The House met at noon and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. MEADOWS).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC, February 13, 2017.

I hereby appoint the Honorable MARK MEADOWS to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

PAUL D. RYAN, Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 3, 2017, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to 1 hour and each Member other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip limited to 5 minutes, but in no event shall debate continue beyond 1:50 p.m.

HONORING PERRY C. McGRIFF

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida (Mr. YOHO) for 5 minutes.

Mr. YOHO. Mr. Speaker, on Thursday, February 2, 2017, Gainesville, Florida, and the State of Florida lost a favorite son in Mr. Perry C. McGriff. Perry was an icon in my hometown of Gainesville, and he was a representative for the State of Florida.

Perry was married to his wife, Noel, for 57 years, raised four children—Jana, Mark, Keith, and Matthew—and enjoyed the joy and laughter of their 15 grandchildren.

A tremendous family man, Perry was also successful in business. He was an insurance agent for 48 years. He had the honor of being the youngest person ever elected as mayor of Gainesville, and he was a representative for the State of Florida.

He was a tireless volunteer and doer in Gainesville, receiving countless awards and recognition for his community service. Two of those particularly stick out to me. He received the first ever Ethics in Business Award and the Service Above Self Award, given by the Gainesville Rotary for his lifetime of service. In addition to his time, Perry donated more than 60 gallons of blood and set an example for all to follow.

For all the things Perry was and all the good things Perry did, I will always remember him most for his smile, his great attitude, and his notorious reputation to have his camera at the ready. He was always snapping pictures of people enjoying life and making sure to send to each individual a copy so they could remember the happy moments in the life that he captured.

To Noel and the McGriff family, thank you for sharing Perry’s time. Thank you for sharing your husband and father with all of us. We will miss him forever, but we will never forget Perry. All of us, the city of Gainesville, the State of Florida, and I are all better for having known Perry.

STANDING STRONG AGAINST NORTH KOREA

Mr. YOHO. Mr. Speaker, this past weekend, North Korea said it had successfully completed the launch of a new ballistic missile. The Pukguksong-2, a medium-range ballistic missile, was test-fired on Sunday. The actions by the North Korean regime are unacceptable and in clear violation of the U.N. Security Council.

It is imperative that the U.S. stand strong with Japan, South Korea, and all of our allies in the region against the provocative and threatening actions of the North Korean totalitarian regime. It is a regime that is determined to thumb their nose at the world by advancing their nuclear capabilities, thus threatening their neighbors, the region, and for that matter, the world.

The United States and its world partners must continue to persuade North Korea to adhere to the U.N. Security Council resolutions or they choose to invite worldwide sanctions upon them. This is North Korea’s decision and nobody else’s.

CORETTA SCOTT KING LETTER TO SENATE JUDICIARY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. SHERMAN) for 5 minutes.

Mr. SHERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I include in the RECORD a letter and statement by Coretta Scott King from March 19, 1986.


Hon. STROM THURMOND, Chairman, Committee on the Judiciary, U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR THURMOND: I write to express my sincere opposition to the confirmation of Jefferson B. Sessions as a federal district court judge for the Southern District of Alabama. My professional and personal roots in Alabama are deep and lasting. Anyone who has used the power of his office as...
United States Attorney to intimidate and chill the free exercise of the ballot by citizens should not be elevated to our courts. Mr. Sessions has used the awesome powers of his office to chill the free exercise of the vote by black citizens in the district he now seeks to serve as a federal judge and jurist. I believe there is a clear and present danger by Black people should not be elevated to the federal bench.

The irony of Mr. Sessions’ nomination is that, if confirmed, he will be given lifetime tenure for exercising power in the local government. Whites had disfranchised black citizens during the past century, a broad array of schemes have been used in attempts to block the Black vote. No group has had access to the ballot box 더러 of all those disfranchised so persistently and intently. Over the last twenty years, a broad array of schemes have been used in attempts to block the Black vote.

The vote of rights is so fundamental in discourse that we cannot tolerate any form of infringement of those rights. Of all the groups who have been disfranchised in our nation’s history, none has suffered longer or suffered more in the attempt to win the vote than Black citizens. No group has had access to the ballot box denied so persistently and intently. Over the last twenty years, a broad array of schemes have been used in attempts to block the Black vote.

The exercise of the franchise is an essential means by which our citizens ensure that those who are governing will be responsible. This is called our right to vote. The denial of access to the ballot box ultimately results in the denial of other fundamental rights. For, it is only when the people select the ones who are governing will be responsible.

I urge you to consider carefully Mr. Sessions’ conduct in these matters. Such a reimposition of a policy that has not been tolerated since segregation was political, and the result frightening—the wide-scale chill of the exercise of the ballot for blacks, who suffered so much to receive the franchise in the first place, is my strongly-held view that the appointment of Jefferson Sessions to the federal bench would irrevocably damage the progress we have made to gain equal participation in our democratic system.

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I thank you for allowing me to share my views.

Mr. SHERMAN. Mr. Speaker, last Tuesday, Senator ELIZABETH WARREN sought to bring to the attention of the Senate some material about an Attor-
ney General nominee, Senator Jeff Sessions. She requested that I be allowed to read parts of her cover letter. In the past, I was not able to do so. Today, I will make an exception.

The irony of Mr. Sessions’ nomination is that, if confirmed, he will be given life tenure for doing with a federal prosecution what the local sheriffs accomplished twenty years ago with clubs and cattle prods.

“The actions taken by Mr. Sessions in regard to the 1984 voting fraud prosecu-
tions represent just one more tech-
nique used to intimidate Black voters and that deny them this most precious franchise.”

“In these investigations, Mr. Ses-
sions, as U.S. Attorney, exhibited an eagerness to bring to trial and convict three leaders of the Perry County Civic League including Albert Turner despite evidence clearly demonstrating their innocence of any wrongdoing.”

“In fact, Mr. Sessions sought to pun-
ish older black civil rights activists, advisors and colleagues of my husband, who had been key figures in the civil rights movement in the 1960’s.”

Therefore, it is my strongly-held view that the appointment of Jefferson Sessions to the federal bench would irreparably damage the work of my hus-
band, Al Turner, and countless others who risked their lives and freedom over the past 20 years to ensure equal par-
ticipation in our democratic system.”

Clearly, if these criticisms set forth in this statement—the entirety of which will be made part of the House Record—indicate, as they did to the United States Senate in 1986, that Mr. Ses-

sessions should not be a district court judge, they also argue that he should not have been confirmed as Attorney General of the United States.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until 2 p.m. today.

Accordingly (at 12 o’clock and 10 minutes p.m.), the House stood in re-

cess.

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. SMITH of Nebraska) at 2 p.m.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, the Reverend Patrick J. Conroy, offered the following prayer: We give You thanks, O God, for giving us another day.

We give You thanks, O God, for giving us another day. We also thank You and the promise of the Holy Bible, was inspired by religious faith in You and the promise of the Holy Bible and, in recent decades, for many, the Holy Koran. Their witness to undying hope and peaceful resolution carry the hope of forming a better United States forever.

Lord, we praise and thank You for the African-American communities across this landscape who have shared our past, bless our present, and endow us with hope, laughter, memorable music, and other contributions to our common good. Bless them, and bless our Nation with peace and reconc-

iliation.

And here, in the people’s House, may all that is done be for Your greater honor and glory.

Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day’s proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pledge of Allegiance

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Repub-
lic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

Resignation from the House of Representat-
ives

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following resigna-
tion from the House of Representa-
tives:

HON. NATHAN DEAL, Governor, State of Georgia.

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES, HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

DEAR SPEAKER RYAN: In order to serve as Governor, State of Georgia,

you have tendered your resignation from the House of Representa-
tives effective 9:00 AM on February 10th, 2017.

Hon. Paul D. Ryan,
Speaker, U. S. House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR SPEAKER RYAN: In order to serve as Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services in President Donald J. Trump’s administration, I hereby resign my seat in the United States House of Representa-
tives effective 9:00 AM on February 10th, 2017.

DEAR SPEAKER RYAN: In order to serve as Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services in President Donald J.
ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the Chair will postpone further proceedings today on motions to suspend the rules on which a recorded vote or the yeas and nays are ordered, or on which the vote incurs objection under clause 6 of rule XX.

Record votes on postponed questions will be taken later.

ABIE ABRAHAM VA CLINIC

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 609) to designate the Department of Veterans Affairs health care center in Center Township, Butler County, Pennsylvania, as the “Abie Abraham VA Clinic”.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 609

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled.

SECTION 1. FINDINGS.

Congress finds the following:

(1) Abie Abraham of Lyndora, Pennsylvania was stationed during World War II with the 18th Infantry in New York; 3 years with the 14th Infantry in Panama; 15th Infantry, unassigned in China, where the U.S.S. Panay was sunk; 30th Infantry, Presidio, San Francisco; and the 31st Infantry, Manila, Philippines, for 9 years.

(2) During World War II, Abraham fought, was captured, endured the Bataan Death March and as a prisoner of war for 3½ years, was beaten, stabbed, shot, survived malaria and starvation to be rescued by the 6th Rangers.

(3) Abraham stayed behind at the request of General Douglas MacArthur for 2 1⁄2 more years disintering the bodies of his fallen comrades from the Bataan Death March and the prison camps, helping to identify their bodies and see that they were properly laid to rest.

(4) After his promotion in 1945, Abraham came back to the United States where he served as a recruiter and then also served 2 years disintering the bodies of his fallen comrades from the Bataan Death March and the prison camps, helping to identify their bodies and see that they were properly laid to rest.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until approximately 4:30 p.m. today.

Accordingly (at 2 o’clock and 6 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess.
Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and add extraneous material.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Tennessee?

There was no objection.

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, today I rise in support of H.R. 609, a bill to name the Department of Veterans Affairs health care center in Center Township, Butler County, Pennsylvania, the Abie Abraham VA Clinic.

This bill is sponsored by the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. WALZ), my friend and colleague.

Mr. KELLY of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman. I brought with me today a picture of Master Sergeant Abraham. Now, I never knew him when he looked like this. I knew him when he was much older. I have got to tell you that to me, Master Sergeant Abraham, you would never have known what he had gone through in his life because all of these folks from that time period just did what they had to do. When you ask them, “Why did you do it?” they said, “It wasn’t an option. We had to do it.” There is just certain times in our history that people rise up and they do things that are incredible, ordinary people doing extraordinary things.

Just being around Master Abraham for a long time—I never called him Able, by the way. I did not call him Able. I always called him sergeant or Mr. Abraham—I was just always so impressed with him. It is such an honor and a privilege to be able to stand here in the people’s House to talk about a true American hero, somebody who was not just a patriot, but was compassionate, somebody who never stopped serving his country in so many different ways.

When I first read “The Ghost of Bataan,” I went back and I talked to Mr. Abraham. I said: You never told me about these things. He said: Oh, don’t worry about that. Those were just things we had to do.

I said: No, but what you did was incredible: to survive the Bataan Death March, to be in a Japanese prison camp for 3½ years, to be stabbed, to be shot, to be beaten, to survive malaria and starvation. Did you ever think of trying to get away?

He said: Yeah, MIKE, I did, but here is the thing: if one of us were to escape, the Japanese soldiers would shoot 10 of the prisoners who were still in the camp; so we didn’t want to do that to any of our colleagues. I watched them die. I held them as they died. We tried to get them through the darkest times that we could.

I said: How did you endure?

He said: My faith. My faith.

That is how we all get through the darkest times, on both knees, believing that God is there for us no matter what. But when you read his books and you understand who this man was—and
I think the second book was the one that was incredible. Let me read this because I just thought if there was anything that somebody did out of love, it was Mr. Abraham.

His second book was “Oh, God, Where Are You?”. You think of this as a prisoner of war who survived the Bataan Death March, who watched his colleagues killed along the way, and if they fell down, they got shot. Toward the end, when they fell down and they couldn’t move anymore, they were put into open graves, and they were told to go ahead and cover the graves. He refused to do it. He said: They are still moving.

So we come to today and we think about what it is that we as Americans can do. What is it we can do? What is in our hearts? What is in our memory? What about all those who came before us and what they went through?

Mr. Abraham, as a child, went to school barefoot. His family didn’t have money even for him shoes, but he had a love for our Nation. He had a love for his fellow man. He had a love for veterans that was just incredible. But imagine the despair of being in that prison camp and not knowing what was going on in the outside war. I asked him: What did you do? How did you keep people’s spirits up?

He said: I made up stories. I would tell them that I just heard there was a rumor going through camp that our army was going to rescue us.

Think about that. They were clinging to a made-up story from this man because he knew that is how he could keep their spirits up in the darkest of times. He kind of smiled about it.

I said: That is incredible. He said: Well, sometimes you have to do things a little different just to get people’s spirits up.

I want you to fast forward to the 1980s. I watched him walk with a cane as he got into his later years, in his eighties and nineties, going to VA Butler Healthcare Center every single day to help fellow veterans. His sole purpose in life was to help other American citizens, to help other veterans, to bring a little light into their life, to bring a little happiness into their life; 40,000 hours of service in a VA center.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I think this is an amazing story that Mr. KELLY shared before us. I had a history professor in college who survived the Bataan Death March. He spent 3½ years in the same—I wonder if these two men knew each other. He, indeed, too, was a remarkable man. I can think of no better honor in Butler, Pennsylvania, than to honor his memory by naming this medical center. Once again, I encourage all Members to support this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. ROE) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 609.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

WORKING TO INTEGRATE NET-WORKS GUARANTEETING MEMBER ACCESS NOW ACT

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 512) to title 38, United States Code, to permit veterans to grant access to their records in the databases of the Veterans Benefits Administration to certain designated congressional employees, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 512

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Working to Integrate Networks Guaranteeing Member Access Now Act” or the “WINGMAN Act”.

SEC. 2. PROVISION OF ACCESS TO CASE-TRACKING INFORMATION.

(a) In General—Section 59 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following:

“§5906. Access of certain congressional employees to veteran records

“(a) IN GENERAL.—(1) The Secretary shall provide to each veteran who submits a claim for benefits under the laws administered by the Secretary an opportunity to permit a covered congressional employee employed in the office of the Member of Congress representing the district or state of such congressional employee to have access to all of the records of the veteran in the databases of the Veterans Benefits Administration.

Notwithstanding any other provision of law, upon receipt of the permission from the veteran under paragraph (1), the Secretary shall provide read-only access to such records to such a covered congressional employee in a manner that does not allow such employee to modify the data contained in such records or in any part of a database of the Veterans Benefits Administration.

(3) A Member of Congress may designate not more than two employees of the Member as covered congressional employees.

(4) An amendment to this section may not impose any requirement other than the requirements specified under subsection (e)(1) before treating an employee as a covered congressional employee for purposes of this section.

“(c) NONRECOGNITION.—A covered congressional employee may not be recognized as an agent or attorney under this chapter.

“(d) LIMITATION ON USE OF FUNDS.—None of the amounts made available to carry out this chapter may be used to develop, or administer any training for purposes of providing training to covered congressional employees.

“(e) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

“(1) The term ‘covered congressional employee’ means a permanent, full-time employee of a Member of Congress;

“(2) A covered congressional employee includes assisting the constituents of the Member with issues regarding departments or agencies of the Federal Government;

“(3) the criteria required by the Secretary for recognition as an agent or attorney under this chapter; and

“(4) The term ‘Member of Congress’ means a Member of Congress as a covered congressional employee for purposes of this section.

“(2) The term ‘database of the Veterans Benefits Administration’ means the database of the Veterans Benefits Administration in which the records of veterans relating to claims for benefits under the laws administered by the Secretary, including information regarding medical records, compensation and pension exams records, rating decisions, statements of the case, supplementary statements of the case, decisions of disagreement, Form-9, and any successor form.

“(3) The term ‘Member of Congress’ means a Representative, a Senator, a Delegate to Congress, or the Resident Commissioner of Puerto Rico.”.

(b) TYPICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of such chapter is amended by adding at the end the following new item:

“§5906. Access of certain congressional employees to veteran records.”

(c) NO AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—No additional funds are authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section or the amendments made by this section. This section and such amendments may be carried out using amounts otherwise authorized to be appropriated, of which, during the period of fiscal years 2018 through 2021, not more than $10,000,000 may be expended for such purpose.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from
Tennessee (Mr. ROE) and the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. WALZ) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Tennessee.

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that Members have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and add extraneous material.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Tennessee?

There was no objection.

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today and urge all Members to support H.R. 512, as amended, the WINGMAN Act.

First, I want to say a special thanks to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. Yoho) and the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. ROYDNEY DAVIS), our colleagues, for introducing the WINGMAN Act. This bill will allow Members cut through the red tape and help constituents who have applied for benefits from VA.

Isn’t that why we are here, to help our constituents?

The problem is that when a constituent calls one of our offices to ask about the status of a claim for benefits, the only thing we can do is write VA and wait for the VA to respond. I know I get very frustrated, and I am sure my colleagues do as well, with how long it takes them to get back to us. The WINGMAN Act provides a simple solution. The bill allows designated, permanent, full-time congressional staffers to look up the status of a claim on VA’s database, but only if the veteran has given the staffer permission. Staffers would have read-only access to VA databases, meaning they wouldn’t be able to add or remove any information. Passing H.R. 512, as amended, would allow Members to help constituents who have applied for benefits from VA.

Passing H.R. 512, as amended, would allow Members to help constituents who have applied for benefits from VA.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 512, as amended, the WINGMAN Act. I, too, would like to thank the gentleman from Florida for trying to do all they can to speed constituent services to their folks.

This legislation gives certain designated congressional office case workers access to veterans’ electronic disability claim records at the Veterans Benefits Administration, or VBA. It has broad support in this House, both Democrat and Republican.

This bill would allow designated congressional office case workers access to the Veterans Benefits Administration database to look at veterans’ records. Congressional staff would not be able to add or remove anything from a record, but simply check on the status of a veteran’s claim and check that evidence and documentation are submitted. The reason this is so important is that a veteran will, at times, wait months, only to turn in a piece of documentation, the VA has already been notified about, and found the claim to be missing that has been added months before. It makes sense. It tracks the system. It ensures that the veteran is getting the fastest, best possible claim adjudication.

The purpose is to provide that faster status tracking system. There are privacy safeguards in the bill, which reinforce the necessity for getting prior consent from the veteran. Also, the bill clearly requires that congressional employees designated for this access must be full-time employees who provide constituent services.

Veterans service organizations have suggested that the VA should put a tracking system in place to ensure that these employees are only assisting constituents with congressional districts, and that congressional staff be held accountable if found to abuse any aspect of this new and unprecedented authority. I support that suggestion.

In my district, county veterans service organizations have asked to have read-only access to veterans’ records so they can assist veterans. I wish to work with Chairman Roe to examine whether that might be something that could be included down the road.

There is broad bipartisan support for giving congressional staff access to veterans’ records so they can help veterans navigate a complex claims system. Often it takes too long to find out the status of a veteran’s claim from the VA. Allowing certain professional staff to do the checking themselves seems like a simple step in the right direction, and I support it.

Last Congress, similar legislation to H.R. 512, as introduced, unanimously passed this House. I urge my colleagues to support it today.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BILIRAKIS) control the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Tennessee?

There was no objection.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. BERGMAN).

Mr. BERGMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 512, the WINGMAN Act.

I am honored to represent the First District of Michigan, which, as a State, has a higher than average percentage of veterans, and the First District has double the percentage of veterans of the rest of the State. I am proud of these fine men and women who have served so honorably, we have the absolute imperative to make sure that they get the help that they need to cut through the bureaucratic red tape at agencies such as the Department of Veterans Affairs.

I have been serving in Congress for just over a month now, and, already, my office has been flooded with requests from veterans seeking aid in navigating the benefits claims process.

Unfortunately, the VA is notoriously plagued by a culture of complacency and inefficiency. Even something as simple as checking the status of a veteran’s claim means that congressional staff members have to circle back around numerous times with VA employees before being able to provide the veterans in the First District with an accurate update.

As a veteran of the Vietnam war, I know that time is valuable to our veterans. We have to introduce more efficiency and transparency into the benefits claims process.

H.R. 512 is designed to cut out the middle step. The WINGMAN Act provides congressional staff with read-only access to veterans’ records within the Veterans Benefits Administration. This commonsense bill allows our veterans quicker access to simple status inquiries, provides greater transparency for congressional offices, and allows the VA employees more time to work on completing these claims.

Mr. WALZ, Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from the Northern Mariana Islands (Mr. SABLAN), my good friend, a member of the Veterans’ Affairs Committee, and a stalwart supporter of this Nation’s veterans and those in uniform.

Mr. SABLAN. Mr. Speaker, I thank my good friend, the ranking member of the Veterans’ Affairs Committee, Mr. WALZ, for allowing me to speak in support of H.R. 512, the WINGMAN Act.

I rise today in support of H.R. 512, the WINGMAN Act, introduced by the gentleman from Florida (Mr. Yoho), my good friend, which would allow veterans to grant designated congressional office staff ready-access to their claim records within the VBA, Veterans Benefits Administration.

Mr. Speaker, there are no Veterans Benefits Administration personnel in the Northern Marianas. The veterans in my district have no one to meet with, but for the very occasional, usually one 6-hour visit to the Marianas from a VBA staff based in Guam or Hawaii. It usually comes once every 6 months if we are lucky.

Staffs’ request for information on behalf of veterans sometimes takes months to receive a reply. This bipartisan bill would eliminate the delay by enabling permitted staff to obtain the information directly from VBA databases. This would be especially meaningful to veterans in my district who face additional challenges for disability claims due to the lack of VA presence.

Mr. Speaker, I represent three islands. I work with Social Security and Selective Service, of course, like other Members. For Social Security, we are
Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. YOHO), a good friend and a strong advocate for our veterans.

Mr. YOHO. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank Mr. BILIRAKIS for the work that he has done, and want to congratulate Chairman ROE for taking over the Veterans’ Affairs Committee.

I would also like to thank the committee staff for their diligence and help on this piece of legislation, as well as the co-leads of this bill, Representatives RODNEY DAVIS, KYRSTEN SINEMA, and JOHN DELANEY.

Last Congress, WINGMAN passed the Veterans’ Affairs Committee unanimously in the House due to the bipartisan support of the Members of this Chamber. While it was disappointing that we were unable to get it across the finish line in the Senate, I feel confident, given the support this bill has witnessed early on in this year, with 170 Members in the House and 7 Members in the Senate, I am encouraged, and my hope is that we will see it pass the Senate this Congress and be signed into law by the President.

Congressional constituent advocates worked diligently in our district offices to help veterans navigate the VA claims appeals system. But, they are hampered by having to wait weeks, months, and sometimes even years to receive documents from the VA that are often incomplete, making it difficult to help the veteran reach a favorable resolution.

WINGMAN will help expedite the process by cutting out the middleman and providing direct access to the files our office already has permission to obtain. Currently, advocates must have a privacy release form signed by the constituent prior to acting on their behalf. This doesn’t change. What changes is the wait time our offices, veterans, and their families must endure while the VA sends us the appropriate documents.

WINGMAN will help veterans such as James, from my district, who had eight separate, but related, claims filed. He didn’t know which files were attached to which claims, the dates they were received, which department they were referred to, or that he could have filed one single, fully developed claim. Had my staff had access to the files, which WINGMAN permits, they would have been able to address the issue and update his claims without having to go on a wild goose chase for the documents with the VA system. Getting his case on track could have happened in a matter of days, rather than years. He is not the only veteran especially impacted since some of his claims are over 6 years old.

Another constituent lost her husband while he was serving this Nation. The VA was mailing all correspondence to his widow to an incorrect address. This resulted in an overpayment, which she was unaware of since she was not receiving the mail. The long-term result was a veteran’s widow having her account sent to collections, which damaged her credit, and ended her new spouse’s tax return being confiscated. With access to the system files, our office would have had a clearer picture of the timeline of events and been able to direct and streamline our inquiry. Instead, our staff had to hunt down the relevant files from numerous branches within the VA and reassemble them like a jigsaw puzzle.

When I hear the story of Sergeant ABRAHAM or Colonel BERGMAN or Staff Sergeant REISNER, we all know that people have paid a price for their service to this country, and our country owes them a debt. As a country, we can do better by our veterans and their families. WINGMAN will not get rid of the claims backlog or solve all of the problems. What it will do, however, is make the process helping our veterans easier.

Let’s put the words “customer service” into our government. So I encourage all Members to support this bill.

Mr. WALZ. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Hawaii (Ms. GABBARD) one of our warriors and a veteran of the war in Iraq, and a staunch advocate for this Nation’s veterans.

Ms. GABBARD. Mr. Speaker, one of the things I appreciate most about the job that I have to represent Hawaii’s Second District is to be able to respond to and provide assistance to the hundred thousands of veterans in any State that contact our office every single year. They call to ask for help with things like compensation and pension issues, health care, mileage reimbursement, especially for our veterans who live on the neighboring islands where they don’t have a VA clinic on an island, education, home loan benefits, and more. This is a responsibility as a Member of Congress and as a fellow veteran that I take very seriously.

Right now, if a veteran contacts my office for assistance, we are required to go directly through the congressional liaison at the VA. We act as the veterans advocate to try to get answers for them on things that they haven’t been able to get answers on, things that they haven’t heard back on.

Too often, we are faced with the bureaucratic layers within the VA and a slow turnaround that leave congressional staff, like me and my colleagues here, jumping through hoops to address an issue on behalf of our veterans and their families. At times, we have waited for months to get answers from the VA on behalf of a Hawaii veteran for something that should be a quick turnaround, like a status update. This is unacceptable.

I am proud to cosponsor the WINGMAN Act, legislation introduced by the gentleman from Florida (Mr. YOHO), my friend and colleague, which allows us to cut through the red tape and ensure that our certified case-workers within our offices can provide quicker, more efficient, and effective service to our veterans. It would help streamline the veterans claims process by allowing congressional offices on behalf of our veteran constituents to directly access the status of pending claims, rating decisions, statement of case, and so on.

I urge my colleagues to support this commonsense legislation so that all of us working here in the people’s House can better serve our veterans who have sacrificed so much for our communities and our country.

Mr. WALZ. Mr. Speaker, I have no further speakers. I urge support of H.R. 512.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, once again, I encourage all Members to support this legislation.

Representative YOHO does not share this view. He travels to VIEN 8 in St. Petersburg, Florida, which is about 3 hours away. We had a discussion about this particular issue. He came up with the suggestion, and he is following through with it. It is a good piece of legislation. Let’s get it through the Senate this time.

I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. ROE) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 512, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

The title of the bill was amended so as to read: “A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to permit veterans to grant access to their records in the databases of the Veterans Benefits Administration to certain designated congressional employees, and for other purposes.”

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.
HONORING INVESTMENTS IN RECRUITING AND EMPLOYING AMERICAN MILITARY VETERANS ACT OF 2017

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 244) to encourage effective, voluntary private sector investments to recruit, retain, and support men and women who have served in the United States military with annual presidential awards to private sector employers recognizing such efforts, and for other purposes, as amended.

The CqSp. A. The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 244

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SEC. 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Honoring Investments in Recruiting and Employing American Military Veterans Act of 2017" or the "HIRE Vets Act."

SEC. 2. HIRE VETS MEDALLION AWARD PROGRAM.

(a) PROGRAM ESTABLISHED.—Not later than 2 years after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Labor shall establish, by rule, a HIRE Vets Medallion Program to solicit voluntary information from employers concerning, by means of an award to be designated a "HIRE Vets Medallion Award", verified efforts by such employers—

(1) to recruit, employ, and retain veterans; and

(2) to provide community and charitable services supporting the veteran community.

(b) SOLICITATION PERIOD.—The Secretary shall establish the HIRE Vets Medallion Program in the calendar year following the calendar year in which the Secretary establishes the program, the Secretary shall annually—

(1) solicit and accept voluntary applications from employers in order to consider whether those employers should receive a HIRE Vets Medallion Award;

(2) review applications received in each calendar year; and

(3) notify such recipients of their awards; and

(4) at a time to coincide with the annual commemoration of Veterans Day—

(A) announce the names of such recipients;

(B) publicly display the HIRE Vets Medallion Award Certificate issued in conjunction with which to determine qualifications for such Award, or in determining the appropriate level of HIRE Vets Medallion Award for the subsequent calendar year.

(c) NOTICe TO RECIPIENTS.—The Secretary shall notify employers who will be awarded HIRE Vets Medallion Awards not later than October 11th of each calendar year for the Awards to be awarded in November of that calendar year.

(d) LIMITATION.—An employer who receives a HIRE Vets Medallion Award for one calendar year shall not be allowed to receive such an Award for the subsequent calendar year.

SEC. 3. SELECTION OF RECIPIENTS.

(a) APPLICATION REVIEW PROCESS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall review all applications received in a calendar year to determine whether an employer should receive a HIRE Vets Medallion Award, and, if so, of what level.

(2) APPLICATION CONTENTS.—The Secretary shall require that all applications provide information on the programs and other efforts of applicant employers during the calendar year prior to that in which the medallion is to be awarded, including the categories and activities governing the level of award for which the applicant is eligible under subsection (b).

(3) VERIFICATION.—The Secretary shall verify all information provided in the applications, to the extent that such information is relevant in determining whether or not an employer should receive a HIRE Vets Medallion Award or in determining the appropriate level of HIRE Vets Medallion Award for that employer to receive, including by requiring the submission of the chief human relations officer of the employer to attest under penalty of perjury that the employer has met the criteria described in subsection (b) for a particular level of Award.

(b) AWARDS.—

(1) LARGE EMPLOYERS.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall establish similar awards to be awarded, including the categories and amounts appropriated to each HIRE Vets Medallion Award Program, if such employer did not receive such Award through the HIRE Vets Medallion Award Program, if such employer did not receive such Award through the HIRE Vets Medallion Award Program; or

(B) GOLD HIRE VETS MEDALLION AWARD.—No employer shall be eligible to receive a Gold HIRE Vets Medallion Award in a given calendar year unless—

(i) veterans constitute not less than 7 percent of all employees hired by such employer during the prior calendar year;

(ii) such employer has retained not less than 75 percent of the veteran employees hired during the preceding calendar year for a period of at least 12 months from the date on which the employees were hired;

(iii) such employer has established an employer veteran organization or resource group to assist new veteran employees with integration, including coaching and mentoring; and

(iv) such employer has established programs to enhance the leadership skills of veteran employees during their employment.

(2) GOLD HIRE VETS MEDALLION AWARD.—No employer shall be eligible to receive a Platinum HIRE Vets Medallion Award in a given calendar year unless—

(i) the employer meets all the requirements for eligibility for a Gold HIRE Vets Medallion Award under subparagraph (B); and

(ii) the employer attests not less than 10 percent of all employees hired by such employer during the prior calendar year;

(iii) such employer has retained not less than 8 percent of the veteran employees hired during the calendar year preceding the preceding calendar year for a period of at least 12 months from the date on which the employees were hired;

(iv) such employer employs dedicated human resources professionals to support hiring and retention of veteran employees, including efforts focused on veteran hiring and training;

(v) such employer provides each of its employees serving on active duty in the United States National Guard or Reserve with compensation sufficient, in combination with the employee's active duty pay, to achieve a combined level of income commensurate with the employee's salary prior to undertaking active duty; and

(vi) such employer has a tuition assistance program to support veteran employees' attendance in postsecondary education during the term of their employment.

(c) EXCLUSION FOR SMALLER EMPLOYERS.—An employer shall be deemed to meet the requirements of subparagraph (C)(iv) if such employer—

(1) employs 5,000 or fewer employees; and

(2) employs with more than 50 but fewer than 500 employees.

(d) DESIGNS BY SECRETARY.—The Secretary shall establish the shape, form, and design of each HIRE Vets Medallion Award, except that the Award shall be in the form of a certificate and shall state the year for which it was awarded.

SEC. 4. DISPLAY OF AWARD.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The recipient of a HIRE Vets Medallion Award may—

(1) publicly display such Award through the end of the calendar year following receipt of such Award; and

(2) publicly display the HIRE Vets Medallion Award Certificate issued in conjunction with such Award.

(b) UNLAWFUL DISPLAY PROHIBITED.—It is unlawful for any employer to display a HIRE Vets Medallion Award, in connection with, or as a part of, any advertisement, solicitation, business activity, or product.

(c) AUTHORIZED.—The Secretary may assess a reasonable fee on employers that apply for receipt of a HIRE Vets Medallion Award, and the Secretary shall deposit such fees into the HIRE Vets Medallion Award Fund. The Secretary shall establish the amount of the fee such that the amount collected from such fees is sufficient to cover the costs associated with carrying out this Act.
While we still have work to do, it is important to note that the veteran unemployment rate has continued to decrease over recent years, and, as of last month, was at the low rate of 4.5 percent. Again, we have more work to do. While many factors have led to the unemployment rate decrease, employers who have participated in the HIRE Vets Medallion Program to recognize employers who hire and retain veterans as well as companies that provide support services to the veterans and their communities.

Hiring veterans isn’t just the right thing to do because it is morally and ethically right; it makes good business sense, and our folks know that. The men and women who have served in our military have received invaluable training and experience that has proven to help them thrive in post-military employment. What they need is a foot in the door. Fortunately, we have been seeing encouraging trends in veterans’ employment. Thanks to the hard work of DOL VETS, combined with efforts within the private sector and Federal and State governments, the veterans’ unemployment rate in January of 2017 was 4.5 percent, which is lower than the national average. We also know that the unemployment rate for post-9/11 veterans remains unacceptably high at 8 percent.

We must remain vigilant to make sure that the men and women who signed up to defend our freedom enjoy opportunities for growth when they return home. The HIRE Vets Medallion Program represents an additional incentive for employers to hire and retain veterans, which is something we can all get behind. Again, I thank Colonel Cook for offering this bipartisan legislation. Thank you to the vice chairman for bringing this up and throwing his support behind it. I am certainly proud to stand in support of this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. COOK), a good friend and a great veterans’ advocate. I thank him for his service.

Mr. COOK. I thank Mr. BILIRAKIS for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, as a combat veteran, I am deeply concerned that the men and women of our Armed Forces continue to struggle to find jobs upon their return to civilian life. These individuals have not only displayed great courage in serving their country, but have acquired certain skills that make them ideal candidates for employment. I urge all of my colleagues to join me in support of H.R. 244, as amended, Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. WALZ. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I rise in support of H.R. 244, as amended, the HIRE Vets Act.

I give a special thank-you to my colleague from California, Colonel Cook, who, himself, is a Vietnam veteran. Since the first day he got into Congress, he has been our veterans’ staunchest supporter, and allows these employers to display, and allows these employers to display, a symbol of their support and willingness to make sure we hire veterans. Employers who provide community and charitable services that support veterans will also be eligible.

As we work to continue to decrease the national unemployment rate among our men and women who have served, it is vital that we highlight and thank the employers who have stepped up and have recognized the benefits of hiring a veteran, and there are many benefits as their work ethic is outstanding—their dedication, their integrity. They are really outstanding people, and I am proud that our employers have stepped up.

I thank the staff of the Department of Labor and the Trump administration for working with us to make improvements to the legislation from what was passed last year.

I also thank Colonel Paul Cook of California for introducing and advocating for this bill, which, again, has my full support.

I urge all of my colleagues to join me in support of H.R. 244, as amended, Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

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As was already mentioned, I am a product of the Vietnam war; and the veterans who were getting out there, a lot of people were afraid to hire them. They didn’t know whether they would be recalled back into the service, and they didn’t know, whether they had post-traumatic stress disorder. They were not going to take a chance on them, and that was sad. That was many, many years ago, but the stats don’t lie.

I am very, very supportive. I get passionate about these programs because the bottom line is we have to make sure that we take care of the troops, and this is a bill that, with the cooperation of private industry, has those incentives built in there. I am optimistic. We had bipartisan support the last time. We went all the way up there and were waiting the last time for the Senate—holding our breath. Everybody knows you don’t always get what you want. I am not going to give up on all the people who have been supporting this bill because we are all very, very passionate about veterans.

I thank Chairman Roe. I thank Ranking Member BALZ for his great support in this very important service. I thank Representative TULSI GABBARD for, once again, being the original cosponsor of this important legislation and for always being there for the veterans and the military. I also thank Congressman BILIRAKIS for his great support.

Once again, this passed out of the House last November and had unanimous support. I urge my colleagues to once again vote in favor of this bill.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from Hawaii (Ms. GABBARD), who still serves this Nation in uniform.

Ms. GABBARD. Mr. Speaker, I stand in strong support of H.R. 244, the Hire Vets Act, and I am so proud to have worked on with my colleague and fellow veteran, Colonel PAUL COOK from California.

This is personal for us. This is about our brothers and sisters in uniform—from different generations—who have been honored and thanked for their service in uniform but who, unfortunately, are often forgotten about when they lay that uniform down. Most people aren’t aware that every single day roughshod are transitioning from military life to civilian life, joining more than 2.9 million veterans who have returned home since 9/11 alone. Through their service and training, these are men and women who are highly trained, who have experience in leading, in making decisions under pressure, in acting and working well as members of a team, and in accomplishing the mission.

Data show that veterans are civic assets in our communities. They have higher rates of voting, of engaging with local governments and community organizations, of participating actively in community service, and more. Together, these qualities make our veterans especially valuable to employers, whether it be in the private sector, in the public sector, or in the nonprofit sector.

Unfortunately, for them, returning to a civilian job market is not as easy as it should be. They often face an unfriendly job market or even an unfriendly culture that doesn’t fully understand them and what they bring to the table. Many people don’t understand that our veterans are not needing pity or a handout but are simply looking for an opportunity to continue to serve—to continue to contribute to our communities and to our country.

This legislation is focused on encouraging employers to hire more veterans. We have seen different programs and initiatives in my home State of Hawaii and in States across the country that focus on recruiting and retaining veterans, but the fact is that there are still more than 400,000 unemployed veterans across the country. We need to do more.

This legislation, the Hire Vets Act, gets directly at this need by setting up an incentive system to encourage employers to hire and retain veterans. It creates a standard of recognition for employers who go the extra mile to recruit and retain veterans and provide services that support our veteran community.

We came together at the end of last year and passed this legislation unanimously. I am hopeful that my colleagues will once again stand and pass this important legislation and move it along through the Senate and to the President’s desk for his signature.

Mr. WALZ. Mr. Speaker, I have no further speakers. I encourage my colleagues to support H.R. 244, as amended.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I urge all Members to support this legislation.

I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there further comment on the rule, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BILIRAKIS) and the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. WALZ) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Florida?

There was no objection.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, to improve employment opportunities for veterans and business opportunities for the companies that serve them, H.R. 974 would authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, in awarding a contract for the procurement of goods or services, to give a preference to offerors that employ veterans.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows: H.R. 974

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled.

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Boosting Rates of American Veteran Employment Act” or the “BRAVE Act”.

SEC. 2. PREFERENCE FOR OFFERORS EMPLOYING VETERANS

(a) IN GENERAL.—Subchapter II of chapter 81 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by adding after section 8128 the following new section:

“§ 8129. Preference for offerors employing veterans

“(a) PREFERENCE.—In awarding a contract for the procurement of goods or services, the Secretary may give a preference to offerors that employ veterans on a full-time basis. The Secretary shall determine such preference based on the percentage of the full-time employees of the offeror who are veterans.

“(b) ENFORCEMENT PENALTIES FOR MISREPRESENTATION.—(1) Any offeror that is determined by the Secretary to have willfully and intentionally misrepresented the veteran status of the employees of the offeror for purposes of subsection (a) may be debarred from contracting with the Department for a period of not less than five years.

“(2) If the Secretary carries out a debarment under paragraph (1), the Secretary shall commence debarment action against the offeror by not later than 30 days after determining that the offeror willfully and intentionally misrepresented the veteran status of the employees of the offeror as described in paragraph (1) and shall complete debarment actions against such offeror by not later than 90 days after such determination.

“(3) The debarment of an offeror under paragraph (1) includes the debarment of all principals in the offeror for a period of not less than five years.

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of this chapter is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 8128 the following new item:

“§ 8129. Preference for offerors employing veterans.”.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BILIRAKIS) and the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. WALZ) each will control 20 minutes.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Florida?

There was no objection.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, to improve employment opportunities for veterans and business opportunities for the companies that serve them, H.R. 974 would authorize the Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs to consider how many veterans an offeror employs during a

BOOOSTING RATES OF AMERICAN VETERAN EMPLOYMENT ACT

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 974) to amend title 38, United States Code, to authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, in awarding a contract for the procurement of goods or services, to give a preference to offerors that employ veterans.
decision to award a contract. Under this bill, the Secretary may give a preference to such employers based on the percentage of the workforce made up of veterans. It makes sense.

The bill would also allow the Secretary to offer a wage differential for wage rates that will attract a sufficient workforce. This is a common-sense step to incentivize employers to bring veterans into their workforce and increase job opportunities for veterans of all ages.

I firmly believe that we should do all we can to encourage both small and large businesses to provide job opportunities for veterans as well as provide the Secretary the authority to consider such hires when making contracting decisions. This will further incentivize government contractors to make a positive investment in their companies by making investments in our Nation’s veterans.

I thank Miss Rice for her hard work on this bill, and I especially would like to thank the gentlewoman from New York (Miss Rice), an unwavering advocate of our veterans and author of this smart piece of legislation.

Both parties agree it is unacceptable that men and women returning home from our most recent conflicts don’t have good, reliable jobs waiting for them. We can start right here in the Federal Government. The VA establishes long-term contracts with private companies for medical equipment, construction, supplies, services, and more.

Currently, the VA gives preferences to veteran-owned small businesses. That is great. What this piece of legislation does is expand this contracting preference to allow the VA Secretary to give a preference to companies that actively search out and employ veterans, a policy that would incentivize companies to even hire more veterans. This is already a smart approach for those companies because veterans bring to a job the skills they have learned over the years and make the company even stronger.

The unique nature of legislation adds no cost to the taxpayers. It allows for debarment of any company that knowingly misrepresents its portion of veteran employees in order to receive the contracting preference.

The BRAVE Act, or the BRAVE Act, is one common-sense step to incentivize employers to bring veterans into their workforce and increase job opportunities for veterans of all ages.

I urge all of my colleagues to support H.R. 974. I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. WALZ. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, the unemployment rate among veterans is lower than that of nonveterans still exceeds their nonveteran peers, and this legislation is one commonsense step to incentivize employers to bring veterans into their workforce and increase job opportunities for veterans of all ages.

I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 974. I reserve back the balance of my time.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I urge the balance of my time.

Mr. WALZ. Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 974. I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I urge the balance of my time.

Mr. WALLACE. Mr. Speaker, once again, I encourage all Members to support this legislation. I commend Representative Rice for her good work.

I urge the yeas and nays. The Ayes have it.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Florida (Mr. Bilirakis) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 974.

