMENT OF COLOMBIA TO PURSUE PEACE AND THE END OF THE COUNTRY'S ENDURING INTERNAL ARMED CONFLICT AND RECOGNIZING UNITED STATES SUPPORT FOR COLOMBIA AT THE 15TH ANNIVERSARY OF PLAN COLOMBIA

Mr. CARDIN (for himself, Mr. CORKER, and Mr. KAINE) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations:

S. RES. 368

Whereas, on October 1, 2000, President William Clinton, having worked with the support of Republican majorities in the United States Senate and the United States House of Representatives, commenced implementation of the first United States foreign assistance package in support of Plan Colombia;

Whereas Plan Colombia has received steadfast commitments from the administrations of Presidents William Clinton, George W. Bush, and Barack Obama, and continuously has been strengthened by broad bipartisan support in the United States Congress;

Whereas the United States Congress, through Plan Colombia, has appropriated more than $9,000,000,000 in foreign assistance to support initiatives of the Government of Colombia to combat the illicit narcotics trade and terrorism, confront irregular armed actors, advance democratic governance, promote economic growth, defend human rights, and pursue a strategy towards sustainable peace;

Whereas the Government of Colombia, throughout the administrations of Presidents Andrés Pastrana, Álvaro Uribe, and Juan Manuel Santos, has made investments in Plan Colombia and carried out transformational efforts to consolidate domestic security, socioeconomic development, and the rule of law that far exceed those contributions made by the United States;

Whereas the United States and Colombia have forged a resolute bond through the implementation of Plan Colombia, which has been bolstered by the support of hundreds of thousands of Colombian-Americans and their contribution to American life;

Whereas, over the past 15 years, levels of crime and violence have subsided sharply in Colombia, with annual per capita homicide rates declining from 62 per 100,000 people in 1999 to 27 per 100,000 people in 2014, and the annual number of kidnappings decreasing from more than 3,000 in 1999 to less than 300 in 2014;

Whereas the alignment of improved security and sound economic policies has translated into steady growth in Colombia's Gross Domestic Product, which increased from $86,000,000,000 in 1999 to more than $377,000,000,000 in 2014, and led to greater Foreign Direct Investment, which grew from $1,500,000,000 in 1999 to one of the highest in Latin America at $16,000,000,000 in 2014;

Whereas the Government of Colombia has made impressive strides in reducing poverty during the last 15 years, with the poverty rate decreasing from 64 percent in 1999 to 28.5 percent in 2014, according to the World Bank;

Whereas, since 1999, the Government of Colombia has expanded the presence of the state across all 32 territorial departments, has contributed to the professionalism of the Colombian judiciary, and has improved the capacity of the Colombian Army, Navy, Air Force, and National Police;

Whereas, in November 2012, the Government of Colombia entered into talks to negotiate an end to the country's enduring conflict with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), a guerilla movement that has ties to the illicit narcotics trade, has kidnapped Colombian and United States civilians, and has been designated by the United States Department of State as a Foreign Terrorist Organization;

Whereas a half-century of conflict has taken a devastating toll on Colombia's civilian population, has claimed the lives of more than 220,000 people, and has left more than

6,500,000 people internally displaced, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees;

Whereas the internal armed conflict has victimized all Colombians, including women, children, and Afro-descendant and indigenous peoples, and has led to the repeated targeting of leading representatives of civil society, including trade unionists, journalists, human rights defenders, and other community activists;

Whereas efforts to achieve lasting peace in Colombia must address the hardships faced by victims of the armed conflict, as exemplified by the Government of Colombia's Law on Victims and Restitution of Land of 2011;

Whereas the prospects for national reconciliation and sustainable peace in Colombia rely on the effective delivery of justice for victims of the conflict and the ability to hold accountable and appropriately punish perpetrators of serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law; and

Whereas a potential accord between the Government of Colombia and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) represents an opportunity to end the enduring conflict in Colombia and bring peace to the Americas: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) reaffirms the unwavering support of the Government and people of the United States for the people of Colombia in their pursuit of peace and their aspiration to live in a country free of violent conflict;

(2) commends efforts to bring an end to Colombia's enduring internal armed conflict;

(3) maintains its commitment to the victims of Colombia's armed conflict and urges the negotiating parties to forge an agreement that holds accountable perpetrators of serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law and ensures that they are appropriately punished;

(4) encourages the Government of Colombia to promote informed public debate about the details of a potential peace accord in advance of voter ratification;

(5) encourages the Secretary of State to develop a comprehensive, multiyear strategy to ensure the successful implementation and sustainability of a potential peace accord in Colombia, if such an accord is endorsed by the Colombian people, and further strengthen the close bilateral partnership shared by the Governments of the United States and Colombia; and

(6) reaffirms its commitment to continued partnership between the United States and Colombia on issues of mutual security, including counternarcotics cooperation, combating transnational organized crime, and ensuring justice for those who have caused indelible harm to our populations.

SENATE RESOLUTION 369—AFFIRMING THE IMPORTANCE OF STUDENT DATA PRIVACY AND RECOGNIZING DIGITAL LEARNING DAY

Mr. DAINES (for himself and Mr. BLUMENTHAL) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 369

Whereas, on February 17, 2016, Digital Learning Day is recognized;

Whereas laws must sufficiently protect the personal information of students as data becomes a form of currency;

Whereas, without sufficient safeguards, student information could end up in the hands of criminals or other bad actors around the world;

Whereas Digital Learning Day highlights the many ways in which technology can enhance the classroom experience;

Whereas teachers and schools use technology and digital information in innovative ways that benefit students;

Whereas schools use electronic records to update student information and transfer electronic records from one school to another school; and

Whereas it is important to maintain student privacy and ensure the data is stored safely and securely: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate, That Congress recognizes—

(1) the benefits of digital learning and the importance of student privacy; and

(2) that policies should safeguard student data and encourage innovative educational technologies.

AMENDMENTS SUBMITTED AND PROPOSED

SA 3295. Mr. PORTMAN (for himself, Ms. CANTWELL, and Ms. MURKOWSKI) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 2953 proposed by Ms. MURKOWSKI to the bill S. 2012, to provide for the modernization of the energy policy of the United States, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 3296. Mr. MCCONNELL (for Mr. JOHNSON) proposed an amendment to the bill S. 2109, to direct the Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency to develop an integrated plan to reduce administrative costs under the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, and for other purposes.

TEXT OF AMENDMENTS

SA 3295. Mr. PORTMAN (for himself, Ms. CANTWELL, and Ms. MURKOWSKI) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed to amendment SA 2953 proposed by Ms. MURKOWSKI to the bill S. 2012, to provide for the modernization of the energy policy of the United States, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the end of subtitle E of title IV, add the following:

SEC. 44_____. NATIONAL PARK CENTENNIAL.

(a) NATIONAL PARK CENTENNIAL CHALLENGE FUND.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 1049 of title 54, United States Code (as amended by section 5001(a)), is amended by adding at the end the following:

"§ 104909. National Park Centennial Challenge Fund

"(a) PURPOSE.—The purpose of this section is to establish a fund in the Treasury—

"(1) to finance signature projects and programs to enhance the National Park System as the centennial of the National Park System approaches in 2016; and

"(2) to prepare the System for another century of conservation, preservation, and enjoyment.

"(b) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

"(1) CHALLENGE FUND.—The term 'Challenge Fund' means the National Park Centennial Challenge Fund established by subsection (c)(1).

"(2) QUALIFIED DONATION.—The term 'qualified donation' means a cash donation or the pledge of a cash donation guaranteed by an irrevocable letter of credit to the Service that the Secretary certifies is to be used for a signature project or program.

"(3) SIGNATURE PROJECT OR PROGRAM.—The term 'signature project or program' means any project or program identified by the Secretary as a project or program that would further the purposes of the System or any System unit.

"(c) NATIONAL PARK CENTENNIAL CHALLENGE FUND.—

"(1) ESTABLISHMENT.—There is established in the Treasury of the United States a fund, to be known as the 'National Park Centennial Challenge Fund'.

"(2) DEPOSITS.—The Challenge Fund shall consist of—

"(A) qualified donations that are transferred from the Service donation account, in accordance with subsection (e)(1); and

"(B) such amounts as are appropriated from the general fund of the Treasury, in accordance with subsection (e)(2).

"(3) AVAILABILITY.—Amounts in the Challenge Fund shall—

"(A) be available to the Secretary for signature projects and programs under this title, without further appropriation; and

"(B) remain available until expended.

"(d) SIGNATURE PROJECTS AND PROGRAMS.—

"(1) DEVELOPMENT OF LIST.—Not later than 180 days after the date of enactment of this section, the Secretary shall develop a list of signature projects and programs eligible for funding from the Challenge Fund.

"(2) SUBMISSION TO CONGRESS.—The Secretary shall submit to the Committees on Appropriations and Energy and Natural Resources of the Senate and the Committees on Appropriations and Natural Resources of the House of Representatives the list developed under paragraph (1).

"(3) UPDATES.—Subject to the notice requirements under paragraph (2), the Secretary may add any signature project or program to the list developed under paragraph (1).

"(e) DONATIONS AND MATCHING FEDERAL FUNDS.—

"(1) QUALIFIED DONATIONS.—The Secretary may transfer any qualified donations to the Challenge Fund.

"(2) MATCHING AMOUNT.—There is authorized to be appropriated to the Challenge Fund for each fiscal year through fiscal year 2020 an amount equal to the amount of qualified donations received for the fiscal year.

"(3) SOLICITATION.—Nothing in this section expands any authority of the Secretary, the Service, or any employee of the Service to receive or solicit donations.

"(f) REPORT TO CONGRESS.—The Secretary shall provide with the submission of the budget of the President to Congress for each fiscal year a report on the status and funding of the signature projects and programs.".

(2) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections affected for title 54, United States Code (as amended by section 5001(b)), is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 104908 the following:

"§ 104909. National Park Centennial Challenge Fund.".

(b) SECOND CENTURY ENDOWMENT FOR THE NATIONAL PARK SYSTEM.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Subchapter II of chapter 1011 of title 54, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following:

"SEC. 101121. SECOND CENTURY ENDOWMENT FOR THE NATIONAL PARK SYSTEM.

"(a) IN GENERAL.—The National Park Foundation shall establish an endowment, to be known as the 'Second Century Endowment for the National Park System' (referred to in this section as the 'Endowment').

"(b) CAMPAIGN.—To further the mission of the Service, the National Park Foundation may undertake a campaign to fund the Endowment through gifts, devises, or bequests, in accordance with section 101113.

''(c) USE OF PROCEEDS.—

''(1) IN GENERAL.—On request of the Secretary, the National Park Foundation shall expend proceeds from the Endowment in accordance with projects and programs in furtherance of the mission of the Service, as identified by the Secretary.

''(2) MANAGEMENT.—The National Park Foundation shall manage the Endowment in a manner that ensures that annual expenditures as a percentage of the principal are consistent with Internal Revenue Service guidelines for endowments maintained for charitable purposes.

''(d) INVESTMENTS.—The National Park Foundation shall—

''(1) maintain the Endowment in an interest-bearing account; and

''(2) invest Endowment proceeds with the purpose of supporting and enriching the System in perpetuity.

''(e) REPORT.—Each year, the National Park Foundation shall make publicly available information on the amounts deposited into, and expended from, the Endowment.''.

(2) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections affected for title 54, United States Code, is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 101120 the following:

''§ 101121. Second Century Endowment for the National Park System.''.

(c) NATIONAL PARK SERVICE INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY PROTECTION.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 1049 of title 54, United States Code (as amended by subsection (a)(1)), is amended by adding at the end the following:

''§ 104910. Intellectual property

''(a) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

''(1) SERVICE EMBLEM.—

''(A) IN GENERAL.—The term 'Service emblem' means any word, phrase, insignia, logo, logotype, trademark, service mark, symbol, design, graphic, image, color, badge, uniform, or any combination of emblems used to identify the Service or a component of the System.

''(B) INCLUSIONS.—The term 'Service emblem' includes—

''(i) the Service name;

''(ii) an official System unit name;

''(iii) any other name used to identify a Service component or program; and

''(iv) the Arrowhead symbol.

''(2) SERVICE UNIFORM.—The term 'Service uniform' means any combination of apparel, accessories, or emblems, any distinctive clothing or other items of dress, or a representation of dress—

''(A) that is worn during the performance of official duties; and

''(B) that identifies the wearer as a Service employee.

''(b) PROHIBITED ACTS.—

''(1) NATIONAL PARK SERVICE EMBLEM OR UNIFORM.—No person shall, without the written permission of the Secretary—

''(A) use any Service emblem or uniform, or any word, term, name, symbol or device or any combination of emblems to suggest any colorable likeness of the Service emblem or Service uniform in connection with goods or services in commerce if the use is likely to cause confusion, or to deceive the public into believing that the emblem or uniform is from or connected with the Service;

''(B) use any Service emblem or Service uniform or any word, term, name, symbol, device, or any combination of emblems or uniforms to suggest any likeness of the Service emblem or Service uniform in connection with goods or services in commerce in a manner reasonably calculated to convey the impression to the public that the goods or services are approved, endorsed, or authorized by the Service;

''(C) use in commerce any word, term, name, symbol, device or any combination of words, terms, names, symbols, or devices to suggest any likeness of the Service emblem or Service uniform in a manner that is reasonably calculated to convey the impression that the wearer of the item of apparel is acting pursuant to the legal authority of the Service; or

''(D) knowingly make any false statement for the purpose of obtaining permission to use any Service emblem or Service uniform.

''(2) PENALTIES.—Any person who violates the provisions of paragraph (1), shall—

''(A) in the case of a first violation by an individual, be fined not more than $5,000 per use, imprisoned not more than 180 days, or both;

''(B) in the case of a subsequent violation by an individual, be fined not more than $100,000 per use, imprisoned not more than 1 year, or both;

''(C) in the case of a first violation by a person or entity other than an individual, be fined not more than $10,000 per use; or

''(D) in the case of a subsequent violation by a person or entity other than an individual, be fined not more than $200,000 per use.

''(c) CIVIL CAUSE OF ACTION.—The Attorney General may, on request of the Secretary, bring a civil action in a court of competent jurisdiction, to obtain injunctive or other equitable relief and to recover damages, against a person who manufactures, reproduces, or uses the Service emblem or Service uniform, without the written permission of the Secretary.

''(d) RETENTION OF FUNDS.—Any fines collected under section (b)(2) and any damages collected under subsection (c) shall be retained by the National Park Service, until expended and without further appropriation, for use by System units and programs administered by the Service.''.

(2) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections affected for title 54, United States Code, is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 104908 (as added by subsection (a)(2)) the following:

''§ 104910. Intellectual property.''.

(d) NATIONAL PARK SERVICE EDUCATION AND INTERPRETATION.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Division A of subtitle I of title 54, United States Code, is amended by inserting after chapter 1007 the following:

''CHAPTER 1008—EDUCATION AND INTERPRETATION

''CHAPTER 1008—EDUCATION AND INTERPRETATION

''Sec.
''100801. Purposes.
''100802. Definitions.
''100803. Interpretation and education authority.
''100804. Interpretation and education evaluation and quality improvement.
''100805. Improved utilization of partners and volunteers in interpretation and education.

''§ 100801. Purposes

''The purposes of this chapter are—

''(1) to more effectively achieve the mission of the Service by providing clear authority and direction for interpretation and education programs that are carried out by the Service under separate authorities;

''(2) to ensure that the public encounters a variety of interpretive and educational opportunities and services during visits to System units;

''(3) to recognize that the Service provides lifelong learning opportunities and contributes to interdisciplinary learning in traditional and nontraditional educational settings;

''(4) to provide opportunities for all people to find relevance in the System; and

''(5) to strengthen public understanding of the natural and cultural heritage and the United States.

''§ 100802. Definitions

''In this chapter:

''(1) EDUCATION.—The term 'education' means enhancing public awareness, understanding, and appreciation of the resources of the System through learner-centered, place-based materials, programs, and activities that achieve specific learning objectives as identified in a curriculum.

''(2) INTERPRETATION.—The term 'interpretation' means—

''(A) providing opportunities for people to form intellectual and emotional connections to gain awareness, appreciation, and understanding of the resources of the System; and

''(B) the professional career field of Service employees, volunteers, and partners who interpret the resources of the System.

''(3) RELATED AREA.—The term 'related area' means—

''(A) a component of the National Trails System;

''(B) a National Heritage Area; and

''(C) an affiliated area administered in connection with the System.

''§ 100803. Interpretation and education authority

''The Secretary shall ensure that management of System units and related areas is enhanced by the availability and utilization of a broad program of the highest quality interpretation and education.

''§ 100804. Interpretation and education evaluation and quality improvement

''The Secretary may undertake a program of regular evaluation of interpretation and education programs to ensure that the programs—

''(1) adjust to the ways in which people learn and engage with the natural world and shared heritage as embodied in the System;

''(2) reflect different cultural backgrounds, ages, education, gender, abilities, ethnicity, and needs;

''(3) demonstrate innovative approaches to management and appropriately incorporate emerging learning and communications technology; and

''(4) reflect current scientific and academic research, content, methods, and audience analysis.

''§ 100805. Improved utilization of partners and volunteers in interpretation and education

''The Secretary may—

''(1) coordinate with System unit partners and volunteers in the delivery of quality programs and services to supplement the programs and services provided by the Service as part of a Long-Range Interpretive Plan for a System unit;

''(2) support interpretive partners by providing opportunities to participate in interpretive training; and

''(3) collaborate with other Federal and non-Federal public or private agencies, organizations, or institutions for the purposes of developing, promoting, and making available educational opportunities related to resources of the System and programs.''.

(2) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of chapters for division A of subtitle I of title 54, United States Code, is amended by inserting after the item relating to chapter 1007 the following:

''1008. Education and Interpretation 100801''.

(e) PUBLIC LAND CORPS AMENDMENTS.—

(1) DEFINITIONS.—Section 203(10)(A) of the Public Lands Corps Act of 1993 (16 U.S.C. 1722(10)(A)) is amended by striking ''25'' and inserting ''30''.

(2) PARTICIPANTS.—Section 204(b) of the Public Lands Corps Act of 1993 (16 U.S.C.

1723(b)) is amended in the first sentence by striking ''25'' and inserting ''30''.

(3) HIRING.—Section 207(c)(2) of the Public Lands Corps Act of 1993 (16 U.S.C., 1726(c)(2)) is amended by striking ''120 days'' and inserting ''2 years''.

(f) VOLUNTEERS IN PARKS PROGRAM.—Section 102301(d) of title 54, United States Code, is amended—

(1) by striking ''is'' and inserting ''are''; and

(2) by striking ''not more than $3,500,000'' and inserting ''such sums as are necessary''.

(g) NATIONAL PARK FOUNDATION.—

(1) BOARD OF DIRECTORS.—Subchapter II of chapter 1011 of title 54, United States Code, is amended—

(A) in section 101112—

(i) by striking subsection (a) and inserting the following:

''(a) MEMBERSHIP.—The National Park Foundation shall consist of a Board having as members at least 6 private citizens of the United States appointed by the Secretary, with the Secretary and the Director serving as ex officio members of the Board.''; and

(ii) by striking subsection (c) and inserting the following:

''(c) CHAIRMAN.—

''(1) SELECTION.—The Board shall select a Chairman of the Board from among the members of the Board.

''(2) TERM.—The Chairman of the Board shall serve for a 2-year term.''; and

(iii) in section 101113(a)—

(I) by redesignating paragraph (2) as paragraph (3); and

(II) by inserting after paragraph (1) the following:

''(2) COORDINATION WITH SERVICE.—Activities of the National Park Foundation under paragraph (1) shall be undertaken after consultation with the Secretary to ensure the activities are consistent with the programs and policies of the Service.''.

(2) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—Subchapter II of chapter 1011 of title 54, United States Code (as amended by subsection (b)(1)), is amended by adding at the end the following:

''SEC. 101122. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.

''(a) IN GENERAL.—There are authorized to be appropriated to carry out this subchapter $25,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2016 through 2026.

''(b) USE OF APPROPRIATED FUNDS.—Amounts made available under subsection (a) shall be provided to the National Park Foundation for use for matching, on a 1-to-1 basis, contributions (including money, services, or property) made to the National Park Foundation.

''(c) PROHIBITION OF USE FOR ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES.—No Federal funds made available under subsection (a) shall be used by the National Park Foundation for administrative expenses of the National Park Foundation, including for salaries, travel and transportation expenses, and other overhead expenses.''.

(B) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections affected for title 54, United States Code, is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 101121 (as amended by subsection (b)(2)) the following:

''§101122. Authorization of appropriations.''.

SA 3296. Mr. MCCONNELL (for Mr. JOHNSON) proposed an amendment to the bill S. 2109, to direct the Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency to develop an integrated plan to reduce administrative costs under the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, and for other purposes; as follows:

On page 10, line 5, insert ''for 7 years beginning on the date of enactment of this Act'' after ''each year''.

AUTHORITY FOR COMMITTEES TO MEET

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Armed Services be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on February 9, 2016, at 9:30 a.m.

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

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Foreign Relations be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on February 9, 2016, at 5 p.m., to conduct a classified briefing entitled ''Administration Update on the Way Forward in Syria and Iraq.''

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

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR, AND PENSIONS

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on February 9, 2016, at 10 a.m., in room SD–430 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building.

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

SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Select Committee on Intelligence be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on February 9, 2016, at 2:30 p.m.

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

SUBCOMMITTEE ON FISHERIES, WATER, AND WILDLIFE

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Subcommittee on Fisheries, Water, and Wildlife of the Committee on Environment and Public Works be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on February 9, 2016, at 2:30 p.m., in room SD–406 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building, to conduct a hearing entitled, ''Federal Interactions with State Management of Fish and Wildlife.''

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

SUBCOMMITTEE ON STRATEGIC FORCES

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Subcommittee on Strategic Forces of the Committee on Armed Services be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on February 9, 2016, at 2:30 p.m.

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

FOREIGN TRAVEL FINANCIAL REPORTS

In accordance with the appropriate provisions of law, the Secretary of the Senate herewith submits the following reports for standing committees of the Senate, certain joint committees of the Congress, delegations and groups, and select and special committees of the Senate, relating to expenses incurred in the performance of authorized foreign travel:

CONSOLIDATED REPORT OF EXPENDITURE OF FUNDS FOR FOREIGN TRAVEL BY MEMBERS AND EMPLOYEES OF THE U.S. SENATE, UNDER AUTHORITY OF SEC. 22, P.L. 95–384—22 U.S.C. 1754(b), COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS FOR TRAVEL FROM OCT. 1 TO DEC. 31, 2015

Name and country	Name of currency	Per diem		Transportation		Miscellaneous		Total	
		Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency
Paul Grove:									
Burma	Kyat		1,087.00		440.00				1,527.00
Japan	Yen		1,169.01						1,169.01
United States	Dollar				5,423.10				5,423.10
Jason Wheelock:									
Burma	Kyat		1,087.00						1,087.00
Japan	Yen		1,169.01						1,169.01
United States	Dollar				5,423.10				5,423.10
Senator Lamar Alexander:									
Italy	Euro		2,275.83						2,275.83
Greece	Euro		732.09						732.09
Sara Fairchild:									
Italy	Euro		2,275.83						2,275.83
Greece	Euro		732.09						732.09
Senator Susan Collins:									
Italy	Euro		2,275.83						2,275.83
Greece	Euro		732.09						732.09

CONSOLIDATED REPORT OF EXPENDITURE OF FUNDS FOR FOREIGN TRAVEL BY MEMBERS AND EMPLOYEES OF THE U.S. SENATE, UNDER AUTHORITY OF SEC. 22, P.L. 95–384—22 U.S.C. 1754(b), COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS FOR TRAVEL FROM OCT. 1 TO DEC. 31, 2015—Continued

Name and country	Name of currency	Per diem		Transportation		Miscellaneous		Total	
		Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency
Elizabeth McDonnell:									
Italy	Euro		2,275.83						2,275.83
Greece	Euro		732.09						732.09
Senator Thad Cochran:									
Italy	Euro		2,275.83						2,275.83
Greece	Euro		732.09						732.09
Kay Webber:									
Italy	Euro		2,275.83						2,275.83
Greece	Euro		732.09						732.09
Linda Good:									
Italy	Euro		2,275.83						2,275.83
Greece	Euro		732.09						732.09
Patrick Magnuson:									
Japan	Yen		672.75						672.75
United States	Dollar				7,184.80				7,184.80
Michael Bain:									
Japan	Yen		672.75						672.75
United States	Dollar				6,935.60				6,935.60
Senator Brian Schatz:									
Jordan	Dinar		685.96		221.24		91.07		998.27
Germany	Euro		306.15		521.42		145.36		972.93
United States	Dollar				18,399.50				18,399.50
William Rogers:									
Jordan	Dinar		685.96		221.23		91.06		998.25
Germany	Euro		306.15		521.42		145.35		972.92
United States	Dollar				12,957.50				12,957.50
Adam Yezerski:									
Tanzania	Tanzanian Franc		309.00						309.00
Rwanda	Rwandan Franc		297.00						297.00
United States	Dollar				8,039.20				8,039.20
*Delegation Expenses:									
Japan	Yen						1,918.52		1,918.52
Burma	Kyat						1,517.00		1,517.00
Greece	Euro						10,128.00		10,128.00
Italy	Euro						1,522.08		1,522.08
Jordan	Dinar				442.47		182.13		624.60
Germany	Euro				1,042.84		290.71		1,333.55
Total			29,503.18		67,773.42		16,031.28		113,307.88

*Delegation expenses include payments and reimbursements to the Department of State under authority of Sec. 502(b) of the Mutual Security Act of 1954, as amended by Section 22 of P.L. 95–384, and S. Res. 179 agreed to May 25, 1977.

SENATOR THAD COCHRAN,
Chairman, Committee on Appropriations, Feb. 1, 2016.

CONSOLIDATED REPORT OF EXPENDITURE OF FUNDS FOR FOREIGN TRAVEL BY MEMBERS AND EMPLOYEES OF THE U.S. SENATE, UNDER AUTHORITY OF SEC. 22, P.L. 95–384—22 U.S.C. 1754(b), COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES FOR TRAVEL FROM OCT. 1 TO DEC. 31, 2015

Name and country	Name of currency	Per diem		Transportation		Miscellaneous		Total	
		Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency
Jonathan Epstein:									
United States	Dollar				12,000.20				12,000.20
Belgium	Euro		913.95						913.95
*Delegation Expenses:									
Belgium	Euro				1,150.16				1,150.16
David E. Sayers:									
United States	Dollar				17,811.00				17,811.00
Australia	Dollar		1,777.00						1,777.00
*Delegation Expenses:									
Australia	Dollar				696.00				696.00
Senator Jeanne Shaheen:									
United States	Dollar				15,629.50				15,629.50
Greece	Euro		511.27						511.27
Ukraine	Hryvnia		293.41						293.41
Germany	Euro		448.22						448.22
Brian McKeon:									
United States	Dollar				11,503.50				11,503.50
Greece	Euro		479.83						479.83
Ukraine	Hryvnia		293.75						293.75
Germany	Euro		467.88						467.88
Josh Lucas:									
United States	Dollar				12,099.90				12,099.90
Greece	Euro		539.15						539.15
Ukraine	Hryvnia		293.75						293.75
Germany	Euro		448.22						448.22
*Delegation Expenses:									
Greece	Euro						4,356.66		4,356.66
Ukraine	Hryvnia						379.06		379.06
Germany	Euro						1,000.47		1,000.47
United Kingdom	Pound				13.34				13.34
Steven Barney:									
United States	Dollar				21,103.08				21,103.08
Israel	Shekel		1,369.64						1,369.64
United Kingdom	Pound		524.01						524.01
James B. Hickey:									
United States	Dollar				21,025.56				21,025.56
Israel	Shekel		1,369.64						1,369.64
United Kingdom	Pound		615.01						615.01
Samantha Clark:									
United States	Dollar				21,071.56				21,071.56
Israel	Shekel		1,369.64						1,369.64
United Kingdom	Pound		615.01						615.01
Jonathan Clark:									
United States	Dollar				21,080.68				21,080.68
Israel	Shekel		1,369.64						1,369.64
United Kingdom	Pound		615.01						615.01
*Delegation Expenses:									
Israel	Shekel				495.90		660.33		1,156.23
United Kingdom	Pound						186.06		186.06

CONSOLIDATED REPORT OF EXPENDITURE OF FUNDS FOR FOREIGN TRAVEL BY MEMBERS AND EMPLOYEES OF THE U.S. SENATE, UNDER AUTHORITY OF SEC. 22, P.L. 95–384—22 U.S.C. 1754(b), COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES FOR TRAVEL FROM OCT. 1 TO DEC. 31, 2015—Continued

Name and country	Name of currency	Per diem		Transportation		Miscellaneous		Total	
		Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency
David E. Sayers:									
United States	Dollar				19,351.00				19,351.00
Japan	Yen		383.47						383.47
Philippines	Peso		1,380.34						1,380.34
Ozge Guzelsu:									
United States	Dollar				24,026.05				24,026.05
Japan	Yen		419.50						419.50
Philippines	Peso		1,386.75						1,386.75
*Delegation Expenses:									
Philippines	Peso						437.23		437.23
Kathryn Wheelbarger:									
United States	Dollar				18,183.00				18,183.00
Turkey	Lira		315.00						315.00
Kuwait	Dinar		265.00						265.00
Qatar	Riyal		584.96						584.96
Hungary	Forint		285.00						285.00
Thomas Goffus:									
United States	Dollar				25,960.80				25,960.80
Turkey	Lira		355.00						355.00
Kuwait	Dinar		265.00						265.00
Qatar	Riyal		595.00						595.00
Hungary	Forint		278.00						278.00
Adam Barker:									
United States	Dollar				25,783.70				25,783.70
Turkey	Lira		108.00						108.00
Kuwait	Dinar		357.00						357.00
Qatar	Riyal		549.96						549.96
William G.P. Monahan:									
United States	Dollar				25,932.40				25,932.40
Turkey	Lira		98.00						98.00
Kuwait	Dinar		337.00						337.00
Qatar	Riyal		320.00						320.00
Michael Kuiken:									
United States	Dollar				16,700.00				16,700.00
Turkey	Lira		365.00						365.00
Kuwait	Dinar		265.00						265.00
Qatar	Riyal		557.96						557.96
*Delegation Expenses:									
Turkey	Lira				166.38				166.38
Kuwait	Dinar						172.52		172.52
Qatar	Riyal						69.15		69.15
Robert Soofer:									
United States	Dollar				17,936.50				17,936.50
United Kingdom	Pound		1,336.25						1,336.25
France	Dollar		530.30						530.30
Jonathan Epstein:									
United States	Dollar				17,870.50				17,870.50
United Kingdom	Pound		1,465.24						1,465.24
France	Dollar		530.30						530.30
*Delegation Expenses:									
United Kingdom	Pound						509.20		509.20
France	Dollar				1,745.00				1,745.00
James B. Hickey:									
United States	Dollar				19,268.60				19,268.60
United Arab Emirates	Dirham		990.04						990.04
Qatar	Riyal		389.89						389.89
Kuwait	Dinar		979.36						979.36
Kathryn Wheelbarger:									
United States	Dollar				19,268.60				19,268.60
United Arab Emirates	Dirham		90.04						90.04
Qatar	Riyal		389.89						389.89
Kuwait	Dinar		884.36						884.36
Thomas Goffus:									
United States	Dollar				19,268.60				19,268.60
United Arab Emirates	Dirham		939.04						939.04
Qatar	Riyal		389.89						389.89
Kuwait	Dinar		889.36						889.36
Adam Barker:									
United States	Dollar				10,897.60				10,897.60
Kuwait	Dinar		669.36						669.36
Samantha Clark:									
United States	Dollar				15,441.30				15,441.30
United Arab Emirates	Dirham		497.53						497.53
William G.P. Monahan:									
United States	Dollar				15,441.30				15,441.30
United Arab Emirates	Dirham,		358.43						358.43
Michael Kuiken:									
United States	Dollar				11,015.08				11,015.08
Kuwait	Dinar		844.36						844.36
*Delegation Expenses:									
United Arab Emirates	Dirham				52.25				52.25
Qatar	Riyal						108.77		108.77
Kuwait	Dinar						900.00		900.00
Afghanistan	Afghani						923.00		923.00
Ozge Guzelsu:									
United States	Dollar				11,184.60				11,184.60
Myanmar	Burmese Kyat		1,395.00						1,395.00
*Delegation Expenses:									
Myanmar	Burmese Kyat						371.50		371.50
David E. Sayers:									
United States	Dollar				14,365.80				14,365.80
Japan	Yen		787.00						787.00
Singapore	Dollar		712.00						712.00
Jason Potter:									
United States	Dollar				14,365.80				14,365.80
Japan	Yen		787.00						787.00
Singapore	Dollar		712.00						712.00
*Delegation Expenses:									
Japan	Yen				1,102.75				1,102.75
Senator Tim Kaine:									
United States	Dollar				764.49				764.49
Canada	Dollar		442.90						442.90
Christian Brose:									
United States	Dollar				764.49				764.49
Canada	Dollar		116.00						116.00

CONSOLIDATED REPORT OF EXPENDITURE OF FUNDS FOR FOREIGN TRAVEL BY MEMBERS AND EMPLOYEES OF THE U.S. SENATE, UNDER AUTHORITY OF SEC. 22, P.L. 95–384—22 U.S.C. 1754(b), COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES FOR TRAVEL FROM OCT. 1 TO DEC. 31, 2015—Continued

Name and country	Name of currency	Per diem		Transportation		Miscellaneous		Total	
		Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency
Ryan Colvert:									
United States	Dollar				764.49				764.49
Canada	Dollar		57.25						57.25
Nicole Porreca:									
United States	Dollar				764.49				764.49
Canada	Dollar		57.25						57.25
*Delegation Expenses:									
Canada	Dollar						9,035.50		9,035.50
Senator John McCain:									
United States	Dollar				12,634.30				12,634.30
Christian Brose:									
United States	Dollar				12,634.30				12,634.30
Iraq	Dinar		122.00						122.00
James B. Hickey:									
United States	Dollar				12,634.30				12,634.30
Kathryn Wheelbarger:									
United States	Dollar				12,634.30				12,634.30
Iraq	Dinar		122.00						122.00
Senator Lindsey Graham:									
United States	Dollar				12,634.30				12,634.30
Iraq	Dinar		5.00						5.00
Craig Abele:									
United States	Dollar				12,634.30				12,634.30
*Delegation Expenses:									
Iraq	Dinar				16,800.00				16,800.00
United Arab Emirates	Dirham				243.03				243.03
Kathryn Wheelbarger:									
United States	Dollar				9,207.56				9,207.56
Israel	Shekel		570.00						570.00
Jordan	Dinar		1,139.67						1,139.67
Thomas Goffus:									
United States	Dollar				9,340.60				9,340.60
Israel	Shekel		565.00						565.00
Jordan	Dinar		1,164.67						1,164.67
Adam Barker:									
United States	Dollar				13,764.86				13,764.86
Israel	Shekel		572.00						572.00
Jordan	Dinar		761.11						761.11
*Delegation Expenses:									
Israel	Shekel				374.07		745.80		1,119.87
Jordan	Dinar				293.45		325.04		618.49
Daniel Lerner:									
United States	Dollar				12,082.00				12,082.00
Germany	Euro		520.75						520.75
Total			46,567.21		641,977.32		20,180.29		708,724.82

*Delegation expenses include payments and reimbursements to the Department of State under authority of Sec. 502(b) of the Mutual Security Act of 1954, as amended by Section 22 of P.L. 95–384, and S. Res. 179 agreed to May 25, 1977.

