

don't ask, don't tell. He signed Executive orders protecting LGBT workers. Americans are now free to marry the person they love, regardless of their gender.

As Commander in Chief, President Obama brought bin Laden to justice.

These are just a few aspects of President Obama's storied legacy, and it is still growing—what a record. It is a legacy of which he should be satisfied. America is better because of this good man being 8 years in the White House.

I am even more impressed by who he is as a person than who he is as President. He is a man of integrity and honesty. I have learned so much from him. I have never heard Barack Obama denigrate anyone, ever. There have been times he could have. Perhaps, I thought a negative word should have been said and I suggested that to him, but he would never take it. No, he wouldn't do that. That is Barack Obama.

Above all, I admire the attention he has given his family. He may be President of the United States, but nothing gets in the way of his family. He is a terrific husband to Michelle and an outstanding father to Sasha and Malia. He arrives home for dinner with his family virtually every night he is in Washington. He goes to their plays and games. President or not, he is a husband and a father.

His devotion extends to his staff as well, and he has had a terrific staff working for him. I can't mention all of them, but I will mention his present Chief of Staff, Denis McDonough. He and I have a very close relationship. Close relationships come with a lot of difficulty sometimes. It has been tough, but we tried to work through it together.

Pete Rouse is one of the nicest people I have ever known. He also worked with the President very closely. He was his chief of staff as Senator, and, of course, a chief adviser when he was in the White House.

Rahm Emanuel, now the leader of Chicago, IL, was former Chief of Staff, and is currently mayor of Chicago. He is a man known for his bluntness and his productivity as a Member of Congress and as Chief of Staff.

Alyssa Mastromonaco was former Deputy Chief of Staff and I hope that I had something to do with the romance that wound up with her marrying my chief of staff, David Krone.

These are just a few of the incredible people I have had the pleasure of working with. They are all wonderful.

Then there is President Obama's Cabinet—a Cabinet of quality. That includes my friend, Secretary of Interior Ken Salazar, a wonderful man and a terrific public servant, a man of substance like no other ever known.

After 8 years leading the country, President Obama is leaving office on a high point. When he first took office, our country was in an economic free fall and hemorrhaging jobs. Now the country is experiencing the longest

streak of private sector job growth ever. We have the lowest unemployment rate in nearly a decade.

After 8 years of President Obama, we are now as a country on a sustainable path to fight climate change and grow renewable energy sources. We are more respected around the world. We reached international agreements to curb climate change, stop Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon, and we are on the path to normalizing relations with our neighbor Cuba.

Our country has made significant strides in nearly every way. There is no doubt that the United States is better now than we were 8 years ago, and we have Barack Obama to thank for that.

Thank you, President Obama, for being the person you are.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

TSUNAMI WARNING, EDUCATION, AND RESEARCH ACT OF 2015

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the House message to accompany H.R. 34, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

House message to accompany H.R. 34, an act to authorize and strengthen the tsunami detection, forecast, warning, research, and mitigation program of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and for other purposes.

Pending:

McConnell motion to concur in the amendment of the House to the amendment of the Senate to the bill.

McConnell motion to concur in the amendment of the House to the amendment of the Senate to the bill, with McConnell amendment No. 5117, to change the enactment date.

McConnell amendment No. 5118 (to amendment No. 5117), of a perfecting nature.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California.

FAREWELL TO THE SENATE

Mrs. BOXER. Madam President, this is a moment for me that, I think it is fair to say, I will never ever forget.

I am so honored. I am so honored to have members of my family here, staff from past and present from both my personal office and committee, extraordinary colleagues whom I adore and love, whom I worked with, fought with and debated. I am so honored that Senator MCCONNELL and Senator REID have said really nice things about me.

I think, in Senator REID's case, we go back so long, and I will talk a little bit more about that. In Senator MCCONNELL's case, we didn't talk for a long time, and then we did get together and we did some great work together. But I think he was here just to make sure I am leaving. My leader over in the House is here—NANCY PELOSI. I will talk about her more. My colleagues

from the House came over in the midst of all their work. I love them. I have enjoyed working with them.

I look around this Chamber, and I realize the reason I am able to actually leave is because I know each of you and your passion to make life better for people, and that is what it is all about.

When I decided not to run for reelection, you know how the press always follows you around. They said: "Is this bittersweet for you?"

My answer was forthcoming: "No way is it bitter. In every way it is sweet."

Why do I feel that way? It is because this has been a dream, to be in a profession that I think is noble, no matter how beaten up it gets, for 40 years—for more than half my life—and I was able to do every day what I always wanted to do, which is simply to make life better for people. I didn't always succeed. Were there frustrations? Yes. Were there disappointments? Yes. Were there defeats? Yes, many, but every morning when I woke up, I knew I had a chance to do something good.

As a first generation American on my mother's side, and, most particularly, as a woman, I never in my wildest dreams imagined that I could be in the U.S. Senate. It was an uphill battle, and I know I speak for a lot of people sitting right here who know what I am talking about.

When I first ran for the Marin County Board of Supervisors in 1972, it was a Republican landslide year. It was more than tough. I will never forget one woman I spoke with after knocking on her door. I introduced myself and said, "Hi, I am Barbara Boxer. I am running for county supervisor."

She greeted me by saying, "I never thought you would be so short." Then, she said she wasn't supporting me because, quote, "You have four kids, and you are going to neglect them if you are elected."

Well, never mind that this was a part-time job just a few minutes from the house. Never mind that the man I was running against had a family and a full-time job. Never mind that I actually had two kids, but she insisted. She said, "I know you have four kids because I read it in the newspaper."

I said, "Lady, when you give birth, you never forget it, and I did it twice."

Well, I lost that seat, but two things helped get me through it. The first was an article by Gloria Steinem, who essentially said women tend to take losses too personally. We have to understand that we could be just a little bit ahead of our time, and we can't give up.

Second, my son Doug, only seven at the time, ignored any attempts to cheer him up by saying, "Mom, can you make me a peanut butter and jelly sandwich for lunch?"

The point is that life goes on no matter how deep the disappointments. You pick yourself up, and you keep fighting because this is your country. It is our country, and it is worth fighting for. I

ran again four years later and won. I was eager to get to work on issues such as:

Afterschool for kids.

Protecting the natural beauty of my county.

Ensuring that a child walking to school would be safe. I put up so many stop signs to protect kids that I soon became known as the "Stop Sign Queen."

It was local government, and the world was changing. The Vietnam War was raging. The women's movement was ramping up. The oil companies wanted to drill off the pristine coast of California. Even from my position as a local county supervisor representing only 40,000 people, I was exposed to these national issues that would soon require all of my attention.

Tip O'Neill, one of NANCY PELOSI's great predecessors, was known for his saying that "All politics is local," but the global became local when Marin County got a Federal grant saying the threat of nuclear attack is real, and you have to have a plan to evacuate the county in case there is a bomb dropped in San Francisco. This was in the 1980's.

The Reagan administration, I think, missed the obvious. Getting in a car on a narrow road to evacuate to Napa or going under your desk was not going to protect you, so all five supervisors—three Republicans and two Democrats—rejected the grant. Instead, we mailed an informational booklet to every household, telling them there was no way to evacuate from a nuclear bomb; you have to prevent it in the first place.

During that same period, James Watt wanted to drill off the coast of California. We put together business people, environmentalists, farmers, and we said no. The tourist industry joined us, and we stopped it.

That was my first attempt at very broad coalition building. As national issues unfolded before my eyes, I had to do more if I really wanted to stay true to making life better for people.

When John Burton's seat for Congress opened up in 1982, I jumped in. It was a long shot. And I will always be grateful to the people who brought me to that dance: working people, environmentalists, children's advocates. They put me over the top.

After I won this election, I began hearing about the mysterious disease that was stealing the lives of so many in my congressional district. I remember feeling so helpless because we didn't know what it was and what caused it. One thing was clear: AIDS was devastating, and too many in Washington were not taking action.

When we found out it could be transmitted sexually, I had to go up against the far rightwing who didn't want to provide any information about the disease. Yet here I was, a middle-aged mother of two from the suburbs, talking about condoms. It was uncomfortable, but this would become my way. In

the face of a crisis, never look away, never back down, and never be afraid.

In the case of AIDS, I got to work with the Chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, a southern gentleman. He had never heard of AIDS. He said to me: "If people are sick, then we must help." We got the first double-digit Federal AIDS funding, and we established an AIDS Task Force and brought in people such as Elizabeth Taylor and Elizabeth Glaser, and we fought back. We took it under our wing to solve this crisis—both adult AIDS and pediatric AIDS.

By that time, I had an extraordinary new partner in the House, NANCY PELOSI. We immediately bonded. I was so impressed with her passion and her energy. We remain the dearest of friends to this day. I am so proud of her. NANCY has changed the face of politics in America, and she will go down in history as one of the most influential leaders of our time.

Recently—on a recent issue—I was expressing deep disappointment, and NANCY told me: "Don't agonize. Organize!" This was two nights ago. She is right. When things get tough, that is what you do.

Over the years, the issues kept coming my way and came the way of a lot of people in this room: the Violence Against Women Act, LGBT equality, protecting a woman's right to choose, workers' rights, protecting the Clean Air Act and the Clean Water Act, and the Safe Drinking Water Act. Those are all examples. These fights continue, and they keep coming whether you are in elected office or not. They come to you if you are a single parent trying to raise a child and struggling to make ends meet on a minimum wage that is not fair. They come to you if your kid gets asthma. They come to you if your job has been outsourced and you have nowhere to turn. They come to you when college tuition gets out of reach.

Whether it is happening to you or someone else, the great thing about our participatory democracy is each of us has a chance to make a difference. You can make a difference by holding an elected office or working for someone who does. You can make a difference by working for a campaign. You can make a difference by starting a business and employing good people to help you build it. You can make a difference by becoming a teacher, a nurse, a firefighter or a police officer.

There are so many noble ways to make a difference in America. The one thing you cannot do, even when it is tempting: You cannot turn away—never. The forces and the people who shape you cannot be ignored. I say to everybody within the sound of my voice that you have it within you to step out and make your mark.

A lot of young people come up to me and say, "I would love to do what you do. How do I become a U.S. Senator?"

I am sure a lot of us get that question.

I always say, "It is not important to be something; it is important to do something."

If you choose my path and the path of many in this room, I want to be clear: You will need mentors and you will need friends like two of mine—John Burton and BARBARA MIKULSKI. John encouraged me to run for the House, where he had always been a fighter for those without a voice.

BARBARA had been my friend in the House and encouraged me to run for the Senate. When I went to see her, she said, very simply: "Go for it." That and \$40 million—that was good advice. And I did. Senator MIKULSKI is everything a Senator should be. She is intelligent, caring, always focused, and as an added bonus, she can have you in stitches. I am so grateful for her guidance and, most important, her friendship.

I launched my campaign for the Senate. It was very difficult. No one predicted I would win. I was less than an asterisk in the polls. I was filled with doubt. Coming to my aid was my senior Senator, DIANNE FEINSTEIN. She stood by my side, even though it could have cost her votes. I will never, ever forget that. Thank you, DIANNE.

I also need to pay tribute to Anita Hill because without her, I never would have been elected to the Senate. Anita Hill courageously told her story to the all-male U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee, breaking the silence on this painful issue. In addition, people saw there were only two women in the Senate.

Anita Hill, you showed us all that we must never be afraid to take on the powerful. It certainly isn't easy, but if you learn to be tough in the right way, you can find the sweet spot, even in this atmosphere where the parties have grown so far apart. This is one of my biggest regrets—how far the parties have grown apart, especially when it comes to the environment.

Remember, Richard Nixon created the Environmental Protection Agency. He signed the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act and the Endangered Species Act. George H.W. Bush signed the extension of the Clean Air Act. Many Republicans led the charge for environmental protection. Now, unfortunately, protecting the environment has become a divide where we truly duke it out.

As I leave here, I intend to do everything in my power to work to bridge that divide because we all live on one planet. It doesn't matter what party we are. We all breathe the same air. We all want our families to be healthy and live on a planet that can sustain us and all of God's creations. In this time of deep division, we have to find areas to work together.

I think I found a proven formula in my relationship with my friend and chairman of the Environment and Public Works Committee, Senator JIM INHOFE. We never surprise each other, even where we disagree—ever. Our

word is our bond to each other. We found that we could work as a winning team to build and strengthen our Nation's infrastructure, and we have made incredible progress for the American people on those issues—long-term highway bills, long-term water bills and the first update on the Toxic Control Act. That was a doozy for us. I will never forget that battle.

Transportation turned out to be a sweet spot between Majority Leader MITCH MCCONNELL and me. We hadn't talked seriously for 20 years because of the Packwood case. It was: Hello, hello. That was it. But we did come together to save the Highway Trust Fund at an urgent time.

Our work together surprised so many of our colleagues, but I think it surprised the two of us more than anything else. But it worked because we set aside all of our past legitimate divisions in order to rescue America's transportation system. We took a risk, and the risk paid off. And, of course, all of my colleagues helped make that possible.

Also, I want to mention my Republican counterpart on the Ethics Committee, Senator JOHNNY ISAKSON, because when it comes to ethics, we have proven there is no room for partisanship. All we want to do is make sure the Senate is a respected institution. Friendship and trust with Members on both sides and in the House of Representatives—I am so proud so many of you are here—that is the only way to get things done.

Having a leader who has your back is essential. A good leader knows and understands each member of his caucus and where they draw the line. HARRY is so humble. Whenever you talk about him, he puts his head down.

HARRY, could you just look at me for a second?

A good leader knows when to speak up and when to listen. A good leader knows when to pick up the gloves and fight like hell. That is what HARRY REID has done. He is not a show horse; he is a workhorse.

He is a soft-spoken man. How many of us have to say: HARRY, could you speak up? He is a soft-spoken man of a few words, but he chooses his words wisely, and he chooses his fights wisely. He doesn't seek the spotlight. When it comes to standing up for what is right, he is right there when others try to slip out of the room.

HARRY has not only been an extraordinary leader and colleague, he and his wife, Landra, have been close and treasured friends of me and my husband, Stewart. I call him the brother I never had, and he calls me the sister he never had. He treats me like a sister; he always hangs up on me when I call him. And he never calls on me when I madly wave my hand at caucus. You know, I am like a sister. You don't have to worry, the love will be there. I am forever grateful for his leadership and his friendship.

Another quality of HARRY REID is that he encouraged women to run for

the Senate. Once we got here, he made sure we had major responsibilities. HARRY, you will go down in history for that.

I am, of course, ecstatic that my successor is Kamala Harris, who served as attorney general for my State with great distinction and who will continue the tradition of having a strong, progressive woman in this seat.

Kamala, you heard it here—a strong, progressive woman in this seat is what we need.

As I wind down my remarks, I must be completely honest about my broken heart. I worked hard, along with so many millions of Americans, so that we would have our first female President. It was not to be this time, but we made history with Hillary Clinton, the first female nominee of a major party, who, I might add, won the popular vote by millions and still counting. She truly shattered the glass ceiling and showed that women had the ability to take it on the chin again and again.

My message to everyone who supported Hillary is, the work goes on. Yes, you build on success and you learn from failure, but you never stop working for human rights, civil rights, women's rights, voting rights, children's rights and the environment. I certainly don't plan to stop.

I am not only fortunate to have had this extraordinary career, but I am also so fortunate to be going home to a State that stands for everything I believe in.

I wish to thank every one of my staffers—those who worked for me in Washington, either on my personal staff, committee staff, those who worked for me in the State, and those who helped me get elected. A lot of them are here today. Without them, I never ever could have done my job, and I never could have accomplished the things I have accomplished that I am proud of.

I also wish to thank the floor staff. The floor staff never gets thanked enough because they deal with us when we are very nervous. They have to deal with us when we are about to have an amendment come up or about to vote on something and need to understand the rules and our rights.

To Gary and his team, Trish, Tim, and all of you—thank you.

When I look back on everything I fought for, there are more than a thousand accomplishments, and I am certainly not going to talk about all of those, but I am going to, briefly, very fast, go through 10 of my favorites. The first afterschool programs that were funded by the Federal Government, covering more than 1.6 million kids every day; 1 million acres of California wilderness preserved; the first-ever comprehensive combat casualty care center in California for our most wounded warriors; ensuring that our transportation programs remain in place for years to come with millions of jobs protected; upholding our landmark environmental laws, and I hope

that continues, but I will not go off on that; setting clean drinking water standards to protect pregnant women, children, and other vulnerable people; the dolphin-safe tuna label; protecting victims of rape in the military from irrelevant, harassing questions that have already been barred in civilian courts; establishing the first-ever subcommittee to oversee global women's issues, which JEANNE is going to carry on; recommending a diverse group of supremely qualified judicial nominees who are carrying out our laws in California's Federal courts. There are many more I could talk about, and we all know this because each one of them is like a child to us and we remember how hard it was to get it done, but let me be clear, you don't get anything done here unless your colleagues help you from both sides of the aisle.

My biggest regret is that I couldn't end the war in Iraq. It hurt my soul. I came down to the floor every day and read the names of fallen soldiers. I was accused of being too emotional. I asked probing questions in committee to expose the fact that we were in the middle of a civil war. Day after day I made my case, but the war went on and on. It took President Obama to finally end that war, and I will always be grateful to him.

Of course, there is unfinished business, and I know my colleagues are going to carry on. We must restore the Voting Rights Act. We need to restore trust between our communities and law enforcement. We have to continue to protect and provide affordable health care. We must take action on climate change or we are in deep trouble as humankind. We must protect the DREAMers and immigrants who contribute to our communities every day. We must raise the minimum wage and ensure equal pay for equal work. We must protect reproductive freedom and work across party lines for a safe world.

I have often joked about some of the things that have been said to me over the years that are too colorful, in a negative way, to repeat here, but I want everyone to know, whether friend or foe, whether critic or admirer, I do appreciate the fact that you let me know how you felt about my work one way or the other.

To close, I will read a handwritten letter I received in October from one of the greatest jazz musicians in our country, Sonny Rollins, into the RECORD. He was recently honored at the Kennedy Center. He wrote in longhand the following:

Greetings—so so sorry that we are not going to have you for us anymore. I've always been interested in politics, marching as a 6 year old with my activist grandmother for civil rights. It has been such a joy and inspiration knowing that Barbara Boxer was there for us.

God bless you, your family, and loved ones—And thank you.

You will be missed and we all love you.

Have a beautiful life, just like you have made life beautiful for so many citizens.

I wish to thank Sonny Rollins. I don't know him personally. I met him once, but what he said is all I wanted to do—make life beautiful for people. I didn't always succeed. I didn't always prevail. I felt the pain of losing many times, but I can honestly say I never stopped trying. I was able to do it because of the love, understanding and support of my husband of 55 years, Stewart, who is here today. He gave me so much, including the best political name ever. I did it because of my son Doug, my daughter Nicole, my daughter-in-law Amy, my son-in-law Kevin, and four incredible grandchildren, Zach, Zain, Sawyer, and Reyna, and because of the people of California who sent me here time and time again—10 years in the House and 24 years in the Senate. I had the opportunity to never stop trying. I had the opportunity to speak out, and no matter how many times I had to try, I did. Here is the thing. I have this platform, which is an extraordinary honor. This is a sacred position, and I say to my colleagues that no matter who says what about it, it is a sacred position. Hold your head high.

So many here have fought the good fight and will continue to fight the good fight, and I will always treasure my time serving the people. They gave me a purpose in my life that I will always cherish. They made me a better person. They made my life more beautiful than I ever could have imagined, and for that I am forever grateful.

I thank the Presiding Officer and yield the floor.

(Applause, Senators rising.)

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. COATS). The Senator from Oklahoma.

TRIBUTE TO BARBARA BOXER

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, that was a very emotional and heartfelt speech. As I look around, I know there are a lot of people who want to respond and be heard, but I grabbed it first. This will be real short.

I believe it was the majority leader who gave me a quote this morning. He made the comment that the two of you agree on nothing, but you get everything done.

Mrs. BOXER. That is right.

Mr. INHOFE. There is a reason for that. If you stop and think about it, we came to the House and Senate at about the same time. There are no two people in this body who are further apart from each other than BARBARA BOXER and JIM INHOFE. Yet we have something beautiful. I hesitate to show this AP picture of our embrace, but it has to be in the record here somewhere.

For 12 years, we swapped—back and forth—being chairman of the Environment and Public Works Committee. I always remember when the Republicans were in the majority back in—let's see. We lost it in 2006. I remember seeing BARBARA, Al Gore, and all these other people danced in and out the door saying the world is going to come to an end unless we do all of these things.

