

been the law of the land since 1996. It was in place when the JCPOA was adopted, and it remains in effect today.

With our vote today, Congress will make clear that the United States will not hesitate to maintain sanctions on Iran and those that seek to provide the world's largest State sponsor of terrorism with weapons of mass destruction. We stand ready to impose rapid and strict punishments for any violation of the JCPOA. This sanctions regime is how we hold Iran accountable, strengthen our security, and deter Iranian hostility towards our allies, especially the State of Israel, which Iran has singled out as a target for destruction.

Diplomacy is always our preferred course of action, but it does not work in a vacuum. It only works if it is backed up with credible deterrence.

Today we show that the United States will continue our leadership against Iranian aggression—work that must continue in the years ahead.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

Mr. BROWN. Madam President, continued implementation of the Iran nuclear agreement, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, JCPOA, is our best shot at stopping Iran from developing a nuclear weapon. And so far at least, that agreement has been working.

The Iranians are fulfilling their JCPOA commitments. And so we must also maintain our commitment both to the letter and to the spirit of this historic agreement. Assuming Iran continues to comply, the agreement can and should last for many years. I know many have noted President-Elect Trump's negative comments about renegotiating its terms or even scrapping it outright. I suspect—at least I hope—that once he learns more about the actual national security consequences of scrapping the agreement—of which we were all reminded yesterday by CIA Director John Brennan—he may reconsider.

We know Iran is a state sponsor of terrorism, that it destabilizes the region and violates the human rights of its people. That is why Western policymakers agreed to separate out and try to secure agreement on this one discrete issue. They knew an Iran with a nuclear weapon would be especially dangerous—to us, to Israel, and to the region.

In fact, it is important to keep in mind that this whole process began in the Bush administration, with a Republican President who was—in the wake of the Iraq War—willing to engage Iran diplomatically. The Bush administration laid the foundation for what eventually became the Iran Nuclear Agreement—sanctions relief in return for strict limits on Iran's nuclear program.

In June 2008, President Bush's National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice signed a memorandum with the P5+1, which said that, in return for Iran doing key things to limit its nu-

clear program, the U.S. was ready to recognize Iran's right to nuclear energy for peaceful purposes; treat Iran's nuclear program like any nonnuclear weapons state party to the nonproliferation treaty, if international confidence in the peaceful nature of its program could be restored; provide technical and financial aid for peaceful nuclear energy; and work with Iran on confidence-building measures, begin to normalize trade and economic relations, and allow for civil aviation cooperation.

All of this should sound familiar because it was effectively the early outline of the Iran Nuclear Agreement.

As you know, the scope of the sanctions relief provided to Iran under the JCPOA is explicitly limited to nuclear-related sanctions. The United States continues to enforce vigorously a variety of nonnuclear sanctions against Iran, including for ballistic missile violations, human rights abuses, and acts of state-supported terrorism. Our primary trade embargo against Iran remains largely intact. Thus, our ability to maintain sanctions pressure on Iran has been preserved, even as we secured an agreement to prevent a state sponsor of terrorism from acquiring a nuclear weapon.

Today we are debating a simple 10-year extension of the Iran Sanctions Act. Strictly speaking, extension of the act is not legally necessary to continue to enforce our existing sanctions against Iran. As administration officials have testified before the Banking Committee and elsewhere, the International Emergency Economic Powers Act and other authorities provide all of the tools that we would need in order to keep the pressure on Iran—or even to ratchet up the pressure incrementally, if warranted.

But I believe that extending it today is important for two reasons. First, it is a signal of our resolve to keep the heat on Iran and its leaders and to ensure that, if they stray from the agreement through any significant violations, together with our partners in Europe, we would respond forcefully—including if necessary by immediately snapback sanctions on Iran. And second, today's action will make even clearer that we will continue to enforce the nonnuclear sanctions on Iran related to terrorism and ballistic missiles and human rights violations.

As we consider extension of the Iran Sanctions Act today, I hope that we will keep in mind what is truly necessary in order to maintain our current sanctions architecture. The JCPOA was a groundbreaking agreement designed to prevent Iran from obtaining a weapon of mass destruction—but it is also a relatively new and somewhat fragile agreement. We should be very careful, going forward, not to violate the terms of the JCPOA by simply imposing under another guise the old sanctions that were waived or suspended under the nuclear agreement. If that were to happen, our success in

preventing Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon could be unwound in a matter of weeks—or even days. And then we would be isolated internationally, instead of Iran being isolated as the outlier by the international community, as it was under the JCPOA.