SENATOR JOHN McCAIN,
Chairman, Committee on Armed Services, Feb. 1, 2016.

CONSOLIDATED REPORT OF EXPENDITURE OF FUNDS FOR FOREIGN TRAVEL BY MEMBERS AND EMPLOYEES OF THE U.S. SENATE, UNDER AUTHORITY OF SEC. 22, P.L. 95–384—22 U.S.C. 1754(b), COMMITTEE ON BANKING, HOUSING, AND URBAN AFFAIRS FOR TRAVEL FROM OCT. 1 TO DEC. 31, 2015

Name and country	Name of currency	Per diem		Transportation		Miscellaneous		Total	
		Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency
Senator Elizabeth Warren:									
Greece	Euro		184.37						184.37
Ukraine	Hryvnia		73.59						73.59
Germany	Euro		150.48						150.48
United States	Dollar				15,629.50				15,629.50
Jonathan Donenberg:									
Greece	Euro		212.25						212.25
Ukraine	Hryvnia		58.48						58.48
Germany	Euro		88.00						88.00
United States	Dollar				16,040.00				16,040.00
Total			767.17		31,669.50				32,436.67

SENATOR RICHARD C. SHELBY,
Chairman, Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs,
Jan. 11, 2016.

CONSOLIDATED REPORT OF EXPENDITURE OF FUNDS FOR FOREIGN TRAVEL BY MEMBERS AND EMPLOYEES OF THE U.S. SENATE, UNDER AUTHORITY OF SEC. 22, P.L. 95–384—22 U.S.C. 1754(b), COMMITTEE ON THE BUDGET FOR TRAVEL FROM OCT. 1 TO DEC. 31, 2015

Name and country	Name of currency	Per diem		Transportation		Miscellaneous		Total	
		Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency
Kusai Merchant:									
France	Euro		1,744.00		1,458.10		3,033.00		6,235.10
Total			1,744.00		1,458.10		3,033.00		6,235.10

SENATOR MICHAEL B. ENZI,
Chairman, Committee on the Budget, Jan. 29, 2016.

CONSOLIDATED REPORT OF EXPENDITURE OF FUNDS FOR FOREIGN TRAVEL BY MEMBERS AND EMPLOYEES OF THE U.S. SENATE, UNDER AUTHORITY OF SEC. 22, P.L. 95–384—22 U.S.C. 1754(b), COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION FOR TRAVEL FROM OCT. 1 TO DEC. 31, 2015

Name and country	Name of currency	Per diem		Transportation		Miscellaneous		Total	
		Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency
David Quinalty:									
United States	Dollar				2,223.30				2,223.30
Ireland	Euro		791.20						791.20
Jeffrey Farrah:									
United States	Dollar				2,223.10				2,223.10
Ireland	Euro		791.20						791.20
John Branscome:									
United States	Dollar				2,223.10				2,223.10
Ireland	Euro		791.20						791.20
Shawn Bone:									
United States	Dollar				2,223.10				2,223.10
Ireland	Euro		791.20						791.20
Senator Brian Schatz:									
France	Euro		1,173.06						1,173.06
*Delegation Expenses:							608.09		608.09
Dale Hahn:									
France	Euro		1,296.23						1,296.23
*Delegation Expenses:							608.09		608.09
Total			5,634.09		8,892.60		1,216.18		15,742.87

*Delegation expenses include payments and reimbursements to the Department of State under authority of Sec. 502(b) of the Mutual Security Act of 1954, as amended by Section 22 of P.L. 95–384, and S. Res. 179 agreed to May 25, 1977.

SENATOR JOHN THUNE,
Chairman, Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation,
Feb. 2, 2016.

CONSOLIDATED REPORT OF EXPENDITURE OF FUNDS FOR FOREIGN TRAVEL BY MEMBERS AND EMPLOYEES OF THE U.S. SENATE, UNDER AUTHORITY OF SEC. 22, P.L. 95–384—22 U.S.C. 1754(b), COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES FOR TRAVEL FROM OCT. 1 TO DEC. 31, 2015

Name and country	Name of currency	Per diem		Transportation		Miscellaneous		Total	
		Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency
Senator Angus King, Jr.:									
United States	Dollar				1,836.50				1,836.50
Ireland	Krona		507.25						507.25
Margaret Williams:									
United States	Dollar				2,419.60				2,419.60
Ireland	Krona		507.25						507.25
*Delegation Expenses:									
Iceland	Krona						4,158.00		4,158.00
Senator Al Franken:									
France	Euro		1,371.74						1,371.74
Ali Nouri:									
United States	Dollar				524.00				524.00
France	Euro		2,169.59						2,169.59
*Delegation Expenses:									
France	Euro						1,250.92		1,250.92
Total			4,555.83		4,780.10		5,408.92		14,744.85

*Delegation expenses include payments and reimbursements to the Department of State under authority of Sec. 502(b) of the Mutual Security Act of 1954, as amended by Section 22 of P.L. 95–384, and S. Res. 179 agreed to May 25, 1977.

SENATOR LISA MURKOWSKI,
Chairman, Committee on Energy and Natural Resources,
Jan. 21, 2016.

CONSOLIDATED REPORT OF EXPENDITURE OF FUNDS FOR FOREIGN TRAVEL BY MEMBERS AND EMPLOYEES OF THE U.S. SENATE, UNDER AUTHORITY OF SEC. 22, P.L. 95–384—22 U.S.C. 1754(b), COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS FOR TRAVEL FROM OCT. 1 TO DEC. 31, 2015

Name and country	Name of currency	Per diem		Transportation		Miscellaneous		Total	
		Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency
Senator James M. Inhofe:									
France	Euro		780.00						780.00
Senator Sheldon Whitehouse:									
France	Euro		2,796.00						2,796.00
Senator Jeff Merkley:									
France	Euro		1,299.00						1,299.00
Senator Edward J. Markey:									
France	Euro		1,621.00						1,621.00
Senator Cory A. Booker:									
United States	Dollar				5,224.40				5,224.40
France	Euro		1,379.53						1,379.53
Jan Brunner:									
United States	Dollar				1,121.80				1,121.80
France	Euro		5,913.00						5,913.00
Brandon Elsner:									
United States	Dollar				1,112.90				1,112.90
France	Euro		5,165.00						5,165.00
Ann Mesnikoff:									
United States	Dollar				1,602.90				1,602.90
France	Euro		5,709.00						5,709.00
Frederick Illston:									
United States	Dollar				1,602.90				1,602.90
France	Euro		6,522.00						6,522.00
Kathryn R. Thomas:									
United States	Dollar				1,416.10				1,416.10
France	Euro		4,775.00						4,775.00
Emily Enderle:									
United States	Dollar				1,406.90				1,406.90
France	Euro		2,200.00						2,200.00
Aaron Goldner:									
France	Euro		784.00						784.00

CONSOLIDATED REPORT OF EXPENDITURE OF FUNDS FOR FOREIGN TRAVEL BY MEMBERS AND EMPLOYEES OF THE U.S. SENATE, UNDER AUTHORITY OF SEC. 22, P.L. 95–384—22 U.S.C. 1754(b), COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS FOR TRAVEL FROM OCT. 1 TO DEC. 31, 2015—Continued

Name and country	Name of currency	Per diem		Transportation		Miscellaneous		Total	
		Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency
Jeremiah Baumann:									
France	Euro		1,435.00						1,435.00
Adrian Deveny:									
United States	Dollar				610.80				610.80
France	Euro		4,210.00						4,210.00
Ana Unruh Cohen:									
United States	Dollar				1,122.10				1,122.10
France	Euro		5,647.00						5,647.00
Jessica Clowser:									
United States	Dollar				1,652.90				1,652.90
France	Euro		5,300.00						5,300.00
Adam Zipkin:									
France	Euro		1,290.00						1,290.00
Philip Moore:									
United States	Dollar				1,122.10				1,122.10
France	Euro		4,688.00						4,688.00
Brian Clifford:									
United States	Dollar				1,088.20				1,088.20
France	Euro		1,526.00						1,526.00
Amanda Gunasekara:									
United States	Dollar				1,121.90				1,121.90
France	Euro		5,502.00						5,502.00
Ryan Jackson:									
France	Euro		1,559.00						1,559.00
*Delegation Expenses:									
France	Euro						10,945.04		10,945.04
Total			70,100.53		20,205.90		10,945.04		101,251.47

*Delegation expenses include payments and reimbursements to the Department of State under authority of Sec. 502(b) of the Mutual Security Act of 1954, as amended by Section 22 of P.L. 95–384, and S. Res. 179 agreed to May 25, 1977.

SENATOR JAMES M. INHOFE,
Chairman, Committee on Environment & Public Works, Feb. 2, 2016.

CONSOLIDATED REPORT OF EXPENDITURE OF FUNDS FOR FOREIGN TRAVEL BY MEMBERS AND EMPLOYEES OF THE U.S. SENATE, UNDER AUTHORITY OF SEC. 22, P.L. 95–384—22 U.S.C. 1754(b), COMMITTEE ON FINANCE FOR TRAVEL FROM OCT. 1 TO DEC. 31, 2015

Name and country	Name of currency	Per diem		Transportation		Miscellaneous		Total	
		Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency
Senator Dan Coats:									
Italy	Euro		750.02						750.02
Greece	Euro		459.66						459.66
Terry Snell:									
Italy	Euro		722.90						772.90
Greece	Euro		445.98						445.98
*Delegation Expenses:									
United States	Dollar						2,426.14		2,426.14
Shane Warren:									
Philippines	Peso		2,593.68						2,593.68
United States	Dollar				12,938.50				12,938.50
Everett Eissenstat:									
Kenya	Shilling		1,125.40						1,125.40
United States	Dollar				12,535.10				12,535.10
Shane Warren:									
Kenya	Shilling		1,176.51						1,176.51
United States	Dollar				12,535.10				12,535.10
*Delegation Expenses:									
United States	Dollar						1,512.35		1,512.35
Theda Khrestin:									
Estonia	Euro		689.09						689.09
Ukraine	Hryvnia		1,165.42						1,165.42
United States	Dollar				12,271.60				12,271.60
Tyler Brace:									
Estonia	Euro		603.58						603.58
Ukraine	Hryvnia		1,521.59						1,521.59
United States	ollar		45.72		11,428.60				11,474.32
Ryan Evans:									
Estonia	Euro		662.06						662.06
Ukraine	Hryvnia		1,094.28						1,094.28
United States	Dollar				12,196.70				12,196.70
*Delegation Expenses:									
United States	Dollar						1,623,37		1,623.37
Total			13,055.89		73,905.60		5,561.86		92,523.35

*Delegation Expenses include transportation, embassy overtime, as well as official expenses in accordance with the responsibilities of the host country.

SENATOR ORRIN HATCH,
Chairman, Committee on Finance, Feb. 2, 2016.

CONSOLIDATED REPORT OF EXPENDITURE OF FUNDS FOR FOREIGN TRAVEL BY MEMBERS AND EMPLOYEES OF THE U.S. SENATE, UNDER AUTHORITY OF SEC. 22, P.L. 95–384—22 U.S.C. 1754(b), COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONSFOR TRAVEL FROM OCT. 1 TO DEC. 31, 2015

Name and country	Name of currency	Per diem		Transportation		Miscellaneous		Total	
		Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency
Senator John Barrasso:									
Canada	Dollar		539.21						539.21
United States	Dollar				2,100.29				2,100.29
Senator Christopher Murphy:									
Canada	Dollar		471.63						471.63
United States	Dollar				1,052.53				1,052.53
Jessica Elledge:									
Canada	Dollar		646.63						646.63

CONSOLIDATED REPORT OF EXPENDITURE OF FUNDS FOR FOREIGN TRAVEL BY MEMBERS AND EMPLOYEES OF THE U.S. SENATE, UNDER AUTHORITY OF SEC. 22, P.L. 95–384—22 U.S.C. 1754(b), COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONSFOR TRAVEL FROM OCT. 1 TO DEC. 31, 2015—Continued

Name and country	Name of currency	Per diem		Transportation		Miscellaneous		Total	
		Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency
United States	Dollar				764.49				764.49
*Delegation Expenses:									
Canada	Dollar						7,744.71		7,744.71
Senator John Barrasso:									
United Arab Emirates	Dollar		244.00						244.00
United States	Dollar				10,615.60				10,615.60
Charles Ziegler:									
United Arab Emirates	Dollar		237.00						237.00
United States	Dollar				9,813.00				9,813.00
*Delegation Expenses:									
Afghanistan	Dollar						15,900.00		15,900.00
Senator Bob Corker:									
France	Euro		673.05						673.05
Egypt	Pound		501.84						501.84
United States	Dollar				11,161.10				11,161.10
David Kinzler:									
France	Euro		848.30						848.30
Egypt	Pound		684.00						684.00
United States	Dollar				10,959.30				10,959.30
*Delegation Expenses:									
France	Euro						1,659.00		1,659.00
Egypt	Pound						3,208.00		3,208.00
Senator Cory Gardner:									
Mexico	Peso		627.92						627.92
United States	Dollar				750.59				750.59
Chris Hansen:									
Mexico	Peso		627.92						627.92
United States	Dollar				1,190.49				1,190.49
*Delegation Expenses:									
Mexico	Peso						2,133.00		2,133.00
Senator Ben Cardin:									
France	Euro		1,436.91						1,436.91
Debbie Yamada:									
France	Euro		1,565.88						1,565.88
Josh Klein:									
France	Euro		1,464.91						1,464.91
Adam Sharon:									
France	Euro		1,060.00						1,060.00
United States	Dollar				1,086.90				1,086.90
Senator Christopher Coons:									
France	Euro		1,796.88						1,796.88
United States	Dollar				5,714.40				5,714.40
Allison Schwier:									
France	Euro		1,848.35						1,848.35
Senator Jeanne Shaheen:									
France	Euro		1,422.91						1,422.91
Robert Diznoff:									
France	Euro		1,554.91						1,554.91
Senator Tom Udall:									
France	Euro		1,621.00						1,621.00
*Delegation Expenses:									
France	Euro						6,080.83		6,080.83
Amber Bland:									
Finland	Euro		291.12						291.12
Lithuania	Euro		798.12						798.12
Croatia	Kuna		285.28						285.28
United States	Dollar				3,093.80				3,093.80
Curtis Swager:									
Finland	Euro		243.59						243.59
Lithuania	Euro		746.60						746.60
Croatia	Kuna		261.76						261.76
United States	Dollar				3,128.80				3,128.80
Lydia Westlake:									
Finland	Euro		312.54						312.54
Lithuania	Euro		940.97						940.97
Croatia	Kuna		313.76						313.76
United States	Dollar				3,128.80				3,128.80
*Delegation Expenses:									
Lithuania	Euro						1,211.80		1,211.80
Croatia	Kuna						29.07		29.07
Jaime Fly:									
Bahrain	Dinar		289.46						289.46
Saudi Arabia	Riyal		403.27						403.27
Egypt	Pound		412.76						412.76
United States	Dollar				7,707.80				7,707.80
John Rader:									
Bahrain	Dinar		396.00						396.00
Saudi Arabia	Riyal		484.33						484.33
Egypt	Pound		517.00						517.00
United States	Dollar				7,742.80				7,742.80
*Delegation Expenses:									
Bahrain	Dinar						1,379.26		1,379.26
Saudi Arabia	Riyal						688.00		688.00
Egypt	Pound						61.00		61.00
Heather Flynn:									
United Kingdom	Pound		1,035.40						1,035.40
France	Euro		978.00						978.00
Belgium	Euro		814.86						814.86
United States	Dollar				3,848.50				3,848.50
*Delegation Expenses:									
United Kingdom	Pound						186.06		186.06
Jodie Herman:									
Israel	Shekel		1,563.77						1,563.77
United States	Dollar				9,751.06				9,751.06
Dana Stroul:									
Israel	Shekel		1,521.89						1,521.89
United States	Dollar				6,399.86				6,399.86
*Delegation Expenses:									
Israel	Shekel						4,433.72		4,433.72
David Kinzler:									
Saudi Arabia	Riyal		1,000.00						1,000.00
United States	Dollar				12,822.70				12,822.70
Stacie Oliver:									
Saudi Arabia	Riyal		920.00						920.00
United States	Dollar				12,822.70				12,822.70

CONSOLIDATED REPORT OF EXPENDITURE OF FUNDS FOR FOREIGN TRAVEL BY MEMBERS AND EMPLOYEES OF THE U.S. SENATE, UNDER AUTHORITY OF SEC. 22, P.L. 95–384—22 U.S.C. 1754(b), COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONSFOR TRAVEL FROM OCT. 1 TO DEC. 31, 2015—Continued

Name and country	Name of currency	Per diem		Transportation		Miscellaneous		Total	
		Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency
*Delegation Expenses:									
Saudi Arabia	Riyal						116.00		116.00
David Kinzler:									
Bahrain	Dinar		1,073.17						1,073.17
United States	Dollar				14,073.80				14,073.80
Dana Stroul:									
Bahrain	Dinar		1,073.17						1,073.17
United States	Dollar				13,574.10				13,574.10
*Delegation Expenses:									
Bahrain	Dinar						1,743.00		1,743.00
Carolyn Leddy:									
Burma	Kyat		699.33						699.33
United States	Dollar				5,704.60				5,704.60
Frank Polley:									
Burma	Kyat		621.00						621.00
United States	Dollar				5,669.70				5,669.70
Michael Schiffer:									
Burma	Kyat		747.00						747.00
United States	Dollar				5,771,00				5,771.00
*Delegation Expenses:									
Burma	Kyat						9,559.50		9,559.50
Stacie Oliver:									
United Arab Emirates	Dirham		1,462.00						1,462.00
United States	Dollar				2,079.20				2,079.20
David Fite:									
United Arab Emirates	Dirham		1,126.00						1,126.00
United States	Dollar				2,079.20				2,079.20
*Delegation Expenses:									
United Arab Emirates	Dirham						753.28		753.28
Margaret Taylor:									
France	Euro		2,561.45						2,561.45
United States	Dollar				1,637.90				1,637.90
Nick Barbash:									
France	Euro		1,918.23						1,918.23
United States	Dollar				1,637.70				1,637.70
Michael Bednarczyk:									
France	Euro		2,628.00						2,628.00
United States	Dollar				1,637.60				1,637.60
*Delegation Expenses:									
France	Euro						1,824.24		1,824.24
Brandon Yoder:									
Colombia	Peso		1,453.81						1,453.81
United States	Dollar				806.60				806.60
Viviana Bovo:									
Colombia	Peso		796.39						796.39
United States	Dollar				848.00				848.00
Nury Gambarrotti:									
Colombia	Peso		1,434.10						1,434.10
United States	Dollar				806.60				806.60
Matthew Padilla:									
Colombia	Peso		1,810.00						1,810.00
United States	Dollar				1,130.10				1,130.10
*Delegation Expenses:									
Colombia	Peso						3,083.00		3,083.00
Total			53,807.38		183,111.61		61,793.47		298,712.46

*Delegation expenses include payments and reimbursements to the Department of State under authority of Sec. 502(b) of the Mutual Security Act of 1954, as amended by Section 22 of P.L. 95–384, and S. Res. 179 agreed to May 25, 1977.

SENATOR BOB CORKER,
Chairman, Committee on Foreign Relations, Jan. 27, 2015.

CONSOLIDATED REPORT OF EXPENDITURE OF FUNDS FOR FOREIGN TRAVEL BY MEMBERS AND EMPLOYEES OF THE U.S. SENATE, UNDER AUTHORITY OF SEC. 22, P.L. 95–384—22 U.S.C. 1754(b), COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS FOR TRAVEL FROM OCT. 1 TO DEC. 31, 2015

Name and country	Name of currency	Per diem		Transportation		Miscellaneous		Total	
		Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency
Senator Ron Johnson:									
Guatemala	Quetzal		272.99						272.99
Honduras	Lempira		191.00						191.00
Senator Tom Carper:									
Guatemala	Quetzal		267.49						267.49
Honduras	Lempira		185.50						185.50
Senator Heidi Heitkamp:									
Guatemala	Quetzal		272.99						272.99
Honduras	Lempira		191.00						191.00
Senator Gary Peters:									
Guatemala	Quetzal		264.65						264.65
Honduras	Lempira		182.66						182.66
Holly Idelson:									
Guatemala	Quetzal		268.13						268.13
Honduras	Lempira		186.14						186.14
Stephen Vina:									
Guatemala	Quetzal		273.68						273.68
Honduras	Lempira		191.68						191.68
Eric Bursch:									
Guatemala	Quetzal		272.99						272.99
Honduras	Lempira		191.00						191.00
Jose Bautista:									
Guatemala	Quetzal		273.67						273.67
Honduras	Lempira		191.69						191.69
Zephranie Buetow:									
Guatemala	Quetzal		279.48						279.48
Honduras	Lempira		212.16						212.16
Brooke Ericson:									
Guatemala	Quetzal		273.00						273.00
Honduras	Lempira		191.68						191.68
Katie Delacenserie:									
United States	Dollar				1,734.10				1,734.10

CONSOLIDATED REPORT OF EXPENDITURE OF FUNDS FOR FOREIGN TRAVEL BY MEMBERS AND EMPLOYEES OF THE U.S. SENATE, UNDER AUTHORITY OF SEC. 22, P.L. 95–384—22 U.S.C. 1754(b), COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS FOR TRAVEL FROM OCT. 1 TO DEC. 31, 2015—Continued

Name and country	Name of currency	Per diem		Transportation		Miscellaneous		Total	
		Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency
Germany	Euro		1,668.09						1,668.09
Jason Rauch:									
United States	Dollar				4,235.90				4,235.90
Estonia	Euro		453.22						453.22
Ukraine	Hryvnia		659.16						659.16
*Delegation Expenses:									
Honduras	Quetzal						3,982.00		3,982.00
Total			7,414.05		5,970.00		3,982.00		17,366.05

*Delegation expenses include payments and reimbursements to the Department of State under authority of Sec. 502(b) of the Mutual Security Act of 1954, as amended by Section 22 of P.L. 95–384, and S. Res. 179 agreed to May 25, 1977.

SENATOR RON JOHNSON,
Chairman, Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, Feb. 3, 2016.

CONSOLIDATED REPORT OF EXPENDITURE OF FUNDS FOR FOREIGN TRAVEL BY MEMBERS AND EMPLOYEES OF THE U.S. SENATE, UNDER AUTHORITY OF SEC. 22, P.L. 95–384—22 U.S.C. 1754(b), COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY FOR TRAVEL FROM OCT. 1 TO DEC. 31, 2015

Name and country	Name of currency	Per diem		Transportation		Miscellaneous		Total	
		Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency
Virginia Boney:									
United States	Dollar				18,512.80				18,512.80
Estonia	Euro		419.51						419.51
Ukraine	Hryvnia		803.69						803.69
*Delegation Expenses:									
Estonia	Euro						114.32		114.32
Ukraine	Hryvnia						426.69		426.69
Senator Amy Klobuchar:									
United States	Dollar				13,712.40				13,712.40
Greece	Euro		552.02						552.02
Ukraine	Hryvnia		297.20						297.20
Asal Sayas:									
United States	Dollar				12,112.70				12,112.70
Greece	Euro		579.90						579.90
Ukraine	Hryvnia		298.34						298.34
Germany	Euro		234.95						234.95
Delegation Expenses:*									
Greece	Euro						2,904.44		2,904.44
Ukraine	Hryvnia						252.71		252.71
Germany	Euro						428.78		428.78
Total			3,185.61		44,337.90		4,126.94		51,650.45

*Delegation expenses include payments and reimbursements to the Department of State under authority of Sec. 502(b) of the Mutual Security Act of 1954, as amended by Section 22 of P.L. 95–384, and S. Res. 179 agreed to May 25, 1977.

SENATOR CHUCK GRASSLEY,
Chairman, Committee on the Judiciary, Jan. 26, 2016.

CONSOLIDATED REPORT OF EXPENDITURE OF FUNDS FOR FOREIGN TRAVEL BY MEMBERS AND EMPLOYEES OF THE U.S. SENATE, UNDER AUTHORITY OF SEC. 22, P.L. 95–384—22 U.S.C. 1754(b), COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR, AND PENSIONS FOR TRAVEL FROM OCT. 1 TO DEC. 31, 2015

Name and country	Name of currency	Per diem		Transportation		Miscellaneous		Total	
		Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency
Senator Mike Enzi:									
Italy	Euro		1,184.45						1,184.45
Greece	Euro		687.85						687.85
Senator Johnny Isakson:									
Italy	Euro		1,184.45						1,184.45
Greece	Euro		687.85						687.85
David Cleary:									
Italy	Euro		1,178.93						1,178.93
Greece	Euro		687.85						687.85
Tara Shaw:									
Italy	Euro		1,178.93						1,178.93
Greece	Euro		687.85						687.85
Joan Kirchner:									
Italy	Euro		1,178.93						1,178.93
Greece	Euro		687.85						687.85
*Delegation Expenses:									
Italy	Euro						6,065.38		6,065.38
Greece	Euro						6,816.90		6,816.90
Total			9,344.94				12,882.28		22,227.22

*Delegation expenses include payments and reimbursements to the Department of State under the authority of Sec. 502(b) of the Mutual Security Act of 1954, as amended by Sec. 22 of P.L. 95-384, and S. Res. 179, agreed to May 25, 1977.

SENATOR LAMAR ALEXANDER,
Chairman, Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions, Jan. 7, 2016.