At that time, she said something very profound that I never forgot, and

I thought about it for the next 8 years. She said that we look at things differently. We had an election and elections have consequences. Remember that elections have consequences. Well, 2 years ago, the Republicans took over, and I gave her a T-shirt that said: "Elections have consequences." During all that time, we didn't really change in terms of what we were doing together. I have a list of the things we have done that I left someplace, but, nevertheless, we did the highway bill in 1998 and 2005. All of the things we did actually worked. I remember when we had a news conference on TSCA. When I looked around, I saw all of my very liberal Democratic friends and me, and I thought: Wait a minute. How did this happen?

We have been able to work together and get things done, and I have been very proud of that. In fact, I shouldn't say this because I am going to divulge our confidence, but we have meetings just as Democrats have their meetings. All the chairmen get together, and when it was my turn to make a statement, I said: Now, from the committee that gets things done. Anyway, that is the way it has been.

I disagreed with Senator BOXER on a lot of the regulations, and I have told her many times she has every right to be wrong.

Mrs. BOXER. You do.

Mr. INHOFE. But on the things that were really important, we did manage to get things accomplished. There is an awful lot of hate around here, and it is so unnecessary. You can disagree with someone and love them anyway. I have to say that confession is good for the soul, but I want my good friend to know I am truly going to miss her around here.

Mrs. BOXER. I thank the Senator from Oklahoma so much.

Mr. INHOFE. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California.

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, the relationship we felt was based on trust and honesty. We never ever misled each other. I just love the Senator's staff. I really do. Our staff developed the same type of relationship that we developed—disagreeing on many things but understanding that we can work together and find common ground. I just hope, as I step out the door—Lord knows when that will be, given this place—that others will form this type of bond across party lines because without it, things just don't work right.

I want my friend to know it has been a great pleasure to work with him in every way, shape, and form. One of us is from Venus and one of us is from Mars, and that is just the way it is. We just see the world differently, but it hasn't stopped us from putting aside those disagreements. We were never bitter with each other.

We had a pretty big divide. One person said climate change is a hoax and the other said it is the biggest threat

we have to deal with, but we knew there was no way we could come together so we kind of put it aside and didn't let it spoil our friendship or our ability to work together in any way.

So I think it is a very important message to many chairmen and ranking members that if there is honesty—set it aside if you can't work together, but where you can find those sweet spots, do it because everyone wants—they are cheering us on from the outside. I can't tell you how many people at home tell me: We don't know how you do it, but it is great what you and INHOFE get done.

Fortunately, we never lost an election over our friendship, which could have happened, you know. They could have said: I am not going to vote for him; he talks to her. But we were able to prove that we can do it.

So, JIM, I am honored that you came down to the floor. I am honored that Senator MCCONNELL said such nice things. I am so honored that so many came to the floor to hear my farewell remarks.

Again, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Hampshire.

FAREWELL TO THE SENATE

Ms. AYOTTE. Mr. President, it is with deep gratitude that I rise today to address my Senate colleagues and members of my staff with whom I have had the privilege of serving over the last 6 years.

First and foremost, I want to thank the people of New Hampshire for giving me the extraordinary opportunity to serve them. From Nashua to Newport, to the North Country, they have inspired me. The people of our State are hard-working, caring, compassionate people with grit. They have a fierce sense of independence that I respect and admire. That spirit has guided me during my time here, and it has been the privilege of a lifetime to serve them.

I want to thank my family—my husband Joe, my wingman. Joe is a patriot with a heart of service. That is why he served our country as a fighter pilot in the Air Force and why he has been my biggest supporter during my service not only as New Hampshire's attorney general but as a Senator. We are so proud of our children, Kate and Jake, who are now 12 and 9. My family has sacrificed so that I could serve the people of New Hampshire, and I am grateful for their patience and love. I also thank my mother Kathy, who is and always has been my mentor and No. 1 cheerleader. I could not have done it without her help and that of my stepfather Jim, my uncle Jack, my aunt Jane, and all of our extended family who have done so much for us. They made it possible for me to serve, and there are not adequate words to express how much their love and support means to me.

I also thank my wonderful and hard-working staff in New Hampshire and Washington, whose dedication, work

ethic, and talent are unparalleled in the Senate. I am especially fortunate that some of the members of my staff have served by my side since I was first sworn in 6 years ago. My staff is dedicated, creative, tireless, and compassionate. I am so proud of our team and all we have accomplished together. I am confident that they will continue to work to create a brighter future for New Hampshire and for our country.

I ask unanimous consent to have a list of their names printed in the RECORD.

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

CURRENT STAFF

Kristine Adams, Erica Andeweg, Daniel Auger, Camden Bisson, Bradley Bowman, John Chambers III, Ryan Clark, Frederick Dressler, Adam Hechavarría, Kelsey Keegan, Shaylyn Kelly, Marne Marotta, Myles Matteson, Richard Murphy III, Kayla Nations, Gabriel Noronha, Taylor Reidy, Samantha Roberts, Chloe Rockow, Bethany Scully, DeWayne Thomas, Elizabeth Johnson, Gene Chandler, Jerome Maslan, Cynthia Woodward, Jane Bosse, Christopher Connelly, Joseph Doiron, Orville Fitch, Michael Garcia, Eric Hensel, Stephen Monier, John Pearson, Neva Varsalona, Gretchen Wade, Lauren Zelt, Matthew Bartlett, Brenda Kittle, Anne Warburton, Kathryn Sullivan.

FORMER STAFF

Kelcey Raymond, Nathanael Anderson, Robin Anderson, William Ardinger, Christin Ballou, Benjamin Bradley, Gwendolyn Cassidy, Thomas DeRosa, Virginia Demers, Dennis Deziel, Elizabeth Drumm, Danielle Duchesne, John Easton, Robert Fraser, Robert Ganim, Elliot Gault, Claire Gimbastiani, Jeffrey Grappone, Elizabeth Guyton, Timothy Hefferan, Brian Hodges, Kathryn Horgan, Debra Jarrett, Alison Kamataris, Sean Knox, John Lawrence, Andrew Leach, Emily Lynch, Cathy Myers, Franci Nichols, Margaret Ouellette, Irina Owens, Kelsey Patten, Brianna Puccini, Matt Reeder, Wade Sarraf, Michael Scala, Robert Seidman, Lauren Spivey, Alexander Stanford, Susan-Anne Terzakis, Simon Thomson, Linda Tomlinson.

Ms. AYOTTE. I want to take a moment to thank the Capitol Police, who devote themselves to keeping us safe each and every day and who have become friends to my staff and me over the years. I am so grateful for all of our first responders who put their lives on the line each and every day to keep us safe. I also thank the Senate floor staff, the pages, and everyone who works so hard behind the scenes to make our work possible here.

During the past 6 years, I have traveled throughout New Hampshire talking to people from all walks of life, listening to their ideas and learning from their experiences. I have met so many hard-working people in our State who have, in turn, inspired me to work hard on their behalf. True to the nature of our great State, they have never been shy about letting me know what is on their minds, whether it was at one of the 50 townhall meetings we held or in the grocery aisle at the Market Basket. They sent me to the Senate with a sense of purpose. It has been an honor

to fight for them and their families every single day.

One of the most rewarding aspects of my time in the Senate has been standing up for those who put their lives on the line for our country—our veterans and our men and women in uniform and their families. Today, we mark the 75th anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor. We are reminded once again of their selfless service and sacrifice on behalf of our great Nation.

I was honored during my time here to lead the charge to repeal unfair cuts for our military retirees and to help make progress toward improving access to local health care for veterans in New Hampshire, who for far too long have been forced to travel long distances to receive care from a VA facility because we don't have a full-service hospital, unfortunately, in the State of New Hampshire. Too often, our veterans are not treated as they should be, and this has to change. They have sacrificed so much for our freedom and deserve only the best from us.

As the wife of a combat veteran who served in Iraq, nothing has been more important to me than keeping our country safe. That commitment is deeply personal to me. One of the greatest privileges I have had as a Senator is to visit with members of our New Hampshire National Guard and our men and women in uniform who serve overseas and are there now as we are here today. We pray for their safe return. They make us so proud. They represent the very best of our State and our country.

As a member of the Armed Services Committee, I have been proud to advocate for the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard and the skilled workers there who make vital contributions to our national security. This has been a team effort between New Hampshire and Maine. I thank my colleagues—Senator SHAHEEN; Senator COLLINS, whom I see here today; and Senator ANGUS KING—for their incredible work in supporting the shipyard.

I especially want to thank Senator SHAHEEN for all the work we did together on important issues for our State. Whether it was advocating for the shipyard, for Pease and the 157th Air Refueling Wing to receive the new tanker, for our National Guard, or for our veterans, we always looked for ways to come together for the people of New Hampshire, and I appreciate her dedication and service.

Since I first came to the Senate, one of my top priorities has been reversing the Obama administration's misguided policy to empty and close the Guantanamo Bay detention facility. Each year I have led efforts to prevent the transfer of terrorist to the United States, to our soil here, and to urge the administration to be transparent with the American people about these dangerous detainees.

As I have called for previously, I hope the new administration will immediately halt the dangerous policy of re-

leasing Guantanamo terrorists to other countries where they even rejoin terrorist activities, and finally establish a commonsense detention policy that keeps terrorists off the battlefield and protects American lives and our national security.

We made progress in saving taxpayer dollars at the Pentagon—and I know there is more work that needs to be done—by ending wasteful programs, such as the missile to nowhere, and passing the Never Contract With the Enemy legislation that cut through redtape and helped prevent tens of millions of dollars from ending up in the hands of our enemies.

Working with Chairman MCCAIN, I was proud to help lead the successful effort to help prevent the premature retirement of the A-10 aircraft, ensuring that our ground troops continue to have the best close air support possible to keep them safe.

During my time on the committee, I have had the privilege of working closely with Chairman JOHN MCCAIN and Senator LINDSEY GRAHAM to ensure that America maintains the strongest and best military in the world and to ensure that our country continues to be the greatest force for good in the world. There are no stronger voices in this body for America's leadership in the world, nor fiercer advocates for our men and women in uniform than Chairman JOHN MCCAIN and Senator LINDSEY GRAHAM. Now more than ever, we need their leadership, expertise, and passion for keeping this country safe with the challenges we face around the world. I am honored to have worked with them and, most of all, to call them my friends.

Serving on the Armed Services Committee has been one of the best experiences I have had in the Senate. I want to express my gratitude to all of my fellow committee members because it has truly been a bipartisan effort each year to ensure our troops have the resources they need to do their jobs.

I see Senator MCCASKILL, the Senator from Missouri, here. I have deeply appreciated the work we have done together on behalf of our men and women in uniform. Thank you.

Going forward, it is critical that Congress and the next administration work together to reverse the harmful cuts to our military and to ensure that we have a defense budget based on the threats we face around the world right now, which are unprecedented.

Another issue that has been near and dear to my heart is addressing a devastating epidemic that is facing the State of New Hampshire; that is, the heroin and prescription opioid epidemic that is taking a devastating toll on our State. I have met so many people in New Hampshire who are hurting because of this epidemic—mothers and fathers who have lost children, brothers and sisters who have lost siblings. Many of the families who have been affected have become my dear friends, like Doug and Pam Griffin of Newton,

NH, who lost their beautiful daughter Courtney, who had so much potential. They lost her to an overdose.

The Griffins, like so many other families in New Hampshire I have met, have turned their pain into passion to save our families. I have learned so much from their experiences. They inspired me to work with a group of great Senators and my colleagues: Senator ROB PORTMAN, who I know is here today; Senator SHELDON WHITEHOUSE from Rhode Island; and Senator AMY KLOBUCHAR from Minnesota. The four of us came together and worked on what is called the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act. This bill will provide a much needed framework for addressing this epidemic through prevention, treatment, recovery, and support for our first responders, who are doing so much for this epidemic. As a bipartisan team, we worked on this legislation for more than 2 years. Our bill passed the Senate overwhelmingly and was signed into law earlier this year.

CARA will focus on the best programs to help State and locale efforts in turning around the tide of addiction that is facing so many in this country. CARA is an important first step, but there is so much more work that needs to be done. I am encouraged that because of our efforts, this body has recognized the seriousness of this crisis.

I was particularly glad to advocate for \$1 billion in funding to address the heroin epidemic being included in the 21st Century Cures Act, which we are expected to pass and send to the President this week. I thank Senator LAMAR ALEXANDER for his incredible leadership in getting this important public health bill passed. The funding in the 21st Century Cures bill goes hand in hand with the important policy provisions in the CARA bill and will help save lives in New Hampshire and across this country.

Finally, I would like to return to the reason I ran for the Senate back in 2010: to make sure we leave New Hampshire and our Nation stronger and better off for the next generation. As the mother of two young children, I was increasingly concerned that, left unchecked, our skyrocketing national debt would ultimately burden future generations and diminish their opportunities.

I ran because I believed it was time for New Hampshire to bring some of its common sense here to Washington to deal with our Nation's spending habits. On every committee I served on, we looked for ways to cut wasteful spending and fought to hold the government accountable for the way it spends our hard-earned taxpayer dollars. It is my hope that this issue will be at the top of the agenda of the incoming Congress and the new administration. If there is anything I have learned in my time here, it is that it takes cooperation from both sides of the aisle to get things done.

It has been a privilege to serve with so many in this body who care about

our country deeply and work tirelessly each day on behalf of their constituents.

I am so honored as I see my colleagues who are here today, because I know how hard you work every day. I want to thank you for what you do on behalf of the people of this country. I am humbled by what I have learned from each of you and from each of my colleagues in the Senate and for the opportunity to serve with so many good people on behalf of our great Nation. I thank each of you for your dedicated service and, most of all, for your friendship.

Without leadership here, things just don't get done. I especially want to thank Majority Leader MITCH MCCONNELL for his commitment to making the Senate work and to making sure we are doing the people's business.

On a personal note, I have deeply appreciated his mentorship and his friendship.

Working with our new President, the Senate has a fresh opportunity to create a better quality of life for all Americans in this great country. That means elected leaders will need to work together and put aside our partisan differences.

During this election, we heard the frustrations of the American people with their government. They rightly expect this body to move forward in solving the significant challenges facing our Nation, such as getting our fiscal House in order, ensuring that families can afford quality health care without Washington between them and their doctors, reforming our broken Tax Code so we can keep and grow jobs here in the United States of America, and foremost, keeping America safe in a dangerous world.

My hope is that the Members of this body will appeal to the better angels of our nature, put partisanship aside, and focus on the challenge of building a more perfect union because the challenges before us are great and we cannot hope to overcome them unless we do so working hand in hand. I know my Senate colleagues are people of great character, and they are up to this challenge. I wish them the very best as they continue their very important work on behalf of the people of the greatest Nation on Earth.

To the people of New Hampshire, Joe and I thank you from the bottom of our hearts for the greatest honor of a lifetime, for serving you and for the privilege of serving in the United States Senate with so many good people.

Mr. President, I thank you, and I yield the floor.

(Applause, Senators rising.)

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SULLIVAN). The Senator from New Hampshire.

TRIBUTES TO KELLY AYOTTE

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Mr. President, I am pleased that I could be here for Senator AYOTTE's farewell address and honored to have had the opportunity to serve

with her over the past 6 years. Six years ago, I stood on this floor to recognize another departing Senator from New Hampshire, Judd Gregg. I said then about my relationship with Senator Gregg something that is also true about my relationship with Senator AYOTTE: that we always managed to disagree without being disagreeable. I am grateful to Senator AYOTTE for this, and I am proud that we have been able to maintain that civility and bipartisanship even in the course of two very close and very tough election cycles. That is the New Hampshire way—putting partisanship aside whenever possible and seeking practical, pragmatic solutions to address people's critical needs.

As she said, time and time again, Senator AYOTTE and I have teamed up to advance legislation of special importance to the Granite State, including strongly advocating for veterans, for the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, and for the New Hampshire National Guard and that new KC-46 tanker. Together, we fought to secure more resources for law enforcement and treatment professionals who are on the frontlines of the opioid crisis, including this week important new funding in the 21st Century Cures Act.

I want to publicly express my gratitude to KELLY for her dedicated service to the people of New Hampshire and, more broadly, the people of the United States. Over the last 6 years, Senator AYOTTE has earned respect on both sides of the aisle in this body and in New Hampshire. I know that her husband Joe and their two wonderful children, Kate and Jacob, are very, very proud of her service in the Senate. Looking to the future, there is no question in my mind that she will continue to serve the State and the country she loves.

KELLY, I wish you and your family all the best in the years ahead. Thank you.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, I come to the floor today to pay tribute to my dear friend and colleague, the Senator from New Hampshire, KELLY AYOTTE. I first met KELLY in 2010 when I joined her for a townhall meeting in Nashua, NH. My affection for the State of New Hampshire dates back to my bid for President in 2000, so it was a familiar setting to join so many old friends in support of her campaign for the U.S. Senate. I was impressed with Senator AYOTTE's deep understanding of the top challenges facing the country, the seriousness with which she approached her work, and the ease with which she engaged with members of the audience, gracefully handling spirited debates and sparring matches with voters—a staple of the townhall meetings in New Hampshire I always admired. I knew then we would be fast friends.

In the Senate, Senator AYOTTE brought the same tenacity to her work, distinguishing herself as a rising star

in the Republican Party and a leader willing to work across party lines to get things done. Senator AYOTTE has approached every issue candidly and pragmatically—something that is all too often lacking in politics today. “I call them like I see them,” she once said. “And that means not just with the opposing party, but with my own party.” Senator AYOTTE took this mantra on the road, continuing the tradition of the New Hampshire townhall meetings by holding more than 50 townhall meetings in small towns and cities across New Hampshire, where she spoke directly with her constituents about the issues impacting their families.

But, in my view, Senator AYOTTE’s best work lies in her contribution to defense and national security as a member of the Armed Services Committee. Coming from a military family, her commitment to strengthening our Armed Forces is deeply personal. That has contributed to her tireless advocacy on issues important to New Hampshire, to Pease Air National Guard Base, the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, and to all military and civilian personnel supporting our national security who call New Hampshire home.

As chairman of the Subcommittee on Readiness, Senator AYOTTE has called attention to the dangerous readiness crisis and has been a consistent advocate for making sure the men and women of our Armed Forces have the resources they need to defend the Nation. She has authored numerous legislative proposals to eliminate wasteful and duplicative spending in the Department of Defense so that we can reinvest the savings in rebuilding our military. She passed legislation to save over \$1 billion in the Pentagon’s budget and to keep U.S. tax dollars out of the hands of America’s enemies. She has been a leading advocate for repealing arbitrary budget cuts and the mindless mechanism of sequestration which continues to weaken our military and puts the lives of our servicemembers at greater risk.

Senator AYOTTE’s fight to prevent the Air Force from mothballing the A-10 Warthog attack planes showed the very best she has to offer. As the wife of a retired A-10 pilot who flew combat missions in Iraq and an expert in defense policy, Senator AYOTTE understood the critical role this aircraft plays in providing close air support for our fighting men and women. Year after year, she led the fight to prevent the Obama administration from following through on its plan to retire that fleet, pushing through measures in annual Defense authorization bills that would prevent any premature divestment of this aircraft. At the end of the day, she was right. The Air Force conceded to this aircraft’s value and reversed its decision, delaying any divestment until at least 2022.

Anyone who has watched Senator AYOTTE question a witness in the

Armed Services Committee will not be surprised to learn of her background as New Hampshire’s first female attorney general. I have been a fortunate observer of more than one occasion in which a bureaucrat withered under skilled cross-examination by Senator AYOTTE. She takes her oversight role extremely seriously and believes in holding our Nation’s leaders accountable.

In every way, Senator AYOTTE rose to meet the responsibilities and opportunities of her office. There are many qualities that are important to being a good Senator, but none, in my opinion, is more important than standing firm for what you believe. That is what Senator AYOTTE has done. She has never wavered in her commitment to principle, and this body is better for it.

On a more personal note, I have cherished the friendship and partnership of Senator KELLY AYOTTE. The kindness and courtesy she has extended to her colleagues has made this institution a better place, and her principled leadership has served as an example to all of us. In KELLY, you could always find a warm smile that served as a reminder that serving here is truly a joy and a privilege.

While I will miss KELLY’s presence in the Senate, I will continue to rely on her wise counsel and friendship, and I am confident our Nation will continue to benefit from her talents for many years to come. With this in mind, I thank my dear friend and valued colleague, Senator KELLY AYOTTE, for her service to the Nation and this body. And until the Nation calls on her again, I wish her and her husband Joe and their children, Katherine and Jacob, fair winds and following seas.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

Mrs. MCCASKILL. Mr. President, I don’t have eloquent prepared remarks, as the chairman just delivered, but I will tell you this: I have been lucky enough to be in the trenches with KELLY AYOTTE, and when you are in the trenches with KELLY AYOTTE, there is something about her demeanor that lifts you up. It was a tough fight where we were outnumbered, particularly by our fellow women Senators, and it was hard. It was really hard and emotional, and every time I would walk up to KELLY in full-blown panic mode, this smile would radiate; the reassuring pat on my shoulder that we have the facts on our side, that the emotional arguments might be on the other side but the facts were on our side. It kept me strong and it kept me focused.