The question was taken. The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered. The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

APPOINTMENT OF INDIVIDUALS TO UNITED STATES-CHINA ECONOMIC AND SECURITY REVIEW COMMISSION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair announces the Speaker’s appointment, pursuant to section 722 of the Fall D. Spence National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2001 (22 U.S.C. 7002), as amended, and the order of the House of January 3, 2017, of the following individuals on the part of the House to the United States-China Economic and Security Review Commission for a term expiring on December 31, 2018:

Mr. Larry Wortzel, Williamsburg, Virginia
Mr. Robert Glenn Hubbard, New York, New York

APPOINTMENT OF INDIVIDUALS TO THE CREATING OPTIONS FOR VETERANS’ EXPEDITED RECOVERY COMMISSION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair announces the Speaker’s appointment, pursuant to section 931(c) of the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act of 2016 (Pub. L. 114–198), and the order of the House of January 3, 2017, of the following individuals on the part of the House to the Creating Options for Veterans’ Expedited Recovery Commission:

Captain John M. Rose, U.S. Navy, Retired, Kenosha, Wisconsin
Lieutenant Colonel Jamil S. Khan, U.S. Marine Corps, Retired, Janesville, Wisconsin

APPOINTMENT OF INDIVIDUAL TO THE NATIONAL COMMISSION ON MILITARY, NATIONAL, AND PUBLIC SERVICE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair announces the Speaker’s appointment, pursuant to section 553(b) of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2017 (Pub. L. 114–328), and the order of the House of January 3, 2017, of the following individual
on the part of the House to the National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service:

Mr. Thomas Kilgannon, Centreville, Virginia

APPOMPTMENT OF INDIVIDUALS TO THE MEDAL OF VALOR REVIEW BOARD

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair announces the Speaker’s appointment pursuant to section 30(b) of the Public Safety Officer Medal of Valor Act of 2001 (42 U.S.C. 15202), and the order of the House of January 3, 2017, of the following individuals on the part of the House to the Medal of Valor Review Board for a term of 4 years:

Mr. Brandon Clabes, Chotoa, Oklahoma

Mr. Brian Murphy, Milwaukee, Wisconsin

APPOMPTMENT OF INDIVIDUAL TO THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE AMERICAN FOLKLIFE CENTER IN THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair announces the Speaker’s appointment, pursuant to section 30(b) of the American Folklife Center in the Library of Congress on the part of the House to the Board of Trustees of the American Folklife Center in the Library of Congress on the part of the House for a term of 6 years:

Ms. Patricia A. Atkinson, Carson City, Nevada

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule 1, the Chair declares the House in recess until approximately 6:30 p.m. today.

Accordingly, at 6 o’clock and 30 minutes p.m., the House stood in recess.

□ 1830

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. WOODALL) at 6 o’clock and 30 minutes p.m.

REPORT ON RESOLUTION PROVING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.J. RES. 66, DISAPPROVING RULE SUBMITTED BY DEPARTMENT OF LABOR RELATING TO SAVINGS ARRANGEMENTS BY STATES FOR NON-GOVERNMENTAL EMPLOYEES, AND PROVING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.J. RES. 67, DISAPPROVING RULE SUBMITTED BY DEPARTMENT OF LABOR RELATING TO SAVINGS ARRANGEMENTS BY QUALIFIED STATE POLITICAL SUBDIVISIONS FOR NON-GOVERNMENTAL EMPLOYEES

Mr. BYRNE, from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 115-115-11) on the resolution (H. Res. 116) providing for consideration of the joint resolution (H.J. Res. 66) disapproving the rule submitted by the Department of Labor relating to savings arrangements established by States for non-governmental employees, and providing for consideration of the joint resolution (H.J. Res. 67) disapproving the rule submitted by the Department of Labor relating to savings arrangements established by qualified State political subdivisions for non-governmental employees, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, proceedings will resume on motions to suspend the rules previously postponed.

Votes will be taken in the following order:

H.R. 241, by the yeas and nays;
H.R. 974, by the yeas and nays.

The first electronic vote will be conducted as a 15-minute vote. The second electronic vote will be conducted as a 15-minute vote.

HONORING INVESTMENTS IN RECRUITING AND EMPLOYING AMERICAN MILITARY VETERANS ACT OF 2017

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The unfinished business is the vote on the motion to suspend the rules and pass the bill, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion before the House to the amendment from Florida (Mr. BILIRAKIS) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, as amended.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 409, nays 1, not voting 21, as follows:

YEAS—409

Abraham
Adams
Adler
Aderholt
Aguiar
Allen
Amodei
Armstrong
Babin
Bacon
Banks (IN)
Barletta
Barker
Barrett
Bass
Beatty
Bera
Bergman
Biggs
Cicilline
Clark (MA)
Clarke (NY)
Cleaver
Cleavinger
Cohen
Collins
Cole
Connolly
Coney
Cooper
Costa
Costello (PA)
Croney
Cramer
Crowley
Cuellar
Capuano
Casper
Cummings
Curvolo (FL)
Davidson
Davis (CA)
Davis (GA)
Davis (KY)
DeFrancisco
DeLasaro
DelBene
Demings
Demings
Dent
DeSantis
DeSaulnier
Desjarlais
Diaz-Balart
Dingell
Doggett
Donovan
Doyle, Michael
Einhorn
Elrod
Evans
Farenthold
Faso
Fitzpatrick
Fleischmann
Flores
Ford
Frankel (FL)
Franks (AZ)
Furguson
Fudge
Gabbard
Gallagher
Garrett
Gatton
Ganahl
Gohmert
Goldmacher (TX)
Goodlatte
Googar
Goosman
Crowley
Granger
Graham (GA)
Graves (LA)
Graves (MD)
Green
Greenspan
Green, Gene
Griffith
Grijalva
Grothman
Guthrie
Hanna
Harper
Harris
Hastings
Hock
Hонаrsing
Herrera Beutler
Hice, Joey
Higgins (LA)
Higgins (NY)
Hilliard
Himes
Hollingsworth
Heyer
Hudson
Huffman
Huizenga
Higueras
Hurd
Issa
Jackson Lee
Japayal
Jeffries
Jenkins (WV)
Johnson (GA)
Johnson (LA)
Johnson (OH)
Johnson, E. B.
Johnson, Sam
Jones
Jordan
Jordan
Joyce (OH)
Kaptur
Katko
Kasting
Kelly (MS)
Kelly (PA)
Kennedy
Khanna
Kihuen
Kim
King
Kinzinger
Knight
Knishnamoorthi
Kuster (NY)
Kuster (IN)
Labrador
LaHood
Lance
Lamm
Larsen (WA)
Larsen (CT)
Latta
Lawrence
Lawson (FL)
Lee
Levin
Levin (NY)
Levin (MI)
Levin (NJ)
Leyva
Lightburner
LoCascio
Loeschner
Loeschner
Lowey
Lucas
Luetkemeyer
Lujan Grisham, M.
Lujan, Ben Ray
Lynch
MacArthur
Maloney
Maloney
Maloney, Sean
Marchant
Marino
Marshall (GA)
Mast
Matsui
Meadows
McClintock
McColl
McEachin
McGovern
McHenry
McInnis
McNulty
McNulty
McNulty
McNulty
McNulty
Mooney (WV)
Moulton
Murray (FL)
Murphy (PA)
Nadler
Napolitano
Newhouse
Nolan
Norcross
Nunnelee
O’Halloran
O’Rourke
Olenski
Palazzo
Pallone
Palmer
Payne
Pearce
Pelosi
Perlmutter
Ferry
Peter
Petersen
Poe
Poe (TX)
Poliquin
Polis
Posey
Price (NC)
Quigley
Raskin
Ratcliffe
Reed
Reichert
Renacci
Rice (NY)
Rice (SC)
Richmond
Roby
Roem
Roger (VA)
Rogers (AL)
Rogers (KH)
Rokita
Ronny
Roy
Roybal-Allard
Roybal-Allard
Roybal-Allard
Royce (CA)
Ruiz
Ruppersberger
Russell
Rutherford
Ryan (OH)
Ryan
Ryan
Scalise
Schrier
Schiff
Schneider
Schneider
Schweikert
Scott (VA)
Scott, Martha
Scott, David
Sensenbrenner
Sessions
Seelbach
Shea-Porter
Sherman
Shifrin
Shiva
Simpson
Sinema
Slaughter
Smith (MD)
Smith (NE)
Smith (NJ)
every adventure, every budget, every run for office. So much of what we have accomplished has been because of her—because of her leadership, because of her planning, because of her caring nature, because of her deep understanding of how this place works. She really is a person of the House.

Above all, she never, ever forgot and never let me forget whom I was working for: the people of the First District of Wisconsin. She is from Wisconsin. She is a Democrat, and observe what an extraordinary member of our family. Speaker Joyce Meyer, I knew that she understood that and that she wanted to be a positive force in making this institution work better.

Let me say that Joyce Meyer now has an even bigger responsibility because she is going to the White House. May we all wish her the best in making that institution work better. Joyce, God bless you and Godspeed.

BOOSTING RATES OF AMERICAN VETERAN EMPLOYMENT ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, 5-minute voting will continue.

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The unfinished business is the vote on the motion to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 974) to amend title 38, United States Code, to authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, in awarding a contract for the procurement of goods or services, to give a preference to offerers that employ veterans, on which the yeas and nays were ordered.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Florida (Mr. Bilirakis) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill.

This will be a 5-minute vote.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 407, nays 0, not voting 24, as follows:

[Yeas—407]

NAYS—1

Amash

Barragan

Blumenauer

Boyle, Brendan

Buchanan

Butler

Carter (GA)

Caspian

Cartwright

Cayetano

Catron (KY)

Culbertson

Crumbliss

Culver

Culver (IN)

Cure (FL)

Curtis

Cushing

Daddario

Davila (FL)

DeLauro

DeSoto

DeVos

Dewhurst

Diaz-Balart

Dickerson

Doyle, Brendan

Drake

Drake (TX)

Drake (IN)

Drew (TN)

Duncan

Duncan (NC)

Duncan (TX)

Duckworth

Eberly

Edwards

Edwards (NY)

Edwards (CA)

Ehrlich

Einheber

Eisenhower

Ellison

Elmore

Emerson

Engel

Engstrom

Engel

Engstrom (CT)

Enerle

Erdmann

Erickson

Eskridge

Eskridge (MN)

Evans

Ezri

Farenthold

Farrell

Fallin

Fallin (OK)

Farrar

Farrar (MI)

Farrar (SD)

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CONGRESSIONAL RECORD — HOUSE

February 13, 2017

S115

DRAINING THE SWAMP

(Ms. KAPTUR asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, President Trump said he was going to drain the swamp.

Really?

His actions speak louder than words. Check the facts. Wall Street’s gold diggers are in charge of the swamp already.

The President’s senior strategist, Steve Bannon, spent half a decade working at Goldman Sachs. Trump’s National Economic Council Director, Gary Cohn, spent 25 years more there. He rose to be Goldman Sachs’ president. Trump’s Senior Counsel for Economic Initiatives, Dina Powell, was a partner since 2010 at Goldman Sachs.

Steve Mnuchin, up for a vote tonight for Treasury Secretary, spent 17 years at Goldman. Dubbed the “Foreclosure King,” Mnuchin was the fast-buck attorney who maneuvered OneWest out of IndyMac’s collapse with shady tactics that kicked hundreds of thousands of families out of their homes in Ohio and beyond. Mnuchin is the ultimate swamp dweller. His father worked at Goldman, his brother still works there, and they all return for alumni engagements.

Come now. While millions of Americans lost their homes, with millions more underwater today, Goldman increased its profits. It is obvious, Wall Street’s trolls have squiggled their way through the White House transom even before the First Lady has remodeled the living quarters.

When Wall Street rigs our economy again, does anyone seriously expect President Trump to drain the swamp?

He is fast in it with them.

CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION MONTH

(Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. THOMPSON. Mr. Speaker, Career and Technical Education Month.

As co-chairman of the Career and Technical Education Caucus, and as a senior member of the Committee on Education and the Workforce, I have long been aware of the importance of CTE programs that provide learners of all ages with career-ready skills.

From agriculture to the arts, from marketing to manufacturing, CTE programs work to develop America’s most valuable resource—its people.

CTE is taught in a range of settings, from high schools and area technical centers, to technical and 2-year community colleges. In total, 12.5 million...
high school and college students are enrolled in CTE programs across the Nation.

Last Congress, I was proud to introduce the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act. This bill, which passed the House by a vote of 405–5, aimed to close the skills gap by modernizing the Federal investment in CTE programs and connecting educators with industry stakeholders.

I look forward to reintroducing similar legislation this Congress and I remain committed to working with the gentleman from Rhode Island (Mr. LANGEVIN), my CTE Caucus co-chair and good friend, to improve our Nation's career and technical education system.

CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION MONTH

(Mr. LANGEVIN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. LANGEVIN. Mr. Speaker, I am so pleased to join the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. THOMPSON), my friend and co-chair of the Career and Technical Education Caucus, to recognize February as Career and Technical Education Month.

In Rhode Island and across the country right now, employers are struggling to find workers with the skills that they need to fill jobs in STEM, in manufacturing, in IT, and so many other skilled trades. Hundreds of thousands of high-skilled, high-paying jobs are open right now, going unfilled, and this number is growing.

To close the skills gap, we must better align education and industry to make sure that what we are teaching in classrooms is better meeting the needs of real-world companies right now. We must increase work-based learning and build education pathways to help students become career and college-ready.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support investment in CTE in the 115th Congress, including by reauthorizing the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act to adapt our workforce to the 21st century economy.

Mr. Speaker, this act passed with strong, bipartisan support in the last Congress, and I hope we can quickly bring it up again to pass it with strong bipartisan support in this Congress as well.

I thank the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. THOMPSON) for his leadership.

HONORING THE MEMORY OF NICK LITTLEFIELD

(Mr. KENNEDY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. Speaker, I rise this evening with a heavy heart to honor the memory of Nick Littlefield, a dear friend and dedicated public servant who passed away last week.

Few in our country could match Nick's career. From the stages of Broadway to classrooms at Harvard Law School, to courthouses in New York City, and eventually to the Halls of this Capitol as an aide to my late uncle, Senator Ted Kennedy, Nick did it all.

Always guided by the simple principle that our laws should help protect our citizens, his fingerprints can be found on landmark legislation such as the Children's Health Insurance Program, the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Family Medical Leave Act, and the 1996 minimum wage increase.

Every day that he arrived at his Senate office, he brought a contagious enthusiasm for his work and extraordinary empathy for the people he served. Even while battling the multiple system atrophy that ultimately cost him his life, he considered himself "not entirely unlucky" to have this disease because it allowed him to "truly sympathize" with those who had disabilities.

Nothing was ever more important to him than his family. In this difficult time, my thoughts and prayers are with Nick's incredible wife, Jenny, as well as his stepchildren Frank, Tom, and Kate.

NATIONAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS COACH RECOGNITION WEEK

(Mr. PAYNE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PAYNE. Mr. Speaker, I am glad to join my colleague, Congressman MARKWAYNE MULLIN today in introducing a resolution designating the week of February 13 as National Health and Wellness Coach Recognition Week.

Lifestyle-related chronic diseases are causing a health crisis in this country. Chronic diseases are the leading cause of preventable deaths and disabilities, and they cost the U.S. economy more than $1 trillion per year.

This crisis is so severe that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has deemed chronic disease to be "the public health challenge of the 21st century."

We can reduce lifestyle-related chronic disease and end this crisis, but that means improving and sustaining health-related behaviors. That is where the health coaches come in. They step in to fill the gap between healthcare provider recommendations and sustainable lifestyle changes. By helping to improve individual health and wellness, health coaches get to the root of this Nation's health crisis.

I want to give my deepest thanks to the American coaches who are making the people of this Nation healthier. We should all support them in their efforts.

HONORING THE RICHMOND FREE PRESS

(Mr. McC EACHIN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. McC EACHIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the Richmond Free Press for its black-owned weekly newspaper that recently celebrated its 25th anniversary.

The newspaper was founded by Raymond H. Boone, a former Howard University associate professor and reporter who tirelessly served as editor and publisher until his death in June of 2014.

The Richmond Free Press serves as a voice for all people and, since its inception, has altered the media landscape of Richmond, the former Capital of the Confederacy. The paper has positively impacted the community through its news stories and its editorials.

Through the leadership of Mrs. Jean Patterson Boone, advertising director and widow of the late founder, Raymond Boone, this is an award-winning publication. Not only has the Richmond Free Press been a source of information for 25 years, but it has been a pillar in our community.

Mr. Speaker, it is appropriate that this recognition come during Black History Month, for the Richmond Free Press does not only chronicle history, it has made history for the last 25 years.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

(Mr. LAWSON of Florida asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. LAWSON of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in honor of Black History Month. It is especially meaningful to me this year as I am so proud to have the honor to represent the great people of Florida's Fifth Congressional District.

Now, more than ever, it is incumbent upon all of us to work to ensure we are upholding our founding principles within our government institutions, from maintaining a vigilant and responsive Department of Justice, to a robust Department of Health and Human Services, to ensuring that our Department of Education is advancing public education and protecting our Historically Black Colleges and Universities.

One African-American who left a lasting legacy in education in Florida is Henry Riley, who was born a slave in 1857 and who died as a millionaire in 1954. Riley was a schoolteacher in Wakulla County, near Tallahassee, and later became the principal of Lincoln Academy in Tallahassee, Florida, serving the community as an educator for 49 years.

Riley was also the first African-American in Tallahassee to own property at the turn of the century. Today, we can all visit the John G. Riley Museum, located in the Richmond Free Press, to learn more about his contributions to the fabric of African-American history.
In Jacksonville, we celebrate Mary Littlejohn Singleton, who became the first Black woman elected to the City Council in Jacksonville, Florida, and then elevated herself to be elected to the Florida Legislature, the first one since the Reconstruction era. Singleton paved the way for other Black women to follow in her footsteps in the Florida Legislature, like former Congresswoman Carrie Meek, and our colleague, Frederica Wilson, who serves now with us today.

It is stories like John G. Riley’s and Singleton’s and countless others that remind me to work and lead us ahead in the future. We must think differently and act differently to affect change by working together to help our fellow men and women.

I am committed to standing with the Congressional Black Caucus and to keep the fight for equality for all Americans.

CELEBRATING THE 60TH BIRTHDAY OF OVERSEER ELVIS L. BOWMAN

(Mr. VEASEY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. VEASEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the 60th birthday of my good friend, overseer Elvis L. Bowman, the senior pastor of the Greater Mt. Tabor Christian Center in my hometown of Fort Worth, Texas. Pastor Bowman was born February 23, 1957, and became a lifelong member of Greater Mt. Tabor Christian Center and their congregation; and the church was founded by his father, E.L. Bowman.

Pastor Bowman graduated from the University of Texas in Arlington with a bachelor’s degree in business and a minor in music. He has since used his education to serve the congregation in so many wonderful ways.

An accomplished musician, Pastor Bowman served as a staff musician under his father before being appointed pastor in 2002. He then served as the Church business manager before he was appointed pastor in 2002. He was later elevated to full gospel district overseer of Tarrant County in 2008.

Pastor Bowman, I wish you happy birthday, my friend, on your 60th birthday. I wish you nothing but health and happiness. Please enjoy your special day.

LEGISLATION TO DEREGULATE GUN SILENCERS

(Ms. JACKSON LEE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, on a warm Sunday morning, yesterday, six men in a blue truck and six men in a black truck began shooting along Griggs Road. Women and children fled. Families fled in fear of their lives. Because of the gunshot noise, police were able to come, and those who were hovering and sheltering could dial 911 on their cell phones.

Today I want to join with the law enforcement coalition who are working with former Congresswoman Gabby Giffords and Mark Kelly, who are standing up against legislation that would deregulate and allow civilians to buy silencers.

It indicates that the gun lobby applauds introduction of the Hearing Protection Act. A quote in an article says many gun owners and sportsmen suffer severe hearing loss after years of shooting. Yet, the tool necessary to reduce such loss is onerously neglected and taxed.

What about the law enforcement officers who will suffer at the hands of those who want to do us harm with silencers on their guns? What will happen to those who will be murdered in the streets? What about them and their families?

This is a legislation misdirected. This is a legislation that is unfortunate. I join with my fellow Americans and law enforcement officers, first responders, in standing up against a nonsensical and misdirected initiative.

Let’s stand with those who are to protect us and protect our families and not support this legislation.

In 1990

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. FITZPATRICK). Under the Speaker’s announced policy of January 3, 2017, the Members, in standing up against a nonsensical and misdirected initiative.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Texas?

There was no objection.

Mr. VEASEY. Mr. Speaker, W. E. B. Du Bois is quoted as saying: “The cost of liberty is the less than the price of repression.” And the cost of liberty has come at a steep price for members of the Black community. But despite this immense challenge the Black community has faced, our resiliency is what we celebrate every month during Black History Month.

Every February, we get together to talk about it, highlight it, and share with school children, friends, and family the accomplishments of the men and women who changed the course of American history. We thank these pioneers for expanding what we believed possible and use them as an inspiration for the fight that remains.

There have been so many African-American pioneers in every field, including medicine. Dr. James McCune Smith was the first African American to earn a medical degree and practice medicine in the U.S.; Dr. Daniel Hale Williams owned the first Black-owned hospital and is credited with the first successful heart surgery performed by an African American; Dr. Charles Drew—many have heard of him—for his research on blood transfusions. More recently, Dr. Regina Benjamin became the first Black woman elected to the American Medical Association Board of Trustees and was appointed the 18th surgeon general by President Barack Obama in 2009.

Each of these medical pioneers broke barriers for the betterment of the community, and each worked to use tools of their profession to improve the health of each patient they treat and also for future generations.

The Secretary of Health and Human Services shared this story about 18 million African Americans between the ages of 18 and 64 gained coverage, and the uninsured rate, among African Americans, fell by nearly 7 percent. In the district that I represent, 47,000 more residents now have coverage thanks to the ACA. And for the district that I represent, that is pretty significant.

People hear a lot about the Texas miracle and about all the jobs and the economic growth in the State of Texas. Despite living in Dallas-Fort Worth—one of the most vibrant economies in the entire world, quite frankly—it had the highest uninsured rate out of any congressional district in the country. It is a shameful that, with that type of prosperity, we would have such a large group of people—over 1 million people collectively when you include people outside of the district that I represent—in the Dallas-Fort Worth metropolitan who don’t have insurance. It is a shame that the progress forged by African-American trailblazers be undermined by a Secretary of Health and Human Services who does not see how expanding healthcare access can help better health outcomes for African Americans.

Similarly, in an area of history where we saw historic tenures of both
Eric Holder and Loretta Lynch as Attorneys General, the recent confirmation of Jeff Sessions as Attorney General is very troubling and really a blatant reminder that we must remain vigilant for those who would like to turn back the clock on the civil rights programs that African Americans fought and died for, particularly when you start talking about voter fraud.

It seems like right now what we are starting to see is the very beginning of people not understanding the processes that have been made. They are trying to lay the groundwork so they can go in and do some really, really serious oppression. And that is absolutely scary just because that was a chapter in our country’s history that we don’t want to go back to.

We want to know that the new Attorney General is going to be working for us and not trying to undermine us when it comes to people being able to exercise their suffrage. And in the Senate and in the very esteemed colleague in Congress, Senator Warren, brought much attention to a letter that Coretta Scott King wrote opposing Senator Session’s consideration for a Federal judgeship.

The Chair wants yet to hear Mrs. King’s words in a letter that she used to highlight the brutal harm Sessions could wreak on voting rights. And if you look at her letter, it simply states: “Free exercise of voting rights is so fundamental to American democracy that we cannot tolerate any form of infringement of those rights. Of all the groups who have been disenfranchised in our nation’s history, none has struggled longer or suffered more in the attempt to win the vote than black citizens. No group has had access to the ballot box denied so persistently and intently.”

And Mrs. King continued: “The actions taken by Mr. Sessions in regards to the voting rights fraud prosecutions represent just one more technique used to intimidate black voters and thus deny them this most precious franchise. The investigations into the absentee voting process were conducted only in the black belt counties where blacks had finally achieved political power in local government. Whites had been using the absentee process to their advantage for years, without incident. Then, when blacks, realizing its strength, began to use it with success, crimes were being committed. Mrs. King went on to state: “In fact, Mr. Sessions sought to punish older black civil rights activists, advisers and colleagues of my husband, who had been key figures in the civil rights movement in the 1960’s. These were persons who, realizing the potential of the absentee vote among blacks, had learned to use the process within the bounds of legality and had taught others to do the same.”

And that is what I am talking about, Mr. Speaker, is that sort of attitude, that sort of hostility towards the African-American community when it comes to the right of suffrage, the right to vote that we hold so precious— that all of us are worried about.

But Mrs. King went on to describe why she believes Jeff Sessions would do irreparable harm to her husband’s civil rights legacy. “The exercise of the franchise,” she states, “is an essential means by which our citizens ensure that those who are governing will be responsible. My husband called it the number one civil right. The denial of access to the ballot box ultimately results in the loss of fundamental rights. For, it is only when the poor and disadvantaged are empowered that they are able to participate actively in the solutions to their own problems.

“We still have a long way to go before we can say that minorities no longer need be concerned about discrimination at the polls. Blacks, Hispanics, Native Americans and Asian Americans are grossly underrepresented in local government in America. If we are going to make our timeless dream of justice through democracy a reality, we must take every step possible to ensure that the spirit and intent of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and the 24th Amendment to the Constitution is honored.”

And with that, Mr. Speaker, I yield to a Member of this body that is no stranger when it comes to civil rights, knew Mrs. King, knew many of the key players and figures in the movement and is a key player and figure himself, and that is the gentleman from South Carolina. I would like to recognize our assistant leader, Clyburn, to come and talk on this topic of Black History Month and some of the things that are so important to our community this month and why we are going to continue to talk about these issues.

Mr. CLYBURN. Thank you very much for yielding to me.

Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to join my colleagues and people throughout the United States to celebrate Black History Month. It may come as a surprise to some that Black History Month is also celebrated in Canada and the United Kingdom, although they do so in the United Kingdom in the month of October.

Thanks to the hard work and persistence of Carter G. Woodson and the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History as the Association for the Study of African American Life and History, the celebration of Black history was inaugurated in 1926. In response to Mr. Woodson’s advocacy, it was to be for 1 week, the second week in February, in order to envelope the birthdays of Abraham Lincoln, February 12, and Frederick Douglass, February 14.

First proposed by students at Kent University in 1969 and 1970, the week was officially expanded to a month in 1976. George Ford was President at the time. When the month was established, President Ford urged the country to “honor the too-often neglected accomplishments of black Americans.” There is a lot of talk about health care these days, and in no area has the contributions of African Americans been more neglected and dishonored as much as in the field of health care.

How many people are aware of the contributions of Charles Drew who unlocked the secrets that led to the ability to perform blood transusions; or Daniel Hale Williams who performed the first successful openheart surgery; or Samuel Kountz who performed the first successful kidney transplant not done on identical twins? Because of these and many other slights in many other fields, Mr. Speaker, I have not always celebrated this occasion with pleasure.

During those discussions back in the late 1960s and early 1970s, I, and many others, felt that the appropriate action was not just to expand from 1 week to a month but to mandate the incorporation of African-Americans’ contributions and achievements throughout the curricula of all of our schools year round.

But, with each passing day, I grow more and more appreciative and respectful of a lesson taught in 1 Corinthians 11:13, which I share with you in Jim Clyburn’s version. “When I was a child, young and inexperienced, I spoke with the reasoning and understanding of a child, but as I grew and matured, I put those childish thoughts, expressions, and ways behind me. That is what I want to understand, Mr. Speaker, that Black History Month is not only about celebrating past achievements and contributions. It is also a time for reflection and introspection.

That is what was on my mind when I addressed this House on the day that we passed the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. On that occasion, I referred to the Affordable Care Act as the civil rights act of the 21st century. It may seem a bit odd to some to hear the Affordable Care Act referred to as a civil rights act, but that is exactly what it is. The Affordable Care Act outlawed discrimination against children with preexisting conditions, outlawed discrimination against people with disabilities, and outlawed discrimination against women just because they are women.

Mr. Speaker, I want to believe that we have grown beyond the day where we were when our country allowed insurance companies to discriminate against women with breast cancer.
and men with prostate cancer. I would like to believe, Mr. Speaker, that we have put behind us the childish practice of kicking children off of their family insurance policies as soon as they turn 21, even if they are still in school, are employed or unemployed. Mr. Speaker, what could be more childish and immature than allowing insurance companies to deny benefits to the sick and disabled in order to gain big bonuses and payouts for executives?

These arguments are not new. In fact, they are reminiscent of an age-old debate.

Fifty years ago, during my years of student protest, there were those who urged us to slow down. You are pushing too hard, too fast, they would say. Some of those who wanted a slower approach claimed to be on our side, like those eight White ministers who implored Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., to slow down, arguing that Christianity took accomplishment and accomplishment. Those ministers believed that the escalation of marches and demonstrations to secure civil rights was unwise and untimely.

In 1963, while sitting in the Birmingham city jail, Dr. King started penning a letter that, of course, he finished after leaving jail, but in that letter he dealt with the whole issue of time. In his letter, Dr. King said: “Time itself is neutral; it can be used either destructively or constructively.”

He continued: “More and more I feel that the people of ill will have used time much more effectively than the people of good will. We will have to repeat in this generation not merely the hateful word and actions of the bad people but for the appalling silence of the good people.”

Dr. King continued: “Human progress never rolls in on wheels of inevitability; it comes through the tireless efforts of men willing to be coworkers with God, and with the help of a sympathetic and supportive public.”

As I answer the question, I want to cite from Eddie Chambers’ article that appeared in the Chronicle today. He said in one of his sentences: “Is there an inherent problem in the celebration that might well appear in some respects as anachronistic?”

“In a word,” he said, “yes.” He went on to say: “As a professor whose classes invariably deal with aspects of African-American history and African Diaspora history, any moment of doubt I might have about the validity of Black History Month is dispelled once classes begin each semester. I am still shocked and saddened at the ignorance among the students of important events and personalities that are part of African-American history, and consequently, American history. I don’t, of course, blame my students, and this ignorance is by no means restricted to students of a particular ethnicity or cultural background.”

In other words, he said: “Widespread ignorance of Black American history leads to an insufficient grasp of American history and thence to the denial of rights.”

Mr. Speaker, what could be more sensible?

Mr. VEASEY. Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleagues who are listening, those educators in primary and secondary education, in colleges, Ivy League and otherwise, what is your answer to the question: Is it now still time to celebrate and commemorate Black History Month? What are you doing about it?

I know that Texas is certainly full and rich with history, although our textbooks do not do much. In fact, there was a vigorous fight with the Texas education board on their lack of responsibility in terms of insisting on textbooks that had an accurate recounting of Black history.

As I begin today, I want to pose a question that was posed by Eddie Chambers. Chambers is a professor of art and art history at the University of Texas in Austin.

As I say that, let me respond to Congressman VEASEY and indicate that we do have a lot of history in Harris County, but also in the State of Texas. Also, I had the privilege of working for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference during the leadership of, then, Ralph David Abernathy and met Hosea Williams, one of the greatest soldiers that worked with Dr. King. I can see the historic perspective that they were able to garner by their experience and association with this great modern-day hero, a man who understood that injustice anywhere is injustice everywhere.

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Mr. Speaker, what could be more sensible?

Also, my father-in-law, Phillip Ferguson Lee, one of the Tuskegee Airmen. Clearly, it began as an experiment to determine whether colored soldiers were capable of operating expensive and complex combat aircraft but ended as an unqualified success, based on the experience of the Tuskegee Airmen, whose record included 261 aircraft destroyed, 141 aircraft damaged, 15,553 combat sorties, and 1,578 missions over Italy and north Africa.

This past weekend, we buried a church member of mine, Clyde Alexander, who was also a Tuskegee Airman. To both of those men, we pay tribute, and I ask the question: How many textbooks in America, in school districts, rural and urban, have the story about the Tuskegee Airmen?

Is the question: Do we need to celebrate the Black history? If that is the question, then the answer is not only a resounding yes, but what are you doing in the academic institutions across America to ensure that we tell the story not of African American history or Black history, but of American history?

Let me finish my remarks by adding a challenge evidenced in the Los Angeles Times.

One of the things that come out of the commemoration of African-American history is a connection to the diaspora. The Congressional Black Caucus has been the singular connecting force to the diaspora, whether it is to the Caribbean, where my parents and grandparents came from, from Jamaica; from Panama, where I grew up on the Panama Canal. All of this is part of the portfolio of the Congressional Black Caucus, and I thank our chairman, Mr. Richmond.

We have been the strongest voices on these issues. Mickey Leland, who was my predecessor, died on the side of an Ethiopian mountain because he cared about the horrible and devastating drought that was killing those in the region and he continued to want to take them food and to hold dying babies in his hands.

Now, we have a new challenge, and that is of Somalia, a new hunger emergency. Millions are going to die if this President does not recognize that his responsibilities include not only being the Commander in Chief, but many times the chief humanitarian of the world.

In the last drought, some 350,000 children died in this region because of starvation. Right now they are expecting that starvation is going to impact hundreds of thousands of women and children. This is a picture of a woman and her child walking by the dead goats that would be the source of their livelihood because there is no water.

As I close my remarks, I call upon this Congress and I call upon this President to get the wheels back on the White House and begin to recognize that America has always been the comforter in receiving refugees, and it has always been a friend of the continent of Africa. Then the Members of Congress who have gone to Africa in times of need, but we have also worked with the administration, from George Bush to Bill Clinton, to Barack Obama and many others, who recognized that we were connected to the continent of Africa by the very slavers who were brought here.

Let us fight for Somalia to survive. I call upon my fellow colleagues to join me in legislation dealing with the starvation here, that we can raise up humanitarian dollars and efforts to save the lives of hundreds of thousands who are now on the brink of starving. That is what this month commemorates, not only the African American history, but the diaspora of which we are so connected.

Mr. Veasey. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from Texas for sharing that great information and talking about some of the highlights that are connected to Black history. I look forward to our story when it comes to African American History Month this February.

I now yield to the gentlewoman from the Virgin Islands, Stacey Plaskett, who is here tonight to also talk about contributions from the part of the world that she represents. I thank her for her efforts here tonight and for being part of this Special Order hour.

Ms. Plaskett. Mr. Speaker, I thank Congressman Marc Veasey for assisting me and for being a leader in this Special Order hour for the Congressional Black Caucus. Of course, I thank the chair of the Congressional Black Caucus, our friend and colleague, the Honorable Cedric Richmond, for his continued leadership of both our caucus and on issues impacting Black America and minority communities across this Nation.

Mr. Speaker, Black History Month is a time to reflect on notable African-American icons, their achievements as a people, and our continued struggle for a more perfect Union. Not only does it serve as a source of great pride and an anchor to the African descendants of the African-American community, but it also educates the masses on the totality of the Black experience throughout the history of this Nation.

As we gather this evening to celebrate the life, legacy, and achievement of African descendants, it is important to remember the journey told and employ the same resiliency spirit in our continued push for fair and equal access to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

Mr. Speaker, the Congressional Black Caucus is a body of 49 members in both houses of Congress representing millions of African Americans and other minorities and majority people across this country. We are alarmed by the recent actions of this administration and the threat those actions pose to the hard-fought progress of African descendants and minorities in this country.

The nomination of Jeff Sessions as Attorney General for many minorities across this country was a direct affront to the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Stokely Carmichael, our colleague John Lewis, and the many others who sacrificed and dedicated their lives to the civil rights movement and the right to vote. The concerns expressed by the great Coretta Scott King 30 years ago about the dubious past of Mr. Sessions with respect to enforcing civil rights laws remain the same for many Americans today. Mr. Speaker, the American Dream was, in fact, made possible by the plight of African descendants, and we must remain vigilant and steadfast in the fight against racial, social, and economic injustice.

Mr. Speaker, I want to raise another area of concern that African Americans have, and that is for health care. My district, the U.S. Virgin Islands, home to the first licensed female physician in Congress, my esteemed predecessor, Donna Christensen, like many underserved communities across the country, is adversely impacted by disparate health outcomes. Diabetes, hypertension, along with funding for disease such as sickle cell, may be adversely affected in this administration. Programs for nutrition and preventative health, like Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, or TANF, and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Programs, or SNAP, provide critical food to the neediest in all of our communities, especially mine, the Virgin Islands, and especially to our children.

Repeal of the Affordable Care Act would create unhealthy African-American communities. Since the Affordable Care Act was passed, nearly half of the African-American adults who didn’t have health insurance now have health insurance. Under the Affordable Care Act, the number of working-age African-American adults who are uninsured has been cut from 27 percent to 14 percent, the lowest rate ever. The number of African-American children with health insurance also increased to the lowest rate ever, negative 5 percent. Repealing the Affordable Care Act would take away coverage for more than 3.3 million African Americans. In my district, we are looking for ways to expand coverage, not to remove or repeal it.

Members of this caucus and members before us have offered policy solutions and continue to push policies and initiatives that would help African-American communities. Whether it be the work that our communities have done, the work of our forefathers to ensure that we have a place at the table; individuals like Shirley Chisholm, as was
spoken about by my colleague SHELLA JACKSON LEE. People who have come to America to be part of the experience of the African diaspora are people from many parts of the Caribbean. Right now we have Congresswoman YVETTE CLARKE, representing the Ninth District of Jamaica, who is my classmate, MARC VEASEY, have done in lead-mendous job that she and my class-marks and for yielding and for the tre-

The distinguished gentlewoman from the African diaspora are people from

is the work of these great African Americans: Hubert Harrison, a promi-

Blyden, from my own St. Thomas, who whose family is from Nevis; Edward

Academy Award-nominated actress hails from Barbados; Cicely Tyson, the Federal bench; our previous Attorney General Colin Powell, the first Black U.S. Secretary of State; Constance Baker Motley, the first Black woman appointed to the Federal bench, and once Attorney General, Eric Holder, whose family hails from Barbados; Cicely Tyson, the Academy Award-nominated actress whose family is from Nevis; Edward Blyden, from my own St. Thomas, who whose family is from Nevis; Edward

freed of the New York delegation, my col-

leadership. And I look forward to hear-

Mr. Speaker, I now yield to another distinguished member of the New York delegation, my col-

league, the great HAKEEM JEFFRIES, who has led this Special Order before and who I look to for guidance on how to continue the great work that he and JOYCE BEATTY did previously.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the distinguished gentlewoman from the Virgin Islands for her kind re-

marks and for yielding and for the tremen-

dous job that she and my class-

mate, MARC VEASEY, have done in lead-

ing this CBC Special Order hour over this 115th Congress during the last few weeks.

We stand here today in the midst of Black History Month where many Afri-

can Americans throughout the country are asking the question: What do we do now that the unthinkable has oc-

As a community, as a nation, we have gone from the Presidency—distin-

guished and dynamic Bill Clinton or Barack Obama to the current situation where we have a swamp percolating at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue under the leadership of Donald J. Trump.

He began Black History Month by saying that he was convening folks for what he called his little Black History Month breakfast. Those of us who actually watched some of the coverage seemed perplexed by his reference to the great

Frederick Douglass as if he was still alive. If anyone has any questions about the relevance of Black History Month, we can start by noting that perhaps it is important to make sure that the Nation’s Commander in Chief understands the contributions that Af-

ricans have made to the United States of America, going all the way back to the Boston Massacre, where one of its leaders, Crispus Attucks, was the first American killed at the onset of the American Revolu-

tion to challenge the Boston Massacre, challenging the unjust tax-

policies of the British Empire.

Now, the 45th President of the United States of America asked a question over the last several months: What ex-

actly do Black folks have to lose?

Many of us were perplexed by that question, given his history, and actu-

ally think that you have lost your mind if you come to the conclusion that the current occupant of 1600 Penn-

sylvania Avenue has any interest in making a positive difference in the lives of people of color generally, Afri-

can Americans specifically, perhaps be-

cause of his own history.

We know that in the early 1970s The Trump Organization, of which he was president, was sued by the Justice De-

partment for racial discrimination in the housing stock that they owned, where they were denying African Americans and people of Puerto Rican ancestry access to apartments, not-withstanding their economic qualifica-

tions to be renters or co-op owners.

I would just note parenthetically that it was the Nixon Justice Depart-

ment—not the Kennedy Justice De-

partment or the Johnson Justice De-

partment or the Carter Justice Depart-

ment or the Clinton Justice Depart-

ment or the Obama Justice Depart-

ment—that concluded that Donald J. Trump and his organization was dis-

crediting the basis of race.

Those of us from New York under-

stand that the current occupant of the White House was the leader of the high-tech lynch mob designed to try to get the wrongfully convicted Central Park Five sentenced to death, taking out a full-page ad in some of the local periodicals in New York calling for that. It turns out that all five individ-

uals were wrongfully convicted and spent years in jail for a crime they did not commit. Donald J. Trump has never apologized for that reckless and irresponsible action.

Then, of course, for 5 years he perpetuated the racist lie that Barack Obama was not born in the United States of America, all designed to un-

dermine the legitimacy of the 44th President of the United States of America, which is why here in Black History Month it is very interesting to me that some of my friends on the other side of the aisle question whether the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Black Caucus, or others are being irre-

sponsible in not giving the current President a chance.

How dare you ask that question. From the beginning of the Presidency of Barack Obama, you declared war on him. You followed a philosophy that may be familiar to those of us who are familiar with the history of the Deep South: obstruction today, obstruction tomorrow, obstruction forever.

Mr. MCCONNELL declared that his top priority was to make Barack Obama a one-term President. And yet, he ques-
tions whether Americans, who are part of the growing resistance movement, have failed to give Donald Trump a chance. Let’s be clear. He has zero credibility on the issue. His obstruc-
tion took place in the midst of two failed wars in the worst economy since the Great Depression.

So we have got a lot of issues that we have got to sort out with this current President here in Black History Month, both for the African-American community and for the broader community of Americans in blue States, in red States, in urban America, in rural America, in suburban America, in the north, in the south, the east, and the west. And I look forward to working with my colleagues in the Congress-

ional Black Caucus, and others, to tackle issues like criminal justice re-

form, to fix the Voting Rights Act that was damaged in such an irresponsible way by the Supreme Court decision in Shelby County v. Holder, and to work to build an economy that works for all Americans, not simply the millionaires and billionaires who dominate the Trump Cabinet.

I thank my distinguished colleague from the Virgin Islands (Ms. PLASKETT) for giving me the opportunity to share some thoughts today. I thank my col-

league, MARC VEASEY, for his continued leadership. And I look forward to hear-

ing my distinguished colleague, BREN-

dA LAWRENCE, from Motown.