CONSOLIDATED REPORT OF EXPENDITURE OF FUNDS FOR FOREIGN TRAVEL BY MEMBERS AND EMPLOYEES OF THE U.S. SENATE, UNDER AUTHORITY OF SEC. 22, P.L. 95–384—22 U.S.C. 1754(b), SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE FOR TRAVEL FROM OCT. 1 TO DEC. 31, 2015

Name and country	Name of currency	Per diem		Transportation		Miscellaneous		Total	
		Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency
Brian Walsh			926.00						926.00

CONSOLIDATED REPORT OF EXPENDITURE OF FUNDS FOR FOREIGN TRAVEL BY MEMBERS AND EMPLOYEES OF THE U.S. SENATE, UNDER AUTHORITY OF SEC. 22, P.L. 95–384—22 U.S.C. 1754(b), SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE FOR TRAVEL FROM OCT. 1 TO DEC. 31, 2015—Continued

Name and country	Name of currency	Per diem		Transportation		Miscellaneous		Total	
		Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency
			550.00						550.00
					9,389.80				9,389.80
Emily Harding			926.00						926.00
			550.00						550.00
					9,389.80				9,389.80
Ryan Tully			926.00						926.00
			550.00						550.00
					7,983.00				7,983.00
Mike Pevzner			926.00						926.00
			550.00						550.00
					9,386.80				9,386.80
*Delegation Expenses							240.00		240.00
Ryan Kaldahl					13,608.20				13,608.20
			1,836.08						1,836.08
			535.00						535.00
Nate Adler					13,608.20				13,608.20
			1,836.08						1,836.08
			535.00						535.00
James Catella			256.00						256.00
					14,072.90				14,072.90
Brian Miller			256.00						256.00
					14,072.90				14,072.90
Emily Harding			256.00						256.00
					14,072.90				14,072.90
Ryan Tully			504.00						504.00
			300.00						300.00
			326.00						326.00
Senator Tom Cotton			504.00						504.00
			300.00						300.00
			326.00						326.00
Chris Joyner			504.00						504.00
			300.00						300.00
			326.00						326.00
Christian Cook			504.00						504.00
			300.00						300.00
			326.00						326.00
Senator Richard Burr			509.33				14.50		523.83
			1,196.00				109.53		1,305.53
					14,788.85				14,788.85
Senator Tom Cotton			509.33				14.50		523.83
			1,196.00				109.53		1,305.53
					14,788.85				14,788.85
Chris Joyner			509.33				14.50		523.83
			1,196.00				109.53		1,305.53
					14,788.85				14,788.85
Christian Cook			509.33				14.50		523.83
			1,196.00				109.83		1,305.83
					14,788.85				14,788.85
Ryan Tully			509.33				14.50		523.83
			1,196.00				109.83		1,305.83
					14,788.85				14,788.85
James Catella			509.33				14.50		523.83
			1,196.00				109.83		1,305.83
					14,788.85				14,788.85
Paul Matulic			509.33				14.50		523.83
			1,196.00				109.83		1,305.83
					14,788.85				14,788.85
Total			27,871.47		209,106.45		1,109.41		238,087.33

*Delegation expenses include payments and reimbursements to the Department of State under authority of Sec. 502(b) of the Mutual Security Act of 1954, as amended by Section 22 of P.L. 95–384, and S. Res. 179 agreed to May 25, 1977.

SENATOR RICHARD BURR,
Chairman, Committee on Intelligence, Feb. 4, 2016.

CONSOLIDATED REPORT OF EXPENDITURE OF FUNDS FOR FOREIGN TRAVEL BY MEMBERS AND EMPLOYEES OF THE U.S. SENATE, UNDER AUTHORITY OF SEC. 22, P.L. 95–384—22 U.S.C. 1754(b), COMMISSION ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE (AMENDED REPORT) FOR TRAVEL FROM JULY 1 TO SEPT. 30, 2015

Name and country	Name of currency	Per diem		Transportation		Miscellaneous		Total	
		Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency
Amb. David Killion:									
Ukraine	Hryvnia		594.00						594.00
Czech Republic	Koruna		466.00						466.00
Finland	Euro		2,050.00						2,050.00
United States	Dollar				10,024.10				10,024.10
Poland	Zloty		2,600.00						2,600.00
United States	Dollar				9,272.00				9,272.00
*Delegation Expenses:									
Ukraine	Hryvnia						600.17		600.17
Czech Republic	Koruna						1,577.92		1,577.92
Finland	Euro						2,219.52		2,219.52
Poland	Zloty						239.73		239.73
Total			5,710.00		19,296.10		4,637.34		29,643.44

*Delegation expenses include payments and reimbursements to the Department of State under authority of Sec. 502(b) of the Mutual Security Act of 1954, as amended by Section 22 of P.L. 95–384, and S. Res. 179 agreed to May 25, 1977.

SENATOR ROGER WICKER,
Chairman, Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe,
Jan. 11, 2016.

CONSOLIDATED REPORT OF EXPENDITURE OF FUNDS FOR FOREIGN TRAVEL BY MEMBERS AND EMPLOYEES OF THE U.S. SENATE, UNDER AUTHORITY OF SEC. 22, P.L. 95–384—22 U.S.C. 1754(b), COMMISSION ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPEFOR TRAVEL FROM OCT. 1 TO DEC. 31, 2015

Name and country	Name of currency	Per diem		Transportation		Miscellaneous		Total	
		Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency
Amb. David Killion:									
Israel	Shekel		1,085.00						1,085.00
Jordan	Dinar		900.19						900.19
United States	Dollar				9,769.96				9,769.96
Serbia	Dinar		947.00						947.00
United States	Dollar				11,019.40				11,019.40
*Delegation Expenses:									
Israel	Shekel						2,044.78		2,044.78
Jordan	Dinar								
Serbia	Dinar								
Total			2,932.19		20,789.36		2,044.78		25,766.33

*Delegation expenses include payments and reimbursements to the Department of State under authority of Sec. 502(b) of the Mutual Security Act of 1954, as amended by Section 22 of P.L. 95–384, and S. Res. 179 agreed to May 25, 1977.

SENATOR ROGER WICKER,
Chairman, Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe,
Jan. 11, 2016.

CONSOLIDATED REPORT OF EXPENDITURE OF FUNDS FOR FOREIGN TRAVEL BY MEMBERS AND EMPLOYEES OF THE U.S. SENATE, UNDER AUTHORITY OF SEC. 22, P.L. 95–384—22 U.S.C. 1754(b), MAJORITY LEADER FOR TRAVEL FROM OCT. 9 TO OCT. 17, 2015

Name and country	Name of currency	Per diem		Transportation		Miscellaneous		Total	
		Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency
Senator Mitch McConnell:									
Spain	Euro		421.00						421.00
Israel	Dollar		450.00						450.00
Jordan	Dollar		711.89						711.89
Iraq	Dollar		5.00		2,700.00				2,705.00
Kuwait	Dollar		418.81						418.81
Afghanistan	Dollar		6.00						6.00
Turkey	Dollar		354.00						354.00
Senator Tom Cotton:									
Spain	Euro		456.21						456.21
Israel	Dollar		485.21						485.21
Jordan	Dollar		746.03						746.03
Iraq	Dollar		5.00		2,700.00				2,705.00
Kuwait	Dollar		418.81						418.81
Afghanistan	Dollar		6.00						6.00
Turkey	Dollar		354.00						354.00
Senator Mike Rounds:									
Spain	Euro		421.00						421.00
Israel	Dollar		450.00						450.00
Jordan	Dollar		718.38						718.38
Iraq	Dollar		5.00		2,700.00				2,705.00
Kuwait	Dollar		418.81						418.81
Afghanistan	Dollar		6.00						6.00
Turkey	Dollar		354.00						354.00
Senator Joni Ernst:									
Spain	Euro		421.00						421.00
Israel	Dollar		450.00						450.00
Jordan	Dollar		713.14						713.14
Iraq	Dollar		5.00		2,700.00				2,705.00
Kuwait	Dollar		418.81						418.81
Afghanistan	Dollar		6.00						6.00
Turkey	Dollar		354.00						354.00
Dr. Brian Monahan:									
Spain	Euro		442.35						442.35
Israel	Dollar		471.36						471.36
Jordan	Dollar		732.18						732.18
Iraq	Dollar		5.00		2,700.00				2,705.00
Kuwait	Dollar		418.81						418.81
Afghanistan	Dollar		6.00						6.00
Turkey	Dollar		354.00						354.00
Thomas Hawkins:									
Spain	Euro		473.66						473.66
Israel	Dollar		502.67						502.67
Jordan	Dollar		763.49						763.49
Iraq	Dollar		5.00		2,700.00				2,705.00
Kuwait	Dollar		418.81						418.81
Afghanistan	Dollar		6.00						6.00
Turkey	Dollar		354.00						354.00
Stefanie Muchow:									
Spain	Euro		421.00						421.00
Israel	Dollar		450.00						450.00
Jordan	Dollar		711.89						711.89
Iraq	Dollar		5.00		2,700.00				2,705.00
Kuwait	Dollar		418.81						418.81
Afghanistan	Dollar		14.00						14.00
Turkey	Dollar		354.00						354.00
Philip Maxson:									
Spain	Euro		421.00						421.00
Israel	Dollar		450.00						450.00
Jordan	Dollar		711.89						711.89
Iraq	Dollar		5.00		2,700.00				2,705.00
Kuwait	Dollar		418.81						418.81
Afghanistan	Dollar		14.00						14.00
Turkey	Dollar		354.00						354.00
*Delegation Expenses:									
Spain	Euro						2,499.17		2,499.17
Israel	New Shekel						10,588.75		10,588.75
Jordan	Dinar						3,073.25		3,073.25
Iraq	Dollar						69.80		69.80
Kuwait	Dinar						518.84		518.84
Afghanistan	Dollar						69.80		69.80
Turkey	Lira						1,081.20		1,081.20

Total			19,281.83		21,600.00		17,900.81		58,782.64

*Delegation expenses include payments and reimbursements to the Department of State, under the authority of Sec. 502(b) of the Mutual Security Act of 1954, as amended by Sec. 22 of P.L. 95–384, and S. Res. 179 agreed to May 25, 1977.

SENATOR MITCH McCONNELL,
Majority Leader, Jan. 21, 2016.

CONSOLIDATED REPORT OF EXPENDITURE OF FUNDS FOR FOREIGN TRAVEL BY MEMBERS AND EMPLOYEES OF THE U.S. SENATE, UNDER AUTHORITY OF SEC. 22, P.L. 95–384—22 U.S.C. 1754(b), MAJORITY LEADER FOR TRAVEL FROM OCT. 1 TO DEC. 31, 2015

Name and country	Name of currency	Per diem		Transportation		Miscellaneous		Total	
		Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency
Thomas Hawkins:									
United States	Dollar				14,788.85				14,788.85
Saudi Arabia	Riyal		382.83						382.83
United Arab Emirates	Dirham		1,069.50						1,069.50
Total			1,452.33		14,788.85				16,241.18

SENATOR MITCH McCONNELL,
Majority Leader, Jan. 21, 2016.

DIRECTING DOLLARS TO DISASTER RELIEF ACT OF 2015

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 313, S. 2109.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 2109), to direct the Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency to develop an integrated plan to reduce administrative costs under the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill, which had been reported from the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, with an amendment to strike all after the enacting clause and insert in lieu thereof the following:

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the ''Directing Dollars to Disaster Relief Act of 2015''.

SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act—

(1) the term ''administrative cost''—

(A) means a cost incurred by the Agency in support of the delivery of disaster assistance for a major disaster; and

(B) does not include a cost incurred by a grantee or subgrantee;

(2) the term ''Administrator'' means the Administrator of the Agency;

(3) the term ''Agency'' means the Federal Emergency Management Agency;

(4) the term ''direct administrative cost'' means a cost incurred by a grantee or subgrantee of a program authorized by the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5121 et seq.) that can be identified separately and assigned to a specific project;

(5) the term ''hazard mitigation program'' means the hazard mitigation grant program authorized under section 404 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5170c);

(6) the term ''individual assistance program'' means the individual assistance grant program authorized under sections 408, 410, 415, 416, 426, and 502(a) of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5174, 5177, 5182, 5183, 5189d, and 5192(a));

(7) the term ''major disaster'' means a major disaster declared by the President under section 401 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5170);

(8) the term ''mission assignment'' has the meaning given the term in section 641 of the Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act of 2006 (6 U.S.C. 741); and

(9) the term ''public assistance program'' means the public assistance grant program authorized under sections 403(a)(3), 406, 418, 419, 428, and 502(a) of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5170b(a)(3), 5172, 5185, 5186, 5189f, and 5192(a)).

SEC. 3. INTEGRATED PLAN FOR ADMINISTRATIVE COST REDUCTION.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 365 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Administrator shall—

(1) develop and implement an integrated plan to control and reduce administrative costs for major disasters, which shall include—

(A) steps the Agency will take to reduce administrative costs;

(B) milestones needed for accomplishing the reduction of administrative costs;

(C) strategic goals for the average annual percentage of administrative costs of major disasters for each fiscal year;

(D) the assignment of clear roles and responsibilities, including the designation of officials responsible for monitoring and measuring performance; and

(E) a timetable for implementation;

(2) compare the costs and benefits of tracking the administrative cost data for major disasters by the public assistance, individual assistance, hazard mitigation, and mission assignment programs, and if feasible, track this information; and

(3) clarify Agency guidance and minimum documentation requirements for a direct administrative cost claimed by a grantee or subgrantee of a public assistance grant program.

(b) CONGRESSIONAL UPDATE.—Not later than 90 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Administrator shall brief the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure of the House of Representatives on the plan required to be developed under subsection (a)(1).

(c) UPDATES.—If the Administrator modifies the plan or the timetable under subsection (a), the Administrator shall submit to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure of the House of Representatives a report notifying Congress of the modification, which shall include the details of the modification.

SEC. 4. REPORTING REQUIREMENT.

(a) ANNUAL REPORT.—Not later than November 30 of each year, the Administrator shall submit to Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure of the House of Representatives a report on the development and implementation of the integrated plan required under section 3 for the previous fiscal year.

(b) REPORT UPDATES.—

(1) THREE YEAR UPDATE.—Not later than 3 years after the date on which the Administrator submits a report under subsection (a), the Administrator shall submit an updated report for the previous 3-fiscal-year period.

(2) FIVE YEAR UPDATE.—Not later than 5 years after the date on which the Administrator submits a report under subsection (a), the Administrator shall submit an updated report for the previous 5-fiscal-year period.

(c) CONTENTS OF REPORTS.—Each report required under subsections (a) and (b) shall contain, at a minimum—

(1) the total amount spent on administrative costs for the fiscal year period for which the report is being submitted;

(2) the average annual percentage of administrative costs for the fiscal year period for which the report is being submitted;

(3) an assessment of the effectiveness of the plan developed under section 3(a)(1);

(4) an analysis of—

(A) whether the Agency is achieving the strategic goals established under section 3(a)(1)(C); and

(B) in the case of the Agency not achieving such strategic goals, what is preventing the Agency from doing so;

(5) any actions the Agency has identified as useful in improving upon and reaching the goals for administrative costs established under section 3(a)(1)(C); and

(6) any data described in section 3(a)(2), if the Agency determines it is feasible to track such data.

(d) PUBLIC AVAILABILITY.—Not later than 30 days after the date on which the Administrator submits a report to Congress under this section, the Administrator shall make the report publicly available on the website of the Agency.

Mr. McCONNELL. I ask unanimous consent that the Johnson amendment be agreed to; the committee-reported substitute amendment, as amended, be agreed to; the bill, as amended, be read a third time and passed, and the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

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

The amendment (No. 3296) was agreed to, as follows:

(Purpose: To sunset the reporting requirement after 7 years)

On page 10, line 5, insert ''for 7 years beginning on the date of enactment of this Act'' after ''each year''.

The committee-reported amendment in the nature of a substitute, as amended, was agreed to.

The bill (S. 2109), as amended, was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time, and passed, as follows:

S. 2109

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

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the ''Directing Dollars to Disaster Relief Act of 2015''.

SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act—

(1) the term ''administrative cost''—

(A) means a cost incurred by the Agency in support of the delivery of disaster assistance for a major disaster; and

(B) does not include a cost incurred by a grantee or subgrantee;

(2) the term ''Administrator'' means the Administrator of the Agency;

(3) the term ''Agency'' means the Federal Emergency Management Agency;

(4) the term ''direct administrative cost'' means a cost incurred by a grantee or subgrantee of a program authorized by the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5121 et seq.) that can be identified separately and assigned to a specific project;

(5) the term ''hazard mitigation program'' means the hazard mitigation grant program authorized under section 404 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5170c);

(6) the term ''individual assistance program'' means the individual assistance grant program authorized under sections 408, 410, 415, 416, 426, and 502(a) of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5174, 5177, 5182, 5183, 5189d, and 5192(a));

(7) the term ''major disaster'' means a major disaster declared by the President under section 401 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5170);

(8) the term ''mission assignment'' has the meaning given the term in section 641 of the Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act of 2006 (6 U.S.C. 741); and

(9) the term ''public assistance program'' means the public assistance grant program authorized under sections 403(a)(3), 406, 418, 419, 428, and 502(a) of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5170b(a)(3), 5172, 5185, 5186, 5189f, and 5192(a)).

SEC. 3. INTEGRATED PLAN FOR ADMINISTRATIVE COST REDUCTION.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 365 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Administrator shall—

(1) develop and implement an integrated plan to control and reduce administrative costs for major disasters, which shall include—

(A) steps the Agency will take to reduce administrative costs;

(B) milestones needed for accomplishing the reduction of administrative costs;

(C) strategic goals for the average annual percentage of administrative costs of major disasters for each fiscal year;

(D) the assignment of clear roles and responsibilities, including the designation of officials responsible for monitoring and measuring performance; and

(E) a timetable for implementation;

(2) compare the costs and benefits of tracking the administrative cost data for major disasters by the public assistance, individual assistance, hazard mitigation, and mission assignment programs, and if feasible, track this information; and

(3) clarify Agency guidance and minimum documentation requirements for a direct administrative cost claimed by a grantee or subgrantee of a public assistance grant program.

(b) CONGRESSIONAL UPDATE.—Not later than 90 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Administrator shall brief the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure of the House of Representatives on the plan required to be developed under subsection (a)(1).

(c) UPDATES.—If the Administrator modifies the plan or the timetable under subsection (a), the Administrator shall submit to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure of the House of Representatives a report notifying Congress of the modification, which shall include the details of the modification.

SEC. 4. REPORTING REQUIREMENT.

(a) ANNUAL REPORT.—Not later than November 30 of each year for 7 years beginning on the date of enactment of this Act, the Administrator shall submit to Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure of the House of Representatives a report on the development and implementation of the integrated plan required under section 3 for the previous fiscal year.

(b) REPORT UPDATES.—

(1) THREE YEAR UPDATE.—Not later than 3 years after the date on which the Administrator submits a report under subsection (a), the Administrator shall submit an updated report for the previous 3-fiscal-year period.

(2) FIVE YEAR UPDATE.—Not later than 5 years after the date on which the Administrator submits a report under subsection (a), the Administrator shall submit an updated report for the previous 5-fiscal-year period.

(c) CONTENTS OF REPORTS.—Each report required under subsections (a) and (b) shall contain, at a minimum—

(1) the total amount spent on administrative costs for the fiscal year period for which the report is being submitted;

(2) the average annual percentage of administrative costs for the fiscal year period for which the report is being submitted;

(3) an assessment of the effectiveness of the plan developed under section 3(a)(1);

(4) an analysis of—

(A) whether the Agency is achieving the strategic goals established under section 3(a)(1)(C); and

(B) in the case of the Agency not achieving such strategic goals, what is preventing the Agency from doing so;

(5) any actions the Agency has identified as useful in improving upon and reaching the goals for administrative costs established under section 3(a)(1)(C); and

(6) any data described in section 3(a)(2), if the Agency determines it is feasible to track such data.

(d) PUBLIC AVAILABILITY.—Not later than 30 days after the date on which the Administrator submits a report to Congress under this section, the Administrator shall make the report publicly available on the website of the Agency.

JUDICIAL REDRESS ACT OF 2015

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 356, H.R. 1428.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 1428) to extend Privacy Act remedies to citizens of certified states, and for other purposes.

The Senate proceeded to consider the bill, which had been reported from the Committee on the Judiciary, with an amendment, as follows:

(The part of the bill intended to be stricken is shown in boldface brackets and the part of the bill intended to be inserted is shown in italic.)

H.R. 1428

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

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the ''Judicial Redress Act of 2015''.

SEC. 2. EXTENSION OF PRIVACY ACT REMEDIES TO CITIZENS OF DESIGNATED COUNTRIES.

(a) CIVIL ACTION; CIVIL REMEDIES.—With respect to covered records, a covered person may bring a civil action against an agency and obtain civil remedies, in the same manner, to the same extent, and subject to the same limitations, including exemptions and exceptions, as an individual may bring and obtain with respect to records under—

(1) section 552a(g)(1)(D) of title 5, United States Code, but only with respect to disclosures intentionally or willfully made in violation of section 552a(b) of such title; and

(2) subparagraphs (A) and (B) of section 552a(g)(1) of title 5, United States Code, but such an action may only be brought against a designated Federal agency or component.

(b) EXCLUSIVE REMEDIES.—The remedies set forth in subsection (a) are the exclusive remedies available to a covered person under this section.

(c) APPLICATION OF THE PRIVACY ACT WITH RESPECT TO A COVERED PERSON.—For purposes of a civil action described in subsection (a), a covered person shall have the same rights, and be subject to the same limitations, including exemptions and exceptions, as an individual has and is subject to under section 552a of title 5, United States Code, when pursuing the civil remedies described in paragraphs (1) and (2) of subsection (a).

[(d) DESIGNATION OF COVERED COUNTRY.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Attorney General may, with the concurrence of the Secretary of State, the Secretary of the Treasury, and the Secretary of Homeland Security, designate a foreign country or regional economic integration organization, or member country of such organization, as a ''covered country'' for purposes of this section if—

(A) the country or regional economic integration organization, or member country of such organization, has entered into an agreement with the United States that provides for appropriate privacy protections for information shared for the purpose of preventing, investigating, detecting, or prosecuting criminal offenses; or

(B) the Attorney General has determined that the country or regional economic integration organization, or member country of such organization, has effectively shared information with the United States for the purpose of preventing, investigating, detecting, or prosecuting criminal offenses and has appropriate privacy protections for such shared information.

(2) REMOVAL OF DESIGNATION.—The Attorney General may, with the concurrence of the Secretary of State, the Secretary of the Treasury, and the Secretary of Homeland Security, revoke the designation of a foreign

country or regional economic integration organization, or member country of such organization, as a ''covered country'' if the Attorney General determines that such designated ''covered country''—

(A) is not complying with the agreement described under paragraph (1)(A);

(B) no longer meets the requirements for designation under paragraph (1)(B); or

(C) impedes the transfer of information (for purposes of reporting or preventing unlawful activity) to the United States by a private entity or person.]

(d) DESIGNATION OF COVERED COUNTRY.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Attorney General may, with the concurrence of the Secretary of State, the Secretary of the Treasury, and the Secretary of Homeland Security, designate a foreign country or regional economic integration organization, or member country of such organization, as a ''covered country'' for purposes of this section if—

(A)(i) the country or regional economic integration organization, or member country of such organization, has entered into an agreement with the United States that provides for appropriate privacy protections for information shared for the purpose of preventing, investigating, detecting, or prosecuting criminal offenses; or

(ii) the Attorney General has determined that the country or regional economic integration organization, or member country of such organization, has effectively shared information with the United States for the purpose of preventing, investigating, detecting, or prosecuting criminal offenses and has appropriate privacy protections for such shared information;

(B) the country or regional economic integration organization, or member country of such organization, permits the transfer of personal data for commercial purposes between the territory of that country or regional economic organization and the territory of the United States, through an agreement with the United States or otherwise; and

(C) the Attorney General has certified that the policies regarding the transfer of personal data for commercial purposes and related actions of the country or regional economic integration organization, or member country of such organization, do not materially impede the national security interests of the United States.

(2) REMOVAL OF DESIGNATION.—The Attorney General may, with the concurrence of the Secretary of State, the Secretary of the Treasury, and the Secretary of Homeland Security, revoke the designation of a foreign country or regional economic integration organization, or member country of such organization, as a ''covered country'' if the Attorney General determines that such designated ''covered country''—

(A) is not complying with the agreement described under paragraph (1)(A)(i);

(B) no longer meets the requirements for designation under paragraph (1)(A)(ii);

(C) fails to meet the requirements under paragraph (1)(B);

(D) no longer meets the requirements for certification under paragraph (1)(C); or

(E) impedes the transfer of information (for purposes of reporting or preventing unlawful activity) to the United States by a private entity or person.

(e) DESIGNATION OF DESIGNATED FEDERAL AGENCY OR COMPONENT.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Attorney General shall determine whether an agency or component thereof is a ''designated Federal agency or component'' for purposes of this section. The Attorney General shall not designate any agency or component thereof other than the Department of Justice or a component of the Department of Justice without the concurrence of the head of the relevant agency, or of the agency to which the component belongs.

(2) REQUIREMENTS FOR DESIGNATION.—The Attorney General may determine that an agency or component of an agency is a ''designated Federal agency or component'' for purposes of this section, if—

(A) the Attorney General determines that information exchanged by such agency with a covered country is within the scope of an agreement referred to in subsection (d)(1)(A); or

(B) with respect to a country or regional economic integration organization, or member country of such organization, that has been designated as a ''covered country'' under subsection (d)(1)(B), the Attorney General determines that designating such agency or component thereof is in the law enforcement interests of the United States.

(f) FEDERAL REGISTER REQUIREMENT; NONREVIEWABLE DETERMINATION.—The Attorney General shall publish each determination made under subsections (d) and (e). Such determination shall not be subject to judicial or administrative review.

(g) JURISDICTION.—The United States District Court for the District of Columbia shall have exclusive jurisdiction over any claim arising under this section.

(h) DEFINITIONS.—In this Act:

(1) AGENCY.—The term ''agency'' has the meaning given that term in section 552(f) of title 5, United States Code.

(2) COVERED COUNTRY.—The term ''covered country'' means a country or regional economic integration organization, or member country of such organization, designated in accordance with subsection (d).

(3) COVERED PERSON.—The term ''covered person'' means a natural person (other than an individual) who is a citizen of a covered country.

(4) COVERED RECORD.—The term ''covered record'' has the same meaning for a covered person as a record has for an individual under section 552a of title 5, United States Code, once the covered record is transferred—

(A) by a public authority of, or private entity within, a country or regional economic organization, or member country of such organization, which at the time the record is transferred is a covered country; and

(B) to a designated Federal agency or component for purposes of preventing, investigating, detecting, or prosecuting criminal offenses.

(5) DESIGNATED FEDERAL AGENCY OR COMPONENT.—The term ''designated Federal agency or component'' means a Federal agency or component of an agency designated in accordance with subsection (e).

(6) INDIVIDUAL.—The term ''individual'' has the meaning given that term in section 552a(a)(2) of title 5, United States Code.

(i) PRESERVATION OF PRIVILEGES.—Nothing in this section shall be construed to waive any applicable privilege or require the disclosure of classified information. Upon an agency's request, the district court shall review in camera and ex parte any submission by the agency in connection with this subsection.

(j) EFFECTIVE DATE.—This Act shall take effect 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the committee-reported amendment be agreed to; the bill, as amended, be read a third time and passed; and the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

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

The committee-reported amendment was agreed to.

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

The bill was read the third time.

The bill (H.R. 1428), as amended, was passed.

SUPPORTING THE GOALS AND IDEALS OF CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION MONTH

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of S. Res. 367, submitted earlier today.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 367) supporting the goals and ideals of Career and Technical Education Month.

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

Mr. MCCONNELL. I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, and the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

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

The resolution (S. Res. 367) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

(The resolution, with its preamble, is printed in today's RECORD under ''Submitted Resolutions.'')

AFFIRMING THE IMPORTANCE OF STUDENT DATA PRIVACY AND RECOGNIZING DIGITAL LEARNING DAY

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of S. Res. 369, submitted earlier today.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 369) affirming the importance of student data privacy and recognizing Digital Learning Day.

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

Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, as a fifth generation Montanan and engineer who worked at a cloud computing company for, 13 years, I have seen firsthand the opportunities created by advances in technology. As a father of four, I am aware of the huge role technology plays in our students' lives.

February 17, 2016, is Digital Learning Day. Students around the globe will be using technology to enhance the classroom learning experience. While digital learning offers many benefits, we must sufficiently protect the personal information of our students. Without proper safeguards in place, our children's privacy is at risk, and student data could end up in the hands of criminals and other bad actors. We need policies in place to ensure students' information and electronic records are processed and stored safely and securely.

I am committed to working with my colleagues to harness the power of digital learning while protecting the privacy of our kids.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, and the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

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

The resolution (S. Res. 369) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

(The resolution, with its preamble, is printed in today's RECORD under ''Submitted Resolutions.'')

ORDERS FOR WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 2016

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it adjourn until 10 a.m. tomorrow, Wednesday, February 10; that following the prayer and pledge, the morning hour be deemed expired, the Journal of proceedings be approved to date, and the time for the two leaders be reserved for their use later in the day; further, that following leader remarks, the Senate be in a period of morning business until 10:30 a.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL 10 A.M. TOMORROW

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, if there is no further business to come before the Senate, I ask unanimous consent that it stand adjourned under the previous order.

There being no objection, the Senate, at 6:06 p.m., adjourned until Wednesday, February 10, 2016, at 10 a.m.

CONFIRMATION

Executive nomination confirmed by the Senate February 9, 2016:

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

SCOT ALAN MARCIEL, OF CALIFORNIA, A CAREER MEMBER OF THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE, CLASS OF CAREER MINISTER, TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE UNION OF BURMA.

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

RESTORING AMERICANS' HEALTHCARE FREEDOM RECONCILIATION ACT OF 2015—VETO MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

SPEECH OF

HON. TOM COLE

OF OKLAHOMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 2, 2016

Mr. COLE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express my profound disappointment in President Obama's recent decision to veto H.R. 3762, the Restoring Americans' Healthcare Freedom Reconciliation Act of 2015. It is important to be clear and stand with my constituents in voting to override the President's veto of legislation that is a story of broken promises by President Obama and the Democrats who voted in favor of this legislation.

I want to spend a few minutes describing just a few of the promises made during consideration of Obamacare which have sadly failed to come to fruition. First, Mr. Speaker, President Obama repeatedly told the American people that ''If you like your health care plan, you'll be able to keep it''. Sadly, in reality, it couldn't be further from the truth. More than 4.7 million people received cancellation notices in the fall of 2013, right before Obamacare went into effect. Politifact, no friend to conservatives, even went as far as labeling the President's promise the ''Lie of the Year.''

Secondly, while Obamacare promised lower healthcare costs and lower premiums, this couldn't be further from the truth. First, on lower healthcare costs, according to CMS' own actuaries, overall spending on healthcare is expected to rise by $621 billion over 10 years due to the law, at an average of 5.8% per year. That's more than double our projected GDP growth, and a higher rate than before Obamacare. The story on premiums is no better. While President Obama promised lower premiums, as John Adams stated, ''facts are stubborn things''. The facts are that the average premium for a family plan has increased by $18,610 from 2009–2013, and the overall cost of premium increases have been over $1.2 trillion.

Third, Mr. Speaker, Obamacare promised more choice, more competition, and lower costs. Well, unfortunately, that is just not the case in Oklahoma, like many other states across the country. In fact, fewer insurers offer fewer options at higher prices than when Obamacare was passed, over my objections. Obamacare is not the answer and the American people know that.

Instead, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to cosponsor the American Health Care Reform Act of 2015 (AHCA), which I support as an alternative to a government-managed health care law. This legislation would provide a number of market-driven solutions to ensure everyone seeking coverage will be able to obtain it. First, it expands federal support for state high risk pools. Unlike Obamacare, which created an already oversubscribed Federal high risk pool, AHCA returns those concerns to the states, provides the necessary funding to sustain them, and caps the premiums in those plans. Additionally, AHCA tax incentives to equalize the treatment of employer-sponsored coverage and those purchased in the private market. In addition to ensuring healthy competition across the market place, it also ensures that if one loses their job, they do not necessarily have to lose their health insurance. Third, AHCA would provide real competition among insurers, by allowing Americans to purchase health insurance products across state lines and by permitting small businesses to pool together to negotiate better rates. AHCA is the type of legislation needed to replace a bloated, government-run healthcare system which has left a trail of broken promises in its wake.