I will tell you three things I know in my heart about KELLY AYOTTE: She is a warrior, she is a class act, and she is my friend.

Thank you, KELLY.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Carolina.

Mr. GRAHAM. Thank you very much. Mr. President, I just want to attest to CLAIRE and KELLY—if I go to war, I want to go with you all because when

the bullets fly, you get tougher. I love all my colleagues, but sometimes the stress of the debate wears you down pretty quickly. The more contentious, the better you were.

So, KELLY, the best way we can pay you back is to keep up the fight and make sure that we have a fair military justice system and that commanders are accountable but they are still in charge.

An observation: For people with young kids, this has to be a tough job. I don’t have any children, but I can’t imagine the schedule if you have young kids. I have gotten to know KELLY, Joe, and Kate and Jake, and I can only imagine what it is like for Joe to be a single parent 3 days a week, running a business, trying to get kids off to school. I can tell you from being KELLY’s friend—and JOHN and I have traveled all over the world with KELLY—that was a constant strain for her. I am sure it is true of every young mother in America doing any job, but having to be gone and having to balance the needs of her kids and being a mom and a wife and all that good stuff—all I can tell you, for you and Joe—if you meet Kate and Jake, you all did good. If you meet these kids, it has been an enriching 6 years. They are full of life. I think you both handled it very well.

You should be proud of the long list of things you have accomplished. But I guess what I saw in you and what I wish more of us would embrace is an attitude that nothing is too hard, nothing is too challenging if you really believe you are here for a purpose.

You didn’t talk about immigration. I don’t blame you. The immigration fight is one of the hardest fights I have ever been in, particularly on our side. It is not easy on your side, but on our side it is really tough. KELLY was there pushing over the line a bill that I think made a lot of sense.

The debt. Everybody talks about it, but nobody wants to do anything about it. We have had a couple of sessions with 10 and 20 Senators trying to find a way to get more revenue and do entitlement reform, something like Simpson-Bowles. If you don’t do that, the country is going to become like Greece. Every time we had a meeting, every time we had a session about doing hard stuff, KELLY was there.

I remember sequestration. JEANNE SHAHEEN and KELLY AYOTTE were two of the six Senators trying to find a way to set aside these defense cuts in a balanced approach without destroying the military.

I think what you should be most proud of is that you served for 6 years and your kids are great, that you made a lot of friendships that will last a lifetime, and that your best days are yet to come.

You can tell the people of New Hampshire—or I will tell them for you if they can understand me. Apparently they couldn’t because I didn’t do that well when I ran for President. The bottom line is that KELLY never blinked.

She went into the sound of gunfire. She took on the hardest challenges. She did it with style and grace, and everybody in this body is better off for having met KELLY AYOTTE.

I look forward to working with you for years to come. The three amigos are now two, and there will never be a third amigo like you.

I yield.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, we have heard a lot of wonderful things about KELLY AYOTTE today and all are deserved. You notice they have come from both sides of the aisle, and they come from Members who were talking about her expertise on national security—as JOHN MCCAIN did eloquently—and homeland security.

I certainly have worked with her on those issues. I was with her on the Armed Services Committee when I first came to the Senate, and we are on the Homeland Security Committee now. She has been a champion for those issues, there is no question about it. She has helped to keep our country safer, and legislation that she has championed will help to make it safer for our kids and grandkids.

I have also worked with her on other issues, and I wish to talk about that for a second. One is this way in which we as a Chamber can ensure we are creating more jobs, being more energy independent, helping the environment, and that is energy efficiency. She has been a leader on that issue.

JEANNE SHAHEEN and I have legislation that we are still working to get all of it done, but we have gotten some of it done, and KELLY AYOTTE was a huge part of that. In fact, her legislation on Tenant Star is now law of the land. It is helping to make commercial buildings and office buildings, more energy efficient. Again, it has the added benefit of creating jobs and making the economy stronger while improving our environment. That is what she has led on as well.

I have also worked with her on issues you would expect someone who is a national security expert to lead on. Iran sanctions, she has taken the lead on some of the issues that resulted in the incredible vote we had on the floor of this Senate just a few days ago when virtually every Senator voted to extend those sanctions, but I have worked with her on another issue that has nothing to do with our national security; it has everything to do with our family security. It has to do with ensuring that people have the opportunity to achieve their God-given purpose in life. It has to do with stopping the deterioration of our communities, families being torn apart, and the enormous impact we have seen of the opioid epidemic. Starting often with prescription drugs, often leading to heroin—now synthetic heroins such as fentanyl, carfentanil, and U-4, these are very difficult issues.

I have seen no one in this Chamber who has a greater passion for this issue

than KELLY AYOTTE, and it comes out of experience. It is borne of experience of walking around New Hampshire communities with families who have lost a loved one. Earlier she talked about befriending a family who had lost their beautiful daughter to this horrible epidemic. It comes from going to the treatment centers and seeing the people who are in the trenches, saving lives, and improving lives. It comes from talking to those who at one point had great promise in their lives and got off track, seeing those people in a detox unit as she has done or seeing them in a treatment center or, promisingly, seeing them now in recovery and beginning to get their lives back together.

This is not an issue of Republicans or Democrats. It is not an issue that is political. It is an issue that is in the heart of KELLY AYOTTE because it affects the communities she knows in New Hampshire, the people she loves in New Hampshire, and now, sadly, our Nation.

On that issue, she has led, not just to draft legislation—and she talked about the CARE legislation which is going to change the dynamic and get the Federal Government to be a better partner with State and local and begin to turn this tide—not just the Cures legislation, which does have funding for the next 2 years to try to stop some of this horrible growth in addictions, overdoses and deaths, but she has done this house-to-house, family-to-family, person-to-person back home to give people hope and to help gather the support in communities around New Hampshire to fight back. She will continue to do that. She is not doing it as a U.S. Senator. After all, she is doing it as a mom, she is doing it as a citizen.

I am looking forward to continuing to work with her on that issue as well as the other issues we have talked about today. Her public service career is not over; in a sense, it is really just beginning. I know she will be active on the national security issues, on fighting against the heroin epidemic, on ensuring that we continue to have a safer and stronger country. I, for one, look forward to working with her on that.

I thank her for her service. I thank her, her kids, and Joe for their sacrifice because this isn't an easy job. It does take you away from your family. Yet, in 2009, she decided she was going to serve her country because she was worried about the direction it was going. She did that, she did it valiantly, and she deserves our praise today.

KELLY, we are going to miss you, but we also look forward to continuing to work with you on all of the issues that were talked about today. Thank you for your service.

I yield back the remainder of my time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia.

Mrs. CAPITO. Mr. President, I am very pleased to be on the floor with my

colleagues today and most especially pleased to be here to honor my good friend KELLY AYOTTE as she leaves the Senate but does not leave public service.

Believe it or not, I first met KELLY on the softball field when we were on the Congressional women's softball team. I was in the House, and KELLY was the cocaptain in the Senate. We raised money for young survivors of breast cancer. I knew then I wanted to get to the Senate to be good friends with KELLY because when you talk about being in the trenches, she was such a competitor.

When you think about a team, a baseball team or a softball team, who is the toughest person on the team? Everybody wants to say the pitcher. In my view, it is the catcher. Guess who our catcher was. KELLY AYOTTE was and is, and so we became good friends then.

We found we have a lot of love for physical activities. We are both runners. We have run a couple of times together. We participate in the 3-mile run that we have every May that determines who is the fastest male Senator, who is the fastest woman Senator. Well, guess who the fastest woman Senator is. You got it. She just blew right by me every year so I might have hope next year. I don't know. I will have to check out the newcomers. But KELLY was always such a great competitor on the softball field, running in 5Ks, and just being around in general.

As we have heard from everybody, you have served your State with integrity and passion. I know it is tough on your family. I see Joe in the Gallery. I have met your beautiful children, Kate and Jake. I have heard you on the phone planning daycare while the rest of us are figuring out how we are going to get home that night or what we are doing in our committees. As a young mother, KELLY is still trying to make the ends meet. I have such admiration for that as a mother myself. I know how difficult it is, but I know the three of them know that no matter if you were here figuring that out, they were always No. 1 in your heart. I think that is a real tribute to you.

We have heard all of the issues she has been so out front on. Particularly as I am from a State like West Virginia—the opioid issue has really impacted our rural areas. When I visited KELLY twice over the last 6 months in New Hampshire, it was the same kind of impact. It is small towns, families, people who know each other. It hurts everybody. KELLY, thank you for your leadership there. That is going to make not just a mark in your State but across our Nation and in my State in particular.

We traveled to Gitmo together. I had never been to Gitmo before. To have an expert such as KELLY explain to me and to hear her question what is going on there and how important it is and was, she continues to be in the fight that she led to make sure we don't have terrorists on our own home soil. The fact

that Gitmo is still open and is still functioning to keep those very dangerous folks off of our shores I think is a tribute to KELLY's leadership.

In terms of New Hampshire, as you move away from here, I know you are going to realize how you have impacted the people where you live and in your home State, but just kind of multiply that all over the Nation. We have a huge debt of gratitude to you and your family for being here for 6 years, but as I have told you repeatedly since the election, this is not the last time we are going to hear from KELLY AYOTTE or about KELLY AYOTTE. To me, that is a very strengthening thing when I talk about my friend.

I am not going to say goodbye because I don't think we will be saying goodbye. I am going to say Godspeed, good luck. You will land on your feet because you always do. Keep running, I will keep running, and maybe I can keep running and improve my time so I can at least see the backs of your feet as you are running past me.

It has been a real privilege to serve with you. It has been great to be your friend, and I look forward to keeping our relationship very viable and alive as the time moves on.

Thanks, KELLY.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. CAPITO). The Senator from Alaska.

MR. SULLIVAN. Madam President, like my friends on both sides of the aisle, I, too, come to the floor to say a few words about my friend and mentor, Senator KELLY AYOTTE. I use the word "mentor" in actually an official capacity. When you come to the Senate—and like you, Madam President, I am part of the new class of 2014. When you come to the Senate, you are assigned a mentor. I think the idea is that you come in, you are clueless, you don't really know what is going on, and so you have somebody who is smart and experienced to mentor you. Everybody gets a mentor.

I was very fortunate to have KELLY AYOTTE as my mentor. I certainly learned a lot from her. She took the time to help me understand how this important body works. We talked about things like work life balance—with somebody such as KELLY who has kids.

It wasn't just those kinds of issues. I had the great opportunity to serve on a couple of very important committees with Senator AYOTTE—on the Armed Services Committee, on the Commerce Committee—and like my colleague from Missouri, I really learned a lot watching her in action. She was always prepared, always engaged, and always tenacious when it came to certain witnesses. Of course, like a lot of us, we shared certain passions for our country—certainly a strong national defense.

My State, like a lot of States such as New Hampshire, is suffering from the opioid crisis. Watching her and Senator PORTMAN literally lead the country on this issue was so important.

I end by saying what I really learned from my mentor was from watching the way she dealt with other people, the way she always treated people with respect, with class, with optimism, and with dignity. That is probably more important than anything, not only in the U.S. Senate but in our country.

I thank KELLY as a mentor. She was a great role model not only for me but all of the 13 Members of the class of 2014. I know she will be serving her country and her State in a lot more ways. I look forward to watching that and continuing to call her my good friend.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SULLIVAN). The Senator from Maryland.

FAREWELL TO THE SENATE

MS. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, I rise to take the floor for what I call my summing-up speech. It is not my farewell speech because I have the honor and privilege of being the ranking member and former chairman of the Appropriations Committee. I will speak later on this week when we move the continuing resolution.

It is the practice and the tradition of the Senate that when a Senator is departing the Senate, they give what they call their farewell address. Well, mine is not going to be as memorable as when George Washington resigned his commission or other memorable speeches, but I do want to say words about how I feel today about having the great opportunity to serve in the Congress.

I have spent 30 years in the Senate, 10 years in the House of Representatives, and, yes, 5 years in the Baltimore City Council. I have served in elected public office for 45 years. More than half of my life has been in elected public service but, at the same time, all of my life has been focused on service.

I rise today to thank the people of Maryland. I rise to thank them for their vote of confidence. When people vote for you, it is not only that they are sending you to Washington or sending you to city hall. They are giving you a vote of confidence that you will be their voice, that you will be their vote, that you will be at their side and on their side, and that is what I want to be able to talk about today.

The people of Baltimore gave me my first shot at running for the Baltimore City Council. When I beat the political bosses, when running for political office as a woman was considered a novelty, they said: You don't look the part. But I said: This is what the part looks like, and this is what the part is going to be like. Along the way, so many people helped me. Behind "me" is a whole lot of "we."

I got started in public life because of volunteers and activists who, on their own time and on their own dime, volunteered themselves to not only help me get elected but to be involved in their communities, to be civically engaged, to make their community and their country a better place. These are

the people who were behind me. Well, guess what. No, I was behind them, because they certainly have led the way.

Along the way, there were people who also not only helped me get elected, but they helped me govern—people who, again, volunteered their own time. I had a wonderful service academy board that helped me pick the best and the brightest to serve in our military academies—people with distinguished careers in either the military or in education. I had a judicial appointment advisory board that made sure I helped nominate the best people to serve in the Federal judiciary. Also, I had a veterans advisory group that brought to me what was really happening to the veterans, not what was in the press releases from the Veterans' Administration. Of course, I had a fabulous strategy group that functioned as a kitchen cabinet. It was a kitchen cabinet. We spent a lot of time cooking things up to try to make our country and our communities better places. So I thank them all for what they did.

But, when we come here to try to serve the people who sent us here, we cannot do it alone. So we have a fabulous staff, both that serves us in Washington and serves us in our State. I wish to thank my current staff: my chief of staff, Shannon Kula; my deputy chief of staff, Rachel MacKnight; my State director, Nichelle Schoultz; my legislative director, Brigid Houton; my communications director, Matt Jorgenson; my scheduling director, Catie Finley; my office manager, Josh Yearsley; my appropriations staff director, Chuck Kieffer; and my appropriations deputy staff director, Jean Toal Eisen; and of course, all of my staff in my State office who helped me.

There is also the support staff who made sure that the phones got answered. You didn't get one of those "call 1, call 2, press 7, press 184," et cetera. Also, there are the people who answer the mail, whether it was snail mail, which so much of it was when I came, or email, because we really believed that we needed to be here for the people.

I called their names, but there are also others who filled those jobs throughout my time in public office. They worked very hard to make sure that we could represent the people of Maryland and to be on their side.

After 45 years, though, it is time for me to say goodbye to elected office, but not to service.

I have the high privilege of being the longest serving woman in congressional history. But I say it is not how long you serve but how well you serve. For those who know me and have been to rallies and so on, they know that I say: "I am here to work on the macro issues and I am here to work on the macaroni and cheese issues"—to work on the big picture, to make sure that the people's day-to-day needs were converted into public policy or, while we are working on public policy, to try to help our communities.

We also have to remember in our own States that we have constituent service issues. One of the things I am really proud of is my constituent service staff, where if you were a veteran and you needed help or you had a Social Security or Medicare problem, you could call Senator BARB and you didn't feel that you had to go to a \$100 fundraiser or know somebody who had connections. The only connection you needed was a phone. You didn't even need Wi-Fi. You could just call me. Summer, winter, spring, or fall, they had Senator BARB. I tried to be of service because service was in my DNA. I was raised to think about service.

My mother and father ran a small neighborhood grocery store in one of Baltimore's famous row house neighborhoods. Every day they would get up, and they would open that grocery store and say to their customers: Good morning. Can I help you?

Now, in running that business, they also wanted to be sure that they were connected to the community. We weren't a big-box shop. We were a shop for the little people. If anybody was in difficulty, my father was happy to extend credit. It was called: We will write your name down in a book. Pay us when you can. Don't worry that you got laid off at Bethlehem Steel. We know that your wife had a difficult childbirth and needs this extra stuff. We are here to help.

My father would say: BARBARA, deliver those groceries. Take it down in that little red wagon I got for you. With my little red wagon, I would maybe take orange juice down to a shut-in, but my father would say: Don't take a tip. But the tip he gave me was to always be of service and to treat people fair and square.

The other place where I learned so much about service was from the nuns who taught me. I had the great fortune to go to Catholic schools. I was taught by the Sisters of Notre Dame and the Sisters of Mercy. These wonderful women, who led the consecrated life, taught us not only about reading, writing, and arithmetic, but they taught us religion and emphasized the Beatitudes. If anybody reads the Scripture, if you go to Matthew 5 and you go to the Beatitudes, you know what has shaped us. One of them is this: Blessed are those who are meek at heart. I had to really work at that one—really, really work at that one. At the same time, there were those who said: those who hunger and thirst after justice. That is what motivated me. It was focusing on the values of faith, like love your neighbor, care for the sick, and worry about the poor.

I was also inspired by a motto from something called the Christopher Movement, where you would help carry the burden. It said: "It is better to light one candle than to curse the darkness." That is what was motivating me to service.

You see, we really believed in America in my family, and we really be-

lieved in it in my community. When my great grandmother came to this country from Poland in 1886, she had little money in her pocket, but she had big dreams in her heart. Women didn't even have the right to vote. One hundred years to the year that she landed in this country, I landed in the Senate. That is what opportunity means in the United States of America.

I never thought I would come into politics. Growing up in Baltimore, my family wasn't involved in politics. My family was involved more in church work, philanthropy, doing good works in the way they did their business. In Baltimore in those days, there were political bosses—guys with pot bellies who smoked cigars and did deals, et cetera—and that wasn't going to be me. I thought I would go into the field of social work.

But I got involved because they wanted to put a 16-lane highway through the European ethnic neighborhoods of Baltimore and not even give the people relocation benefits, and they were going to smash and bulldoze the first African-American home-ownership neighborhood in Baltimore, in a community called Rosemont.

I said: Look, we can fight this. We just have to give ourselves a militant name.

I helped put together a group called SCAR, or the Southeast Council Against the Road. Our African-American neighbors were on the other side of town, and they had a group called RAM, or Relocation Action Movement. Then the citywide coalition had a group called MAD, or Movement Against Destruction. So you see, I have always had a certain flair about these things.

So we did take on city hall. But the more I knocked on doors—and our community did—we weren't heard. So I decided: the heck with it. If I knocked on a door and I wasn't going to be heard, I was going to knock on the door to get elected, and that is what I did—knocking on doors, putting together a coalition, defying the odds, defying what people said: You can't win. No woman can win in an ethnic, hard-hat neighborhood. No woman can win who isn't part of the political machine. And no woman could win who had been active in the civil rights movement. I said: Guess what. We defied the odds, and we denied the odds, and that is how I came into public office—a champion on behalf of the people.

I wanted to come to be an advocate for people to have better lives, to have better livelihoods and better neighborhoods, to be able to save jobs and to do what I could to be able to help them. I knew that to do that I had to show up, stand up, and speak up for my constituents, staying close enough to the people so they wouldn't fall between the cracks and meeting their day-to-day needs and the long-range needs of the Nation.

When I came to the Senate, I was the very first woman elected in her own

right. Though I was all by myself, I was never alone. When I came, there was only one other woman here—the wonderful and distinguished colleague from Kansas, Senator Nancy Kassebaum, a wonderful colleague. When I say I was by myself as the only woman in the Democratic caucus, I say I was never alone because of the great men that we could work with in the Senate.

Now, I have had the privilege to work with two of the best men in America. Senator Paul Sarbanes, who was my senior Senator when I came and who certainly was my champion, helped me to get on the right committees and convinced everybody that my name was BARB MIKULSKI and not Bella Abzug. But I was a little bit of both. As to Senator Sarbanes and now, of course, Senator BEN CARDIN, who also has been at my side, we have worked together on issues related to Maryland both large and small.

But there were others who taught me, like Senator Byrd, Senator Kennedy, and others. What it was all about was being able to work for jobs and for justice.

Though I was the first Democratic woman, I wanted to be the first of many. I wanted to help women get elected to the Senate and do what I could to be able to help them to do that. It has been just wonderful to see that now there are 20 women who are currently serving in the Senate. One of the great joys has been to work to help empower them so that they can be a powerhouse. That is why we have those power workshops that struck fear into the hearts of the guys—not to worry about us but to keep an eye on us.

I have been proud of what I have learned, taking the values that I had growing up and trying to put them in the Federal lawbooks, because, for me, no issue was too small to take up, and no cause was too big for me to not take on.

I firmly believe that the best ideas come from the people. That is where some of my greatest accomplishments came from. One of the things I loved the most was being in Maryland, moving around the State, going to all of the counties in the State. I loved my Mondays in Maryland, where I could meet and go into unannounced places like diners. A lot of people like to do townhalls, and they are terrific, but I like to show up at a diner, go from table to table and not only eyeball the french fries but listen to what the people have to say.