Our debate today sends an important signal to Iran: We resolve to continue our fight against terrorism worldwide, to counter Iran's moves to further destabilize the Middle East region, and to impose consequences for the grave human rights abuses that, sadly, continue in Iran to this day. Of course, in addition to renewing these sanctions and maintaining tough JCPOA oversight, Congress must also continue to support robust military and other aid to regional partners like Israel. We should focus both on ensuring strict implementation of the agreement and on the most effective ways to pressure Iran's leaders to change their destabilizing behaviors in the region.

There is no question of our willingness to maintain our current Iran sanctions architecture. We can and we will continue to vigorously enforce nonnuclear sanctions against Iran. And I believe we presently have all of the tools we need to do so. I urge my colleagues to support this measure.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. ERNST). The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

21ST CENTURY CURES BILL

Mr. ALEXANDER. Madam President, I come today to the Senate floor to offer congratulations to the U.S. House of Representatives because last night, in an overwhelming vote, they passed what Senate Majority Leader MITCH MCCONNELL has described as the single most important piece of legislation the Congress is likely to enact this year.

I am referring to the 21st Century Cures Act, combined with the mental health bill, which is the most significant set of reforms of major mental health programs in 10 years. The Cures package is the result of bipartisan work over the last 2 years. Its purpose is to move cures and treatments through the expensive development process and the extensive regulatory process and into the medicine cabinets and doctors' offices of America more rapidly and safely at the same time. That also helps to lower costs, and we hear a great deal of talk about the affordability of prescription medicines. If it takes more than 10 or 15 years and more than \$1 billion to develop a drug, such as a treatment for Alzheimer's, that all adds to the final cost. We would like to lower that cost and speed that time up as long as we continue to do it safely.

I wish to especially compliment the chairman of the House committee that worked on this, Chairman FRED UPTON, as well as Congressman PALLONE and Congresswoman DEGETTE, Democratic Members of the House of Representatives. They have worked with Senator MURRAY, the ranking Democrat on the Senate's HELP Committee, and with me for the last 2 years on a very complex but very important bill.

Part of the bill has to do with money, and one part of that is \$1 billion of funding for State grants for opioids. Now, I suspect one reason there was such a large vote in the House of Representatives yesterday—only 26 Members voted no and 392 voted yes—was because of this \$1 billion for opioids. At least in Tennessee—and I am sure it is true in most States of the country—there is no more urgent epidemic than opioid misuse. It is filling up the courts. It is filling up the jails. It is filling up the hospitals. It is causing tragedies in families all across America.

The Senate passed important legislation earlier this year on programs authorizing new money, but this is the money for State grants to Iowa, to Tennessee, to California, and to every State to help deal with the opioid epidemic abuse. So I suspect that one reason so many Members of the House voted yes yesterday and so few voted no would be that it would be pretty hard to explain a “no” vote against \$1 billion of State grants for opioid abuse.

There is also \$4.8 billion of funding for the National Institutes of Health, which Francis Collins, the distinguished Director, calls the “national institutes of hope,” and there is \$1.8 billion for the Cancer Moonshot led by Vice President BIDEN. There is \$1.4 for the Precision Medicine Initiative, or personalized medicine initiative, a special project of President Obama, and \$1.6 billion is for the BRAIN Initiative. There are remarkable advances being made in the ability to identify Alzheimer's before symptoms are evident and then to slow its progression. It is hard to imagine how much grief that would end and the billions it would save if we could do that. So those are other reasons why there are only 26 Members of the House of Representatives who voted no yesterday and 392 who voted yes.

The Mayo Clinic has sent a letter to me:

On behalf of the Mayo Clinic, I write in enthusiastic support of the 21st Century Cures Act and salute your strong, bipartisan leadership on this essential legislation.

We are pleased to see the inclusion of dedicated streaming funds for the Food and Drug Administration and National Institutes of Health. . . .

I ask unanimous consent that this letter be printed in the RECORD following my remarks.