I am pleased to vote to override the President's veto of H.R. 3762. While I know this vote will not be successful, I am pleased that the President has finally had to confront the issues that the American people have with his signature piece of legislation, the so-called Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. Unfortunately, Obamacare is none of these things. I urge all my colleagues to vote in favor of overriding the President's veto.

CONGRESSIONAL PROGRESSIVE CAUCUS: THE FLINT, MICHIGAN, WATER CRISIS

SPEECH OF

HON. BARBARA LEE

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 3, 2016

Ms. LEE. Madam Speaker, I'd like to thank Congressman DAN KILDEE for his tireless work to bring justice for the residents of Flint. His work, and the work of Congressman JOHN CONYERS, Congresswoman BRENDA LAWRENCE, Congresswoman DEBBIE DINGELL, and so many Members of the Michigan Delegation, is essential to providing the families of Flint a voice as we address this crisis.

Madam Speaker, the situation in Flint is nothing short of a tragedy—and a tragedy that could have been prevented.

Every day, we learn more information about how Michigan public officials sacrificed the health and futures of Flint residents in order to save a few dollars in water costs.

This is a shame and a disgrace. The people of Flint deserve better from their leaders.

As Members of Congress, we cannot stand silent while Americans are poisoned.

First, to truly understand this crisis—you have to understand Flint.

Flint is a majority African American city and the average household income is just $24,834 a year—that's barely HALF the average household income for the state. Let me say that again, the average household in Flint earns JUST half of what other Michigan households earn.

Even before the water switched from Detroit to the Flint River, Flint had fallen on hard times.

It was a city in need and instead of taking action, Governor Rick Snyder balanced the budget at the expense of Flint children, their health and their safety.

Even after residents complained of brown water coming out of the taps, the state insisted nothing was wrong.

But not everyone got the same treatment.

Last January—a full year ago—state workers complained about the quality of water. While Flint residents were told the water was perfectly safe, the state employees were provided with bottled water.

Even before that, in October 2014, the Flint General Motors factory complained that the water was corroding car parts. The city helped General Motors tap into a different, safer water line.

While officials lined up to protect state employees and corporate profits, the residents of Flint were fed lies and lead.

Madam Speaker—I have to ask:

Would this have happened in another city, where the residents had the advantage of wealth?

Or do these gross breaches of public trust only happen in cities where politicians see the residents as expendable?

Sadly, I think we all know the answer to that question.

Tragically, this isn't the first time a poor town has been poisoned—and then ignored.

In far too many low-income communities and communities of color across the country, this story is very familiar.

They, like the families in Flint, have had their health, their well-being and their futures traded in by callous politicians more concerned with expanding corporate profits than serving the public good.

It's past time for Congress to take steps to address environmental racism and ensure that everyone—no matter their zipcode—has the opportunity to grow up safe and healthy.

President Obama took the first step by declaring a state of emergency and extending $80 million in federal funding.

But more can and must be done to address this public health crisis and ensure that this never happens again—in any community, anywhere.

When I was in the California legislature, I worked to pass one of the first state bills regulating lead. This toxin was disproportionately impacting communities of color. I have seen firsthand the devastating impact of lead on children.

I support the work of my colleagues who are demanding state and local officials are held accountable for this man-made disaster, a disaster that never should have happened.

The tragedy in Flint reveals the real impacts of structural and institutional racism and classism on our community. I stand with the people of Flint in my outrage and will continue to demand answers.

As we do so, we must come together to address the impacts of lead poisoning on Flint's residents, particularly Flint's children. Because, sadly, for them, this crisis is just beginning.

IN RECOGNITION OF PINE FORGE ACADEMY

HON. PATRICK MEEHAN

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 9, 2016

Mr. MEEHAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Pine Forge Academy for providing 70 years of exemplary education to Pennsylvania's 7th District.

Pine Forge Academy is a co-educational boarding school that serves grades 9 through 12. It is a part of the Seventh-Day Adventist education system, the world's second largest Christian school system.

Today, the school remains committed to providing African-American high school students with an exemplary education, a chance to develop their faith and to prepare for a life of service.

Mr. Speaker, Pine Forge Academy has been changing the lives of young men and women for the past 70 years. I congratulate the school and look forward to seeing the excellent work it will continue to do in the years to come.

CELEBRATING THE 150TH ANNIVERSARY OF LEBANON VALLEY COLLEGE

HON. CHARLES W. DENT

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 9, 2016

Mr. DENT. Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to recognize the 150th Anniversary of Lebanon Valley College. Lebanon Valley College was founded on February 23, 1866. For 150 years it has delivered quality liberal arts educational instruction to its students.

During this time, the school has grown to become a vital and vibrant part of the culture and community of Lebanon County and of Annville Township.

Lebanon Valley College currently offers thirty-six undergraduate majors to its student body of approximately sixteen hundred undergraduate students. At various times, the U.S. News & World Report, the Princeton Review and Forbes have all placed the school on their respective lists recognizing America's best colleges.

Mr. Speaker, I warmly extend my congratulations to the students, faculty, employees, administrators and alumni of Lebanon Valley College on the happy occasion of their Sesquicentennial. I extend my congratulations to Lebanon Valley College for its outstanding record of successfully providing so many young men and women with a strong liberal arts education, and wish continued growth and success for the College and all of its students.

NATIONAL TRAUMA INSTITUTE RECOGNITION

HON. WILL HURD

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 9, 2016

Mr. HURD of Texas. Mr. Speaker, traumatic injury in America affects everyone, claiming over 190,000 lives and costing hundreds of billions of dollars in healthcare annually. It is the number one cause of death for Americans between 1 and 46 years old. As a result, in 2006, the National Trauma Institute was founded in San Antonio, Texas, to stop unnecessary suffering from trauma through prevention, education and research. Ten years later, the National Trauma Institute celebrates a decade of trauma research advocacy and funding.

The National Trauma Institute has enjoyed much success throughout its first decade in existence advocating for federal appropriations for trauma-related research so that patients can receive care faster and more efficiently. To date, the organization has been responsible for securing $55 million in funding for trauma-related research, special projects and research infrastructure. That $55 million has made an incredible impact on millions of Americans, allowing them to survive injuries that were once unthinkable and go on to lead healthy productive lives.

There is no question that the National Trauma Institute, founded in San Antonio, Texas, has contributed to trauma research that has saved and dramatically improved lives. The organization has become a pillar of the community and is now the leading voice of advocacy for the funding of clinical trauma research. I am proud to congratulate The National Trauma Institute for its incredible achievements for San Antonio and the rest of the nation.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. MICHAEL E. CAPUANO

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 9, 2016

Mr. CAPUANO. Mr. Speaker, I missed several votes last week while meeting with the Speaker of Parliament of the Republic of the Sudan. I wish to state how I would have voted had I been present:

Roll Call No. 55—No

Roll Call No. 56—No

COMMEMORATING THE 75TH ANNIVERSARY OF PEORIA CHARTER COACH COMPANY

HON. DARIN LaHOOD

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 9, 2016

Mr. LAHOOD. Mr. Speaker, I would like to honor a remarkable business, Peoria Charter Coach Company, an icon of Central Illinois celebrating their 75th anniversary.

Peoria Charter Coach Company started in Lacon, Illinois under Walter Winkler who had nothing but the earnest desire to put his community first. After seeing his fellow citizens struggle to travel to work due to the World War II gas rations, he opened a bus service so that others around him could safely commute to work to earn their paychecks.

Seventy-five years later and now headquartered in Peoria, Illinois, four generations of Winklers have found many other ways to serve their community. From transporting war-time United States Defense Workers and Military Personnel to serve their country to helping schoolchildren to attend classes, from assisting college students returning home for the holidays to serving locals looking to catch a ball game in Chicago, the Winklers continue to pride themselves on assisting others. To date, the Peoria Charter Coach Company now carries an impressive half million passengers over four million miles annually.

I am thankful that America has been a country where hard-working families with a vision, such as the Winklers can grow their small business, employ others, and serve their fellow Americans. I extend my sincere congratulations to the Winkler Family and Peoria Charter Coach Company for their impressive accomplishments and thank them for their continued service to the 18th District. I wish them seventy-five more years of good fortune and safe travels.

HONORING THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF MRS. WAYEDEAN BEATRICE McGRAW

HON. ALCEE L. HASTINGS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 9, 2016

Mr. HASTINGS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the life and legacy of Mrs. Wayedean Beatrice McGraw of Broward County, Florida, who sadly passed away on Friday, January 1, 2016 at age 73. Wayedean was born in Leeds, Alabama where she attended Moton High School. She later moved to Florida where she worked providing private home health care in various locations throughout Broward County. She worshipped at Bethel Baptist and Evergreen Missionary Baptist Church, now known as Greater Providence Baptist Church.

Wayedean is survived by her three loving children, Bruce, Annette and Ronald; seven wonderful grandchildren: Cornelius Sr., Valencia, Antwon Sr., Calvin Sr., Marquis, Brittany and Lauren; ten great grandchildren: Roy, Cornelius Jr., D'Naisah, Kristian, Antwon Jr., A'Niyah, Nakyla, Calonni, Calvin Jr., and Makai; one sister, Nancy of Oakland Park, Florida; and many loving nieces, nephews, other relatives and friends. Her mother, Arlene, and four siblings: Jean, Mary, Paul and Charles all preceded her in death.

Mr. Speaker, I am truly honored to celebrate the incredible life of Mrs. Wayedean Beatrice McGraw, and express my deepest condolences to her family. I know that her spirit, loving memory, and legacy will always live on.

CONGRATULATIONS TO LIBRADA PAYAN

HON. WILL HURD

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 9, 2016

Mr. HURD of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the 101st birthday of Mrs. Librada Payan of El Paso, Texas.

A beloved mother of 7 children, 30 grandchildren, 15 great grandchildren, and several more great-great grandchildren, Mrs. Payan is known for her cheerful outlook and devotion to her beloved family.

Mrs. Payan was born in 1915, and moved to the El Paso area in 1918. She was happily married to the love of her life for over 65 years. She never ceases to be amazed at the changes of the world around her, and greets each day with an enthusiasm that eludes even the most optimistic of people.

On behalf of the Twenty-Third Congressional District of Texas, congratulations to Librada Payan on turning 101 years old, and may she celebrate many more.

HONORING THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF DR. JAMES H. BILLINGTON

HON. JEFF FORTENBERRY

OF NEBRASKA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 9, 2016

Mr. FORTENBERRY. Mr. Speaker, today I would like to honor the accomplishments of James H. Billington as founding chairman of the Open World Leadership Center in Washington, DC, in recognition of his retirement in September 2015.

James H. Billington served as the 13th Librarian of Congress from 1987 until his retirement in 2015.

''Jim'', a native of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, is an accomplished author, scholar, educator, and administrator and has earned the respect and admiration of his students, colleagues, peers, and fellow Trustees.

Librarian Billington earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from Princeton University in 1950 and a doctorate from Balliol College, Oxford, where he was a Rhodes Scholar.

After serving with the United States Army and in the Office of National Estimates, Mr. Billington taught history at Harvard University from 1957 to 1962 and subsequently at Princeton University where he was professor of history from 1964 to 1973.

James H. Billington became director of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in September 1973, an institution created by the United States Congress in 1968 as a living memorial to the 28th President. He grew the Woodrow Wilson Center International Center for Scholars allowing American and invited foreign scholars to spend time reflecting on issues central to understanding a complex world.

He then helped create the Kennan Institute for Advanced Russian Studies in 1974, believing that the relationship with the Soviet Union was America's most important international challenge.

As a scholar of Russian history and culture, Dr. Billington has accompanied 10 congressional delegations to Russia and the former Soviet Union, and joined President Reagan at the summit meeting in June, 1988.

On September 14, 1987, Professor Billington was sworn in as the 13th Librarian of Congress where he oversaw the largest collection of books, maps, photographs, recordings, and motion pictures in the world.

Dr. Billington is the author of Mikhailovsky and Russian Populism (1956), The Icon and the Axe (1966), Fire in the Minds of Men (1980), Russia Transformed: Breakthrough to Hope, August 1991 (1992), The Face of Russia (1998)—a companion book to the three-part television series of the same name, which he wrote and narrated for the Public Broadcasting Service, and Russia in Search of Itself (2004), books translated and published in a variety of languages.

James H. Billington has received over 40 honorary doctorates—including from the University of Tbilisi in Georgia (1999), the Russian State University for the Humanities in Moscow (2001), and the University of Oxford (2002), has been awarded the Woodrow Wilson Award from Princeton University (1992), the UCLA Medal (1999), the Pushkin Medal of the International Association of the Teachers of Russian Language and Culture (2000), the Karamzin Prize (2005) from the Foreign Literature Library in Moscow, the Likhachev Prize (2006) from the Likhachev Foundation in St. Petersburg, the inaugural Lafayette Prize by the French-American Cultural Foundation, the EastWest Institute Outstanding Leadership Award, and the Presidential Citizens Medal by President Bush in 2008.

Dr. Billington is a member of the Russian Academy of Sciences. He was decorated as Commander of the Order of Arts and Letters and as Chevalier of the Legion of Honor by the President of France, as Commander of the National Order of the Southern Cross of Brazil, the Order of Merit of Italy, a Knight Commander's Cross of the Order of Merit by the Federal Republic of Germany, the Gwanghwa Medal by the Republic of Korea, the Chingiz Aitmatov Gold Medal by the Kyrgyz Republic and the Order of Friendship by the President of the Russian Federation; the highest state order that a foreign citizen may receive.

Dr. Billington will continue to study and write on important Russian-American issues, after retiring as the second-longest-serving Librarian of Congress, and as Founding Chairman of the Open World Leadership Center.

It is fitting that the United States Congress recognize his deeds throughout his 28 years of service as Librarian of Congress and the accomplishments and achievements of James H. Billington as founding Chairman of the Open World Leadership Center throughout his 16 years of service.

HONORING DR. JAMES BILLINGTON

HON. DAVID E. PRICE

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 9, 2016

Mr. PRICE of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I wish to congratulate and thank Dr. James Billington upon completion of his 42 years of distinguished public service, culminating in 28 years as the 13th Librarian of Congress. He presided over a doubling of the Library's holdings and a major enhancement of the Library's role in American cultural life.

Dr. Billington, a Rhodes Scholar and a distinguished expert on Russia, began his career as a professor of history at Harvard University and Princeton University. He served as director of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars and helped found the Kennan Institute for Advanced Russian Studies before coming to the Library of Congress in 1987.

Dr. Billington recognized that the Library must be a great public asset, an educational resource for all Americans, not just for academics and Members of Congress. He set about digitizing many of the Library's collections and arranging the purchase and display of dozens of important relics that had long been hidden from public view. He also created the National Book Festival, which has brought hundreds of thousands of book lovers to Washington to celebrate our literary history.

As a Member of Congress and a leader of the House Democracy Partnership (HDP), I have particularly appreciated Dr. Billington's application of his background as a scholar of Russia and his extensive international experience to the establishment of the Open World Leadership Center, a unique legislative branch initiative that has brought some 24,000 young leaders from post-Soviet states to the U.S. for intensive exposure to our people and community life. I have enjoyed hosting these delegations in North Carolina, parliamentary colleagues but also teachers, doctors, provincial leaders, and others from all walks of life.

The Library and the Congressional Research Service (CRS) have also been invaluable in HDP's outreach to parliaments in democratizing countries, helping build their staff, research, and IT capabilities. This work began with the Frost-Solomon Task Force in the early 1990s, when post-communist states faced the challenge of equipping and operating modern parliaments. It has continued over the past decade as HDP has helped establish research facilities and personnel, with the help of CRS, in countries ranging from Liberia to Afghanistan to Timor-Leste.

I congratulate Dr. Billington on his historic career, and I wish him and his family the very best for a well-deserved retirement.

HONORING TERRY'S HOUSE AS THEY CELEBRATE THEIR 5 YEAR ANNIVERSARY

HON. JIM COSTA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 9, 2016

Mr. COSTA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Terry's House, a hospitality home dedicated to providing affordable and convenient lodging for families of patients in critical care units at the Community Regional Medical Center. This year Terry's House is celebrating its five year anniversary of continuous service in Downtown Fresno, California. Since its inception in 2011, Terry's House has served over 3,600 families, from forty-two states and twenty-three countries around the world. Operating solely on donations, Terry's House has been made possible by the generosity of the community, and it is their hope that they may continue to assist families of those in critical care for many years to come.

This residential facility is named in honor of Terry Richards who suffered and survived a serious trauma at the age of five when he was injured in a car accident. For nearly five months, his mother, Marie Richards traveled nearly 80 miles a day to see her son while he was recovering in the hospital. Her story was the story of many people before Terry's House opened its doors. Many families had to seek accommodations miles from the hospital, and many who couldn't afford lodging slept in waiting rooms, in their cars, or had to try their best to find a spot in a busy hospital. Often, patients' loved ones had no alternative but to the leave the hospital and make the long drive home. Terry's House addresses this need, and has provided families with a home away from home, while their love ones receive care.

Terry's House is situated on 17,000 square feet and features two stories of living quarters located across the street from the Community Regional Medical Center, so families can visit their loved ones daily. The twenty hotel and suite style rooms at Terry's House have a capacity of up to four individuals and feature various amenities, including balcony seating areas, in-room refrigerators, access to adjoining rooms for increased capacity, and various common areas including a kitchen, dining area, laundry facility, and children's play room.

Terry's House was made possible by the tireless work of Terry Richards's brother, Tom Richards, a local community developer and CEO of the Penstar Group. With the dedication of Tom Richards, Leta Ciavaglia, Christa Short, the Terry's House Development Council, the Community Regional Medical Center Foundation and many generous members of the community, a family dream has become a reality.

The sustainability of Terry's House is entirely dependent on private gifts, contributions from generous individuals, and organizations. More than $5 million was raised to initially build and furnish the home. In addition to generous gifts from Tom Richards and Bank of America, a large number of in-kind donations also continue to assist in sustaining the ongoing operations of the home. Terry's House has been fortunate enough to receive staffing support from the Community Medical Centers. To minimize costs, volunteers generously perform many of the daily operations of the home.

Mr. Speaker, for the last five years, Terry's House has had the privilege and responsibility of housing families as they face some of the most difficult days of their lives. Terry's House has been there for them, and will continue to be there thanks to the generosity and support of our community. Through their selfless service, Terry's House has made an immense difference in the lives of so many individuals, and it is important that we recognize them for all that they have done and will continue to do for years to come.

CONGRATULATIONS TO HELEN FORBRICH

HON. WILL HURD

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 9, 2016

Mr. HURD of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the 103rd birthday of Helen Virginia Forbrich, of San Antonio, Texas.

Helen was born in Adkins, Texas on February 25th, 1913. She was married to the love of her life for 45 years. She had 4 wonderful children, and 4 grandchildren. She has always enjoyed cooking and is known for her homemade biscuits. In 1921, at the age of 8, she began the life-long habit of drinking four ounces of red wine every night before bed, which her family attributes to her wonderful longevity.

On behalf of the Twenty-third Congressional District of Texas, congratulations to Helen Virginia Forbrich on turning 103 years old, and may she celebrate many more.

RECOGNIZING HARRY BOWEN AS VETERAN OF THE YEAR

HON. MARTHA McSALLY

OF ARIZONA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 9, 2016

Ms. MCSALLY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor and congratulate Harry Bowen, a veteran from Sierra Vista who was recently selected as the Veteran of the Year by the Greater Sierra Vista Area United Veterans' Council. Mr. Bowen has continued the proud tradition of service to our country long after leaving the military.

Mr. Bowen served in the United States Army during Vietnam and retired as a Chief Warrant Officer 3. After his service in the Army, Mr. Bowen has actively served in the Military Officers Association of America in many capacities including as the Employer Support to the Guard and Reserve Outreach coordinator who works to educate companies on the benefits of hiring veterans as employees. He is also active in the Warrant Officers' Association, and the American Legion Post 52.

Recently, Mr. Bowen joined the Cochise Serving Veterans Committee—as a founding member—to aid in helping homeless and at-risk veterans in Cochise County. He has served on the board for the Cochise County Stand-down event for two years and his involvement is credited with making the Cochise County Stand-down the largest event of its kind in Southern Arizona.

The extent of Mr. Bowen's service and civic involvement is not limited to Veteran Service Organizations. He has also served the Kiwanis club in several capacities since 1993, and has led the American Cancer Society Relay for Life event in Sierra Vista for 9 years.

To quote his friend, ''It is clear he does not perform his duties or take on these leadership roles for any kind of recognition, but for the love of service to his fellow veterans and countrymen.'' Harry Bowen is an excellent representative of the veterans of Southeastern Arizona who have continued to exemplify the time-honored values at the core of our military: duty, service, and an abiding commitment to a cause greater than any one individual. Congratulations to Mr. Bowen for being selected as Veteran of the Year, a well-deserved honor.

IN RECOGNITION OF BOB CHERECK

HON. PETE SESSIONS

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 9, 2016

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the work of an outstanding Texan, Robert A. Chereck, as he recently concluded his distinguished work as the long-term Chairman of the Board for the Children's Health Systems of Texas (CHST) in Dallas. While serving as Chairman for the Children's Health Systems of Texas, Mr. Chereck also served as the Executive Chairman and President/CEO of Southwest Securities FSB and previously served as the Executive Vice President of Wells Fargo Bank.

The Children's Health Systems of Texas' original location is in Dallas and has now grown to include the several other specialty and pediatric care centers located throughout North Texas. The Children's Health Systems of Texas remains the seventh largest pediatric health care provider in the country—receiving more than 760,000 patients annually and performing more than 26,588 surgeries at its two full-service campuses in Dallas and Plano. The Dallas campus serves as the main campus as well as the only academic healthcare system in the Dallas-Fort Worth area dedicated solely to the comprehensive care of children from birth to age 18. Children's Health has also been recognized as (1) one of the most connected hospitals in the nation for its excellence in patient safety, patient engagement and clinical connectedness; (2) one of only six STS three-star designations for congenital heart surgery; (3) a Level IV Neonatal Intensive Care Unit—the highest qualification for such programs; and (4) a Level 1 Trauma Center for pediatric care.

I have seen the power of the Children's Health System of Texas as both a Member of Congress and as the father of a patient. Our region is blessed to have the resources and expertise of the CHST medical professionals and staff available to meet the needs of our children. So much of the CHST success story is due to the involved engagement of civic leaders like Bob Chereck. Together, those leaders have ensured the children of our region would never have to leave home to have the best possible medical care.

I have personally had the opportunity to work with Mr. Chereck over the years in Dallas on a number of issues important to our community, region and state. Besides serving as Chairman of the Board at CHST, Bob has served as Chairman of the Dallas Regional Chamber of Commerce, Chairman of the Dallas Citizens Council, a member of the Downtown Dallas Association Board, the Youth Services Council, and a number of initiatives at his beloved University of Texas. Over the years, my work with Bob via any number of these organizations has forged a strong bond and friendship with both Bob and his wife Donna.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my esteemed colleagues to join me in wishing Bob and Donna Chereck all the best in their future endeavors.

CELEBRATING THE 200TH BIRTHDAY OF THE CITY OF JACKSON

HON. BRADLEY BYRNE

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 9, 2016

Mr. BYRNE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the 200th birthday of Jackson, Alabama, which is located in Alabama's First Congressional District. Over the past 200 years, the City of Jackson has had a rich and storied history that is reflected in all of the hardworking residents of Jackson today.

Situated on a rise overlooking the east bank of the Tombigbee River is where you will find Jackson's historic downtown. In 1815, a stock company, the Pine Level Land Company, was formed by a group of investors who believed they could promote the site to attract settlers. Formerly known as ''Pine Level,'' and ''Republicville,'' it was finally decided that the little village would be named Jackson, in honor of General Andrew Jackson, hero of the War of 1812 as well as the Creek Indian War of 1813–14, who would later become our seventh president. Jackson was incorporated by an act of the Mississippi Territorial Legislature on November 27, 1816, which also created the town's first governing body.

Like many of our country's communities, Jackson has experienced both ups and downs throughout its history. In 1816, the prosperous Jackson had a population of 1,500, which was quite large for a rural frontier town. The town experienced growth and success through the Civil War, but then declined. By 1875, the town was home to only 15 families. With the arrival of the railroad in 1886 and the hard work and dedication of the people of Jackson, the town once again boomed. The railroad brought with it the timber industry, which was instrumental in reviving the tiny town. Throughout the early 20th century, Jackson experienced economic growth and expansion. The town experienced another setback during the Great Depression, but was sparked yet again by economic growth in the 1930s. This year is not only Jackson's 200th birthday; it is also a year that will bring even more success to Jackson with the opening of the new iSpice food manufacturing and distributing plant.

The Post Civil War Era and the Depression could have easily led to a different fate for Jackson, but the people of this quaint timber town refused to give up on their home. The hardworking men and women of Jackson are not only pillars of their community, but they also represent the true backbone of the United States. Their hard work and perseverance through troubling times serves as an example that should be followed by all Americans. Success is not given, it is earned, and Jackson has earned it throughout its 200-year existence.

Mr. Speaker, it is my honor to congratulate Jackson on its bicentennial.

IN RECOGNITION OF THE 100TH BIRTHDAY OF KIRBY HIGHT

HON. BRUCE POLIQUIN

OF MAINE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 9, 2016

Mr. POLIQUIN. Mr. Speaker, I would like to join loving family members, dear friends and the entire Skowhegan community in recognizing the 100th birthday of Kirby Hight. I am honored to extend birthday greetings on this truly special occasion.

I congratulate Mr. Hight on this major milestone but also express profound gratitude for his valiant service to our Nation as a proud member of the United States Navy.

We are forever grateful and humbled by his heroism and selflessness during World War II as a Captain of one of our naval destroyers.

Upon returning to Maine after the war, he continued to give back to his community. He developed a successful family business, gave his time to the local Rotary Club and served as a member on the board of the Skowhegan Fair Association and Redington Fairview Hospital, not to mention the numerous local causes his late wife, Grace, and he supported.

The fantastic turnout expected for his birthday celebration will be but a small testament to the magnificent impact his hard work and unwavering generosity has had on his family, community and country.

Happy 100th Birthday to Mr. Hight—I wish him many more years of continued good health and happiness. May we all be so lucky to live such a long and meaningful life. God Bless America and God Bless you, Mr. Hight.

TRIBUTE TO MURIEL LOIS CORRIN DAVIS

HON. DONALD M. PAYNE, JR.

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 9, 2016

Mr. PAYNE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the 90th birthday of a very incredible constituent, Muriel Lois Corrin Davis. Muriel was born on February 9, 1926 in Sea Bright, New Jersey. At the age of 1, her family moved to East Orange, New Jersey. She graduated from East Orange High School in 1944 and left for Spelman College in Atlanta, Georgia in 1945. She received her B.A. in English and Spanish in 1950. An avid moviegoer, her dream was to see the world she had only seen onscreen.

After graduation in August 1950, Muriel was the first African American woman to be hired by Doubleday Publishers. Her position was Assistant Secretary in the Executive Office of Doubleday. Her courtship with Morehouse College graduate (Class of 1947) Griffith ''Griff'' Davis began while he lived in the Harlem home of Langston Hughes. Mr. Hughes used them as the prototype for his Simple book series.

Liberia President William V. S. Tubman commissioned Griff to do the first photography exhibit on Liberia at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City and the filming of Liberia's first promotional film entitled ''Pepperbird Land.'' In March 1952, Muriel flew to Liberia to marry Griff. Their ''Global Honeymoon'' on three continents was written and photographed by Griff and appeared in the September 1952 issue of Ebony magazine.

Upon returning from their honeymoon, Griff took the Foreign Service exam in Washington, DC. In November 1952, they returned to Liberia as African-American pioneers in President Harry Truman's Point Four Program for foreign aid.

As the spouse of a U.S. Foreign Service Officer during the family's tours of duty in Liberia from 1952 to 1957, Muriel was unofficially responsible for developing, cultivating and maintaining diplomatic relationships with President Tubman, key business and government officials of Liberia, citizens and high level visitors to the country: like the future Prime Minister of Ghana Kwame Nkrumah in January 1953.

Muriel was the first Bank Teller for the first indigenous bank in Liberia (Bank of Liberia) founded by her former Morehouse classmate A. Romeo Horton. She taught Early European History and Political Science at Monrovia High School. She gave birth to her two children in Monrovia: Dorothy Davis and Ben Davis.

In 1957, the family was posted to newly independent Tunisia. Muriel repeated the same unofficial diplomatic duties she had in Liberia but faced an even more multicultural and potentially hostile environment. Although women could not attend government activities, Muriel was able to meet Tunisia's first President Habib Bourghuiba.

Muriel returned to New Jersey in 1959 to enroll her two children in private school. When she met the principal of The Carteret School of West Orange, he rescinded the school's initial offer for admission to her daughter, Dorothy, because she was African American. On behalf of her daughter, Muriel filed a complaint with the State of New Jersey Division Against Discrimination of the Department of Education in 1959. She won the next year. This decision enabled African Americans to attend New Jersey's private schools. In June 1967, Muriel taught pre-schoolers at East Orange Co-op Day Care Center until 1980. She became an Investigator for the Essex County Probation Department's Bail Program in Newark until she retired in 1994.

Since her retirement in February 1994, Muriel has traveled across the United States and to France, Ghana, Switzerland, Barbados and the U.S. Virgin Islands and remains friends with people from around the world. She has volunteered for several institutions including the United Black Episcopalians, the Church of the Epiphany, the United Nations International School (UNIS), and the Women's Africa Committee of the African-American Institute.

Ms. Davis is the proud grandmother of Joelle Joseph, Anne-Laure Davis and Daniel Davis. She has lived a life that makes me honored to acknowledge her 90th birthday and wish her another year of happiness.

INAUGURATION OF THE FORT McDOWELL YAVAPAI NATION TRIBAL COUNCIL

HON. DAVID SCHWEIKERT

OF ARIZONA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 9, 2016

Mr. SCHWEIKERT. Mr. Speaker, I rise to express my warmest congratulations to the newly elected members of the Fort McDowell Yavapai Nation Tribal Council. Bernadine Burnett was elected to the Council as President, Pamela Mott has been reelected as Treasurer, and Gerald Doka has been reelected as Council Member. I wish them all the best as they govern the Fort McDowell Yavapai Nation.

COMMENDING THE SOUTHERN AND CENTRAL PENNSYLVANIA VOLUNTEERS WHO PROVIDED HEROIC SERVICE DURING WINTER STORM JONAS

HON. BILL SHUSTER

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 9, 2016

Mr. SHUSTER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commend the selfless assistance provided by many of the volunteer fire department and public assistance agencies from southern and central Pennsylvania during the recent Winter Storm Jonas.

While many of us sought shelter during the recent winter storm that struck the East Coast, some of us were not so fortunate, as was made evident by the miles and miles of cars that were stranded on the Pennsylvania Turnpike. Many of these travelers had gotten trapped on the turnpike as a number of crashes stopped traffic while a huge amount of snow fell. Fortunately for the beleaguered travelers, a number of local volunteer fire departments from the surrounding communities braved the weather to assist those in need.