The other thing that I really liked was roundtables—absolutely those roundtables—where you could engage in conversation with people and listen to them, not show off how smart or cool you were. I really loved doing that. Out of it came some of my first big accomplishments.

When I came to the U.S. Senate, my father was quite ill with Alzheimer's. My father was a wonderful man. He worked hard for my sisters and me so that we would have an education. He

saw his role as a protector and provider, and by providing us an education, we could always take care of ourselves.

When he became so ill and went into a nursing home, I listened to other families who would come to visit people in long-term care. We saw that the very cruel rules of our own government were forcing people to spend down their entire life savings and put in their family home or their family farm as an asset base. Well, listening to them, BARBARA MIKULSKI said this: Family responsibility—yes, you need to take responsibility for your family, but the cruel rules of government should never push a family into family bankruptcy. So I crafted something called the spousal anti-impoverishment rules that enable elderly couples to keep their assets and keep their home. AARP tells me that since that legislation passed over 20 years ago, we have helped 1 million seniors not lose their homes or their family farms because one becomes too ill because of that dreaded A-word or Parkinson's or others. That is what I mean about the best ideas coming from the people.

Then I also listened to women who worked hard every single day yet weren't getting equal pay for equal work. Of course we heard it from Lilly Ledbetter, but we heard it from lots of Lillies, and we heard it from lots of Roses and lots of Marys and lots of Otanias and lots of Marias. That is why we worked hard to pass the equal pay for equal work act.

Working together with Senator Nancy Kassebaum, Olympia Snowe, our friends over in the House, Connie Morella, Pat Schroeder, we also found that women were being excluded from the protocols of NIH. The famous study to take an aspirin and keep a heart attack away was done on 10,000 male medical students, not one woman. So Olympia, Connie, Pat, BARB showed up at NIH and pounded the table and said: Let's start practicing good science instead of bad stereotypes and make sure we are included where we should be in a legitimate, scientific way. Out of that came the appointment of Bernadine Healy as the head of NIH; out of that came the Office of Research on Women's Health at NIH; and out of that came the famous hormone replacement study that Dr. Healy championed. Then Tom Harkin and Arlen Specter helped us get money in the Federal checkbook.

One study changed medical practice and lowered breast cancer rates in this country by 15 percent. Wow. That is what working together does—to try to save lives a million at a time. That was on women's health.

Then we saw growing concerns about the issue of the high cost of college. The first mortgage many of our kids are facing is their student loans. Working together with the other side of the aisle, we created AmeriCorps, making sure we enabled people to be able to be of service to our country and earn a

voucher to pay down their student loans.

Then there was a roundtable where I met with parents of special needs children, and a mother asked me to change the law from "retardation" to "intellectual disability" because she was being bullied. Well, I came back here and drafted legislation. Again, on the other side of the aisle was MIKE ENZI, who worked with me to pass that.

Rosa now is a member of the Special Olympics. She wins medals. She was Person of the Week on TV. That is what Mondays in Maryland means. It is worth everything to do things like that.

In Maryland, we worked along with Senators Sarbanes and Hardin to clean up the bay. We worked to make sure our port was viable. We worked not only on our Port of Baltimore for ships of commerce, but also we worked on the space community at Goddard. I am so proud of the fact that I worked very hard to save the Hubble Space Telescope. That Hubble Space Telescope turned out to be the richest contact lens in world history. But again, with astronaut Senators Jake Garn and John Glenn working together, we did it, and it ensured America's premier leadership in astronomy and in space for years and for several decades.

Over the years, though, I could go through accomplishment after accomplishment, but one of the things I have learned as my lesson in life is that the best ship you could sail on in life is something called friendship. It is friendship that makes life worth living. It enables life to have the value of giving. That is what friendship is. When I think about the friends along the way whom I have met both in my hometown and my State, there are also those who are here, people who on both sides of the aisle are absolutely so important to me—and the fact that we have worked on both sides of the aisle.

I spoke about Senator CARDIN and Senator Sarbanes. But also on the Senate Appropriations Committee, it was Senator SHELBY and Senator Kit Bond; we could actually work together. We put our heads together to try to come up with real solutions for real problems, and we could do that.

The other is not to judge one another because we have a party label. I am so darned sick of that. In the year of the women, so many came—like BARBARA BOXER and PATTY MURRAY and DIANNE FEINSTEIN, also Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison, who came from Texas. I got a call from Senator Hutchison one day, and my staff said: Ew, she wants to work with you on something. Ew, ew. She is a conservative from Texas and she wants to do something for women.

I said: How about if we listen? Could we start with listening? Could we start with just listening?

Senator Hutchison had a fabulous idea on IRA contributions. In those days, if you were in the marketplace, you could put in \$2,000, but if you worked full-time at home, you could

put in only \$500. What Senator Hutchison wanted to do was to make it have parity—that old word, "parity." I said yes. Our staffs told us not to work with each other, but we were going to forge ahead.

We went out to dinner to talk over strategy, but we talked together about our lives, how she got her start, obstacles she faced. We had such a good time that we said: Let's invite other women. Well, that became the famous dinners—the famous dinners that the women of the Senate have. We knew we would never be a caucus because we were not uniform in our views or the way we voted, but what we wanted to be was, No. 1, a zone of civility where we would treat each other with respect, our debates would be observed with intellectual rigor, and when the day was over, the day would be over. Those dinners have now stood the test of time, and I am so proud of them.

I have been so proud to work with my colleague, the senior Senator from Maine, Ms. COLLINS, who has been such a friend and such an ally. Though we are not a caucus, we are a force when we can come together. We have made change, and we have made a difference. That doesn't go down in the roll books, but I think it certainly should go down in the history books.

So as I get ready to leave the Senate, what will I miss? Well, I will never have another job as consequential as this. This is pretty consequential. The fate of this country, and maybe even the world, lies in the hands of the Congress of the U.S. Senate.

I will miss the people in the Senate the wonderful professional staff, but I am also going to miss the doorkeepers, the elevator operators, the cafeteria workers, the police officers who say: In helping the one, we help the many. We learn so much from them; I have learned so much from them.

I learned a lot from the elevator operators. One was a lady of very modest means who every day would say to me and to all of us, "Have a blessed day." What a great gift she gave us: "Have a blessed day."

Another elevator operator, who himself has recovered from very challenging health issues, always cheerful, asks, "How is your day?" The last thing you could do is to not return a smile. Those are the kinds of people whom I will always remember, all those helping hands.

So I say to my colleagues now that I will never, ever forget you. Helen Keller, though she was blind, was a great visionary, and she said that all that you deeply love you never lose. And all whom I have ever met have become a part of me; each and every one of you have become a part of me. Everybody I met along the way, whether it was at roundtables or the elevator operators, have become a part of me. You shaped me, and you have helped me become a better person.

So when I wrap up and people say "Well, what do you think you are going

to do, Barb," I will say my plan is not a job description but a life description. Every day I am going to learn something new. Every day I am going to give something back. Every day I am going to do something where I keep an old friend or make a new one. I want to thank God that I live in the United States of America, which enabled me to do this.

In conclusion, George Bernard Shaw—I don't know how he would have felt about me, but he wrote this, and I think it is pretty good. He said this:

I am [of the opinion] that my life belongs to the [whole] community, and as long as I live, it is my privilege to do for it whatever I can.

For the harder I work, the more I live. I will rejoice in life for its own sake. Life is no "brief candle" to me. It is a sort of splendid torch which I have got hold of for the moment, and I want to make it burn as brightly as possible before handing it on to future generations.

God bless the United States Senate, and God bless the United States of America.

(Applause, Senators rising.)

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

TRIBUTES TO BARBARA MIKULSKI

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, yesterday I had an opportunity on the floor to talk about Senator MIKULSKI, but I just want to take 1 minute—because I know a lot of my colleagues want to speak—to thank her on behalf of the people of Maryland.

Yesterday I was with Senator MIKULSKI at the inauguration of Catherine Pugh, our new mayor of Baltimore. As is the tradition on programs, the senior Senator speaks and then the junior Senator speaks, so I had the opportunity to speak after the dynamic remarks of Senator MIKULSKI. That has been a burden that I have had now for 10 years. As I pointed out to the people of Maryland, we are losing one of the great giants and advocates for our State, and that is going to be a great loss. The only benefit I can see is that I will not have to follow Senator MIKULSKI on the program in the future.

We are living part of a legacy, and we know that. We know that what we do here in the U.S. Senate one day will be recorded in the history of our country. I know that Senator MIKULSKI will be mentioned frequently for her incredible accomplishments here in the U.S. Senate.

On a personal basis, I just wanted to express that my life in the U.S. Senate has been special. For all of us, being in the Senate is special, but my enjoyment, productivity, and life in the Senate has been made so much greater because of my seatmate and friend, Senator BARBARA MIKULSKI.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. ERNST). The Senator from Maine.

Ms. COLLINS. Madam President, it is with deep affection, admiration, and appreciation that I rise today to offer my heartfelt congratulations to our colleague and my dear friend, Senator BARBARA MIKULSKI, as her service in

the Senate comes to a close. As the longest serving woman in the history of the United States Congress—30 years in this Chamber, in addition to 10 years in the House—she has earned the gratitude of the people of her beloved Maryland and of the entire Nation. That gratitude is based on much more than simple arithmetic, much more than just how many years she has served here, impressive though that is. In reflecting on her service, it is difficult to decide where to begin—her accomplishments, her vision, or her complete dedication to the people she serves, the dedication that began in that neighborhood in Baltimore that she describes so passionately today. No matter where we begin, we end up in the same place—it is all about her character.

Perhaps the best way to describe Senator MIKULSKI's character is by noting that she is not only officially the longest serving woman in the history of the Congress, but she is also unofficially the dean of the women in the Senate. That title perfectly demonstrates the trust and respect she has earned her from her colleagues. As a brandnew Senator in 1997, I was one of those tutored by this accomplished and experienced dean. At that time, Senator MIKULSKI had already been in the House and the Senate for a combined 20 years. She didn't know me from Adam—or perhaps I should say from Eve—yet, despite the difference in our seniority, our States, and our parties, she took me under her wing. She was one of the first people who called me after I was sworn in as a new Senator. I was so grateful for her kindness and her wisdom. She invited me to a power workshop in her office, along with Mary Landrieu, the other woman who was elected that year. She taught me the ropes of the appropriations process and instituted regular bipartisan dinners for the women of the Senate.

In the years since then, I have come to know her as a fighter, a trailblazer, and a person of such integrity.

Maybe it is all those years with the nuns that taught you that.

It has been a privilege to work with her on such vital issues as home health care, maritime issues, higher education, pay equality, and an issue near and dear to both of us, Alzheimer's research. Serving with her on the Appropriations Committee, I have witnessed firsthand what an extraordinary leader she is—fair, openminded, yet with firm expectations and a clear sense of direction.

Senator MIKULSKI is, above all, a hard worker. Growing up in East Baltimore, she learned the value of hard work in her family's grocery store, as we have heard today. Her commitment to making a difference in her neighborhood led her to become a social worker, helping at-risk children and our seniors. The statement she made sums up her approach to serving in Congress: "I was a social worker for Baltimore families. Now I'm a social worker building opportunities for families throughout America."

Two years ago, I was honored to stand alongside Senator BARB to accept Allegheny College Prize for Civility in Public Life. We were representing all of the women of the Senate for our leadership in bringing an end to the devastating government shutdown of 2013 and working together on so many other issues.

With our dean setting the example, we have always rejected the idea of a women's caucus because we, like the men in the Senate, span the ideological spectrum. Who would expect otherwise? We have worked together across party lines to serve all Americans. As Senator MIKULSKI puts it "It's not about gender, it's about the agenda." In fact, all of us have our favorite sayings that the Senator from Maryland has taught us, and we will miss her way with words so much.

When Senator MIKULSKI reached her Senate longevity milestone 5 years ago, she surpassed my personal role model in public service, the legendary Senator from Maine, Margaret Chase Smith. Just as the great lady from Maine inspired me and countless other young women of my generation to serve, the great lady from Maryland inspires the young women of today, always encouraging them to go for it.

Throughout her life in public service, she has lived by one guiding principle: to help our people meet the needs of today as she helps our Nation prepare for the challenges of tomorrow.

What an honor it has been to serve alongside Senator BARBARA MIKULSKI. I have learned so much from her. I will never forget the day she told me I had the soul of an appropriator, which I knew was the highest compliment she could give me. And she was right. We have worked on that committee to get so much done.

I wish her many more years of health, happiness, and, most of all, that most important "ship," friendship.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California.

Mrs. BOXER. Madam President, before Senator COLLINS leaves the floor, I want to thank Senator COLLINS for her beautiful remarks about BARBARA MIKULSKI. As I leave here, I have said publicly—the press has asked: What is your hope?

I often say: My hope is with the Senator from Maine, Senator COLLINS, to bridge some of the partisan divides.

It has been an honor to serve with you. I know you have a lot on your shoulders as we move forward.

Senator MIKULSKI, I want to take a few minutes to talk about you. Some Senators have focus and drive. Some have compassion. Some have empathy. Some have sharp negotiating skills. Some have a quick wit. Some are great students of history. Some are champions for the least among us. Senator BARBARA MIKULSKI, you are all of these things. You are everything a Senator should be and more. As my mentor, as my treasured friend, you have been a

major influence in my career. Honestly, I can say I would not be here as a United States Senator without your guidance.

One of my favorite things about BARBARA is her wonderful sense of humor. It is legendary. She is hilarious when she wants to be.

When I was in the House of Representatives, I was fighting to integrate the all-male House gym. The room to which they had assigned the women was about 6 by 6, and it had showers and hair dryers. You know the big hair dryers that come over your head like that? It had no exercise equipment. It had no space. It was the size of a shoebox. We women decided we needed some exercise, so we packed into the tiny room.

There was then-Congresswoman MIKULSKI, Congresswoman Ferraro, Congresswoman Schroeder, Barbara Kennelly, Olympia Snowe, who looked like she had just stepped out of Vogue magazine. I was in my sweat suit, and so was BARB. The teacher was leading us in an aerobics class, and she said: Put your hands above your head. We did it. She said: Put your hands out on the side. We did it. Then she said: Put your hands on your hips and bend at the waist. And with that, BARBARA yelled: "Look, if I had a waist, I wouldn't be here." That is my BARB. She can use laughter to defuse any situation. I will always love her for it.

When I started thinking about my own long shot bid for the Senate—and it was worse than a long shot—the first person I went to after my family was BARB. It was a few years after she had made history by becoming the first Democratic woman ever elected in her own right to the U.S. Senate. She got right to the point: "How old are you, Babs?"—using the nickname she calls me to this day. I told her I was almost 50.

God, that sounds so young, BARBARA. I told her I was almost 50. I explained it was going to be a tough fight. I was up against two powerful male opponents in the Democratic primary, and I was an asterisk in the polls. What was her response? She looked at me and she said: "Go for it. It's worth the fight you'll have to wage to get here. And it will be a fight." And it was.

In 1992, four new women came to the Senate, and who was waiting for us with open arms? Senator MIKULSKI. And this is what she said: "Some women stare out the window waiting for Prince Charming. I stared out the window waiting for more women Senators—and it is finally happening!" That is who BARBARA is. She never set out to make a name for herself. She wanted to blaze a trail that was wide enough for all of us to follow.

Just days after I won that first Senate race, she sent all the new women Senators a guidebook she herself had written about how to get started in the Senate, how to get on committees. She invited us to her office for lessons on Senate procedure and how to set up our offices. She had covered everything.

In the years since, as you have heard, she has hosted regular dinners for all the women in the Senate—Democratic and Republican alike. We reach across party lines and come together because of her. We talk about our work, our families. We share our struggles and our triumphs. What is said there stays there.

Senator MIKULSKI has led us by example, showing us how to build coalitions, how to bridge the partisan divide, which includes strong partnership with our male colleagues, whom she calls "Sir Galahads." She has also shown us how to stand up and make our voices heard. As she says, go "earring to earring" with our opponents and "put on our lipstick, square our shoulders, suit up and fight." Legendary Mikulski words.

To me, Senator MIKULSKI is the whole package—a skilled, intelligent negotiator, a Senator who fights for the people, and a woman who helps other women. She is our cherished leader, and that is why she will always be known as the dean of the Senate women.

When BARBARA announced she would be leaving the Senate, I wrote her a rhyme. I love to write rhymes and lyrics. I wrote her the following rhyme: Before Mikulski won the day,
A guy would have to pass away,
And then his wife would take his place.
Finally, a woman in a Senate space.
But Barb she got there in her own right.
First Democratic gal to win that fight.
She won the race and joined the misters.
But finally NOW she has nineteen sisters!

BARBARA, next year, because of what you started, because of the people you encouraged, there will be 21 women in the Senate—a record. Sitting here in my chair, my seat, will be an incredible woman.

Senator MIKULSKI, BARB, my treasured mentor, my dear friend, thank you for everything. We have been through battles together. I am forever grateful to you, and I will always treasure our friendship.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Madam President, I thank the gentlady from California.

Mrs. BOXER. I like "gentlady."

Ms. MIKULSKI. That is the way we talk here. I thank the gentlady from California for her kind words. We have been together through thick, thin, and the attempt to get thin, and that story about bending at the waist is a true one.

I am not the person with the best hairdo or sleek or chic, but one of the things I have so admired about my friend is her authenticity. We first got to know each other in the House, and then I encouraged you to come to the Senate, which certainly was the right thing to do. You are yourself. You are true to yourself, you are true to your beliefs. You are true to your constituents, and you are true to the Constitution. You are such a true, blue person.

There are many words to describe you, such as outspoken, feisty, and all of that, but I would say the word that describes you best is "authenticity." You are who you are. The people of California have loved you for it and sent you to the Congress.

We started out together basically in city council roles, sometimes called the pothole parliament. It has been a pleasure to serve with the Senator from California. I have watched you stand up for your beliefs, and along the way, as you stood up for your beliefs, you made believers of us all.

Godspeed to you, BARBARA. We are friends forever.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

TRIBUTE TO DEPARTING SENATORS

Ms. STABENOW. Madam President, I wish to speak about Senator MIKULSKI and then also Senator BOXER, the two great Senator BARBARAS who have been such giants in the Senate. We are so grateful to both of them.

BARBARA MIKULSKI

Madam President, I do have to say that among the many things with which I have been honored and have appreciated was when Senator MIKULSKI accepted my offer to stay at the Stabenow bed and breakfast after long session nights and days when the Appropriations Committee was negotiating and doing the incredible work that had to be done. I had the honor of being able to put up a plaque in my home that says: Senator BARB slept here. I will always be honored to have had that opportunity on top of all of the other ways we have worked together.

It really is an honor to stand here. I can't imagine the Senate without Senator MIKULSKI and Senator BOXER. I can't imagine the Senate without the incredible service of my dear friend and colleague, who is our dean in every sense of the word—the senior Senator from the State of Maryland. For over 30 years she has worked tirelessly. We know that. We hear it every day. We know what the people in Baltimore, the Chesapeake Bay area, and all of Maryland care about. She has been fighting and standing up for them every single moment of every single day. I so admire that, and I am so grateful. She has been a wonderful inspiration and mentor to me. We have all heard about our dinners and the power briefings on appropriations. She has been a continual source of inspiration and a mentor to me.

She reached out to me, as she does to all of our colleagues, when I was first elected. She welcomed me and showed me what it meant to be a good Senator representing my State of Michigan and how to get things done. Senator MIKULSKI has always been willing to lend a helping hand and has never given up when it comes to fighting for the people she represents and being a trail-blazer.

I came into the Senate with a master's degree in social work. Senator MIKULSKI has often said that we are the

two official do-gooders in the Senate. We have taken our interest from helping people individually to another level by becoming policymakers, thereby giving us the opportunity to touch more lives by using our skills and our background in education as well.

We all know—but I think it is important to remind ourselves—that she was only 26 when Senator MIKULSKI talked about the highway proposal that would have destroyed a neighborhood full of working people. She spoke up. She was noticed, and she wasn't afraid to say exactly what she was thinking. She was and is absolutely fearless in every good sense of that word. She brought that fearlessness to the Senate. That fearlessness made her the first woman to serve as chair of the Appropriations Committee of the Senate. It doesn't get more important than that in setting policy and having an impact on people's lives in our country by prioritizing the interests of the American people in every funding decision. That fearlessness was on display when she helped bring us closer to the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act of 2009, making it closer to having equal pay for equal work than it has ever been before.

Senator MIKULSKI fought for health care. I was proud to join her in making sure that women could receive preventive care without a copay. She made sure that women were truly represented and that our needs were met in health care reform, and that will continue to impact all of the lives of women across the country.

When she turned her eyes to the stars, wondering what was up there, she made sure that the Goddard Space Flight Center was a leader in exploring the unknown. Like the supernova named after her, she has absolutely astonished us with her brilliance, and nothing will be quite the same after she leaves here.