Ms. PLASKETT. Mr. Speaker, I thank Mr. VEASEY.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the distin-

guished gentleman from Michigan (Mrs. LAWRENCE), who I never heard has been one that has been valued, not only to us here in Cong-

gress but for this country.
Mr. Speaker, Black History Month is a time to celebrate our progress while recognizing the challenges that we still face today.

The President, Donald Trump, posed the question to African Americans asking: What do you have to lose?

Our Black history is outlined with the great progress and hard sacrifices endured by our forefathers. Under this administration and under these current circumstances that we are dealing with, yes, Mr. President, we have a lot to lose. We have a lot to lose for every point of progress that we have made in this country. And for every hard fought step forward, we have a lot to lose.

Inspecting the swamp, this administration is filling it with unqualified and dangerous megadonors. Our basic rights and privileges included in our Constitution are under the risk of being attacked under this administration. Old battles that we fought and celebrate the wins, such as equal rights and quality education and criminal justice, have now begun again anew.

How are they under attack, you would ask? Well, let’s go by appointment by appointment.

Under DeVos’ leadership, our education system is under attack.

African Americans have historically fought for equal access and opportunity in education. African Americans had to suffer through the Jim Crow era to fight a segregated education system. They were forced to learn under a system that was both separate and unequal.

African Americans have faced and fought against injustice in the education system ever since our emancipation.

And now, in 2017, our Secretary of Education is Betsy DeVos. And frankly, she is not qualified to be the Secretary of Education because she has zero experience in public education, and she is not the right person to lead our public schools. Being a millionaire does not mean you are qualified to direct good policy.

We have real issues in Detroit. Under DeVos’ direct involvement in Michigan public schools, we now have a challenge in our city of Detroit with school desert. Some of you may not have heard about that. But a school desert is where a community does not have a local public school to attend. This means a family’s only opportunity to educate their children would be to go to a for-profit charter school that is miles away, and there is no public transportation given for your child to get there, so you are in a school desert.

Our Secretary of Education should be enforcing civil rights equality and making sure every child is educated in America, and this includes children of color who can’t advocate for themselves.

Funneling taxpayer dollars to private religious schools is a step backwards. Re-segregation masked under the guise of school of choice is a step backwards.

So let’s talk about Secretary Sessions.

Our criminal justice system is under attack.

Civil rights icons that we know and celebrate during Black History Month, like Martin Luther King and our amazing Congressman John Lewis, endured pain and suffering during a peaceful protest and support of voting rights in 1965.

Disproportionate injustices against African Americans and minorities did not end with the civil rights movement.

Today, we fight for equality under the law. This fight continues.

Now, we have Senator Jeff Sessions charged with leading the Justice Department. His record speaks for itself. He was denied for a position as a Federal court judge speaks volumes.

Clearly, there seems to be a certain amount of fear of the truth when it comes from the mouth of Coretta Scott King.

We cannot go backwards. African Americans have worked hard to be a part of the fabric of this country through education, and health care is one of them.

Let’s talk about Charles Drew, who, with his research and technique to save blood banks that we can use in transfusions; Daniel Williams, the first person to successfully complete open-heart surgery; and Dr. Patricia Bath, whose invention in cataract lenses transformed eye surgery, and she became the first African-American woman doctor to receive a patent for a medical invention.

Now, our society’s most vulnerable stand to lose something that we fought so hard for, and that is ensuring every one receives health care in America, ACA. Women should not be charged more for insurance than a man. The sickness shouldn’t be denied insurance because of preexisting conditions. And Republicans instead want to repeal, take away, the ACA without any plan to replace it. We are going backwards.

This month, we celebrate how far we have come. We celebrate the progress of the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act. We celebrate the heroes and heroines who paved the way. We have come too far to go back now.

That is why I am proud to be a member of the Congressional Black Caucus, along with others who have fought for Americans’ equality and for the millions of voices we represent. It is time for us to remember the great progress we have made as a nation. It is time to remember the past injustices so that we never repeat them. The sacrifices of those who came before us must never be forgotten. Their sacrifices must not be in vain.

During this month of remembrance, let us all remember we are not going back. We, the African-American community, we Americans, we are moving forward.

Ms. PLASKETT. Mr. Speaker, I thank Mrs. Lawrence so much for that discussion and inspiration she has given us. We are not going to go back.

We have heard from so many of our colleagues about the achievements of African Americans. But not just the achievements—the struggles, and the issues that we are facing today.

Mr. Speaker, we heard from Congresswoman Suzan DelBene, who outlined not just the past struggles of African Americans and their achievements, but also about the rising concerns throughout the African diaspora when she talked about what is happening in Somalia and other places, and the fact that African Americans have a duty to support other diasporas and the work that they are doing and the struggles they have.

We heard about the Affordable Care Act from our assistant leader, Mr. Clyburn, the civil rights movement, the work that was done, and the assault that is occurring now on some of those issues.

So we, as the Congressional Black Caucus, have a duty to protect those issues here before our colleagues, here in Congress, Mr. Speaker, to put those issues on the Record so that we can expound on them.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to Mr. Veasey if there is anything else that he wanted to discuss or that he reflected on in hearing some of the words that our colleagues spoke about today.

Mr. VEASEY. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentlewoman from the Virgin Islands (Ms. Plaskett) for offering that time.

There were several things that I heard that were deeply inspiring, yet deeply troubling at the same time. It is amazing how when you start talking about Black history, and you get ready to apply it to present day, you understand just how important it is that we do bridge those two things—the history, the future, and where we are at today.

If you look at education, for instance, I know that Brenda Lawrence talked about the school desert phenomena and how there are some neighborhoods where there are no neighborhood schools. That is really sad. Because when you think about Brown v. Board of Education and some of the things that were brought out about people having to travel great distances just to be able to get an education, and now you start looking at today in modern-day America and there still are no neighborhood schools, there is still segregation in schools, and then you see a Secretary of Education who wants to try to implement plans that many say would re-segregate the schools, would eliminate neighborhood schools, that is what brought us here. The neighborhood school is what brought us here. That is what allowed us to have so many great inventions when you start talking about the inventions in Black History Month, when you learn about medicine, when you start talking about almost all of the things that you mentioned, even during that time of some of the most awful segregation in our country.
And I think about that in my own family. I have a high school invitation from the 1930s in a little town called Henderson in Rusk County. I think Louie Gohmert is the representative there. When you open up the high school invitation—it is from my grandmother's first cousin—and it says Henderson Negro High School, and the graduation will be held at the Henderson Negro High School auditorium.

I like to bring that up because when people say—Well, why is there Black History Month?

Ms. PLASKETT. So we don’t forget. Mr. VEASEY. So we don’t forget. But before there was a Black History Month, people started putting those things—Black, not colored, whatever it may happen to be for that time period—in front of schools. They didn’t put White in front of there. There was no Henderson White High School. It was the Negro High School.

□ 2030

I think the important thing in our trying to bring all of that is we want to make sure that we don’t go back. We don’t want to take steps backwards when it comes particularly to education because all of those people, whether they went to the Henderson Negro High School, whether it be blood transfusions—whatever it may happen to be—they are the ones because of the investment that we made in this country in our public education system. The fact that someone in a position of importance would want to roll back those opportunities is absolutely scary.

It is the same with health care, when you start talking about health care and so many people who don’t have adequate health care. It is when we see the racial discrepancies and the life expectancy amongst African Americans. An African-American man, in particular, has the lowest life expectancy. And you want to remove people—20 million Americans—from having life insurance?

Ms. PLASKETT. Sure. Mr. VEASEY. It is absolutely scary. I thank the gentleman for participating in this very timely conversation. We needed to have this conversation with the country.

Ms. PLASKETT. Indeed. There are some additional conversations that we need to have, but I know that our time has drawn nigh.

Mr. VEASEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Members are reminded to refrain from engaging in personalities toward the President.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms. PLASKETT. Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

The motion was agreed to; accorded to the House adjourned until tomorrow, Tuesday, February 14, 2017, at 10 a.m. for morning-hour debate.

EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS, ETC.

Under clause 2 of rule XIV, executive communications were taken from the Speaker’s table and referred as follows:

543. A letter from the Assistant to the Board, Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System, transmitting the Board’s final rule — Federal Reserve Capital Plan and Stress Test Rules [Docket No.: R-1548] (RIN: 7100 AE-59) received February 9, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Financial Services.

544. A letter from the Assistant General Counsel for Regulations, Office of Policy Development and Administration, Housing and Urban Development, transmitting the Department’s final rule — Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects received February 9, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Financial Services.

545. A letter from the Special Inspector General, Office of the Special Inspector General For The Troubled Asset Relief Program, transmitting the Office’s quarterly report on the activities under the Department of the Treasury under the Troubled Asset Relief Program; to the Committee on Financial Services.

546. A letter from the Acting Assistant Secretary, for Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy, Department of Energy, transmitting a report titled “Effects of Climate Change on Federal Hydropower: The Second Report to Congress”, pursuant to Sec. 9005 of the SECURE Water Act of 2008; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

547. A letter from the Director, Regulations Policy and Management Staff, FDA, Department of Health and Human Services, transmitting the Department’s final rule — Refuse to Accept Procedures for Premarket Tobacco Product Submissions; Revised Effective Date [Docket No.: FDA-2016-N-1556] received February 9, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

548. A letter from the Associate Administrator, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting the Agency’s Initial Report to Congress on the EPA’s Capacity to Implement the Clean Air Act; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

549. A letter from the Acting Secretary, Department of the Treasury, transmitting a final rule — Clarification of Reporting Requirements for the National Emergency with respect to Lebanon that was declared in Executive Order 13441 of August 1, 2007, pursuant to 50 U.S.C. 1703(c); Public Law 94-412, Sec. 401(c); (90 Stat. 1257) and 50 U.S.C. 1641(c); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

550. A letter from the Director, International Cooperation, Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics, Department of Defense, transmitting Transmittal No. 94-17, informing of an intent to sign the Memorandum of Agreement Between the Department of Defense of the United States of America and the Kingdom of Denmark, pursuant to Lautenberg Chemical Safety for the 21st Century Act and Executive Order 13441; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

551. A letter from the Acting Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting Transmittal No. DDTC 16-104, pursuant to Sections 36(c) and (d) of the Arms Export Control Act; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

552. A letter from the Acting Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting Transmittal No. DDTC 16-079, pursuant to the reporting requirements of Section 36(d) of the Arms Export Control Act; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

553. A letter from the Acting Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting Transmittal No. DDTC 16-109, pursuant to the reporting requirements of Section 36(d) of the Arms Export Control Act; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

554. A letter from the Acting Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting Transmittal No. DDTC 16-110, pursuant to Section 36(c) of the Arms Export Control Act; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

555. A letter from the Acting Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting Transmittal No. DDTC 16-096, pursuant to Section 36(c) of the Arms Export Control Act; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

556. A letter from the Acting Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting Transmittal No. DDTC 16-127, pursuant to Section 36(c) of the Arms Export Control Act; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

557. A letter from the Acting Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting Transmittal No. DDTC 16-133, pursuant to Section 36(c) of the Arms Export Control Act; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

558. A letter from the Acting Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting Transmittal No. DDTC 16-127, pursuant to Section 36(c) of the Arms Export Control Act; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

559. A letter from the Acting Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting Transmittal No. DDTC 16-119, pursuant to Section 36(c) of the Arms Export Control Act; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

560. A letter from the Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting determinations of the Secretary and the associated report, pursuant to the Iran Freedom and Counter-Proliferation Act of 2012; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

561. A letter from the Associate General Counsel for General Law, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting seventeen (17) notifications of a federal vacancy, designation of acting officer, nomination, or action on nomination, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 3349(a); Public Law 106-277, 151(b); (112 Stat. 2681-614); to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

562. A letter from the Solicitor, Federal Labor Relations Authority, transmitting a notification of a federal vacancy, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 3349(a); Public Law 105-277, 151(b); (112 Stat. 2681-614); to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

563. A letter from the General Counsel, National Mediation Board, transmitting the Board’s final rule — Access to Information [Docket No.: O-7156] (RIN: 3140-AA00) received February 9, 2017, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

564. A letter from the Acting Attorney General, Department of Justice, transmitting a decision of the United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit, United States v. Robert Cardena et al., 842 F.3d 959 (7th Cir. 2016), pursuant to 28 U.S.C.
PUBLIC BILLS AND RESOLUTIONS

Under clause 2 of rule XII, public bills and resolutions of the following titles were introduced and severally referred, as follows:

By Mr. LYNN (for himself, Mr. SCHRADE, Mr. NORTON, Mr. TID LIEU of California, Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia, Mr. RYAN of Ohio, Mr. VARGAS, Ms. JACKSON LEE, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mr. ROSEN, Mr. PLENTZ, Mr. CARDENAS, Mrs. CAROLYN B. MALONEY of New York, Mr. CICILINE, Mr. O’HALLERAN, Mr. MEERS, Ms. JUDY CHU of California, Ms. ADAMS, Mr. HASTINGS, Ms. GARBARD, Ms. BONAMICI, and Ms. SHEA-PORTER):

H.R. 1001. A bill to exempt certain veterans and other individuals from the application of the hiring freeze; to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

By Mr. DENT (for himself, Mr. TONKO, Mr. HARRIS of New York, Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania, Mr. GRILALVA, Mr. HERNANDEZ, Mr. CARSTENHOLM, Mr. MERRIAN, Mr. MICHAEL F. DOYLE of Pennsylvania, Mr. ALLEN, Mr. POLIS, and Mr. BARLETTA):

H.R. 1002. A bill to authorize a National Heritage Area Program, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Natural Resources.

By Ms. NORTON:

H.R. 1003. A bill to authorize the establishment of a program of voluntary separation incentive payments for nonjudicial employees of the District of Columbia courts and employees of the District of Columbia Public Defender Service; to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

By Mr. WALBERG (for himself, Mr. CARTER of Georgia, Mr. MEADOWS, Mr. NEWHOUSE, Mr. GOSETT, and Mr. FARENTHOLD):

H.R. 1004. A bill to amend chapter 3 of title 5, United States Code, to require the publication of information relating to pending agency regulatory actions, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

By Mr. ZELDIN (for himself and Miss RICE of New York):

H.R. 1005. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to improve the provision of adult day health care services for veterans; to the Committee on Veterans’ Affairs.

By Ms. JAYAPAL (for herself, Mr. CONYERS, Ms. LOFOPEN, Mr. NADLER, Ms. JACKSON LEE, Mr. GUTIERREZ, Ms. JUDY CHU of California, Mr. JEFFRIES, Mr. SWALWELL of California, Mrs. ROYBAL-ALLARD, Ms. MICHELLE LUCAN GRISHAM of New Mexico, Mr. RICHMOND, Mr. Quigley, Ms. CLARKE of New York, Mr. RASKIN, Mr. SERRANO, Mr. LARSEN of Washington, Mrs. TOWERS, Mr. KILMER, Mr. SMITH of Washington, Ms. VELEZACE, Mrs. NADLER, Mr. GOLDBERG, Mr. ROYBAL-ALLARD, Mr. GRILALVA, Mr. LANGEVIN, Ms. ESHOO, Ms. NORTON, Mr. VARGAS, Mr. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, Mr. TIDE LIEU of California, Mr. POLIS, Mr. ELLISON, and Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia):

H.R. 1006. A bill to clarify the rights of all persons who are held or detained at a port of entry or at any detention facility overseen by U.S. Customs and Border Protection or U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement; to the Committee on the Judiciary, and in addition to the Committee on Homeland Security, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, on the passage of the bill; to the Committee on Homeland Security.

By Mr. KATKO (for himself, Mr. KINO of New York, Mr. THOMPSON, Mr. DESJARDINS, Mr. SOTO, Mr. BLUMENAUER, Mr. BEYER, Mr. TONKO, Ms. MATSUI, Mr. SCOTT of Virginia, Mr. COOK, and Mr. JENSEN):

H.R. 1007. A bill to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish a task force on Agent Orange exposure; to the Committee on Veterans’ Affairs.

By Mr. SOTO (for himself and Mr. CRISST):

H.R. 1008. A bill to ensure reliable observation of hurricanes; to the Committee on Science, Space, and Technology.

By Mr. MITCHELL, (for himself, Mr. MEADOWS, and Mr. PALMER):

H.R. 1009. A bill to amend title 44, United States Code, to require the Administrator of the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs to review regulations, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, and in addition to the Committee on the Judiciary, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, on the passage of the bill; to the Committee on Homeland Security.

By Mr. BARLETTA:

H.R. 1010. A bill to amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to expand the definition of an unauthorized alien to include aliens who have not been admitted and who are not lawfully present in the United States, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. BURGESS:

H.R. 1011. A bill to make clear that an agency outside of the Department of Health and Human Services, appoint, or employ special consultants, fellows, or other employees under subsection (f) or (g) of section 207 of the Public Health Service Act; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

By Mr. BURGESS:

H.R. 1012. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to increase the dollar limitation on employer-provided group term life insurance that can be excluded from the gross income of the employee; to the Committee on Ways and Means.

By Mr. CASTRO of Texas (for himself, Ms. JACKSON LEE, and Mr. NOLAN):

H.R. 1013. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to make the charitable contribution deduction for certain expenses of elementary and secondary school teachers to individuals involved in early childhood education programs; to the Committee on Ways and Means.

By Ms. CLARKE of New York (for herself, Mr. RICE, Mr. HASTINGS, Ms. WASSEMAN SCHEA, Mr. VARGAS, Ms. NORTON, Mr. ESPAILLAT, Mr. SOTO, Mr. CONYERS, Mr. GALLEGOS, Mr. MEERS, Mr. BARTLETT, Mr. OWENS, Mr. BELANGER, Mr. BARLETTA, Ms. CASTOR of Florida, Mr. RASKIN, and Mr. SERRANO):

H.R. 1014. A bill to designate Haiti under section 244 of the Immigration and Nationality Act to permit nationals of Haiti to be eligible for temporary protected status under such section; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. CONNOLLY (for himself, Mr. MILLER, Mr. NOLAN, Mr. PETRI, and Mr. DESJARDINS):

H.R. 1015. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to allow a credit against...
By Mr. WALBERG:
H.R. 1004.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Article 1, Section 8, Clause 3 of the Constitution of the United States: the power to regulate commerce among the several states and Article 1, Section 8, Clause 18 to make all Laws which shall be necessary and proper for carrying into Execution the foregoing Powers.

The bill will prevent Executive Agencies from violating the rule and spirit of the Administrative Procedures Act by requiring additional transparency about public communications made by the Executive branch under its Commerce Clause power and it is necessary and proper to introduce legislation to effectively carryout this power.

By Mr. ZELDIN:
H.R. 1005.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Article 1, Section 8 of the United States Constitution.

By Ms. JAYAPAL:
H.R. 1006.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

This bill is enacted pursuant to the power granted to Congress under Article I of the United States Constitution and its subsequent amendments, and further clarified and interpreted by the Supreme Court of the United States.

By Mr. KATKO:
H.R. 1007.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Article 1 Section 8 Clause 1: Congress shall have power to lay and collect Taxes, Duties, Imposts and Excises, to pay the Debts and provide for the common Defence and general Welfare of the United States.

By Mr. SOTO:
H.R. 1008.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

This bill is enacted pursuant to the power granted to Congress under Article I of the United States Constitution and its subsequent amendments, and further clarified and interpreted by the Supreme Court of the United States.

By Mr. MITCHELL:
H.R. 1009.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Article 1, Section 8, Clause 18 to make all Laws which shall be necessary and proper for carrying into Execution the foregoing Powers.

By Mr. BARLETTA:
H.R. 1010.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Article 1, Section 8, Clauses 4 and 18

By Mr. BURGESS:
H.R. 1011.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Article 1, Section 9, clause 7, “No Money shall be drawn from the Treasury, but in Consequence of Appropriations made by Law; and a regular Statement and Account of the Receipts and Expenditures of all public Money shall be published from time to time.”

By Mr. BURGESS:
H.R. 1012.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Article 1, Section VIII, clause 1 enumerates that, “The Congress shall have power to lay and collect Taxes, Duties, Imposts and Excises...” Further, Amendment XVI states that “The Congress shall have power to lay and collect taxes on incomes, from whatever source derived, without apportionment among the several states, and without regard to any census or enumeration.”

By Mr. CASTRO of Texas:
H.R. 1013.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

H.R. 1014.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

By Mr. DELAURO:
H.R. 1015.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Article 1, Section 8, Clause 18: The Congress shall have Power .... To make all Laws which shall be necessary and proper for carrying into execution the foregoing Powers, and all other Powers vested by this Constitution in the government of the United States, or in any department or officer thereof.

By Ms. CLARKE of New York:
H.R. 1016.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Article 1, Section 8, Clause 1:

By Mr. DENT:
H.R. 1017.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

H.R. 1018.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

By Mr. DESJARLAIS:
H.R. 1019.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

By Mr. GARRETT:
H.R. 1020.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

H.R. 1021.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

By Mr. GRIFFETH:
H.R. 1022.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

This bill is enacted pursuant to: Article I, Section 8 of the Constitution of the United States, or in any Department or Officer thereof.

By Mr. GROSS:
H.R. 1023.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

This bill is enacted pursuant to: Article I, Section 8 of the United States Constitution.

By Mr. HALL:
H.R. 1024.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

This bill is enacted pursuant to: Article I, Section 8 of the United States Constitution.

By Mr. HARRIS of Tennessee:
H.R. 1025.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Article 1, Section 8, Clause 1, which provides that, “The Congress shall have the Power to lay and collect Taxes, Duties, Imposts and Excises, to pay the Debts and provide for the common Defence and general Welfare of the United States; but all Duties, Imposts, and Excises shall be uniform throughout the United States” and Article 1, Section 9, Clause 7, which provides that, “No money shall be drawn from the Treasury, but in Consequence of Appropriations made by Law; and a regular Statement and Account of the Receipts and Expenditures of all public Money shall be publish from time to time.”

By Mr. NADLER:
H.R. 1026.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Article 1, Section 8 of the U.S. Constitution.

By Mr. NOLAN:
H.R. 1027.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Article 1, Section 8 of the Constitution of the United States grants Congress the authority to enact this bill.

By Mr. SARBANES:
H.R. 1028.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

By Mr. SIRES:
H.R. 1029.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Pursuant to clause 3(4)(1) of rule XIII of the Rules of the House of Representatives, the Committee finds the authority for this legislation in article I, section 8 of the Constitution.

By Mr. TITTON:
H.J. Res. 71.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

By Mr. ALBIE:
H.R. 1030.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Pursuant to clause 7 of rule XII, sponsors were added to public bills and resolutions, as follows:

H.R. 25: Mr. HENNSLING.
H.R. 60: Mr. SIMPSON.
H.R. 112: Mr. MAST.
H.R. 179: Mr. COOK, Mr. BYRNE, and Mr. LOBIONDO.
H.R. 233: Ms. DELBENE and Mr. O’HALLERAN.
H.R. 246: Mr. KINZINGER, Mr. ROGERS of Alabama, Mr. FASO, Mr. SIMPSON, Mr.

ADDITIONAL SPONSORS

Under clause 7 of rule XII, sponsors were added to public bills and resolutions, as follows:

H.R. 25: Mr. HENNSLING.
H.R. 60: Mr. SIMPSON.
H.R. 112: Mr. MAST.
H.R. 179: Mr. COOK, Mr. BYRNE, and Mr. LOBIONDO.
H.R. 233: Ms. DELBENE and Mr. O’HALLERAN.
H.R. 246: Mr. KINZINGER, Mr. ROGERS of Alabama, Mr. FASO, Mr. SIMPSON, Mr.
Ms. SHEA-PORTER.

GRAVES of Missouri, Ms. MOORE, and Mr. ESHOO, Mr. FITZPATRICK, Mr. TROTT, and Mr. CRIST.

WALZ, Mr. HEINSARLING, Mr. MITCHELL, Mr. LAWRENCE, Mrs. DINGELL, Ms. TITUS, Mr. ROOTH, Mr. LENSINK, Mr. LENSINK, Ms. DEGETTE.

February 13, 2017

H.R. 696: Mr. DEUTCH, Mr. SENSHENBRENNER, Mrs. NAPOLITANO, Mr. HASTINGS, Mr. KRATING, Ms. SHEA-PORTER, Mr. GAETZ, Ms. NORTON, and Ms. LEE.

H.R. 820: Mr. GIBSON, Mr. NEWHOUSE, Mr. SHERMAN.

H.R. 830: Mr. BARR.

H.R. 842: Mr. RAINIER.

H.R. 850: Mr. FASO and Mr. YOHIO.

H.R. 852: Mr. DRUTCH.

H.R. 858: Mr. RUIZ and Mr. AGUILAR.

H.R. 869: Mr. BARTLETT, Mr. KATKO, Mr. RENACCI.

H.R. 876: Mr. KATKO.

H.R. 886: Mr. CALDERON, Mr. GABRIEL, Mr. WILK.

H.R. 894: Mr. MOONER.

H.R. 898: Mr. MEEKS.

H.R. 909: Mr. DAVID SCOTT of Georgia, Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia.

H.R. 926: Mr. STEPHENS, Mr. ESHOO.

H.R. 931: Mr. RICHMOND, Mr. DEUTCH, Mrs. RUSTOS, Ms. NORTON, Ms. JUDY CHU of California, Mr. POLIS, Mr. SARAHANES, and Mr. MULLIN.

H.R. 932: Mr. BYRNK, Mr. SMUCKER, Mr. WALKER, and Mr. RICE of South Carolina.

H.R. 933: Mr. COHEN.

H.R. 938: Mr. SMITH of Texas.

H.R. 943: Mr. VISCLOSKY.

H.R. 947: Mr. GONZALEZ of Texas, Mr. BROWNING, and Mr. MILLER.

H.R. 952: Mr. KOCH.

H.R. 959: Mr. SCOTT of Georgia, Mr. BISHOP of Georgia, Mr. J OHNSON of Georgia, Mr. C LAY, Ms. MENG, Mr. LEWIS of Georgia, Mr. NANDLER, Mr. ZELDIN, Mr. McGovern, and Ms. Tennyson.

H.R. 1002: Mr. COHEN, Mr. GALLEGO, Mr. VELASQUEZ, and Mr. McGovern.

H.R. 1048: Mr. SHEA-PORTER.

H.R. 1051: Mr. PATEL, Ms. MURPHY, Mr. HASTINGS, Ms. CASTOR of Florida, and Ms. ADAMS.

H.R. 111: Ms. LEE, Ms. KAPTUR, Ms. CICILINE, Ms. VELAZQUEZ, Ms. BLOUMENAUER, Ms. JACKSON LEE, Ms. SPEIER, Mr. SARAHANES, and Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia.

CONGRESSIONAL EARMARKS, LIMITED TAX BENEFITS, OR LIMITED TARIFF BENEFITS

Under clause 9 of rule XXI, lists or statements on congressional earmarks, limited tax benefits, or limited tariff benefits were submitted as follows:

Offered by Ms. FOXX

The provisions warrants a referral to the Committee on Education and the Workforce in H.J. Res. 66 do not contain any congressional earmarks, limited tax benefits, or limited tariff benefits as defined in clause 9 of rule XXI.

Offered by Ms. FOXX

The provisions warrants a referral to the Committee on Education and the Workforce in H.J. Res. 67 do not contain any congressional earmarks, limited tax benefits, or limited tariff benefits as defined in clause 9 of rule XXI.

PETITIONS, ETC.

Under clause 3 of rule XII, petitions and papers were laid on the clerk’s desk and referred as follows:

13. The SPEAKER presented a petition of the Common Council of Akron, OH, relative to Resolution No. 15-2017, urging the Speaker of the House Paul Ryan and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell not to repeal the Affordable Care Act because this law has been so important for the health and wellbeing of Akron residents; jointly to the Committees on Energy and Commerce, Ways and Means, Education and the Workforce, the Judiciary, Natural Resources, House Administration, Rules, and Appropriations.
The Senate met at 12 noon and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. HATCH).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

O God, who sends showers to soften the Earth, You are the source of life and joy. You have challenged us to number our days, not our weeks, months, or years. Give us wisdom to comprehend the brevity and uncertainty of our life’s journey. Forgive us when we boast about tomorrow, forgetting that our times are in Your hands.

Today, bless our lawmakers and their staffs. Remind them that they belong to You and that You will order their steps. As they wrestle with complex issues, help them seek Your wisdom and guidance. Lord, empower them as stewards of Your bounty, making them faithful in the vocation to which You have called them.

We pray in Your Holy Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. Kennedy). Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the nomination of Steven T. Mnuchin, of California, to be Secretary of the Treasury, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Steven T. Mnuchin, of California, to be Secretary of the Treasury.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Hampshire.

Ms. HASSAN. Mr. President, I yield my post cloture debate time to Senator Wyden.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator has that right.

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

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The Democratic leader is recognized.

CABINET NOMINATIONS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, candidate Trump ran a populist campaign that promised so much to working America. Many of those themes were actually echoed in his inaugural address, but ever since President Trump took the oath of office, he has gone about breaking promise after promise to the working people of this country.

A predictable pattern is beginning to emerge. This President uses populist rhetoric to cover up a hard-right agenda. We still hear the remnants of candidate Trump’s populism in his speeches, but his actions as President don’t match up. Just an hour after he had delivered populist words on the steps of the Capitol in his inaugural address, the President signed an Executive order—his first, I believe—that jacked up the price on Americans trying to afford a mortgage.

Ever since, we here in the Senate have been working through the President’s Cabinet, which is filled not with champions of the working class, not with people who came from the working class but with a slew of superrich nominees, Washington insiders, and corporate types who have spent their whole careers sticking it to the working man.

A President’s Cabinet provides insight into how they will govern and what their priorities will be. The President has shown his hand by selecting the most anti-working class Cabinet we have ever seen.

The slate of nominees we will soon consider, including Steve Mnuchin for Treasury, Andrew Puzder for Labor, and Rick Mulvaney for OMB, show the yawning gap between the President’s audacious promises to working America and the practical reality of his administration, which is steadily stacking the deck against them.

This evening we will debate the nomination of Steve Mnuchin for Treasury, a Cabinet post that will have oversight over Wall Street.

Candidate Trump spent the campaign lambasting elites and criticizing Wall Street. He said:

“I’m not going to let Wall Street get away with murder. Wall Street has caused tremendous problems for us.

Those are his words, but what does President Trump do? With one of his first Executive orders, he started the process to try to roll back Wall Street reform, undoing protections we put in place after the financial crisis to prevent another one from occurring. He wants to eviscerate the one agency that sticks up for consumers when they are being ripped off by payday lenders or debt collectors—the CFPB. That is a broken promise.

Candidate Trump said at his rallies: “When you cast that ballot, just picture a Wall Street board room filled with the special interests . . . and imagine the look on their faces when you tell them: ‘You’re fired!’”

But President Trump told Steve Mnuchin, a Wall Street insider with
decades of experience in that board room he described, “You’re hired,” as his Treasury Secretary, no less. That is a broken promise.

A President who is a true champion for working America would never consider unwinding protections that were designed to make our financial system more secure and protect hard-working Americans from the risky practices too often seen on Wall Street.

For the Secretary of Labor, the President picked Andrew Puzder, a man who once said he prefers robots to human employees because, in his words, they are always polite, they always upsell, they never take a vacation, they never show up late, there is never a slip and fall, or an age, sex, or race discrimination case.

Secretary Nomi Puzder, the guy who is supposed to be protecting laborers—working people—actually said that.

I want to read it again. It galls me that this man is nominated for Labor Secretary. Why does he prefer robots to human employees? Secretary Puzder: They are always polite, they always upsell, they never take a vacation, they never show up late, there is never a slip and fall, or an age, sex, or race discrimination case.

This is a man who has such disdain for workers that he said the minimum wage is a big mistake, and while at CKE Restaurants, his company, he continues American jobs outsourced.

A President who is a true champion of working America would never even consider selecting a nominee like Andrew Puzder to run the Labor Department. It is another broken promise to the working men and women of America. Amazing.

What President Trump did during the campaign and said during the campaign and in his inaugural address is almost the exact opposite of what he is doing now. You could not find a more anti-labor nominee for Labor Secretary than Mr. Puzder.

Now, what about OMB? The President selected Representative Mike Mulvaney, whose congressional career is a direct rebuke to key promises Candidate Trump made to working America. Candidate Trump promised that he was “not going to cut Social Security like every other Republican and I’m not going to cut Medicare or Medicaid.”

That is a quote from Candidate Trump.

But who does he choose for OMB? A pick who has relentlessly argued to cut both of these programs, including bill after bill that would end both Medicare and Social Security as we know it.

Our new Health and Human Services Secretary—who, unfortunately, passed this Chamber because our Republican colleagues are just marching in lockstep to the President—is in exactly the same boat.

A true champion of senior citizens, of the working man and woman, wouldn’t hire someone like Representative Mulvaney or Representative Price to take an ax to the programs they have relied on for generations.

Just 3 weeks in, the administration is stretching the boundaries of cognitive dissonance. The President still speaks like a populist, but his actions like a hardcore conservative. He promises to stick up for working families, but every decision he has made is rigging the system further against them.

Every American who works hard for their paycheck, who desperately depends on programs like Social Security and Medicare, is in exactly the same pickle who has relentlessly argued to cut both of these programs, including bill after bill that would end both Medicare and Medicaid. Candidate Trump promised that he was “not going to cut Social Security or Medicare.”

I know many working people voted for President Trump in hopes that they would change the power structure in Washington, as he promised so many times. His Cabinet is the first way to see if he really meant it. His Cabinet is the first way to measure: is President Trump making his Presidency to what he promised in his campaign?

It turns out President Trump was using populist rhetoric to cover up a hard-right agenda, which will be carried out by this bevy of billionaires and bankers—bankrolled ideologues—broken promise after broken promise.

Candidate Trump said that Washington was a place where “the hedge fund managers, the Wall Street investors . . . and the powerful [protect] the powerless.”

“But I’m fighting for you,” he said to working Americans.

If these first 3 weeks are any indication, that is a broken promise.

The nominations of Steve Mnuchin, Representative Mulvaney, and Andrew Puzder represent broken promise after broken promise after broken promise. We Democrats, over the next several weeks, will make clear to the American people, as we continue to debate these nominations, that what President Trump said on the campaign trail is not what he is doing as President. He is breaking his promises to the working people of America.

Many working people who voted for Mr. Trump are depending on him to do what he said in the campaign. Reading the tea leaves of the first 3 weeks, working Americans are going to be deeply, deeply disappointed over the course of his Presidency.

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

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

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, when you serve as the Secretary of Treasury, you are charged with a variety of responsibilities, and right at the center of your duties is to address taxes. This is an area that the nominee to head the Treasury Department, Mr. Steven Mnuchin, waded into very early on after his nomination became public.

News leaked on November 29 of last year that Mr. Mnuchin was the President-elect’s choice for Secretary of the Treasury. The very next day, Mr. Mnuchin appeared on CNBC program and confirmed his selection. During an extended interview with CNBC, he introduced what I have come to call the Mnuchin rule. I will quote Mr. Mnuchin directly with respect to what he said: “That is a quote from Candidate Trump.

Mr. Mnuchin is the President’s nominee for Secretary. This is a position that has been held by American economic giants like Alexander Hamilton, Albert Gallatin, Salmon Chase, Henry M. Morgenthau, Jr., and Lloyd Bentsen. When a nominee for Treasury Secretary makes a pledge like Mr. Mnuchin’s, it really ought to mean something. It ought to stand for something.

Unfortunately, it already looks as though the Mnuchin rule is on the ropes. The very first act of the 115th Congress and a unified Republican government, repealing the Affordable Care Act, shatters the Mnuchin rule.

The Affordable Care Act repeal would mean that Republicans kicked off months ago, in my view, is a Trojan horse of tax breaks for the most fortunate. Nobody outside the top 4 or 5 percent of earners would get any of that break. Most of it would go to households in the top 1 percent of earners—even then, the top one-tenth of 1 percent—and it is paid for by taking insurance coverage and tax cuts for health care literally out of the hands of millions of working people.

When is it back for another whack at the Mnuchin rule later this year. Last week, the New York Times published a story talking about Mr. Mnuchin, which said that “his guarantee appears impossible to fulfill either under the tax overhaul that the House Republicans are pushing or similar, sketched-out proposals that Mr. Trump has offered.”

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD the article titled “Treasury Nominee Vows No Tax Cut for Rich: Math Says the Opposite.”

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

[By Patricia Cohen]

"The newly christened “Mnuchin rule”—the assurance given by the Treasury nominee Steven T. Mnuchin that “there would be no absolute tax cut for the upper class”—seems as if it was made to be.

Mr. Mnuchin initially made the statement during an interview on CNBC in November, February 13, 2017."
after President Trump chose him for the cabinet. At Mr. Mnuchin’s confirmation hearing, Senator Ron Wyden, an Oregon Democrat, rebranded the comment as a “rule,” transforming a throwaway line into a formal pledge.

Whether it will be kept may become clearer in two or three weeks—the timing Mr. Trump has selected for delivering a “phenomenal” tax plan.

Although Mr. Mnuchin said any rate reductions at the top would be offset by the closing of tax loopholes, his guarantee appears impossible to fulfill either under the tax overhaul that the House Republicans are pushing or similar, sketchier proposals that Mr. Trump has offered.

Redesigning the tax code with an eye fixed on lower rates has been a Republican mission for decades, and one that Mr. Trump adopted. That prospect, combined with a promised regulatory retreat, has pumped up the stock market and fueled optimism among business leaders.

At the same time, the president has raised expectations among his working-class supporters that “the rich will pay their fair share of their social-interest foreclosures that have been so good for Wall Street investors, and for people like me, but unfair to American workers” will be eliminated. Mr. Mnuchin is one of the administration’s top economic policy officials, promised “a big tax cut for the middle class.”

Yet analyses of the president’s and the House plans consistently conclude that the wealthy will receive the largest tax cuts by far.

Start with the House blueprint, which at the moment is the closest thing to a working draft that exists. The nonpartisan Tax Policy Center, a joint project of the Urban Institute and Brookings Institution, found “high-income households would receive the largest tax cuts, both in dollar terms and as a percentage of income.”

How big? “Three-quarters of the tax cuts would benefit the top 1 percent of taxpayers,” if the plan were put into effect this year, it said. The highest-income households—the top 0.1 percent—would get “an average tax cut of about $1.3 million, 16.9 percent of after-tax income.”

Those in the middle fifth of incomes would get an average tax cut of about $260, or 0.4 percent, while the poorest would get about $50.

That split would worsen down the road, the Tax Policy Center says: “In 2025 the top 1 percent of taxpayers would receive nearly 100 percent of the total tax reduction.”

Those wary of any potential liberal bias could turn to the conservative-leaning Tax Foundation. Its analysis found a smaller gap between the wealthy and everyone else, but a gap nonetheless. The foundation concluded that four out of five taxpayers would see only a slight increase in after-tax income, while those in the top 1 percent of the income scale would save at least 10 times as much, or 53 percent. That’s nearly $68,000 extra for the top, compared with $67 for those smack dab in the middle of the income scale.

“The Mnuchin rule is already being broken as Republicans look to strip away hundreds of billions of dollars in Affordable Care Act tax credits for working Americans to pay for a giant tax break for the wealthy,” Senator Wyden said. “Bottom line is it’s unfair to cut benefits that the middle class depends on, all so the wealthy pay a lower rate.”

Mr. Mnuchin did not respond to a request for comment.

Republicans argue their plan makes every one a winner—that lower taxes will unleash an economic growth spurt, raising wages, incomes and tax revenue all around.

The historical record does not offer much support for the claim that slashing taxes for the most affluent creates growth. Yet even assuming the rosiest of forecasts, the top 1 percent of taxpayers to the Tax Foundation, would still receive close to a $100,000 tax cut—32 times as much as a middle-income family.

Mr. Mnuchin has offered his own formula for adhering to the standard he laid down, explaining that “any reductions we have in upper-income taxes would be offset by less deductions.”

That would require some otherworldly mathematical magic, however. Consider the proposals that would reduce taxes on the rich:

Cut the top income to 33 percent, from 39.6 percent.

Cut taxes on capital gains, 70 percent of which flow to the top 1 percent.

Eliminate the estate tax, which applies to a tiny number of people, couples that have estates bigger than $10.8 million.

Eliminate the 3.8 percent surtax on high earners’ investment income that has been used to subsidize health care for poorer Americans.

End the alternative minimum tax, which currently limits deductions for high earners. Lowering lower-income taxes would pass from small businesses to their owners, which also primarily benefit wealthier Americans.

Now, what deductions could be eliminated that would offset all those cuts at the top? There aren’t many, said Alan Viard, an economist at the conservative American Enterprise Institute. If Republicans insist on lowering taxes on top wages, capital gains, estates and cash-flow and pass-through income as advertised, “there’s not a lot of latitude to limit itemized deductions further,” Mr. Viard said.

Any plan to curb itemized deductions would be partly offset by the Trump plan to increase the standard deduction. Cur- tailing mortgage deductions for the most expensive homes is probably a good idea, Mr. Viard said, but that isn’t going to do much to raise revenue from those at the top of the income pyramid, and the deduction is already roughly limited to the interest paid on $1 million in mortgage debt.

Such alternative ideas, however, assume that the Mnuchin rule will have a meaningful impact on what the White House will propose or defend. Not everyone is convinced that it will. Mr. Viard said, “I don’t know how much interest there is in fulfilling that statement by Mnuchin, however it’s interpreted.”

Mr. WYDEN. After breaking the Mnuchin rule once, the majority is now planning to fast-track a second tax break for the wealthy. This one will be even larger; in fact, it could be 10 times bigger or more. My guess is that a lot of Americans are wondering what has happened to spend just a few minutes checking in with that part of the plan. If we read the fine print, we will notice that one of the Trump tax plan’s big casualties is something called head of household status. That is a particularly important benefit for some middle-income taxpayers because it reduces their bills. What would it mean for head of household status to go away? Millions of working Americans, mostly single parents, would get hit with tax increases.

Furthermore, the Trump plan eliminates key personal exemptions for millions of other middle-income families. It pushes a lot of families into higher tax brackets than they are in today. That administration touts its proposals for a larger standard deduction and a new child care tax credit as the cure-all for its tax increases on the middle class and on working people, but the math just doesn’t add up. Families who are struggling to get ahead today are going to pay higher taxes tomorrow.

So let’s recap the Trump tax plan: a multitrillion-dollar tax break for the wealthy and corporations and a gut punch of higher taxes for working families.

At this point, it would be generous to say that the Mnuchin rule is now on life support. If we wanted to design a tax plan to push more Americans out of the economic winners circle, the Trump plan is what you would come up with. When I look at the Trump tax plan that Mr. Mnuchin would be in charge of spearheading, it looks to me as though the administration has zero interest in cleaning out the rot that is right at the heart of America’s tax system.