For the drivers stranded overnight, these volunteer emergency responders were the only ones who could reach the area to help. As snow continued to fall, these volunteers worked together to ensure the well-being of those stranded by traveling car to car and offering supplies to many. To aid the cause, many local stores and restaurants contributed food and water to be distributed. It was truly a community effort.

On behalf of the 9th Congressional District of Pennsylvania and all of those who were assisted by the area's volunteers, I would like to thank these public servants for their selflessness. It is my honor to highlight this tremendous effort and its illustration of the neighborly commitment my constituents embody.

To the volunteer organizations and governmental agencies listed below, we thank you for your generous dedication to serving the public:

New Baltimore Vol. Fire Co.
Shawnee Valley Vol. Fire Co.
Shawnee Valley EMS
Bedford Fire Co.
Everett Fire Co.
Breezewood Fire Co.
Southern Cove Fire Co.
Alum Bank Fire Co.
Chestnut Ridge EMS
Blue Knob Fire Co.
Claysburg Fire Co.
Martinsburg Fire Co.
Imler Fire Co.
Bedford American Legion
Pa. National Guard
SCMRTF Incident Management Team
DCNR
PEMA
Pa. State Police
Pa. Turnpike
Somerset Co. EMA & 9–1–1
Bedford County EMA & 9–1–1
American Red Cross
Salvation Army.

RECOGNIZING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF FLOTILLA 77 OF THE UNITED STATES COAST GUARD AUXILIARY DIVISION 7

HON. DANIEL WEBSTER

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 9, 2016

Mr. WEBSTER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the chartering of Flotilla 77 of the United States Coast Guard Auxiliary Division 7. Flotilla 77 was officially recognized in a chartering ceremony on January 23, 2016, in Polk County, Florida.

The U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary is the volunteer corps that assists the U.S. Coast Guard in promoting boating safety. Formed originally as the Coast Guard volunteer Reserve on June 23, 1939, the volunteer Reserve was renamed the Auxiliary two years later. During World War II, the Auxiliary rapidly expanded as Auxiliarists provided oversight assistance in many of the Coast Guard surface and air operations, which freed up active duty Coast Guardsman for wartime missions. Today the Auxiliarists support and augment the non-military and non-law enforcement operations including communication watchstanding, public education programs, marine safety, and assisting with search and rescue missions.

The selflessness by which they voluntarily serve and put their lives on the line for our safety and security is inspiring. We honor these brave men and women whose dedication to our great nation have and continue to ensure the safety and security of our ports, waterways and coastal regions.

It is my distinct pleasure, as a representative of the people of Central Florida, to recognize and honor the establishment of Flotilla 77 of the United States Coast Guard. I thank them and their loved ones for their dedication and service to our community and country.

CONGRATULATING DAVID JOHNSON AND JAMES FERENTZ ON REMARKABLE NFL SEASONS

HON. DAVID LOEBSACK

OF IOWA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 9, 2016

Mr. LOEBSACK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate two of my constituents, Arizona Cardinals running back David Johnson and Denver Broncos center James Ferentz, on a remarkable 2015–2016 NFL season. David and James each helped lead their teams to the AFC and NFC conference championship games, and James now has the distinct honor of being called a Super Bowl champion.

Having grown up in Clinton and Iowa City, David and James both know the meaning of hard work. This hard work ethic propelled them from the gridirons of the University of Northern Iowa and University of Iowa to the top of their profession.

Currently in their rookie and sophomore NFL seasons, each has achieved so much in just a few short years. Their successes can be attributed to the family, friends, teachers, and coaches that continue to challenge the future David Johnsons and James Ferentzes of Iowa.

I am honored to represent these men in Congress and look forward to seeing them achieve much more in their careers. The state of Iowa looks forward to watching these young men play on Sundays for years to come.

Congratulations on a great season, David and congratulations on becoming Iowa's Super Bowl champion, James.

HONORING THE LIFE, ACHIEVEMENTS AND CONTRIBUTIONS OF MAURICE WHITE

HON. STEVE COHEN

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 9, 2016

Mr. COHEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the life of Memphis singer, drummer, songwriter, producer and founder of the world-renowned band Earth, Wind & Fire, Maurice White. Maurice White was born in Memphis, Tennessee on December 19, 1941, and attended Booker T. Washington High School where he was in the drum corps. After graduating, he and his family moved to Chicago, Illinois and Maurice White enrolled at the Chicago Conservatory of Music. Having developed a love for drums while singing in his church choir in Memphis and watching marching bands, Maurice found work as a drummer in nightclubs and in 1963, he became a session drummer for Chess Records.

While at Chess Records, Maurice recorded with music legends Etta James, Fontella Bass, Muddy Waters, The Impressions, Betty Everett and many more. In 1966, he joined the Ramsey Lewis Trio during a time when the group was one of only a few jazz groups to rise to the upper levels of the pop charts. Maurice White left the group to form the Salty Peppers in 1969 alongside his two friends, Wade Flemons and Don Whitehead. After little success, he moved to Los Angeles, California, recruited new band members including his brother Verdine White and, drawing inspiration from the astrological chart, changed the group's name to Earth, Wind & Fire.

Earth, Wind & Fire signed with Warner Bros. in 1971 but did not gain renowned fame until Maurice, again, brought on new band members, with the exception of Verdine, and signed the band with Columbia. It was then that Earth, Wind & Fire infused its sound with jazz, funk, soul and pop, and recorded the album Head to the Sky in 1973, which sold over 500,000 copies and included hit songs Evil and Keep Your Head to the Sky. In 1974, Earth, Wind & Fire released the album Open Our Eyes and reached the pop Top 40 for the first time with the song Mighty Mighty. Their next album released just a year later, That's the Way of the World, included the group's first and only No. 1 pop hit, Shining Star. Earth, Wind & Fire also recorded hit songs Reasons (1975), That's the Way of the World (1975), Fantasy (1977), September (1978), Boogie Wonderland (1979), and Let's Groove (1981), including many more hits and popular songs. Maurice White helped produce seven double platinum albums, two platinum albums, two gold albums and two gold singles.

In addition to writing or co-writing many of the songs for Earth, Wind & Fire, Maurice White produced music for the Emotions, Ramsey Lewis and Deniece Williams, and in

1985, he released a solo, eponymous album and earned a hit with his cover of Ben E. King's Stand by Me.

In all, Earth, Wind & Fire had 16 Top 40 singles and sold an estimated 90 million albums worldwide. The group has won six Grammy Awards from seventeen nominations, four American Music Awards from twelve nominations, the BET Lifetime Achievement Award, the NAACP Hall of Fame Award, Soul Train's Legend Award, and has been inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and the Vocal Group Hall of Fame as well as earned a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. In 2010, Maurice White was inducted into the Songwriter's Hall of Fame along with band members Verdine White, Philip Bailey, Al McKay and Larry Dunn. Earth, Wind & Fire has earned a list of other awards and recognitions and will receive the 2016 Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award.

Maurice White's music was written and produced to inspire and bring all people together. Maurice once said, ''Being joyful and positive was the whole objective of our group. Our goal was to reach all the people and to keep a universal atmosphere—to create positive energy. All of our songs had that positive energy. To create uplifting music was the objective.'' Maurice's goal was easily recognized by all who heard and loved his work. President Barack Obama stated, ''Only Maurice could make such sophisticated songs so catchy. Only he could inspire generations of such diverse artists. And only he could get everyone—old and young, black and white—to let the groove move them on the dance floor.''

Maurice's universal sound was remembered by Flea, bassist for Red Hot Chili Peppers, who said, ''In my junior high school, the white kids loved Zeppelin, the black kids loved p funk [Parliament Funkadelic], the freaky kids loved Bowie, but everyone loved Earth, Wind & Fire. They were just undeniable. Old people loved 'em, kids loved 'em, every race and economic class loved 'em. They just crossed every line with the power of incredible music and amazing performances.'' Tributes from artists from all genres include mentions of Maurice as a genius, a king, a masterful artist, a leader and a teacher.

Maurice White passed away on February 3, 2016 in Los Angeles at 74 years of age. He was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease in 1992. The music community has lost one of the greatest musical minds of our time. Maurice White's influence cannot be denied and his contributions are lasting. Maurice White was a true ''shining star'' and his legacy will shine on for generations to come.

HONORING LORI FLORES

HON. FILEMON VELA

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 9, 2016

Mr. VELA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Dr. Lori Flores, a South Texas native and a leading researcher in the fields of Latino and labor history.

Lori attended Yale University, and she was the first woman in her family to earn a college degree. At Yale, she realized her passion to study Mexican American history, ultimately leading her to earn a PhD from Stanford University. Lori's dissertation explored the political development of Mexican Americans and immigrants in California's Salinas Valley during the mid-1900s. Her research on the Latino civil rights movement culminated in the publication of a book which will be released this year.

Lori now teaches at the State University of New York at Stony Brook, where she nurtures the thinkers and dreamers of tomorrow. Dr. Flores has received numerous awards, and she continues to be a role model for young people in her community.

RECOGNIZING DOMINION HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS FOR THEIR DISTRACTED DRIVING CAMPAIGN

HON. BARBARA COMSTOCK

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 9, 2016

Mrs. COMSTOCK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize three students from Dominion High School who recently led a Distracted Driving Campaign at Dominion High School in Sterling, Virginia. Kirsten Chun, Bryce Griffin, and Joseph Pavich took on this campaign as part of their Creative Marketing Project, which focused on Distracted Driving and Joshua's Hands. Joshua's Hands is a non-profit organization based in the 10th District whose mission focuses on community service and teen safe driving, founded in memory of Joshua Guthrie who died in a car accident. Their mission is to keep roads safe and to educate teens about the consequences of distracted driving. To create a visualization to meet this awareness goal, these students removed 15 students from classes throughout the day and instructed them to dress in black and not interact with their classmates. This exercise served to represent the 15 people that are killed each day due to distracted driving. Ms. Chun, Mr. Griffin, and Mr. Pavich utilized the school announcement system to convey their message, in addition to selling t-shirts which said ''Take Action STOP the Distraction.'' Students at Dominion also took a distracted driving survey in order to gain a better understanding of their peers' views of distracted driving. These students partnered with Chantilly Autobody in addition to Joshua's Hands for their project.

Driving while distracted seems to plague many of our drivers today, and young people are particularly susceptible to this. I am honored to recognize these students today for their mission to educate their peers about the grave consequences of texting while driving. It is my sincere hope that their project will facilitate more awareness in the future about the growing problem of distracted driving so that our community will remain safe.

DR. AJANWACHUKU TO RECEIVE LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

HON. PAUL COOK

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 9, 2016

Mr. COOK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Dr. Vincent Ajanwachuku, who will be honored with the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Dreamers, Visionaries, and Leaders Project on February 6, 2016. Currently, Dr. Ajanwachuku serves as the chief of surgery at St. Mary Hospital in Apple Valley, California, a position he's held since 2004.

Dr. Ajanwachuku's journey is a remarkable one. Born and raised in Nigeria, he arrived in the United States in 1973 to pursue his undergraduate education at New York University. Eventually, he earned his medical degree from the Howard University School of Medicine and was selected to teach medical students in the discipline of surgery.

During his career in medicine, Dr. Ajanwachuku has received a number of accolades, including ''Humanitarian of the Year'' from St. Mary Hospital. He was given this award because of his dedication to improving the educational growth and practical experiences of nurses and medical technicians at his hospital. He has also been honored with a ''Values in Action'' award from St. Mary Hospital for being a servant leader.

It is long overdue that Dr. Ajanwachuku is receiving the Lifetime Achievement Award. He has persevered through significant obstacles during his life, yet he continues to give back to his community and improve the lives of those around him. I want to congratulate Dr. Ajanwachuku for this notable achievement and for being a role model to the youth in the Victor Valley.

RECOGNIZING THE BOCA POINTE CHAPTER OF AFMDA

HON. THEODORE E. DEUTCH

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 9, 2016

Mr. DEUTCH. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in honor of the Boca Pointe Chapter of the American Friends of Magen David Adom on the occasion of their ambulance dedication.

Magen David Adom is Israel's emergency medical service, blood bank, and disaster-relief organization. The American Friends of Magen David Adom (AFMDA), a nonprofit organization, is the largest supporter of MDA worldwide. Today, the AFMDA Boca Pointe Chapter will dedicate a fully-equipped ambulance to the people and State of Israel. This is the fourth such ambulance they have donated, a generous gift that truly saves lives.

I express deep appreciation for the Boca Pointe Chapter's selfless humanitarian endeavors. Their unwavering support for the State of Israel not only sets an example for the future but for the South Florida Jewish community as a whole. I am proud to honor them and thank them for their work and service.

HONORING MICHAEL BURNETT, THE DON SHULA NFL HIGH SCHOOL COACH OF THE YEAR

HON. BARBARA COMSTOCK

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 9, 2016

Mrs. COMSTOCK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize my constituent, Michael Burnett, who the NFL and Washington Redskins recently recognized as the Don Shula NFL High

School Coach of the Year. The award was created to honor exemplary high school football coaches who exhibit a commitment to the health and safety of their players as well as integrity in leadership. Michael is the head coach of Tuscarora High School's Varsity Football Team. Following a coaching career in California, he led Broad Run High School in Ashburn, Virginia to two consecutive state titles. He moved to Tuscarora High School to start their football program. Michael has taken the opportunity as a high school football coach to build character in his players and ensure their growth as both players and leaders. It is fitting that he earned this high honor from the NFL because of his commitment to personal growth in youth and their overall health and safety.

In addition to his recognition by the NFL, Michael will receive $25,000 from the NFL Foundation which he plans to donate to the Adam Fortune Scholarship Fund, which was created in honor of his close friend and former defensive coordinator at Broad Run and Tuscarora, who died in 2014. The fund is designed for players who exemplify strong character on and off the field. In addition to coaching, Michael teaches Advanced Placement (AP) Economics and serves as Department Chair of Social Studies at Tuscarora High School. I am honored to recognize him today for helping shape young athletes in our community to lead lives of integrity.

CONGRATULATING LAURA KRAUS ON HER VOLUNTEER WORK WITH THE LEARN TO READ PROGRAM

HON. ANDER CRENSHAW

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 9, 2016

Mr. CRENSHAW. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Laura Kraus for her outstanding service to her country through her volunteer work with the Learn to Read program.

Since 1975, Laura's volunteer work has exemplified her love for people and her tireless efforts to give back to the community. Her commitment was no secret: the neighborhood held banquets in her honor, television stations recognized her, and even the nation's leaders honored her service. President Barack Obama signed a letter of recognition and Neal Bush presented the Presidential Bronze Medal of Volunteering Service.

Still, she found the most satisfaction seeing the impact from the people she helped themselves. Her work has always extended to those in the greatest need regardless of physical or psychological obstacles. Volunteering with the Arthritis Foundation, Laura spent time with physically disabled members of the community through Horses for Therapy. In addition, victims of domestic abuse in a Hubbard House, a 24-hour hotline and emergency shelter, were touched by her support as well.

Laura began her training with the Learn to Read program as an intern, eager to assist adults and already willing to persist with compassion and patience through the challenges that were to come. Only a year and a half into the work with her first student, the impact that Laura had on her student was not only evident but incredibly touching, particularly for Laura herself.

Anthony was only 23 years old when he became Laura's first student in the Learn to Read program, struggling to read because of a learning disability. Yet Anthony was dedicated to his goal to create a better future and he never failed to be prompt and respectful every session. After a year and three months of the hour and a half routine, he articulated a simple and profound truth representative of the impact Laura's work has had for many: ''Miss Laura, you have changed my life.''

Mr. Speaker, I ask you and Members of Congress to join me in recognizing Laura Kraus for her tireless dedication to serving each person with the care and opportunities that they deserve as a citizen of this great nation.

HONORING THE NAPA COUNTY LIBRARY

HON. MIKE THOMPSON

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 9, 2016

Mr. THOMPSON of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the Napa County Library (NCL), which is celebrating its 100th anniversary as a county library system.

In 1916, the California State Legislature authorized the creation of free county libraries around the state. As a result, in February of that year, the unincorporated areas of Napa County gained library services when the Napa County Board of Supervisors established the Napa County Free Library.

The NCL offers reading programs for all ages, outreach services, literacy initiatives, job-search and small business resources, information services, computer training, Internet access, and other means of community support and enrichment. More generally, the library enables individuals to make informed decisions about their self-governance by promoting unrestricted access to information and by serving as a community center for lifelong learning. In the last fiscal year, over 18,000 people received technology-related help, while 567,192 individuals visited the NCL. And over 4,000 adults, children and teens participated in the NCL's summer reading program.

The library's importance extends beyond its bookshelves. Basic literacy and computer-proficiency programs have broad and positive effects on local economies, bolstering the capabilities of local workers and businesses. Furthermore, the NCL's myriad child- and employment-focused initiatives help children and adults find, evaluate and use information they need for their jobs, health, education and success.

Mr. Speaker, the NCL is a dynamic civic resource that promotes free and open access to information, while providing valuable materials and services to all members of the community. The Napa County Library continues to benefit its community immensely, and it is fitting and proper that we honor it here today.

HONORING THE LIFE OF MR. DINO ANTONIO PETRUCCI

HON. JIM COSTA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 9, 2016

Mr. COSTA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the life and service of Mr. Dino Antonio Petrucci of Madera, California who recently passed away on January 4, 2016, at the age of 85. Mr. Petrucci was a remarkable farmer, teacher, and business owner of Petrucci's catering. His commitment to family and to his community will forever live in lives of the people he touched.

Dino Antonio Petrucci was born to Italian immigrant parents, Vincenzo and Ilide Petrucci, on January 17, 1930. His parents were members of the large Italian community who helped settle and pioneer Madera, California with its rich agricultural history. A lifelong resident, he attended Madera schools and enrolled at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, where he received his bachelor's degree in crop production. In 1951, he married the love of his life, Peggy Hayes, and they would have celebrated 65 years of marriage this March.

As an Agriculture Education instructor, he found joy in teaching and in expanding students' minds by showing them what they were capable of. All in all, Dino spent 40 plus years of his life devoted to Vocational Agriculture and Education. Although he was a fulltime teacher, Dino would spend evenings, and weekends helping his brother Enzo on the family grape farm.

Dino was also passionate about cooking and in 1974, he initiated his catering business, Petrucci's Catering. He expanded and bought the Howard School building and used it to host events. Saturday's were his favorite, because he loved being at the old school house serving barbecue tri tip, chicken and side dishes. His favorite place to be was at the end of the buffet line greeting everyone, and making sure their plates were full. Dino's love for food was so strong he developed his own barbecue sauce, ''Petrucci's Secret Sauce'' and a dry meat rub that are sold locally.

Civil service and giving back to his community were two other areas of interest to Dino. He was active in The Young Farmers, Lions Club and Italo-American Club of Madera. He served on the boards of the Madera County Farm Bureau, Madera County Food Bank, and Madera Unified School District Board of Education. In 1999, he was honored as the Madera County Senior Farmer of the Year by the Madera Chamber of Commerce.

Without question, Dino's integrity, honor, and long-lasting involvement in the Central Valley made him a reputable man; he was well known, well-liked, and shown enormous appreciation by anyone who had the pleasure of calling him a friend. Dino lived his life to the fullest surrounded by family and friends. He leaves behind his loving family, including his wife, Peggy, his two children, and grandchildren. It is my honor to join his family in celebrating the life of this amazing man, who will never be forgotten.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues in the House of Representatives to join me in honoring the life of Mr. Dino Antonio Petrucci. We are all better for having known Dino Petrucci, a remarkable Californian, and Central Valley Native.

RECOGNIZING PATRICIA VAIL FOR RECEIVING THE FLORIDA BAR PRESIDENT'S PRO BONO SERVICE AWARD FOR THE 4TH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT

HON. ANDER CRENSHAW

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 9, 2016

Mr. CRENSHAW. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Patricia Vail for receiving The Florida Bar President's Pro Bono Service Award for the 4th Judicial Circuit.

In her legal career, she has served in several capacities, from statewide coordinator for Florida Legal Services to corporate counsel for CSX Transportation. In addition, Patricia has also served on the board of Jacksonville Area Legal Aid. Upon retirement from CSX Transportation, Patricia served in The American Bar Association's Collaborative Europe and Eurasia Law Initiative program as a volunteer lawyer in Kazakhstan. Patricia's commitment to pro bono work for low-income people and her positive impact have been quite remarkable.

Since 2008, Patricia has been a regular presence in Northeast Florida senior citizen centers and HUD residential facilities, where she has become a trusted pro bono legal resource. Patricia meets with individuals and groups as legal questions arise, and she helps prepare simple wills, durable powers of attorney, designation of health care surrogate, and designation of pre-need guardian. For nearly three years, Patricia provided these services single-handedly. When it became clear that the need far exceeded one attorney's ability in 2011, Patricia initiated a program to serve more area seniors with comprehensive and scheduled legal services called Advance Directives for Seniors Project. The Project provides 60–80 seniors annually with complete advance directive packets and has expanded to include senior patients at medical clinics and seniors at the Councils on Aging in Clay and Nassau counties.

In recognition of all her countless hours spent helping needy Jacksonville area residents through pro bono legal work, Patricia Vail was selected to receive The Florida Bar President's Pro Bono Service Award for the 4th Judicial Circuit.

Mr. Speaker, I ask you and Members of Congress to join me in congratulating Patricia Vail on winning the Florida Bar President's Pro Bono Service Award.

OUR UNCONSCIONABLE NATIONAL DEBT

HON. MIKE COFFMAN

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 9, 2016

Mr. COFFMAN. Mr. Speaker, on January 20, 2009, the day President Obama took office, the national debt was $10,626,877,048,913.08.

Today, it is $18,996,371,521,571.14. We've added $8,369,494,472,658.06 to our debt in 7 years. This is over $8 trillion in debt our nation, our economy, and our children could have avoided with a balanced budget amendment.

COMMEMORATING THE 150TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE GREATER PEORIA CHILDREN'S HOME FOUNDATION

HON. DARIN LaHOOD

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 9, 2016

Mr. LAHOOD. Mr. Speaker, today I would like to honor a remarkable organization in the Peoria area. The Children's Home of Greater Peoria is celebrating 150 years of improving the lives of children and families.

Children's Home (previously Christian Home Mission, Women's Christian Association, and Home for the Friendless) opened in 1866 and is divulged in the principles of lending a helping hand to those in need, specifically women and children. Christian Home Mission was founded by women looking to alleviate suffering among the poor and provide shelter for homeless women and children. The foundation quickly expanded and became too small for the services they wanted to provide.

Children's Home continued to grow and began focusing on children with behavioral and emotional disorders who were abused. By 2009, the foundation furthered their mission in helping children by offering programs focused in special education, community-based opportunities, and live-in care and treatment.

Currently, Children's Home houses six locations and are staffing over 400 professionals to provide services for over 1,700 children and families each month. With each resource, Children's Home tirelessly dedicates itself to achieve its mission: Giving children a childhood and future by protecting them, teaching them and healing them, and by building strong communities and loving families. Because of their efforts, many disadvantaged children have brighter futures.

As a proud husband and loving father of three, I applaud the continual efforts of the Children's Home. Their success equates to our future's success. Congratulations, Children's Home, for its sesquicentennial and I wish the organization many more years of great service to our children.

HONORING PETER TER FOR HIS SERVICE TO THE UNITED STATES IN THE PEACE CORPS AFTER COMING TO THE U.S. AS A REFUGEE

HON. ANDER CRENSHAW

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 9, 2016

Mr. CRENSHAW. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Peter Ter for his outstanding service to his country through his volunteer work with the Peace Corps.

Peter Ter was born in southern Sudan, although his exact birth date is not known because his family, like many others, did not keep these records. His father and mother, a cattle keeper and farmer respectively, were both illiterate. He lived with his family, including five sisters and three brothers, in a small hut built with wood and mud and thatched with grass.

However, Peter's childhood was cut short due to the breakout of the Second Sudanese Civil War that began in 1983 and lasted for twenty-one years. Like thousands of other children in Sudan, Peter became a "Lost Boy," losing his family in conflict between the warring Sudanese government and the Sudanese People's Liberation Army. After fleeing the violence and enduring a grueling journey, Peter ended up in the Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya, living what he described as a hopeless life.

While living in the Kakuma camp, Peter completed an application for refugee status in America. In the application, he had to write one page on why he wanted to go to America. He wrote of living a hopeless life in the refugee camp and of how he yearned to go to a place where he could restore his dignity and educate himself—the United States of America.

After two years, Peter's application was approved, and he was resettled in my congressional district in Jacksonville, Florida. Peter went on to graduate from the University of Florida and attended graduate school at Brandeis University in Boston.

After graduation, Peter knew he wanted to give back to the country that had saved him, so he volunteered for the Peace Corps. Since 2009, Peter has served as a cultural ambassador and an international development practitioner in Azerbaijan, China, and the Republic of Georgia, promoting the values of the United States along the way. In his work abroad, Peter has faced many challenges, including blatant racism. However, having faced greater challenges before, he doubled down on his commitment to service and eventually earned respect in the villages and cities where he served.

As the co-chair of the House Peace Corps Caucus, I have the privilege of interacting with and supporting the work of outstanding individuals, such as Peter Ter. America is the world's most generous country, made up of people from around the world, and Peter is proof that this generosity touches those who need it most. I am proud that Peter calls Jacksonville, FL home. Peter has fully utilized the great opportunities presented to him by the United States of America and has dedicated his life to helping others around the world.

Mr. Speaker, I ask you and Members of Congress to join me in congratulating Peter Ter on overcoming great obstacles in his life and on his continued success abroad on behalf of our great nation.

HONORING DIANNE EDMONDSON'S LIFETIME OF DISTINGUISHED SERVICE

HON. KENNY MARCHANT

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 9, 2016

Mr. MARCHANT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Dianne Edmondson for her distinguished service to the Denton County Republican Party.

Dianne Edmondson is a native Texan born in San Antonio. She attended Oklahoma State University where she was a member of the Gamma Phi Beta sorority. In 1983, she founded a successful executive search firm which she later sold in 2006. Dianne and her husband Bob live in Denton, Texas and are

blessed with two grown children (and one deceased son) and seven grandchildren. I have had the pleasure of knowing Dianne and Bob for over a decade. Dianne is actively involved in her local community where she has spent her time fulfilling a selfless passion to serve others. Dianne is a member of many civic service organizations and advisory groups including: Vice-Chair of the Denton County Citizens Budget Advisory Committee, Denton County Commissioners' Re-Districting Committee, and Board of Directors of the Denton Chamber of Commerce, among others.

Throughout her adult life, Dianne has been involved in nearly every aspect of the political arena. Dianne is the former Executive Director of Republican National Coalition for Life. She has served as a National Republican Convention Delegate in 2000, former President of the Denton Republican Women's Club, Chair of Senate District 12 Rules Committee, Chair of the 2012 and 2014 State Convention Permanent Organization Committee, and managed or volunteered in dozens of Republican candidates' campaigns for nearly 20 years in Denton County.

In 2002, Dianne was elected as Chairman of the Denton County Republican Party and serves on the Board of the Texas Republican County Chair Association. Dianne has spent countless hours educating voters on public policy and encouraging voter engagement. As a creative planner and master organizer, Dianne has the ability to bring people together around a common goal and vision. She has worked with precinct chairs and candidates to ensure that Denton County remains conservative. As a result, every county, state, and federal elected office in Denton County is held by a Republican.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the 24th Congressional District of Texas, I would like to thank Dianne Edmondson for her leadership as the Chairman of the Denton County Republican Party. I ask all my distinguished colleagues to join me in recognizing Dianne for her lifetime of service.

HONORING MR. JOSEPH FAZIO ON HIS 100TH BIRTHDAY

HON. LEE M. ZELDIN

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 9, 2016

Mr. ZELDIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay a special tribute to the incredible life of Mr. Joseph Fazio.

Born in 1916 in the Bronx, Joseph was the oldest son of 5 children. Tragically, when Joseph was in high school his father passed away, forcing him to quit school so that he could provide for his family. After receiving a small loan from a friend, Joseph bought his own truck and subsequently started a trucking business. He worked tirelessly for his customers to ensure they received the best possible service year after year. Joseph's altruism is only one of the many qualities that make him such a wonderful and caring person.

Joseph retired at the age of 65 so that he could truly appreciate the community of Mastic Beach full-time; however, you would not know that by the way he has maintained such an active role in the town's affairs. To name a few of his many contributions to Mastic Beach: Joseph has built floats for the Mastic Beach Parade; built benches for the docks; volunteered for the Annual Seafood Festival; was the former Director of the Mastic Beach Property Owners Association; and enjoys playing the piano for other seniors. When he's not busy helping his fellow community members, he takes great pleasure in gardening, planting hundreds of tomato plants and many varieties of vegetables. He is known as the Beloved Farmer of Mastic Beach, as he generously shared the treasures of his garden with friends throughout the Tri-Hamlet Community. Joe is also a long standing member of St. Jude Catholic Church and Knights of Columbus.

Joseph will be turning 100 years old on March 27, 2016. Joseph, and his lovely wife Ann, are the proud parents of 2 children, 5 grandchildren, and 8 great grandchildren. Good food, good family, good friends and a strong belief in God have kept him going to 100. I am blessed to serve and represent such an incredible human being like Joseph Fazio in the First Congressional District of New York, and proud to express my gratitude for all he does for his community; as well as wish him a very happy 100th birthday.

CONGRATULATING MICHAEL WARD, CHAIRMAN AND CEO AT CSX CORPORATION, ON RECEIVING THE CITIZENSHIP SERVICE AWARD BY VOICES FOR NATIONAL SERVICE

HON. ANDER CRENSHAW

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 9, 2016

Mr. CRENSHAW. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor my constituent, Michael Ward, for his outstanding service to his country through his volunteer work with City Year.

Michael has invested tremendous amounts of time, energy and resources to support City Year, an education-focused national service organization that is dedicated to helping our students and school succeed. City Year provides high-impact student, classroom and school-wide support to help students stay in school and to graduate from high school, ready for college and career success. City Year is partners with 27 urban, high-poverty communities across the United States and abroad, and Michael was instrumental in bringing City Year to Jacksonville, Florida.

In addition to serving as Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of CSX Corporation, Michael is a dedicated Trustee of City Year and is the Chairman of the local City Year program. In addition to his work with City Year, Michael also serves on the board of United Way of Northeast Florida and on the board of Hubbard House, which helps victims of domestic violence.

Earlier this year, the Corporation for National and Community Service, the federal agency that oversees millions of American volunteers, faced significant budget cuts that would have forced many national service programs to close. However, Michael took action and led the effort to remind my colleagues that federal investment in national service is vital to improving lives, strengthening communities and uniting the nation.

The drive to protect federal funds for national service succeeded in no small part thanks to the contributions of Michael Ward. In recognition of all of his many contributions to national service, Michael Ward was recently awarded the Citizen Service Award by the Voices for National Service.