Her work in the Senate has made it possible for so many women and girls across America to put their hat in the ring and say: I want to run for office, and I can do it.

Senator MIKULSKI said it best—there are so many wonderful quotes I will always use—when she said: Put your lipstick on, square your shoulders, and suit up. Go into the fight and get things done. That has become a mantra for us in working together.

I thank Senator BARB. You will be greatly missed, but I know you have so much more to give. I know you will always make a difference in people's lives in every single thing you do every single day, and we will be forever grateful.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Madam President, again, I thank the gentlelady from Michigan. We both have master's degrees in social work. I joke, but I am actually serious when I say we are certified do-gooders. When people hear about social work, they sometimes think it is about giving money away, but it is really about trying to help people build lives, build families, and

therefore build the Nation. The Senator from Michigan's championship in that area has been amazing to me.

I am so glad my friend from Michigan is here in the Senate, whether she is standing up for the people in Flint, MI, so they have safe drinking water, or standing up for those who need help in the area of food and nutrition so there aren't food deserts in communities. That is one of the biggest public health initiatives. If you are a diabetic, you can't comply if all you can get is fast food and french fries. If you are a child, you need good food and good nutrition. My friend knows more than anybody that you need to feed the body, the mind, and the spirit, and she has certainly done that. It has been great being your pal and partner.

Many people don't know this, but Senator CARDIN and I commute every day. When those appropriation cycles got pretty late, after midnight, the gentlelady from Michigan offered her home to me. We had a saying: Stop whining and have a glass of wine. There was nothing like being able to talk about your day with a colleague who will offer inspiration and encouragement at the end of the day. My friend offered her home, but she has really fought for so many people to have a home and a community in order to have what they need so they can learn and prosper in this country.

I just wish you so much and wish you all the best.

Thank you very much.

BARBARA BOXER

Ms. STABENOW. Madam President, as her name suggests, Senator BOXER has always been a fighter, a champion for the people of California, and a good friend.

Though Senator BOXER began her life in Brooklyn, California has always been her home.

It is where she got elected to the Marin County Board of Supervisors, becoming the first woman to hold the board's presidency.

It is where she first got elected to the House of Representatives, where she quickly rose and became a leader we could all aspire to be.

And as Senator, she has worked tirelessly for families, children, consumers, everyone in the State of California and Americans everywhere.

Senator BOXER has always been a wonderful mentor to me, and she has been relentless on moving forward on some of the most critically important issues of our time.

As the first woman to chair the Environment and Public Works Committee, she has provided the support that has kept America's air and water safe and to fight climate change. She defended mercury and lead standards and installed choking warnings on packages.

I will personally always be grateful for her tireless advocacy and support for the 100,000 Flint citizens who have been poisoned by lead in their water.

We have her to thank when we know that children and families all over the

country can be safer and more secure in their own neighborhood.

She has been an incredible supporter of transportation, extending the highway trust fund, helping protect over 1 million jobs. Or her Mat Map-21 Transportation Bill, which modernized Federal highway, highway safety, and transportation programs.

And she has fought for children and families, her work in the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act—providing extra services for young adults under 21 and helping some of America's young people who need it most.

On a personal note, I have greatly enjoyed sharing a love of music with my friend, BARBARA. Her creativity and passion for song has been a special part of who she is.

Her retirement, while well earned, will be a loss for all of us.

Thank you so much for your service.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Delaware.

TRIBUTE TO BARBARA MIKULSKI

Mr. COONS. Madam President, I wish to offer a few brief comments, if I might, so I may thank and congratulate Senator MIKULSKI for her tireless contributions to the State of Maryland and the whole country.

As many know, she is a passionate, capable, effective champion for people of all backgrounds, and she got her start in local government. One of the things we have in common is that I, too, started in a very humble office as a county council member in my home community of New Castle County, DE.

The way I first met BARBARA MIKULSKI and first saw her toughness, grit, passion, and determination was in a fight over a program she helped give life to, the national service program known as AmeriCorps. AmeriCorps is a fantastic national program that partners with the Federal Government, State, and local governments, the private sector, and nonprofit volunteers. She has been a tireless champion for AmeriCorps over many years and has made a lasting difference in its areas of focus and work.

During my short 6 years here, she has been a great friend and a mentor to me and to so many others on both sides of the aisle. JOE BIDEN, our Vice President, has often said: Show me your budget, and I will show you your values. As leader of the Senate Appropriations Committee, Senator MIKULSKI helped to lift up our values and helped to make sure we invested in effective programs that made sure we fed the hungry, housed the homeless, fought for manufacturing, and ensured that Federal workers who lived in Maryland and Federal agencies that were rooted, not just in Maryland but around the country, had the resources, support, and capacity to make a lasting difference here in our region and for the entire country.

I just wanted to add my voice to colleagues who stood here on the floor and said: We are so grateful to Senator

BARBARA MIKULSKI for her decades of service to Baltimore, to Maryland, and to our country and for all she has done to lift us up together.

Thank you.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

200TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE SENATE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, this Saturday, December 10, marks the 200th anniversary of the establishment of the Committee on the Judiciary of the Senate. I am very proud to be the chairman of that committee—the first chairman who is not a lawyer, I might add—and I will be submitting a resolution, along with some other committee members, to commemorate this 200th anniversary.

Madam President, 200 years ago, the Senate established 11 original standing committees. Today, although there are many committees, the Senate Judiciary Committee is one of four original committees that still meet today. During the past two centuries, some of the most vital and important questions facing the Nation have come before the committee. For example, during the Civil War, the committee ensured that President Lincoln had the emergency powers he needed to pursue the Civil War effort, and in 1864, the committee took a critical step in ending slavery in the United States when it reported the 13th Amendment of the Constitution.

The committee has jurisdiction over issues that directly impact American lives and is on the forefront of deciding important policy issues, including immigration, civil liberties, criminal laws and the protection for victims, and, of course, civil rights. In addition, the committee examines those nominated for lifetime appointments to the Federal bench.

Over the years, the committee has reported legislation that has been vital to the safety and protection of the American people. I don't have time today to discuss all the committee has accomplished over the last 200 years, but I do want to take a minute to recognize this important anniversary. I am very proud of the committee's storied history. Today, I celebrate these accomplishments and will follow that up with the submission of a resolution. I am truly humbled today to be its chairman.

I yield the floor and 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. HOEVEN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

DAKOTA ACCESS PIPELINE

Mr. HOEVEN. Madam President, I rise again to speak about the Dakota Access Pipeline issue in North Dakota. Again, I want to emphasize that we need to focus on the facts and under-

stand what is really going on there. On Saturday, the Obama administration announced its refusal to issue the final easement for the Dakota Access Pipeline to cross a narrow section deep underneath the Missouri River.

This easement is required to finish the 1,172-mile-long pipeline which is already 98 percent complete in North Dakota—and 86 percent complete overall. As I have indicated before on the floor, it runs from the Bakken oilfields in North Dakota, moving North Dakota light sweet crude all the way to Patoka, IL, so oil can go into all of the refineries along the eastern part of the country and the eastern seaboard.

In fact, our light sweet crude oil competes with OPEC. If they are not using our light sweet crude, they are bringing in oil from places like Saudi Arabia for these eastern refineries. So very important in terms of energy independence for our country, but as I said, this pipeline is 98 percent complete in our State. Now, again, the Obama administration is delaying it.

Unfortunately, this latest Obama administration decision fails to follow the rule of law, it fails to resolve the issue, and it perpetuates an extremely difficult situation for North Dakotans. Furthermore, it is estimated that over 5,000 protesters are still unlawfully gathered on Federal or Corps of Engineers land in our State. They are there in direct violation of the Army Corps' December 5 eviction notice, as well as an evacuation order from North Dakota's Governor.

However, now that the Obama administration has made its decision, protesters should move from their unlawful site on the Army Corp of Engineers' land. Even Standing Rock Chairman David Archambault has finally said that protesters need to leave and return home. Let me repeat that. Even Standing Rock Sioux Chairman David Archambault has finally said protesters need to leave and return home. He is the tribal chairman. The Obama administration needs to do the same. The administration needs to call on the protesters to leave this illegal site as well.

As I said, the Dakota Access Pipeline issue has been difficult for the people of North Dakota. In recent months, protesters have trespassed on private property, they have blocked state highways and damaged bridges, they have committed acts of vandalism to construction equipment by cutting hydraulic hoses, breaking windows, filling gas tanks with gravel, and setting equipment on fire.

Protesters have blocked intersections in Bismarck and Mandan. They have disrupted area businesses, and farmers and ranchers in the area have reported instances of trespassing and butchered livestock. The rule of law matters in this country, but by committing acts of lawlessness at this construction site as a proxy for changing broader environmental policies, the rule of law is undermined.

Just as the pipeline company must follow the law, the protesters themselves need to follow the law as well. By continuing to remain in the camp, the protesters are defying Federal and State orders to leave. They are subjecting residents in the area to additional weeks of disruption and hardship. They also require our law enforcement to continue their around-the-clock presence, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

The protesters need to follow the law, just like everyone else. I repeat, it is time—past time—to leave this illegal camp. I would like to address the dedication of our State and local law enforcement officers—the professionals who make up the North Dakota Highway Patrol, our sheriffs, and our deputies around the State and from other States who have come in to assist us.

Members of the North Dakota National Guard and other first responders have acted with professionalism and diligence to maintain peace and order under very difficult circumstances. They continue to protect the public, especially now with the onset of challenging winter conditions. In my 10 years as Governor of North Dakota, I spent a lot of time working with our law enforcement officers to prepare for weather emergencies. I know the preparations these situations require.

Even today, our law enforcement and State Department of Transportation crews are working to keep evacuation routes open, rescuing people stranded on the highways and providing assistance to many from outside North Dakota who are unprepared to deal with the recent blizzard we had in North Dakota.

The men and women in law enforcement are doing their best to protect everyone, including the protesters. We owe our law enforcement a debt of gratitude for their diligence, for their dedication, and for their professionalism, but North Dakota's law enforcement resources are severely strained. I have repeatedly called on the U.S. Department of Justice to provide additional funding and law enforcement officers to ensure public safety.

Our State has requested Federal assistance and was assured—was assured—by the Attorney General that we would be given expedited consideration, but that has not been the case. Our Byrne grant application for Federal assistance has still not been approved by the Attorney General. I will continue to call on the U.S. Department of Justice, the U.S. Department of the Interior, and the Corps to provide additional Federal resources, including funding and law enforcement personnel to assist our State and local law enforcement officers and ensure public safety.

As I have said before, everyone has a right to be heard, but it must be done lawfully and peacefully, whether that is during the permitting process, with its opportunities for public comment,

or through the court system. I emphasize through the court system. That is the established method in our country for dispute resolution. So it is time—it is past time—for the protesters to stand down and to recognize that the courts and the next administration will resolve this issue.

It is also important to recognize that this pipeline is not unique or unusual as an infrastructure project. There are more than 38,000 crude oil pipeline river and water body crossings in the United States—more than 38,000—and more than 1,000 in my State of North Dakota alone. This is one more. These crossings range from rivers, streams, and lakes to ponds, canals, and ditches. Also, it is important to understand the oil is already being transported across a river on rail and across bridges.

Once again, I just want to show—this is the network of oil pipelines in the country. They cross many bodies of water. We are doing it one more time with the latest, greatest technology. The pipeline does not go in the river in any way, shape or form. It is about 100 feet underneath the river. So even if there was a leak, somehow that oil would have to come up through bedrock to even get into the area.

In other words, it is the latest, greatest technology. This oil is already moving to market. It is already crossing the river on rail and on truck. If we don't build this, we are relying on the old infrastructure, which is less safe and less environmentally sound, instead of building the new, latest, greatest infrastructure with the technologies that will be more efficient, more safe, more environmentally sound. That is what makes sense. Again, it is not unique.

Additionally, the pipeline company has modified its route on its own 140 times in North Dakota to avoid any important or cultural resources. So they have modified the route to avoid any cultural resources 140 times just in our State.

In July 2016, the Army Corps issued its final environmental assessment, which concluded with the finding of “no significant environmental impact” and “no historic properties affected.” These determinations have been upheld not once but twice by the Federal courts, including a judge appointed by the Obama administration—a Federal district court judge here in Washington, DC.

As for the way forward for this difficult issue, we need to look at the facts at hand. In the midst of the ongoing news coverage, it can seem that heated rhetoric leaves little room for good-faith efforts to find common ground, but I want to highlight that there continues to be attempts at finding consensus among the stakeholders, even as recently as last Friday.

To that point, in a meeting I had yesterday with the Army Corps' Northwestern Division Commander, BG Scott Spellman, he stated that last Friday, on December 2, the Army

Corps' Omaha district commander, John Henderson, convened representatives from the pipeline company, the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, and Army Corps officials. They met in Bismarck for 5 hours. The meeting included tribal staff and the company's engineering and technical experts who came together for the sole purpose of reviewing Standing Rock's 19 specific safety and environmental concerns raised in the tribe's October 2016 letter to the Corps.

In this meeting, the pipeline company, tribe, and Army Corps discussed all 19 concerns raised by the Standing Rock, and they considered 36 potential terms and conditions that could further reduce the risk of a spill or pipeline rupture. Again, let me repeat that. In order to directly address the river crossing concerns raised by the tribe and the protesters, the pipeline company was willing to consider more than 36 additional safeguards for this crossing.

Friday's meeting actually resulted in a revised proposed easement, which was presented to the Assistant Secretary of the Army, Jo-Ellen Darcy, the next day, on Saturday, December 3—last Saturday. However, the following day, on Sunday, December 4, Assistant Secretary Darcy promptly rejected the revised easement and instead required more “broad public input and analysis.”

Clearly, the Obama administration is not interested in finding a way forward based on the merits of the project, even in light of two Federal court rulings upholding the Army Corps' reviews and even with subsequent attempts by the company to specifically address the tribe's remaining environmental concerns.

In recent days, I have met directly with President-Elect Trump's transition team and conveyed the importance of bringing this situation to a resolution. I have also spoken directly on the matter to Vice President-Elect Mike Pence and to the next Attorney General, JEFF SESSIONS.

President-Elect Trump has now publicly communicated his support for the project, as well as for providing Federal assistance, including additional resources and law enforcement personnel. This project should be decided on the merits and in accordance with the law. Failure to do so will cast new uncertainty on all future infrastructure projects, from pipelines that carry oil and gas and other liquids to transmission lines carrying both traditional and renewable energy.

If companies and individuals cannot rely on a system that follows the rule of law, nobody will risk making future investments in our country's vital infrastructure. That will make our Nation less safe, less secure, and less competitive. As I said a minute ago, think about it. If we can't build new infrastructure, then we will continue to use the old infrastructure, which is less safe and less environmentally secure.

To avoid this situation in the future—the kind of standoff we have with

the Dakota Access Pipeline—we need to focus on ways to improve the permitting process. We need to improve the process so we can make sure all people's voices are heard and provide regulatory certainty to companies willing to invest in large infrastructure projects. This should be done prospectively, not retroactively—looking for ways to better streamline procedures, reduce duplicative hurdles, and improve methods for public input.

This pipeline can be built safely and include necessary protections for both the tribe and everyone else downstream. The fact is that our country needs energy, and we cannot have it without energy infrastructure—pipelines, transmission lines, roads, rail, and bridges—to move both traditional and renewable energy from where it is produced to where it is consumed. Move it both safely and efficiently. Let's all work together to make that happen.

With that, Madam President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Hawaii.

75TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ATTACK ON PEARL HARBOR

Mr. SCHATZ. Madam President, I rise to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor.

For the people of Hawaii, it started as an ordinary sunny Sunday morning in December. Families were getting ready for church; others were preparing breakfast. It was quiet. It was peaceful.

Just before 8 a.m., the first wave of Japanese warplanes started their coordinated surprise attack on the island of Oahu. Bombers attacked aircraft clustered wing tip to wing tip at Wheeler and Hickam Airfields, making it too easy for Japanese pilots to destroy their targets. By the end of the attack, Japanese forces sunk four of the eight battleships at Ford Island. Another battleship intentionally ran aground in the harbor to avoid blocking the channel. Three destroyers and seven other ships were sunk or severely damaged. It was the worst disaster in U.S. naval history. There were 2,403 servicemembers killed or mortally wounded, and 1,247 servicemembers were injured. Fifty-seven civilians were killed.

Across Oahu, people watched as smoke and fire blackened the sky over Pearl Harbor. Among those were two 17-year-olds, Daniel K. Inouye and Daniel K. Akaka. Like many others that day, they were called to duty. Senator Daniel Akaka, then an ROTC student at the Kamehameha School for Boys, grabbed a rifle and guarded the hills above the school from potential Japanese paratroopers. Senator Inouye, then a volunteer medical aid, reported to Lunalilo Elementary School, where for a week he tended to the wounded.

In the weeks that followed, the shipyard was back to work repairing vessels raised from the harbor. Incredibly, all but two ships returned to service in just 2 years. The *Nevada* went on to

support the invasion of Normandy. Five other ships damaged at Pearl Harbor later met Japanese forces in the Philippines. That “Day of Infamy” and the events that followed would ultimately galvanize more than 12 million Americans to serve in uniform during the Second World War. We remember the men and women who left their homes to fight an enemy they did not know in places they had never heard of. They said goodbye to their families to protect their neighbors—foreclosed the promise of their own dreams to protect our freedom. We know well the stories of courage and devotion: the Tuskegee Airmen, the 442nd Infantry Regiment. We remember the ingenuity and heroism of Doolittle’s Raiders, the Navajo code-talkers, and Nisei translators.

The war in the Pacific lasted 2,194 days. When American occupation forces landed 4 years later at the end of the war, Japan was in ruins. But instead of turning our backs on the people of Japan, we extended a hand. We chose to turn an enemy into an ally. American occupiers immediately set out to transform Japan into a peaceful democracy, implementing land and economic reforms, improving working conditions, and granting women the right to vote. The United States sent billions of dollars in economic aid to rebuild Japan. Most of that assistance was delivered as food, for even several years after the surrender, there was widespread starvation in Japan. It is hard to forget someone who sends you milk for hungry children, as Prime Minister Abe recently told Congress.

The attack on Pearl Harbor set in motion a chain of events with painful consequences for our two countries, but the decision we made to partner with, rather than punish, Japan helped to forge between our two countries what Senator Mike Mansfield described as “the most important bilateral relationship in the world, bar none.”

Today, Japan is a leader in the Western world. We cooperate as partners to maintain regional peace. Our countries work together to stop the flow of extremism and arms in the Indian Ocean. We work side by side in humanitarian relief missions and to defend against ballistic missile threats. Our relationship has never been stronger. President Obama’s trip in May to Hiroshima and President Abe’s trip to Pearl Harbor demonstrate the endurance of this friendship and the importance of reconciliation.

So as we commemorate the 75th anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor, we remember the service and sacrifice of the men and women who lost their lives on that day in December. In remembering them and the service of those who fought, we know that their sacrifices were not in vain. America and Japan are forever joined in history. We move forward together, in the memory of those who sacrificed for a better world and for peace.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. CAPITO). The Senator from Mississippi.

TRIBUTE TO BARBARA MIKULSKI

Mr. COCHRAN. Madam President, I rise to compliment and congratulate my good friend and colleague, the senior Senator from Maryland, BARBARA MIKULSKI, on her decision to retire from the U.S. Senate. We are going to miss her very much. She has been a very effective Senator in speaking not only as a representative for the State of Maryland but also for the entire country on so many different issues and Federal responsibilities of our government. She has been very successful in every way—serving as chair of the committee on Appropriations, where it has been my pleasure to work closely with her as the vice chair when the Republicans were in the minority, and then coming to chair the committee, with her as the ranking Democratic member during other periods.

It has been a distinct honor to serve with her on the Appropriations Committee. In 2012, she became the first woman to chair the committee. She has also served as vice chairwoman for the past 2 years. I am pleased that we have been able to work together to report bills that reflect our shared commitment to national security, scientific research, education, and economic development. Senator MIKULSKI has been a very valuable partner throughout. Her approach to funding decisions as chairwoman and vice-chairwoman highlights the importance of the constitutional role of Congress to be good stewards of taxpayer money.

I congratulate BARBARA MIKULSKI on her distinguished career representing the people of Maryland which reflects great credit on our U.S. Senate. Best wishes to her.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION BILL

Mr. REED. Madam President, I rise to discuss the National Defense Authorization Act. After several months of debate and negotiation, the House and Senate Armed Services Committees have arrived at a completed conference agreement. This will be the 55th consecutive time that we pass a National Defense Authorization Act, which sets national security policy and provides important authorities to the Department of Defense.

I want to begin by thanking Chairman MCCAIN for his leadership during the course of this year. At his direction, the Senate Armed Services Committee undertook a robust review of how the Department develops strategic guidance and executes their business processes to help the Department operate more effectively and efficiently. I commend the chairman for making this effort a priority for the committee, and I appreciate his willingness to work in a bipartisan fashion on this important endeavor.