Here is what it is all about, in my view. The Tax Code today is a tale of two systems. If you are a wage earner—a welder in Portland or a nurse in Louisville—you have a lot of your taxes taken out of your paycheck. They are compulsory—no special deals. You can even see the numbers right on your pay stub. Once or twice a month, it comes out. There are no special tax-dodging strategies or loopholes to window down the tax bill further. In Portland, you pay taxes in Louisiana. You can’t set up a John Doe, Inc., in a Cayman Islands P.O. box to shield your income from taxes.
But the rules are different for the powerful and the well connected. At their disposal are huge armies of lawyers and accountants who specialize in tax games. They specialize in tax tricks. With the right advice, the most fortunate individuals and corporations in the country can decide how much tax to pay and when to pay it. If anybody wonders why people in America feel the tax system is rigged and the rules are stacked against them, this is a big part of the answer. I pretend to talk more about that, but I must come to back height the difference between the welder in Portland and the nurse in Louisiana.

When those hard-working Americans are out there working for a wage and once or twice a month have their taxes taken right out of their paycheck, they know they aren’t getting anything special. It is compulsory. It is mandatory. They see it on their paychecks. Yet they get lots of news coverage and articles about the rules they will follow for those who are fortunate, instead of paying taxes in a mandatory and compulsory way, they pretty much get to decide what they are going to pay, when they are going to pay it, and maybe even how. It seems to me that as we look at the nominee for Treasury Secretary, we get a pretty good example of how it does play out in terms of taxes for those fortunate few and how his taxes stand in sharp contrast to the welder in Portland or the nurse in Louisiana.

Not long after ending a 17-year run at Goldman Sachs, Mr. Mnuchin opened a hedge fund called Dune Capital in 2004. He set up an outpost in Anguilla and the Cayman Islands. That is not a move you make for the infrastructure or the ease of the commute. It is about a zero-percent tax rate.

During Mr. Mnuchin’s hearing, he claimed that having those overseas funds benefited American nonprofit. When he testified in front of the Finance Committee, he said: You know, the main thing we are doing with these overseas funds is we are helping churches and pension funds. But documents from the Securities and Exchange Commission show something quite different. In some cases, 100 percent of his investors were from outside of the United States, and setting up overseas allowed Mr. Mnuchin to help them avoid US taxes. What was the end effect? Dune Capital was heavily invested in movies. So millions of dollars in profits from Hollywood exports, like the movie “Avatar,” were funneled to an offshore web of entities and investors, giving him the chance to skirt US tax bills.

At a more recent point in his career, Mr. Mnuchin’s bank was up for a merger. The deal had the potential to be a personal windfall for him and a small circle of others. A foundation Mr. Mnuchin chaired reportedly used tax-exempt dollars to fund a write-in campaign pushing for the deal’s approval. During the public comment period on a potential merger, this is pretty much the equivalent of stuffing the ballot box.

Now, as a nominee for a Cabinet position, Mr. Mnuchin could be in line for a special elective Federal tax deferral on monies made by selling off and bonds. That is the true definition of getting to pay what you want, when you want. We hear a frequent and common defense that these kinds of tax tricks are brought into public view. It is true that the people who use them, follow the rules, are not the trouble. But the outrage in our tax system, as I have said on this Senate floor, is what is legal. That is the real outrage with the American tax system, and it is outrageous that the Senate has allowed obvious gamesmanship to stay legal. It is outrageous that the administration and its chosen nominee for Treasury have shown no interest in changing it.

When you are the Treasury Secretary, one of your paramount obligations is to sell Congress on the last time the United States overhauled its Tax Code—this was in 1986—the Reagan Treasury Department played a huge role in that effort, and one of the core principles of that reform was treating wages the same way. Democrats and Republicans came together to pass a tax reform bill based on fairness. It said that the wage earner—that nurse in Louisiana or welder in Portland—or the income of those who made their money in finance and on Wall Street like would be treated the same. I see no indication that this administration is prepared to repeat that formula.

The campaign promise to fix the broken, dysfunctional Tax Code—Donald Trump’s campaign promise—lured in a lot of voters. When I heard that Mnuchin rule the first time, I said that sounds pretty good—no net tax break for those who are the most fortunate. That sounds pretty appealing. The tax plan put forward by the Administration and Republicans in Congress have on offer now will not undo the disgusting unfairness that is right at the heart of the American Tax Code. In fact, it is only going to get worse.

This issue has to be at the center of the debate on Mr. Mnuchin’s nomination. I am particularly troubled by the fact that the evidence shows that the Mnuchin rule is already on the ropes. I intend to oppose this nominee. I urge my colleagues to do the same. I suggest the absence of a quorum. The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to do so.

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

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

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I rise to express my strong support for the nomination of Dr. David Shulkin to be the next Secretary of Veterans Affairs. I believe his impressive record of service in both the public and private health care sectors as well as his firm grasp of VA health care issues make him extraordinarily well qualified to lead the Department through the coming period of major reforms and continuing transformation.

Dr. Shulkin has served in numerous executive roles at hospitals across the country, including Beth Israel Medical Center in New York City, the University of Pennsylvania Health System, and the Atlantic Rehabilitation Institute. In fact, he has been named one of the top 100 Physician Leaders of Hospitals and Health Systems and one of the 50 Most Influential Physician Executives in the country.

In 2015, Dr. Shulkin brought his extensive experience in the private sector to the Department of Veterans Affairs and served as the VA Under Secretary for Health. Last year, I had the opportunity to host Dr. Shulkin in my home in Maine, as he toured our community-based outpatient clinic and our local hospital, Cary Medical Center, to see the innovative work being done there to provide veterans with top-quality health care closer to where they live.

Cary Medical Center partners with the VA through the Access Received Closer to Home or ARCH Program to provide veterans in Northern Maine with high-quality care, including specialty care that is more close to their families, rather than forcing them to drive 250 or more miles to receive their care at the Togus VA Medical Center in Augusta, the location of Maine’s only VA hospital. This partnership between Cary Medical Center and the VA has been a huge success, with an approval rating from our veterans exceeding 90 percent. Last spring, when we were faced with the potential expiration of the ARCH Program, Dr. Shulkin, as VA Under Secretary, came to Maine and announced his commitment to ensure that veterans using this innovative program in our State would maintain seamless community care. He kept his word. During his visit to Maine, Dr. Shulkin also toured the Togus VA Medical Center, the oldest VA facility in the Nation and the community-based outpatient clinic in Bangor. I would note that he drove the 4 hours from Augusta to Caribou to get a better sense of the distances in our State. Right now, when we are in the midst of a fierce blizzard, you can imagine how important it is for veterans in need of care to be able to access that care close to home in an efficient and cost-effective manner.

I was truly impressed, and remain truly impressed, with Dr. Shulkin’s understanding of the needs of rural veterans and the challenges of providing quality care in rural settings. While in Maine, Dr. Shulkin also listened to veterans health care providers, VSO advocates, and the VA staff alike to ensure that our veterans received the care they
have earned through their service to our Nation.

In fact, he remained in Caribou and had a town meeting in which he heard from people representing a variety of views but all of whom encouraged him to continue this wonderful program.

Dr. Shulkin’s nomination to be VA Secretary has drawn support from our veterans service organizations throughout the country, including the American Legion, the VFW, the Disabled American Veterans, the Paralyzed Veterans of America, AMVETS, and the Vietnam Veterans of America.

That does not surprise me because he has demonstrated, in very concrete ways, his commitment to the veterans we are serving. At a time when bipartisan consensus, unfortunately, has been all too rare in this Chamber, Dr. Shulkin’s nomination has been one of the few areas where Republicans and Democrats have found common ground. His nomination was approved unanimously by the Senate Veterans’ Affairs Committee.

During this time, when crucial reforms and organizational changes are necessary to ensure consistent, high-quality care for our Nation’s veterans, it is critical that the VA has an experienced, talented, and committed leader to spearhead the Department’s transformation as we seek to improve the quality and timeliness of health care for our veterans.

Dr. Shulkin is an excellent nominee and I urge all of my colleagues to support his confirmation.

Seeing no one seeking recognition, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

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

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

Ms. HIRONO. Mr. President, it is observed that we are being asked to confirm a Treasury Secretary who helped bring about the 2008 financial crisis and profited off the misery that followed.

During his campaign, President Trump promised to crack down on Wall Street abuses. In one of his campaign ads, the President said that the CEO of Goldman Sachs was part of a “global elite” trying to ruin our working class.” He said that on Wall Street, “It’s the powerful protecting only the powerful.”

Given his campaign promises, it is astounding that President Trump nominated Steve Mnuchin, someone whose business record embodies the worst abuses from the financial crisis, to serve as Secretary of the Treasury.

In the fall of 2008, when I served in the U.S. House, then-Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson came to Capitol Hill and presented a dire picture. He told us that without drastic intervention by Congress and the White House, the entire global financial system would collapse. The situation was so dire, he argued, that we could not even pause to provide additional, meaningful relief to the millions of families across the country facing home foreclosures.

In the years that followed, we learned just how bad things were. Many banks sold mortgages to people who couldn’t afford them, packaged those mortgages into complex financial instruments, colluded with ratings agencies, and sold those “products” as solid investments.

The American people stepped in with hundreds of billions of dollars to bail out Wall Street. But without effective, broad laws in place before the financial crisis to prevent predatory lending, millions of people lost their homes and trillions of dollars in household wealth. Many of those victims have yet to recover.

That was bad enough as it was unfolding, but in the years that followed, many of the numerous abuses these banks perpetrated on the American people.

After years of pushing subprime loans on minority homeowners who couldn’t afford them, foreclosures devastated communities across the country. According to a 2010 study by the Center for Responsible Lending, minority homeowners were 70 percent more likely to lose their homes in foreclosure proceedings.

Many banks also violated judicial foreclosure proceedings when they signed hundreds of thousands of foreclosure documents without reviewing them, also known as robo-signing.

Some of my colleagues might argue that it isn’t worth rehashing this devastating economic history, but I disagree because today we will be asked to vote for a Treasury nominee whose questionable business practices earned him the title of “Foreclosure King.”

As a senior executive at Goldman Sachs for 17 years, Steve Mnuchin was an evangelist for the types of financial transactions—credit default swaps and collateralized debt obligations—that crashed the economy in 2008. He said these instruments were “an extremely positive development in terms of being able to finance different parts of the economy and different businesses effectively.” What was essentially just business to him devastated the economy and different businesses.

As the CEO of OneWest, Mnuchin was deeply involved in subprime lending and was responsible for tens of thousands of foreclosures across the country. Under Mr. Mnuchin’s leadership, OneWest was among the worst offenders in robo-signing foreclosure documents. While he denied this fact during his confirmation hearing, a vice president at OneWest admitted to signing 750 documents per week while spending less than 30 seconds on each one. In other words, he was very busy robo-signing these documents.

Under Mr. Mnuchin’s leadership, a OneWest subsidiary, Financial Free-dom, foreclosed on more than 16,000 seniors who were living on fixed incomes and who had reverse mortgages with that company. In one case, the company foreclosed on a 90-year-old woman’s home over a 27-cent debt.

Many of those victims have yet to recover. The American people stepped in with $30,000 more than her records showed and made a unilateral offer without disclosing any information contrary to what they had agreed to.

Suzanne wisely refused to accept the so-called offer. At the time that she wrote to me, OneWest was pushing a judge to proceed with her foreclosure. She said: “I want to keep my home, but the difference between $1,300 and $1,500 a month is huge.”

OneWest has billions and is considering going public this year.

She went on to say: “They have made unreasonable offers, lost paperwork, ignored requests. All the nightmares you hear about on the news, well, consider me a poster child.”

Suzanne asked us to write to Steve Mnuchin; on her behalf, even though she knew that OneWest had a record of hanging homeowners like her out to dry. She said: “It seems to me that Mr. Mnuchin was one of the architects of our meltdown.” She is right.

There are tens of thousands of stories from OneWest customers like Suzanne across the country, and Mr. Mnuchin is responsible for each one of them as CEO of OneWest. Now President Trump is asking us to confirm Mr. Mnuchin to serve as Secretary of the Treasury.

Throughout his campaign, President Trump made it clear that he wants to dismantle Dodd-Frank, eliminate the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, and roll back financial regulations that would prevent another financial crisis. As Treasury Secretary, Mr. Mnuchin would be charged with implementing this agenda.

Credible economists have warned that we could end up in another financial crisis. My question is, Who would Mr. Mnuchin turn to save—Wall Street or the millions of people who will be adversely impacted? His record shows which path Steve Mnuchin
would choose. That is why I call on my colleagues to oppose this nomination.

I yield the floor.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the vote for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. Young). Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The majority leader is recognized.

WELCOMING THE PRIME MINISTER OF CANADA

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, later today we will welcome Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to the Capitol. Canada is more than just our neighbor. It is our partner. Canada is our neighbor. Today, we are fortunate to have Prime Minister Trudeau here in the Senate.

We welcome him.

We are also fortunate to have Prime Minister Trudeau here in the Senate. We welcome him.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Senators,Prime Minister Trudeau will be recognized by Senator Pat McCrory, President Pro Tempore of the North Carolina Senate.

Senator McCrory?

Mr. McCrory. Prime Minister, it is an honor to welcome you.

Thank you for being here today. We are honored to have you here.

Prime Minister, you are welcome.

Thank you, Mr. McCrory.

I would also like to recognize the Senate pages, who didn't miss a beat just 2 weeks into their new job. They worked through the night. We thank them for their service and for keeping us safe every day.

I would also like to thank the Secretary of the Senate, Julie Adams, Assistant Secretary Mary Suit Jones, and their entire team.

Specifically, I would like to thank the following offices and staff members, many of whom worked for more than 50 straight hours: the Official Reporters of Debates, which include Patrick Renzi, Susie Nguyen, Julia Jones, Mary Carpenter, Patrice Boyd, Octavio Colominas, Alice Hadow, Andrea Huston, Carol Darche, Desirea Jura, Megan McKenzie, Wendy Caswell, Diane Dorhammer, Mark Stuart, and Julie Ram. The Capitol Police Services team, which includes Sandra Schumm, Brenda Jamerson, Doreen Chendrorain, Jennifer Smolka, and Laurie Harris.

In addition to the offices I just named, I would also like to recognize the following legislative offices: The Bill Clerk, the Enrolling Clerk, the Executive Clerk, the Journal Clerk, the Legislative Clerk, the Daily Digest, and, of course, the Parliamentarians.

Lastly, I would like to thank our subcommittee and the Government Publishing Office, which worked tirelessly to get the Record printed.

We are also grateful for the long hours and sacrifice that each of these offices and staff members made last week. Of course, it was completely unnecessary but, nevertheless, they were here through the night.

NOMINATION OF NEIL GOSSCH

Mr. President, now, one final matter. When President Clinton took office in 1993, he named his first nominee to the Supreme Court, Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg. Justice Ginsburg's nomination was not without controversy. She had argued for positions that are still quite controversial today. For example, she had questioned the constitutionality of laws against bigamy because they implicated private relationships. For the same reason, she had opined that there might be a constitutional right to prostitution.

She was always an advocate for education and female facilities. She even proposed abolishing Mother's Day.

So you can understand why Senators wanted to get her views on issues that might come before her as a Justice, but, nevertheless, they were here. Here is what she had to say:

You are well aware that I came to this proceeding to be judged as a judge, not as an advocate. Because I am and hope to continue to be a judge, it would be wrong for me to say or preview in this legislative chamber how I would cast my vote on questions the Supreme Court may be called upon to decide. Were I to rehearse here what I would say and how I would reason on such questions, I would act injudiciously. Judges in our system are bound to decide concrete cases, not abstract issues.

She went on:

A judge sworn to decide impartially can offer no forecasts, no hints, for that would show not only disregard for the specifics of a case, but, in the case of a judge, it would also display disdain for the entire judicial process.

So summing it up, she said: No hints, no forecasts, no previews, and that is what has become known as the Ginsburg standard. Supreme Court nominees of Presidents of both parties have adhered to it.

For example, President Clinton's second nominee, Stephen Breyer, noted that "there is nothing more important to a judge than to have an open mind and to listen carefully to arguments," and so he told the Judiciary Committee he did "not want to predict or commit myself on an open issue that I feel is going to come up in the Court." That meant, he said, not discussing "how" a "right" applies, where it applies, under what circumstances it applies.

When his nomination to be Chief Justice was pending, John Roberts said that adhering to the principle embodied in the Ginsburg standard is "of great importance not only to potential Justices but to judges, which most nominees to the Supreme Court already are."

"We're sensitive," he said, "to the need to maintain the independence and integrity of the Court."

He then explained how the Ginsburg standard helps maintain the independence of the Court. Nominees, he said, "go on the Court not as a delegate from [the Judiciary] Committee with certain commitments laid out and how they're going to approach cases."

Rather, "[T]hey go on the Court as Judges who will approach cases with an open mind and decide those cases in light of the arguments presented, the record presented, and the rule of law."
And the litigants before them,” he concluded, “have a right to expect that and to have the appearance of that as well. That has been the approach that all of the Justices have taken.”

At the time, my colleague from New York and other Senate Democrats were upset that the Chief Justice followed Justice Ginsburg’s approach—even though many of them didn’t complain when she refused to preview or pre-judge legal issues during her confirmation hearing.

But my friend who came to the Chief Justice’s defense, Justice Ginsburg. She felt compelled to depart from protocol and weigh in on the matter. She said: “Judge Roberts was unquestionably right” in refusing to preview or pre-judge legal issues at his confirmation hearing.

Both of President Obama’s nominees adhered to the Ginsburg standard as well. His first nominee, Sonia Sotomayor, explained that what her “expectation as a trial court judge and the appellate court have reinforced for me is that the process of judging is a process of keeping an open mind. It’s the process,” she continued, “of not coming to a decision with a prejudgment ever.” That prejudgment, she said, applied not only to the cases that would come before her on the Supreme Court if she were confirmed but that could come before her in her then-current capacity as a circuit court judge.

Most Senators of both parties have respected the Ginsburg standard.

For example, during her hearing, Senator Leahy told Justice Ginsburg that he “certainly” didn’t want her “to have to lay out a test here in the abstract which might determine what [her] vote or [her] test would be in a case [she had] yet to see that may well come before the Supreme Court.” Even my friend from New York has recognized the Ginsburg Standard is a “grand tradition.”

The far left has been pushing my colleague who serves on the Judiciary Committee, the senior Senator from Connecticut, also says that Judge Gorsuch, for the first time with Supreme Court nominees, has some “special obligation”—some “special obligation”—to give his views on “specific issues,” without the benefit of the judicial process that Justice Sotomayor noted was so important.

Under our colleagues’ approach, there is no need to review the record in the case, no need to do any legal research, no need to hear the best arguments from each side, no need to deliberate with colleagues on the bench to arrive at a correct result. Nope. Just give a drive-by legal conclusion on a complicated and consequential matter of constitutional law.

Let’s be clear about what is going on here. This new “special test” and “special obligation” are not about ensuring Judge Gorsuch’s judicial independence; they are about compromising it. Our friends on the other side of the aisle want to constrain his ability to rule in a manner that is consistent with the law by holding him to what he said in their meetings or what he said under oath at his hearing.

In the upside down world of my Democratic friends, Judge Gorsuch “must” do two things: first, must preview his approach or even pre-judge legal issues that could come before him; and second, must lose his judicial independence—in order to prove his judicial independence.

As Justice Ginsburg and Justice Breyer and Justice Sotomayor all noted, the process of judging is about having an open mind, seeing what the facts are in a particular case, hearing the arguments on both sides, and making what the judge believes is the correct ruling according to the law. It is not about a judge hemming himself in before a legislative body by previewing how he would view a legal issue, or, as Senator Leahy noted, announcing the legal test he might apply in a particular case, it is simply not about that judge saying whether something in the abstract is constitutional.

So under this double standard, Senators must respect the need for judicial independence of the Supreme Court nominees of Democratic Presidents, even when those nominees espouse views that are far, far outside the mainstream, like suggesting there is a constitutional right to prostitution or urging the abolition of Mother’s Day.

Under this double standard, Senators can compromise judicial independence of clearly mainstream Supreme Court nominees of Republican Presidents, even when those nominees are, like Judge Gorsuch, well-known proponents of maintaining judicial independence, who have a long record on the issue.

That is not just my view of Judge Gorsuch’s commitment to judicial independence, by the way; that is according to prominent Democratic lawyers like President Obama’s top litigator in the Supreme Court.

This Democratic double standard, though, is not surprising. Recall that the Democratic leader said he was prepared to keep Justice Scalia’s seat open for 4 years—4 years. That was made difficult by the nomination of an outstanding candidate like Judge Gorsuch.

So our colleague came up with a new supermajority standard for his confirmation—a standard that didn’t exist for seven of the eight Justices currently on the Court—a fact my friend later had to admit.

The Democratic double standard on requiring nominees to prejudge issues is just the latest attempt to come up with something, with anything—anything—to justify opposing an exceptional nominee like Judge Gorsuch. Judge Gorsuch is one of the most impressive, most highly qualified nominees to ever come before us. He has won kudos from across the political spectrum. Even the top Democrat on the Judiciary Committee couldn’t help but praise him.

Instead of appreciating that our new President has nominated an accomplished, independent, and thoughtful jurist, Democrats are viewing this outstanding nominee as a political problem. Their base is demanding total resistance to everything, but they can’t find a good reason to oppose Judge Gorsuch on the merits. They are in a pickle.

So we have this attempt to replace the bipartisan Ginsburg standard with the double standard. I understand the difficulty of their situation, but the standard we are going to follow with this nominee is the same one—we followed for Ruth Bader Ginsburg and every other Justice on the Court since then: no hints, no forecasts, no previews, fair consideration, and an up-or-down vote.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.
Let’s get the obvious points out of the way. Mr. Mnuchin has 30 years’ experience working in a variety of capacities in the financial sector. He has experience managing large and complicated private-sector enterprises and in negotiating difficult compromises and decisions. He has been accountable for those decisions. He has the support of a number of key organizations and associations within the financial industry, and experts across the ideological spectrum have endorsed his nomination.

Long story short: Under any objective standard, Mr. Mnuchin has ample experience, credentials, and qualifications for this important position. Yet my colleagues have done all they can under the rules—even to the point of casting aside some longstanding customs and traditions of the Senate—in order to delay his confirmation.

I will not relive the entire chain of events that got this nomination through the Finance Committee, bringing us to this point. For now, I would urge my colleagues to look fairly at the record. In every case, as the committee processed his nomination, Mr. Mnuchin responded to questions and allegations with complete and honest answers and demonstrated no signs of acting or responding in bad faith toward the committee or its members.

People are free, I suppose, to walk into the confirmation process with an assumption of bad faith. But throughout my time in the Senate—and keep in mind, I have been here a long time—that isn’t usually how we operate around here.

My colleagues on the other side have put forward a number of claims and allegations about Mr. Mnuchin. They have essentially thrown everything, including the kitchen sink, at this nominee in a desperate attempt to block his confirmation. Well, so far, nothing has worked. But through-out my time in the Senate—and keep in mind, I have been here a long time—that isn’t usually how we operate around here.

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I have found it particularly interesting to see my friends raise concerns about matters that did not bother them in the least when it came to voting for Democratic nominees for Treasury Secretary. Indeed, with regard to Mr. Mnuchin, my Democratic colleagues have raised questions that none of the allegations my colleagues have raised can withstand even a modest amount of scrutiny. But that hasn’t stopped some of them from trying.

I have found it particularly interesting to see my friends raise concerns about matters that did not bother them in the least when it came to voting for Democratic nominees for Treasury Secretary. Indeed, with regard to Mr. Mnuchin, my Democratic colleagues have raised questions that none of the allegations my colleagues have raised can withstand even a modest amount of scrutiny. But that hasn’t stopped some of them from trying.

Mr. Mnuchin placed some investments offshore, in full conformity with the law and not for the purpose of avoiding U.S. taxes. But my friends have simply asserted that no one uses offshore financial vehicles unless they are trying to avoid U.S. taxes, and, therefore, Mr. Mnuchin’s investments disqualified him to serve as Treasury Secretary. Yet Secretary Lew, prior to his confirmation, actually made investments in the famous Uglund House in the Cayman Islands. President Obama described as “outrageous” and “the biggest tax scheme in the world.” My Democratic colleagues knew this, but did not care, and happily confirmed Secretary Lew without much mention of this matter. We allowed him to go through, in the interest of civility and getting along with our colleagues.

Democrats have argued that Mr. Mnuchin's only problem was related to the housing market collapse. Yet Secretary Lew, prior to his nomination, ran “proprietary trading” groups at Citigroup, where they invested a hedge fund that bet heavily on the collapse of the housing market. My Democratic colleagues knew this, but did not care, and happily confirmed Secretary Lew without ever really acknowledging this part of his record.

Democrats claim that Mr. Mnuchin unfairly foreclosed on homeowners, despite evidence to the contrary. Yet Secretary Lew, prior to being nominated, ran a Citigroup division that was, according to arbitration panels at the Financial Industry Regulatory Authority and later the SEC, “defrauding investors.” When asked about the toxic securities sold by his Citigroup unit, Secretary Lew’s answers varied between not remembering any specific securities to claiming he somehow wasn’t involved in the investment decisions made at the Citigroup unit he oversaw. My Democratic colleagues knew this, but they did not care, and happily confirmed Secretary Lew without any thing resembling complete answers to these questions.

Despite ample evidence to the contrary, Democrats claim that Mr. Mnuchin ran a “robo-signing” foreclosure machine. Yet Citigroup, while Jack Lew was in senior management, sliced and diced mortgages and was alleged to have “robo-signed” mortgage documents. Democrats knew this, but they did not care, and happily confirmed Secretary Lew without ever really asking him about these issues.

I can go on and on. There are many other issues that my colleagues were willing to overlook, if not outright ignore, with regard to Secretary Lew that have been hyperbolic attacks on Mr. Mnuchin.

I wish to remind my colleagues that despite the numerous concerns that I and others have had about Secretary Lew and the many significant disagreements that I had with President Obama’s agenda, I voted in favor of Secretary Lew’s confirmation. On this very floor, I stated the following:

I have always believed that [the] President—any President, regardless of party—is owed a certain degree of deference when choosing people to work in his administration. Therefore, if I personally would have chosen a different person for this position, I intend to vote in favor of Mr. Lew’s confirmation.

Many other Republicans also voted to confirm Secretary Lew, despite serious reservations, in recognition that the President had a right to appoint who he wanted to—as long as they were not crooks and people who hate the republic. Well, Mr. Lew was not either of those.

My, how times have changed. As is typically the case, when a group of Senators is unable to make a believable case against a nominee, they tend to just raise every possible issue and hope something gains traction. When in the end nothing works, they cling to whatever allegation came last and hope it is enough to change the outcome. That is why, over the past couple of weeks or so, we have heard an awful lot about “robo-signing.”

Here is the basic rundown of what has happened on this issue: My friends on the other side got an answer to a poorly and vaguely worded question that was not what they wanted to receive. The answer from Mr. Mnuchin, that OneWest Bank did not engage in “robo-signing” under his leadership, was truthful and defensible, but it did not conform to the Democratic talking points drafted for this nominee.

Since that time, Senate Democrats have repeatedly referenced new stories that purportedly prove that not only did Mr. Mnuchin run a bank that engaged in the nefarious, yet not well-defined practice of “robo-signing” mortgage documents, he lied about it in his answers to the committee. However, I would urge my colleagues on both sides to actually look at the supposed evidence from those news articles. Simply, to say that my Democratic colleagues are trying to make a mountain out of a molehill would be an insult to moles everywhere. There is no molehill to be found here.

To make the case that Mr. Mnuchin was untruthful in his answers, the articles rely on quotes mined from a single deposition of a OneWest employee. Quoted out of context, the employee seems to have said that she rapidly signed several hundred foreclosure-related documents a week without fully verifying their accuracy. That is the supposed smoking gun on the Mnuchin “robo-signing” question.

However, if you read the full depositions, the employee absolutely clear that she was not the employee responsible for verifying the accuracy or validity of everything in the documents. She was part of a process that included several steps and multiple employees to verify the accuracy of different aspects of the paperwork. She didn’t even have to dig for this explanation. It is not a matter of any interpretation. That explanation, in plain
English, is right there in the deposition my colleagues and the news articles have been using as “evidence” that Mr. Mnuchin lied to the Finance Committee.

Nothing—not a single thing—in the deposition showed Mr. Mnuchin ever said anything that contradicts their preconceived notions, particularly when it comes in the form of an answer to one of their questions, that is no basis or justification to make wild and brazen accusations that a nominee has been lying. And make no mistake, that is precisely what they are doing with Mr. Mnuchin.

On a related note, it is really amazing to me that my friends on the other side are now feigning outrage over alleged lack of responsiveness to their questions when gone through the last 8 years with Treasury Secretaries who routinely ignored questions and requests for briefings posed by myself and a number of my other Senate colleagues. But I digress.

I certainly sympathize with the many people who suffered through the foreclosure crisis and with Democrats in Congress who were, and continue to be, frustrated that Treasury officials in the Obama administration failed to construct effective homeowner relief programs, despite having made numerous promises to do so.

However, given that frustration, it is odd to me that my colleagues remain so opposed to Mr. Mnuchin’s nomination when he was very much engaged in the practice of making mortgage modifications work during his time as the head of OneWest Bank. Moreover, Mr. Mnuchin worked diligently with regulators and others to clean up the system under which foreclosure documents were being processed. You don’t have to take my word for it; you can examine the numerous letters of support we have received from a range of people and organizations, from community groups to community bankers, which attest to Mr. Mnuchin’s success in turning a bank that was plagued by toxic loans and numerous processing errors into a viable financial services firm that provides jobs and support to communities.

Along the way, Mr. Mnuchin’s company significantly outperformed rivals in the industry in terms of offering loan modifications to help keep Americans facing foreclosure in their homes. Mr. Mnuchin has acknowledged that he took effective homeowner relief without errors and that he genuinely regrets any mistakes that were made. He has also made clear that OneWest was committed to providing remediation in order to compensate those who were affected.

It should also be noted that in the vast majority of independent evaluations of OneWest’s practices, the bank’s error rates were routinely below the average for the industry and often zero.

I think people should quit using false arguments against this man. All of this was discussed out in the open during the Finance Committee hearing on the Mnuchin nomination. Nothing was hidden. No one was misled.

Unfortunately, rather than focusing on the actual facts surrounding OneWest’s performance under the nominee’s leadership, my friends on the other side opted to try to smear Mr. Mnuchin. In essence, they have tried to relitigate the foreclosure crisis, with Mr. Mnuchin’s company confusingly placed in the crosshairs. This is a company that, according to a letter from Faith Schwartz, former executive director of the Hope Now Alliance, “was committed to avoiding foreclosures where possible.”

As I said, with Mr. Mnuchin, my colleagues aren’t really in the double standard for confirming a Treasury Secretary. For Republican Treasury Secretary nominees, any allegation, no matter how careless or untrustworthy the source, is enough to inspire the Democrats’ outrage and trigger a seemingly endless bout of name-calling. For Democratic nominees, on the other hand, even proven instances of questionable actions and poor judgment on the part of the nominee fail to even make a blip on their radar screens.

I have spent quite a bit of time in recent weeks decrying the antics of my Democratic colleagues with regard to President Trump’s Cabinet nominations. Frankly, I am tired of talking about it. My colleagues are, of course, free to do whatever they think will help them hobble the new administration and score points with their political base, even if it breaks from the longstanding customs and traditions of the Senate and even if it puts our dignity and the integrity of our relations with Finance Ministers of other countries at greater risk. However, they should know that these tactics do absolutely nothing to help American families seeking greater opportunities and economic growth. They don’t help us fix our broken Tax Code, reform our failing health care system, and empower businesses and job creators to grow and expand.

The bottom line is this: Mr. Mnuchin is clearly qualified to serve as Secretary of the U.S. Treasury.

Some of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle made clear they intend to vote no on the nomination, and that is their right. However, while each Senator has a right to vote according to his or her own judgment, Senators do a disservice to the country and the Senate as an institution when they concoct stories and antics designed merely to delay a vote for the sake of delay. Going forward, I hope my colleagues remember the nearly precedent setting example the Senate is setting with regard to these nominees and opt to change course.

I intend to vote in favor of confirming Mr. Mnuchin, and so should everybody else in the U.S. Senate. I urge all of my colleagues to do so.

When I first met Mr. Mnuchin, I hadn’t met him before. I didn’t even know his name. I have to say I was really impressed.

I said to him: Why are you doing this? You are going to lose a lot of money because you are going to have to delay a vote for the sake of delay. Why are you doing this?

He looked at me, looked me square in the eyes, and he said: I am doing it because I love my country, and I want to help. I want to help turn it around.

I was pretty impressed with that. I have been pretty impressed with Mr. Mnuchin ever since. I think we need a terribly smart guy who is honest, who is decent, who has made a great success of his life, who understands where money comes from and where it goes, who is literally willing to lose his office and lose some of his savings and money in order to save this country and because he wants to work with our good President, who every day is going through the unbelievable nonsense and slanders like I have never seen anybody go through before.

I don’t understand how that is occurring here is unbelievably stupid. Yes, I know they want his first 100 days to not be successful, but gee-whiz, to do this kind of maneuvering and this kind of playing around with the facts is because the dignity of my colleagues on the other side.

If my side was doing this, I would be rewriting them up. The fact is, we didn’t do this. The past two Treasury Secretaries—I personally said “We are going to support them” even though we could have pulled this kind of stuff on them, and the facts were true. Both of them were good people. Both of them had made a couple of mistakes. Both of them made mistakes in their filings. But they were good men, good people, and so is Mr. Mnuchin.

Wouldn’t it be wonderful if both sides would treat people with respect and dignity? I have to admit, sometimes our side could do better, but what we have been going through for the last almost 2 months now is pathetic. I think it is all done in the hope that they can ruin the first 100 days of this President. Well, there are 200 days, and we are going to keep going. We are not making any headway with the President where they could make headway. He is someone who actually came from their side of the floor—at least at one time when I knew him long ago. He is a person with an open mind. He is a person who really is willing to hear them out and to bring with him some of the best people in this country, not the least of whom is Mr. Mnuchin.

I think they ought to wake up and quit this slandering and even labeling this really fine man who is willing to sacrifice much of his personal fortune to serve in this government as the Treasury Secretary. We are lucky that
people like this are willing to do it, to take all the guff and calumny and slander they have to go through. Thank goodness we have people like Mr. Mnuchin who are willing to do this. I don’t intend to see him fail, so I hope we can all vote for him tonight and send a message. I hope some of my colleagues on the other side will vote for him. They should. They should, in good faith. Yes, they can play this game of having a lot of votes against him, but some of them should vote for him. Because I believe the truly fair and the truly good people—I think all of them are good people on the other side and on this side, but it is not showing up as well as I would like it to show up in these confirmation fights.

In this particular one, there is a fellow who is willing to sacrifice immensely to be able to help our country, who is known on Wall Street, who is known as one of the bright lights up there, who has been immensely successful and who has had a wide variety of experiences in the area of finance. We ought to be getting on our knees and thanking him for being willing to go through this and being willing to serve his country.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The bill clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I take this time to explain to my colleagues why I will be opposing Steve Mnuchin’s nomination for Secretary of the Treasury.

Mr. Mnuchin has an impressive record of accomplishment, and I admire him for serving the public. But because of his advocacy for fiscally irresponsible and unfair fiscal policies, which I believe will add to the deficit of this country, I cannot support his nomination.

Let me go back a while, if I may. I was in the Congress when we passed a budget that balanced the Federal budget, where we were actually reducing the Federal debt. It was controversial at the time because we did it by cutting spending first and we did—but making sure we had adequate revenues in the Treasury to pay our bills because we recognized that we had a moral obligation to pay our bills, that we are wealthy enough of a nation that we don’t have to ask our children and grandchildren to pay for our spending today. We took the steps to balance the Federal budget, and we did it by making some tough votes. I was proud to be in the Congress that took those tough votes that balanced the Federal budget.

After we balanced the Federal budget, we saw unprecedented economic growth because we took the responsible actions. We should take a lesson from the past and recognize that there is no easy way to get our budget in better balance. It requires a fiscal policy that is fair—that is fair to middle-income families, that is fair to our children and grandchildren, that is fair to those who have to do with what are financed through the government sector, including our seniors with Medicare and Social Security. We can do that if we work together.

But Mr. Mnuchin’s economic plan, the one that he has submitted to Congress, I think, would put us at great risk. The main part of what he is advocating is tax cuts primarily for the wealthy. The top 0.1 percent under the Mnuchin plan will receive in excess of $1 million in tax breaks; the upper 1 percent in excess of $200,000 in tax cuts.

Here is the problem: How do we pay for this? How do we offset the cost of these tax cuts? Because I don’t think any of us wants to add to the deficit. So I asked Mr. Mnuchin that question during the confirmation process. Let me just read for the RECORD the questions that I asked him as to how he would offset the cost of the tax cuts. The Trump plan, including those cuts, is estimated by the Tax Foundation Center to add $6.2 trillion to the deficit and by the Tax Foundation to add $3.9 trillion to the deficit.

I asked Mr. Mnuchin: In your hearing, you discussed the importance of economic growth in offsetting the revenues lost under the President’s tax reform plan. … For instance, you’ve said, “[e]nough that by cutting corporate taxes, we’ll create huge economic growth and we’ll have huge personal income, so the revenues will be offset on the other side.” Is it your view that the tax cuts in the President’s plan will be fully offset by economic growth?

That is the question I asked. Mr. Mnuchin’s answer: “Our objective is to have any tax cuts offset by economic growth.”

I then asked: “Will you commit, as we discussed in our meeting, not to put forward a plan that will increase the deficit and put our country in a worse financial position?”

Mr. Mnuchin’s answer: “Our objective is to have any tax cuts offset by economic growth.”

In other words, there is no effort here to offset the cost of this tax cut, other than borrowing money, putting our children and grandchildren at greater risk. I want to repeat again the estimate that we have heard on the President’s tax proposal—that it will add anywhere from $6 trillion to almost $4 trillion in deficit. Those estimates are from progressive and conservative groups, and they do consider that there will be some dynamic score keeping here, that there will be some economic growth.

That is in those estimates. So even with economic growth, these proposals will greatly enhance the deficit of this country, something that we should not be doing.

What does that mean? You increase the debt of this country. America has to borrow more. Interest rates go up. Middle-income families have to pay more on mortgage payments or car loans.

Middle-income families are the ones who get hurt by this. If we are going to see economic growth, we have to help the middle class—the growing middle class—the consumers, those who buy the goods, those who are struggling every day to make ends meet. This plan doesn’t help them. What they are going to be saddled with is more debt and higher interest costs, which will be a drag on our economic growth.

So for all those reasons, I think what is important to have is an advocate for fiscal responsibility here in the Treasury, someone who recognizes the balance here.

Let me tell you what else deficits do. They are used as justification to continue to cut our discretionary spending and to cut Social Security. Let me also take a look at entitlement spending.

I acknowledge that, as part of the strategy to balance the Federal budget, we must look at our spending, but we have to have the revenues in order to do it. If we balance you don’t have the revenues, and you are taking another $4 to $6 trillion out of the equation, there is going to be a lot more pressure to make irresponsible cuts on the spending side.

I heard Candidate Trump talk about that we are not going to cut Social Security. But can you really have $6 trillion of tax cuts without looking at Social Security? And how about Medicare? These are programs that are vital, and are important for our seniors. It provides them money to live on so they don’t have to live in poverty, so they can pay their medical bills. For a majority of seniors, Social Security is their largest source of income. Are we really thinking about equaling that with tax cuts for the wealthiest in this country of over $1 million? I don’t think that is fairness. I don’t think that is what we should be doing.

When you look at the programs that are financed through Social Security, are we going to take away from our students? They already are suffering too high, as far as the cost of attending colleges. Interest rates are already too high in regards to what they do.

Are we going to put more pressure to make more cuts in regards to how we help our students? Are we going to cut maintaining our highways? We want to spend more on highways, bridges, transit systems, and water infrastructure, which I think we need to do. How do we do that? If you took another $4 trillion of revenue on the revenue side without adding greatly to the deficit, which is something none of us wants to do?
How about something like our national parks? We take pride and want to maintain that, but with the pressure on the budgets that is a result of taking the revenues out of government, we know what is going to happen. We have seen it happen before. We have seen what has happened before. The driving force behind all of this is that the most important thing, the most important part of the economic program, is to have these tax cuts primarily for the wealthy.

No. I think the center of our economic policy needs to be fairness—fairness for middle-income families, fairness so that Americans can afford to raise their families and send their kids to college and can afford to have decent opportunities in this country. That is how we all grow together, and that requires a balanced approach to our Nation's budget—one that, yes, looks at restraining spending but also looks at having a Tax Code that is fair and neutral in the revenues to pay our bills and not pushing that off to future generations.

I think for all those reasons, we need a person who is going to advocate on behalf of middle-income families and on behalf of working people. I want to bring up the fact that I think the plan that Mr. Mnuchin is advocating will not accomplish that. For these reasons and others, I cannot support his nomination for Secretary of the Treasury.

I suggest the absence of a quorum. The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

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

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

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, the Secretary of the Treasury is one of the most powerful positions in our government, as we know. The Treasury Secretary has broad responsibilities—for the economy, for our tax system, trade, our pensions, housing, and so much more. It is critical that anyone who holds that position use their power to help working people. It is clear to me that Mr. Mnuchin's policies will, in fact, hurt middle-class families and working people.

There are also serious ethical concerns that neither he nor my Republican colleagues have been able to address. As a result, I will be voting no on his nomination.

I would like to talk about something that has not received the focus that I think it deserves and certainly that the people of Michigan feel it deserves, and that is the question of pensions and what is happening to pensions in our country.

Mr. Mnuchin has a history of fighting against working people and profiting off their misfortune. As we know, pension funding can have a significant impact on a company's bottom line. But losing a pension can destroy a family's and Social Security to live on. We try to save, but it is difficult. We are hoping that the pension will last more than 10 years, but who knows.

I also hear from people in Michigan all the time about the accountability there is when it comes to the management of people's pensions.

One man wrote in from Macomb County about his own pension plan:

Why are none of the trustees being held accountable for the bad decisions of the plan? I'm sure they all have their golden parachutes in place for when they retire. Why do we, the hard workers, have to suffer because of the trust fund? I am just an average guy hoping that you can help protect the benefits that are due to me, so I can enjoy retirement when my time comes.

The Treasury Secretary nominee sat on the Sears board when they were making changes that created the investments that were not as good as they should have been, when they underfunded their pension system, cut back on help for health care, and he is asking for a promotion. I wonder what my constituents in Macomb County will be saying about that.

The Treasury Secretary plays a very important role in the security of our pension system—one of the basic tenets in our country, the way we support the next generation, the way people have trust in the system, you know that when you pay into the pension and then when you retire you get the pension.