As a Member of Congress, I have the privilege of supporting the work of outstanding individuals, such as Michael Ward. Michael has striven tirelessly to ensure to promote education across the country and in my district, and I am proud that Michael calls Jacksonville, Florida home.

Mr. Speaker, I ask you and Members of Congress to join me in recognizing Michael Ward for his tireless dedication to educational attainment and congratulate him on receiving the Citizenship Service award.

HONORING THE LIFE OF SARKIS SAHATDJIAN

HON. JIM COSTA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 9, 2016

Mr. COSTA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the life of Sarkis Sahatdjian of Madera, California, who recently passed away on December 29, 2015—at the age of 95. Mr. Sahatdjian was a remarkable farmer of 80 years, and a generous leader who was prideful of his community, and Armenian roots.

Sarkis Sahatdjian was born in Constantinople in 1920 to Armenian parents, Vagharshag and Makrouhi Sahatdjian. The Sahatdjians were survivors of the Armenian Genocide of 1915, an event Sarkis would never forget. His family set sail on an unpredictable journey when Sarkis was two years old, and his brother Haig only five days old. The Sahatdjian family first landed in Buenos Aires, Argentina where they resided for one year and a half. After this the family immigrated to the United States, arriving through Ellis Island, and eventually settling in California's San Joaquin Valley in April of 1924. The Sahatdjians started off as migrant workers, working at canneries and packing houses throughout California following the crop cycles. In 1928, the family bought their first farm—twenty acres of vineyards, where Sarkis worked after school and on weekends while attending Central High School.

After graduating from high school in 1939, Sarkis worked at the Mare Island Naval Shipyard, repairing warships. Sarkis joined the Army Air Force, serving in Guam during World War II as a military policeman guarding Japanese prisoners of war. After the war he married Iris Odabashian in 1947, and soon after had three children. The couple went on to purchase a farm in Madera, California in 1947, and Sarkis returned to farming.

In 1963, Sarkis and his brother Haig Sahatdjian, purchased raisin processing equipment, placed it on 40 acres in Madera and named it in memory of their late father: Victor Packing. Victor Packing became a full-time farming and packing business when Sarkis and his brother Haig began to process and pack their own raisins along with the raisins of other growers. The business required all hands on deck. Sarkis's wife Iris handled the payroll; their eldest child Victor and his high school friends worked as clean-up crew; and their daughter Margaret and youngest child Bill

joined in later. The family company Sarkis co-founded has grown to become a leader in the raisin industry; growing, dehydrating, processing, and packing raisins that are sold and shipped worldwide. Victor Packing remains a family business, and currently employs five of Sarkis's 12 grandchildren. Hard work, desire, and business acumen ultimately paid off for the Sahatdjian brothers.

Not only was Sarkis a well-known businessman, he was also dedicated to serving his community. Sarkis was a board member of the local VFW; a benefactor and delegate of Holy Trinity Armenian Apostolic Church; major donor to California State University, Fresno's Viticulture and Armenian Studies Department; major donor to Fresno Community Hospital; board member of the Armenian Community School of Fresno; founding board member of the Armenian Technology Group; and countless other local, regional and international charities. Further, he was also a major contributor in establishing the Armenian Genocide Centennial Monument, which marked 100 years since the start of the genocide in Armenia in 1915. The monument is displayed at California State University, Fresno and is the first monument on a U.S. college campus marking the genocide.

Without question, Mr. Sarkis's integrity, honor and long-lasting involvement in the Central Valley made him a reputable man; he was well known, well-liked and shown enormous appreciation by anyone who had the pleasure of calling him a friend. Sarkis lived his life to the fullest, surrounded by family and friends. He leaves behind his loving family, including his wife of 68 years, Iris, their two sons and daughter; their spouses, twelve grandchildren, and four great-grandchildren. It is my honor to join his family in celebrating the life of this amazing man, who will never be forgotten.

Mr. Speaker, it is with great respect that I ask my colleagues in the House of Representatives to join me in honoring the life of Sarkis Sahatdjian. His commitment to family and to his community will forever live in the lives of the people he touched. We are all better for having known Sarkis Sahatdjian, a remarkable Californian, and Central Valley native.

DR. HAMPTON-HENRY TO RECEIVE LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

HON. PAUL COOK

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 9, 2016

Mr. COOK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Dr. Mildred Dalton Hampton-Henry for her efforts to improve educational outcomes for low-income students in San Bernardino, California. On February 6, 2016, Dr. Hampton-Henry will receive the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Dreamers, Visionaries, and Leaders Project during their annual awards ceremony. It is an honor to highlight Dr. Hampton-Henry's professional achievements today.

A native of Arkansas, Dr. Hampton-Henry arrived in San Bernardino in 1983 and became the executive director of the Provisional Accelerated Learning Center, also known as the PAL Center. The PAL Center provides structured educational services to low-income students from urban environments. The programs at the center strive to reduce the number of high school dropouts in her community.

In addition to her work with at-risk youth, Dr. Hampton-Henry is an accomplished educator. She was the first African American professor to receive tenure at the California State University, San Bernardino College of Education. In addition, Dr. Hampton-Henry taught courses at Southern Illinois University, the same school from which she received her Ph.D. in philosophy.

I want to congratulate and thank Dr. Hampton-Henry for her passion and commitment to bettering her community. She truly embodies the spirit of selfless sacrifice and is well-deserving of the Lifetime Achievement Award that she will receive on Saturday.

RECOGNIZING CARLY CRUMP FOR HER RESEARCH ON THE DENGUE VIRUS AND FOR ATTENDING NOBEL PRIZE WEEK

HON. ANDER CRENSHAW

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 9, 2016

Mr. CRENSHAW. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Ms. Carly Crump on her outstanding research work on the transmission of the dengue virus and on her invitation to attend Nobel Prize Week in Stockholm, Sweden. As the U.S. Congressman of Jacksonville, Florida and the co-chair of the Caucus on Malaria and Neglected Tropical Diseases it is an honor to recognize Carly for her exceptional accomplishments.

Carly, a graduate of Episcopal School of Jacksonville, Florida, first began her work in her parents' garage breeding mosquitos. Eventually, Carly's work evolved from offering blood meals to these mosquitos to studying the proteins involved in the transmission of the dengue virus, related to the viruses that cause West Nile infection and yellow fever, that can lead to the dengue fever. In her most recent research at Johns Hopkins University, Carly helped identify 11 proteins that may be involved in the transmission of dengue virus 2 and could set the basis for vaccine development.

As a result of her prestigious work, Carly was invited to attend Nobel Prize Week in Stockholm, one of only 26 young people from 19 countries invited to attend. There, Carly gave a presentation to 1,000 students on her work and interacted with another 2,000 students who stopped at her booth to discuss her project.

Carly has also been recognized as one of the nation's top 16 young STEM researchers by US News and World Report and has won first place at the International Science and Engineering Fair, the Florida Science Fair, and the Junior Science and Humanities Symposium.

Currently, Carly is studying microbiology at the University of Florida and hopes to be a surgeon like her father and her grandfather and to continue her research.

Mr. Speaker, I ask you and Members of Congress to join me in congratulating Carly Crump on the success of her research and on attending Nobel Prize Week in Stockholm. Her research and the research of many other rising talents will lead the world to develop cures for this and other devastating diseases that cripple both Americans and our foreign partners alike.

HONORING REV. JAMES ANTHONY NOEL

HON. BARBARA LEE

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 9, 2016

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the extraordinary life of an outstanding member of the Bay Area community, Reverend James Anthony Noel. With his passing on Sunday, January 31st, 2016 at the age of 68, we honor his many years of faithful service.

Born on New Year's Day in 1948, in Queens, New York, Reverend Noel moved to Berkeley, California when he was a young child. He would go on to earn his B.A. from the University of California, Berkeley in 1969, as well as a Master of Divinity degree from San Francisco Theological Seminary (SFTS) in 1975, and his Ph.D. from the Graduate Theological Union (GTU) in 1999.

Reverend Noel joined the SFTS faculty in 1988, where he was the H. Eugene Farlough, Jr. Chair of African-American Christianity, as well as a professor of American Religion. He also served as a member of the Core Doctoral Faculty at the GTU, and was the convener of the Black Church/Africana Studies Certificate Program. Reverend Noel received a distinguished professor award from his colleagues at GTU, for his embodiment of scholarly standards, teaching excellence, and commitment to ecumenism.

From 1976 to 1987, Reverend Noel served as the pastor of St. Andrew Presbyterian Church in Marin City, CA. Following that, until his passing, he was the pastor of New Liberation Presbyterian Church in San Francisco. He also served as interim pastor of Sojourner Truth Presbyterian Church in Richmond, CA.

Considered by many a true renaissance man, Reverend Noel was a gifted painter, with his vibrant artwork on display throughout the Bay Area. Reverend Noel was also a 7th Dan Tae Kwon Do Master, having studied the Korean martial art since he was a teenager. He would also often break into song with his rich bass voice during lectures or sermons.

Reverend Noel is survived by his beautiful wife, Dianna, and his children Michelle, Kaiya, Daniel and Amada. He will be forever remembered for his love, legacy, and the impact he had on the hearts and minds of those whom he touched.

On a personal note, Reverend Noel was a prophetic and prolific preacher. He was a great leader who demonstrated what it means to live a life in service to humankind and to God. We will miss this magnificent man of God who taught us what a spirit filled life means.

Today, California's 13th Congressional District salutes the life of an exemplary individual and devoted community member, Reverend James Anthony Noel. I join all of Reverend Noel's loved ones in celebrating his inspirational life and achievements, and offer my sincerest condolences.

HONORING THE ASIAN PACIFIC DEVELOPMENT CENTER

HON. MIKE COFFMAN

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 9, 2016

Mr. COFFMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the Asian Pacific Development Center for its ongoing service to the growing population of Asian American and Pacific Islander residents throughout the state of Colorado and to celebrate its Annual Banquet in recognition of the Asian New Year, the year of the Fire Red Monkey.

The Asian Pacific Development Center is a role model for other communities and works to provide culturally appropriate and linguistically proficient wellness and lifestyle services to enrich the lives of our state's Asian American and Pacific Islander residents.

Originally created to serve Vietnamese refugees 35 years ago, APDC has grown to include a diverse list of communities.

Every day, the Center grants self-sufficiency to these residents so that they may better navigate our shared home.

I, in addition to many community leaders in Arapahoe County and Aurora, attend the Annual Banquet each year as tribute to APDC's efforts, and I am proud to have the opportunity to speak this year in honor of the celebration's 35th anniversary.

I applaud the Asian Pacific Development Center for continuing to empower our state's Asian American and Pacific Islander refugees and immigrants, and thus, for continuing to fight poverty and to address literacy, education, and employment in Colorado.

RECOGNIZING LISC JACKSONVILLE FOR 15 YEARS OF SERVICE TO THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

HON. ANDER CRENSHAW

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 9, 2016

Mr. CRENSHAW. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the work of Local Initiatives Support Corporation Jacksonville for its outstanding service to the Northeast Florida community through its transformative efforts to empower citizens and to build up the neediest neighborhoods.

Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) is a nationally known nonprofit that works with local leaders to invest in housing, health, education, public safety, and employment. This year marks the 15 year anniversary for its involvement in the Jacksonville community. Over the last 15 years LISC Jacksonville has leveraged almost a quarter of a billion dollars to create affordable housing and community development all while fostering financial stability within the Jacksonville community.

LISC Jacksonville's invaluable efforts within our local community from supporters across the country have turned out $62.6 million in grants and loans, $220.7 million in leveraged investments, and $20 million for the Jacksonville property tax rolls from new homes developed within our community.

Much more than large dollar amounts, multiple areas in Jacksonville are building up an infrastructure able to sustain and promote community development. Approximately 295 homes and 1,509 apartment units were built and 3,100 jobs were created. Tax credits helped to finance the first KIPP charter school of Florida, investments were made in the EverBank Stadium neighborhood, and a business incubator was established with the Beaver Street Enterprise Community.

Representing Northeast Florida, I have the privilege of interacting with and supporting the work of outstanding nonprofits such as LISC Jacksonville and its dedicated workers. The remarkable transformation of our community is proof that no neighborhood is outside the possibility of revitalization and redevelopment. I am proud that these devoted constituents call Jacksonville their home and I believe every community can experience similar success.

Mr. Speaker, I ask you and Members of Congress to join me in recognizing LISC Jacksonville for its belief in holistic change, and its long-term commitment that will continue to create a flourishing community for so many people who call Jacksonville home.

TRIBUTE TO SERGEANT MAJOR DEBRA J. WILCOX

HON. CORRINE BROWN

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 9, 2016

Ms. BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in remembrance of Sergeant Major Debra J. Wilcox, an honored veteran that served our country with honor and distinction. I was saddened to hear about the passing of a daughter of Jacksonville. On behalf of the constituents of Florida's Congressional District Five we salute and pay tribute to SGM Wilcox.

Sergeant Major Debra J. Wilcox was born in Jacksonville, Florida. She volunteered for the U.S. Army and took the oath of enlistment on 19 August 1979 and subsequently completed Basic Training and Advanced Individual Training at Fort Jackson, South Carolina. She completed 35 years, 9 months, 19 days of service.

Her past assignments include: Information Management Specialist, Joint Staff, DOM; Administrative Sergeant, Defense Intelligence Agency; Command Sergeant Major, 436th Transportation Command; Command Sergeant Major, 3/318th MP OSUT; student at the U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy, Ft. Bliss, Texas; Administrative NCO, J–5; Training Chief Instructor, HQ/6/80th DIV; NCOIC DCSPER, 5115th Garrison Support Unit; Force Management NCO, 97th ARCOM; PAB NCOIC, 318th Reception Battalion; Test Administrator, MEPS Los Angeles; Mail Clerk, Fort Rucker, AL; Administrative Specialist, 43rd USA Artillery Detachment, Germany.

Sergeant Major Wilcox's military and civilian education includes: Primary Leadership Development Course, Basic and Advanced Noncommissioned Officer Course, Personnel, Administrative, and Training Management Courses, a graduate of the Sergeants Major Academy. She completed a double Master's in Interdisciplinary Studies and an MBA Degree followed with a number of Graduate Certificates.

Her awards and decorations include the Defense Meritorious Service Medal (1st OLC), Army Commendation Medal, Joint Service Achievement Medal (3rd OLC), Army Achievement Medal (4th OLC), Army Good Conduct Medal, National Defense Service Medal (w/ Bronze Star), Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, Armed Forces Reserve Medal (w/ M, Silver H), NCO Professional Development Ribbon (w/Numeral 4), and the Overseas Service Ribbon.

As twice the Citizen Debra's civilian work includes The Aerospace Corporation, Defense Finance and Accounting Service, and the Department of the Army Inspector General Agency.

Sergeant Major Wilcox is survived by her mother, Jean Walker, two sisters, Cheryl Adams, Deandrous Wilcox; four brothers, George Wilcox, Anthony Wilcox, Vaughn Wilcox, Joe Walker; Aunties; many cousins, Angela, Joy, nieces and nephews, great-nieces and -nephews, and friend John Jackson.

CELEBRATING THE INAUGURATION OF THE BETTY RODRIGUEZ REGIONAL LIBRARY

HON. JIM COSTA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 9, 2016

Mr. COSTA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the life of the late Betty Rodriguez and inauguration of the state of the art Betty Rodriguez Regional Library named in her honor. The newly reconstructed 14,000 square foot library located in east-central Fresno features 25 computers, a 3–D printer, and robotics kits, making it Fresno County's newest, most technologically advanced library. The library also features a meeting room for 50, group study spaces, and a separate quiet reading room. The site on which the Betty Rodriguez Regional Library exists, is nearly double the size of its 40 year predecessor, and creates a significant advancement for the City of Fresno. This new library serves as a reminder to all of the life of Betty Rodriguez, and the legacy she created within the community through her selfless dedication to others.

Mrs. Rodriguez was an individual of outstanding character and throughout her career, achieved a great deal of success and impacted the lives of many. Mrs. Rodriguez was an inspiration to all, especially to students and young children, teaching them that through hard work and education, they are able to achieve success in their lives. Mrs. Rodriguez dedicated her life to serving as a role model for our youth by motivating them to dream big and to work hard. Demonstrating her strong commitment to our youth, Betty was a member of Friends of the Fresno County Library, and was a great supporter of the Boys and Girls Club of Fresno County, the Boy Scouts of America, the Girl Scouts of the United States of America, and the Special Olympics.

Public service was important to Mrs. Rodriguez, and she was very active in many community organizations. For example, Betty served on Fresno's Torreon Sister City Committee, a non-profit organization that supports the development of partnerships between U.S. cities and cities around the world. She also helped to launch the League of Mexican American Women in 1973 in order to help women in her community become more politically aware and to facilitate the contribution of

their services for schools and organizations. For her contributions to the Mexican-American community, she was awarded the ''Medalla de Ohtli'' by the Institute of Mexicans Abroad, in 2009.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in remembering a woman who always demonstrated a strong commitment to serving others. The new library, located near Cedar and Clinton Avenues in Fresno, will rightly bear the name of someone who has positively influenced the lives of so many people in the community. Her memory will live on through her family and will continue to serve as a reminder to all who access the state of the art library. It is a beautiful tribute to the life of Mrs. Betty Rodriguez, and I know she will continue to inspire others through her ever-lasting presence at the Betty Rodriguez Regional Library.

CONGRATULATING MILDRED OGILVIE FOR CELEBRATING HER 100TH BIRTHDAY

HON. ANDER CRENSHAW

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 9, 2016

Mr. CRENSHAW. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Mildred Atkinson Ogilvie, for celebrating her 100th birthday on January 1, 2016.

Mildred Ogilvie was born the youngest of nine children to Jesse and Agatha Atkinson in Callahan, Florida on January 1st, 1916. Mildred's parents passed away when she was still young, but her older siblings kept the family together and continued to raise them in Callahan. In 1932 at the age of 16, Mildred married Bill Ogilvie. Mildred and Bill had four children together—Marlin, Dallas, Harold, and Cheryl.

Mildred has lived her entire life in Northeast Florida. While raising her four children, Mildred also helped her husband Bill run his many businesses, including grocery stores and laundromats.

Mildred celebrated her birthday at the Jacksonville Nursing and Rehabilitation Center surrounded by 35 family members, including nieces, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and great-great-grandchildren. Her niece, Gwen Harvey, fondly recalled walking to Mildred and Bill's grocery store to see their beautiful smiling aunt, knowing that she would walk away with a cold Pepsi-Cola.

Despite being orphaned at a young age, Mildred and all eight of her siblings went on to become successful adults.

Mr. Speaker, I ask you and Members of Congress to join me in congratulating Mildred Ogilvie on overcoming great obstacles, serving as a model for a life well lived, and on celebrating 100 full years of life.

IN HONOR OF DR. ANDREW J. VITERBI RECEIVING THE CHARLES STARK DRAPER PRIZE FOR ENGINEERING

HON. JUAN VARGAS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 9, 2016

Mr. VARGAS. Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of Rep. SCOTT PETERS, Rep. DUNCAN HUNTER, and Rep. SUSAN DAVIS today to congratulate Dr. Andrew Viterbi on being awarded the Charles Stark Draper Prize for Engineering for the development of the Viterbi algorithm.

One of the world's preeminent awards for engineering achievement, The Charles Stark Draper Prize for Engineering was established in 1988 at the request of the Charles Stark Draper Laboratory Inc., to honor the memory of ''Doc'' Draper, the ''father of inertial navigation,'' and to increase public understanding of the contributions of engineering and technology. The National Academy of Engineering annually awards the prize in recognition of innovative engineering achievements and their reduction to practice in ways that have led to important benefits and significant improvement in the well-being and freedom of humanity.

Andrew J. Viterbi is president of the Viterbi Group, which advises and invests in startups in the digital and wireless communication fields. As cofounder of Linkabit in 1968 and Qualcomm in 1985, he led the development of innovative technologies based on code division multiple access. In addition to his career in the communication industry, Viterbi was a professor at the UCLA School of Engineering and Applied Science from 1963 to 1973 and then taught part-time at the University of California, San Diego, where he has been professor emeritus since 2004. Viterbi received his Ph.D from the University of Southern California (USC), where he and his wife Erna Viterbi made a naming gift to rename the USC engineering school the Viterbi School of Engineering. Viterbi was elected to the National Academy of Engineering in 1978 and the National Academy of Sciences in 1996.

Andrew J. Viterbi developed the Viterbi algorithm as a method for enhancing error-correcting code used in telecommunication, making it easier to eliminate static in transmissions. The Viterbi algorithm has had the greatest impact in digital cellular phones, but it is also used in other applications such as cable, DSL modems, and Ethernet. The Viterbi algorithm has also been instrumental in interplanetary communication signals, allowing for greater signal strength in deep space missions such as the Mars Pathfinder, the Mars Exploration Rover and the Cassini probe to Saturn. Usage of the Viterbi algorithm has been expanded to include speech recognition, speech synthesis, keyword spotting, computational linguistics, and bioinformatics.

Mr. Speaker, we would echo the National Academy of Engineering President C. D. Mote, Jr. who said ''The Viterbi algorithm has led to significant benefits to the health, safety, and well-being of the world's citizen. His work embodies the prize's mission, which is to recognize an engineer whose accomplishments have meaningfully impacted society.''

COMMENDING AND CONGRATULATING BRIGADIER GENERAL TRACY L. SMITH ON BECOMING THE FIRST WOMAN GENERAL OFFICER FROM GUAM

HON. MADELEINE Z. BORDALLO

OF GUAM

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 9, 2016

Ms. BORDALLO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commend and congratulate Tracy L. Smith on her promotion to Brigadier General in the U.S. Army. BG Smith is the first woman from Guam to attain a general officer rank in the U.S. military, and she currently serves as the Deputy Commander, U.S. Army Reserve Medical Command. She was nominated by President Barack Obama on April 13, 2015 and confirmed by the U.S. Senate on April 30, 2015. She received her first star during a ceremony at the Army Reserve Medical Command in Pinellas Park, Florida on January 24, 2016.

BG Smith is part of a strong heritage of exceptional men and women from Guam who have bravely and dutifully served our nation in uniform. Her promotion to Brigadier General is an important milestone in her career and a reflection of her perseverance, dedication, and commitment to service. As the first woman general officer from Guam in any of the U.S. military services, BG Smith is a role model for future woman servicemembers and her promotion is source of pride for our island.

Brigadier General Smith was born on Guam and started her career of service nearly thirty years ago. She, like many families from Guam, comes from a proud military family; her father, Franklin Artero, is a retired Sergeant Major in the U.S. Army, and her brother, Audie Artero, is a Lieutenant Colonel in the Guam National Guard. She was commissioned as Second Lieutenant after completing the Reserve Officers Training Corps program at the University of Guam. Since then, she has held a number of posts in the military medical field. A natural trailblazer, she earned the recognition of being the first Active Guard and Reserve Commander of the 865th Combat Support Hospital in Utica, New York. During her military career, BG Smith has earned numerous awards and recognitions, including the Legion of Merit and the Bronze Star.

I join the people of Guam in commending and congratulating Tracy L. Smith on her distinguished career and promotion to Brigadier General in the U.S. Army. I look forward to her continued service to our nation, and I am confident that as she assumes this new position, she will continue to inspire not only the soldiers she commands, but also women in Guam and throughout our country. I also extend my congratulations and appreciation to husband, retired Army Sergeant Scott Smith, and her entire Artero and Smith families.

HONORING BASMA ALAWEE FOR HER OUTSTANDING COMMUNITY SERVICE ADVOCATING ON BEHALF OF FELLOW REFUGEES

HON. ANDER CRENSHAW

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 9, 2016

Mr. CRENSHAW. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Basma Alawee for her outstanding service to her country through her work in the community advocating on behalf of fellow refugees.

Basma's impact began two years ago, when she came with her husband, Ali Aljubouri, and their daughter Dana, to Jacksonville, Florida from Iraq in order to escape persecution resulting from their assistance to the United States. Not only did they come to America for

a better life, but they have bettered the lives of those now around them.

Now in North Florida, the two have both given much back to their adopted community. Basma teaches middle school girls at the Foundation Academy much more than just math and science. Through example, she instills the value of taking initiatives and the importance of making a difference in the lives of others. To do this, she brings her classes to visit a local nursing home and organizes clothing at the church's thrift store. Her husband, Ali, contributes to the Christian academy through his work as a chef and a soccer coach, both bridging gaps in different religious communities.

For Basma, the work doesn't end when the school day is over. Basma has been volunteering with refugee-resettlement agencies, working as the Florida delegate to the UNHCR, and even founding the Iraqi Family Organization so that the Iraqi community could support one another.

The increasing conflict in the Middle East has threatened the future of refugees to the United States. Basma, who became an American citizen in July, wrote an essay with great courage, telling her own story in response to the political rhetoric about banning Muslims and refugees from certain countries. Her expressions of the struggles she faced and the love she had for America were simple, yet the message was clear and powerful.

As a Member of Congress, I have the privilege of interacting with and supporting the work of outstanding individuals, such as Basma Alawee. America is the world's most generous and diverse country, and Basma is proof that this generosity touches those who need it most. I am proud that Basma and her family call Jacksonville, FL their home. Basma has fully utilized the great opportunities presented to her by the United States of America and has dedicated her life to fostering community in Jacksonville and around the world.

Mr. Speaker, I ask you and Members of Congress to join me in recognizing Basma Alawee, not only for overcoming incredible challenges as a refugee, but for her dedication making this country a home for her family, her neighbors, and those who have dreams of escaping conflict for a better life.

HONORING MR. DOUGLAS HEUSER ON THE OCCASION OF HIS RETIREMENT FROM THE SEE SCIENCE CENTER

HON. FRANK C. GUINTA

OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 9, 2016

Mr. GUINTA. Mr. Speaker, I would like to express my congratulations to Douglas Heuser on his retirement from the SEE Science Center after 32 years, and thank him for the outstanding work he did during his career.

Mr. Heuser's commitment to promoting and instilling a love of science in people across the Granite state has been a critical aspect of his dedication to education. Under Mr. Heuser's leadership, the SEE Science Center has grown from a staff of one to a staff of 23 and the center has grown from 4,500 square feet to 45,000. This expansion exemplifies Mr. Heuser's outstanding management abilities and successful marketing techniques.

The creativity, knowledge and experience Mr. Heuser brought to New Hampshire during his time at the SEE Science Center has been invaluable, and it's clear he leaves an example of strong leadership for others to emulate in his wake.

It is with great admiration that I congratulate Mr. Heuser on his retirement, and wish him the best on all future endeavors.

IN HONOR OF GEORGIE CLARK

HON. SAM FARR

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 9, 2016

Mr. FARR. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the accomplishments and celebrate the tourism award being presented to a truly remarkable woman and dear friend, Georgiana Clark. Today, the National Tour Association at their annual convention in Atlanta, Georgia, is recognizing Mrs. Clark with the Pioneer Award for her lifetime dedication to the tourism industry in the United States. I have known Georgie and her late husband, Norman, since the early 1980s. They are the founders and operators of a family attraction in Santa Cruz County: Roaring Camp Railroads. The goal of the Clark Family was to freeze a period in time so visitors can step across the authentic wooden covered bridge and step back in time to the 1880's.

Norman and Georgiana Clark realized their family owned tourist attraction would never be able to financially afford the worldwide marketing needed to make their attraction a success, but they believed in cooperative marketing. Georgiana and Norman were the founders of what is today Cal Travel but was founded as the California Travel Industry Association and were the founders of what today is known as US Travel but was founded as the Travel Industry Association of America.

After Norman's passing in 1985, Georgiana went on to launch the company's second rail service, the Santa Cruz, Big Trees & Pacific Railway, the train from the California Redwoods to the beaches of Santa Cruz, Monterey Bay and the Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk. I'm proud to say I was part of the original dedication ceremony when this tourist attraction began in Santa Cruz County. Today Roaring Camp is a thriving tourist attraction hosting many historical events and one of the largest Day Out With Thomas (Thomas the Tank Engine) events in the world.

Georgiana Collins Clark was born in 1935 Honolulu, Hawaii. She learned the importance of tourism at a very young age. Georgie and her sisters would make leis and sell them to arriving visitors to Honolulu as they disembarked off of cruise ships. Remember—back then there was no commercial air services. Georgiana later became a stewardess for Aloha Airlines where she met her husband, Norman on a flight. After Norman and Georgiana were married they settled in to their new home on the property of Roaring Camp where together they raised their three daughters Chemene, Melani and Kapiolani. Today two of their daughters work in tourism; Melani is the CEO for Roaring Camp Railroads and Kapiolani is an Operations Director at the Disneyland Resort in Anaheim.

Georgiana has played such a huge part in so many lives but especially to her family and friends. As the National Tour Association recognizing Georgiana P. Clark for her lifetime contribution to tourism, I am proud to say I have watched this family owned and operated attraction grow and flourish over the years.

Mr. Speaker, I know I speak for the whole House in celebrating Georgiana P. Clark's amazing spirit and offering our congratulations to her on her lifetime of dedication to the tourism industry.

IN RECOGNITION OF THE LIFE OF JAMES J. PAVLICIN

HON. DAVID W. JOLLY

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 9, 2016

Mr. JOLLY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Jim Pavlicin, a resident of Gulfport, Florida, who passed away on January 7, 2016. James Joseph Pavlicin was born and raised in Westbury, New York, the son of United States Navy veteran and Nassau County Police Detective Michael Thomas Pavlicin and his wife, Margaret Josephine (née Clay).

During World War II, Jim's mother sewed three blue stars on her Military Service flag, as all three of her sons, members of the Greatest Generation, defended our nation overseas. Following his older brothers—Mike, who served in the United States Navy, and George, who served in the United States Marine Corps—Jim joined the United States Army. In the post-war period, he was assigned to the Military Police Honor Guard, IX Corps Headquarters, in Sendai, Japan.

Returning home, he married his beloved wife of sixty years and eight months, Mary (née Horton). Settling on Long Island, New York, Mary and Jim raised four children: James (Annie), William (Debra), Jo Ann (Van), and Robert (Melissa); had seven grandchildren: Jessica (Sean), Amy (Matt), Kellie (Brandon), William, Rachel, Matthew, and Rebecca; and five great-grandchildren: Kaelyn, Matthew, Sam, Jacob, and Thomas. A sixth great-grandchild, Brandon Jr., will be born this month. He is also survived by two sisters, Mary Elliott and Margaret Clark, and dozens of nieces and nephews.

Jim was a proud member of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers for fifty-five years. He enjoyed gardening, sport aviation, and travel, and was a master woodworker. Mary and Jim retired to Gulfport in 1998 after four years of living in a recreational vehicle and seeing this beautiful country. They belonged to the Gulfport Presbyterian Church, and were active and avid volunteers with the Experimental Aircraft Association, and the Sun 'n Fun Fly-In & Expo, Florida's largest convention. In 2012, Jim and his daughter Jo Ann participated in an Honor Flight, along with many other veterans from the Tampa area, traveling to Washington to visit the National World War II Memorial along the Mall.

Jim's goal in life was to "build a better mouse trap"—and most of the time, he did. He always had a smile on his face, and was happiest when he was with his family, helping others, telling a story, or singing. At his funeral, his grandchildren recounted how meaningful it was to hear their grandfather say to them, "Good job. I'm proud of you."