The conference report we are considering today includes many Senate reforms, including efforts to improve the defense strategy documents produced

by the Department and reorganizing the Office of Acquisition, Technology and Logistics to ensure that the Pentagon emphasizes research and innovation in support of our warfighters.

In particular, one of the most important reform efforts included in the final conference agreement is a Senate provision that would create cross-functional teams. This is a new tool for the Secretary of Defense to manage the formation and implementation of policies and solutions for complex problems that inherently cut across the many stovepiped functional organizations in the Department of Defense. The private sector has pioneered and mastered this highly effective integration mechanism for a generation, and business schools and business consultancies have championed its use for decades. I consider this provision to be one of the most important reform initiatives in this bill. None of this would have happened without the leadership, guidance, and constant urging of the chairman, Senator MCCAIN. Once again, I commend him for his extraordinary efforts.

As these reforms are introduced, it is imperative that we continue to collaborate with the Department of Defense to ensure that these reforms contribute to our national security and do not create unnecessary and detrimental consequences. This will be a partnership going forward to ensure that these reforms are adequate, appropriate, and work for the benefit of the men and women in uniform, and that is a process in which we will all be engaged.

With respect to the budget, the conference agreement we are considering today authorizes a total of \$619 billion, which includes \$543.4 billion in base budget funding for the Department of Defense and certain security activities of the Department of Energy and \$67.8 billion in overseas contingency operations, or OCO, funding.

This OCO amount includes \$5.8 billion in supplemental funding requested by President Obama for operations in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria, as well as an additional \$3.2 billion above President Obama’s budget request for base budget requirements primarily devoted to increased end strength. I have serious concerns about increasing OCO funding above the President’s budget request without a corresponding increase in domestic spending. While the OCO account is exempt from budget caps, the purpose of the Budget Control Act was to establish proportionately equal caps on defense and nondefense discretionary spending to force a bipartisan compromise on the budget.

During consideration of the NDAA, the House and Senate had different approaches on how best to fund these base budget requirements and ongoing military operations. However, after a robust debate, we reached an agreement on a modest increase in OCO to fund increased end strength and to replenish depleted munitions inventories.

With respect to Afghanistan, the conference agreement supports our military operations. Specifically, the bill authorizes approximately 8,400 troops in Afghanistan in 2017, including fully funding the Afghan Security Forces Fund at \$4.26 billion to continue support to the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces. Likewise, the bill contains \$814 million to enhance the capabilities of the Afghan Air Force and begin a transition from Mi-17 to the UH-60 helicopters.

Also—and this is an issue that I support very strongly after a recent trip to Afghanistan—it accelerates the Afghan Aviation Initiative, which is designed to build greater rotary wing capability and fixed-wing capabilities in the Afghan Air Force. This is a critical battlefield advantage that the Afghan forces will have over the Taliban.

With respect to Europe, we have fully funded the President's request of \$3.4 billion for the European Reassurance Initiative. This funding will support critical investments that will increase rotational U.S. military presence in Europe, improve key infrastructure, and enhance allied and partner military capabilities to respond to external aggression and preserve regional stability. The agreement also includes an authorization of \$350 million for the Ukraine training assistance initiative, to continue and expand security assistance and intelligence support to the Ukrainian security forces to protect their sovereignty and encourage a continued focus on robust defense reform efforts.

With regard to our special operations forces, they are at the forefront of our fight against ISIL, Al Qaeda, and other terrorist groups. The bill also includes important reforms designed to improve the oversight and advocacy for their important efforts by enhancing the role of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict. I think those reforms will be something we watch and encourage.

With respect to other aspects of our security programs, the conference agreement includes a comprehensive reform of Defense Department security cooperation programs. This is the first time such a reform has been undertaken, and it is an effort to ensure there is unity of effort across our government in the security assistance arena.

Likewise, the conference agreement includes a provision that would enhance the scope and authority of the Global Engagement Center. For too long we have been losing the information space to our adversaries—both state and nonstate actors. It is my hope that by providing this critical center at the State Department with a powerful mandate, we can begin to improve our efforts in the information space.

The bill also supports modernization efforts of many different weapons platforms. I am particularly pleased to see

that we are continuing two-per-year construction of the Virginia-class submarine. It also supports additional requests for advance procurement to keep this production on track. Furthermore, it authorizes \$1.9 billion for the Ohio-class replacement, including the first strategic nuclear submarine procurement funds, to begin the process of reinvigorating and rebuilding our underwater nuclear deterrence through the Ohio-class replacement.

In addition to modernization of our underwater forces, we are also looking at modernizing our triad of air, sea, and ground delivery platforms for strategic deterrence. This is the beginning of a multi-decade effort involving three major acquisition programs: our ballistic missile submarines—as I have mentioned, the Ohio-class replacement—long-range penetrating bombers, and also the land-based intercontinental ballistic missiles. Most importantly, we will be modernizing their command and control systems to ensure that our President always has positive control of these forces. As I have stated many times, modernization is critical in light of the increasingly belligerent actions by Russia, which conducted a nuclear exercise immediately after invading Crimea as a form of nuclear intimidation.

In the area of technology and acquisition, I am pleased the conference report takes a number of important steps to help DOD maintain its technological superiority. We continue to build on past work on acquisition reform undertaken by the committee, as well as the successes of Defense Secretary Carter and his colleagues, including Under Secretary Kendall, in controlling the costs of major weapons systems procurement programs.

The agreement includes a number of steps to improve defense acquisition processes, including strengthening the acquisition workforce, simplifying and streamlining regulatory and bureaucratic burdens on the government and industry, making it easier for DOD to work with innovative small businesses and commercial companies, and promoting the use of prototyping and rapid fielding to speed the development and deployment of advanced new systems.

In the area of technological innovation, I hope that reconstituting the position of Under Secretary of Research and Engineering will help promote connections with innovators both inside and outside of the government and ensure that the policies and practices governing our R&D programs, our defense labs, and our engagements with universities and industry are optimized to promote the most efficient and effective development of new systems and technologies.

Finally, I think the conference report includes important provisions designed to streamline and modernize Pentagon management processes. The bill supports efforts to develop and execute the modern management techniques and

practices modeled on private sector best practices, including the use of big data to improve Pentagon business processes. I believe that refining Pentagon management practices will result in cost savings and efficiencies, freeing up funds for other critical needs.

I note that the conferees did not include several provisions regarding the application of Obama administration Executive orders related to labor, safe workplace, and LGBT issues. Many of these are very problematic. I hope we continue to work to ensure the Department engages with fiscally and socially responsible and effective contractors to the best benefit of warfighters and taxpayers alike.

Of course, one of the key issues for the committee was the readiness of troops. I am pleased the conference report includes significant resources for the military services' unfunded requirements, with the goal of restoring full-spectrum readiness as soon as possible. For example, the bill includes additional funding for Army units to conduct additional home station training in order to prepare them for future combat training center rotations, as well as additional flight training for the other services.

We have also included significant resources in order to provide additional depot maintenance to repair our military aircraft, ships, and combat vehicles. There is also additional funding to better sustain our military installations, specifically in the facilities restoration and modernization accounts.

In the area of military personnel, the conference agreement accomplishes much on behalf of our servicemembers and the Department of Defense because we owe them much. It authorizes a 2.1 percent pay raise for all servicemembers, supports requested increases in the housing benefit, and reauthorizes a number of expiring bonus and special pay authorities to encourage enlistment, reenlistment, and continued service by Active-Duty and Reserve component military personnel.

Unfortunately, the bill does not include the provision in the Senate-passed bill that would have required women to register for the draft to the same extent men are required. I continue to believe this is the right policy for the Nation and the military. If we are going to have a draft, women must share equally the burden and privilege of service. We must be able to take advantage of their extraordinary talents because without those talents our military today could not function as it does.

However, the bill does establish an independent national commission on military, national, and public service to study the need for a military selective service process, including whether the Nation continues to need a mechanism designed to draft large numbers of replacement combat troops; whether women should be required to participate equally in the process; the means

by which to foster a greater attitude and ethos of service among the United States' young men and women, including an increased propensity for military service; and how to obtain military, national, and public service individuals with skills for which the Nation has a critical need. This commission could provide valuable insight on how we should proceed, particularly in a state of national emergency, in pulling together the best of our young people to serve the Nation.

With respect to health care, the bill contains a robust package of health care reforms that will bring the military health care program in line with the best practices in the civilian health care industry. This is something we have to continue to emphasize—the ability to care and treat all of our personnel and retirees with respect to their health care.

I think we have done a lot of important work in this legislation.

Let me conclude, as I began, by thanking Chairman MCCAIN and my Senate colleagues on the committee for their thoughtful contributions to this process. I also thank my colleagues on the House Armed Services Committee, Chairman MAC THORBERRY and Ranking Member ADAM SMITH. They did a superb job, along with their staffs. This was truly a thoughtful, bipartisan process that resulted in a bill that I believe will receive overwhelming support on the floor of the Senate, as it did in the House.

Finally, of course, this agreement would not have been possible without the extraordinary work of the staff. I thank so many, but I particularly thank Chris Brose, Steve Barney, and all the majority committee staff for their hard work.

On the Democratic side, I thank my staff director, Elizabeth King. I also thank Gary Leeling, Creighton Greene, Carolyn Chuhta, Maggie McNamara, Jonathan Clark, Jonathan Epstein, Ozge Guzelsu, Jody Bennett, Mike Kuiken, Kirk McConnell, Mike Noblet, John Quirk, Arun Seraphin, and Jon Green.

I deeply appreciate all of their efforts. They have made this bill possible.

With that, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

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

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

Mr. MORAN. Madam President, I come to the Senate floor to thank Chairman MCCAIN for his efforts on the

National Defense Authorization Act. Yesterday I was here talking about the Cures Act, and I know that is the business of the day, but I also want to recognize the importance of the NDAA and its assumed or hoped-for passage today or this week. I appreciate Senator MCCAIN working with me and supporting my amendment to remove language that would allow the administration to expend taxpayer dollars on plans to close Guantanamo Bay detention facility.

As in previous years, the NDAA continues to prohibit the closure of Gitmo and the transfer of detainees to U.S. soil. Fort Leavenworth, in my home State of Kansas, has been a site under this administration's consideration. This administration and foreign countries have lost track of numerous detainees, which escalates the risk for military men and women if the detainee is returned to the battlefield. With the total reengagement rate at Gitmo detainees returning to that battlefield at more than 30 percent, this provision is a life-and-death matter.

This Defense authorization also halts troop reduction and increases end strength across our Active, National Guard, and Reserve Forces. In every Senate Appropriations Defense Subcommittee hearing this past year with Department of Defense officials, from service chiefs to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, I received answers that concluded our Armed Services would welcome more forces, not less.

I introduced the POSTURE Act, S. 2563, with my colleagues Senator BLUNT and Senator PERDUE, to reverse these force reductions, increase end strength in the Active Duty, National Guard and Reserve, and specifically increase levels for our ground forces in the Army and Marine Corps. I am pleased this defense legislation—the one we are considering this week—reflects the objectives of the POSTURE Act by stopping force reductions and increasing end-strength levels across the Armed Services.

There are many unknowns around the world, and to reduce the size of our defense force would be a mistake. We have been impacted already by budget decisions rather than based upon what our Armed Forces need to defend America. Readiness is paramount, and this NDAA allows for increased funding to make certain we are training, equipping, and readying our forces as challenges around the world unfold. As Chief of Staff of the Army GEN Mark Milley has repeatedly said, "Readiness wins wars."

The Big Red One—the Army's 1st Infantry Division located at Fort Riley in Manhattan, KS, near Junction City, KS, has deployed its headquarters to Iraq for a second time in less than 2 years. That kind of turnaround requires the highest levels of readiness.

This bill also authorizes critical military construction funding for Fort Riley, Fort Leavenworth, and McConnell Air Force Base, helping Kansas re-

main a stronghold for our military training and power.

As we head into the holidays, I am pleased that servicemembers and their families will receive, with the certainty of the passage of this bill, benefits which they have earned and that they deserve, which includes a 2.1-percent pay increase, which is the largest increase in 5 years.

75TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ATTACK ON PEARL HARBOR

As we pass this defense legislation to support our military men and women, those who serve our Nation, we must take a moment to also reflect upon the significance of this day—December 7, 1941—that horrific attack on Pearl Harbor 75 years ago. That day forever changed our Nation and our national defense. We should never forget those who perished in that attack, as they made that ultimate sacrifice: 2,008 naval men, 109 Marines, 218 Army men, and 68 civilians.

Shortly after I was elected to the U.S. Senate on December 7, 2010, I had the distinct opportunity to present service medals to Kansans who had served and survived the attack on Pearl Harbor. It took us 69 years after they survived that attack, but I was honored to bestow U.S. Navy veterans Arthur Dunn and Paul Aschbrenner with their much deserved commendations. It was a special moment I will not forget.

VETERANS HEALTH CARE AND BENEFITS LEGISLATION

To honor those who perished that day as well as those who survived, like Arthur and Paul, we must care for the 21.8 million veterans who live among us today and who deserve the best our Nation can offer. We have an opportunity to better care for our veterans with the passage of H.R. 6416, the Jeff Miller and Richard Blumenthal Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act of 2016, which has passed the House and is coming to the Senate.

This legislation includes 76 bipartisan provisions to improve VA health care, streamline disability compensation, and address other benefits and services that must be reformed to better serve our veterans. I thank the chairman of my committee, the Senator from Georgia, for his leadership in this regard.

I am particularly pleased that this legislation includes legislation that I, along with Senator BLUMENTHAL, have diligently worked on for over the last several years. It is sponsored by 48 of our Senate colleagues. It is the Toxic Exposure Research Act. This legislation takes a significant step toward researching the potential health effects of toxic exposure to veterans and their descendants. To send a strong message to our veterans, we must pass this legislation.

I often meet with World War II veterans at the memorial that was built in their honor on the National Mall. The message I try to convey is one that I also shared with my dad upon my first

visit to the memorial. I stepped away and called my dad at home in Plainville, KS, and I said: Dad, I should have said this a long time ago, but I thank you for your service, I respect you, and I love you. That, we do again today. On this significant day in our Nation's history, with the passage of veterans legislation, with the passage of NDAA, we certainly can tell our service men and women and our veterans, those who served our country so diligently and so faithfully, that we thank you for your service, we respect you, and we love you.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Virginia.

AFFORDABLE CARE ACT

Mr. KAINE. Madam President, I rise to talk about the ongoing discussions about the repeal of the Affordable Care Act. I basically want to make the case that this repeal, without a replacement being known, would be malpractice for the health care of millions of Americans as well as malpractice for the American economy. Before I talk about why, I just want to tell two stories.

On Monday of this week, I visited Neighborhood Health, which is a community health center in Northern Virginia that serves 14,000 patients. It is not a walk-in clinic; they are sort of a medical home for 14,000 low-income Northern Virginians, mostly working people. Community health centers in Virginia, West Virginia, and in every State are a critical part of the health care safety net. In Virginia, they serve about 300,000 patients and millions nationally.

They are medicine with a mission. They don't deny anybody primary health care services because of inability to pay, and residents have equal access regardless of where they live, their culture, their gender, their race, or resources.

Many centers, including the one I visited just 20 minutes from here, were centers that were able to build or expand because of the Affordable Care Act. Facilities have gotten better in communities across the country because of the Affordable Care Act. That visit made powerfully clear to me how much every ZIP Code in this country has been affected by the Affordable Care Act because of these centers and other services that are provided.

The second story is a story from my recently completed, 105-day, unsuccessful venture as part of a national ticket. I was at the Iowa State Fair. A grandfather was carrying a little boy who looked to be about 3½ years old. I said: Tell me this youngster's name. The grandfather said: This is Jude. Of course, I said: Hey, Jude, and I said: Tell me about Jude. The grandfather and now the father walked over and started to talk to me, and what they said is this: Jude is 3½ years old and he has already had five open heart operations at the Omaha Children's Hospital, which is just across the river from Western Iowa, in Nebraska. They

looked at me and they said he couldn't have had these operations had it not been for the Affordable Care Act. Had it not been for the Affordable Care Act, he now would have exceeded his lifetime limit of any policy he could ever get, and he also would have a pre-existing condition because of his heart condition that would render him unable to get insurance for the rest of his life. They looked at me, and—the father especially is a pretty big guy—and they asked: Will you do all you can—will you do all you can to make sure that this act is not repealed? You can strengthen it, you can improve it, but will you do all you can to make sure it is not repealed? I looked at them and I said—because I believed this even before they asked me the question: I will do anything to my last breath to make sure that we improve this but that we don't get rid of it. That is why I stand on the floor today.

Since the Affordable Care Act was passed in March of 2010, 20 million Americans have health insurance and many of them for the first time in their life. That is, I think, the combined population of about 14 or 15 States, having health insurance for the first time in their lives.

Now, when you have health insurance, it is not only that you can get care for an illness or an accident, even when you are healthy, you can go to bed at night with the knowledge that if something happens to my wife tomorrow, if something happens to me tomorrow, if something happens to my child tomorrow, they will be able to receive care.

The percentage in the Nation of people who were uninsured when the Affordable Care Act was passed was 16 percent. One in six Americans was uninsured. Now it is down to 8.6 percent. That is the lowest level of uninsured we have had probably since we have measured it. In Virginia, the drop has been from 13 percent—we were a little better than the national average—and we have dropped down to 9.1 percent uninsured. We are a little higher than the national average now because my State does not accept Medicaid expansion, but the difference in 6 years is 327,000 more Virginians have health insurance in 2015 than had it in 2010. That is a powerful thing.

In addition to having health insurance, families are protected because they can't get turned away because of preexisting conditions, they can't get turned away because they have reached lifetime limits in terms of their medical care, as Jude would have reached by age 3½. Children can stay on family policies until age 26. Women cannot be charged different health care premiums than men. Insurance companies are required to rebate excess premium payments back to consumers if they overcharge.

It is not just about the millions who have health insurance who have never had it before, there are also millions and millions more to receive protec-

tions they have never had before. These are important provisions.

There has been discussion that I have been reading and following that what some want to do is just repeal the Affordable Care Act, with a vague promise that something will happen down the line. Of course, those who want to repeal the Affordable Care Act who voted against it in March of 2010 have had 6 or now nearly 7 years to come up with what they think would be better, and there has been no consensus about what they think would be better. So the notion of we are going to repeal it and don't worry, we will come up with a better alternative, rings pretty hollow to a family like Jude's parents and grandparents who have a three-and-a-half-year-old-boy who needs open heart surgery. The notion that don't worry, we will find a replacement, we will find a fix—I think we could forgive somebody like Jude's family for not having a lot of confidence in that.

If, in fact, we are serious about finding a fix, why don't we go to work finding a fix before we pass legislation to repeal the law.

I have said I think it is health malpractice and economic malpractice. Let me start with the economic malpractice. The worst thing Congress can do for the economy is to inject uncertainty into it. I have been a mayor and I have been a Governor and I am a certainty fanatic. What I have learned about the economy is that our strong and resilient business sector—if you give them certainty, they can plan. They may not like a policy, they might not like a budget number, but if you tell them this is the way it is going to be, the ingenuity of our private sector is significant. They are going to be able to plan, they are going to be able to make the best of it, they are going to be able to figure it out, but if you provide uncertainty and don't tell people what you are going to do, that is very devastating.

I am on the Budget Committee. I came into the Budget Committee in the Senate, and I told my colleagues on both sides of the aisle: I am a certainty fanatic. We should be doing a budget. We shouldn't be doing a continuing resolution right now. We should be doing appropriations bills because when we tell both our own planners in our own departments and also the private economy: This is what it is going to be for the next year, they can figure it out, they can adjust, and they can do well. When we instead deliver a message that we don't know what we are going to do—oh, there will be a fix, but it will be a few years from now, we can't tell you what it is going to be now, and really we can't even promise we will do it since we haven't done it in 6 years—you inject uncertainty into the economy, and that is the worst thing we can do.

I have made the argument that the recovery we have been on economically—which is not a robust recovery, but it is a steady recovery—the principal reason it has been steady but not

robust is because of uncertainty, and the principal generator of uncertainty in the United States is this body, Congress. Congress's inability to do budget in regular order, Congress's inability to tackle priorities, Congress's inability to work on big picture fiscal issues generates uncertainty.

So now we are talking about a repeal of the Affordable Care Act, the single largest sector in the American economy. One-sixth of the GDP of this country is health care. If you tell the entire American economy we are going to go into the largest sector in the economy, we are going to repeal it, and don't worry, we will get to something down the road as a replacement, you will inject uncertainty into an economy in a degree that has never been done by this body that I think will have catastrophic economic consequences even beyond health care.