So next Monday the Senate will have a chance to see whether we can do as well as the House of Representatives. I ask my colleagues to think long and

hard about a big vote. We need a big vote. Let me give my colleagues one reason especially why. This \$6.3 billion that is in the 21st Century Cures bill is designated for opioids, for precision medicine, for cancer, for brain, and for FDA, and it has to be approved every year by a vote. That is the way our appropriations process works. I would say to my Democratic friends as well as to my Republican friends that if you are concerned about whether the \$6.3 billion will be available next year and the next year, the best way to ensure that it is will be to cast a big vote on Monday for it this year, because it will be very hard to explain, if you vote for \$6.3 billion this year spread over the next few years, why you did not vote to support it next year and the following year.

The big vote in the House should give assurance to Democrats as well as Republicans in the Senate that these are real dollars, that they are provided in a fundamentally responsible way. To Republicans who look at the \$6.3 billion and say: I like the idea of funding opioids; I like the idea of improving funding for the National Institutes of Health, let me say that this is done in a responsible way.

Speaker RYAN, who everybody knows is a conservative budget hawk, created the mechanism for this funding. It was approved by TOM PRICE, the House Budget Committee chairman. It goes like this: \$6.3 billion over the next several years for these dedicated purposes. It can only be spent for those purposes. It has to be approved every year. It does not increase the overall spending of the budget by one penny because it is offset by reductions in mandatory spending on the other side. So \$6.3 billion up here and \$6.3 billion down there over the next 10 years.

So this is a compromise, but it is a magnificent compromise. It is, as Senator MCCONNELL has said, the most important piece of legislation we will deal with this year. The House passed it with a huge bipartisan vote: 392 to 26. I hope that we in the Senate do just as well next Monday because the real winners will be the American people as they look forward to treatments for Alzheimer's, for cancer, a vaccine for Zika, a non-addictive pain medicine that will help deal with the opioid misuse epidemic, and regenerative medicine, which may help restore hearts and perhaps even eyesight in miraculous ways.

This is truly an exciting time, and this is truly an effective piece of legislation that deserves our support by coming to the floor on Monday and then by passing it on Tuesday or Wednesday.

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

MAYO CLINIC,

Rochester, MN, November 30, 2016.

Sen. LAMAR ALEXANDER,
Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR ALEXANDER: On behalf of Mayo Clinic, I write in enthusiastic support

of the 21st Century Cures Act and salute your strong, bipartisan leadership on this essential legislation.

Efforts to advance biomedical innovation and accelerate the development and delivery of cures are of great importance to Mayo Clinic and our patients. We are pleased to see the inclusion of dedicated funding streams for the Food and Drug Administration and National Institutes of Health—including funds for research efforts such as the President's Precision Medicine initiative, the Vice President's Cancer Moonshot, and the BRAIN initiative to speed diagnosis and treatment of conditions such as Alzheimer's disease.

In addition, provisions to promote administrative streamlining, telehealth efforts and mental health reform are also of critical importance in allowing Mayo Clinic physicians and researchers to provide the best possible care to patients.

Mayo Clinic is grateful for your leadership, wholeheartedly supports this comprehensive legislation and looks forward to this innovative effort being signed into law, and we pledge to be a committed partner in its implementation. Thank you.

With best regards,

JOHN H. NOSEWORTHY, M.D.,

President & CEO.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Madam President, I thank the Presiding Officer, and 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. COATS. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

WASTEFUL SPENDING

Mr. COATS. Madam President, today marks the 54th version of “Waste of the Week”—54 times I have been down here in the Senate to highlight documented examples of waste, fraud, and abuse. When I first started this endeavor, I told my staff: I hope we can reach \$100 billion or so—some target. Do you think there is that much waste, fraud, and abuse floating around through the Federal Government?

Well, we hit that \$100 billion a long time ago—I think about the 20th week—and we now have moved to a pretty staggering number, which is more than one-third of a trillion dollars of waste that has been documented by independent agencies of the government that are supporting us with information as to why this money should not have been spent or how it was wasted or lost through fraud or abuse.

I have had a number of serious issues here that run into the billions of dollars that could easily be fixed. Some of them we started by pointing this out with legislation to try to fix these things, but it just keeps piling on here. So every once in a while, I throw in something so ridiculous, people will understand the fact that there may have been some benefit to that program—we don't understand what the benefit was—but surely these ridiculous examples of money spent, hard-