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the United States Congress, I am privileged to honor James J. Pavlicin, whose life and service reflect great credit upon himself, his family, and his community. He will be remembered as a man who selflessly answered his country's call; as a devoted husband, father, grandfather, great-grandfather, son, brother, and uncle; and as an important part of Florida's 13th Congressional District. My wife Laura and I offer our prayers for his wife, Mary; children, Jim, Bill, Jo, and Bob; and the rest of his large, loving family, as we remember and honor the life of Jim Pavlicin.

HONORING THE LIFE OF MAY YING MARY YANG

HON. JIM COSTA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 9, 2016

Mr. COSTA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the life and service of May Ying Mary Yang of Merced, California who passed away on November 22, 2015, at the age of 69. Mrs. Yang's family and friends will miss her greatly as she dedicated her life to assisting those she met and always strived to make a difference in the community.

May Ying Mary Yang was born on October 1, 1946 in Xieng Khouang, Laos. When she was 15 years old, she married a military man, Ge Paul Yang, whom she would spend the rest of her life with. In 1975, the Yang family made the decision to flee from the war in Vietnam with their 8 children in order to seek refuge in a refugee camp in Thailand, prior to immigrating to the United States. When they arrived to the refugee camp, the Yang family had no money or food for their children and faced numerous hardships. Additionally, while living in the refugee camp, the family witnessed many children dying from malnutrition and diseases. It goes without saying that Mrs. Yang overcame many struggles in her life and managed to persevere in order to provide her family with a safe future lifestyle.

Throughout her life, Mrs. Yang touched many lives. Her commitment to her husband, Ge Paul Yang played a huge role in his career. Further, Mrs. Yang was known as an intelligent woman with a big heart, who was compassionate and always encouraging. She actively made a difference in her community alongside her husband, preparing meals, planning community events, and engaging in social work. The Yang family did this as a means to maintain a strong Hmong group within the community.

Mrs. Yang's work led to more Hmong individuals believing in the concept of "giving more than what one is called upon to give." Her work was instrumental to the development of the belief that women should be equal and that equality is not based on gender. These beliefs were instilled in Mrs. Yang's children and she always encouraged them to succeed.

Further, the dedication Mrs. Yang had to serving her community; her integrity, honor, and long service to the Central Valley made her a cherished figure. Her commitment to family and to her community will forever live in the lives of the people she touched. It is my honor to join Mrs. Yang's family in celebrating a life that will never be forgotten.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in remembering a great woman of tireless service and dedication to her community. Mrs. Yang's memory will live on through her family and be remembered by our entire community.

TO AMPLIFY CONCERNS OF IMMIGRANT DEATHS IN PRIVATE PRISONS

HON. JOHN CONYERS, JR.

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 9, 2016

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, I would like to submit the first sections of a terrific article, entitled, 'This Man Will Almost Certainly Die' by Seth Freed Wessler, and published by The Nation. As we continue to discuss Criminal Justice Reform, I hope that this article can be invaluable resource to my colleagues.

Where Claudio Fagardo-Saucedo grew up, on the colonial streets of the Mexican city of Durango, migrating to the United States was almost a rite of passage. It was following the stream of departures from Durango in the 1980s that the lanky young man left his family and traveled north. His mother, Julieta Saucedo Salazar, heard that he'd found jobs working as a laborer in Los Angeles. But they soon lost touch. ''We did not know much about him, really,'' his younger sister told me.

This article was reported in partnership with the Investigative Fund at the Nation Institute, with support from the Puffin Foundation. It will be part of the February 6 episode of Reveal, a new podcast and public radio show produced by The Center for Investigative Reporting and PRX. Fagardo-Saucedo worked, his jobs sometimes taking him out of California, and occasionally he got into trouble—once for ''possession for sale'' of cocaine, another time for stealing jewelry. Every seven or eight years, his mother recalled, he'd return to her house—but never by choice. ''They caught him all the time for being illegal,'' Julieta said. She always hoped her wandering son might stay, get to know the family again, but he never did. ''He would be here a month, and then he'd go again.''

In the summer of 2003, immigration agents detained Fagardo-Saucedo on his way back to California, but this time the Border Patrol referred him to federal prosecutors, who charged him with ''illegal re-entry,'' or returning to the United States after deportation. He served nearly five years before being sent back to Mexico. Again, he tried to return. Early one morning in August of 2008, Fagardo-Saucedo triggered an infrared sensor as he and two others ran across the border near Tijuana. He pleaded guilty in a U.S. District Court to another ''illegal re-entry'' charge. The judge sentenced him to four years in federal prison.

When Fagardo-Saucedo arrived at Reeves, a prison complex in rural West Texas, he entered a little-known segment of the federal prison system. Over the previous decade, elected officials and federal agencies had quietly recast the relationship between criminal justice and immigration enforcement. These changes have done as much to bloat the federal prison population as the War on Drugs; they have also helped make Latinos the largest racial or ethnic group sentenced to federal custody.

Until the 1990s, border crossing was almost always treated as a civil offense, punishable by deportation. But in the late 1980s, Congress started to change that. By 1996, crossing the border after deportation was punishable by years of imprisonment, with enhanced sentences for people previously convicted of crimes—most often drug offenses. Though federal investigators have found no evidence that criminalization has reduced the pace of border crossings over the long term, prosecutions for illegal entry and reentry rose from fewer than 4,000 a year at the start of Bill Clinton's presidency, to 31,000 in 2004 under George W. Bush, to a high of 91,000 in 2013 under President Obama.

By the late 1990s, the flood of inmates from this new class of prisoner, coupled with a raging War on Drugs, sent the Bureau of Prisons searching for places to put them. The BOP turned to private companies to operate a new type of facility, low-security prisons designed to hold only noncitizens convicted of federal crimes. As of June 2015, these facilities—which are distinct from immigration detention centers, where people are held pending deportation—housed nearly 23,000 people.

Three private companies now run 11 immigrant-only contract prisons. Five are run by the GEO Group, four by the Corrections Corporation of America, and two by a privately held company called the Management & Training Corporation. (A third MTC prison was recently shut down after inmates ransacked it in a protest.) Except for a prison largely used to house inmates from Washington, DC, these 11 facilities are the only privately run prisons in the federal criminal-justice system. In 2013, the BOP spent roughly $625 million on them. The contracts include the provision of medical care, for which the companies often hire health-services subcontractors. In one such facility in Reeves County, Texas, the BOP entered into an agreement with the county, which in turn hired GEO to operate the prison and Correct Care Solutions to manage prison healthcare.

The BOP's contracts with these facilities are meant to cut costs. Though the prisons are part of the federal infrastructure, the companies that run them operate under a different—and less stringent—set of rules in order to allow cost-cutting innovations. As a retired BOP contracting official said in an interview, ''The more specificity you put in the contract, the more money the contractors are going to want for performing the service.''

At least five times since 2008, inmates have rioted in the BOP's contract prisons. The unrest has often come after medical-care complaints. (Pecos Enterprise, Smokey Briggs / AP)

Repeated federal audits and reports have found these facilities to be in crisis. Prison medical care is notoriously bad, but for years, immigrant- and prisoner-rights advocates have sounded the alarm about these sites in particular, describing them as separate and unequal, segregated on the basis of citizenship. ''These prisons operate without the same systems of accountability as regular Bureau of Prisons facilities, and prisoners suffer,'' said Carl Takei, an ACLU attorney who coauthored a 2014 report documenting the subpar conditions.

Yet the full scale of the medical neglect at these immigrant-only contract prisons has remained opaque—until now. After two years of negotiations with the BOP in and out of federal court over an open-records request, I obtained more than 9,000 pages of medical records that contractors submitted to the BOP. They include the records for 103 of at least 137 people who have died in federal contract prisons from 1998 (the year after the first one opened) through the end of 2014. The records all concern men; women are sent to regular BOP-run prisons. The documents include nurse and doctor notes, records from hospital visits, psychological files, autopsies,

and secret internal investigations. In their pages can be found striking tales of neglect. Each case file—sometimes hundreds of pages long—was reviewed by at least two independent doctors who rendered opinions on the adequacy of the medical care provided. Some of the case files are meager and appear to be missing pages. But of the 77 that provided enough information to render a judgment, the doctors found that 38 contained indications of inadequate medical care. In 25 of these—a third of the total—the reviewers said the inadequacies likely contributed to the premature deaths of the prisoners. In only 39 cases did at least one reviewer find indications that the care had likely been in accordance with recognized medical standards.

Combined with interviews with relatives and cellmates of the deceased inmates, and with correctional officers and medical staff, the files tell the story of men sick with cancer, AIDS, mental illness, and liver and heart disease, forced to endure critical delays in care. They show prison medical units repeatedly failing to diagnose patients correctly despite obvious and painful symptoms, as well as the use of underqualified workers pressed to operate on the borders of their legal scope of practice. The files also show men dying of treatable diseases—men who very likely would have survived had they been given access to adequate care.

Fagardo-Saucedo, then 43, was booked into Reeves, run by the GEO Group and a separate medical contractor, on January 27, 2009. When he arrived, the facility was in tumult. Six weeks earlier, inmates at the sprawling 3,700-bed complex had rioted, protesting the death of a man who was left in solitary confinement for a month without proper treatment for his epilepsy; he died after suffering a seizure. Four days after Fagardo-Saucedo's arrival, the prisoners rioted again when another sick man was reportedly placed in segregation.

According to the BOP, prisons holding people who will be deported don't require the same level of inmate services as regular prisons. (Josh Begley)

Reeves was still recovering from the unrest when a prison physician scrawled a cursory note in Fagardo-Saucedo's file. The doctor noted that the inmate had arrived from pretrial detention with records indicating that he'd tested positive for latent tuberculosis and had complained of headaches. BOP rules require that TB-positive inmates also be tested for HIV, but an HIV test was never performed. Indeed, over the next two years, Fagardo-Saucedo wasn't seen by a medical doctor even once.

After three weeks in Reeves, he began to show up in the clinic complaining of pain—first tooth pain, then headaches, then nausea and back pain. Over two years, Fagardo-Saucedo went to the clinic 18 times. He was seen on nearly all of these occasions by one of a rotating group of licensed vocational nurses, or LVNs. Usually, the LVN sent him back to his bed with a prescription for Tylenol or ibuprofen. Meanwhile, his body was signaling a fatal breakdown, something that doctors who reviewed his case said should have been caught by the facility's care providers.

The training for LVNs (known as licensed practical nurses, or LPNs, in some states) takes only a year. They are taught to change dressings, check blood pressure, help patients bathe, and gather basic information. They're often hired to provide routine care in nursing homes or to assist registered nurses in hospitals. Unlike the RNs, who provide patients with substantive medical care and perform triage and evaluations, LVNs are intended as support staff.

This is the reason that BOP-run prisons rarely hire LVNs, said Sandy Parr, a vice president in the federal correctional officers' union and formerly a registered nurse in a federal prison. ''LVNs are too limited to make sense to hire,'' she said. Yet in the BOP's immigrant-only contract prisons, LVNs often appear in the files as the sole caregivers that sick prisoners see for days or weeks. They seem to perform jobs equivalent to those of registered nurses, a practice that prison medical staff confirm. In 19 of the cases reviewed, at least one medical doctor flagged the overextension of LVNs as a factor impeding proper medical care.

In only 39 of 77 cases did a reviewer find that the care had likely been in accordance with recognized medical standards.

Martin Acosta, a Salvadoran man who served time in Reeves for illegal re-entry at the same time as Fagardo-Saucedo, began complaining of abdominal pain late in the summer of 2010. Over four and half months, he went to the clinic more than 20 times. Other than a doctor's visit a month after his complaints began, he saw only nursing staff until the last two weeks of his incarceration; on 14 of those occasions, he saw only LVNs. Notes in the handwritten medical logs and nursing templates reveal a cascade of missed signs indicating serious illness, said doctors who reviewed the files. The prison medical staff described Acosta as a difficult patient; one thought he was simply trying to obtain a prescription for narcotics. Acosta was sent back to his room with nothing but Maalox nine times. Physicians who reviewed the files said the nurses appear to have missed the larger story of a protracted medical condition.

''For prison medicine to work, a doctor has to be able to trust the people who work there,'' said Dr. Neal Collins, a retired BOP and immigration detention-center physician and clinical director who reviewed the Acosta files. ''If they have competent nurse practitioners, then they can trust that the system is catching it. But when people don't know what to look for, that's what you worry about.''

In significant discomfort on one of his many trips to plead for help, Acosta told an LVN that he'd vomited a dark substance and had seen blood in his stool. He asked to be sent to a hospital, and the LVN took a stool sample. Leafing through the file, I expected to find a hospital referral or at least the test results. Instead, the records suggest that the LVN eyeballed the stool sample and deemed it unremarkable. There's no indication in the files that lab tests were performed or a doctor was called. When Acosta finally saw a physician at Reeves in December 2010, he could no longer eat. He was transferred to a hospital, where a massive tumor was found in his abdomen. Acosta was ultimately diagnosed with severe metastatic stomach cancer.

In early 2014, an LVN at another facility—this one run by MTC—similarly failed to complete a basic test. Tasked with evaluating a man who complained of chest pains, the LVN attempted to use an electrocardiogram machine. But he wrote in his notes that he couldn't get the machine to work because the patient's ''skin is oily and electroids [sic] did not stick.'' Rather than call a doctor, the LVN checked a box marked ''No action indicated at this time on the form for chest-pain complaints. The patient later died of a heart attack, despite subsequent treatment. Doctors who reviewed the file were divided about whether the shoddy care contributed to his death. In the aftermath of the 2008 and 2009 riots at Reeves, BOP monitors began to visit the facility more regularly to check on healthcare conditions. But the increased oversight accomplished little: Each time the monitors returned, they found that Reeves had failed to fix the problems. One year after the riots, Reeves remained derelict. ''The lack of an internal system of administrative and clinical controls has contributed to the provision of less than adequate medical care,'' the monitors wrote.

Acosta's common-law wife, Guillermina Yanez, showed me a photograph of him before his illness. Acosta appeared youthful and strong, his T-shirt hugging muscular arms. Then Guillermina showed me a picture taken after she and the couple's 2-year-old daughter, Tania, boarded a bus from Atlanta to visit him in the hospital. Acosta's frame was now skeletal, his face sunken, his chest tattoo pinned to paper-thin skin. ''I asked a question to the guards: 'Looking at him, how could you have left him to look like that?' Guillermina recalled.

Acosta died in late January 2011. In a will that a nurse's assistant at the hospital helped him prepare, Acosta wrote: ''I want the deed to my house and land''—in a small town by a river on El Salvador's far eastern edge—''to be placed in the name of the mother of my daughter.'' Salvadoran officials facilitated the return of Acosta's body to the country of his birth. Martin Acosta's daughter, Tania, shows pictures of her father before and after stomach cancer drained away his body, and life. (Courtesy of the Martin Acosta family)

''By the time he got to the hospital, it was too late,'' said Collins, the retired prison doctor. ''If this case went to court, would they win a malpractice suit? Yes, I think they would.''

Reeves continued to fall short. The Justice Department's inspector general, Michael Horowitz, released the results of an audit of the facility in April 2015. The audit found that Reeves's medical contractor at the time, Correctional Healthcare Companies, had failed to meet contractual staffing obligations in the medical unit for at least 34 of the 37 months from 2010 to 2013. The BOP may have incentivized the understaffing: The financial penalties for failing to fill open LVN positions were so modest that it cost CHC less simply to leave them vacant. The inspector general is currently conducting a broader investigation of the BOP's contracting. About the understaffing in the medical unit at Reeves, Horowitz asks: ''Why was it happening for 34 to 37 months? Why wasn't that caught before we showed up?''

The rest of the article can be found at http://www.thenation.com/article/privatized-immigrant-prison-deaths/?nc=1.

IN RECOGNITION OF OUR STELLAR SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS

HON. PETE OLSON

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 9, 2016

Mr. OLSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the hard working School Board members of Clear Creek Independent School District.

Our school board members of Clear Creek ISD in the 22nd Congressional District of Texas play a critical role in the success of our schools. Our district is the most diverse and fastest growing congressional district in America, due largely in part to the hardworking and caring educators and school board members that dedicate their time and energy on our schools; ensuring that our children can achieve whatever they set their mind to. Our school board members were elected or hired

to be the caretakers of the American Dream—any child can be anything they want—if they receive the education that will give them the necessary tools to achieve their dream. Our schools are stronger because each of them embrace the challenge.

On behalf of the Twenty-Second Congressional District of Texas, thank you again to Clear Creek ISD for being Super-Heroes in developing our leaders of tomorrow.

AMERICAN HEART MONTH

HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 9, 2016

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize American Heart Month and to acknowledge the tireless advocacy of the staff and volunteers of the American Heart Association, and the organizations in my home state of New Jersey and across the country. They work this month, and year round, in the effort to raise awareness of heart disease, stroke, and other cardiovascular diseases. The Association is leading the charge in increasing visibility of American Heart Month through coordinated campaigns, such as National Wear Red Day on February 5, Go Red For Women, and a congressional briefing on February 24.

American Heart Month provides a critical platform to promote public awareness and heart-healthy lifestyles. The American Heart Association focuses on seven health factors and behaviors that increase the risk of cardiovascular disease, or CVD. These areas of prevention include smoking cessation, physical activity, healthy diet and body weight, as well as managing cholesterol, blood pressure, and blood sugar. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, the leading cause of heart disease and stroke is uncontrolled high blood pressure. Outlining these areas gives us the knowledge to focus our prevention efforts in the fight against CVD.

The statistics speak for themselves. CVD is the leading cause of death nationally and globally. One in three American deaths is caused by CVD, a disease which claims the life of an American every forty seconds. To fully understand what that means, in 2013, the most recent year for which data is available, CVD killed over 800,000 people in America. In addition to the lives it claims, over eighty-five million Americans are currently living with CVD and its effects. CVD also has a real impact on our national economy. Annually, the economic cost of CVD is over $316 billion. $1 of every $6 spent on health care in this country is spent treating CVD.

That said, there is good news. The efforts of the advocates are working. The mortality rate from heart disease has fallen by 38 percent. This is encouraging, but there remains so much more to be done.

I would be remiss if I did not mention the good work being done in my home state in the fight against CVD. The American Heart Association and the American Stroke Association are funding nineteen Founders Affiliate research awards in the state of New Jersey.

In my own Congressional district, the Meridian Health Foundation's "Women's Heart Fund"—focused on promoting heart health in Monmouth and Ocean Counties—has worked to promote heart health awareness and raise funds for heart health at the Meridian Health System including the Jersey Shore University Medical Center, Riverview Medical Center, K. Hovnanian Children's Hospital, and Bayshore Community Hospital.

Each year, the Fund selects and supports a cardiac initiative. In 2015, the Fund supported the Community of LifeSavers program. Working together with the American Heart Association, Community of LifeSavers equips everyday people with the skills to perform CPR. Over 5,000 students from seventeen schools have been trained, at no cost to the schools or students, since the program's inception.

I am honored to have served as co-chair of the Congressional Heart and Stroke Coalition since the 113th Congress. This year marks the twentieth anniversary of the Coalition's establishment and our numbers have grown to over one hundred members of Congress. Over the past twenty years our bi-cameral, bi-partisan Coalition has served as a resource for all members of Congress and worked to advance federal policies that raise the quality of life for individuals with heart disease.

The American Heart Association and the Coalition work in partnership to raise awareness of CVD and provide those of us making funding and policy decisions with the tools and information to address the problems most critical to those affected by CVD.

Heart and stroke patients, as well as their loved ones and caregivers, need vocal advocates on Capitol Hill to ensure access to quality care and treatments. We have a duty to see that programs aimed at combating CVD, as well as medical research for prevention and treatment of stroke and heart attacks are supported appropriately at the federal level.

As we look forward to promoting awareness during American Heart Month, it is important to remember that the work continues year round. Finally, I would like to acknowledge my colleagues who are fellow members of the Congressional Heart and Stroke Coalition and thank them for their efforts. I encourage those members who have not yet joined the Coalition to do so. The Coalition will continue to work with the Association throughout the year in the fight against America's number one killer.

IN RECOGNITION OF OUR STELLAR SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS

HON. PETE OLSON

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 9, 2016

Mr. OLSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the hard-working School Board members of Needville Independent School District.

Our school board members of Needville ISD in the 22nd Congressional District of Texas play a critical role in the success of our schools. Our district is the most diverse and fastest growing congressional district in America, due largely in part to the hard-working and caring educators and school board members that dedicate their time and energy on our schools; ensuring that our children can achieve whatever they set their mind to. Our school board members were elected or hired to be the caretakers of the American Dream—any child can be anything they want—if they receive the education that will give them the necessary tools to achieve their dream. Our schools are stronger because each of them embrace the challenge.

On behalf of the Twenty-Second Congressional District of Texas, thank you again to Needville ISD for being Super-Heroes in developing our leaders of tomorrow.

KINGWOOD HIGH SCHOOL AT THE PAN AMERICAN DEBATE CHAMPIONSHIP

HON. TED POE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 9, 2016

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, the Kingwood High School Debate team has been invited to compete at the Pan American Schools Debate Championships in Vancouver, Canada on March 16th, 2016. The competition is organized by the Pan-American Debate Organization (PADO) and aims "to promote debate in the Americas, and to encourage high school students to participate in international competitions."

Members of Team Kingwood include Morgan Lee, junior; Reese Grayson, senior; Colette Faulkner, junior—also the designated alternate to Team USA; Connor Smith, junior; Gaurav Gawankar, junior. The team is coached by Audra and Jason Langston. These students will not only be representing their high school, but the state of Texas as well. As they enter the competition, the Texas students will face competitors representing Argentina, Bermuda, Canada, Chile, Mexico, Peru, USA and Venezuela. The Kingwood team will be the only team that will represent a high school, rather than a country.

The principles of open debate have long been a lifeblood to our democracy. Society is shaped every day by open conversation, public opinion and debate. The great debaters, men like Patrick Henry, Daniel Webster, and John C. Calhoun shaped American society, bringing democracy to a new born nation. Debaters like Margaret Thatcher broke barriers, improved economies, and shaped their countries' policies for an entire generation. Great Debaters are leaders who have had an impact on our society.

These students have taken the first step towards becoming future leaders. Debate teaches students how to speak both powerfully and persuasively, fosters critical thinking, and how to defend their point of view. As a former debater, Judge and Congressman, I know that it's important to learn how to make a point.

Congratulations to the Kingwood Debate team. Good luck at the Pan American Championships.

And that is just the way it is.

IN RECOGNITION OF OUR STELLAR SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS

HON. PETE OLSON

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 9, 2016

Mr. OLSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the hard working School Board members of Stafford Municipal School District.

Our school board members of Stafford MSD in the 22nd Congressional District of Texas play a critical role in the success of our schools. Our district is the most diverse and fastest growing congressional district in America, due largely in part to the hardworking and caring educators and school board members that dedicate their time and energy on our schools, ensuring that our children can achieve whatever they set their mind to. Our school board members were elected or hired to be the caretakers of the American Dream—any child can be anything they want—if they receive the education that will give them the necessary tools to achieve their dream. Our schools are stronger because each of them embrace the challenge.

On behalf of the Twenty-Second Congressional District of Texas, thank you again to Stafford MSD for being Super-Heroes in developing our leaders of tomorrow.

RESTORE THE VOTE

HON. TERRI A. SEWELL

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 9, 2016

Ms. SEWELL of Alabama. Mr. Speaker, today is both Restoration Tuesday, and the New Hampshire Primary, our nation's first primary of the election season. As Americans head to the polls today, let us all be reminded that today will be the first presidential primary in the past 50 years where Americans will not be afforded the full protections of the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

New Hampshire is one of 16 states with new voting restrictions that have been implemented since the Supreme Court gutted Section 4 of the Voting Rights Act. Unfortunately for voters in New Hampshire, a new voter-ID law will be in full effect for the first time today.

New Hampshire's voter ID law is designed to require those without a photo ID to sign an affidavit and have their picture taken, a motif clearly designed to intimidate and imply suspicion of criminality. The authors and proponents of the law have yet to make the case for the need or intended use of the photos. In addition to intimidation, the law will undoubtedly lead to longer lines at the polls, further inhibiting access for those who have to return to work.

Congress has had two years to answer the Supreme Court's call to develop a modem day formula for preclearance under the Voting Rights Act, and therefore prevent such dangerous laws from being implemented. But here we are, on the day of the New Hampshire Primary, and nothing has been done to restore the vote. Election season has commenced, and Americans cannot wait any longer.

Thousands of our constituents will face new barriers to voting throughout this election cycle. From African American communities in my home state of Alabama, to Native American communities in Alaska, Asian American communities in California and Latino communities in Texas, thousands of minority communities across America will be met with modern-day barriers to the ballot box due to our inaction. Any attempt to restrict a certain portion of our electorate is a threat to our democracy, whether that is through voter ID laws, the closure of driver's license offices, or the scaling back of early voting.

While these don't appear to be as egregious as literacy tests and poll taxes, they represent modern-day attempts to achieve the same goal—to restrict the voice of a portion of the electorate.

I respect the differing opinions of my colleagues on issues of economic, energy, education, and foreign policy. However, I cannot comprehend how we can disagree on something as American as protecting the right to vote. Voting Rights is not a partisan issue. It is a pillar of our democracy.

As the primary season begins, I urge my colleagues to co-sponsor the Voting Rights Advancement Act and join me and many others in urging Speaker Ryan to bring this bill to the floor for a vote.

IN RECOGNITION OF OUR STELLAR SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS

HON. PETE OLSON

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 9, 2016

Mr. OLSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the hard working School Board members of Alvin Independent School District.

Our school board members of Alvin ISD in the 22nd Congressional District of Texas play a critical role in the success of our schools. Our district is the most diverse and fastest growing congressional district in America, due largely in part to the hard-working and caring educators and school board members that dedicate their time and energy on our schools; ensuring that our children can achieve whatever they set their mind to. Our school board members were elected or hired to be the caretakers of the American Dream—any child can be anything they want—if they receive the education that will give them the necessary tools to achieve their dream. Our schools are stronger because each of them embrace the challenge.

On behalf of the Twenty-Second Congressional District of Texas, thank you again to Alvin ISD for being Super-Heroes in developing our leaders of tomorrow.

TEXAS 4000

HON. TED POE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 9, 2016

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, during the summer months of 2016, TEXAS 4000, a University of Texas non-profit organization, will host their annual summer bike ride: the longest charity bicycle ride in the world (as they say, everything's bigger in Texas). The ride starts in Austin, TX and stretches 4,000 miles across the country to Anchorage, Alaska. Participating in this ride are 75, carefully selected, University of Texas college students. These 75 UT students will commit 70 days of their summer to complete the 4,000-mile ride, utilizing each day to raise awareness about cancer prevention, detection, and research in the communities they visit along the way. One of the 75 UT students, Jeffery Saeling, happens to be a constituent of mine.

Jeffery attended Kingwood High School in Texas from 2008 to 2012. During his senior year, in 2012, he was nominated as the Kingwood High School student of character for exhibiting responsibility, respect, trustworthiness, fairness, caring and citizenship; consequently, I, along with Dr. Guy Sconzo, the superintendent of Humble ISD, and Texas State Representative, Dan Huberty had the pleasure of meeting Jeffery, where we experienced firsthand the quality of his character. Four years later, in 2016, Jeffery's continued display of character is one of the reasons he was selected to participate in the TEXAS 4000's summer ride. However, selection for the ride is only the beginning.

Once selected to participate, each rider is expected to raise $4,500 and volunteer at least 50 hours in their community. On top of this, riders must commit to dedicate time and effort in the planning, preparation, and execution of the summer ride. These lofty expectations coupled with the physicality of the ride work in tandem to cultivate volunteers and philanthropists dedicated to eradicating cancer. However, this wouldn't be possible without TEXAS 4000, the non-profit organization responsible for the 4000-mile ride.

Their mission: to share "hope, knowledge, and charity through leadership development, grant making, and their 4,000 plus mile bike ride from Austin to Anchorage: They share hope by letting those affected by cancer know that they are riding for them and fighting for a world without cancer; they share knowledge by bringing life-saving information about cancer prevention to communities and providing leadership development training to tomorrow's leaders; and they share charity by contributing to cancer research and cancer support services while developing the next generation of volunteers and philanthropists."

To date, TEXAS 4000 has raised over $5 million for distribution to various organizations such as M.D. Anderson and the American Cancer Society. Their impact and influence is not contained by the boundaries of the community they operate within, it spans nationwide.

Organizations, like TEXAS 4000, and people, like Jeffery Saeling, represent some of the best my district and Texas has to offer. Their selflessness, dedication, and volunteerism stand as a shining example of the type of quality Americans who call Texas home. Their mission is honorable and their hearts huge.

And that's just the way it is.

HAPPY 25TH ANNIVERSARY TO COLONY ONE

HON. PETE OLSON

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 9, 2016

Mr. OLSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate Colony One Auto in Stafford, Texas on its upcoming 25th anniversary. Colony One has been open since April 15, 1991.

This quarter century anniversary reflects 25 years of hard work, commendable service and quality relationships built within the community. Colony One's commitment to excellence and their customers has resulted in high praise and positive reviews on Angie's List, among other service review websites. Their dedication to their business and their community has also enabled them to be on track to

work on their 250,000th automobile during this year, averaging 11,000–12,000 a year since the business opened. Colony One has remained a friendly, reputable business for the community. We appreciate their business and are proud to see their success.

On behalf of the Twenty-Second Congressional District of Texas, congratulations to Colony One Auto for 25 years of successful, quality service.

THANKING JUANITA CAMPBELL FOR HER SERVICE TO THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

HON. STENY H. HOYER

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 9, 2016

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I rise to thank Ms. Juanita Campbell, who is retiring after more than forty-two years of outstanding service to the United States Congress.

Ms. Campbell retired in January as a Manager of Legislative Data, with more than four decades of service to the Library of Congress. She first started working for the Library in 1973 as a high school student, at which time she served as a Library Aide working on the National Union Catalog. Ms. Campbell went on to become a Clerk Typist in 1974 and, soon after, joined the Congressional Research Service's Economic Division as an Editorial Assistant. Three years later, she moved to the American Law Division, originally called the Bill Digest Section, where she helped track and summarize all pending public legislation. Since 1996, Ms. Campbell has served as a Manager of Legislative Data. Through the years, she has been a highly reliable and knowledgeable liaison to House and Senate staff, relaying bill status information and sharing her expertise on the interaction of the different legislative information management systems.

Ms. Campbell has been focused intently on improving access to legislative proceedings. She aided in the transition of where transcripts and details of legislative proceedings could be found: from only being available through a Library of Congress database, with a limited range of users, to their availability on the internet through the THOMAS website, which everyone can access. Ms. Campbell's knowledge was invaluable during the recent transition to the more modern Congress.gov.

Ms. Campbell has been instrumental at increasing legislative transparency and moving Congress into the digital age. The services she helped develop are invaluable to Congress, the public, and our democracy. The work of her unit, particularly on bill status information, has vastly increased accessibility to the legislative database as well as documentation. Her keen attention to detail has been largely responsible for the high quality of work the Library and CRS's legislative service provides.

