

this Court, the Senator from Iowa is undermining years of his own hard work in pushing for more open government. All that he has done talking about transparency is gone.

Senator GRASSLEY should take his own medicine and stop retreating behind closed doors with private conversations that shut the American people out of the important confirmation process. If the senior Senator from Iowa truly believes in transparency, he should simply do his job and give Merrick Garland a hearing and a vote.

Mr. President, there appears to be no one seeking the floor. Will the Presiding Officer 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 for 1 hour, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. COTTON). The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

#### REMEMBERING THOMAS EATON STAGG, JR.

Mr. CASSIDY. Mr. President, I rise in support of designating the Shreveport Federal Building as the "Tom Stagg Federal Building and United States Courthouse." The Honorable Thomas or "Tom" Eaton Stagg, Jr., of Shreveport passed away last June. He was an inspirational figure.

He graduated from Byrd High School in Shreveport and joined the U.S. Army preparing for World War II. He rose to the rank of captain, earning the Combat Infantryman Badge, a Bronze Star for valor, another Bronze Star for meritorious service, the Purple Heart with oak leaf cluster.

At one point, he was saved from death when a German bullet was stopped by a Bible he carried in his pocket. It was as if he was fated to live. After World War II, Tom attended Cambridge and then LSU Law Center and then served in private practice.

Tom's reputation was described as a combination of "intelligence, spirit, patriotism, wisdom and wit" and resulted in his nomination to serve on the Federal bench for the Western District of Louisiana in 1974. He was named chief judge in 1984, a position he

held until 1991. Many testimonials, one of which a close colleague said of Judge Stagg:

Without a doubt he was the finest trial judge I have ever met. Without ever knowing it, he had served as my silent mentor, a role model. . . . To have served the job with Judge Tom Stagg on the federal bench for 12 years is a singular honor. A giant has fallen . . . this remarkable man left a legacy of love of family, of duty and honor and love of this nation, its judicial system and the rule of law.

The colleague continues:

Tom Stagg loved being a federal judge. We will all miss him.

Judge Stagg assumed senior status on the court in 1992, but he didn't retire. He maintained a full caseload, serving on Federal circuit courts of appeals panels. Judge Stagg loved being a judge, but his love for the job also came second after his love for his family. Judge Stagg married the former Mary Margaret O'Brien in 1946 and is survived by her and their two grandchildren, Julie and Margaret Mary.

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.

#### CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

#### AMERICA'S SMALL BUSINESS TAX RELIEF ACT OF 2015

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 636, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 636) to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to permanently extend increased expensing limitations, and for other purposes.

Pending:

McConnell (for Thune/Nelson) amendment No. 3679, in the nature of a substitute.

Thune amendment No. 3680 (to amendment No. 3679), of a perfecting nature.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Dakota.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I wish to speak briefly to the legislation before us, the FAA reauthorization.

The Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, which I chair, was instrumental in bringing this bill to the floor. Our committee has a long and proud history of bipartisan cooperation on important matters under its jurisdiction. This extends to the bill before us today, the Federal Aviation Administration Reauthorization Act of 2016, which I, along

with my colleagues, introduced and marked up in front of our committee.

The legislation before us today includes the most passenger-friendly provisions, the most significant aviation safety reforms, and the most comprehensive aviation security enhancements of any FAA reauthorization in recent history. This bill helps passengers and Americans who use the national airspace for many different transportation needs.

For example, since the last reauthorization of the Federal Aviation Administration in 2012, the use of drones has increased dramatically. According to its most recent aerospace forecast, the FAA estimates that annual sales of both commercial and hobby unmanned aircraft could be 2.5 million in 2016—a number they estimate may increase to 7 million units annually by 2020. But the FAA has an outdated legislative framework being used to shape the use of this rapidly growing technology for both hobbyists and commercial operators. This is slowing down innovation and advancements in safety. Our bill gives the FAA new authority to enforce safe drone usage. This includes efforts to make sure drone users know and follow basic rules of the sky to avoid dangerous situations.

To support job growth in the aerospace industry, our legislation reforms the process the FAA uses for approving new aircraft designs. Our goal is to shorten the time it takes for U.S. aerospace innovations to go from design boards to international markets while maintaining safety standards.

For the general aviation community, we are also streamlining redtape and adding safety enhancements for small aircraft by including provisions from the Pilot's Bill of Rights 2.

Finally, we increase authorized funding for the Airport Improvement Program, which pays for infrastructure like runways, by \$400 million with existing surplus funds. This allows us to help meet pressing construction needs without raising taxes or fees on the traveling public.

We developed this bill through a robust and open process that allowed every member of the Commerce Committee to help guide the content of this critical aviation legislation. Last year the Commerce Committee held six hearings on topics that helped inform our legislation. At the committee markup last month, we accepted 57 amendments, 34 of which were sponsored by Democrats and 23 of which were sponsored by Republicans.

Since debate began on the bill last week, we have successfully included an additional 19 amendments here on the floor of the Senate. Ten of these amendments are sponsored by Democrats and nine by Republicans.

This bill deserves the Senate's support. I urge Members to remember all of the important improvements this legislation puts in place for aviation security, consumer protection efforts, American innovation, safety, and job