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.

There are 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 and 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.

I want 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 and Michelle enjoy 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 pain. But I have a very close relationship. Denis was my 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 led to her marrying my chief of staff, David Krone.

These are just a few of the incredible 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.

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.

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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 were stealing the lives of so many. 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 race I won this 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 1960’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 was a southerner and he had never heard of 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, when 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—every single person 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 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. When I ran for Congress in 1983, John Burton and BARBARA MIKULSKY encouraged me to run for Congress. When I went to see her, she said, very simply: “Go for it.” That and $60 million—that was good advice. And I did. Senator MIKULSKY 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, Senator.

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. This was breaking the silence on a 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 duked 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 a planet that is sustainable 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 INHOFFE. We never surprise each other, even where we disagree—ever. Our
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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 Toxics 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 didn’t talk 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 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 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. I 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 of 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 shuttered 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, 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 troops 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 banned 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. It was so hard not to get 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 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 together, but the war went on and on. It took President Obama to finally end that war, and I will always be grateful to him.

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. And yet, I can honestly say I never stopped trying. I was able to do that 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, 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. It was our platform, which was 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 looked 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 spoke 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. 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 Committees. 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 things we were going to come to an end unless we do all 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: "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 the Clean Air Act, and we did actually work. 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 divulse 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 disagree 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 like 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 what will happen. They could do things in 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 spoilt our friendship or our ability to work together in any way.

So I think it is a very important meeting to many seasoned 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 and back home say they are cheering us on. 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 6½ 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 8. My family has supported me 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


FORMER STAFF


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 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 at 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 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 to have the chance 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 rooted in the hearts of the bravest people, and 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 Ayotte of New Hampshire, and Senator King of Maine for 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 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 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 and 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 threats we face around the world. I am honored to have worked with them and most of all to call them my friends.

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, broth-
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 lives. 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 SHELTON 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 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 inflicted in many communities. Our bill included 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.

I also 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 you to know 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 the dedicated public servants in service and, most of all, for your friendship.

Without leadership here, things just don’t get done. I especially want to thank Majority Leader MRCRN MCCONNELL for his commitment 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 finding 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 competitive and very tough 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 six 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 visit in 2000 at the invitation of a friend of mine to go and visit a hockey game. I came away from that visit even more enamored of the Granite State, including KELLY AYOTTE. I was very pleased that I could be here today.

KELLY, I wish you and your family all the best in the years ahead.
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 her their,” 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 town-hall meetings by holding more than 50 town-hall meetings in all 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 ensuring 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 preventing 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, she 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 2023.

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 the withering 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 here at home. Her 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. In this mission, 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 Norman 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. Mr. President, I 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 think I can safely say that renewable and reformed immigration is one of the 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. I 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 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 grown and 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: I will tell them 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, 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 onTenant 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 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.

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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 worked with her on another issue that has more 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, U-4, 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 young daughter to this terrible, 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 trapped in this terrible, horrible epidemic. She has done it 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 CARE 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 here-back-to-back, 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, it is 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 co-captain in the Senate. We raised money for young survivors of breast cancer. I know I needed 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 softball team or a softball teammate, 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 5-mile run. We have very different types of activities. That is what 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 CARE 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 here-back-to-back, 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, it is 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.

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The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia.
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 the opioid crisis. Watching her and Senator New Hampshire, is suffering from the crisis.

I was very fortunate to have KELLY AYOTTE as my mentor. I certainly learned a lot from her. She took the idea that you can get 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 I have high esteem, great admiration, have 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 government. I had a local appointment advisory board that made sure I helped nominated 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 services 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 Schoutz; 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, 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.

There were other things like work life balance—with somebody such as KELLY who has kids.

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 in honor and in memory of one of the leaders 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, to accept 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 of gratitude. I did today taking 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 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 26 years ago. The people of the political offices, 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 get me 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...
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 them all, 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, fall, they were 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 made sure that we 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 on 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 mother 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 school in the parishes, 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 was what was motivating me to service.

You see, we really believed in America in my family, and we really believed 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, she was elected to 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 father was a church building, 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 neighborhood of Baltimore, 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 doors 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 a political 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 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 to 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 women 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 family members 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. Listening to these people, 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 were in Menopause: not one woman. So I crafted away was done on 10,000 male that women were being excluded from the colleges and lots of Marias. That is why Ledbetter, but we heard it from lots of Lillies, and we heard it from lots of Lilly workers, that 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 Rosas and lots of Marys and lots of Otaries and lots of Mandalas. 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 Snowe and I, when she was a member of Congress, we went to 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 disabilities.” That 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 was a Miss 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 closely with Dr. Healy at NIH and pounded the table and said: That is what 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 things. Senator Glenn got more books, 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 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 Diane 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 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.