The Treasury Secretary oversees implementation of the Multiemployer Pension Reform Act, and I asked him on the board of directors of the pension overseers. I asked Mr. Mnuchin in committee: What is your position on the Multiemployer Pension Reform Act, which Treasury is responsible for administering?

How do you propose to shore up our multiemployer pension system and protect people who are counting on their pensions? His answer was: "You have my commitment to work with you to find solutions to the multiemployer pension crisis."

That is it. I resubmitted the question, hoping for a more detailed response.

His response was: "If confirmed, I will consult with you and other interested parties on the Multiemployer Pension Reform Act of 2014."

That is not much of an answer for the people whom I represent, who want to know how he feels and what he is going to do to protect their pensions. The American people deserve a better answer than that.

People are struggling, retirees are struggling after trusting the system and paying into their pensions their whole life—the whole time they have been working, paying in, counting on having that dignity in retirement. We need a Treasury Secretary who understands that a pension is a promise. Mr. Mnuchin's actions have not demonstrated that he understands that.

Even when it comes to something as basic as Social Security, during our Finance Committee hearing, Mr.
Mr. Mnuchin couldn’t tell me the average monthly benefit when I asked him, which, by the way, one-third of our seniors virtually rely on that alone, and the rest are putting together a small pension, and most seniors are counting on Social Security and their pension to have dignity and a quality of life in their retirement. The Treasury Secretary is a key overseer of the laws and management process and accountability for both of those systems. So for him this is a very big deal and is in this spot, in terms of how this affects working people, middle-class families, and retirees.

I didn’t mention earlier that when I asked him just how Social Security-payment was—which he could not answer—he also couldn’t tell me what he meant about a “cut” in Social Security; if he wasn’t going to cut; what that meant. Did that mean putting putting a financial cap on the cost of living? What did that mean? He did not answer that.

Let me talk about another pretty basic area. Pensions are critically important so is the ability to have a home. Home mortgage crisis the disaster in 2008 and 2009, most families’ savings for retirement, savings to put their kids in college, were through the equity in their home. In 2008 and 2009, for millions of Americans, that disappeared.

Mr. Mnuchin has made his career profiting from the misfortunes of working people, and let me talk about the financial crisis and how he benefitted from it. As a result of the financial crisis, he put together a group of investors to purchase IndyMac Bank, which was renamed OneWest. During that time, OneWest was notorious for taking an especially aggressive role in foreclosing on struggling homeowners. OneWest Bank pushed people into foreclosure and made their last-ditch efforts to save their homes through a mortgage modification or other means all but impossible.

What the borrowers were not allowed at the hearing on this confirmation, I was pleased to join with colleagues in putting together a forum where homeowners who had been impacted could share their experience. We held this forum for homeowners who were repeatedly given hope by OneWest that they might be able to avoid foreclosure, only to have it snatched away every time. One small business owner at the forum told us her story of how OneWest defrauded her and ultimately foreclosed on her. She told us that “despite how difficult OneWest made the process, I did everything I was told, because I wanted to keep my home.”

Eventually, she said: “I received a knock on my door and a man introduced himself as the owner of my house.” Unbelievable. Shortly thereafter she had to leave her home. OneWest was Mr. Mnuchin’s company. This is one of the many stories about OneWest that is being reported. When asked what the OneWest Bank sold, Mr. Mnuchin and other investors made about $3 billion off the backs of folks who lost their home and many were like the women who heard from who tried desperately to work it out to keep their home. I wonder if the checks they cashed from her after they said they didn’t get them were a part of that $3 billion.

Finally, I want to express my concern over statements that Mr. Mnuchin made at the Finance Committee hearing that just don’t line up with the facts; particularly, Mr. Mnuchin was asked whether his bank, OneWest, robo-signed foreclosure documents. To be clear on what this is, the banks, during the financial crisis, had sworn to documents robo-signed, automatically signed so they could foreclose on homeowners quickly without anyone even reading the documents. They just signed the papers—signed the papers—nobody reviewed whether they added up or whether they were right, whether they could help them. They just had the machine signing, signing, signing, foreclosure, foreclosure, foreclosure.

Mr. Mnuchin said in the hearing his bank didn’t do that. The Columbus Dispatch did an investigation that found that OneWest did do that in Ohio. A source in Texas reported that OneWest did do it in Texas. New Jersey temporarily banned OneWest from foreclosing on homeowners at all in New Jersey because of its history of robo-signing documents. Sign, sign, sign—don’t look at it, just sign away. We heard the story of one woman who lost her house because of a 27-cent difference. I wonder if she signed away her future they just signed away. Mr. Mnuchin said they didn’t do that. There is evidence to the contrary.

Mr. Mnuchin also forgot to disclose to the committee that he owned a company organized in the Cayman Islands. When I asked him about that, his best defense was that “I did not use a Cayman Islands entity in any way to avoid paying taxes myself.” At the time, I didn’t mention earlier that when I asked him about avoiding his taxes, he said: Oh, so you just helped other people avoid paying their taxes. We find out now he did use it to help foreign investors avoid paying U.S. taxes. I have a funny feeling that he made money by helping those investors avoid paying their U.S. taxes.

He also forgot to disclose that he owned $95 million in real estate in various locations. I forget that all of the time. I have so many houses all over the place, it is easy to forget. So $95 million in property that he didn’t know he owned?

He also forgot to disclose that he didn’t know his real estate was an asset. He didn’t know his real estate was an asset. That is alarming.

I don’t mean to be flippant, but this is so shocking when I listen to some of this. The idea that we would believe someone who says this, that it somehow is making sense—that is why we as Democrats on the Finance Committee, before this final confirmation vote, asked Mr. Mnuchin to come back in and answer questions, because these are serious questions.

This nominee has not been properly vetted. He supports policies that do not have the interests of the working men and women in Michigan and across the country or people’s retirement systems. I don’t know where he really is on Social Security, which is the other big piece of the promise we made as Americans, where people pay into Social Security and are counting on that being there. He has personally profited off the misfortune of those who need help the most.

I urge my colleagues to join me in voting no.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I, too, will be voting no on the candidacy of Mr. Mnuchin to become Secretary of the Treasury.

Rhode Island got hit so hard by the mortgage meltdown that Wall Street called it the "Rhode Island." The senator from the other side of the aisle asked that he not be a Secretary of Treasury. It is not. He adheres to policies that don’t protect the pensions of hard-working men and women in Michigan and across the country or people’s retirement systems. I don’t know where he really is on Social Security, which is the other big piece of the promise we made as Americans, where people pay into Social Security and are counting on that being there. He has personally profited off the misfortune of those who need help the most.

I urge my colleagues to join me in voting no.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I, too, will be voting no on the candidacy of Mr. Mnuchin to become Secretary of the Treasury.
Concerns among the financial community are growing that assets are being mispriced because the full extent of climate risk is not being factored in, threatening market stability.

The story continues:

According to Barclays—Barclays is a significant international banking institution—the fossil fuel industry could lose $34 trillion in revenues by 2040 as a global deal to limit temperature rise to well below 2 degrees Celsius reduces demand for coal, oil, and gas, returning reserves into stranded assets.

If, in fact, this is an industry that could lose $34 trillion in revenues by 2040, that explains a lot of their misbehavior around Congress. Obviously, for them to get that kind of money, there is very little mischief these folks wouldn’t get up to, and sure enough, they are getting up to all of that mischief, and more, around here. But the financial industry itself is pretty big, and it doesn’t care. It is not going to be pushed around and bullied.

This Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosure is described as having 32 members from large banks, insurance companies, asset management companies, credit rating agencies, and accounting and consulting firms—32 members representing the 20 biggest economies in the world, and they are saying: Here it comes. Let’s get ready.

So I hope the people will begin to listen to these folks in the financial services industry and these major market economies about what is going on and stop listening to the self-serving nonsense that the fossil fuel industry insists on trying to jam into our ears around here. It just is bogus. Bottom line: It is bogus.

Most recently, at the end of last year, September 2016, BlackRock, which is one of the most significant investment firms in the world—I think it has more than $1 trillion in assets under management—issued this new report: “Adapting Portfolios to Climate Change.” OK. So BlackRock, one of the smartest and biggest companies in the world, is now talking about how we have to adapt to climate change and helping investors plan for it. In this building, can we have a sensible conversation about climate change? No, of course not, because the fossil fuel industry won’t even let some of us mention the words, but in the real world, where real money and real decisions are being made by very smart people, they are all over this. Here is BlackRock: “Adapting Portfolios to Climate Change.”

Sentence from the report: “Investors can no longer ignore climate change.”

Investors can no longer ignore climate change. No, it takes Congress to do that. Investors can no longer ignore climate change, but don’t worry, we will, as long as we are following the lead of our fossil fuel industry friends, right over the climate cliff.

The report continues that we can expect more frequent and severe weather events over the long term—something that actually we are seeing already, not only in the United States but around the world. They say that there is a market failure in this area—a market failure—as current fossil fuel prices arguably do not reflect the true costs of their extraction and use.

That is what we are fighting about here. The fossil fuel industry has the biggest lobby in the world. They are able to pollute like crazy, do immense damage in the world—damage that coastal homeowners in Rhode Island, fishermen in Rhode Island, people who have breathing difficulties and are trying to breathe on a hot day in Rhode Island—they all have to pay the price.

Under real market theory, the harm of the product has to be in the price of the product for the market to work. That is market 101. Well, they don’t want to play by those rules. They want to have everybody else cover the harm in their product, and they just get to shove it out into the marketplace with this giant subsidy. The International Monetary Fund is not a bunch of stupid people, and the International Monetary Fund, as far as I can tell, has no conflict of interest with respect to fossil fuel, unlike the fossil fuel companies, one of the most significant examples of a conflict of interest. The International Monetary Fund says that the subsidy to the fossil fuel industry every year—just in the United States of America—is $700 billion—billion with a “b.” Like I said, how much mischief would they get up to for $700 billion? Oh, about $700 billion worth.

Is there a fix to this? Yes, continues the BlackRock report. “The most cost-effective way for governments to meet emissions reduction targets: Policy frameworks that result in realistic carbon pricing.” Market 101. Of course, they don’t want market 101, they want fossil fuels subsidies 101, and we go along with it because of the mischievous way they behave in politics. But we should not go along with it. It is not proper economics. It is not conservative. It is nothing except traditional, old-fashioned, special interests, special pleading. It is from any other pollutant who wants to be able to dump their waste into the river or onto their neighbor’s yard or wherever it is rather than having to pay for cleaning up the mess they made.

We go on through the report: “The world is rapidly using up its carbon budget,” says BlackRock. “The damage from climate change could shave 5 to 20 percent off global GDP annually by 2100. Up to a fifth of global GDP. That is a massive economic correction. That is massive economic pain.

“The economic impacts,” it goes on to say, “are not just in the distant future. More frequent intense extreme weather events, such as hurricanes, flooding, and droughts, are already affecting assets and economies.”

For anybody just tuning in, this is not me making this stuff up, this is BlackRock investments. They talk about global fossil fuel subsidies—four times as large, they say, as renewable energy support.
Here is an interesting thing: “Scrap- ping energy subsidies could save govern- ments some $3 trillion a year, more than they collect from corporate taxes,” according to BlackRocK.

So here we have the fossil fuel industry out there, and they are getting the biggest subsidy in the world—by IMF calculations, $700 billion a year—and the party that says it wants a more ef- ficient government and that ordinarily would like to reduce corporate taxes is defending that subsidy, even though that is taking money out of govern- ment more than corporate taxes. It is quite astonishing. The BlackRocK re- port gives such a window into Congress by comparison, frankly. They conclude here by giving some pretty dire warn- ings about where this goes if people aren’t preparing for climate change. They say:

Risk for the long-term investor . . . could lead to a permanent loss of capital. The ef- fects of climate change need to be part of that equation, we believe.

Yet even short-term investors would do well to integrate climate factors into their portfolio.

So from Goldman Sachs on to BlackRocK, some of the most powerful and intelligent financial firms in the world are telling their investors: Get ready for climate change.

The last page of the BlackRocK re- port says:

[C]urrent market prices arguably do not yet reflect the social costs of burning fossil fuels. . . . This externality is at the core of the climate challenge.

The externality, of course, being that you take the harm that you cause and instead of putting it in the price of your product, you make everybody else around you pay for it by being a pol- luter. Then they asked the question:

What is the correct price of carbon? It is hard to say. A 2015 U.S. government study estimated $36 of economic damages for each metric ton of carbon emitted. Yet estimates are rising: A 2015 Stanford University study pointed to $120 per metric ton. I believe that our U.S. social cost of carbon is running at about $45 per met- ric ton right now. And, by the way, it has been upheld twice—at least twice—by Federal courts. In fact, one court rather insisted that the social cost of carbon had to be baked into the underly- ing rule; otherwise, the underlying rule couldn’t pass the test of being logical and fair and not arbitrary and cap- pricious.

So there is the case from some of our leading financial institutions about cli- mate change. They have real money at stake. They have real clients. They can’t engage in the kind of nonsense that is total bunkum processed going to cost too much money. All of that there is still debate about or being nonsensical because there is still debate about or being something that if we try to fix it, it is going to cost too much money. All of that is total bunkum processed through a sort of advertising-fuel public relations firms by the fossil fuel industry and sold to a gullible public as if it were true.

A few folks who aren’t so gullible—all Republicans—have just come out with a very interesting report. Three of them are Treasury Secretaries. Re- publican Presidents trusted these folks with the conduct of the U.S. economy—Jim Baker, Secretary of the Treasury under President Reagan; Hank Paulson, Secretary of the Treasury under President Bush; and George Shultz, Secretary of the Treasury under President Nixon. These men have some pretty serious credentials. Not only was he Secretary of the Treasury, but James Baker was also the Secretary of State. And not only was George Shultz Secretary of the Treasury and Secretary of State, he was also Secretary of Labor.

These three former Treasury Secre- taries have led a group of other inves- tors, including the former chairman of the board of Walmart, the world’s larg- esting retailer and employer. Tom Ste- phenson, a Republican who is a partner at Sequoia Capital, a very successful venture capitalist firm out in Silicon Val- ley; and Greg Mankiw, who was Chair- man of George W. Bush’s Council of Economic Advisers. They are all a very Republican group. They have a lot of experience. None of them holds elective office now, so they don’t have to worry about the fossil fuel industry threat- ening to crush them in a primary or some millionaires’ dollars through phony-baloney front groups against them or any of the usual stuff that politicians have to put up with from the fossil fuel industry as it fights to protect that massive subsidy that we have talked about a lot.

Let’s go through this report by these very senior Republican officials. The first sentence:

Mounting evidence of climate change is growing in number and intensity. Tom Ste- phenson, many Republicans have looked the other way.

Indeed. They go on to propose a con- servative climate solution—what they call a carbon dividends plan—which aligns with the American Opportunity Carbon Fee Act, which I have put forward in the past and am going to put forward in this Congress as well. I hope, given its alignment with this Republican leader- ship on climate, that we might actu- ally begin to get some conversations going here. We may have to go hide out of State somehow so the fossil fuel folks don’t find who is participating in the conversation and start punishing them for doing so, but we will see how that goes.

The recommendation basically is for a carbon tax that collects revenue to offset the cost of pollution that is not being paid by the people who cause it and then re- turn it all to the American people through a big dividend.

The report says: “A carbon tax would send a powerful market signal that en- courages technological innovation and largescale substitution of existing en- ergy and transportation infrastruc- tures, thereby stimulating new invest- ment.”

Furthermore, a well-designed carbon dividends plan, the second half, the tax, would stimulate new investment and “a well-designed carbon dividends plan would further contribute to eco- nomic growth through its dynamic ef- fects on consumption and investment.”

Definitely worth noting that the one-to-one relationship so that all the money that comes in goes back out. That is the principle of my bill, as well, and I am more than willing to live with it. But the problems of failing to act are acute.

Since two of these gentlemen were Secretaries of State, we should take some interest when they say: “Our reli- ance on fossil fuels contributes to a less stable world, empowers rogue petro-states and makes us vulnerable to a volatile world oil market.”

We have to address this issue for a lot of reasons, and I couldn’t be more satisfied that these two Republican Secretaries of State have actually come around. One of the most compelling arguments Friedman has made and that the De- partment of Defense has repeatedly made in its “Quadrennial Defense Re- view” between our overreliance on carbon and between the harms of climate change and a less stable world in which climate change is what the Defense Department has so often called a catalyst for conflict.

They then reflect a little bit on what is going on with their party: The op- position of many Republicans is to mean- ingfully address climate change re- reflects poor science and poor economics, and is at odds with the party’s own noble tradition of stewardship.

You would never know it nowadays, but the Republican Party was once the party of Teddy Roosevelt. They point out that “64% of Americans worry a great deal or a fair amount about cli- mate change, while a clear majority of Republicans acknowledge that climate change is occurring.

They go on to point out “that 67 per- cent of Americans”—two thirds of Americans—“support a carbon tax with proceeds returned directly to them.”

Two thirds of Americans support a carbon tax with proceeds returned di- rectly to them, including 54% of con- servative Republicans.”

So let’s not pretend that this is a partisan issue. It is not a partisan isue. It is an issue in which a big spe- cial interest has credible weight around to try to crush one side of the debate. But clearly, if 67 percent of Americans supported anything and 54 percent of conservative Republicans supported that, we would probably be having a sensible conversation in the Senate about whatever That thing was. We just can’t do it when that thing happens to be climate change because we have the fossil fuel industry out there—powered up by Citizens United, spending all that money—trying to protect that huge, huge subsidy that they enjoy.

Finally, the report points out—and I see the pages lined up here along the
side of the podium: "Increasingly, climate change is becoming a defining issue for this next generation of Americans, which the GOP ignores at its own peril."

If this party wants to write off the young voters, good for them, but the fossil fuel industry off the climate cliff, there will be a very grave price to be paid.

The report concludes: "With the privilege of controlling all branches of the government comes a responsibility to exercise wise leadership on the defining challenges of our era, including global climate change."

I don’t know where Mr. Mnuchin will lead on climate change at the Treasury Department. There are a number of ways in which the Treasury Department can be influential in this area. To my knowledge, he has never said anything about it yet.

It was not too long ago—2009—that a full-page advertisement ran in the New York Times, a full page advertisement that pointed out that the science of climate change was already, by then, to use the word in the advertisement, "irrefutable." The science of climate change was "irrefutable," the advertisement stated.

Then the advertisement went on to say that the consequences of climate change would be "catastrophic and irreversible." That is another quote from the advertisement: The consequences of climate change were to be "catastrophic and irreversible."

On the one hand, you have science that is irrefutable; on the other hand, you have consequences of ignoring it that are catastrophic and irreversible. Who signed that advertisement? None other than Donald J. Trump—not only he, but his children, Donald Trump, Eric Trump, and Ivanka Trump, also all signed it.

The year 2009 was not that long ago. It is possible that the Trump family really could refer to what they knew in 2009 and perhaps take advice from a Treasury Secretary. I hope they take advice from three Treasury Secretaries, but we will see how that goes.

Perhaps Mr. Mnuchin can be a voice to try to get the GOP out of the fossil fuel hole it is in, aligned with the 67 percent of American voters who want to see a revenue-neutral carbon tax, aligned with the majority of Republican voters who would support that, and aligned with the irrefutable nature of the science, and addressing the catastrophic and irreversible consequences in this strange new administration in which the newnormal is abnormal. It is perhaps hard to expect the good to come, but let’s hope and let’s hope Mr. Mnuchin makes himself a part of the solution rather than just a part of the climate-denial problem that so infects us, particularly here in Congress.

I yield the floor.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, today the Senate will confirm the nomination of Steven Mnuchin to be the Secretary of the Treasury. It is a nomination I simply cannot support.

The Treasury Department plays an essential role in the development of the economic policies that financially secure the United States in world markets. The responsibilities are available to all Americans, and that help set the stage for a sound and growing economy. Our country’s economic engine must be one that is accessible to all Americans, not just the wealthy few. Retractably, and Mr. Mnuchin may have a knowledge of the inner workings of Wall Street, he seems to know shockingly little of the hardships faced on Main Street. One need look no further than his role during the height of the housing crisis in foreclosing on tens of thousands of American families. Reducing these actions to mere administrative matters belies the true struggles of those who don’t boast the personal coffers Mr. Mnuchin enjoys. I simply cannot accept his explanation of his role in these actions.

We cannot forget the devastation and hardship that the recent financial crisis brought upon our country, its people, its neighborhoods, small businesses, and its communities. People lost their homes and their jobs, and our markets crashed. Many have still have not recovered from those losses. As Congress worked to find the answers, it became clear that large investment banks and insurance companies hid the insecurity of their finances from stockholders and from the American people. While many people lost their life savings, corporate executives received outrageous severance packages. As the country lurched into a financial downward spiral, Mr. Mnuchin’s company, One West, administered aggressive foreclosure tactics that added to the devastation of these families, including veterans. It was wrong. Mr. Mnuchin’s testimony before the Senate Finance Committee, may have tried to convince the American people that his was an innocent role in the crisis. But given that he could not provide a valid reason for failing to disclose that he was the director of an offshore account worth more than $100 million, domiciled offshore in the Cayman Islands, I just cannot buy what he is selling—and neither can Vermonter.

In 2010, Congress worked hard to pass the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act. This legislation included a number of financial reforms to change the way financial institutions and banks take on risk, while adding protections for customers of these institutions, and creating a new regulatory council in order to provide more effective oversight of the industry. President Trump has indicated that he will seek to roll back Dodd-Frank regulations, and Mr. Mnuchin is hearing from the people he used to argue against. As the ranking Democrat on the Senate Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs, I have been following the debate in the Senate with considerable success on rebuilding the regulatory framework that protects the American people from the devastation of runaway corporate greed.

For the last 8 years, we have focused with considerable success on rebuilding our economy. We had to fight to ensure that the Treasury Department and to continue this forward progress.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, today we consider the nomination of Steve Mnuchin, a multimillionaire former Goldman Sachs executive, hedge fund manager, and investor, to be Secretary of the Treasury. In our Nation’s history, the Treasury Secretary was the first Cabinet official to be confirmed by the Senate, when Alexander Hamilton took his post in 1789. The first Congress valued the Treasury Department highly, giving it more resources than all other government agencies combined. Today the mission of the Treasury Department is to:

"Maintain a strong economy and create economic and job opportunities by promoting the conditions that enable economic growth and stability at home and abroad, strengthen national security by combating threats and protecting the integrity of the financial system, and manage the U.S. Government’s finances and resources effectively."

While the Department always serves a critical function, it has been particularly vital in times of financial crisis. In 2008, in the wake of lax regulation and excessive speculation, a financial crisis shook our Nation’s economy. The Treasury Department was a key player in helping to rescue the financial system and keep the toxic contagion on Wall Street from spilling over to Main Street. We had to fight to ensure that the colossal failures of irresponsible corporate executives would not wipe out small businesses and citizens’ savings.

At that time, my congressional office helped hundreds of homeowners facing foreclosure, working them through the loan modification process, helping track down missing documents, and following up again and again with banks to make sure that paperwork was processed. We held a foreclosure prevention forum to connect people to
housing counselors. For too many, this process was extremely difficult, tremendously confusing, and, in some cases, deliberately misleading. While my office was always ready to help, there was no reason why congressional intervention wasn’t necessary to help families modify their payments to stay in their homes.

Where was Steve Mnuchin at this time, when families across the nation were struggling? He was profiting from it. In 2003, Mnuchin joined a group of billionaire-investors to buy IndyMac, a failed bank that the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation had taken over. The investors turned it into OneWest Bank, and they turned it into what the California Reinvestment Coalition called “a foreclosure machine.”

Though the majority did not permit the California Reinvestment Coalition to testify at an official hearing on Mr. Mnuchin’s nomination, the coalition’s Pauline Gonzalez spoke with a number of Senators at a forum on Mr. Mnuchin’s bank. Ms. Gonzalez told us that OneWest was among the worst. OneWest denied more applications than most. The Community Hope Affordable Modification Program, the government program to help homeowners avoid foreclosure by adjusting their payment schedule, Ms. Gonzalez told us, “We have labeled OneWest a foreclosure machine’ not only because it foreclosed on more than 60,000 American families and because of its aggressive foreclosure practices, but because it seemed to do little else.”

Consider some of the heartbreaking foreclosure stories that OneWest left in its wake.

A 90-year-old Florida woman lost her home after making a 27-cent payment error.

Christina Clifford attempted to modify her loan twice. Each time that she sent in her check with the paperwork, OneWest told her that her paperwork was not received—even though the bank cashed the check that was in the same envelope.

A Minneapolis woman was in the process of negotiating a loan modification when she came home in a blizzard and found that her locks had been changed.

OneWest and its subsidiary Financial Freedom were also notorious for what came to be called “widow foreclosures.” They lured seniors into reverse mortgages signed by one spouse of a couple. When the spouse who signed the paperwork died, OneWest and Financial Freedom would immediately begin the foreclosure process, sending out notices in as little as 10 days to widows and widowers.

Another egregious bank practice during the foreclosure crisis was “robo-signing.” Mortgage officials would speed through foreclosure documents and sign off without reviewing their accuracy. This practice all too frequently led to the bank powering through as many foreclosures as possible.

Mr. Mnuchin told the Finance Committee that “OneWest Bank did not ‘robo-sign’ documents.” But in a deposition, a OneWest executive admitted to personally robo-signing hundreds of documents, even shortening her signature to speed the process even further. Thanks to these draconian practices, Mr. Mnuchin made a tidy $1.5 billion in profit when he and his fellow investors sold OneWest after 6 years.

In the aftermath of the devastating 2008 financial crisis, Congress worked to reform the system with the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act. Congress intended the law to reduce the kind of risk and recklessness that led to the worst financial crisis and structural oversight of Wall Street and Big Banks. Congress created the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau to be a watchdog for everyday Americans and prevent predatory lending and unscrupulous behavior.

Mr. Mnuchin told the Finance Committee, “We want to strip with CNN’s Squawk Box after his nomination, he said, “We want to strip back parts of Dodd-Frank and that will be the number one priority on the regulatory side”—the number one priority.

It is unclear how Mr. Mnuchin, Mr. Cohn, and President Trump plan to reshape financial regulation, how much risk they plan to reintroduce to the market and whether they will ensure adequate safeguards for consumers and investors. We do know, however, that Mr. Mnuchin and Mr. Cohn are cozy with Wall Street and Big Banks, and it appears now that Mr. Trump’s talk about reigning in Wall Street was just talk.

In addition to the need to continue sensible oversight of the financial system, the next Treasury Secretary will have to confront one of the greatest challenges of our time—growing income inequality, wealth inequality, and wage stagnation.

According to an Economic Policy Institute Analysis of data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics and Bureau of Labor Force: Economic Analysis, from 1973 until 1973, worker productivity and compensation rose at roughly similar rates—productivity increased by 96.7 percent and hourly compensation increased by 91.3 percent. Starting in 1973, however, growth in productivity and wages began to diverge dramatically. Between 1973 and 2013, productivity increased by 74.4 percent, but hourly compensation increased by just 9.2 percent.

Not everyone, however, saw stagnation. The wages of the top 1 percent of earners grew 138 percent between 1979 and 2013, once again, according to analysis by the Economic Policy Institute. In that same time period, the wages of workers in the bottom 10 percent actually dropped by 5 percent.

In 1965, an average company CEO made 20 times the salary of an average, nonmanagement worker. In 2014, the average CEO made 355 times the salary of an average worker.

Many Americans feel that they are working harder than ever, but they aren’t getting ahead. Too often, they are right. They are taking on more and not getting compensated for the extra effort. We need policies that help average workers, like increasing the minimum wage, fair pay, and improvements to the Tax Code to encourage hard work rather than simply rewarding those who make money off of money.

Is Mr. Mnuchin the right person to address this problem? His experience is certainly different from that of the average worker. The son of a Goldman Sachs banker, he has accumulated enough wealth that he forgot to disclose a hundred million dollars in assets. In 2009, when Mr. Mnuchin’s hedge fund industry. Will he serve as a check on the impulse to reopen banking to greater risk? In an interview with CNN’s Squawk Box after his nomination, he said, “We want to strip back parts of Dodd-Frank and that will be the number one priority on the regulatory side”—the number one priority.
November 30, 2016

To: Steve Mnuchin, Nominee for Secretary of the Treasury

Dear Mr. Mnuchin,

I write to you today as a member of the Senate Committee on Finance, which will be hearing your nomination. I look forward to hearing your thoughts on the important issues facing the Treasury Department.

As a member of Congress, I have always been concerned with the impact of economic policies on the American worker. I have seen firsthand the devastating effects of foreclosures and the harm they have caused to families in my home state of Illinois. As Secretary, you will be responsible for implementing a tax plan that is designed to help families, not just the wealthy. I hope you will consider the impact of your policies on the American worker.

I am also concerned about the impact of your policies on the American economy. As the world's largest economy, the United States has a responsibility to lead the global economy. I hope you will consider the importance of a strong, stable, and inclusive economy when making decisions about tax policy.

I look forward to your testimony and hope that you will be able to provide a clear and concise explanation of your policies and their impact on the American worker and economy.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]

Chairman of the Senate Committee on Finance
will be responsible for protecting these families and ensuring that we don’t have another financial crisis. All we have seen from him is his ability to profit from the foreclosure crisis and the devastation left in its wake. In the aftermath of the financial crisis of 2008, Congress got together with the President and passed Dodd-Frank. This was Wall Street reform determined not to let another economic crisis follow. The consumer protection act was also passed to prevent these crises and to reform the problems that caused them. Mr. Mnuchin has made no secret of the fact that his No. 1 regulatory priority is to roll back Wall Street reform, to return the barbarians to the gates. Despite the promises President Trump made during his campaign, including “not letting Wall Street get away with murder,” Mr. Mnuchin has an ally in President Trump in undoing Dodd-Frank. President Trump signed an Executive Order that would begin rolling back the important consumer and financial system reforms we passed as part of Dodd-Frank. The President signed this order sitting among the biggest beneficiaries of his actions, some of Wall Street’s high rollers. Make no mistake, if President Trump gets his way and Steven Mnuchin is confirmed, the banks are going to have the best friend they can think of in the Treasury Department, just like they did before the economic crash of 2008. It is clear the American people can’t count on Mr. Mnuchin, based on his business experience, to decide with them over Wall Street. But, certainly, he should be committed to basic fairness of the Tax Code. He said he was until he wasn’t. Shortly after his nomination, Mr. Mnuchin said there would be “no absolute tax cut for the upper class.” Yet he has not spoken out against the significant tax cuts the wealthy would receive from the repeal of the Affordable Care Act of 2010 or the President’s and the House Republican’s tax reform plan. We shouldn’t be surprised by this because we are asking Mr. Mnuchin to close the loopholes and raise the taxes on the very people he helped to avoid paying taxes by using offshore tax havens as a hedge fund manager.

We are still recovering from the devastation of that financial crisis 8 years ago. We can’t afford to have our Nation’s official hedge fund manager who has only been looking out for Wall Street. For a President who ran on bringing back jobs and being a champion of the working people, the choices of President Trump for his Cabinet are the opposite and have taken advantage of the very system he has derided as rigged against the people.

The American people deserve better. When Mr. Mnuchin’s nomination is brought to the Senate floor for a vote, I will be there and I urge my colleagues to do the same.

**Nomination of David Shulkin**

Madam President, I want to take a moment to address the nomination of Dr. David Shulkin to be confirmed soon as the next Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs. We all know the Veterans Affairs Department faced a number of challenges in recent years: long waiting times, disability claims backlogs, inadequate access to accountable care organizations, and the quality of care. The list is too long. As the second largest Federal agency, employing more than 350,000 people across America and serving as our largest integrated health care system, some challenges are warranted. Dr. Shulkin has been named on the Secretary of the Veterans Health Administration back in 2015, and I believe he is the right person to head the VA today.

Just 3 days ago, I was in Marion, IL, and visited our veterans hospital there. I met with the administrator, Ms. Ginsberg told me she knew of Dr. Shulkin and had high regard for him. That came as high praise from someone who is on the front line of serving thousands of deserving veterans in southern Illinois every day. So her endorsement helped me to come forward today and to commit that I will be voting to make sure that Dr. Shulkin gets this opportunity to head the Veterans Affairs agency.

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. MERRICK. 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. MERRICK. Madam President, even now, more than 2 months after then President-Elect Trump nominated Steven Mnuchin to be Treasury Secretary, I still find it hard to believe. Month after month out on the campaign trail, President Trump attacked the VA. He said he would terminate it and make it only a “private health care system,” which would only lower the quality of care for our veterans. That is why I am pleased with the nomination of Dr. Shulkin by President Trump to be the next Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

Despite years of people playing politics with the VA—efforts which have only been counterproductive and have made it difficult for the VA to fill critical vacancies—and despite months of President Trump’s scaremongering about privatization without offering real solutions, today we have a nominee who appears to understand that, while there is a role for expanded care options, weakening or dismantling the VA is not the answer. I was heartened by Dr. Shulkin’s commitment during his hearing in the Senate Veterans’ Affairs Committee on February 1, where he said: “The Department of Veterans Affairs will not be privatized under my watch.”

Dr. Shulkin may not be a veteran himself, but I am encouraged by the fact that he comes from a military family and has decades of medical experience, including serving for 2 years under former VA Secretary Robert McDonald as head of the Veterans Health Administration after being nominated by President Obama. May I add that he left a lucrative private sector job and took a huge pay cut to join the VA.

It is no surprise that a number of veterans service organizations actively support his nomination. Although progress has been made in recent years, there are still challenges at the VA that we need to continue to address. I am talking about the waiting time, the VA is consistently found to provide care in key areas that is better than or on par with care in the private sector. It is significantly more cost effective, as well. And most veterans across the country prefer their veteran-centric health care that they receive in the VA. Despite what some may claim, most of them do not support privatization. I want to be clear that this includes a myriad of efforts to pass the guise of expanding access or choice.

So I hope my colleagues will join me in supporting Dr. Shulkin to be the next VA Secretary. I shared then-President Obama’s sentiment that he is the right person to lead the VA, and I believe the veteran’s voice will be heard inside the VA. So I will be voting to make sure that Dr. Shulkin gets this opportunity to head the Veterans Affairs agency.

I yield the floor.

The American people deserve better. When Mr. Mnuchin’s nomination is brought to the Senate floor for a vote, I will be there and I urge my colleagues to do the same.
in U.S. history, we will be holding a vote on whether Steve Mnuchin is a fit character to be Secretary of the Treasury.

What is particularly puzzling is not only the Goldman Sachs background, in which the President-elect ran a high-fee predatory mortgage scheme—call it a ripoff of the pyramid promises, but also that this individual was a contributor to many of the predatory practices that nearly destroyed our economy in 2008, and he is someone who made a fortune throwing struggling American families out of their homes—not just because they lost their jobs and couldn’t pay their mortgage but because of the predatory design of the mortgages.

I am somewhat shocked we are here tonight and that some of my colleagues are considering voting to put a man in charge of our Nation’s financial system who played such a role in bringing it to its knees just a couple of years ago.

Let’s remember the massive impact on American families. They lost jobs by the millions. The unemployment rate soared. They lost their retirement savings and often they lost their homes—not just because they lost their jobs and couldn’t pay their mortgage but because of the predatory design of the mortgages.

So I am shocked that I am here tonight and we are holding this vote and that the individual under consideration is an individual who worked to tear down the protections and throw American families to the Wall Street wolves.

Maybe we should have a Treasury Secretary who succeeded in the past to build up the economy, not one who participated in tearing it down. Maybe we should have a Treasury Secretary who worked hard to put tens of thousands of people into homes, rather than someone who personally profited by throwing tens of thousands of American families out of their homes. I would be feeling much better about the vote we are holding tonight if that was the case because the American people have endured too much pain and suffering at the machinations of Wall Street.

I thought we had perhaps learned our lesson. We worked hard to pass the Dodd-Frank reforms that would end those predatory mortgages, that would end those teaser rate-exploding interest rate loans that brought families to their knees, that would end those predatory practices, including the illegal robo-signing he participated in.

This individual has no business overseeing the financial future of the American people so I will be voting no on his confirmation, and I passionately urge my colleagues to do the same.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MORAN). Without objection, it is so ordered.

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

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

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I rise this afternoon to speak about the nomination of Steve Mnuchin to be Secretary of the Treasury and the concerns I have about his nomination. I want to start with a Pennsylvania story. It is a story we wish we didn’t have to highlight, but it is relevant to the discussion and debate on this nomination.

I am looking at a document that is a written summary of a television investigative news report from January of this year. It is from the Pittsburgh television station WTAE, and it is dated January 16, 2017. The headline on the document is “Trump Pick for Treasury Secretary Foreclosed on Hundreds of Homeowners in Western Pennsylvania.” The article says in pertinent part about this one Pennsylvanian:

Nellie Mlinek lost her husband to cancer. She lost her son to an overdose. And then she lost her home to OneWest Bank. Informing Ruth that it was part of the record you are to review. She remembers the day she got the letter that “scared me to death.” The letter threatened a foreclosure because of a reverse mortgage that she didn’t know existed. The headline reads that a reverse mortgage nightmare can start after borrower dies.

In this case, Ruth lost her husband. The article says that this particular foreclosures were in January 2013 from OneWest Bank, informing Ruth that it was foreclosing on the house in the 2800 block of South Hutchinson Street that she and her late husband had bought in 2006 for $200,000. Without her knowledge, Ruth Guerriero said, her husband, 23 years her senior, had taken out a reverse mortgage in September 2007. It goes on from there.

So anyone who has had that experience of losing a home or becoming the victim of a reverse mortgage when you didn’t have prior knowledge or relate to what has happened to these individuals. This is part of the debate. These are not the only considerations we weigh, but when you have, in this case, a nominee for Treasury Secretary who comes into the nomination process not having held public office or not having held appointed government office, this is part of the record you are to review. It is really the only record—the record in this case as a banker or a businessperson, and in his case, his work on Wall Street.

I had the opportunity, of course, as a member of the Finance Committee, to meet Mr. Mnuchin in my office and to question him more than once in the question period for the Finance Committee. In our meeting, I asked him, for example—and these are other relevant questions in terms of presenting accurate information, presenting information that will fully answer questions that have been raised about his financial institution changes to modify mortgages as opposed to foreclosing, and he told me that there were about 100,000 mortgage modifications. Yet we
know the documented evidence tells a different story; it is about one-third that number, closer to 35,000 modifications.

I realize that someone could not remember the exact number, but I was surprised at how far off he was in something so substantive in someone’s life, whether it was a person like Nellie or other individuals. A mortgage foreclosure, as opposed to a modification, which is a better result for an individual, is a substantial difference in their lives. And I would hope that when you are in any way involved in a foreclosure, as a banker or as a part of an entity that is foreclosing, that you would carefully weigh the consequences before you choose to pursue foreclosure or pursue a different path, the path of modification, which, of course, everyone would prefer in that circumstance.

I asked Steve Mnuchin how many Americans his bank had foreclosed on during the financial crisis, and he has yet to provide an answer to that question. I know others may have asked a similar question, and I wonder if they got an answer. We will see what the public record shows.

Mr. Mnuchin also asked to provide a copy of a letter he said he sent to the Department of Housing and Urban Development raising concerns about the impact of the company’s reverse mortgage guidance. It was almost a month before we asked for that information to be produced, that letter, and we still haven’t seen it. So I wonder about the statement he made with regard to information from HUD.

I also asked Mr. Mnuchin whether his financial institution engaged in the predatory practice of so-called robo-signing, and this is a question which was asked by a couple of Senators. I asked him for that information, and he said that wasn’t the case. But now we know from documented evidence in an answer that he later changed that there was robo-signing taking place at the time we alleged that it did.

So when you ask a question in a hearing and you get an answer that was wrong or incomplete or misleading or otherwise, that is one thing. You could sometimes have a circumstance where someone didn’t intentionally want to mislead or tell a lie, or they may have answered a question imprecisely, a lot of information is not recorded in an answer that he later changed that there was robo-signing taking place at the time we alleged that it did.

But I think it is a little different when you ask a question in writing, where the individual had the time to analyze a question and provide an answer in writing with some time to reflect, some time to consult some other sources of information, before they draft their answer and then submit it to you as part of the nomination process. In this case, Mr. Mnuchin had a different answer than the facts showed, and I will go through that a little bit later.

At some level, there is a question of accuracy, maybe even rising to the level of trust, and that is something we have to consider when we are making a determination about a nominee, because almost any Cabinet agency has to transmit information, very specific, detailed information. People have to be able to rely upon the information, the accuracy of it and the completeness of it. That is why we have had this process in our nomination process, that causes us to raise some real questions.

I wanted to start with OneWest Bank—another entity called Financial Freedom threatened to foreclose on a Pennsylvania home that was sold by Mr. Mnuchin’s bank—in this case, the name of the entity was Financial Freedom—sought assistance because he had been served with a preforeclosure notice. The reverse mortgage company owned by Mr. Mnuchin gave this individual 30 days to pay almost $5,000.

What was the bill for? Well, without his knowing it, Financial Freedom charged him over $2,000 for forced-placed insurance coverage from 2010 to 2012. Financial Freedom threatened to foreclose with the knowledge this senior citizen made immediate monthly payments equal to almost 35 percent of his monthly income. With legal assistance, those payments were reduced.

Mr. Mnuchin said he would hope you would not need to hire a lawyer to get those payments reduced, but sometimes when you are up against a powerful financial institution, that is the only way to proceed.

Instead of immediately informing the senior citizen of their coverage, Financial Freedom charged excessive amounts for forced-placed coverage. Financial Freedom then waited 2 years to begin collection, but it expected this senior, who was living on a fixed income, to pay within 30 days. Financial Freedom also did not tell this senior citizen he could apply for a longer repayment plan due to his low income.

According to the National Consumer Law Center, in 2015, Financial Freedom notified a Pennsylvania reverse mortgage holder’s heirs that the only way to avoid foreclosure on the family home was by repaying the loan balance or selling the property for at least 95 percent of its appraisal value. They said the appraisal value for the Pennsylvania home was $170,000, even though their own appraisal of the property just one month earlier was $67,000. There is a big difference between $170,000 and $67,000, and $170,000 was the appraised value at loan origination, way back in 2007. Now, of course, it is years later, and that was, of course, before the market collapsed. So for the purposes of preforeclosure notice, Financial Freedom used an appraisal over $100,000 more than the actual value of the home. They were trying to force the heirs to pay more than $100,000 above the home’s value to prevent foreclosure of the family home.

So these are a couple of Pennsylvania stories. These are stories from some others, whose names aren’t in the text of my remarks, but give similar stories about some of the foreclosure practices.
that Mr. Mnuchin was part of when he had these individual banks.