It is also malpractice in the health lives of Americans. The Urban Institute has come out with a study today, an update of a study they did a year ago. There was a proposal a year ago to repeal the Affordable Care Act that President Obama vetoed. They did a study about what would repeal mean. This is what repeal means to the American public as we get ready to celebrate the holidays, a time when we are mindful of the needs of others:

The number of uninsured people in the United States, if the ACA is repealed, would rise from its current 28.9 million to 58.7 million, an increase of 29.8 million uninsured in this country. The share of nonelderly people without insurance would increase from 11 percent to 21 percent.

Of the 29.8 million newly uninsured as a result of the repeal, 22.5 will become uninsured as a result of eliminating premium tax credits, Medicaid expansion, and the individual mandate, and the additional 7.3 million would become uninsured because of the near collapse of the nongroup insurance market, and 82 percent of the new 29 million who will become uninsured are working families, 82 percent; 38 percent would be ages 18 to 34; 56 percent would be non-Hispanic Whites; 80 percent of adults becoming uninsured are adults who do not have college degrees. There will be 12.9 million fewer people with Medicaid or CHIP coverage in 2019 if the Affordable Care Act is repealed, and nearly 9.5 million people who have received tax credits to help them purchase private nongroup health coverage in 2019 will no longer receive that assistance. This is catastrophic to tens of millions of Americans.

I will tell a third story that is a story about me. I have to have the healthiest family in the United States, my wife and I and our three children. The only hospitalizations we have ever had, until my wife recently broke a bone, was for three child births. Our kids are 27, 24, and 21. We are the healthiest family in the United States. I was required once to go out right after the Affordable Care Act passed to buy

health insurance on the open market. I didn't have an employer who could cover it. Two insurers turned me down because they said: We can't write a policy for your whole family because of a preexisting condition. One insurer turned me down because of something about me, and one insurer turned me down because of something about one of my children. Again, we are the healthiest family there is.

We were able to say: Wait a minute. The Affordable Care Act just passed. You are not legally allowed to do that now. You have to write a policy for the whole family.

The insurance agent who dealt with us on the phone said: Let me talk to my supervisor, and then called back and said: You know, what. You are right. We have to write you a policy.

This is a law that not only provides health insurance to 20 million people who never had it before but for even healthy families like mine provides benefits to protect against some of the worst and most predacious behaviors of insurance companies. If the act is repealed, this all goes away.

Americans agree, repeal is not the answer. A Kaiser Foundation poll that was done in the last 2 weeks showed that only 26 percent of Americans support a repeal of the Affordable Care Act. Of the other 75 percent, some think it should stay the same, some think it should be tweaked backward a little bit, some think it should be advanced, but only one in four Americans believe we should repeal this law. Overwhelmingly, what the American public is telling us is, we should improve the law. That is what we should be about in this body.

When I was the Governor of Virginia, I noticed at the end of every legislative session there would be 1,100 bills on my desk for me to review, sign, veto, or amend. Of the 1,100 bills, pretty much every year 200 or 300 would be new, but 800 would be improvements to existing law. The job of a legislature is more about taking existing laws and reforming and improving it than repealing or doing something brand new. That is what puzzles me. Why aren't we doing that? Clearly, there is no rush. There is no rush because the discussions are, we would repeal the Affordable Care Act with a promise we will find a replacement in 2 or 3 years. So if the notion is we are going to work for 2 or 3 years to find a replacement, there is no rush, and if there is no rush, why aren't we sitting down right now? Instead of repealing the law, why aren't we sitting down right now? Let's sit down around the table, let's talk about what we don't like, let's talk about what we do like, let's talk about what it means to have 20 million people in this country with health insurance, many for the first time in their lives, and what they might think. Let's get the perspectives of hospitals. Let's get the perspectives of insurers, of doctors, and other medical professionals. That is what we should be doing. What is the rush?

I fear the rush is for one reason: a desire to do something before this President leaves office that can be a little bit of a poke in his eye, but it is a poke in his eye politically in a way that takes families like Jude's family or the families I saw at the neighborhood health center in Alexandria and puts deep fear and uncertainty in their lives and also puts uncertainty into one-sixth of the American economy.

I know we will be having this discussion in earnest, I suspect a little bit over the next couple of days but more when the year begins, just as we are going to be having discussions about Medicare and Medicaid, with 1.3 million Medicare enrollees in Virginia as of 2015. The CHIP and Medicaid Programs in Virginia have an additional 970,000 enrollees. I read dramatic discussions about these programs as well, these basic safety net programs.

I will conclude and say there is no reason we shouldn't be able to sit down around the table and talk about improvements. What I might call a reform somebody else could call a replacement. I don't care about the label, but what I do care about is repealing a law that provides millions of people the confidence that they have health care for the first time in their lives, doing it and having the discussion during the holiday season, doing it in a way that will hurt working people, will hurt working people who don't have high school degrees, doing it in a way that will hurt people who are already sick, who are already dealing with illnesses in their families.

I am a student of this body. I am not a historian. I am a student of this body, but my prediction would be this: If this body goes down the path of repealing this important law that provides important protections to millions with no idea about what the replacement is, I think it will be a day we will look back on and those who care about this body will look back on, probably in the not-too-distant future, and will say this will be one of the low moments in the history of the United States Senate. There is no need for it because there are people of good will in this body who are willing to sit down and find solutions and find improvements and find reforms, but nobody seems willing to have that discussion. Let's have that discussion rather than the repeal discussion, and we will serve our constituents better.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, today, the Senate will vote on significant legislation—a bill that aims to make it easier for innovative medical treatments to be approved, while investing over \$6 billion in medical research and combating the opioid crisis. The bill also takes an important step toward improving our mental health system, specifically by strengthening our parity laws to ensure mental health treatments are covered by insurance companies.

Medical research holds tremendous promise, but our commitment to this

funding has not kept pace with what is needed to make more breakthroughs with diseases like cancer and Alzheimer's. In recent years, Congress has supported increased funds for medical research, but these increases have come at the expense of other important domestic programs. We can and should do more.

In October, Vice President BIDEN joined me in Vermont to discuss the future of cancer treatment. We learned that we are on the cusp of so many developments in fighting the disease, but that more research is needed to get there. This bill contains \$1.8 billion dedicated to Vice President BIDEN's cancer moonshot and another \$1.4 billion in precision medicine to help target treatments to individual patients. It also includes \$1.5 billion for President Obama's BRAIN Initiative, to expand brain mapping technologies that help scientists understand brain disorders and diseases affecting the central nervous system. Since the BRAIN Initiative was established in 2013, it has already made significant advances in medical knowledge, including improving artificial limb technologies and discovering more links between brain chemical functions and depression.

I am also pleased that this bill finally fulfills our commitment to fund efforts to combat the opioid crisis. This is especially critical since Congress failed to include necessary funding resources when the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act passed earlier this year. This bill contains \$1 billion to combat the opioid crisis, with the first half of the funding to be dedicated this fiscal year. Each day, 129 people die from drug overdoses in this country. Vermont and many other predominantly rural States have been hit particularly hard by this epidemic. I suspect that almost every Vermonter knows someone who has been impacted by addiction. It is something I hear about regularly when I am home in Vermont. This is not the future we want for our children, for our grandchildren, or for our communities. I am hopeful that the funding included in this bill will help States move people into treatment to eventually stop the tragic cycle of abuse.

While I strongly support this funding, in addition to the bill's expansion of medical research and mental health parity, this bill is far from perfect. Whereas the bill contains \$6.3 billion in upfront cuts to offset funding for its many efforts, these funds are not in fact guaranteed each year. Rather, the Appropriations Committee must act each year to "unlock" the funding. Republican leaders assure us that this funding will go out the door, and as the incoming vice chairman of the Appropriations Committee, I intend to hold them to that promise.

I am also concerned that the bill includes provisions to fast-track prescription drug approval through the Food and Drug Administration, FDA.

We all want to ensure that patients have access to medications, but we must also be sure those treatments are both safe and effective. I have concerns that this bill may weaken the standards by which the FDA can review certain medications, for example, by allowing the agency to use existing data from different drug trials to prove the safety of new medications that include similar drug compounds.

Furthermore, while the bill makes it easier in many cases to get drugs approved, it does nothing to address the unreasonable price hikes we have seen in some prescription drugs. I filed an amendment with Senators GRASSLEY, KLOBUCHAR, and LEE that would address some of the anticompetitive behavior many drug companies are engaging in to help drive up the cost of their drugs. For example, in order to delay approval of generic drugs entering the market, some drug companies withhold drug samples or refuse to enter into shared safety agreements with generic manufacturers—both of which are necessary for FDA approval. Our amendment, which mirrors our CREATES Act, would close this loophole and help generic drugs come to the market faster.

Unfortunately, the Senate will not have the opportunity to consider this improvement to the bill or any others before we vote on the bill's passage. I am frustrated that a bill of this enormity—that has never been considered by the full Senate—is being placed on the calendar at the end of a session with no opportunity for amendments. I hope the Senate leadership will promptly schedule floor debates on this and other improvements to this package early next year.

Nevertheless, improvements were made to this bill before it was considered by the House last week. For example, the bill no longer includes a provision that would weaken the disclosure requirements for physicians receiving gifts. The bill also now clearly directs opioid funding to States that have been hit hardest by the crisis. Lastly, more of the funding for medical research is set to go out this fiscal year, which will have an immediate impact on improving the important work of the NIH and our overall medical research community.

On balance, this is an important piece of legislation that offers a great promise to move the bar forward on medical research, while also providing critical relief to families suffering from opioid addiction. I believe these strong investments will benefit us for generations to come, and I will support the passage of this bill.

Mr. REED. Madam President, I am pleased to support the 21st Century Cures Act, which includes a number of critical mental health provisions, much needed funding for medical research and innovation at the National Institutes of Health and the Food and Drug Administration, as well as funding to help combat the opioid crisis in our country.

First, I would like to highlight division B of this legislation, the Mental Health Reform Act. The Mental Health Reform Act represents years of work in Congress across party lines to improve the quality of and access to mental health and substance abuse treatment, such as training more behavioral health workers and strengthening parity for mental health and substance abuse treatment. This bill also includes my legislation, the Garrett Lee Smith Memorial Reauthorization Act, which supports youth suicide prevention grants for schools—elementary schools through college where children and young adults spend most of their time—to be able to reach at-risk youth. I am especially pleased that, for the first time, this bill will allow funding to be used for mental health treatment on college campuses, the most effective way to prevent suicide. I have worked with advocates across the mental health community for the better part of the last decade on this effort, so I am pleased to see this come to fruition.

This legislation also includes an infusion of funding for National Institutes of Health and the Food and Drug Administration—\$4.8 billion over the next 10 years, including \$1 billion to be concentrated over the next 3 years for the Cancer Moonshot initiative. I commend Vice President BIDEN for his work to spearhead the Cancer Moonshot initiative over the last year, and I think it was a fitting tribute that the Senate agreed unanimously to rename this title of the bill after his son, Beau Biden, who tragically lost his life to cancer last year. The remaining funding will be used to support key efforts at the NIH, such as the Precision Medicine Initiative, the BRAIN Initiative, and regenerative medicine using adult stem cells. In addition, the bill contains \$1 billion in funding for States to respond to the ongoing opioid epidemic. Earlier this year, passage of the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act was an important first step in addressing this crisis, but my colleagues on the other side of the aisle voted against efforts to fund the legislation and provide access to treatment in our communities. I am pleased that we will finally have real funding going to communities this year to provide this treatment.

However, I am disappointed that this bill does not make this funding mandatory. We will still have to rely on appropriations in the future to ensure that this funding goes out as intended. I am also concerned about the cuts in this bill, which many of my colleagues have spoken about at length during consideration of the bill, and I would like to echo those comments. For example, this legislation cuts the Prevention and Public Health Fund by \$3.5 billion, to the detriment of worthy and vital efforts such as youth suicide prevention, immunizations, and lead poisoning prevention.

While I have these reservations, I am pleased that the Congress is able to

support bipartisan reforms to our mental health system, as well as funding for medical research and the opioid response. I hope that we will be able to work on a bipartisan basis to ensure that these efforts continue to be funded over the next several years.

Mr. BURR. Madam President, I am pleased to rise to talk about the 21st Century Cures bill we have before us today.

At the beginning of this Congress, my good friend Senator ALEXANDER and I issued a report entitled *Innovation for Healthier Americans* in which we asked a simple, but critical, question: how can we do it better? Chairman ALEXANDER and I asked this question because we must do it better for our constituents and their loved ones who are battling devastating diseases—diseases like Alzheimer's, cancer, and rare pediatric conditions—for which we have no treatments today, but hope that we will in time to help the courageous individuals with these diseases to win their fight. I commend Chairman ALEXANDER for his resolute focus on this critical work and for his leadership in bringing forward the bill we have before us today.

For decades, our Nation has led the world in medical innovation, but the challenges to maintaining this global edge have never been greater. We recognized that our Nation's biomedical discovery and development must work as well as possible to ensure that Americans are able to benefit from the most cutting-edge medical innovations in as timely a manner as possible. We are at a tremendously exciting era in medicine that will be defined by innovation. Innovation holds great potential. Our ability to respond to public health threats, including those that pose a direct threat to our national security, will in large part be defined by whether or not we embrace innovation. In other words, the stakes could not be greater and innovation will be the key to our success in these endeavors.

The bill before us today reflects a tremendous amount of bipartisan work and covers many areas of health care. I want to take just a few moments to highlight a handful of provisions on which I have partnered with my colleagues and that I believe answer the question of how we can do it better.

I am pleased that the final Cures bill includes the Advancing Targeted Therapies for Rare Diseases Act, legislation that will help advance the development of targeted drugs for patients with serious or life threatening rare genetic diseases. Each of us has met constituents facing a difficult diagnosis, and these cases are particularly devastating when the patient is a young child who should have a lifetime ahead of them, but for which we have no treatment to offer them. These are the patients who move us to bring an unapologetic urgency to our work on these issues. The choice between nothing and nothing is not a choice. And so I want to thank my colleagues, par-

ticularly Senator BENNET, Senator HATCH, and Senator WARREN, for their work on the Advancing Targeted Therapies for Rare Diseases Act. Developing drugs for rare diseases is particularly difficult, but as our genetic understanding of rare diseases increases, there will be new opportunities to pursue treatments for Duchenne muscular dystrophy, cystic fibrosis, and certain cancers, and these provisions will help to pave the way for these therapies to reach patients sooner. With these opportunities will come renewed hope for the children, adults, and families battling these conditions.

I am particularly pleased that the final Cures bill also includes the Advancing Breakthrough Devices for Patients Act. This legislation builds on the Advancing Breakthrough Therapies for Patients Act, which was enacted 4 years ago and has been very effective in helping to bring forward breakthrough therapies for patients. I want to thank Senator BENNET and Senator HATCH for their collaboration and partnership on these breakthrough bills. Like our 2012 bill, these provisions will ensure an all-hands-on-deck approach, this time for devices, with the goal of expediting the development and review of breakthrough technologies. These provisions are appropriately focused on what these technologies will mean for patients. In order to qualify for FDA designation as a breakthrough device, a device must provide more effective treatment or diagnosis of life-threatening or irreversibly debilitating diseases or conditions. These devices must represent breakthrough technologies, have no approved alternatives, offer significant advantages over existing approved alternatives, or their availability must be in the best interest of patients. These devices might be the next technology that better prepares us to respond to needs in a disaster or life-threatening situation or the innovation that improves the manner and quality of an individual's episode of care. In other words, bringing forward these breakthrough devices will improve health care.

The timely and predictable review of medical products is key to promoting and protecting the public health. The FDA Modernization Act I authored in 1997 sought to modernize the agency in a way that supported regulating in the least burdensome manner, while ensuring that innovative products would reach patients in as timely a manner as possible. The FDA Device Accountability Act's bipartisan provisions included in the final Cures bill build on these efforts. I want to thank Senator FRANKEN for his collaboration on this legislation, which will ensure that FDA eliminates unnecessary burdens when reviewing devices. It will also permit more efficient device clinical trials. In addition, the bill will require FDA to update guidance on certain tests performed in doctors' offices to ensure that the guidance on this matter aligns with the FDA Modernization Act's in-

tent that, if the results by trained and untrained users are comparable, a test is considered to be accurate for CLIA waiver purposes. If we are going to ensure devices are able to reach Americans in as timely a manner as possible, we need to focus on what is necessary to know to meet FDA's gold standard for approval. What might be nice to know is not necessarily central to what FDA needs to know to make regulatory decisions. These provisions will help provide needed regulatory certainty and focus when it comes to FDA's review of medical devices.

As we worked on the Cures bill this Congress, we have been reminded of the need to be prepared for the full range of public health threats that may present themselves, whether naturally occurring, like the Zika virus, or the result of a deliberate attack. I want to thank Senator CASEY for his partnership in making sure we are as prepared as possible for these threats. The final Cures bill includes provisions from our bipartisan bill, the Medical Countermeasures Innovation Act, which will encourage the development of the medical products needed to protect the American people in the event of a global pandemic or biological weapons attack. Cochairs of the Blue Ribbon Study Panel on Biodefense, Joe Lieberman and Tom Ridge, wrote that this legislation would further strengthen the underpinnings of biological preparedness by creating new incentives for public-private partnerships; clarifying and streamlining contracting processes at the Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority; and ensuring that our Nation's health care providers have the guidance they need to use medical countermeasures in an emergency. The Alliance for Biosecurity has said that the medical countermeasure priority review voucher provided for in our legislation, and the final Cures bill, would be a game changer for investment in biodefense. Researching, developing, and getting a medical countermeasure across the approval finish line to market is a long, difficult, costly, and very risky but necessary endeavor. The priority review voucher for medical countermeasures will help to invigorate partnerships to ensure we have the medical countermeasures we need against the most serious identified threats—threats that have been found to affect our national security. We have heard that this program will benefit not only our civilian needs, but those of our Nation's warfighters, and, in doing so, better protect the American people. I look forward to continuing to work with my colleagues to ensure we fully leverage this provision, including ensuring that partners and innovators in this space have the certainty of knowing the Federal Government is committed to seeing this work through and not undercutting it by stopping our work on these fronts before we are fully prepared to protect the American people from these serious threats.

I also want to take this opportunity to thank Senator CASEY for working with me in our annual efforts to advocate for the National Institutes of Health having the robust resources it needs to advance its lifesaving work. In addition to the funding increases the NIH has been provided through the appropriations process, this legislation will give NIH a meaningful booster shot in dedicated funding to enhance its work in promising areas.

While passage and enactment of this legislation is a significant step, it is by no means the last. I will continue to hold the NIH and FDA accountable for their work on behalf of America's patients, and I look forward to continuing to partner with my colleagues on these important issues. As I have said before, the day-to-day actions—and, in many cases, inaction—at the FDA has a profound effect on our Nation's patients. It also directly impacts our economy, as FDA-regulated products account for about 25 cents of every dollar spent by American consumers each year. The importance of holding the agency accountable for its actions and inactions—all the way from front-line reviewers to the Commissioner—has never been more important.

The former FDA Commissioner, Dr. Andy von Eschenbach, once wrote that government policy can either inhibit or accelerate the next revolution in science and technology. We must continue to advance and see through policies that spur, foster, and support the innovation and regulatory pathways necessary to realize cutting-edge treatments. Like the FDA Modernization Act in 1997, the bill before us today represents a remarkable opportunity—the opportunity to embrace innovation for healthier Americans. The director of the Lineberger Comprehensive Cancer Institute at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill summed it up well when he wrote to me and said that passage of this legislation will not only touch lives, it has the potential to save them. Therefore, it is my strong hope that the tools provided by this legislation will be leveraged and the medical products our constituents are counting on accelerated. This will be good for America's innovators, North Carolinians, and our Nation.

Mr. KAINE. 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. (Mr. WICKER). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Madam President, at 2 p.m., the Senate will move to a final passage vote on legislation we call 21st Century Cures. It has been called by the majority leader the most important piece of legislation the Congress is likely to act on this year.

The House of Representatives added to the bill a Mental Health Reform Act—actually three separate bills that Senator MURPHY, Senator CORNYN, and Senator CASSIDY worked on especially here, which is the most important reform of many mental health programs in more than a decade. It is very important to one out of five adult Americans who have a mental illness.

It caused me to think this: This is Pearl Harbor Day. Pearl Harbor Day is a day when we remember the terrifying attacks on the American military that killed more than 2,000 and launched us into World War II. We also remember it as a day that began to create and define what we now refer to as the “greatest generation”—the generation distinguished by the men and women of that era, the era of Bob Dole, George H.W. Bush, and men and women now in their nineties and late eighties. They were defined by being willing to work hard on behalf of the entire country, put their differences aside and work for the greater good; to recognize that our diversity is important, but what is more important is the fact that we are all Americans.

There have been some other times in our recent history when we have been reminded of that, and 9/11 is the most important of those. I remember how I felt after 9/11. I watched President George W. Bush speak, and I thought he spoke eloquently, as did Al Gore at that time, about the principles that unite us a country.