So I invited 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 this Senate have. It would never be a caucus because we were not uniform in our views or the way we voted, but what we wanted to do 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 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. Then I had to go down in the roll books, but I think it certainly should go down in the history books.

As so I get ready to leave the Senate, what will I miss? Well, I will never have another job as consequential as what I have done. 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 Kissengers, 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 can’t thank 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 for Senator from Maryland, Senator Sarbanes and Senator Hardin to clean up the bay. We worked to make sure that both sides of the aisle...
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. That is the way 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 the laudatory assessment I gave him today. I don’t know. I am not sure. I believe that’s probably 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 "bribe 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. SMITH. 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 morning 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. The State of Maryland 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 known. We know that what we do here 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. 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 separate the 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 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 she should say 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 institutional 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 has something to do 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 well as a social worker for Baltimore kids and 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 work hard for more families. Now I'm a social worker building opportunities for families throughout America."

Two years ago, I was honored to stand alongside Senator BARBARA MIKULSKI 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 dear 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, 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 of the least among us. Senator BARBARA MIKULSKI, 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 where 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, Barbara Kennelly, Olympia Snowe, who looked like she had just stepped out of Vogue magazine. I was in my sweat suit, and so was BARR. The teacher was leading us in an aerobics class, and she said: Put your hands above your head. We did it. She told us to twist our hips. 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 BARR. 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 BARR. 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, BARBARRA. I told her I was almost 50. I explained it was time to toughen up. 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 all 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. And 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 one of our cherished leaders, and one of the reasons 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 MIkulsik 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 mister. But finally NOW she has nineteen sisters!’’

BARBARRA, 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 treasure, 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 gentlelady from California. Mrs. BOXER. I like ‘‘gentlelady.’’ Ms. MIKULSKI. That is the way we talk here. I thank the gentlelady from California for 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 your beliefs. You are true to your constituents. 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. You have been to the Congress, 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 when 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.

THANKS TO US. 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 trailblazer.

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本国 action in a more strategic way.

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 citizen over money funding decisions. 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.

Here and 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 lip-stick 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 BARTLETT for her wonderful mentor to me, and she has been a tireless champion for our values and for the environment. She has been a tireless champion for America and all of her efforts have been directed towards making America a better place for everyone.

As a woman and as a mother, I have always looked up to Senator MIKULSKI as a role model. She is a strong and powerful women who has never been afraid to speak her mind or stand up for what she believes in.

Senator MIKULSKI, 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, 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 dieter, you can’t comply if all you can get is fast food. For children, you need good food and good nutrition. My friend knows more than anybody else 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 has fought for so many people to have a home and a community in order to forget about who they need so they can learn and prosper in this country.

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

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 first got elected to the Marin County Board of Supervisors, becoming the 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 in 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 and Act—providing essential 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.

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 that 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 government, 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 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. She always put people first.

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 is recognized.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, this Saturday, December 10, marks the 200th anniversary of the establishment of the Senate Judiciary Committee. 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 we 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 protection and promotion 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 talk about the Dakota Access Pipeline issue in North Dakota. Again, I want to emphasize that we need to focus on the facts and understand 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—98 percent complete in North Dakota—and 86 percent complete overall. With a hand on the floor, it runs from the Bakken oilfields in North Dakota, moving North Dakota light sweet crude all the way to Patoaka, 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 David Archambault 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.

The unfortunate decision of the Obama administration 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 in direct violation of the Army Corps’ December 5 eviction notice, as well as an evacuation order from North Dakota’s Governor.

The administration needs to act now. Let me repeat: Even Standing Rock Sioux Chairman David Archambault has finally said that 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 unlawful 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 dedication 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 have 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 are working to keep 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 service, 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 that has not happened. Our Byrne grant application for Federal assistance has 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. 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 bed-rock to get to 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 both more expensive 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’ 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, Army Corps 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 companies, 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 noise at various points. 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-Ellyn Darcy, the next day, 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 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 doubt on the wisdom of the decision to do so. This company’s determination on the merits and in accordance with the law. Failure to do so will cast new doubt on the wisdom of the decision to do so.

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 is necessary, 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 in accordance with the law 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.

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 or 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 Hickham Airfields, making it too easy for Japanese pilots to destroy their targets. By the end of the attack, Japanese forces had sunk four of the eight battleships at Ford Island. Army Air Force bases were on fire, the ships 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 servicemen killed or mortally wounded, and 1,247 servicemen were injured. Fifty-seven civilians were killed.