Here is the question on robo-signing that I mentioned earlier. I submitted a question for the record in writing and gave it to him, and here is what his response was to the question. The question was this:

One of the most significant scandals during the financial crisis was the practice of “robo-signing” whereby bank employees rapidly approved foreclosures without a thorough review. Many were wrongfully foreclosed upon on account of these practices. Did OneWest Bank “robo sign” documents related to foreclosures and evictions?

His response was pretty shocking:

OneWest Bank did not robo-sign documents, and as the only bank to successfully complete the independent foreclosure review required by Federal banking regulators to investigate allegations of robo-signing, I am proud of our institution’s extremely low error rate.

The reason I say that it was a shocking answer is because he had signed his name to a 2011 document that found that OneWest Bank did, in fact, robo-sign. The findings from the Office of Thrift Supervision does not explicitly state robo-signing—that is not a legal term of art—but it does set forth a fact pattern of robo-signing, which involves an employee signing foreclosure documents without reviewing them. Instead of reviewing the details of each, robo-signers assume the paperwork is correct and sign it automatically. Almost everyone who lived through the financial crisis of 2008 knows what robo-signing is, and many were victims of this practice.

So that is a problem, obviously, when you answer a question in a manner that is totally inconsistent with the facts.

I know I am low on time, and I want to wrap up. What I will do for the record—or if we have time to come back later—is to get into some other issues, the real concerns I have about his nomination is not just his record as a banker, as a person working on Wall Street and working in that world. It is one thing to say you did something in your prior life, but once you put on the mantle of public service and the heavy responsibilities of Treasury Secretary, you set aside that other work you did or that other position you had, maybe, on some issues. But, apparently, some of his work—I wish I had more of his points of view—will continue in the Treasury Department, because I think it is pretty clear, based upon some reporting back at the end of November, that Mr. Mnuchin believes that one of his prime responsibilities is to begin to dismantle Dodd-Frank, the consumer protection act.

We know what happened prior to that. We know what happened to the economy. We know that the United States was about $19 trillion in household wealth. That fell to $13 trillion with a “t.” More than 8 million jobs—by one estimate, 8.7 million jobs—were lost. So I would hope that as Treasury Secretary, were he to be confirmed, he would make sure that we never go down that path again—that before you dismantle Dodd-Frank, you better think about the consequences to real people’s lives.

So I am a little wrap because I know we have to go, but I will put more information in the RECORD.

Let me conclude with one thought before we move on. One of the concerns I have about his nomination, also, is that one word you see in a document is decadent.

In the Democrat’s final judgment that can be summarized this way: I have a real concern about his commitment to public service. Why do I say that? It seemed that, in this whole process of disclosing financial information—turning over documents, answering questions, answering follow-up questions—Mr. Mnuchin was kind of resistant to scrutiny or seemed to be burdened by this, and that somehow he was disclosing too much. His demeanor, when you would ask him some questions, appeared to me to be a demeanor that was not consistent with what public service must be about. When you are in public service, whether you are elected or you are appointed, you are, in fact, a servant. You don’t work for a bank, you don’t work for a financial institution, and you don’t work for a company. You don’t even work for a President. You work for the people.

I urge my colleagues not to be fooled by Mr. Mnuchin. He was part of the cadre of corporate raiders that brought our economy to its knees.

In its 2011 report on the great recession that wiped out nearly $13 trillion in household wealth and cost nearly 9 million Americans their jobs, the Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations described Goldman Sachs’ role in the crisis as follows:

Goldman engaged in securitization practices that magnified risk in the market by selling high risk, poor quality mortgage products.

It said: Conflicts of interest related to proprietary investments led Goldman to conceal its adverse financial interest from potential investors, sell investors poor quality investments, and place its final interests before those of its clients.

Despite the damage they caused, Mr. Mnuchin never learned his lesson, and, as recently as 2012, he praised these instruments, calling them “an extremely positive development in terms of being able to finance different parts of the economy and different businesses efficiently.”

Now, after he left Goldman Sachs, Mr. Mnuchin started a hedge fund, Dune Capital, which started investing in an exotic financial instrument called life settlements, which are made up of life insurance policies purchased from cash-strapped seniors. The investor, Mr. Mnuchin’s hedge fund, had a plan to pay the premiums on the policies until the seniors died, at which point they would cash in on the insurance claim.

It’s not clear. Under Mr. Mnuchin’s plan, the sooner seniors died, the more money his hedge fund would make. While the markets for...
this product collapsed before Mr. Mnuchin could cash in, we have to ask ourselves if this is the type of leader whom we want at the helm of our economy? Do we really want a Treasury Secretary who had a plan to get rich off of dying seniors? I mean, that's where we stood.

That brings us to the end of 2008 and early 2009. Wall Street had brought our economy to the brink of collapse, and 13.2 million Americans were facing unemployment. Home values were plummeting, home loans falling 12.5 percent in just one quarter. And where was Mr. Mnuchin? He was negotiating the deal of a lifetime. In the darkest days of the financial crisis, when Rome was burning, Mr. Mnuchin and his friends were looking for stores to raid.

Boy, did they find a gem in IndyMac. He purchased IndyMac's $23.5 billion of assets for a mere $1.55 billion in March of 2009. With the FDIC, Federal Deposit Insurance entity backing, its too many loans went south. So he had a government guarantee for $23.5 billion of assets for about $1.5 billion, and he had the government's guarantee. All that Mr. Mnuchin had to do was to agree to help homeowners struggling with their mortgages, but Mr. Mnuchin didn't hold the bank to the basic promise that he wanted more. Apparently, the profit margins of foreclosure were just too sweet to ignore.

After buying IndyMac and renaming it OneWest Bank, Mr. Mnuchin was installed as chairman. But instead of working to achieve sustainable loan modifications and workouts for struggling borrowers, as Mr. Mnuchin had committed to doing, OneWest’s business model centered on kicking borrowers out of their homes at the first sign of default.

In April of 2011, the former Office of Thrift Supervision hit OneWest Bank with a consent order because the bank was actually putting homeowners on a fast track to foreclosure, robo-signing 750 foreclosure documents a week without ever reading or reviewing them. In 2014, an independent government review of OneWest’s foreclosure activities in 2009 and 2010 alone identified more than 10,000 homeowners, including dozens of active-duty servicemembers, who were owed $8.5 million in damages due to the bank’s foreclosure practices.

OneWest’s practices were especially egregious when it came to seniors with reverse mortgage loans. During Mr. Mnuchin’s tenure at the bank, OneWest’s reverse mortgage subsidiary, Financial Freedom, had approached 17 percent of the reverse mortgage share, but was responsible for nearly 40 percent of reverse mortgage foreclosures. In other words, Mr. Mnuchin cornered the market on focusing on seniors and survivors in distress. Whether it was foreclosing on a 90-year-old woman over a 27-cent—27-cent—missed payment or threatening to kick an 84-year-old widow out of her home of 54 years, Mr. Mnuchin was ruthless.

What did Mr. Mnuchin have to say about all of this when we asked him during his confirmation hearing in the Senate Finance Committee? He dodged responsibility at every step. First he blamed IndyMac for the quality of mortgage loans; then he blamed government regulations, which he falsely claimed forced his bank to kick people out of their homes. But it wasn’t enough, Mr. Mnuchin had the audacity to tell us that his bank did not robosign documents despite clear evidence to the contrary.

To make matters worse, Mr. Mnuchin had the gall to call OneWest a loan modification machine. He repeatedly misled the committee that OneWest provided more than 100,000 loan modifications when, in fact, they modified less than one-quarter of that amount.

On top of misleading the committee, Mr. Mnuchin has been unwilling to provide information on the number of borrowers who lost their homes during the time that he ran the bank. We believe that number is at least 60,000 families and seniors, but those numbers could even be higher.

At the end of the day, this is about much more than numbers. It is about the seniors who are barely hanging on to their homes—their only source of wealth. It is about communities that were delivered death by a stream of subprime loans in the years leading up to the crisis, only to face banks like OneWest with unrelenting foreclosure practices that stopped at nothing until they had kicked people out of their homes.

It is about people like Sylvia Oliver of Scotch Plains, NJ. After her employer cut her hours in 2009, like so many other hardworking Americans at the time, she ran into difficulty paying her mortgage payments. That’s when Ms. Oliver found a full-time job and applied eight—eight—times for loan modifications. Mr. Mnuchin’s bank denied each and every one of her applications. Ms. Oliver has been fighting to save her home for 7 years. She is hanging on by a thread. Her own words speak volumes about Mr. Mnuchin. She said:

'It’s been very painful and stressful not knowing if my kids and my family are going to have a home to live in, or if it’s going to be foreclosed on. I would ask you to remember my experience when you consider whether Mr. Mnuchin is qualified to lead the Department of the Treasury. As the CEO and Chair of OneWest Bank, Mr. Mnuchin had the opportunity to help families like mine with responsible loan modifications, and he didn’t. I don’t think this is a track record that anybody should be proud of.

Ms. Oliver is right. Mr. Mnuchin’s record is not only undeserving of pride, it is shameful. While Mr. Mnuchin’s business formula proved toxic for tens of thousands of hard-working American families, it was incredibly lucrative for Mr. Mnuchin and OneWest’s investors. He sold OneWest for $3.4 billion, a profit of $1.85 billion over just 6 years, making around $200 million for himself. That is a pretty nice return on investment.

While I am gravely concerned about Mr. Mnuchin’s history of exploiting hard-working Americans to line his own pockets, I am even more concerned about his plan to unchain Wall Street. Mr. Mnuchin has made it his No. 1 priority to roll back Wall Street reform.

As my friend Senator Brown has often said, our colleagues seem to have only jumped on a case of collective amnesia about the great recession. Just 8.5 years after the worst financial collapse in 80 years, which put taxpayers on the line for billions in bailouts, the President, Republicans in Congress, and Mr. Mnuchin are charging at the bit to take down the very protections that were put in place to prevent another catastrophe. I ask them, Have we learned nothing?

We know what this administration wants. It wants a Treasury Secretary who will work in the best interests of people like those who made up the mortgage markets in the 1980s and 1990s. But this isn’t a movie. It is the real world of both men, greed is good, and fiction becomes reality. In the world of both men, greed is good.

But this isn’t a movie. It is the real world with real-life consequences for 200,000 people who work at Sears. Stripping Sears of $12 billion worth of its most valuable assets and keeping them for themselves and their friends.

While Sears seemed to lose in this transaction, there were some that certainly appeared to profit off of the deal. Unsurprisingly, Mr. Mnuchin and his hedge fund friends were those profiteers. As a shareholder lawsuit contended, they gobbled up the most valuable and profitable assets, and they saved golden parachutes for themselves to escape if the company crashed. This might sound complicated, but it is a move that would make Gordon Gecko from the movie “Wall Street” proud. Just replace Bluestar Airlines with Sears, and he is more than $8 billion since 2011 alone. Rather than invest in the growth and workers, he decided to strip the company of its most valuable assets and keep them for themselves and their friends.

As we have learned, Mnuchin are champing at the bit to serve in a position to ensure the financial instability of American families.

Not only did he profit off the backs of struggling homeowners, he also stands to profit off of pensioners who he managed while on the board of the Sears company. From the time Mr. Mnuchin joined the board of Sears, the company lost billions of dollars, including more than $6 billion since 2011 alone. Rather than invest in growth and its workers, he decided to strip the company of its most valuable assets and keep them for themselves and their friends.

But this isn’t a movie. It is the real world with real-life consequences for 200,000 people who work at Sears. Stripping Sears of $12 billion worth of its most valuable assets contributed to the devaluation of the company, which further jeopardized the pensions of more than 200,000 Americans. According to the most recent filing, this pension fund is now underfunded by an alarming $2 billion after they stripped $12 billion from the company’s most valuable assets. These retirees, who rely on pensions to live, who worked hard all of their lives and played by the rules, have already
had their benefits cut by Mr. Mnuchin and the Sears finance board. In fact, the pension situation has become so dire that the government, through the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation, or the PBGC, felt compelled to step in to protect the pension benefits for these 200 people.

As if his past mismanagement of pensions isn’t bad enough, as Treasury Secretary, Mr. Mnuchin would oversee the decision whether to bail out the pension—Mr. Mnuchin would have to decide whether to protect his personal hedge fund investments in Sears, which he refuses to divest, or to protect the Federal Government and those 200,000 retirees.

To be fair, when I asked Mr. Mnuchin about his inherent conflict of interest during his confirmation hearing, he declined to recuse himself from any decision by the PBGC regarding Sears. But we have heard that song before. Mr. Mnuchin, I urge you today, along with many of my colleagues, to speak out against the White House nominating Steven Mnuchin to be the next Secretary of the U.S. Treasury. President Trump has nominated the former CEO of OneWest Bank—who more than 17 years ago was a Goldman Sachs executive—to run the Federal agency tasked with crafting and implementing U.S. economic policy. So much for draining the swamp.

I want to start, however, by sharing the story of a good friend, Lola Orvik, whom I met when I was attorney general of Nevada.

In 2013, Lola’s mortgage on her townhouse in Henderson was underwater. In conclusion, you can tell a lot about a person based on how they handle a crisis. Do they avert a crisis, or do they exacerbate the problems and the suffering? It was both. We were there to help her, but we forced her to a new program that was too good to be true, and it was. After calling my office, she thankfully discovered that it was a scam. I am so glad she called my office. Our staff referred her to a new program we had created, the Home Again Homeownership Restabilization Program. It is a one-stop shop to help struggling homeowners. It helped Lola finally get a loan modification, reduce her principal by $37,000, slash her interest rate from 5.7 percent to 2 percent, and keep the house she had live in for nearly 20 years.

The Home Again Program helped thousands of Nevada homeowners understand all the State and Federal housing resources available to them. It has helped folks like Lola restructure their loans to ensure more affordable monthly payments. That simple hotline number has gone a long way.

Because we were there to help her, Lola got her life back. However, not everyone was as fortunate as Lola. In fact, some families are still trying to overcome the continuing destructive impact of the foreclosure crisis in Nevada and across this country.

In the depths of the great recession, Lola’s predicament was not unique. Nevada and across this country. Because we were there to help her, Lola got her life back. However, not everyone was as fortunate as Lola. In fact, some families are still trying to overcome the continuing destructive impact of the foreclosure crisis in Nevada and across this country.

In the depths of the great recession, Nevada was ground zero for the housing crisis. Property values plummeted. “For sale” signs lined the streets. Foreclosure notices hung on doors throughout the State. Thousands of families lived in constant fear of losing their homes.

In 2008, Nevada had the highest foreclosure rate in the Nation, with more than 77,000 homes getting a notice at the door saying they were at risk for eviction. We led the Nation in the terms of foreclosure rate for 62 straight months during the recession.

Things got so bad that by 2010, nearly 70 percent of Nevada homeowners were underwater on their homes, meaning
that they owed more on their mortgag es than the current value of their property.

As Nevada’s attorney general, I fought the big banks, Wall Street institutions, and default servicing companies that charged homeowners $1.9 billion to help hard-working families get back on their feet. That money helped to fund the Home Again Program.

More than just getting that money back, this was about changing the conduct and predatory practices of the big banks when working with homeowners. For instance, we made dual tracking an illegal practice so that banks could no longer foreclosure on a home while simultaneously considering their request for a loan modification and then charging them fees every step of the way. We demanded that a homeowner have a single point of contact within the financial institution so the homeowner would no longer get shuffled around from person to person and told to reapply for the loan modification application over and over again. We demanded that the banks demonstrate that they had personal knowledge of the foreclosure documents they filed to prevent robo-signing and unlawful foreclosures of a home.

Unfortunately, not every bank was willing to do everything possible to help the millions of Nevadans and Americans who were suffering. Mr. Mnuchin’s OneWest Bank—formally known as IndyMac—was one such bank. Instead of trying to help homeowners, OneWest enforced predatory and unforgiving practices that only served to line the pockets of Mr. Mnuchin and his co-owners.

Steven Mnuchin purchased IndyMac from the Federal Government after it collapsed and took control of the thousands of mortgages the bank managed. Mnuchin rebranded the bank as OneWest and went to work using questions and predatory practices of the dual tracking, so he could make more money. That is not right.

Instead of working to help these homeowners stay in their homes, OneWest Bank, under Mnuchin’s leadership, became a foreclosure machine. The bank had one of the highest denial rates for applications to the Home Affordable Modification Program. A judge in Wisconsin cited OneWest’s “harsh, repugnant, shocking, and repulsive practices when deciding a suit against them. Recent documents show that the company used robo-signing to deny modification claims, proving that it did not fairly consider loan modification applications for tens of thousands of homeowners.

When confronted with these facts at his Senate confirmation hearing, Mr. Mnuchin lied. He denied that OneWest used robo-signing, offered empty excuses, and shifted blame for his company’s heinous practices. And during his confirmation hearing, Mr. Mnuchin repeatedly refused to say how many homes OneWest foreclosed on in Nevada.

However, according to new data, during the foreclosure crisis and its immediate aftermath, OneWest made $3 billion in profit while evicting 3,654 Nevada families from their homes. This includes 181 foreclosures on seniors who had taken out reverse mortgages. When he eventually left the bank, Mr. Mnuchin received a $10.9 million payout. This is on top of the annual compensation of $4.5 million he has received since 2015, when OneWest was bought by other investors. Let me repeat that: Some Nevada families lost their homes because Mr. Mnuchin’s OneWest put profits over people. That is a snapshot and a statistic which does not do justice to how much pain that caused for those families.

I want to spend some time on these accusations of robo-signing, both because Mr. Mnuchin clearly lied and also because this was an issue I took on when I was attorney general during and after the financial crisis.

First, let’s be clear what this is. Robo-signing is a procedure used by mortgage companies to sign foreclosure documents without reviewing them. This is a reckless practice used by big banks to forge documents, to rush things along, and it caused thousands of families to be wrongfully evicted from their homes. Like OneWest, the banks were involved in a massive robo-signing scheme in our home State of Nevada, and I went after them aggressively as the State’s attorney general. Nevada led the Nation in foreclosures every month for more than 4 years.

Mr. Mnuchin’s company did not care that middle-class families were losing their homes during the crisis. In fact, during his confirmation hearing before the Senate, he admitted:

“I never wanted to be in the mortgage servicing business. I didn’t want to be in the reverse mortgage business. I wanted to build a regional bank.”

In other words, Mr. Mnuchin had to convince his investors that they would make money—a point that Mr. Mnuchin admitted at the hearing, saying: “Yes, my investors made a lot of money on OneWest.”

Not only did his investors make a lot of money, Mr. Mnuchin did so as well. Since leaving the bank, he has pocketed nearly $20 million. Mr. Mnuchin also owns thousands of mortgages to thousands of Nevadans who were losing their homes and their dignity, Nevadans like Heather McCready of Sparks, who came to Capitol Hill last month to share her heart-wrenching story of how she applied to OneWest for a loan modification in 2010 after she and her husband lost their jobs as a result of the financial crisis. Despite three applications over the next six months because—OneWest’s rejection of our application in 2010 after she and her husband lost their jobs as a result of the financial crisis. Despite three applications over the next six months because

The Home Affordable Modification Program (HAMP)...

By applying for the HAMP program, we thought we were back on our feet and helping our home. We complied 100 percent with OneWest requirements for HAMP—we were incredibly nervous about being able to keep our home, so we were careful to make sure we did everything we could to keep the process going forward. Our application for HAMP was processed and we were approved for our modification in the signed paperwork and the first payment under the modified payment amount along with a $15,000 principal reduction.

But then the process started to fall apart. After a whole 30 days, OneWest returned our personal check and told us that only certified checks would be accepted, so they were now voiding the modification offer. We had followed the instructions to the letter on OneWest paperwork, crossing our ‘T’s and dotting our ‘I’s. But in the end, this didn’t matter—and OneWest’s rejection of our HAMP application put us on the road to foreclosure.

We applied two more times for loan modifications over the next six months because we were given assurances by people at OneWest that they would reapply. We again complied with every request OneWest made of us, taking care to send in extra documents whenever OneWest requested them.

But as far as I can tell, OneWest never attempted to process the loan modification. The foreclosure went through and we lost our home on September 19, 2010. The foreclosure left us without a home; and finding a new rental was extremely difficult because of our credit. Juggling the demands of raising our twins was so hard—we were even meant that our kids had to miss school. Eventually we did find a new place, but we had to pay an outrageous rent, over $800 a month, even though it was not a good home for us at all.

It’s hard to explain the shame, embarrassment, and grief that Jack and I felt. I’ve never seen a tear of sad or at least, I didn’t think we were asking too much: We wanted to hang on to our home for the sake of our kids, and we did everything we could to stay in our home. And while we never know exactly what OneWest did, the outcome of my story proves that Mr. Mnuchin’s company had no interest in helping those they were trying to help: Mrs. McCready’s testimony. It is moving and heartbreaking and deserves to be heard by every Member of this body.
Mr. Mnuchin is to be our next Secretary of the U.S. Treasury. The Treasury Department has the vital mission of promoting the conditions that enable economic growth, stability, job opportunities, and the ability to buy a car or own a home. Their actions directly affect the lives of every American.

Our next Treasury Secretary should have a proven record of fighting to expand economic opportunities for everyone. That is what Americans deserve. Yet, from where I stand, Mr. Mnuchin falls far short of that test.

President Trump’s choice of Mr. Mnuchin to lead the U.S. Treasury is a slap in the face for Nevada families like Heather’s. Her story makes it crystal clear: This is not someone who will be looking out for working people when he implements our Nation’s economic policy.

In many ways, President Trump’s unfortunate choice of someone like Mr. Mnuchin should not surprise us because in 2006 the President said he “sort of hoped” the real estate market would tank, and in 2007 he said he was “excited!” for the housing market crash. The motive was the same: profits.

We cannot afford to return to the misguided policies that brought us to the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression. Families cannot afford to lose their homes again. But that is exactly what we can expect if Mr. Mnuchin is confirmed as President Trump’s Treasury Secretary. When I ran for the Senate, I promised Nevadans that I would fight for them, that I would stand up for them and be their voice here in Washington. Today, I am that voice, and that is why I rise with my colleagues in opposition to the “Foreclosure King,” Mr. Mnuchin.

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

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

Mr. BOOKER. Mr. President, I rise today to join a chorus of my colleagues in speaking out against the nomination of Steven Mnuchin to serve as Secretary of the Department of the Treasury.

What I believe is, if you look at Mr. Mnuchin’s record, he has spent a lot of time benefiting from—in fact, even exploiting—families who are struggling homeowners in my State.

When Mnuchin is confirmed as President Trump’s Treasury Secretary, he does not put himself in the place to try to empower, support, or deal with the folks that he saw as an opportunity to take over a financial institution and continue, if not accelerate, the foreclosures that were going on.

This has become very clear in that Mr. Mnuchin oversaw the operations of this bank that, as its business model, he set out to explicitly mislead and manipulate homeowners into foreclosure.

This article that I read has been repeated by organizations and by news outlets all over the spectrum, talking about how Mr. Mnuchin, in this environment, worked very hard to accelerate foreclosures and take advantage of this and make a profit. From elderly widows, the stories continue, to families, to small business owners, to Active-Duty servicemembers, there were many, many victims of Mr. Mnuchin’s bank’s predatory tactics, taking advantage of folks in a crisis, as opposed to trying to understand out a way to support folks through it.

I would like to read one more from the Minneapolis StarTribune, an article that documented one instance of the disturbingly prevalent practices of Mr. Mnuchin’s company.

The headline reads: “Negotiating on foreclosure, then locked out in a blizzard.”

A Minneapolis woman who was negotiating with a lender to find a way to stay in her foreclosed house.

Stepping back from the text, this is someone who is working hard to do the right thing in negotiations.

Back to the text:

They arrived home from work during Tuesday night’s blizzard to find that the locks had been changed. After spending the night at her mother’s, Leslie Parks went Wednesday to her Minneapolis home, where the referee ordered that she be allowed back into her mother’s former duplex at 3749 Park Avenue while negotiations continued. Locksmiths on Wednesday reconfigured the locks that had been changed Tuesday by a contractor for OneWest Bank.

These are the kind of tactics that were being used, the kind of hardball politics that were being used by Mr. Mnuchin’s company that really under mined a lot of hard-working Americans from a variety of backgrounds in many, many different States.

His record is clear. Mr. Mnuchin not only advocated in support of this company and its tactics, but even now he talks about trying to roll back the kind of protections that have been put in place to try to protect average Americans. Many of them are in the lives of people who see that we can prevent Wall Street from burdening Main Street with the costs while they reap the rewards. This is the broken system that we saw in the past that needs fixing and needs healing. We don’t need one of the architects of the system that caused so much pain to be in one of the most important positions in our land.

The head of this vital agency must be someone who understands their responsibility to look out for struggling American trying to make it by playing by the rules and someone who is qualified and willing to direct the Department to fiercely protect the economic security of our Nation, the economic well-being of the American people, and the integrity of our financial system.

I don’t believe Mr. Mnuchin is that person. He has made it clear in his decades-long career that he is willing for a profit to work hard to exploit hard-working families and shortchange homeowners for their personal gain. This is unacceptable. Mr. Mnuchin has built a career and has reaped literally millions of dollars of success by exploiting people, by exploiting people, and by hurting people.

The American people cannot afford to suffer through another financial crisis. We can’t afford to have a master Wall Street manipulator put in the position that we should be relying on to protect us from that kind of financial manipulation.

This is a difficult economy where people in our country are still struggling under challenging financial
times. I believe that we can make a nation where people can do good and do well at the same time, where we should not elevate or celebrate people who really fed off of the misery and the challenges of others, but, instead, that we can have a nation where we put people who feel the pain of their own personal background, in positions like the Department of Treasury to celebrate the best of who we are, the best of our values—people who are public servants, people who have shown a commitment to not only serve but even sacrifice for one another.

What we saw amidst this crisis—amidst a crisis that, in many ways, was aggravated and caused by greed and avarice in the mortgage industry and the banking industry, among rating agencies—was that many people showed who they were in a time of American struggle and American crisis. We saw with clarity where people's priorities were. Was it exploiting people? Was it exploiting systems for their own avarice and their own benefit, or was it for being there for our country, trying to make things better, trying to give people bridges that could carry them from financial struggle and strain to stability, or people trying to crumble those bridges and have people free fall in financial distress.

This is, unfortunately, what we see here today. We have President Trump trying to elevate someone who has not shown that they are the one who is going to help but instead has shown a record of someone who wants to hurt. That to me is unacceptable, especially at this time where so many American families are still struggling to get back on their feet to find financial security and find the pathway to their American dream.

It is for this reason and more that I cannot support this nomination. 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. WYDEN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, there are communities across this country that are still waiting for the recovery from the Great Recession to show up. In many of those towns and cities, the storefronts are boarded up, the factories are shuttered, and, in what could be the most lasting scar of the crisis, homes—many homes—have been foreclosed.

A lot of people in those communities cast their votes in November based on a Trump message that real change was coming.

Heads are going to be spinning tonight with the news from the Senate. In just a few minutes, this body will vote to confirm Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin, known by many as the "foreclosure king." That is whom the President chose as his Treasury Secretary. Mr. Mnuchin turned the bank he bought into a cash cow, and they set a land speed record for foreclosures. I have supported nominees for this position from both parties. I voted for Paul O'Neill. I voted for John Snow. I voted for Henry Paulson, who served under President George W. Bush. I don't expect to see eye to eye on each issue with every Treasury Secretary. I do expect to have confidence that the Treasury Secretary is going to work on behalf of all Americans—all Americans—and not just the well healed, not just the fortunate, not just the powerful.

After considering Mr. Mnuchin's qualifications and background, I just don't believe he would be that kind of Treasury Secretary. In Mr. Mnuchin's response to questions from members of the Finance Committee, he denied that his bank, OneWest, engaged in a practice known as robo-signing. The public record says that is just dead wrong. In fact, the evidence is that Mr. Mnuchin's record says that is just dead wrong. In fact, the evidence is that the OneWest, engaged in robo-signing.

Mr. Mnuchin also withheld foreclosure data requested by two Democratic members of the Finance Committee, Senators BROWN and CASEY. He did, apparently, give similar information to Senator HELLER, one of the committee's Republican members. That is on top of $100 million worth of settlements with various business entities for their own avarice and their own benefit, or was it for being there for our country, trying to make things better, trying to give people bridges that could carry them from financial struggle and strain to stability, or people trying to crumble those bridges and have people free fall in financial distress.

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She said she personally signed more than 750 disclosure documents a week without even reading them, and there was no notary present during the process. That is a violation of the law.

When asked how much time she spent executing each document, Ms. Johnson-Seck replied: "I changed my signature considerably. It's just an E now. So not more than 30 seconds."

Now, on the eve of the Finance Committee mark-up for Mr. Mnuchin, the Columbus Dispatch in Ohio reported documented examples of robo-signing in Ohio. Now, on the eve of Mr. Mnuchin's confirmation vote in the Senate, another such story has broken.

This time it is in the State of Washington. More evidence of robo-signing that directly contradicts what Mr. Mnuchin told the Finance Committee and the public.

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The Mnuchin rule just hasn’t held up. It is beyond being on the ropes. It is not going anywhere at all. In fact, the early proposals only make this extraordinary unfairness, the unfairness at the heart of America’s Tax Code, even worse.

So what we have is another Trump nominee who, in my view, doesn’t meet the test of standing up for working families in those communities all across the country who are waiting for economic recovery to show up in their neighborhood. They are the ones who have seen the factory close and seen the foreclosures and seen their neighbors laid off. And they would like to see people in these positions advocate for them, advocate for them because they need somebody who is going to stand up for them, and they were told in the campaign that is what they were going to get.

The fact is, Mr. Mnuchin is yet another Trump nominee who, instead of standing up for those working families, has a different set of priorities and, in addition to that, has the ethics alarm bells sounding.

He appears to be withholding information requested by Members of this body. My view is, he mislaid the Finance Committee and the public about his bank’s foreclosure tactics. The Mnuchin rule—the first promise he made, the very first promise he made on policy, which he was proud to have made, the very first promise he made, Mr. Mnuchin rule—the first promise he made, my bank’s foreclosure tactics. The fact is, Mr. Mnuchin is yet another Trump nominee who, instead of going to get, and seeing to it they get it from every veteran gets the care they need. We have worked together as a team—Democrats and Republicans—to make this happen.

I yield the remainder of my time to Jon Tester of Montana as my ranking member. We have worked together as a team—Democrats and Republicans—to make this happen.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. DAINES). The question is on agreeing to the motion to reconsider.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The nomination was confirmed. Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to reconsider the vote on the nomination, and I move to table the motion to reconsider.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Mr. DAINES. The question is on agreeing to the motion to table. The motion was agreed to.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will be 10 minutes of debate, equally divided in the usual form.

The Sensor from Georgia.

Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, I want to make a statement that has not been heard much around these Halls or these Chambers in a couple of years. But on February 7—this month—the Veterans Affairs Committee reported by a vote of 17 to 0 the name of David Shulkin, of Pennsylvania, to be Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will be 10 minutes of debate, equally divided in the usual form.

The Senator from Georgia.

Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, I want to make a statement that has not been heard much around these Halls or these Chambers in a couple of years. But on February 7—this month—the Veterans Affairs Committee reported by a vote of 17 to 0 the name of David Shulkin, of Pennsylvania, to be Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will be 10 minutes of debate, equally divided in the usual form.

The Senator from Georgia.

Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, I want to make a statement that has not been heard much around these Halls or these Chambers in a couple of years. But on February 7—this month—the Veterans Affairs Committee reported by a vote of 17 to 0 the name of David Shulkin, of Pennsylvania, to be Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will be 10 minutes of debate, equally divided in the usual form.
be a path that is reckless for our veterans, and I think the veterans service organizations would tell us that.

Again, I express my support for the nomination of Dr. Shulkin to be VA Secretary. I believe he will stand up for our veterans, and I believe he will put them above politics.

Moving forward, I look forward to working with him and other Members in this body to make sure we serve our veterans the best we possibly can. Our veterans deserve no less.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, as the Senate has spent the last few weeks considering controversial nominee after controversial nominee, it is a refreshing break to consider Dr. David Shulkin to lead the Department of Veterans Affairs. Dr. Shulkin is a man defined by his professionalism, competence, and dedication to the mission of the agency he is tapped to lead.

The son of an Army psychologist and an executive administrator, Dr. Shulkin was selected by President Obama to restore trust and confidence at the Veterans Health Administration after years of struggles punctuated by the horrible scandal of wait times in Phoenix. Under his leadership, this has made significant progress. Amid a sea of questionable Cabinet nominations, Dr. Shulkin is one about which I have no question.

Of course, Dr. Shulkin will face immense challenges. The VA needs significant oversight, not just in its practices and policies, but in its facilities and technology. In eliminating the backlog for access to health care and in the midst of tackling the backlog in claims, facilities have been short-changed with respect to needed improvements and upgrades, while experiencing increased usage. New technologies provide new opportunities for providing care, but they also require new investments.

Areas that are finally receiving the attention required include mental health, posttraumatic stress, and other lingering invisible wounds of war. It has been one of my priorities to ensure that the best science and practices with respect to mental health and posttraumatic stress can be spread to the communities where veterans live and work, like the rural communities of Vermont. Only then will we see progress in improving the lives of veterans in those areas.

Dr. Shulkin must also rebuild the confidence of a VA workforce that has been unfairly targeted and vilified by some for the actions of a few. The Federal employees who work at the VA are among the most dedicated anywhere. Their devotion to improving care for veterans is inspiring, but their jobs have been made more difficult by both the disappointing actions of some individuals and the frustrating policies and organizational structures that sometimes get in the way of them serving veterans.

I believe that Dr. Shulkin is up to this challenge. It is evident from his testimony before the Veterans Affairs Committee and through his public statements that he believes in the VA and in the importance of its mission. It is evident that he understands the value of looking to the community for healthcare answers when that makes sense and that he also understands that the Nation should never ignore its solemn responsibility to care for veterans through all possible avenues. I am also reassured by his pledge not to disrupt or turn VA or turn its delivery of care into a voucher system. It is evident that he intends to speak his mind about what makes the most sense for leading a missive health care system focused on providing quality care to each individual veteran.

I will support Dr. Shulkin’s nomination, and I look forward to working with him.

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, I am proud to support Dr. David Shulkin’s nomination as Secretary of Veterans Affairs. The Department of Veterans Affairs, VA, faces massive challenges in delivering care to our veterans, but I believe that Dr. Shulkin is well equipped for the task at hand.

Dr. Shulkin has committed to fully implementing the Veterans Choice Program as Secretary and will work to expand this program to provide a network that meets the needs of veterans, their families, and providers in the community—every veteran deserves access to care, whether that be at the VA or in the community.

Through the Veterans Choice Program, we have made more than 7 million appointments made for veterans in their communities, a network expanded by 350,000 providers and over 1.5 million veterans that have benefitted from using the Choice Card. I will seek to build and expand upon this progress and look to Dr. Shulkin’s support for legislation that would bring care in the community under an integrated and coordinated system that utilizes a Veterans Choice Card. This will ensure access to timely, flexible, and quality care that our veterans have earned and deserve.

I believe that Dr. Shulkin is the person that can repair the culture of the VA to focus on the veteran and restore honesty and accountability to the Department. I thank him for accepting this challenge to serve our Nation and look forward to working with him in the days ahead.

Thank you.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, I support the nomination of David Shulkin to be Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

President Obama nominated Dr. Shulkin, a medical doctor, to be Under Secretary for Health for the Department of Veterans Affairs and Chief Executive of the Veterans Health Administration. The Senate confirmed Dr. Shulkin in June 2015 by a voice vote.

Since then, he has led the VA’s health care system, with more than 1,700 care sites and 9 million veterans using the system each year.

Before joining the VA, Dr. Shulkin served as president and CEO of Beth Israel Medical Center in New York City and president at Morristown Medical Center, Goryeb Children’s Hospital, and Atlantic Rehabilitation Institute, and the Atlantic Health System Ambulatory Care Organization. Dr. Shulkin also previously served as the chief medical officer of the University of Pennsylvania Health System, the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania, Temple University Hospital, and the Medical College of Pennsylvania Hospital. He had been chairman of medicine and vice dean at Drexel University School of Medicine. And Dr. Shulkin founded and was the chairman and CEO of DoctorQuality, a consumer-oriented source of information for quality and safety in health care.

Veterans groups are cautiously optimistic that Dr. Shulkin will continue to improve the timeliness and quality of medical care we veterans receive. They are also hopeful that he will bring much-needed reforms in the administration of veterans’ benefits, including the reform of the appellate review process.

The Department of Veterans Affairs provides important services, care, and peace of mind for our Nation’s 21 million veterans. The VA has more to do to make sure that the care that it provides is worthy of those who served our Nation. I believe that Dr. Shulkin’s experience and training has prepared him well to continue that effort, and I support his nomination.

Mr. TESTER. Mr. President, I yield back the remainder of our time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic time has been yielded back.

The Senator from Georgia.

Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from Montana and urge every Member of the Senate—Republican, Independent, Democrat—to cast their vote for our veterans, cast their vote for our country, and cast their vote for David Shulkin to be the new Secretary of the Veterans’ Administration.

I yield back the remainder of our time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. All time is yielded back.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Shulkin nomination?

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second? The question appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

The result was announced—yeas 100, nays 0, as follows:

Alexander
Baldwin
Bennet
Barrasso
Booker
Boozman
Brown
YEAS—100
YEAS—100
February 13, 2017

CONGRESSIONAL RECORD — SENATE
S1123


LEGISLATIVE SESSION
Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to proceed to legislative session. The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR
Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I move that the Senate proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 3, Wilbur Ross to be Secretary of Commerce.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Wilbur L. Ross, Jr., of Florida, to be Secretary of Commerce.

CLOTURE MOTION
Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I send a cloture motion to the desk. The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The bill 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 nomination of Wilbur L. Ross, of Florida, to be Secretary of Commerce.


LEGISLATIVE SESSION
Mr. McConnell, Mr. President, I move to proceed to legislative session. The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR
Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I move that the Senate proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 15, Scott Pruitt to be Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Scott Pruitt, of Oklahoma, to be Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency.

CLOTURE MOTION
Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I send a cloture motion to the desk. The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The bill 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 nomination of Scott Pruitt, of Oklahoma, to be Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency.


LEGISLATIVE SESSION
Mr. McConnell, Mr. President, I move to proceed to legislative session. The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR
Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I move that the Senate proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 8, Ryan Zinke to be Secretary of the Interior.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Ryan Zinke, of Montana, to be Secretary of the Interior.

CLOTURE MOTION
Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I send a cloture motion to the desk. The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The bill 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 nomination of Ryan Zinke, of Montana, to be Secretary of the Interior.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR
Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I move that the Senate proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 5, Ben Carson to be Secretary of Housing and Urban Development.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The bill clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION
We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of James Richard Perry, of Texas, to be Secretary of Energy.


Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum calls for these cloture motions be waived.

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

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES

RULES OF PROCEDURE
Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, pursuant to rule XXVI, paragraph 2, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, on behalf of myself and Senator CANTWELL, I ask unanimous consent that a copy of the rules of the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources for the 115th Congress be printed in the RECORD.

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

RULES OF THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES

GENERAL RULES

Rule 1. The Standing Rules of the Senate, as supplemented by these rules, are adopted as the rules of the Committee and its Subcommittees.

MEETINGS OF THE COMMITTEE

Rule 2. (a) The Committee shall meet on the third Thursday of each month while the Congress is in session for the purpose of conducting business, unless, for the convenience of Members, the Chairman shall set some other day for a meeting. Additional meetings may be called by the Chairman as he may deem necessary.

(b) Hearings of any Subcommittee may be called by the Chairman as he may deem necessary. Open hearings and meetings shall be scheduled or held concurrently with a full Committee meeting or hearing, unless a majority of the Committee concurs in such concurrent hearing.

OPEN HEARINGS AND MEETINGS

Rule 3. (a) All hearings and business meetings of the Committee and all the hearings of any of its Subcommittees shall be open to the public unless the Committee or Subcommittee involved, by majority vote of all the Members of the Committee or such Subcommittee, orders them to be closed in accordance with paragraph 5(b) of Rule XXVI of the Standing Rules of the Senate.

(b) A transcript shall be kept of each hearing of the Committee or any Subcommittee.

(c) A transcript shall be kept of each business meeting of the Committee unless a majority of all the Members of the Committee agrees that some other form of permanent record is preferable.

BUSINESS MEETING AGENDA

Rule 5. (a) A legislative measure, nomination, or other matter shall be included on the agenda of the next following business meeting of the Committee if a written request by a Member of the Committee for such inclusion has been filed with the Chairman of the Committee at least one week prior to such meeting. Nothing in this rule shall be construed to limit the authority of the Chairman of the Committee to include a legislative measure, nomination, or other matter on the Committee agenda in the absence of such request.

(b) The agenda for any business meeting of the Committee shall be provided to each Member and made available to the public at least three days prior to such meeting, and no new items may be added after the agenda is published except by the approval of a majority of all the Members of the Committee on matters not included on the public agenda. The Staff Director shall promptly notify absent Members of any action taken by the Committee on matters not included on the published agenda.
QUORUMS

Rule 6. (a) Except as provided in subsections (b) and (c), eight Members shall constitute a quorum for the conduct of business of the Committee.

(b) No measure or matter shall be ordered reported from the Committee unless twelve Members of the Committee are actually present at the time such action is taken.

(c) The Committee shall constitute a quorum for the purpose of conducting a hearing or taking testimony on any measure or matter before the Committee or any Subcommittee.

ROLL CALLING

Rule 7. (a) A rollcall of the Members shall be taken upon the request of any Member.

Any Member who does not vote on any rollcall at the time the roll is called, may vote (in person or by proxy) on that roll call at any later time during the same business meeting.

(b) Proxy voting shall be permitted on all matters of the Committee, but shall not have the authority to vote on any rollcall at the time the roll is called, unless specifically authorized by the Majority or Minority Whip of the Committee.

(c) Members shall be informed of the matter or the Committee.

Rule 8. (a) The number of Members assigned to each Subcommittee and the division between Majority and Minority Members shall be fixed by the Chairman in consultation with the Ranking Minority Member.

(b) Assignment of Members to Subcommittees shall, if possible, reflect the preferences of the Members. No Member will receive assignment to a second Subcommittee until, in order of seniority, all Members have chosen assignments to one Subcommittee, and no Member shall receive assignment to a third Subcommittee until, in order of seniority, all Members have chosen assignments to two Subcommittees.

(c) Any Member of the Committee may sit with any Subcommittee during its hearings but shall not have the authority to vote on any matters before the Subcommittee unless he is a Member of such Subcommittee.

NOMINATIONS

Rule 9. At any hearing to confirm a Presidential nomination, the testimony of the nominee and, at the request of any Member, any other witness shall be under oath. Every nominee shall submit the financial disclosure report filed pursuant to Title I of the Ethics in Government Act of 1978. Such report is made available to the public.