Celebrating our diversity is a good thing. Celebrating our oneness is more important, and it is harder work. What we are doing today is a more modest—much more modest—example of the same sort of spirit. I do not want to suggest that passing a bill in Congress equals going to war or running into a burning building in New York City after it has been attacked, but it is the same spirit. I don't have any apology for suggesting that. It is a spirit of facing up to a big issue, a complex issue that affects lots of people, about which there are lots of legitimate differences, and working hard to resolve those differences so that we are not celebrating those differences, we are celebrating the fact that we came together and—as we did in the House of Representatives last week 392 to 26 and as we did on Monday in the Senate with 85 votes in favor of 21st Century Cures—we moved toward a solution that we all can support.

Sometimes we govern by Executive order in Washington, and Executive orders can be repealed by any new administration. Sometimes we have partisan exercises, as we did with Obamacare 6 years ago, and we have been like the Hatfields and McCoys ever since, shooting each other until we forget what we are arguing about. We actually remember, but it makes it much more difficult than to come together and get a consensus.

Other examples are the civil rights bill of the 1960s, the Medicare bill, and

the bill last December that President Obama called a Christmas miracle when we fixed No Child Left Behind and came forward with a piece of legislation about which there was a consensus not just to fix it but on how to fix it, a consensus supported by Governors as well as teachers unions, classroom teachers as well as school boards. On that bill, there will not be a movement in Congress to repeal it because everybody voted for it. So those who are teaching in our classrooms in our 100,000 public schools and those who are working in State departments of education and the parents will know that for the foreseeable future, there is a consensus and stability about elementary and secondary education.

We hear every day that we have a fractured country, that we have so many differences of opinion, we can't operate. Well, there is one institution in the country that is an institution that is capable of leading the country toward consensus on important issues, and it is the U.S. Senate. Sometimes we are able to do that. We were able to do it last year. As the President said—he called it a Christmas miracle. We fixed No Child Left Behind. We are able to do it today on mental health legislation, which had to navigate its way through gun issues, funding issues, and a whole variety of other issues. We are doing it on 21st Century Cures, which, as I and the majority leader have said, is the most important piece of legislation we will act on.

It is pretty rare that we have legislation that the President of the United States says is an opportunity we just can't miss and the Vice President of the United States is telephoning Senators before they go into their caucus meetings to urge them to support it. At the same time, the Speaker of the House, a Republican, is saying: This is part of my agenda for the future of our country. And the majority leader is saying it is the most important bill we will act on.

It still wasn't easy to pass because we are dealing with a lot of life-and-death issues: How rapidly can we move treatments and cures through the Food and Drug Administration and make sure they are still safe or how slowly can we do it and run up the cost so high that nobody can afford these treatments? How long can we take so that everybody is dead by the time the medicine is ready? We don't want that to happen. Those were the issues we had.

What kind of incentives can we give to drug companies so they can tackle rare diseases in children like the ones at St. Jude whom we see from Mississippi, Tennessee, and across the country? They have rare cancers and other diseases. Nobody is making medicines for those diseases because there is no incentive in the marketplace for it, so we give some incentive in the marketplace for such things.

Electronic medical records have been a real burden to doctors. We spent 30

billion taxpayer dollars, and they were in a ditch. This legislation moves it out of the ditch.

Francis Collins, the distinguished head of the National Institutes of Health, says that in the next 10 years, we will be able hopefully to prevent Alzheimer's or to identify it before symptoms, an artificial pancreas for diabetes, a vaccine for HIV/AIDS, a vaccine for Zika and a universal vaccine for flu, which killed 30,000 last year. According to the Mayo Clinic, regenerative medicine is a game changer—using our own stem cells to restore eyesight or to restore our damaged hearts. There are provisions in this legislation to move that ahead. There is \$4.8 billion in funding for the National Institutes of Health. The bill includes the EUREKA Act, sponsored by the Senator from Mississippi, which is so important. The funding includes money for the President's Precision Medicine Initiative, for the Vice President's Cancer Moonshot, and for the BRAIN Initiative. There is an additional \$500 million for the FDA and \$1 billion for State grants over the next 2 years to fight opioid abuse.

As the President says, this is an opportunity we cannot miss. It is an opportunity we cannot miss and we are not going to miss. We are going to have this bill down to the President very shortly, and he will have an opportunity to be presented with another Christmas miracle.

I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD following my remarks today's editorial from the Wall Street Journal, which says:

Cures is a stride toward a more rational and humane drug development system, and legislation is about compromise. The bill could become a useful precedent for successful progress as the 115th Congress starts to take shape next year.

On Pearl Harbor Day when we celebrate the "greatest generation" and the contributions they made by remembering that while diversity is important, our oneness is more important, this is a much more modest example but a very important one of the same spirit, one that affects virtually every family in America.

I would like to extend my deep thanks and sincere appreciation to the dedicated staff who worked on the bill. We talk about that a lot here, but every one of us who is a Senator knows how crucial that is. We have worked for 2 years on the bill, numerous hearings, numerous discussions. It passed the House of Representatives twice. It came through our committee, the Senate HELP Committee, in the form of 19 different bipartisan bills. Every one of those bills, by the time it passed, was the largest number of recorded votes against each one of those 19 bills.

The staff did a tremendous job on that. I want to especially thank David Cleary, who is my chief of staff, and Evan Schatz, Senator MURRAY's chief on these issues, for the remarkable way they are able to work together with

both Senator MURRAY's staff and my staff.

On Senator MURRAY's staff, John Righter, Nick Bath, Andi Fristedt, Wade Ackerman, Remy Brim, Colin Goldfinch, Madeleine Pannell, Julia Tierney, Kalah Auchincloss—I thank them very much for their passion for the issue and their willingness to work toward a result.

On our staff, in addition to David, I thank Mary-Sumpter Lapinski, Lindsey Seidman, and Grace Stuntz, who did an enormous amount of work, as did Laura Pence. I thank Brett Meeks, Kara Townsend, Melissa Pfaff, Liz Wroe, Margaret Coulter, Curtis Vann, Kathryn Bell, Andrew Burnett, Bobby McMillin, Lowell Schiller, Jim Jeffries, Liz Wolgemuth, Margaret Atkinson, Taylor Haulsee, Alicia Hennie, and Jamie Garden.

We have had an unusual opportunity in this to work across the aisle with Chairman UPTON, Representative PALLONE, Representative DEGETTE, and others in the House of Representatives and their staffs. I want to especially thank Speaker RYAN and Senator MCCONNELL. Speaker RYAN did a triple somersault to try to find a funding mechanism that would satisfy both Democrats and Republicans, and Senator MCCONNELL made time on the floor for it. Not everyone is satisfied with the funding mechanism, but we are all voting for it because this is such an important bill.

On Chairman UPTON's staff, I would like to thank Gary Andres, Paul Edattel, John Stone, Carly McWilliams, Adrianna Simonelli, Katie Novaria, James Paluskiewicz, Josh Trent, and Clay Alspach.

On Ranking Member PALLONE's staff, I would like to thank Tiffany Guarascio, Kimberlee Trzeciak, Megan Velez, Waverly Gordon, and Arielle Woronoff.

I would like to thank the hard-working staff of our Senate HELP Committee members, who played important roles in reaching this agreement, including Liz Schwartz with Senator ENZI, Anna Abram and Angela Wiles with Senator BURR, Jordan Bartolomeo with Senator ISAKSON, Natalie Burkhalter with Senator PAUL, Olivia Kurtz and Amanda Lincoln with Senator COLLINS, Chelsea Holt with Senator MURKOWSKI, Cade Clurman and Andrew Vogt with Senator KIRK, Claire Brandewie with Senator SCOTT, Matthew Richardson and Stuart Portman with Senator HATCH, Emily Mueller with Senator ROBERTS, Robb Walton and Brenda Destro with Senator CASIDY, Jean Doyle with Senator MIKULSKI, Sophie Kasimow with Senator SANDERS, Sarah Mabry with Senator CASEY, Beth Wickler with Senator FRANKEN, Rohini Kosoglu with Senator BENNET, Jennifer DeAngelis with Senator WHITEHOUSE, Kathleen Laird with Senator BALDWIN, and Joe Dunn with Senator MURPHY, and Beth Pearson with Senator WARREN.

From the Senate Finance Committee, I would like to thank Kim

Brandt, Jennifer Kuskowski, Erin Dempsey, Brett Baker, Chris Campbell, and Jay Khosla.

I would also like to thank much of the hard-working staff from the White House and Department of Health and Human Services who provided great help in getting this bill completed.

From the White House, I would like to thank Chief of Staff Denis McDonough and Kate Mevis.

From the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, I would like to thank Secretary Sylvia Burwell, NIH Director Dr. Francis Collins, Dr. Kathy Hudson, FDA Commissioner Dr. Robert Califf, Dr. Janet Woodcock, Dr. Jeffrey Shuren, Dr. Karen Desalvo, Acting SAMHSA Administrator Kana Enomoto, Sara Singleton, Jill Adleburg, Dayle Cristinzio, Jennifer Tomasello, Rachel Stauffer, Maren McBride, Karson Mahler, Lauren Higgins, Adrienne Hallett, Laura Berkson, Ned Culhane, Patricia Brandt-Hansberger, Dena Morris, Miranda Katsoyannis, Brian Payne, Brian Altman, and Peggie Rice.

We always rely on the experts at the Congressional Research Service to give us good information in a timely manner, so I extend my thanks to Andrew Nolan, Maeve Carey, and Wendy Ginsberg.

The Senate and House legislative counsel staff worked long hours on the many drafts of this bill, so I would like to extend my thanks to Bill Baird, Jessica Shapiro, Kim Tamber, Katie Grendon, Warren Burke, and Margaret Bomba.

From the Congressional Budget Office, I would like to thank Chad Chirico, Holly Harvey, and Ellen Werble.

On Senator MCCONNELL's staff, I would like to thank Scott Raab.

On Speaker RYAN's staff, I would like to thank Matt Hoffman.

Finally, I would like to thank all the patients, doctors, researchers, innovators, thought leaders, and experts who dedicated time and expertise to helping us come up with this legislation.

I see my colleague, the Senator from Washington, on the floor. I once again thank her for her strong leadership in helping create the environment where 21st Century Cures and the mental health legislation can succeed.

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

[From the Wall Street Journal, Dec. 6, 2016]

CONGRESS'S CURES BREAKTHROUGH

Medicine moves faster than government, thank goodness, but every now and again government tries to catch up. After years of thoughtful bipartisan work, Congress is now poised to pass the 21st Century Cures Act, a bill designed to accelerate the development of new medicines and modernize a malfunctioning corner of the regulatory state.

The sweeping measure cleared a Senate procedural vote 85-13 on Monday night and passed the House 392-96. These margins are testimony to renewed self-confidence in U.S. innovation and health-care progress, not

much expressed in Washington until recently. A few dead-enders like Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren are denouncing Cures for its lack of pharmaceutical price controls, which might have become a reality had Hillary Clinton won on Nov. 8.

Cures includes a \$4.8 billion infusion for the National Institutes of Health for basic research. The bill funds the NIH's neurological program on diseases like Alzheimer's, Joe Biden's "cancer moonshot" and rare diseases, while one encouraging earmark is for "high risk, high reward" studies that might not be financed by the private economy.

By the way, these new dollars are roughly offset with budget cuts elsewhere, which exposes the liberal claims of crisis if every program doesn't last forever. Congress is supposed to set priorities.

Perhaps the most promising component of Cures is a new regulatory model for Food and Drug Administration approvals. The FDA remains fused to an outdated clinical model that is too slow, costly and arbitrary. The FDA was not designed to govern an era of genomics, biomarkers, systems biology, artificial intelligence and other advances, not that its own inadequacy has prevented it from trying.

Thus Cures encourages the FDA to supplement classical randomized clinical trials with more information, such as adaptive trial designs that target patient sub-groups who are more likely to benefit. This would allow research to succeed or fail faster at some fraction of the current expense. The agency is also ordered to consider "real-world evidence" in approvals outside of trials.

What the FDA calls "RWE" is controversial because the agency is preoccupied with "proving" how a medicine will perform. But modern trials are so tightly controlled that the results are often artificial, or irrelevant to how a medicine will be used and refined in actual medical practice. In any case, debates about drug approval are never about "proof," but how to interpret evidence of benefits and risks.

The main limitation of Cures is that the problems at FDA aren't due to a shortage of laws. They flow from the agency's institutional culture of control, delay and abuse of regulatory discretion. Cures requires the FDA merely "to evaluate the use of real-world evidence," and this wouldn't be the first political instruction that the bureaucracy has defied.

Still, Cures is a stride toward a more rational and humane drug development system, and legislation is about compromise. The bill could become a useful precedent for successful progress as the 115th Congress starts to take shape next year.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to all of our colleagues in the House and the Senate who worked so hard to make this bill the best it could be for the patients and families we serve. In particular, I want to express my appreciation to Vice President BIDEN for his leadership, vision, and determination. I especially want to thank the chairman of the HELP Committee, Senator ALEXANDER, for his work and his leadership on this bill, as well as Energy and Commerce Chairman FRED UPTON, Ranking Member FRANK PALLONE, and Congresswoman DIANA DEGETTE.

I would like to reiterate my gratitude to our staff on both sides of the

aisle who put in very long hours and weekends and more to get this legislation finished.

As a result of a lot of strong bipartisan work, we are now sending a bill to the President's desk that will invest in tackling our hardest-to-treat diseases, put real dollars behind the fight against the opioid epidemic, and make badly needed changes to mental health care in our country. I am particularly thankful for the strong bipartisan work of Senator MURPHY and Senator CASSIDY, as well as Congressman MURPHY.

I am confident that I am not alone in saying that I have heard from so many people in my home State about each and every one of these challenges. There are patients and families waiting and hoping for new cures and treatments, people from every walk of life who make clear that the opioid epidemic has cost too many lives and torn too many families apart, and families who have struggled to get loved ones the mental health care they need, and our broken mental health care system got in their way, rather than helping.

I listened to these stories in my home State of Washington. I brought them back and told them here on the Senate floor, and now I am very proud to be taking bipartisan steps to help give patients, families, and communities the relief they need in response to some of the biggest challenges in health care of our time.

Thank you again to all of the Senators who worked on this and all of our colleagues in the House for this bipartisan effort.

I want to thank the Congressional staff from both Houses and both parties who worked so hard over the last 2 years on this legislation.

From my staff, Wade Ackerman, Kalah Auchincloss, Nick Bath, Jane Bigham, Remy Brim, Andi Fristedt, Colin Goldfinch, Megan Howard, Madeleine Pannell, Melanie Rainer, Julie Tierney, Elizabeth Wagner, Eli Zupnick, Helen Hare, Evan Schatz, John Righter, Aravind Sreenath, Natalie Kirilichin, and Kate Blizinsky.

From Chairman ALEXANDER's staff David Cleary, Margaret Coulter, MarySumpter Lapinski, Brett Meeks, Laura Pence, Melissa Pfaff, Kara Townshend, Curtis Vann, Lindsey Seidman and Elizabeth Wroe.

From Representative PALLONE's staff, Eric Flamm, Waverley Gordon, Tiffany Guarascio, Rachel Pryor, Kim Trzeciak, Arielle Woronoff, and Megan Velez.

From Chairman UPTON's staff, Paul Edattel, Adrianna Simonelli, John Stone, Carly McWilliams, JP Paluskiewicz, Adam Buckalew, Jay Gulshen and Josh Trent.

Thank you to the staff from all our committee Democrats who worked so hard on the package: from Senator MURPHY's staff, David Bonine and Joe Dunn; from Senator WHITEHOUSE's staff, Jen DeAngelis and Anna Esten; from Senator BALDWIN's staff, Kathleen

Laird and Jasmine Badreddine; from Senator CASEY's staff, Sara Mabry and Doug Hartman; from Senator FRANKEN's staff, Beth Wilder and Rachel Cumberbatch; from Senator BENNET's staff, Rohini Kosoglu and Rina Shah; from Senator MIKULSKI's staff, Jean Doyle, Jessica McNiece, and Amanda Shelton; from Leader REID's staff, Kate Leone and McKenzie Bennet; from Senator SCHUMER's staff, Veronica Duron; from Leader PELOSI's office, Wendell Primus; from Representative HOYER's office, Charlene MacDonald.

Thank you to the tireless staff of the Senate legislative counsel: Kim Tamber, Bill Baird, and Katie Grendon; and Holly Harvey, Ellen Werble and Julia Christensen of the Congressional Budget Office.

At the White House, let me thank Amy Rosebaum, Jeanne Lambrew, Carole Johnson, and Kate Mevis. Each of the agency heads played a crucial role in pushing this bill forward: Secretary of Health and Human Services Sylvia Mathews Burwell, National Institutes of Health Director Dr. Francis Collins, Food and Drug Administration Commissioner Dr. Robert Califf, Principal Deputy Administrator for the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration Kana Enomoto, and National Coordinator for Health Information Technology Dr. Vindell Washington and his predecessor Dr. Karen DeSalvo. The staff of each of these agencies did invaluable work over a long period of time: Andrea Palm, Jim Esquea, Sara Singleton, Jeremy Sharp, Dayle Cristinzio, Rachel Sher, Sara Walinsky, Adrienne Hallett, Laura Berkson, Lauren Higgins, Alex Khalife, Rachel Stauffer, Maren McBride, Steven Posnack, Karson Mahler, Tom Coderre, Brian Altman, Brian Payne, Peggie Rice, and Jon White.

I thank Senator ALEXANDER, who has worked diligently across the aisle to get this done.

My sincere thanks to you today. The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, the Senator from Washington knows how much I appreciate her leadership and enjoy working with her, and I think we all respect the fact that she enjoys getting results that help the American people.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, all postcloture time has expired.

VOTE ON MOTION TO CONCUR WITH AMENDMENT NO. 5117

Mr. ALEXANDER. I move to table the motion to concur with the amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion to table.

The motion was agreed to.

VOTE ON MOTION TO CONCUR. The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion to concur in the House amendment to the Senate Amendment to H.R. 34.

Mr. ALEXANDER. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. COTTON).

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

The result was announced—yeas 94, nays 5, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 157 Leg.]
YEAS—94

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

NAYS—5

Lee	Sanders	Wyden
Merkley	Warren	

NOT VOTING—1

Cotton

The motion was agreed to.

CLOTURE MOTION

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

The senior assistant 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.

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

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the conference

report accompanying S. 2943, an original bill to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2017 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. COTTON).

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

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 92, nays 7, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 158 Leg.]
YEAS—92

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

NAYS—7

Gillibrand	Merkley	Wyden
Lee	Paul	
Markey	Sanders	

NOT VOTING—1

Cotton

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 92, the nays are 7.

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

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2017—CONFERENCE REPORT

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the conference report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

Conference report to accompany S. 2943, a bill to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2017 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Delaware.

Mr. COONS. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The VICE PRESIDENT. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. COONS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the following Senators who wish to speak in honor of the Presiding Officer be recognized in the following order for up to 4 minutes each: me, the majority leader Senator MCCONNELL, the minority leader Senator REID, Senator SCHUMER, Senator HATCH, Senator LEAHY, Senator MCCAIN, Senator DURBIN, Senator ISAKSON, Senator MURRAY, Senator FEINSTEIN, Senator COLLINS, Senator MIKULSKI, and Senator CARPER.

The VICE PRESIDENT. The Democratic leader.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senator from Delaware amend his request so that Senator MCCONNELL and I will use our leader time. That will not count against his hour.

The VICE PRESIDENT. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered. The Senator from Delaware.

TRIBUTES TO VICE PRESIDENT JOE BIDEN

Mr. COONS. Mr. President—and it does bring me some joy to call you Mr. President. I am honored to be here today with so many of our colleagues, and I am grateful to Majority Leader MCCONNELL and Leader REID for their enthusiasm in pulling together this bipartisan tribute. I am honored to be joined by my senior Senator from Delaware, TOM CARPER, who will make closing remarks this afternoon.

Before I begin, I would like to remind my colleagues that there will be a reception for the Vice President in the Mansfield Room, after we conclude here, beginning sometime after 4. We have many Senators who wish to speak so we will move quickly through the order. I encourage my colleagues to submit their remarks for the RECORD, those who are not able to speak in the next hour. Their remarks will be combined with all the other remarks given on the floor, and the resulting speeches printed, bound, and presented to the Presiding Officer.

Mr. President, in a place known these days for some disagreements, my colleagues—our colleagues, Republicans, Democrats, and Independents—are all here today because we agree on one powerful and simple thing: our deep gratitude for the difference you have made in your decades in public service.

The greatest honor of my life is to serve in the seat that you held for 36 years—and not just literally this seat in the Senate but also a seat on the 7:15 Amtrak train down from Wilmington