Across Oahu, people watched as smoke and fire blackened the sky over Pearl Harbor. Among them 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 Lunahillo 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
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 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 of national concern and national importance. 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 chairwoman of Appropriations. 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, 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 Appropriations Committee 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.

The PRESIDENTIAL OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

National Defense Authorization Bill

Mr. REED. Madam President, I rise to discuss the 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 includes $543.4 billion in base budget funding for the Department of Defense 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 reforms 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 of the chairman, Senator MCCAIN.

As these reforms are introduced, it is imperative that we continue to collaborate with the Pentagon to ensure the 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 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 any 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.

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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 $2.28 billion to continue support to the Afghan National Army 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. 

I also want to talk about 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 enhance 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 area.

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-year-period 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 deployment of 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 conditional defense 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 the Department of Defense achieve superior. 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 role of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics 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 step up Pentagon management processes. The bill supports efforts to develop and execute the modern management techniques and practices modeled on private sector 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 conference did not include several provisions regarding the application of Obama administration Executive orders related to labor, sexual harassment and LGBTQ 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 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 new bonus for 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 have to have a draft, we 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 individual's skills for which the Nation might 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, if you will, begin, 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 Thornberry 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, Carolin Chhut, Maggie McNamara, Jonathan Clark, Jonathan Epstein, Ozge Guzeltsu, 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 SMITH and the author 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 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 Sub-committee hearing this past year with Department of Defense officials, from service chiefs to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, I received answers that concluded we needed 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—reverses the 2016 NDAA and the POSTURE Act by halting 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 meeting the 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 authorizes critical military construction funding for Fort Riley, Fort Leavenworth, and McConnell Air Force Base, helping Kansas remain 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 in which they have invested and that they deserve, which includes a 2.1-percent pay increase, which is the largest increase in 5 years.

77th 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.

I served 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 68 years after 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, in the passage of veteran legislation, with the passage of NDAA, we can certainly 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.

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.

There 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 was 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 preexisting 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 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 lives. 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 me tomorrow, if something happens to me tomorrow, if something happens to me the day after 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. 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, we are 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.

Mr. Kaine. 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. 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 you provide uncertainty and don’t tell people what you are going to do, that is very devastating.

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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 generating 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, with a study they did a year ago, 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 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 Affordable Care Act were 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 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, 25, and 24. My 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. They 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 healthier families like mine provides benefits to protect against some of the worst and most preicious behaviors of insurance companies. If the act is repealed, this all goes away.

Americans agree, repeal is not the answer. A Kaiser 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, 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. I would spend much of 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 have that discussion rather than the repeal discussion, and we will serve our constituents better.

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, I yield the floor.

Mr. LEAHY. 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 $8 billion in 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 Alzheimers. 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 groups of as 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 Bidens 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 Obamas 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 provide 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 predominately 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 bills expansion of mental and behavioral 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 Hatch 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 colleagues SAPIENTS 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 bills 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. It is not the time for this important work. 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 opioids that have been approved for use in treating HIV not be approved for other uses, which is a step in the right direction. Moreover, 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 and scientific innovation, 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. 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 and access to mental health and substance abuse services, 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 Prevention and Education 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, and regenerative rates are among the adult mental health community for the better part of the last decade on this effort, so I am pleased to see this come to fruition.

The 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 my late 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 the Cancer Moonshot initiative. This bill will allow funding 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.

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 long haul.

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 patients in these battles 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.

Progress. Our Nation has led the world in medical innovation, but the challenges to maintaining this global edge have never been greater. We recognize that our Nation’s biomedical discovery and development must continue 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, bringing forward these 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 came 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, with the goal of advancing therapies, such as 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 approval, 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 the only 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 fast-paced world that have birthed the FDA. The same thinking 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 prioritize conducting certain tests performed in doctors’ offices to ensure that the guidance on this matter aligns with the FDA Modernization Act’s intent 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, the need for 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 a global pandemic or biological weapons attack. Co-chairs 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—whether or not we 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 received 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 frontline 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 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. KAIN. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum 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 decades. It is a bipartisan initiative, 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 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, banded together to solve its issues in 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 political 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, and the same 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 celebrated 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 McCoy’s 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 and 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 100,000 public schools or 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 to do the things that we think are important 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 the medicine to get there 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 cure, and 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 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 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 of a lifetime 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:

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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 many have become a reality that had Hillary Clinton won on Nov. 8.