INVESTIGATIONS

Rule 10. (a) Neither the Committee nor any of its Subcommittees may undertake an investigation unless specifically authorized by the Chairman and the Ranking Minority Member or a majority of all the Members of the Committee.

(b) No Member shall be called to testify in an investigation shall be informed of the matter or matters under investigation, given a copy of these rules, given the opportunity to make a brief and relevant oral statement before or after questioning, and be permitted to have counsel of his or her choosing present during his or her testimony or closed hearing, or at any unsworn interview, to advise the witness of his or her legal rights.

(c) For purposes of this rule, the terms ‘investigation’ shall not include a review or study undertaken pursuant to paragraph 8 of Rule XXVI of the Standing Rules of the Senate or a preliminary inquiry, undertaken at the direction of the Chairman or the Ranking Member, intended to determine whether there is substantial credible evidence that would warrant an investigation.

Rule 11. Witnesses in Committee or Subcommittee hearings may be required to give testimony under oath whenever the Chairman or Ranking Minority Member of the Committee or Subcommittee deems such to be necessary. If one or more witnesses at a hearing are required to testify under oath, all witnesses at the hearing shall be required to testify under oath.

SUBPOENAS

Rule 12. The Chairman shall have authority to issue subpoenas for the attendance of witnesses or the production of documents, records, or other materials (1) with the agreement of the Ranking Minority Member, (2) when authorized by a majority of all the Members of the Committee, or (3) when within the scope of an investigation authorized under Rule 10(a).

CONFIDENTIAL TESTIMONY

Rule 13. No confidential testimony taken by or any part of the proceedings of a closed Committee or Subcommittee meeting shall be made public, in whole or in part or by way of summary, unless authorized by a majority of all the Members of the Committee at a business meeting called for the purpose of making such a determination.

DEFAMATORY STATEMENTS

Rule 14. Any person whose name is mentioned or who is specifically identified in, or who believes that testimony or other evidence presented at, an open Committee or Subcommittee hearing tends to defame him or otherwise adversely affect his reputation, may file with the Committee for its consideration and action a sworn statement of facts relevant to such testimony or evidence.

BROADCASTING OF HEARINGS OR MEETINGS

Rule 15. Any meeting or hearing by the Committee or any Subcommittee which is open to the public may be covered in whole or in part by way of summary, unless authorized by a majority of all the Members of the Committee.

AMENDING THE RULES

Rule 16. These rules may be amended only by vote of a majority of all the Members of the Committee in a business meeting of the Committee: Provided, that no vote may be taken on any proposed amendment unless such amendment is set out any votes on amendments offered for the United States generally, including environmental aspects of deepwater ports.


10. Nonmilitary environmental regulation and control of nuclear energy.

11. Ocean dumping.


13. Public works, bridges, and dams.

14. Regional economic development.

15. Solid waste disposal and recycling.


17. Water resources.

18. Such committee shall also study and review, on a comprehensive basis, matters relating to environmental protection and re-use utilization and conservation, and report thereon from time to time.

RULES OF PROCEDURE

Rule 1. Committee Meetings in General

(a) Regular Meeting Days: For purposes of complying with paragraph 3 of Senate Rule XXV, the regular meeting day of the Committee is the first and third Thursday of each month at 10:00 a.m. If there is no business before the committee, the regular meeting shall be omitted.

(b) Additional Meetings: The chair may call additional meetings, after consulting with the ranking minority member. Subcommittee chair may call meetings, with the concurrence of the chair, after consulting with the ranking minority members of the subcommittee and the committee.

(c) Presiding Officer:

(1) The chair shall preside at all meetings of the committee. If the chair is not present, the ranking minority member shall preside.

(2) Subcommittee chairs shall preside at all meetings of their subcommittees. If the

COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS

RULES OF PROCEDURE

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, the Committee on Environment and Public Works has adopted rules governing its procedures for the 115th Congress. Pursuant to rule XXVI, paragraph 2, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I ask unanimous consent that a copy of the committee rules be printed in the RECORD.

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

COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS

JURISDICTION

(Pursuant to Rule XXV, Sec. 2, Standing Rules of the Senate)

The Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works is one of sixteen standing committees established by Rule XXV of the Senate under which committee jurisdictions were last revised by the adoption of S. Res. 4, Senate Committee Reorganization, February 11, 1977. Section 2 of Rule XXV as amended on January 7, 1993 provides that the Committee shall consist of seventeen Senators.

The pertinent section of Senate Rule XXV follows:

(h)(1) Committee on Environment and Public Works, to which shall be referred all proposals for legislation affecting the Federal environment, natural resources, energy, transportation, and public utilities, both within and without Federal jurisdictions.

5. Environmental aspects of outer continental shelf lands.


7. Fisheries and wildlife.

8. Flood control and improvement of rivers and harbors, including environmental aspects of deepwater ports.


10. Nonmilitary environmental regulation and control of nuclear energy.

11. Ocean dumping.


13. Public works, bridges, and dams.

14. Regional economic development.

15. Solid waste disposal and recycling.


17. Water resources.

18. Such committee shall also study and review, on a comprehensive basis, matters relating to environmental protection and re-use utilization and conservation, and report thereon from time to time.

RULES OF PROCEDURE

Rule 1. Committee Meetings in General

(a) Regular Meeting Days: For purposes of complying with paragraph 3 of Senate Rule XXV, the regular meeting day of the Committee is the first and third Thursday of each month at 10:00 a.m. If there is no business before the committee, the regular meeting shall be omitted.

(b) Additional Meetings: The chair may call additional meetings, after consulting with the ranking minority member. Subcommittee chairs may call meetings, with the concurrence of the chair, after consulting with the ranking minority members of the subcommittee and the committee.

(c) Presiding Officer:

(1) The chair shall preside at all meetings of the committee. If the chair is not present, the ranking minority member shall preside.

(2) Subcommittee chairs shall preside at all meetings of their subcommittees. If the
subcommittee chair is not present, the ranking majority member of the subcommittee shall preside.

(3) Notwithstanding the rule prescribed by paragraph (1) and (2), any member of the committee may preside at a hearing.

(d) Open Meetings: Meetings of the committee and subcommittees, including hearings and business meetings, are open to the public. A portion of a meeting may be closed to the public if the committee determines by roll call vote of a majority of the members present that the matters to be discussed or the testimony to be taken—

(1) will disclose matters necessary to be kept secret in the interests of national defense or the confidential conduct of the foreign relations of the United States;

(2) relate solely to matters of committee staff personnel or internal staff management or procedure; or

(3) constitute any other grounds for closure under paragraph 5(b) of Senate Rule XXVI.

(e) Broadcasting:

(1) Public meetings of the committee or a subcommittee may be televised, broadcast, or recorded. A group interested in sponsoring such a broadcast shall notify the Senate press gallery or an employee of the Senate.

(2) Any member of the Senate Press Gallery or employee of the Senate wishing to televise or record a committee meeting must notify the staff director or the staff director’s designee by 5:00 p.m. the day before the meeting.

(3) In public meetings, any person using a camera, microphone, or other electronic equipment may not position or use the equipment in a way that interferes with the seating, vision, or hearing of committee members or staff on the dais, or with the orderly process of the meeting.

Rule 2. Quorums

(a) Business Meetings: At committee business meetings held for the purpose of approving the issuance of a subpoena or approving a committee resolution, seven members of the committee, at least two of whom are members of the minority party, constitute a quorum, except as provided in subsection (d).

(b) Subcommittee Meetings: At subcommittee business meetings, a majority of the subcommittee members, at least one of whom is a member of the minority party, constitutes a quorum for conducting business.

(c) Continuing Quorum: Once a quorum as prescribed in subsections (a) and (b) has been established, the committee or subcommittee may adjourn business.

(d) Reporting: No measure or matter may be reported to the Senate by the committee unless a majority of committee members cast votes in favor.

(e) Hearings: One member constitutes a quorum for conducting a hearing.

Rule 3. Hearings

(a) Announcements: Before the committee or a subcommittee takes any action, the chair of the committee or subcommittee shall make a public announcement and provide notice to members of the date, place, time, and subject matter of the hearing. The announcement and notice shall be issued at least one week in advance of the hearing, unless the chair of the committee or subcommittee, with the concurrence of the ranking minority member of the committee or subcommittee, determines that there is good cause to provide a shorter period, in which case the announcement and notice shall be issued at least twenty-four hours in advance of the hearing.

(b) Statements of Witnesses:

(1) A subcommittee may schedule testimony at a hearing of the committee or a subcommittee. The chair shall file 100 copies of the written testimony at least 48 hours before the hearing. If a witness fails to comply with this requirement, the presiding officer may preclude the witness' testimony. This rule may be waived in the interests of national security and for witnesses from the Federal Government.

(2) Any witness planning to use a hearing exhibit such as a chart, graph, diagram, or model must submit one identical copy of the exhibit (or representation of the exhibit in the case of a model) and 100 copies reduced to letter or legal paper size at least 48 hours before the hearing. Any exhibit described above that is not provided to the committee at least 48 hours prior to the hearing cannot be used for purpose of testifying to the committee and will not be included in the hearing record.

(3) The presiding officer at a hearing may have a witness confirm the oral presentation to a summary of the written testimony.

(4) Notwithstanding a request that a document be embargoed, any document that is to be discussed at a hearing, including, but not limited to, those produced by the General Accounting Office, Congressional Budget Office, Federal Reserve, a Federal agency, an Inspector General, or a non-governmental entity, shall be provided to all members of the committee at least 72 hours before the hearing.

Rule 4. Business Meetings: Notice and Filing Requirements

(a) Notice: The chair of the committee or a subcommittee shall provide notice, the agenda of business to be discussed, and the text of agenda items to members of the committee or subcommittee at least 24 hours before a business meeting. After the filing deadline, the chair shall promptly distribute all filed amendments to the members of the committee or subcommittee.

(b) Amendments: First-degree amendments must be filed with the chair of the committee or subcommittee at least 24 hours before a business meeting. During the filing deadline, the chair shall promptly distribute all filed amendments to the members of the committee or subcommittee.

(c) Modifications: The chair of the committee or the subcommittee may modify the notice and filing requirements to meet special circumstances, with the concurrence of the ranking member of the committee or subcommittee.

Rule 5. Business Meetings: Voting

(a) Proxy Voting:

(1) Proxy voting is allowed on all measures, amendments, resolutions, or other matters before the committee or a subcommittee.

(2) A member who is unable to attend a business meeting may submit a proxy vote on any matter, in writing, orally, or through personal instructions.

(3) A proxy given in writing is valid until revoked. A proxy given orally or by personal instructions is valid only on the day given.

(b) Subsequent Voting: Members who were not present at a voting and were unable to cast their votes by proxy may record their votes later, so long as they do so at the same business day and their vote does not change the outcome.

(c) Public Announcement:

(1) Whenever the committee conducts a rollcall vote, the chair shall announce the results of the vote, including a tabulation of the votes cast in favor and the votes cast against the proposition by each member of the committee.

(2) Whenever the committee reports any measure or matter by rollcall vote, the report shall include a tabulation of the votes cast in favor and the votes cast against the proposition by each member of the committee.

Rule 6. Subcommittees

(a) Regularly Established Subcommittees: The committee has four subcommittees:

(1) Transportation and Infrastructure; Clean Air and Nuclear Safety; Superfund, Waste Management, and Regulatory Oversight; and Fisheries, Water, and Wildlife.

(b) Membership: The committee chair, and consulting with the ranking minority member, shall select members of the subcommittees.

Rule 7. Statutory Responsibilities and Other Matters

(a) Environmental Impact Statements: No project or legislation may be approved by any executive branch agency may be approved or otherwise acted upon unless the committee has received a final environmental impact statement relative to it, in accordance with section 102(2)(C) of the National Environmental Policy Act, and the written comments of the Administration or the Environmental Protection Agency, in accordance with section 309 of the Clean Air Act. This rule is not intended to broaden, narrow, or otherwise modify the class of projects or legislative proposals for which environmental impact statements are required under section 102(2)(C).

(b) Project Approvals:

(1) Whenever the committee authorizes a project under Public Law 89–298, the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1965, Public Law 83–566, the Ashland and Portsmouth Harbor, Oregon, Navigation Act; or Public Law 86–249, the Public Buildings Act of 1959, as amended; the chair shall submit for printing in the Congressional Record, and the committee shall publish periodically as a committee print, a report that describes the project and the reasons for its approval, together with any dissent or individual views.

(2) Proponents of a committee resolution shall submit appropriate evidence in favor of the resolution.

(c) Building Prospectuses: The committee authorizes the General Services Administration to submit a prospectus, pursuant to section 7(a) of the Public Buildings Act of 1959, as amended, for construction (including construction of buildings for lease by the government), alteration and repair, or acquisition, the committee shall act with respect to the prospectus during the session in which the prospectus is submitted.

A prospectus rejected by majority vote of the committee or not approved in the Senate during the session in which it was submitted shall be returned to the General Services Administration and must then be re-submitted in order to be considered by the committee during the next session of the Congress.

(2) A report of a building project survey submitted by the General Services Administration to the committee under section 11(b) of the Public Buildings Act of 1959, as amended, may not be considered by the committee unless it was being a prospectus for its approval by committee resolution in accordance with section 7(a) of that Act. A prospectus described in the report may be considered for committee action only if it is submitted as a prospectus in accordance with section 7(a) and is subject to the provisions of paragraph 1 of this rule.

(d) Naming Public Facilities: The committee may not name a building, structure or facility for any living person, except former Presidents or former Vice Presidents of the United States, former Members of Congress over 70 years of age, or Federal judges who have taken senior status and are over 75 years of age.
TRIBUTE TO DR. JEFFERY P. HOLLAND

Mr. COCHRAN. Mr. President, I wish to commend Dr. Jeffery P. Holland for 37 years of service to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Dr. Holland will soon retire as the Director of the Research and Development and Director of the Corps Engineer Research Center, ERDC, headquartered in Vicksburg, Miss. He is capping his career with a highly successful management term leading one of the most diverse research organizations in the world—an organization that includes seven laboratories in four States with more than 2,000 employees, including more than 1,200 Federal engineers and scientists.

As director of R&D and chief scientist for the Corps since 2010, Dr. Holland has effectively promoted its research missions, including warfighter support, military infrastructure, the environment, water resources, and information technology. His work has enhanced our Nation’s knowledge and sparked innovation related to military and civilian missions of the Department of Defense and other agencies.

His leadership in research and development led to numerous achievements, among them increased soldier survivability and improved unit protection in combat zones. He distinguished himself within the Senior Executive Service with his work to establish excellence in human capital benchmarks, to develop an enterprise knowledge management and technology transfer plan for the Corps, and to develop a science and technology initiative to improve Defense Acquisition.

Over his long career, Dr. Holland earned a reputation as a strong leader and coalition builder, who empowered thousands of engineers and scientists to find new ways to solve problems. His career has resulted in significant and lasting contributions to the Department of the Army, the Department of Defense, the Vicksburg community, and the Nation.

His distinguished tenure and outstanding accomplishments are in keeping with the highest standards of civilian service and reflect great credit upon him, the Department of the Army, and the Department of Defense.

I am pleased to commend Dr. Holland for his many years of service and to wish him well in the years ahead.

PERSPECTIVE OF RURAL AMERICA TOWARD THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENT

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, there is a very good radio reporter in small-town Iowa named Robert Leonard, or “Dr. Bob,” as he is known, who interviews me every month. I recently read an opinion piece he wrote in the New York Times where he gives his take on the perspective of rural America toward the role of government. This perspective is often lost in policy debates in our Nation’s Capital. In this piece, Dr. Bob gives very thorough and intellectually honest commentary that more people should read.

I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD the New York Times article entitled, “Why Rural Americans Voted for Trump,” by Robert Leonard dated January 5, 2017. There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the New York Times, Jan. 5, 2017]
WHY RURAL AMERICA VOTED FOR TRUMP
(By Robert Leonard)

KNOXVILLE, I.A.—One recent morning, I sat near two young men at a coffee shop here whom I’ve known since they were little boys. Now about 18, they pushed away from the table, and one said, “Let’s go to work, Let the liberals sink or swim.” The other added, “They’re hard workers. As a kid, one washed dishes, took orders and swept the floor at a restaurant. Every summer, the other picked sweet corn for a farm stand by 4 a.m. and for grocery stores, and then went to work all day on his parents’ farm. Now one is a welder, and the other is in his first year at a state university on an academic scholarship. They are conservative, believe in hard work, family, the military and cops, and they know that abortion and socialism are evil, that Jesus Christ is our savior, and that Donald J. Trump will be good for America.

They are part of a growing movement in rural America that encompasses many young people in a culture—not just conservative news outlets but also home and church environments—that emphasizes contemporary conservative values. It views liberals as loathsome, misinformed and weak, even dangerous.

Who are these rural, red-county people who voted for Mr. Trump? I’m an Iowa Republican and a native Iowan report. I’ve never voted for a Democrat, and I’ve been a Republican since age 18. After the election, I began to understand how these conservative friends and neighbors I respect—and at times admire—can think so differently from me. How can over 60 percent of voters in my county could have chosen Mr. Trump.

Political analysts have talked about how ignorance, racism, sexism, nationalism, Islamophobia, economic disenfranchisement, and the decline of the middle class contributed to the popularity of Mr. Trump in rural America. They have pointed out the deeper cultural factors that shape the thinking of the conservatives who live here.

For me, it took a 2015 pre-caucus stop in Pella by J. C. Watts, a Baptist minister, who was a Republican congressman from 1995 to 2003, to begin to understand my neighbors—and most likely other rural Americans as well.

“The difference between Republicans and Democrats is that Republicans believe people are fundamentally good, that democrats see people as fundamentally good,” said Mr. Watts, who was in the area to campaign for Senator Rand Paul. “We are born bad,” he added. “We need to be taught to behave badly—they are born knowing how to do that. We become good by being reborn—born again.”

He continued. “Democrats believe that we are born good, that we are made in the image of God, that he created us. If we are our own God, as the Democrats say, then we need to look at something else to blame when things go wrong—Blame us.”

Mr. Watts talked about the 2015 movie theater shooting in Lafayette, La., in which two people were killed. Mr. Watts said that Republicans knew that the gunman was a bad man, doing a bad thing. Democrats, he added, “would look for other causes—that the gun was basically a bad thing. It was the guns, society or some other place where the blame lies and then they will want to control the guns, or something else—not the man.” Republicans, he said, “don’t need to look anywhere else for the blame.”

Hearing Mr. Watts was an epiphany for me. For the first time I had a glimpse of where many of my conservative friends and neighbors were coming from. I thought, no wonder Republicans and Democrats can’t agree on things like gun control, regulations, or the Social Security programs. We live in different philosophical worlds, with different foundational principles.

Overlap this philosophical perspective on the rural versus urban divide of history, economy and geography, and the conservative individual responsibility narrative becomes even more powerful. In my experience, the rural divided line is a red state versus blue state issue, it’s red county versus blue county, Rural Iowans have more in common with the rural residents of Washington State and New Mexico—and places I’ve also lived—than with the residents of Des Moines, Seattle and Albuquerque.

Look at a national map of which counties went for Democrats and which for Republicans: Overwhelmingly the blue counties are along waterways, where early river transportation encouraged the formation of cities, and surround state capitals. This is also where most investment in infrastructure and services is made. Rural Americans recognize that this is how it must be, as the cities are where most of the people are, yet it’s a sore spot.

In state capitols across America, lawmakers spend billions of dollars to take a few seconds off a city dweller’s commute to his office, while rural counties’ farm-to-market roads fall into disrepair. If the paved roads in my region are no longer maintained and are reverting to gravel. For a couple of generations now, services that were once scattered across rural areas have increasingly been consolidated in urban areas, and rural towns die. It’s all done in the name of efficiency.

In cities, firefighters and E.M.T.’s are professionals whose departments are funded by local, state and federal tax dollars. Rural America relies on volunteers. If I have a serious heart attack at home, I’ll be cold to the time the volunteer ambulance crew from a town 22 miles away gets here.

Urban police officers have the latest in computer equipment and vehicles, while small-town cops go begging.

In this view, blue counties are where most of our tax dollars are spent, where all of our laws are written and passed. To rural Americans, sometimes it seems our taxes mostly go to making city residents live better. We realize that the truth is more complex, particularly when it comes to social programs, but it’s the perception that matters—certainly to the way most people vote.

To make matters worse, jobs are continuing to move to metropolitan areas.
Small-town chamber of commerce directors and mayors still have big dreams, and use their perkiest grins and tax abatements to try to lure new businesses, only to see their hopes dashed, time and again. Many towns with a rich history and strong community pride are already dead; their citizens just don’t know it yet.

Many traditionally rural Republicans became supporters of Mr. Trump when he released his list of potential Supreme Court nominees who would allow the possibility of overturning Roe v. Wade. They also claim the liberal worldview creates unnecessary rules and regulations that cripple the economy and take away good jobs that may belong to them. Public schools and colleges are liberal tools of indoctrination that go after what we love and value most—our children.

Some of what liberals worry about they see as pure nonsense. When you are the son or daughter of a Carpenter or mechanic and a housewife or secretary who lives paycheck to paycheck, who can’t afford to send kids to college, as many rural residents are, white privilege is meaningless and abstract. It’s not just older people. The two young men who drive a younger generation with this view. When Ted Cruz campaigned in a neighboring town in 2015, I watched a couple of dozen grade-school pupils sat at his feet, as if they were at a children’s service at church. His campaign speech was nearly a sermon, and the children listened wide-eyed when he told them the world is a scary place, and it’s good to have people like him who are going to save them from the evils of President Obama, Hillary Clinton and their fellow Democrats.

While many blame poor decisions by Mrs. Clinton for her loss, in an environment like this, the Democratic candidate probably didn’t have the Democratic Party may not for generations to come. The Republican brand is strong in rural America—perhaps even strong enough to withstand a distasteful Trump presidency.

Rural conservatives feel that their world is under siege, and that Democrats are an enemy to be feared and loathed. Given the philosophical premises Mr. Watts presented as the difference between Democrats and Republicans, reconciliation seems a long way off.

TRIBUTE TO KEVIN CONCANNON

Mr. KING. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize and congratulate Kevin Concannon on his retirement and distinguished career. The fact that Kevin Concannon retired is not news—he has done this several times before, and each time, he moved onto more exciting and challenging positions.

In 2016 Kevin Concannon retired from the USDA as the Undersecretary of Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services after 8 years of service.

Kevin is a tireless advocate of people—all people. His work to assure that every effort was made to address hunger levels is an indicator of his compassion, understanding of both the issues and solutions, and his unwavering faith in the ability of this great country to care for those who are struggling—whether it is food insecurity or earlier in his career on mental health issues, long-term care, and childhood care.

At USDA, Kevin worked tirelessly to increase options for SNAP beneficiaries to access fresh local foods at Farmers Markets; he was determined that children should have more access to nutritious foods in WIC, schools, and childcare. While Kevin and I agree on that goal, I must add that, as a native Mainer, Kevin may have missed the mark on white potatoes fit into those meal plans.

Kevin Concannon came to USDA with an amazingly broad spectrum of experience. From 1987 to 1995, he served as the director of Oregon Department of Human Services. After having served commissioner of Maine Department of Mental Health and Correc-tions. In 1995, I was fortunate to be able to bring him back to his home State of Maine to serve as the commissioner of Maine’s Department of Human Services. At the time, I commented that he was the Dan Marino of commissioners and welcomed him back. I would point out that Dan Marino is now serving as the VP of the Dolphins, and I expect that, in the same way, Kevin Concannon will find ways to continue his public service—and that will benefit us all.

Kevin led efforts throughout his career to improve child welfare, expand Medicaid and child health insurance, integrate programs of public health and medical care, and improve systems for long-term care for elders and people with disabilities. Many of those efforts were national in scope, and he was selected by his peers to serve as the president of the American Public Welfare Association.

In every role, in every effort, Kevin Concannon has been an exemplary public servant and leader.

Margaret Chase Smith said it best: “Public service must be more than doing a job efficiently and honestly. It must be a complete dedication to the people and to the nation.” Kevin Concannon is the personification of total dedication, honesty, and determination to make the world a better place; that is the hallmark of his work each and every day.

Congratulations and best wishes to Kevin Concannon, and welcome home.

REMEMBERING ROBERT JUSTIN STEVENS

Mr. McCAIN. Mr. President, I rise today in fond memory of Robert Justin Stevens, a former staffer of mine who recently passed away—entirely too young—after a long, arduous fight with cancer.

Justin was exemplary in his desire to serve and his love for public policy and politics. He was a dedicated public servant who worked tirelessly to improve the lives of Americans. Over the last few years, Justin managed Federal policy and advocacy for homeland security, public safety, and military-related issues as legislative director with the National Governors Association.

Before Justin joined me, he worked tirelessly with me, and later with Senator Scott Brown, as a professional staff member at the Senate Homeland Security and Govern-
mental Affairs Subcommittee on Federal Financial Management, Government Information, Federal Services, and International Security. There, he helped us to identify and address waste, fraud, and abuse in government spending and financial improvement, and he did so with a relentless and insatiable drive.

During my 2008 Presidential campaign, Justin served as a senior advance team lead. It was in that context that I was first introduced to Justin’s boundless love of life and energy.

Justin also served as the director for candidate operations and advance for the Scott Brown for Senate 2012 campaign; a financial systems analyst with the EMCOR Group; and a Navy/NASA university faculty fellowship program manager with the American Society for Engineering Education, ASEE.

Justin never took his young life for granted. An avid runner and adventurous soul, Justin sought to improve himself every day taking advantage of a master’s in national security and strategic studies at the U.S. Naval War College, after having received a B.S. in business administration from the University of Florida and graduated East Lake High School. Also, unbowed by his continuing struggle with cancer and always filled with hope, Justin married the love of his life, Elizabeth.

Justin will be forever remembered for the joy he brought to the lives of his family, friends, and colleagues with his humor, energy, and selflessness. Throughout his young life, Justin always made sure that those closest to him knew how important they were to him.

Cindy and I extend our warmest condolences to Justin’s wife, Elizabeth; his mother Jean Nowakowski; his stepmother Karen Stevens, with whom Justin was exceptionally close; his siblings Bryan and Damon; his niece Magdalena and nephew Jackson. Thank you.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO MICHAEL ILITCH

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, today I wish to honor a champion for Detroit and for Michigan, Mike Ilitch. Everyone from Michigan knows his life story: the son of Macedonian immigrants, he founded Little Caesars Pizza, one of the largest pizza chains in the world, and rebuilt both the Detroit Tigers and the Detroit Red Wings into world class, winning franchises. He led the Red Wings to four Stanley Cups and brought the Tigers to the World Series twice.

The story of Mike Ilitch is the story of never doing anything halfway. He embodies the American dream; he served as a marine, built a business empire, and had an eye for perfection that led him to incredible success.

For him though, it wasn’t enough to be satisfied with success in business or
MESSAGE FROM THE HOUSE
At 12:03 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mr. Novotny, one of its reading clerks, announced that pursuant to 22 U.S.C. 6913, and the order of the House of January 3, 2017, the Speaker appoints the following Members of the House of Representatives to the Congressional-Executive Commission on the People’s Republic of China: Mr. Smith of New Jersey, Co-Chairman, Mr. Pittenger of North Carolina, Mr. Franks of Arizona, and Mr. Hultgren of Illinois.

The message further announced that pursuant to 22 U.S.C. 2761, and the order of the House of January 3, 2017, the Speaker appoints the following Member of the House of Representatives to the British-American Intparliamentary Group: Mr. Cole of Oklahoma.

The message also announced that pursuant to 22 U.S.C. 276f, and the order of the House of January 3, 2017, the Speaker appoints the following Members of the House of Representatives to the Mexico-United States Intparliamentary Group: Mr. McCaul of Texas, Chairman, Mr. Duffy of Wisconsin, Vice-Chairman, Mr. Hurd of Texas, and Mr. Pearce of New Mexico.

The message further announced that pursuant to 22 U.S.C. 276d, and the order of the House of January 3, 2017, the Speaker appoints the following Members of the House of Representatives to the Canada-United States Intparliamentary Group: Mr. Huizenga of Michigan, Chairman, Mr. Young of Alaska, Mr. Poliquin of Maine, and Mr. Cramer of North Dakota.

The message also announced that pursuant to section 4 of the Virgin Islands of the United States Centennial Commission Act (Public Law 114-224), and the order of the House of January 3, 2017, the Speaker appoints the following Members of the House of Representatives to the Virgin Islands of the United States Centennial Commission: Mr. MacArthur of New Jersey and Mrs. Love of Utah.

The message further announced that pursuant to 26 U.S.C. 2902, and the order of the House of January 3, 2017, the Speaker appoints the following Members of the House of Representatives to the United States Holocaust Memorial Council: Ms. Ros-Lehtinen of Florida, Mr. Zeldin of New York, and Mr. Kustoff of Tennessee.

The message also announced that pursuant to Executive Order No. 12131, and the order of the House of January 3, 2017, the Speaker appoints the following Members of the House of Representatives to the President’s Export Council: Mr. Tibshirani of Ohio, Mr. Kelly of Pennsylvania, and Mr. Reichart of Washington.

The message further announced that pursuant to 10 U.S.C. 5968(a), and the order of the House of January 3, 2017, the Speaker appoints the following Members of the House of Representatives to the Board of Trustees of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts: Mrs. Comstock of Virginia.

The message further announced that pursuant to section 603 of the Department of State Authorities Act, Fiscal Year 2017 (Public Law 114-323), and the order of the House of January 3, 2017, the Speaker appoints the following individual on the part of the House of Representatives to the Western Hemisphere Drug Policy Commission: Ms. Mary Bono of Washington, DC.

The message also announced that pursuant to 44 U.S.C. 2561, and the order of the House of January 3, 2017, the Speaker appoints the following Member of the House of Representatives to the National Historical Publications and Records Commission: Mr. Meadows of North Carolina.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS
The following bills and joint resolutions were introduced, read the first and second times by unanimous consent, and referred, as indicated:

By Mr. Hatch:
S. 351. A bill to amend the Higher Education Act of 1965 to provide for comprehen-
sive student achievement information; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. Corker (for himself, Mr. Cardin, Mr. Alexander, and Mr. Kain):
S. 352. A bill to award a Congressional Gold Medal to Master Sergeant Rodrick ‘Rodie’ EDMONDSON for his actions during World War II; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

By Ms. Collins (for herself and Ms. Cassidy):
S. 353. A bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to extend the rural add-
dition to Medicare home health benefit, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. Cotton (for himself and Mr. Perdue):
S. 354. A bill to amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to eliminate the Diver-
sity Visa Program, to limit the President’s discretion in setting the number of refugees admitted annually to the United States, to reduce the number of family-sponsored immi-
grants, to create a new nonimmigrant classification for the parents of adult United States citizens, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mrs. Shaheen (for herself and Ms. Collins):
S. 355. A bill to amend the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act to provide for a lifetime National Recreational Pass for any veteran with a service-connected dis-
ability; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

By Ms. Stabenow (for herself, Mr. Peters, Mr. Brown, and Mr. Franken):
S. 356. A bill to amend title XXI of the Soc-
ial Security Act to improve access to, and the delivery of, children’s health services through school-based health centers, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Fi-
nance.

By Mrs. Feinstein:
S. 357. A bill to direct the Secretary of the Interior to convey certain public lands in San Bernardino County, California, to the San Bernardino Valley Water Conservation District, and to accept in return certain ex-
changed non-public lands, and for other pur-
poses; to the Committee on Energy and Nat-
ural Resources.

By Mr. Casey (for himself, Mr. Isak-
son, Mr. Rubio, and Ms. Warren):
S. 358. A bill to establish a commission for jurisdictions permissive to terrorism financ-
ing, to build the capacity of partner nations to investigate, prosecute, and hold account-
able terrorist financiers, to impose restric-
tions on foreign financial institutions that provide financial services for terrorist orga-
nizations, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

By Mr. Nelson (for himself and Mr. Rubio):
S. 359. A bill to amend the Internal Rev-
ue Code of 1986 to provide a reduced excise tax rate for portable, electronically-aerated bait containers; to the Committee on Fi-
nance.

By Ms. Klobuchar (for herself, Mr. Test-
er, Mr. Durbin, Mr. Blumenthal, Ms. HIRONO, Mr. Venable, Mrs. Gillibrand, Mr. Merkley, Ms. Porteeez Masto, and Mr. Van Hollen):
S. 360. A bill to amend the Help America Vote Act of 2002 to require States to provide for same day registration; to the Committee on Rules and Administration.

By Mr. Cruz (for himself, Mr. Grass-
ley, and Mr. Lee):
S. 361. A bill to amend section 349 of the Immigration and Nationality Act to deem
The following concurrent resolutions and Senate resolutions were read, considered, and referred (or acted upon), as indicated:

By Mr. Daines (for himself, Mr. Tester, Mr. Lankford, Mr. Gardner, Mr. Franken, Mr. Hoeven, and Mr. Udall):

S. Res. 60. A resolution designating May 5, 2017, as the ‘National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Native Women and Girls’; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

APPROPRIATIONS RESOLUTIONS

H.R. Res. 63

The request of Mr. Moran, the name of the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. Inhofe) was added as a cosponsor of S. 63, a bill to clarify the rights of Indians and Indian tribes on Indian lands under the National Labor Relations Act.

S. 92

At the request of Mr. McCaul, the names of the Senator from Vermont (Mr. Leahy), the Senator from Maine (Mr. King), the Senator from Rhode Island (Mr. Whitehouse) and the Senator from Ohio (Mr. Brown) were added as cosponsors of S. 92, a bill to amend the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act to allow for the personal importation of safe and affordable drugs from approved pharmacies in Canada.

S. 102

At the request of Ms. Cantwell, the name of the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. Menendez) was added as a cosponsor of S. 102, a bill to direct the Federal Communications Commission to commence proceedings related to the resilience of critical communications networks during times of emergency, and for other purposes.

S. 109

At the request of Mr. Grassley, the name of the Senator from Maine (Mr. King) was added as a cosponsor of S. 109, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to provide for coverage under the Medicare program of pharmacist services.

S. 178

At the request of Mr. Grassley, the names of the Senator from Rhode Island (Mr. Whitehouse) and the Senator from Hawaii (Ms. Hirono) were added as cosponsors of S. 178, a bill to prevent elder abuse and exploitation and improve the justice system’s response to victims of elder abuse and exploitation cases.

S. 241

At the request of Mrs. Ernst, the name of the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. Cotton) was added as a cosponsor of S. 241, a bill to prohibit Federal funding of Planned Parenthood Federation of America.

S. 251

At the request of Mr. Wyden, the name of the Senator from Ohio (Mr. Brown) was added as a cosponsor of S. 251, a bill to repeal the Independent Payment Advisory Board in order to ensure that it cannot be used to undermine the Medicare entitlement for beneficiaries.

S. 253

At the request of Mr. Cardin, the name of the Senator from Ohio (Mr. Brown) was added as a cosponsor of S. 253, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to repeal the Medicare outpatient rehabilitation therapy caps.

S. 324

At the request of Mr. Hatch, the name of the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. Inhofe) was added as a cosponsor of S. 324, a bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to improve the provision of adult day health care services for veterans.

S. 326

At the request of Mr. Heller, the name of the Senator from Georgia (Mr. Perdue) was added as a cosponsor of S. 326, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide for the tax-exempt financing of certain government-owned buildings.

S. 338

At the request of Mr. Nelson, the names of the Senator from Minnesota (Ms. Klobuchar) and the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. Menendez) were added as cosponsors of S. 338, a bill to protect scientific integrity in Federal research and policymaking, and for other purposes.

S. 347

At the request of Mr. Coons, the name of the Senator from New York (Mrs. Gillibrand) was added as a cosponsor of S. 347, a bill to amend the Small Business Act and the Small Business Investment Act of 1958 to increase the percentage of loans guaranteed for small business concerns that are manufactured.

S.J. Res. 13

At the request of Mrs. Ernst, the name of the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. Cotton) was added as a cosponsor of S.J. Res. 13, a joint resolution providing for congressional disapproval under chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, of the final rule submitted by the Secretary of Health and Human Services relating to compliance with title X requirements by project recipients in selecting subrecipients.

S.J. Res. 18

At the request of Mr. Grassley, the names of the Senator from Alaska (Ms. Murkowski) and the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. Hoeven) were added as cosponsors of S.J. Res. 14, a joint resolution providing for congressional disapproval under chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, of the rule submitted by the Social Security Administration relating to Implementation of the NICS Improvement Amendments Act of 2007.

S.J. Res. 19

At the request of Mr. Strange, his name was added as a cosponsor of S.J. Res. 14, supra.

S.J. Res. 16

At the request of Mr. Wyden, the name of the Senator from Ohio (Mr. Brown) was added as a cosponsor of S.J. Res. 16, a joint resolution approving the discontinuation of the process for consideration and automatic implementation of the annual proposal of the Independent Medicare Advisory Board under section 1899A of the Social Security Act.

S. Res. 58

At the request of Ms. Warren, the name of the Senator from Rhode Island (Mr. Whitehouse) was added as a cosponsor of S. Res. 58, a resolution congratulating the New England Patriots on their victory in Super Bowl LII.

STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

By Mrs. Feinstein:

S. 357. A bill to direct the Secretary of the Interior to convey certain public lands in San Bernardino County, California, to the San Bernardino Valley Water Conservation District, and to accept in return certain exchanged non-public lands, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

Mrs. Feinstein. Mr. President, I am pleased to reintroduce the Santa.
Ana River Wash Plan Land Exchange Act. This legislation directs the Bureau of Land Management, BLM, to exchange land with the San Bernardino Valley Water Conservation District, the District, in San Bernardino, CA, as part of a regional land management plan. The bill is the culmination of years of collaboration between numerous Federal and State agencies, private industry, and municipalities representing mining, flood control, water supply and wildlife conservation, among other interests.

Included among the supporters of this land exchange are county of San Bernardino; city of Redlands; city of Highland; San Bernardino Water Conservation District; San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District: East Valley Water District; Endangered Habitats League; CEMEX Construction Materials Pacific; Robertson’s Ready Mix and Inland Action.

In 1993, representatives from this diverse group formed the Wash Committee to address mining issues in the upper Santa Ana River wash area. The role of the committee subsequently expanded in 1997 to consider the value of public land uses in the area, including natural resource conservation.

The Wash Committee developed a strategy that focused best uses for more comprehensive planning and not on property boundaries that would segment the area. The result is a forthcoming Land Management and Habitat Conservation Plan expected to cover 4,500 acres.

This land exchange will take place in a designated region within the Santa Ana Wash, at the junction of the Santa Ana River and Mill Creek. Currently, land within the Santa Ana Wash is owned by both the District and BLM.

The land parcels owned by the district are currently used for recharging the local groundwater aquifer through more than 77 basins and also provide critical Riversidian sage scrub habitat for a number of State and federally listed species. In addition, under this plan, new land would be set aside for conservation purposes near land already managed by BLM.

The exchange of land between the district and BLM will connect a current patchwork of separately owned land parcels into a consolidated open space for conservation purposes and will optimize the efficiency of mining operations and water conservation efforts.

The land transfer resulting from this legislation will lead to increased habitat protection, improved connectivity in the wildlife corridor, expanded groundwater recharge for water supply, and the future establishment of public accessible trails.

Additionally, the legislation will allow the continued use of land and mineral resources while maintaining the biological and hydrological resources of the area in an environmentally sensitive manner.

I want to applaud diverse members of the Wash Committee that worked together, including the cities of Highland and Redlands, East Valley Water District, the County of San Bernardino, Robertson’s Ready Mix, CEMEX, the San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District, and the San Bernardino Valley Water Conservation District, along with the Federal, State and local stakeholders, for their continued efforts on this plan.

This group has demonstrated that, while it takes significant time, funding, and cooperation, it is possible to simultaneously protect the environment and support local jobs, business, and community interests.

I would also like to thank my colleagues, Representatives PAUL COOK and PETE AGUILAR, for introducing similar legislation in the House.

I look forward to working with my colleagues in the Santa Ana River Wash Plan Land Exchange Act.

SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS

SENATE RESOLUTION 60—DESIGNATING MAY 5, 2017, AS THE “NATIONAL DAY OF AWARENESS FOR MISSING AND MURDERED NATIVE WOMEN AND GIRLS”

WHEREAS, according to a study commissioned by the Department of Justice, in some tribal communities, American Indian women face murder rates more than 10 times the national average murder rate; and

WHEREAS, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, homicide was the third-leading cause of death among American Indian and Alaska Native women between 10 and 24 years of age and the fifth-leading cause of death for American Indian and Alaska Native women between 25 and 44 years of age; and

WHEREAS little data exist on the number of missing American Indian and Alaska Native women in the United States; and

WHEREAS, on July 5, 2013, Hanna Harris, a member of the Northern Cheyenne Tribe, was reported missing by her family in Lame Deer, Montana; and

WHEREAS the body of Hanna Harris was found 5 days after she went missing; and

WHEREAS Hanna Harris was determined to have been raped and murdered, and the individuals accused of committing those crimes were convicted; and

WHEREAS the case of Hanna Harris is an example of many similar cases; and

WHEREAS Hanna Harris was born on May 5, 1992; Now, therefore, be it

RE SOLVED, That the Senate— (1) designates May 5, 2017, as the “National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Native Women and Girls”; and (2) calls on the people of the United States and interested— (A) to commemorate the lives of missing and murdered American Indian and Alaska Native women whose cases are documented and undocumented in public records and the media; and (B) to demonstrate solidarity with the families of victims in light of those tragedies.

ORDERS FOR TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 2017

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it adjourn until 10 a.m., Tuesday, February 14; that following the prayer and pledge, the morning hour be deemed expired, the Journal of proceedings be approved to date, and the time for the two leaders be reserved for their use later in the day; further, that following leader remarks, the Senate proceed to legislative session as under the previous order.

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

ORDER FOR ADJOURNMENT

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, if there is no further business to come before the Senate, I ask unanimous consent that it stand adjourned under the previous order, following the remarks of Senator RUBIO.

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

The Senator from Florida.

VENEZUELA

Mr. RUBIO. Mr. President, I come here this evening to speak on the issue of human rights in Venezuela and developments today in regard to all these issues. It is part of the broader effort my office has undertaken for a while now. It is the hashtag “Expression NOT Oppression” campaign.

Every week we come here to the floor of the Senate when in session and high-profile political prisoners and dissidents whose lives are being destroyed by oppressive regimes around the world.

Today, I will be highlighting the case of Leopoldo Lopez, a Venezuelan opposition leader who, 3 years ago this week, led peaceful demonstrations against the regime of Nicolas Maduro, and he was thrown in jail for it.