Throughout her career, Ms. Campbell's thoughtfulness and positive attitude have earned her the respect and confidence of countless Congressional and CRS staff. As a manager responsible for much of what makes complex information not merely reliable but understandable, she has always demonstrated a passion for teamwork, learning, and problem-solving.

Although Ms. Campbell will be retiring, her many accomplishments will stand as a fitting tribute to her as a professional and as a patriot. Ms. Campbell's presence will be greatly missed. On behalf of this House, I congratulate Juanita Campbell on her retirement and thank her for her dedication and outstanding contributions to the institution. I wish her the best in all her future endeavors.

IN RECOGNITION OF OUR STELLAR SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS

HON. PETE OLSON

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 9, 2016

Mr. OLSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the hard working School Board members of Katy Independent School District.

Our school board members of Katy ISD in the 22nd Congressional District of Texas play a critical role in the success of our schools. Our district is the most diverse and fastest growing congressional district in America, due largely in part to the hard-working and caring educators and school board members that dedicate their time and energy on our schools; ensuring that our children can achieve whatever they set their mind to. Our school board members were elected or hired to be the caretakers of the American Dream—any child can be anything they want—if they receive the education that will give them the necessary tools to achieve their dream. Our schools are stronger because each of them embrace the challenge.

On behalf of the Twenty-Second Congressional District of Texas, thank you again to Katy ISD for being Super-Heroes in developing our leaders of tomorrow.

MOURNING THE LOSS AND HONORING THE UNFORGETTABLE LIFE OF MAURICE WHITE

HON. SHEILA JACKSON LEE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 9, 2016

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, it is with a deep sadness and a heavy heart that I rise today to pay tribute to Maurice White, a man who touched the hearts of millions of Americans as a founding member of the legendary band called Earth, Wind & Fire.

Maurice "Reese" White was born on December 19, 1941, in Memphis, Tennessee.

From a young age he displayed a true talent for playing music.

He left Memphis to study music in Chicago at the elite Chicago Conservatory of Music.

In 1963, Maurice White began working as a session drummer for Chess Records. Soon after, he began playing with the Ramsey Lewis Trio. In 1969, he formed his own band, the Salty Peppers. After moving to Los Angeles, California, Maurice White renamed the band as Earth, Wind & Fire. He asked his younger brother, bassist Verdine White, to join his band. The band's first album failed to become a break out hit, which prompted Maurice White to shuffle the membership. Maurice White brought in several new members that included singer Philip Bailey, keyboardist Larry Dunn, and guitarist Al McKay. The band began experimenting with jazz, R&B, funk, soul, pop music, and African sounds.

Then in 1973, with the new band members and a new sound, Earth, Wind & Fire released their first hit album titled Head to the Sky, selling more than 500,000 copies. The group continued to build on that success by producing a succession of gold and platinum albums throughout the 1970s and the early 1980s. Maurice White helped compose many of the band's hits and the songs that helped define the decade: "Shining Star," "That's the Way of the World," "Reasons," "September," and "Let's Groove." Maurice White won six Grammys with Earth, Wind & Fire, and received a solo award for his arrangement of "Got To Get You Into My Life." Maurice White and Earth Wind & Fire were inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 2000.

Also, in 2000, Maurice White revealed to the world that he had been diagnosed with Parkinson's disease. This announcement served as an explanation to his legion of loyal fans around the world for his decision to withdraw from performing. Despite the effects of his health condition, Maurice White decided to remain active in the Music industry by founding a new recording label called Kalimba Records. He also collaborated on Hot Feet, which was a musical set to Earth, Wind & Fire songs. Then in 2010, Maurice White was inducted into the Songwriters Hall of Fame. After a long battle with Parkinson's disease, Maurice White passed away in his sleep on February 3, 2016 in Los Angeles, California. Mr. Speaker, Maurice White leaves behind a legacy as one of the most innovative and unique artists and songwriters of the 21st century.

IN RECOGNITION OF OUR STELLAR SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS

HON. PETE OLSON

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 9, 2016

Mr. OLSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the hard working School Board members of Pearland Independent School District.

Our school board members of Pearland ISD in the 22nd Congressional District of Texas play a critical role in the success of our schools. Our district is the most diverse and fastest growing congressional district in America, due largely in part to the hardworking and caring educators and school board members that dedicate their time and energy on our schools; ensuring that our children can achieve whatever they set their mind to. Our school board members were elected or hired to be the caretakers of the American Dream—any child can be anything they want—if they receive the education that will give them the necessary tools to achieve their dream. Our schools are stronger because each of them embrace the challenge.

On behalf of the Twenty-Second Congressional District of Texas, thank you again to Pearland ISD for being Super-Heroes in developing our leaders of tomorrow.

IN RECOGNITION OF OUR STELLAR SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS

HON. PETE OLSON

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 9, 2016

Mr. OLSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the hard working School Board members of Fort Bend Independent School District.

Our school board members of Fort Bend ISD in the 22nd Congressional District of Texas play a critical role in the success of our schools. Our district is the most diverse and fastest growing congressional district in America, due largely in part to the hardworking and caring educators and school board members that dedicate their time and energy on our schools; ensuring that our children can achieve whatever they set their mind to. Our school board members were elected or hired to be the caretakers of the American Dream—any child can be anything they want—if they receive the education that will give them the necessary tools to achieve their dream. Our schools are stronger because each of them embrace the challenge.

On behalf of the Twenty-Second Congressional District of Texas, thank you again to Fort Bend ISD for being Super-Heroes in developing our leaders of tomorrow.

IN RECOGNITION OF OUR STELLAR SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS

HON. PETE OLSON

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 9, 2016

Mr. OLSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the hard working School Board members of Lamar Consolidated Independent School District.

Our school board members of Lamar Consolidated ISD in the 22nd Congressional District of Texas play a critical role in the success of our schools. Our district is the most diverse and fastest growing congressional district in America, due largely in part to the hard-working and caring educators and school board members that dedicate their time and energy on our schools; ensuring that our children can achieve whatever they set their mind to. Our school board members were elected or hired to be the caretakers of the American Dream—any child can be anything they want—if they receive the education that will give them the necessary tools to achieve their dream. Our schools are stronger because each of them embrace the challenge.

On behalf of the Twenty-Second Congressional District of Texas, thank you again to Lamar Consolidated ISD for being Super-Heroes in developing our leaders of tomorrow.

Daily Digest

Senate

Chamber Action

Routine Proceedings, pages S709–S758

Measures Introduced: Thirteen bills and three resolutions were introduced, as follows: S. 2514–2526, and S. Res. 367–369. **Page S737**

Measures Passed:

Directing Dollars to Disaster Relief Act: Senate passed S. 2109, to direct the Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency to develop an integrated plan to reduce administrative costs under the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, after agreeing to the committee amendment in the nature of a substitute, and the following amendment proposed thereto: **Pages S755–56**

McConnell (for Johnson) Amendment No. 3296, to sunset the reporting requirement after 7 years. **Pages S755–56**

Judicial Redress Act: Senate passed H.R. 1428, to extend Privacy Act remedies to citizens of certified states, after agreeing to the committee amendment. **Pages S756–57**

Career and Technical Education Month: Senate agreed to S. Res. 367, supporting the goals and ideals of Career and Technical Education Month. **Page S757**

Digital Learning Day: Senate agreed to S. Res. 369, affirming the importance of student data privacy and recognizing Digital Learning Day. **Pages S757–58**

Conference Reports:

Trade Facilitation and Trade Enforcement Act—Cloture: Senate began consideration of the conference report to accompany H.R. 644, to reauthorize trade facilitation and trade enforcement functions and activities. **Page S730**

A motion was entered to close further debate on the conference report to accompany the bill, and, in accordance with the provisions of Rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, a vote on cloture will occur on Thursday, February 11, 2016. **Page S730**

Message from the President: Senate received the following message from the President of the United States:

Transmitting, pursuant to law, the Budget of the United States Government for Fiscal Year 2017; referred jointly, pursuant to the order of January 30, 1975 as modified by the order of April 11, 1986; which was referred to the Committees on the Budget; and Appropriations. (PM–41) **Pages S732–34**

Executive Reports of Committees: Senate received the following executive reports of a committee:

Report to accompany Protocol Amending Tax Convention with Swiss Confederation (Treaty Doc. 112–1) (Ex. Rept. 114–1);

Report to accompany The Protocol Amending the Tax Convention with Spain (Treaty Doc. 113–4) (Ex. Rept. 114–2);

Report to accompany Convention on Taxes with the Republic of Poland (Treaty Doc. 113–5) (Ex. Rept. 114–3);

Report to accompany Tax Convention with Chile (Treaty Doc. 112–8) (Ex. Rept. 114–4);

Report to accompany Protocol Amending the Tax Convention with Japan (Treaty Doc. 114–1) (Ex. Rept. 114–5);

Report to accompany Protocol Amending Tax Convention with Luxembourg (Treaty Doc. 111–8) (Ex. Rept. 114–6);

Report to accompany Tax Convention with Hungary (Treaty Doc. 111–7) (Ex. Rept. 114–7); and

Report to accompany Protocol Amending the Convention on Mutual Administrative Assistance in Tax Matters (Treaty Doc. 112–5) (Ex. Rept. 114–8). **Pages S734–37**

Nomination Confirmed: Senate confirmed the following nomination:

By a unanimous vote of 90 yeas (Vote No. EX. 19), Scot Alan Marciel, of California, to be Ambassador to the Union of Burma. **Pages S717–18**

Additional Cosponsors: **Pages S737–39**

Statements on Introduced Bills/Resolutions: **Pages S739–42**

Additional Statements: **Pages S731–32**

Amendments Submitted: **Pages S742–44**

Authorities for Committees to Meet: Page S744

Record Votes: One record vote was taken today. (Total—19) Page S718

Adjournment: Senate convened at 11 a.m. and adjourned at 6:06 p.m., until 10 a.m. on Wednesday, February 10, 2016. (For Senate's program, see the remarks of the Majority Leader in today's Record on page S758.)

Committee Meetings

(Committees not listed did not meet)

WORLDWIDE THREATS

Committee on Armed Services: Committee concluded a hearing to examine worldwide threats, after receiving testimony from James R. Clapper, Jr., Director of National Intelligence; and Lieutenant General Vincent R. Stewart, USMC, Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, Department of Defense.

DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION REQUEST AND FUTURE YEARS DEFENSE PROGRAM

Committee on Armed Services: Subcommittee on Strategic Forces concluded a hearing to examine Department of Defense nuclear acquisition programs and the nuclear doctrine in review of the defense authorization request for fiscal year 2017 and the Future Years Defense Program, after receiving testimony from Robert M. Scher, Assistant Secretary for Strategy, Plans and Capabilities, Arthur T. Hopkins, Acting Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Nuclear, Chemical and Biological Defense Programs, Vice Admiral Terry J. Benedict, USN, Director, Strategic Systems Programs, and General Robin Rand, USAF, Commander, Air Force Global Strike Command, all of the Department of Defense.

STATE MANAGEMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE OVERSIGHT

Committee on Environment and Public Works: Subcommittee on Fisheries, Water, and Wildlife concluded an oversight hearing to examine Federal interactions with state management of fish and wildlife, after receiving testimony from Ron Regan, Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, and Doug Vincent-Lang, Safari Club International, both of Washington, D.C.; and Donald James Barry, Defenders of Wildlife, Anchorage, Alaska.

THE WAY FORWARD IN SYRIA AND IRAQ

Committee on Foreign Relations: Committee received a closed briefing on the way forward in Syria and Iraq from Brett McGurk, Special Presidential Envoy for the Global Coalition to Counter ISIL, Department of State.

BUSINESS MEETING

Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions: Committee ordered favorably reported the following business items:

S. 2030, to allow the sponsor of an application for the approval of a targeted drug to rely upon data and information with respect to such sponsor's previously approved targeted drugs, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute;

S. 1622, to amend the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act with respect to devices, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute;

S. 2014, to demonstrate a commitment to our Nation's scientists by increasing opportunities for the development of our next generation of researchers, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute;

S. 800, to improve, coordinate, and enhance rehabilitation research at the National Institutes of Health, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute;

S. 849, to amend the Public Health Service Act to provide for systematic data collection and analysis and epidemiological research regarding Multiple Sclerosis (MS), Parkinson's disease, and other neurological diseases, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute;

S. 2503, to establish requirements for reusable medical devices relating to cleaning instructions and validation data, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute; and

S. 2511, to improve Federal requirements relating to the development and use of electronic health records technology, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute.

WORLDWIDE THREATS TO AMERICA

Select Committee on Intelligence: Committee concluded a hearing to examine worldwide threats to America and its allies, after receiving testimony from James R. Clapper, Jr., Director of National Intelligence; John Brennan, Director, Central Intelligence Agency; Lieutenant General Vincent R. Stewart, USMC, Director, Defense Intelligence Agency, and Admiral Michael Rogers, USN, Director, National Security Agency, both of the Department of Defense; and James Comey, Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation.

House of Representatives

Chamber Action

Public Bills and Resolutions Introduced: 16 public bills, H.R. 4498–4513; and 3 resolutions, H. Con. Res. 112–113; and H. Res. 610 were introduced. **Pages H649–50**

Additional Cosponsors: **Pages H651–52**

Reports Filed: Reports were filed today as follows:

H.R. 3036, to designate the National September 11 Memorial located at the World Trade Center site in New York City, New York, as a national memorial, and for other purposes, with an amendment (H. Rept. 114–416);

H.R. 890, to correct the boundaries of the John H. Chafee Coastal Barrier Resources System Unit P16, with an amendment (H. Rept. 114–417);

S. 1698, to exclude payments from State eugenics compensation programs from consideration in determining eligibility for, or the amount of, Federal public benefits (H. Rept. 114–418);

H.R. 4180, to improve Federal agency financial and administrative controls and procedures to assess and mitigate fraud risks, and to improve Federal agencies' development and use of data analytics for the purpose of identifying, preventing, and responding to fraud, including improper payments (H. Rept. 114–419); and

H. Res. 609, providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 3442) to provide further means of accountability of the United States debt and promote fiscal responsibility, and providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 3293) to provide for greater accountability in Federal funding for scientific research, to promote the progress of science in the United States that serves that national interest (H. Rept. 114–420). **Page H649**

Speaker: Read a letter from the Speaker wherein he appointed Representative Farenthold to act as Speaker pro tempore for today. **Page H597**

Recess: The House recessed at 12:01 p.m. and reconvened at 2 p.m. **Page H597**

Recess: The House recessed at 2:25 p.m. and reconvened at 3:03 p.m. **Page H600**

Suspensions: The House agreed to suspend the rules and pass the following measures:

Extending the deadline for the submittal of the final report required by the Commission on Care: H.R. 4437, to extend the deadline for the submittal of the final report required by the Commission on Care; **Pages H600–01**

Construction Reform Act: H.R. 3106, amended, to authorize Department major medical facility construction projects for fiscal year 2015, to amend title 38, United States Code, and to make certain improvements in the administration of Department medical facility construction projects; **Pages H601–03**

Agreed to amend the title so as to read: ''To amend title 38, United States Code, to make certain improvements in the administration of Department medical facility construction projects.''. **Page H603**

VA Provider Equity Act: H.R. 3016, amended, to amend title 38, United States Code, to clarify the role of podiatrists in the Department of Veterans Affairs; **Pages H603–14**

Agreed to amend the title so as to read: ''To amend title 38, United States Code, to make certain improvements in the laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs relating to health care, educational assistance, and vocational rehabilitation, to establish the Veterans Economic Opportunity and Transition Administration, and for other purposes.''. **Page H614**

Career-Ready Student Veterans Act: H.R. 2360, amended, to amend title 38, United States Code, to improve the approval of certain programs of education for purposes of educational assistance provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs; **Pages H614–16**

Authorizing the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to convey to the Florida Department of Veterans Affairs all right, title, and interest of the United States to the property known as "The Community Living Center" at the Lake Baldwin Veterans Affairs Outpatient Clinic, Orlando, Florida: H.R. 4056, amended, to authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to convey to the Florida Department of Veterans Affairs all right, title, and interest of the United States to the property known as ''The Community Living Center'' at the Lake Baldwin Veterans Affairs Outpatient Clinic, Orlando, Florida; **Pages H616–17**

Agreed to amend the title so as to read: ''To direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to convey to the Florida Department of Veterans Affairs all right, title, and interest of the United States to the property known as 'The Community Living Center' at the Lake Baldwin Veterans Affairs Outpatient Clinic, Orlando, Florida.''. **Page H617**

American Heroes COLA Act: H.R. 677, amended, to amend title 38, United States Code, to provide for annual cost-of-living adjustments to be made automatically by law each year in the rates of disability compensation for veterans with service-

connected disabilities and the rates of dependency and indemnity compensation for survivors of certain service-connected disabled veterans; **Pages H617–28**

Agreed to amend the title so as to read: ''To amend title 38, United States Code, to provide for annual cost-of-living adjustments to be made automatically by law each year in the rates of disability compensation for veterans with service-connected disabilities and the rates of dependency and indemnity compensation for survivors of certain service-connected disabled veterans, and for other purposes.''. **Page H628**

Failing VA Medical Center Recovery Act: H.R. 3234, amended, to amend title 38, United States Code, to establish within the Department of Veterans Affairs an Office of Failing Medical Center Recovery; **Pages H628–30**

Agreed to amend the title so as to read: ''To amend title 38, United States Code, to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to evaluate the ability of each medical center of the Department to provide quality health care to veterans, to ensure that the Secretary improves such medical centers that are underperforming, and for other purposes.''. **Page H630**

Female Veteran Suicide Prevention Act: H.R. 2915, amended, to amend title 38, United States Code, to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to identify mental health care and suicide prevention programs and metrics that are effective in treating women veterans as part of the evaluation of such programs by the Secretary; **Pages H630–33**

Agreed to amend the title so as to read: ''To amend title 38, United States Code, to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to identify mental health care and suicide prevention programs and metrics that are effective in treating women veterans as part of the evaluation of such programs by the Secretary, and for other purposes.''. **Page H633**

Providing for the conveyance of land of the Illiana Health Care System of the Department of Veterans Affairs in Danville, Illinois: H.R. 3262, to provide for the conveyance of land of the Illiana Health Care System of the Department of Veterans Affairs in Danville, Illinois; **Pages H633–34**

National 9/11 Memorial at the World Trade Center Act: H.R. 3036, amended, to designate the National September 11 Memorial located at the World Trade Center site in New York City, New York, as a national memorial, by a ⅔ yea-and-nay vote of 387 yeas to 12 nays, Roll No. 64; **Pages H634–37, H640**

Correcting the boundaries of the John H. Chafee Coastal Barrier Resources System Unit P16: H.R. 890, amended, to correct the boundaries of the John H. Chafee Coastal Barrier Resources System Unit P16; and **Pages H637–38**

Agreed to amend the title so as to read: ''To revise the boundaries of certain John H. Chafee Coastal Barrier Resources System units in Florida.''. **Page H638**

Amending title 10, United States Code, to require the prompt notification of State Child Protective Services by military and civilian personnel of the Department of Defense required by law to report suspected instances of child abuse and neglect: H.R. 3894, to amend title 10, United States Code, to require the prompt notification of State Child Protective Services by military and civilian personnel of the Department of Defense required by law to report suspected instances of child abuse and neglect. **Pages H638–40**

Recess: The House recessed at 5:38 p.m. and reconvened at 6:30 p.m. **Page H640**

Presidential Message: Read a message from the President wherein he transmitted to Congress his Budget of the United States Government for Fiscal Year 2017—referred to the Committee on Appropriations and ordered to be printed (H. Doc. 114–86). **Pages H598–H600**

Senate Messages: Messages received from the Senate by the Clerk and subsequently presented to the House today appear on page H598.

Quorum Calls Votes: One yea-and-nay vote developed during the proceedings of today and appears on page H640. There were no quorum calls.

Adjournment: The House met at 12 noon and adjourned at 8:18 p.m.

Committee Meetings

DEBT MANAGEMENT AND FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY ACT OF 2015; SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH IN THE NATIONAL INTEREST ACT

Committee on Rules: Full Committee held a hearing on H.R. 3442, the ''Debt Management and Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2015''; and H.R. 3293, the ''Scientific Research in the National Interest Act''. The committee granted, by voice vote, a structured rule for H.R. 3442. The rule provides one hour of general debate equally divided and controlled by the chair and ranking minority member of the Committee on Ways and Means. The rule waives all points of order against consideration of the bill. The rule provides that the bill shall be considered as read. The rule waives all points of order against provisions in the bill. The rule makes in order only those amendments printed in part A of the Rules

Committee report. Each such amendment may be offered only in the order printed in the report, may be offered only by a Member designated in the report, shall be considered as read, shall be debatable for the time specified in the report equally divided and controlled by the proponent and an opponent, shall not be subject to amendment, and shall not be subject to a demand for division of the question. The rule waives all points of order against the amendments printed in part A of the report. The rule provides one motion to recommit with or without instructions. Additionally, the rule grants a structured rule for H.R. 3293. The rule provides one hour of general debate equally divided and controlled by the chair and ranking minority member of the Committee on Science, Space, and Technology. The rule waives all points of order against consideration of the bill. The rule provides that the bill shall be considered as read. The rule waives all points of order against provisions in the bill. The rule makes in order only those amendments printed in part B of the Rules Committee report. Each such amendment may be offered only in the order printed in the report, may be offered only by a Member designated in the report, shall be considered as read, shall be debatable for the time specified in the report equally divided and controlled by the proponent and an opponent, shall not be subject to amendment, and shall not be subject to a demand for division of the question. The rule waives all points of order against the amendments printed in part B of the report. The rule provides one motion to recommit with or without instructions. Testimony was heard from Chairman Smith of Texas, and Representatives Marchant, Pascrell, Huelskamp, Maxine Waters of California, Eddie Bernice Johnson of Texas, and Jackson Lee.

Joint Meetings

No joint committee meetings were held.

COMMITTEE MEETINGS FOR WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 2016

(Committee meetings are open unless otherwise indicated)

Senate

Committee on Appropriations: Subcommittee on Department of Defense, to hold hearings to examine proposed budget estimates for fiscal year 2017 for the Air Force, 10:30 a.m., SD–192.

Committee on Environment and Public Works: to hold an oversight hearing to examine the importance of enacting a new Water Resources Development Act, 10 a.m., SD–406.

Committee on Finance: to hold hearings to examine the President's proposed budget request for fiscal year 2017, 10:30 a.m., SD–215.

Full Committee, to hold hearings to examine the President's proposed budget request for fiscal year 2017, 2 p.m., SD–215.

Committee on Foreign Relations: business meeting to consider S. Res. 99, calling on the Government of Iran to fulfill its promises of assistance in the case of Robert Levinson, the longest held United States civilian in our Nation's history, S. Res. 361, urging robust funding for humanitarian relief for Syria, and S. Res. 330, congratulating the Tunisian National Dialogue Quartet for winning the 2015 Nobel Peace Prize; to be immediately followed by a hearing to examine United States policy in Central Africa, focusing on the imperative of good governance, 10 a.m., SD–419.

Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs: business meeting to consider S. 2517, to require a report on United States strategy to combat terrorist use of social media, H.R. 1656, to provide for additional resources for the Secret Service, and to improve protections for restricted areas, S. 2509, to improve the Government-wide management of Federal property, S. 2522, to amend the Homeland Security Act of 2002 to build partnerships to prevent violence by extremists, S. 1526, to amend title 10 and title 41, United States Code, to improve the manner in which Federal contracts for construction and design services are awarded, to prohibit the use of reverse auctions for design and construction services procurements, to amend title 31 and 41, United States Code, to improve the payment protections available to construction contractors, subcontractors, and suppliers for work performed, S. 236, to amend the Pay-As-You-Go Act of 2010 to create an expedited procedure to enact recommendations of the Government Accountability Office for consolidation and elimination to reduce duplication, S. 1411, to amend the Act of August 25, 1958, commonly known as the "Former Presidents Act of 1958", with respect to the monetary allowance payable to a former President, S. 795, to enhance whistleblower protection for contractor and grantee employees, S. 2450, to amend title 5, United States Code, to address administrative leave for Federal employees, S. 2418, to authorize the Secretary of Homeland Security to establish university labs for student-developed technology-based solutions for countering online recruitment of violent extremists, S. 2340, to require the Director of the Office of Management and Budget to issue a directive on the management of software licenses, H.R. 3361, to amend the Homeland Security Act of 2002 to establish the Insider Threat Program, S. Res. 104, to express the sense of the Senate regarding the success of Operation Streamline and the importance of prosecuting first time illegal border crossers, an original resolution directing the Senate Legal Counsel to bring civil action to enforce a subpoena of the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, and the nomination of Beth F. Cobert, of California, to be Director of the Office of Personnel Management, 10 a.m., SD–342.

Committee on the Judiciary: to hold hearings to examine mental health and the justice system, 10 a.m., SD–226.

Special Committee on Aging: to hold hearings to examine a new scam by global drug traffickers perpetrated against our nation's seniors, 2:30 p.m., SD–562.

House

Committee on Agriculture, Full Committee, hearing to review the 2016 Agenda for the Commodity Futures Trading Commission, 10 a.m., 1300 Longworth.

Committee on Appropriations, Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development, budget hearing on the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, 10:30 a.m., 2362–B Rayburn.

Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies, budget hearing on the Commodity Futures Trading Commission, 2:30 p.m., 2362–A Rayburn.

Committee on Armed Services, Full Committee, hearing entitled ''Understanding and Deterring Russia: U.S. Policies and Strategies'', 10 a.m., 2118 Rayburn.

Subcommittee on Tactical Air and Land Forces, hearing entitled ''Recommendations from the National Commission on the Future of the Army'', 2 p.m., 2118 Rayburn.

Subcommittee on Emerging Threats and Capabilities, hearing entitled ''Department of Defense (DoD) Countering Weapons of Mass Destruction (CWMD) Policy and Programs for Fiscal Year 2017'', 3:30 p.m., 2212 Rayburn.

Committee on Education and the Workforce, Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education, hearing entitled ''Next Steps for K–12 Education: Implementing the Promise to Restore State and Local Control'', 10 a.m., 2175 Rayburn.

Committee on Energy and Commerce, Subcommittee on Health, hearing entitled ''Examining Medicaid and CHIP's Federal Medical Assistance'', 10 a.m., 2123 Rayburn.

Subcommittee on Commerce, Manufacturing, and Trade, hearing entitled ''Industry Perspectives on the Consumer Product Safety Commission'', 10:15 a.m., 2322 Rayburn.

Subcommittee on Communications and Technology, markup on H.R. 2666, the ''No Rate Regulation of Broadband Internet Access Act''; H.R. 1301, the ''Amateur Radio Parity Act of 2015''; and the ''Small Business Broadband Deployment Act'', 3 p.m., 2123 Rayburn.

Subcommittee on Energy and Power, markup on H.R. 3021, the ''AIR Survey Act of 2015''; H.R. 3797, the ''Satisfying Energy Needs and Saving the Environment (SENSE) Act''; the ''Blocking Regulatory Interference from Closing Kilns (BRICK) Act''; H.R. 4444, the ''EPS Improvement Act''; H.R. 2984, the ''Fair RATES Act''; H.R. 4427, to amend section 203 of the Federal Power Act; H.R. 4238, to amend the Department of Energy Organization Act and the Local Public Works Capital Development and Investment Act of 1976 to modernize terms relating to minorities; H.R. 2080, to reinstate and extend the deadline for commencement of construction of a hydroelectric project involving Clark Canyon Dam; H.R. 2081, to extend the deadline for commencement of construction of a hydroelectric project involving the Gibson Dam; H.R. 3447, to extend the deadline for commencement of construction of a hydroelectric project; H.R. 4416, to extend the deadline for commencement of construction of a hydroelectric project; and H.R. 4434, to extend the deadline for commencement of construction of a hydroelectric project, 5 p.m., 2123 Rayburn.

Committee on Financial Services, Full Committee, hearing entitled ''Monetary Policy and the State of the Economy'', 10 a.m., 2128 Rayburn.

Committee on Foreign Affairs, Full Committee, hearing entitled ''From Iraq and Syria to Libya and Beyond: The Evolving ISIL Threat'', 10 a.m., 2172 Rayburn.

Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations; and Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere, joint hearing entitled ''The Global Zika Epidemic'', 1:15 p.m., 2172 Rayburn.

Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade, hearing entitled ''After San Bernardino: The Future of ISIS–Inspired Attacks'', 2 p.m., 2200 Rayburn.

Committee on Homeland Security, Full Committee, hearing entitled ''National Security and Law Enforcement: Breaking the New Visa Waiver Law to Appease Iran'', 11 a.m., 311 Cannon.

Committee on Natural Resources, Subcommittee on Water, Power and Oceans, hearing entitled ''The Costly Impacts of Predation and Conflicting Federal Statutes on Native and Endangered Fish Species'', 10 a.m., 1334 Longworth.

Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Subcommittee on National Security; and Subcommittee on Government Operations, joint hearing entitled ''The President's Waiver of Restrictions on the Visa Waiver Program'', 3 p.m., 2154 Rayburn.

Committee on Rules, Full Committee, hearing on H.R. 2017, the ''Common Sense Nutrition Disclosure Act of 2015'', 3 p.m., H–313 Capitol.

Committee on Science, Space, and Technology, Full Committee, hearing entitled ''Midnight Regulations: Examining Executive Branch Overreach'', 10 a.m., 2318 Rayburn.

Committee on Small Business, Subcommittee on Agriculture, Energy and Trade, hearing entitled ''Export Control Reform: Challenges for Small Business? (Part I)'', 10 a.m., 2360 Rayburn.

Subcommittee on Investigations, Oversight and Regulations, hearing entitled ''Oversight of the Office of Advocacy and the Office of the National Ombudsman at the SBA'', 1 p.m., 2360 Rayburn.

Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, Full Committee, hearing entitled ''Review of ATC Reform Proposals'', 10 a.m., 2167 Rayburn.

Committee on Veterans' Affairs, Full Committee, hearing entitled ''U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Budget Request for Fiscal Year 2017'', 10 a.m., 334 Cannon.

Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity, hearing entitled ''A Review of VA's Loan Guaranty and Specially Adaptive Housing Grant Programs (SAH)'', 2 p.m., 334 Cannon.

Committee on Ways and Means, Full Committee, hearing on the Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) Fiscal Year 2017 Budget Request, 2 p.m., 1100 Longworth.

Next Meeting of the SENATE

10 a.m., Wednesday, February 10

Senate Chamber

Program for Wednesday: After the transaction of any morning business (not to extend beyond 10:30 a.m.), Senate will begin consideration of H.R. 757, North Korea Sanctions Enforcement Act, and after a period of debate, Senate will vote on passage of the bill.

Next Meeting of the HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

10 a.m., Wednesday, February 10

House Chamber

Program for Wednesday: Consideration of H.R. 3293—Scientific Research in the National Interest Act (Subject to a Rule). Consideration of H.R. 3442—Debt Management and Fiscal Responsibility Act (Subject to a Rule). Consideration of the following measure under suspension of the rules: H.R. 4470—Safe Drinking Water Act Improved Compliance Awareness Act.

Extensions of Remarks, as inserted in this issue

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