

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 S. 2943, National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2017.

Mitch McConnell, Deb Fischer, Thom Tillis, Daniel Coats, James M. Inhofe, John Hoeven, Cory Gardner, Orrin G. Hatch, Mark Kirk, Tom Cotton, John Cornyn, Lindsey Graham, Mike Rounds, Lisa Murkowski, Dan Sullivan, John McCain.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum call be waived with respect to this cloture motion.

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

COMMENDING THE SENIOR SENATOR FROM TENNESSEE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, before I give my remarks, as I planned, I wish to say a brief word about Senator ALEXANDER, the senior Senator from Tennessee.

During my time in Congress, he has always been one of the most pleasant people I have dealt with. He is always very thorough in whatever he wants to talk to you about, and I have found him to be a remarkably good Senator. He has a background that is stunningly important—a longtime Governor of the State of Tennessee and someone who has served in one of the Republican administrations as Secretary of Education.

This Cures bill is not everything I would wish it to be. I think it is too weak in some parts. I think we could have done better. But I have been around for a long time, and I understand what legislation is all about.

We have gotten money. We have been trying for a couple years to get money for opioids. There should be far more, and it should be given in a different way than we have it here, but it is money. We have people—as we are sitting here for a few minutes today—dying as a result of this scourge that is sweeping America. It is in Oklahoma, it is in Tennessee, and it is in places such as New Hampshire. It is all over. So that part of it is excellent.

As to the resources we give the National Institutes of Health, or NIH, there is not enough we can do. I would hope there would be much more. I am pleased to report that this is the beginning of the Moonshot that Senator BIDEN will lead in research to defeat cancer. It can be done. We have made tremendous progress, and we are making it on a monthly basis now.

There are a lot of good things in this legislation. One of the things that the

senior Senator from Tennessee and I have spoken about is clinical trials. Sometimes you don't understand the importance of those until they could personally affect you.

With the injury that I suffered almost 2 years ago, I am hopeful that in my lifetime there will be something done to be able to take care of retinas that are damaged. We have a lot of those that are damaged—a lot of retinas that are damaged as a result of diabetes and other maladies—but not a lot has been done on injuries to retinas. But there is work being done on that now.

I had a very good meeting on Saturday with one of the foremost people in the world dealing with retinas, Dr. Bressler of Johns Hopkins, and they are doing some stuff. They are doing stem cell work. They are doing some transplants. They are doing some good things.

On a very personal basis, Senator ALEXANDER came and talked to me one evening. He asked if I had time. Of course, I always have time for any Senator who wants to see me.

He came with tears in his eyes to talk to me about some things he had learned about people who had damaged their eyes and how some work is being done with these people who once could not see and, as in the Biblical passages, can now see.

It was a very wonderful meeting, and I had the opportunity to meet one individual he introduced me to—a man named Doug Oliver, who was basically blind. Because of work done with stem cells, he can now see. He is off disability, he can drive a car, and he can read. He could not do that before.

I appreciate it. It perhaps could have passed without him, but I doubt it, and I admire his legislative skills. I hope, with the new Congress coming, he will pull even those skills he doesn't have now out of his back pocket so perhaps we can do even more. There is going to be a lot more that needs to be done in the new Republican Congress.

So I express my public admiration to the senior Senator from Tennessee for the good work he has done for his State and for the country for many decades.

CELEBRATION AT STANDING ROCK

Mr. REID. Mr. President, in the bitter cold of a North Dakota December yesterday—and it can be cold up there—there was a celebration at Standing Rock. Why?

Along the banks of the Missouri River, in this heavy snow, there were hugs and tears of joy and drumming and dancing as the people of the Standing Rock Tribe and others heard the good news. The Army Corps of Engineers did not—did not—approve the easement for the Dakota Access oil pipeline. Instead, the Corps of Engineers determined that the pipeline must be rerouted. I am so glad. It is so important.

This is a victory for the Standing Rock Sioux. We know the long history

Native Americans have in the State of the Presiding Officer. We know that around the country—I have 26 Indian entities in Nevada—they have been treated so poorly. Nevada is no different from any other State. They were pushed off of the lands they dwelt on before we showed up, we White folks here in America. They have been pushed around. So when the Standing Rock people heard the good news that the Corps of Engineers had finally given them at least some small victory, it was very exciting for them. It is a victory for them. They have been objecting to this construction for more than 2 years.

The tribe was concerned about a number of issues, not the least of which were their ancestral grounds, some of which land has their ancestors buried there. They were afraid of water contamination and other problems.

In a statement to the press, the chairman of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe said:

We wholeheartedly support the decision of the administration and commend with the utmost gratitude the courage it took on the part of President Obama, the Army Corps, the Department of Justice and the Department of Interior to take steps to correct the course of history and do the right thing.

The Standing Rock Sioux Tribe and all of Indian country will be forever grateful to the Obama administration for this historic decision.

Indians have taken one loss after another. Rare are there any victories for the Indians.

I agree with the chairman of the tribe. This is a historic decision, and it was a momentous step toward correcting the course of a disgraceful history.

As I said last week here on the floor, the treatment of the Standing Rock Sioux by our government has been shameful—not only recently but for more than a century. The Sioux were pushed to reservations first. I say “reservations”—plural. But even that land was taken—most of it—and then massive dams were built that put the tribe's best farmland underwater. The result of these actions was a crippling poverty that plagued the tribe for generations—even this generation.

This mistreatment was not unique, as I have indicated, to Standing Rock. Indeed, there are tribes all across the Nation with very similar histories. We have them in Nevada.

Yesterday's decision will not make up for the past, but the President's action was a huge step toward correcting a terrible wrong. Money, profits, and not human dignity, was the direction of the pipeline. The Obama administration changed that.

For far too long, the pleas for justice for Native Americans have gone unanswered. At least now, on this occasion, the Standing Rock Sioux and Native Americans throughout this country know that someone is listening and their concerns are being addressed by the U.S. Government.

I admire the support of those who locked arms with the Standing Rock