Cures includes a $4.5 billion infusion for the National Institutes of Health for basic research, which will fund the NIH’s frontier logical on programs 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 if 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 current expenses. 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 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 to use the new evidence, and this will 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 future compromises.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

Mr. MURRAY. Mr. President, I would like to express my heartfelt thanks and appreciation to all my 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 Chair- man 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 hard-to-treat diseases, and keep 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 loved ones in 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 with me 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 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 Aucinhloss, Nick Bath, Jane Bigham, Remy Brim, Andi Fristedt, Colin Goldsmith, Madeline Pannell, Melanie Rainer, Julie Tierney, Elizabeth Wagner, Eli Zupnick, Helen Hare, Evan Schatz, John Righter, Aravind Sreenath, Remy Brim, Andi Fristedt, Colleen Auclair, Aravind Sreenath, Madeline Pannell, Melanie Rainer, Julie Tierney, Elizabeth Wagner, Eli Zupnick, Helen Hare, Evan Schatz, John Righter, Aravind Sreenath, Natalie Kirkichin, and Kate Blizinsky.

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

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

From Chairman UPTON’s staff, Paul Edtale, Adrianna Simonej, 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 McCaskill and 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 FRANKEEN’s staff, Beth Wilder and Rachel Cumberbatch; from Senator BENNET’s staff, Rohini Kosoglu and Rina Soo; and Senator MURPHY’s staff, Jean Doyle, Jessica McNeice, and Amanda Shelton; from Leader REID’s staff, Kate Leone and McKenzie Benet; 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 Hally Hanvey, Ellen Worker, Rachel Sher, Sara Wallinsky, Adrienne Hallett, Laura Berks, Lauren Higgins, Alex Khalife, Rachel Stauffer, Maren McBride, Steven Posnack, Karson Mahler, Tom Codere, Brian Altman, Bridget 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, 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.

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 to concur. The motion was agreed to.

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 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:

[Rolcall Vote No. 157 Leg.]

YEAS—94

Alexander  Fischer  Murray
Ayotte  Fischer  Nelson
Baldwin  Franken  Paul
Barrasso  Gardner  Perdue
Bennet  Gillibrand  Peters
Blumenthal  Graham  Portman
Blunt  Grassley  Reed
Boozman  Hatch  Reid
Boozman  Hoeven  Reisch
Boxer  Hirono  Roberts
Brown  Heller  Rounds
Burr  Hirono  Rubio
Cantwell  Hoeven  Sasse
Capito  Inhofe  Schatz
Cardin  Isakson  Scott
Carper  Johnson  Sessions
Cassidy  King  Sessions
Cooper  Klobuchar  Shaheen
Collins  Klobuchar  Shelby
Cotton  Manchin  Tester
Coryn  Markley  Thune
Crapo  McCain  Tillis
Cruz  McCaskill  Tomé
Daines  McConnell  Udall
Donnelly  Menendez  Vitter
Durbin  Mikulski  Whitehouse
Emi  Moran  Wicker
Ernst  Murkowski  Wicker
Feinstein  Murphy  Wyden

NAYS—7

Lee  Sanders  Wyden
Merckley  Warren  Cotton

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 the debate on the conference report to accompany S. 2943, National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2017.


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. COTTON). Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

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

[Rolcall Vote No. 158 Leg.]

YEAS—92

Alexander  Feinstein  Murray
Ayotte  Fischer  Nelson
Baldwin  Franken  Paul
Barrasso  Gardner  Perdue
Bennet  Gillibrand  Peters
Blumenthal  Graham  Portman
Blunt  Grassley  Reed
Boozer  Hatch  Reid
Boxer  Hoeven  Reisch
Brown  Heller  Rounds
Burr  Hirono  Rubio
Cantwell  Hoeven  Sasse
Capito  Inhofe  Schatz
Cardin  Isakson  Scott
Carper  Johnson  Sessions
Cassidy  King  Sessions
Cooper  Klobuchar  Shaheen
Collins  Klobuchar  Shelby
Cotton  Manchin  Tester
Coryn  Markley  Thune
Crapo  McCain  Tillis
Cruz  McCaskill  Tomé
Daines  McConnell  Udall
Donnelly  Menendez  Vitter
Durbin  Mikulski  Whitehouse
Emi  Moran  Wicker
Ernst  Murkowski  Wicker
Feinstein  Murphy  Wyden

NAYS—7

Gillibrand  Merkley  Wyden
Lee  Paul  Cotton
Merckley  Sanders  Cotton

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.

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 President 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 MRKULSKI, 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 years—and not just literally this seat here today because we agree on one powerful and simple thing: our deep respect for Joe Biden.