I am honored that this week we will be visited here in Washington by Lilian Tintori, Leopoldo’s wife and the mother of their two children. She is an incredibly brave woman who does not rest as she continues advocating for her husband’s release and the release of all political prisoners and continues to fight for a free and democratic Venezuela. So I want to recognize her as she visits Washington this week to ask for our government’s continued help.

Before I get into Leopoldo’s case, I want to take a few moments to talk about what is happening in our own Western Hemisphere and in Venezuela specifically.

For decades, the Western Hemisphere has been neglected by our foreign policy—sadly, by administrations of both
parties. As we see all over the world, when America fails to lead and engage on the world stage, bad actors emerge and they grow emboldened, while our enemies and adversaries rush to fill the void. We see democracy under assault and, when it run for and won an un-conventional third term, with his wife as the Vice President. Of course, we are growing increasingly familiar with the economic, social, and political disaster in Venezuela, which I shall elaborate on shortly.

By the way, I am also concerned about the impact of ongoing, rampant corruption in the region, which will undermine democratic governments and their institutions.

There is another major issue plaguing the region and threatening the security of the United States, and that is rising insecurity stemming from narco-terrorist drug cartels. In recent years, we have seen the worst of them—the FARC in Colombia—brought to their knees by the heroic efforts of the Colombian Government’s efforts. But Mexico and other countries throughout Central America continue to be threatened by organizations such as these.

A third problem in the region is the lack of economic opportunity. It is simply in America’s interest to have more prosperous neighbors, people to sell to and trade with. Ultimately, if people can’t earn enough money to feed their families and live in a safe neighborhood, they will either pick up and leave by any means necessary, including illegal immigration, or they will join drug gangs.

I know that too often there is a tendency to overlook what is happening in our own region. Some might say: I have enough problems here at home to worry about what is going on in other countries. But I hope that everyone remembers that all of this I have described and am about to talk about ultimately has direct consequences on us here in the United States and on our people. When you have a breakdown in any of these areas, people in these countries look to leave. The first place they look to is the freest and the most prosperous country in the region—in the world—the United States of America. Because it also happens to be a rich country, and they are completely bare. Everyday products, like toilet paper, are scarce, as is food.

The people of Venezuela are literally starving, so much so that a recent Miami Herald article from last week detailed how people have turned to hunting and eating flaminagos for food. By now, many of us have seen the images of people of Venezuela lining up with cardboard boxes at the hospital because these hospitals can no longer afford citric ibids.

So it comes as no surprise that the Venezuelan people, living in misery like this, would be desperate and aspiring for more than this disaster—would choose to speak up. They began to do so in full force 3 years ago this week. That is when Venezuelan students took to the streets to protest the violence and the scarcity of basic necessities due to the negligible, incompetent policies enacted by the Maduro regime. What began as a student protest soon became something bigger. It became a movement.

When the government responded to this movement with violence, and the peaceful demonstrations came to look like a combat zone: 43 people dead, 600 people injured, and approximately 3,400 people detained. Among those detained was Leopoldo Lopez, a Venezuelan opposition leader. The government of Maduro outrageously accused him of being responsible for all of this violence, and they threw him in jail and he has been there ever since. It has been about 1,100 days. A number into context, Washington Post reporter Jason Rezaian was held prisoner by the Iranian regime for 544 days. The Iranian hostage crisis of 1979 lasted 444 days. In September 2015, Leopoldo Lopez was sentenced to 13 years, 9 months, 7 days, and 12 hours for his participation in the protests. In jail he has suffered physical and psychological torture.

He is the father of two young children, and he is married to Lilian Tintori. He was the mayor of Caracas, and the leader of Voluntad Popular political party. He will be a critical part of building a
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freer, more democratic, and more prosperous Venezuela, but for now, sadly, he languishes in prison.

He is not alone either. In Venezuela today, there are at least 108 political prisoners. Like Leopoldo, they each have a lot to contribute to making Venezuela a better place, but the Venezuelan Government is robbing them of their freedom, and it is robbing their families of the memories every child and spouse deserves to create with their father, husband, and loved ones.

All of these political prisoners should be free. I have encouraged, publicly and privately, our new Secretary of State and the administration to make the freedom of these political prisoners their cause and to make it a priority. I know we are trying to work through our top-level Cabinet nominations here in the Senate, but we need to get people in place in other key roles throughout the administration; for example, our next Ambassador to the Organization of American States, where the United States needs to recommit to making its voice heard in that forum as a voice for democracy and human rights and for holding Venezuela’s regime accountable for violations of the Inter-American Democratic Charter.

I am also pleased that today the administration announced a new round of sanctions against a key Venezuelan official. Specifically, Venezuela’s Executive Vice President Tareck Zaidan El Aissami Maddah, El Aissami, as I talked about him earlier, and Venezuelan national Samark Jose Lopez Bello were sanctioned under the Kingpin Act for international narcotics trafficking.

Aissami’s primary front man was Samark Jose Lopez Bello, whom I just discussed. He was designated for providing material assistance, financial support or goods and services, and support of international narcotics trafficking activities and acting for or on behalf of the Venezuelan political prisoners, all in Venezuela who are fighting for a better life, we stand with you, and we will continue doing everything in our power to make sure your cause is supported by this Congress and by this administration.

TRIBUTE TO TIM TEBOW

Mr. RUBIO. Mr. President, finally, on a separate topic, I did want to take a moment to recognize someone I am proud to represent in the Senate. He is a fellow Floridian and a constituent by the name of Tim Tebow. By now, a lot of people know I am proud to be a University of Florida alum. So as a proud Gator fan, I have been rooting for Tim Tebow since he first stepped foot on campus in 2006.

He went on to win two national championships, becoming the first sophomore to win the Heisman Trophy, and in the process he rewrote the record books. When I was the Speaker of the Florida House of Representatives, we hosted the Gators championship team. One of my favorite memories of my time in State government was catching a pass from Tim Tebow No. 15—on the floor of the Florida House. It was not a great pass, but I caught it. The rules are a little different in the Senate. I wish it were OK to throw passes in here, but it was a great pleasure to be able to do that.

From the moment Tim arrived in Gainesville, we football fans saw that he was as good as advertised on the field, but we also started learning that as good a football player as he is, he is an even more extraordinary human being off the field.

He is a man to much has been given, whether it was the chance to be born to two great parents, an incredible support network, and of course God. He has been given much, and he has given back even more. We saw this once again this past Friday, when the Tim Tebow Foundation held its Night to Shine Initiative, an annual prom for special needs students from all over the world.

All told, 375 churches participated as Night to Shine hosts in all 50 States, 11 countries, and on 6 continents. There were 150,000 volunteers, and 75,000 special needs students were the guests of honor at events across the world. I encourage those of you here today or watching this or watching this in the future to Google search Night to Shine, to visit Tim Tebow’s Facebook page, or to see the hashtag ‘Night to Shine’ on Twitter. There you will see all of the photos that have been shared from Friday night’s events. You will see 15,000 young people with special needs having the time of their lives. You will see volunteers and teachers and especially parents overcome with joy and emotion at the sight of their children feeling as loved, as important, and as special as each and every one of them truly is.

Personally, I was very moved. So I wanted to take a few minutes this evening to recognize Tim Tebow, the Tebow Foundation, the churches and the volunteers who participated, and all of the incredible students and parents who inspire us every day. I know I speak on behalf of the entire Gator Nation—I should say the entire State of Florida—in saying that we are proud of Tim. We are even prouder of all he has done and continues to do.

With that, Mr. President, I yield the floor.

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL 10 A.M.
TOMORROW

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow.

The Senate, at 8:20 p.m., adjourned until Tuesday, February 14, 2017, at 10 a.m.

CONFIRMATIONS

Executive nominations confirmed by the Senate February 13, 2017:

DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY
STEVEN T. MUNCHENBERG, OF CALIFORNIA, TO BE SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
DAVID J. SHULIKIN, OF PENNSYLVANIA, TO BE SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.
HONORING JONATHAN R. ELAM
HON. JARED HUFFMAN
OF CALIFORNIA
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Monday, February 13, 2017

Mr. HUFFMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in recognition of Jonathan (Jon) Elam on the occasion of his retirement as General Manager of Tamalpais Community Services District (TCSD) after twelve years of stellar service. Starting in 2005, after a professional career in public works and city management, Mr. Elam was hired as General Manager of TCSD, where he served the residents of Tamalpais Valley and Marin County at large with distinction for a dozen years.

Under his leadership as General Manager, he reinvigorated the refuse collection program and created numerous new programs, including food waste collection and popular collection programs such as e-waste, batteries, printer ink cartridges, eyeglasses and medical disposal, as well as two paper shredding days per year for the TCSD service area. From upgrading park and recreation facilities, to installing new fire safe efforts, to working to ensure our agencies are compliant with EPA regulations, Mr. Elam established a productive track record for getting things done.

Mr. Elam’s commitment to environmental stewardship has been a common thread throughout his work and volunteer service. Not only did Mr. Elam serve as the Delegate for the California Climate Registry to the United Nations climate meetings, but he also has participated in a variety of local organizations, including the Carbon Cycle Institute, the San Anselmo Bike & Pedestrian Advisory Committee, and the Marin County Solid Waste JPA Advisory Council. He also served in a number of volunteer roles in the community including his recent role as the president of the Marin Conservation League.

Mr. Elam’s professional and civic contributions leave a lasting and positive legacy that will continue to benefit the local residents and regions for years to come. He is a true environmentalist, and I’m sure he will continue to fight the good fight in retirement.

Please join me in congratulating Mr. Elam on his retirement and expressing our deep appreciation for his long and exceptional career and outstanding civic engagement.

HONORING FRANK LUCIA’S 107TH BIRTHDAY
HON. JOSH GOTTHEIMER
OF NEW JERSEY
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Monday, February 13, 2017

Mr. GOTTHEIMER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to wish a very happy birthday to Frank Lucia, a treasured member of our North Jersey community. Frank recently celebrated his 107th birthday, a tremendous milestone in a very special life. Frank is an outstanding father and a true blessing to our Demarest community. I am sure he and his family had a wonderful time celebrating, dancing, and singing in Italian. Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring Frank and wishing him many more years of good health and happiness.

IN HONOR OF MR. GARY SCHNEIDERS
HON. ROD BLUM
OF IOWA
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Monday, February 13, 2017

Mr. BLUM. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor a remarkable teacher and citizen from Waterloo, Iowa. Mr. Gary Schneider has taught History, Social Studies, and Economics at Waterloo Columbus Catholic High School for 39 years. Over those 39 years, Mr. Schneider has made an enormous impact on the lives of his students and members of the community.

Mr. Schneider’s devotion goes beyond the classroom with his annual trip to the hallowed ground of Europe’s battlefields. This trip is no European vacation. Students walk the trenches of the Western Front, and explore battlefields with a twelve mile hike one day and twenty mile bike-ride another day. Prior to their departure, students are given reading assignments and must complete a 20 page essay. While in Europe, the students have nightly homework assignments. This annual trip is highly anticipated and one that many Waterloo Columbus students work toward their entire high school career.

The itinerary also includes visits to several American cemeteries and memorials honoring our fallen heroes, and a wreath-laying ceremony at the Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery. On the final day, the students visit the Normandy American Cemetery and Memorial where they clean the grave markers, plant an American Flag, and lay a rose on the grave of every lowan. At the end of the day, students lay their final wreath of the trip at Normandy as Taps sounds in the background.

Upon their return to Iowa, the students give presentations to their families, fellow students, and residents of Waterloo and Cedar Falls; with a special invitation extended to the local Veteran community.

Over the past 39 years, Mr. Schneider has shown his students what cannot be taught in a classroom—the meaning of sacrifice and love of country. Today, we honor his devotion that extends far beyond the classroom and helps to ensure the preservation of American values for generations to come.

IN RECOGNITION OF SHEILA STEPHENS’ RETIREMENT
HON. MICHAEL C. BURGESS
OF TEXAS
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Monday, February 13, 2017

Mr. BURGESS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Sheila Stephens, who is retiring from public service after 44 years with the City of Keller. Ms. Stephens started working for the city in 1972 as an assistant to the Water Department Manager. At that time, there were only 1,500 residents and 25 people employed by the city. She was appointed by the city council to be city secretary in 1977. During her 39 years in the position, Ms. Stephens demonstrated a level of professionalism and expertise in municipal government that she has exhibited with colleagues in the City of Keller as well as in other municipalities.

During her tenure, the City of Keller’s population has grown to over 44,000 people and city staff has expanded to 300 people to serve the needs of the community. In her almost four decades with the city, Ms. Stephens supervised 76 elections, recorded countless meetings, documented 2,900 deaths and 100 births in addition to fulfilling 2,960 open records requests. She has faithfully served under 12 mayors and 12 city managers providing needed continuity and depth. Current Keller Mayor Mark Matthews declared December 30, 2016 as “Sheila Stephens Day” to thank Sheila for the hard work and time she dedicated to her community.

I would like to express my appreciation for the 44 years of exemplary service Sheila Stephens gave to our community and extend best wishes upon her retirement. It is my privilege to represent the residents of Keller in the United States House of Representatives.

IN RECOGNITION OF REV. LEE WON SANG
HON. BARBARA COMSTOCK
OF VIRGINIA
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Monday, February 13, 2017

Mrs. COMSTOCK. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a moment to honor the life of Reverend Lee Won Sang, a Pastor Emeritus of the Korean Central Presbyterian Church in Virginia’s 10th District. Throughout his life, Rev. Lee was a respected leader in the community, served with admiral purpose, and placed a strong importance on education.

Rev. Lee was born in Manchuria, China in 1937. He began his higher education and path to service by earning a bachelor’s degree in Theology from Keimyung University and a master’s degree in Theology from Kyungbuk University. In the early 1970s, he moved to the United States to further his education, where he attended the Dallas Theological Seminary to study the Old Testament. After
graduating from that program, he started working for the Korean Central Presbyterian Church, but also was pursuing a Doctorate from the University of Pennsylvania. After retiring, he went on to receive a Ph.D. from the University of Wales in the U.K. at the age of 72, a true testament to the importance Rev. Lee placed on continuous education and growth.

Outside of his education, Rev. Lee is known for his 23 years of work and leadership at the Korean Central Presbyterian Church in Centreville, Virginia where I have frequently visited. The congregation has grown to almost 9,000 members at its main location, many of whom are my 10th District constituents. In addition to his work at the Korean Central Presbyterian Church, Rev. Lee took on many other projects to advance the church globally and help within his community. He founded the Central Missionary Fellowship (CMF) in 1988, which later evolved into SEED International, an organization which helped establish 12 overseas missionary groups. SEED International was the first Korean Missionary organization to become a member of the Mission NEXUS organization. Additionally, Rev. Lee founded Prassion, which is a SEED International affiliate and independent mission organization focused on prayer movement nationally and internationally.

In Washington, D.C., Rev. Lee helped establish the Washington Youth Foundation and even was afforded the opportunity to lead the opening prayer for the 107th U.S. Congress on October 10, 2002.

Mr. Speaker, I now ask that my colleagues join me in recognizing Rev. Lee’s years of community service. Today, we honor and celebrate the contributions the Reverend has made not just within the 10th District, but on a global level.

IN RECOGNITION OF THE WONDERFUL COMPANY

HON. DAVID G. VALADAO
OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Monday, February 13, 2017

Mr. VALADAO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today and am joined by Mr. MCCARTHY and Mr. COSTA of California, to commend The Wonderful Company for receiving the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation’s 2016 Corporate Citizenship Award for Best Community Improvement Program.

The Best Community Improvement Program Award honors businesses for the many ways they influence and enrich local communities. Companies from around the world compete for this award, making it an extraordinary acknowledgment of outstanding corporate social responsibility. The Wonderful Company was presented with the esteemed 2016 U.S. Chamber Foundation Corporate Citizenship Award for Best Community Improvement Program.

Since 1979, The Wonderful Company has quickly grown and become known worldwide for its almonds, bottled water, citrus fruits, flower bouquets, pistachios, pomegranates, and wine, The Vineyard and Winery at Lost Creek. The Wonderful Company has provided an exceptional example of corporate responsibility and we look forward to their future initiatives that continue to make the world a better place, one community at a time.

HONORING THE LIFE OF PETER VINCENT BELEZZUOLI

HON. JIM COSTA
OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Monday, February 13, 2017

Mr. COSTA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today along with my colleague Mr. VALADAO, to honor the life and achievements of Peter Vincent Belezzuoli. Peter passed away on December 15 at the age of 61. He will be remembered as a wonderful husband, father, grandfather, auctioneer, dairyman, and friend to all who knew him.

Peter was born on August 22, 1955 in Tulare, California to Pete and Louise Belezzuoli. In 1959, the Belezzuolis moved to Hanford, California after his father purchased Overland Stockyard. From a young age, Peter worked with his father to learn all aspects of the beef cattle industry. He graduated from Hanford High School in 1973. During his years at Hanford High he was a member of 4-H and FFA, in addition to playing on the basketball team. It was his father’s business partner Hoke Evetts that taught him the art of auctioneering. Following high school, Peter attended College of the Sequoias and graduated from Missouri Auction School as a Colonel in 1974.

Peter took over his father’s role at Overland Stockyard following Pete’s sudden death in 1983. Peter continued his father’s legacy through the passion he put into his work each and every day. Peter became very well known in the dairy cattle, and beef cattle sales industries both locally and throughout the country. He was a very innovative businessman, utilizing internet video auction capabilities, allowing buyers from all over the country to participate in auctions held in Hanford.

Peter had a number of hobbies that brought him joy. In his spare time he enjoyed visiting his home in Shell Beach, riding his pontoon boat through Shaver Lake and barbecuing for his many family and friends. Peter enjoyed giving back to the community he loved so dearly. He frequently used his talents as a skilled auctioneer for local charity groups, including the Kings County Fair and the Fresno Fair. He was also a lifelong member of St. Brigid Catholic Church in Hanford.

Peter is survived by his wife of 35 years, Lisa and their children Julie, Daniel and Douglass, their spouses and three grandchildren, Belezzuoli, Korban and Peter.

Mr. Speaker, I respectfully ask my colleagues in the U.S. House of Representatives to join Mr. VALADAO and myself in honoring the life of Mr. Peter Belezzuoli. He will be remembered as a man of great character, who valued his family above all else. His presence in the San Joaquin Valley and in the local dairy community will truly be missed. We join his family in honoring his life, service to his community and tremendous legacy he leaves behind.

IN RECOGNITION OF THE VINEYARD AND WINERY AT LOST CREEK

HON. BARBARA COMSTOCK
OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Monday, February 13, 2017

Mrs. COMSTOCK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate and commend my constituents, Todd and Aimee Henkle, on their victory in the 2017 San Francisco Chronicle Wine Competition. This win not only speaks to the hard work, entrepreneurship and expertise of Todd and Aimee Henkle, but also the growing and transitioning Virginia wine industry. In 1998 the two visited Bordeaux, France for their honeymoon, where they decided that one day they wanted to own their very own winery and vineyard. In 2007, corporate jobs brought them to northern Virginia, and they quickly became very impressed with what DC’s Wine Country had to offer. In 2012, they had an opportunity to buy a plot of land in Leesburg, between Route 15 and the Potomac River, from an old vineyard owner, and with Todd’s business background and Aimee’s passion for wine, The Vineyard and Winery at Lost Creek was born.

Since opening five years ago, their hard work has certainly come to fruition. They have been recognized nationally and most recently...
have won the Best in Class in the chardonnays priced between $26 and $29.99 category with their wine, Lost Creek Reserve Chardonnay.

In today's society, family owned small businesses are crucial to the future of our nation and my constituents in the 10th District are proud they call Loudoun County their home. It is families like the Henkles that help foster strong, local economies by establishing successful business practices that can be carried out for multiple generations.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in applauding Todd and Aimee Henkle on their great accomplishment and successful small business. I wish Todd, Aimee, and their children, Evan and Ryan, the best in their future endeavors.

HONORING THE LIFE OF KITTY MOON EMERY

HON. MARSHA BLACKBURN
OF TENNESSEE
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Monday, February 13, 2017

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Speaker, there are those who live their lives with distinct intentionality. They have the ability to inspire their communities by bringing innovation and change in their relentless pursuit to make the world a better place. They use their creativity to bring beauty and encourage leaders to reach their fullest potentials. I am saddened by the loss of my friend, Kitty Moon Emery. I was fortunate to have met her early in my career and always appreciated her advice and counsel as she was one of those special leaders.

Kitty was a Nashville native who had an enduring love for Tennessee and our country. She worked as one of only two female press secretaries in the Senate under Senator Bill Brock. She later went on to become the Assistant National Director of Advertising for the presidential campaign of Ronald Reagan. Kitty was eventually appointed by Secretary Henry Kissinger to the United Nations Advisory Committee. In these spheres she broke many barriers by filling positions that were not traditionally held by women.

Kitty was a treasured advisor to many. She served as the chairman for the Metro Sports Authority and played a vital role by being on many boards including the Country Music Association, the CMA Foundation, the Rotary Club of Nashville, and Leadership Music. More recently she founded the consulting firm Kitty Moon Enterprises to support leaders in the Middle Tennessee Region.

Kitty’s presence in Nashville will be deeply missed. Her love and devotion to community brought people together and made Tennesseans a much better place to live. I rise today to celebrate her lasting achievements and ask my colleagues to join with me in honoring her life.

RECOGNIZING FANNIN COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY

HON. DOUG COLLINS
OF GEORGIA
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Monday, February 13, 2017

Mr. COLLINS of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the Fannin County Public Library and to commend its Food for Fines program. The Fannin County Public Library started this initiative a decade ago, and this year’s program runs through the end of the month. Food for Fines is a smart, creative way to give back to the community. It allows individuals with overdue fines to donate non-perishable food items in lieu of a fee. For every food item donated, the library forgives one dollar of fines.

All of the donations from this food drive will go to support the Fannin County Public Library staff and library patrons have made in their community. It is a privilege to represent such civic-minded individuals and to bring opportunity to their neighbors. The Fannin County Public Library’s Food for Fines program is an example of the inclusive service I see throughout Northeast Georgia.

IN HONOR OF THE HILLSBORO TOWN EXPANSION

HON. BARBARA COMSTOCK
OF VIRGINIA
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Monday, February 13, 2017

Mrs. COMSTOCK. Mr. Speaker, I rise to acknowledge my constituent, the Honorable Roger Vance, Mayor of the Town of Hillsboro, Vice Mayor Steve Morgart, Council Member at Large John Dean, Council Member at Large Joseph Gertig, Council Member at Large Amy Newton Marasco, Council Member at Large Matt Parse, and the Town Clerk, Sherry Vance on their historic boundary line expansion. Today, we honor and celebrate the town’s history as one of Loudoun County’s most important assets.

INTRODUCTION OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA COURTS AND PUBLIC DEFENDER SERVICE VOLUNTARY SEPARATION INCENTIVE PAYMENTS ACT

HON. ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON
OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Monday, February 13, 2017

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, today, I introduce the District of Columbia Courts and Public Defender Service Voluntary Separation Incentive Payments Act. The bill, which passed the House in the 114th Congress, would make a small but important change to the authorities of the District of Columbia Courts (D.C. Courts) and the Public Defender Service for the District of Columbia (PDS), placing these entities in the same position as their federal counterparts for more effective management and operation.

The bill would give the D.C. Courts and PDS the same authority federal agencies and federal courts already have to offer voluntary separation incentive payments, or buyouts, to their employees. The fiscal year 2016 omnibus bill already gives D.C. Courts buyout authority, but my bill would make this authorization permanent, and would extend it to PDS in addition to the D.C. Courts. Buyouts would allow the D.C. Courts and PDS to respond to future administrative and budget needs, and would provide the flexibility to extend buyout offers to their employees.

The U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) has determined that voluntary separation incentive payments may be made only where statutorily authorized. Federal agencies and federal courts already have the statutory authority to offer buyouts, and PDS and the D.C. Courts need the same express authority in order to manage their workforce as budget conditions and needs change.

I urge my colleagues to support this important legislation.

IMPORTANCE OF A U.S.-U.K. TRADE DEAL

HON. TED POE
OF TEXAS
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Monday, February 13, 2017

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, this past summer British citizens chose to reclaim their independence. In a landmark referendum they decided to leave the European Union and take charge of their economic future. Now, in the wake of Brexit, it is important that we preserve, as Winston Churchill first put it in 1946, the special relationship between the U.S. and the U.K.
Our two nations are bound together by a shared history, a common language, and a friendship that reaches back hundreds of years. Now our two countries got off to a rough start. The Crown opposed our independence and then burned the Capitol and the White House in the War of 1812. But Great Britain has been our oldest enemy, our oldest ally. For over two hundred years our two countries have partnered together to preserve peace and security. From the trenches of WWII to the mountains of Afghanistan, our men and women have spilt blood together on the battlefield. Our relationship is deep and special.

A trade deal represents yet another opportunity to deepen our relationship. The previous Administration threatened to put the U.K. “at the back of the queue” for a trade deal. But that kind of snub to our greatest ally is exactly the opposite of what we should be doing. A bilateral agreement will enhance the flow of commerce and boost the welfare of our economies. Trade deals that do not help the United States are things of the past. A bilateral trade agreement can be in both our interests.

The U.K. shares many values and business practices with the U.S. Our similarities will help ensure a smooth negotiation process as neither side will be forced into making hard concessions, because British workers are paid at about the same rate as Americans, we do not have to worry about American manufacturers moving factories to the English countryside. Jobs will not be sent overseas. We will be able to streamline regulations and reduce barriers to trade. That means more consumers for U.S. goods. Our two countries already enjoy close economic ties. No country receives more investment from Britain than the United States. And the United States is the largest investor in the United Kingdom.

In my home state of Texas, the U.K. is the number one foreign direct investor. It sends over $2.5 billion dollars a year into the Texas economy. This investment has helped to bring more than 87,000 jobs to hardworking Texans. Texas is a great place to do business. The British people see that. But these kinds of gains are not limited to Texas alone. Every day over a million Americans go to work for British companies based in the U.S. It is critical that we turn our backs on trade. Houston is dependent on the free flow of goods. Over 50 percent of the city’s economy is based on the Port of Houston. But that does not mean the United States has to give away the farm to get a trade deal done. We can have free and fair trade. We can level the playing field for American businesses, give American goods better access to consumers around the world, and increase American jobs.

The new Administration has expressed its preference for bilateral deals over more cumbersome multilateral agreements. A bilateral deal with the U.K. is a great place to start. Once the U.K. is off the back of the shackles of the EU’s restrictive trade policies, there will be better opportunities for job growth and investment.

A free trade deal between the United Kingdom and the United States will be an important step in our dedication to promote economic freedom. Together we can come up with the gold standard of trade deals. This deal could serve as a model for future deals or maybe even opened up for other nations to join.

The geopolitical effects of a trade deal may be just as important as the deal itself. This deal can send a message to those opposed to our shared values of freedom and liberty that the United States and the United Kingdom are standing strong together.

And that’s just the way it is.

IN RECOGNITION OF VED VENGSARKER ACHIEVING A PERFECT SCORE ON THE AMERICAN COLLEGE TEST

HON. BARBARA COMSTOCK
OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Monday, February 13, 2017

Mrs. COMSTOCK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Briar Woods High School’s very own Ved Vengsarker on achieving a perfect score on the American College Test (ACT)—a respected college admissions test in the United States. Ved, now a high school junior, began studying diligently last summer in preparation, reviewing his ACT books during the week and taking several practice tests each weekend. His perfect score is not only a testament to his hard work and dedication, but also to the exemplary teachers and faculty at Briar Woods High School located in Ashburn, Virginia who helped cultivate Ved’s intellectual intrigue.

Each year less than one-tenth of a percent of the ACT test-taking population receive a perfect score. Ved is a self-driven individual who understands the need to prepare early and continue practicing until you achieve your goal. It is young, hardworking students like Ved who will help Loudoun County, Virginia’s 10th District, and even the United States grow tremendously in the future.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that my colleagues join me in congratulating Ved Vengsarker for achieving a perfect score on the ACT test. It is a privilege to represent him, and I wish him all the best in his future endeavors.

HONORING THE SERVICE OF BOBBIE SUMMERS

HON. JIM COSTA
OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Monday, February 13, 2017

Mr. COSTA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the recent achievements for her outstanding work with the Social Security Administration (SSA) and to congratulate her on her retirement after 40 years of dedicated service. Bobbie began her career with the Social Security Administration in 1976. She was hired for a Claims Representative position in Hanford through the outstanding Scholar Program. After her time in Hanford, Bobbie worked as a Claims Representative in Southeast Fresno, West Fresno, Fresno Downtown and as Operations Supervisor for the Madera SSA office. In 1984, Bobbie was promoted to an Operations Supervisor position in the Fresno SSA office. In 1990, she was promoted to Branch Manager in Carmel. Bobbie returned to Fresno in 1993 as an Operations Supervisor. In 2003, Bobbie was accepted for the Regional Leadership Development Program where she worked in the SSA Office of Public Service and Operations Support on the SDW ramp up initiative. In 2004, she was promoted to Assistant District Manager in the Fresno office, and later that year, she accepted a yearlong detail to the SSA Office of Public Service and Operations Support where she worked on the cross program recovery project. Bobbie was promoted to Level 1 District Manager position in the Southeast Fresno SSA office in 2005 where she served until 2008. In 2008, she was given a detail in the SSA Central Office to assist with the transition for the newly formed SSA Office of Disability Determinations Division. She returned to her Level 1 District Manager position in 2009.

Bobbie’s ongoing hard work and dedication resulted in many awards throughout the years. Some of the awards she received are: The Commissioner’s Citation, Deputy Commissioner’s Citation, Regional Citation and Commissioner’s Team Award.

In is with great pleasure that I applaud Bobbie Summers for her many years of tireless work on behalf of the U.S. Government.

Mr. Speaker, it should be noted that in addition to her countless gifts to the Social Security Administration and our community, Bobbie has been a true champion for my constituents. In my office, a majority of our constituent casework involves the Social Security Administration. These are sensitive cases that can sometimes take a great deal of time to resolve. One member of my Fresno staff, Ms. Kelly Gill has worked closely with Bobbie Summers on Social Security cases over twenty years and proudly recollects Bobbie always being available to discuss cases and work together on issues of concern. I ask my colleagues to join me today in recognizing the commitment, dedication and success of Bobbie Summers and wish her well as she embarks on new endeavors.

HONORING COWGIRL CREAMERY

HON. JARED HUFFMAN
OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Monday, February 13, 2017

Mr. HUFFMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Cowgirl Creamery and its founders, Sue Conley and Peggy Smith, in honor of the 20th anniversary of this artisan cheese company, which has over the past two decades been a leader in the evolution of the local, state, and national artisan cheese market.

Opened in 1997, the idea of Cowgirl Creamery began years earlier when Sue and Peggy, each with twenty years of culinary experience, settled in Point Reyes Station in West Marin, California. Inspired by local agricultural matriarchs on both sides of the Mississippi, Sue and Peggy decided to combine their culinary expertise and environmental stewardship ethos to create an artisan cheesemaking business. Several years after purchasing a barn in downtown Point Reyes Station and after researching local cheesemaking traditions and acquiring the permits to open Tomales Bay Foods as a distribution company, Cowgirl Creamery was opened.
Mr. LYNCH. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commemorate the 15th Anniversary of Beacon Hill Village in Boston. It’s an anniversary with significance for the whole Nation and they are to be congratulated on reaching this special milestone.

Mr. Speaker, Beacon Hill Village was created by, and for, neighbors determined, as they aged, to continue to thrive and grow in the neighborhood they loved. There was no ready model. A core goal of Beacon Hill Village members was keeping independent. There isn’t much choice about growing old, but there are choices about where and how to do so. A little help with the ordinary business of living is always welcome, yet Beacon Hill Village’s philosophy was from the start all about choice. People are quite capable of figuring out what they need and when.

But the revolution in aging our nation is experiencing also presented an extraordinary opportunity beyond better managing daily life. Most of our nation’s elders will live many years after retirement. Their goals for those years are to be productive, engaged and open to new people, new experiences, and new ideas. Its members quickly and clearly understood how Beacon Hill Village could advance those goals.

Almost from the start, word of Beacon Hill Village’s success serving its own members spread. More and more communities, from near and far, were soon flocking Beacon Hill Village for help in creating villages of their own. In response, just a few years after it opened in 2002, Beacon Hill Village was the chief force behind the creation of the Village to Village Network, dedicated to helping communities everywhere design their own villages reflecting local needs and using local resources. Today that Network has more than 350 open and developing villages serving members numbering over 40,000. These villages are all across the nation, in 45 states and the District of Columbia, and in six countries abroad.

Mr. Speaker, I am convinced, that the best days of Beacon Hill Village, the Village to Village Network and the villages of the nation, are still ahead of them. Their message is simple, forceful and optimistic: aging should be to each individual’s own design. No one, as they age, should be told where to go or how to live. Villages can help their members take responsibility for their own aging and make choices resulting in vibrant, purposeful lives lived on their own terms, in their own homes and communities. With this message the village movement is changing how elders experience aging and how our society perceives aging. Every American benefits from these changes.

On February 13th in Boston, Dr. Atul Gawande, whose celebrated 2016 book Being Mortal: Medicine and What Matters in the End continues to sustain a lively national conversation about living well and ending well in old age, will speak at a public forum to salute and conclude Beacon Hill Village’s fifteenth-year celebrations. Being Mortal has generous things to say about how Beacon Hill Village and villages inspired by it provide a valuable model for such living and ending well. Dr. Gawande’s remarks will be simulcast nationally to more than 150 villages where more than 5000 will participate remotely in the celebration.

One of the great issues worldwide today is how to support and care for aging populations. By 2030, twenty percent of our nation’s population will be over 65, an estimated 83 million people. The numbers are even larger in many countries around the world. The Village concept and Dr. Gawande’s profound understanding of the importance of community and choice offer valuable insights and solutions for this challenging phenomenon.

Mr. Speaker, in recognition of the positive impact that the village movement has had on the experience of aging, I ask that my colleagues join me in saluting Beacon Hill Village and villages throughout the nation by designating Monday, February 13, 2017 as National Villages Day.
Over 40 years ago, the Old Stone School in Hillsboro was saved from being demolished by the HCA, a non-profit comprised of area residents and alumni. Since 1976, the HCA has made it their mission to preserve and restore the Old Stone School and to identify and restore other historic landmarks in the Hillsboro area. More recently, the organization began to operate under the name Friends of the Old Stone School, as they placed an even stronger focus on the landmark building. In 2006, the town government took over full management of the building from the HCA.

Now, with the love and support of the community in good hands, the HCA, under the new name, the Short Hill Historical Society, is planning to expand their restoration efforts immensely. The group contributed an estimated $15,000 worth of furniture and equipment to the school and also provided over $19,000 for management and operations.

This year, the Short Hill Historical Society has planned a plethora of events and concerts to raise money and also garner support for new restoration projects. It is strong, community-focused group, the Short Hill Historical Society, that will help Western Loudoun County retain its rich history, and I look forward to their future projects and endeavors.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating the Short Hill Historical Society for their years of dedication and hard work. I wish them all of the best in their future endeavors.

IN RECOGNITION OF RICHMOND FREE PRESS
HON. A. DONALD MCEACHIN
OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Monday, February 13, 2017

Mr. MCEACHIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize the Richmond Free Press, an independent, black-owned, weekly newspaper, that recently celebrated their 25th anniversary. The paper was founded by Raymond H. Boone, a former Howard University associate professor and reporter who tirelessly served as editor and publisher until his death in June 2014.

The Richmond Free Press serves as a voice for all people and since its inception has altered the media landscape of Richmond, the former Capital of the Confederacy. Their mission is to, "provide solid, fair-minded news stories and informed opinion to empower its readers to motivate them to take enlightened action on important issues that touch their lives."

Positively impacting the community through news stories and editorials, the Richmond Free Press is instrumental in providing honest news stories and editorials, the Richmond Free Press does not only chronicle history, it has made history for the last 25 years.

INTRODUCTION OF THE FEDERAL EMPLOYEES PAID PARENTAL LEAVE ACT
HON. CAROLYN B. MALONEY
OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Monday, February 13, 2017

Mrs. CAROLYN B. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Speaker, today, I am proud to reintroduce the Federal Employees Paid Parental Leave Act, bipartisan legislation to grant six weeks of paid parental leave to hardworking federal employees.

In the Presidential campaign, both candidates voiced strong support for a workplace that makes sense for hardworking parents. This bipartisan legislation is a great place to start.

The federal government is our nation’s largest employer, and should be setting the trend for commonsense, family-friendly policies. Paid parental leave would give a boost to the almost two million people who work for the federal government across the country, and would help our government recruit and retain a talented workforce.

The growing costs of caring for a new child, the expensive diapers, bottles, baby carriers, they all add up. And the USDA found that in the first two years a new child can cost families an average of nearly $13,000. Paid leave makes sure that families can start out on the right foot, not forcing them into debt, or making devastating choices between caring for a child and the paycheck they need.

I am proud that versions of this legislation have passed the House twice before, and urge my colleagues to support this commonsense proposal.

HONORING MS. DONNA MARIE GLAPION, QUEEN ZULU 2017
HON. CEDRIC L. RICHMOND
OF LOUISIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Monday, February 13, 2017

Mr. RICHMOND. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the achievements of Ms. Donna Marie Glapion, a native of my hometown of Houma, Louisiana. Ms. Glapion has been a part of a research team at Tulane University School of Medicine as the Administrator of the Hematology/Oncology Section.

In closing Mr. Speaker, the hard work and dedication of Ms. Donna Marie Glapion gives us hope and promise for the future of our city and I wish to congratulate Ms. Glapion on her coronation as Queen Zulu and wish her a successful reign in 2017.

HONORING MS. DONNA MARIE GLAPION, QUEEN ZULU 2017
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Monday, February 13, 2017

Mrs. CAROLYN B. MALONEY of New York. Mrs. COMSTOCK. Mr. Speaker, I rise to acknowledge my constituent, Mr. John S. Sedlak, who will be departing from his position as Technical Advisor in the Office of Commercial Vessel Compliance this month after a 20-year career of distinguished public service.

Mr. Sedlak has made tremendous contributions to his community and country as both an active duty serviceman in the U.S. Coast Guard and as a civilian employee.

Mr. Sedlak graduated from the U.S. Coast Guard Academy in 1974, beginning a long career in active duty service that included assignments to a Coast Guard Cutter, multiple Marine Safety Offices, and a Staff Engineer position at the Coast Guard Headquarters. After serving as Staff Engineer, Mr. Sedlak earned a degree in Mechanical Engineering at the Naval Post Graduate School of Monterey, California and served his final tour of active duty as the Electrical Branch Chief handling operations at the Coast Guard Marine Safety Center.

Following his departure from active duty service, Mr. Sedlak assumed his current position as Technical Advisor in the Office of Commercial Vessel Compliance in 2002. As one of only three Technical Advisors in CVC and an internationally recognized expert in his field, Mr. Sedlak developed national policy in a number of passenger ships and offshore vessel areas. While developing these policies, Mr. Sedlak routinely collaborated with other Federal Agencies and represented the Coast...
Mr. Costa. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the life of Roselyn Baker, who passed away January 5, 2017. Roselyn was a wonderful mother, wife, and friend, whose presence will be greatly missed.

Roselyn was born in Fresno, California in 1926 to Kourken and Varsenig Shabaghtian, both survivors of the Armenian Genocide. The family initially lived in the heart of downtown Fresno before relocating to San Francisco when Roselyn was a young child. There her parents operated several grocery stores. You would frequently find Roselyn by her father’s side at the stores, assisting with deliveries and getting to know the customers.

Roselyn attended Girls High School in San Francisco, where her love of classical music was born and fostered by her teachers. Roselyn graduated high school in 1944 and enrolled in San Francisco City College. Roselyn began working in the ladies glove department for Roos Brothers and Ransahoff’s Department Stores in downtown San Francisco.

Roselyn met the love of her life George F. Baker, a veteran who was attending the College of Physicians & Surgeons Dental School on the GI Bill. George and Roselyn were married in 1947 at St. John’s Armenian Apostolic Church in San Francisco. The couple moved to Fresno, where George would open a dental practice in the Tower District. Roselyn served as the office manager and dental assistant in her husband's practice. Roselyn was a devoted mother, frequently serving as a volunteer teacher's aide. Roselyn enjoyed reading books and keeping up with current events. She was an avid San Francisco Giants fan, rejoicing when the team finally won the World Series in 2010.

Roselyn is survived by her two devoted children, Dr. Timothy G. Baker and Bethany R. Baker, in addition to family and close friends. Timothy practices dentistry in the same building in the Tower District as his father.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join me in extending our sincerest thanks to Mr. Sedlak for his service to our nation and all the work he has done for the CVC.
Mr. Speaker, I am proud to recognize Dr. Fran Kaplan on her 70th birthday. She has left a legacy of advocacy and compassion. She is a true trailblazer and my friend for nearly 40 years. And now, Fran has returned to direct anti-racism organizing and education, her first true calling, at ABHM and has finally come home. The citizens of the Fourth Congressional District, the State of Wisconsin and the nation have benefited tremendously from her dedicated service. I am honored for these reasons to pay tribute to Dr. Fran Kaplan.

RECOGNIZING BLACK HISTORY MONTH

HON. ADRIANO ESPAILLAT
OF NEW YORK
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Monday, February 13, 2017

Mr. ESPAILLAT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Black History Month, also known as African American History Month during this month of February. This is an opportunity to celebrate the countless contributions that African Americans have made to our great nation throughout its history. First recognized in 1926 by Dr. Carter G. Woodson, the Black History Month allows us to reflect on the collective strength that diversity continues to bring to our great nation today and the many days to come.

New York’s thirteenth congressional district has a rich history that celebrates the contributions of African Americans to New York City, and the legacy of African American history in the United States. The Apollo Theater, opened in 1914, introduced the world to the transcendent voice and talent of Ella Fitzgerald, James Brown, and Lauryn Hill. The Audubon Ballroom where the late Malcolm X (Malcolm El Hajj Malik el-Shabazz) was assassinated now stands in memoriam to his legacy and is also a venue for community organizing.

Even after his passing, in his name the Malcolm X Memorial and Educational Center has become a landmark for my constituents and visitors alike seeking reflection and enrichment.

Known to locals and across the country, Harlem’s famous Sylvia’s Restaurant founded by Sylvia Woods—the Queen of Soulfood—for 55 years stands proudly as a window to the rich culinary history of African Americans throughout the country. These institutions are cultural landmarks that help tell the story of the African American experience that runs throughout communities across the land.

During this month of reflection, a representative of New York’s 13th district, it is incumbent on me to highlight and celebrate the history of my predecessors. That history begins with the Honorable Congressman Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. Congressman Powell was the first African American to represent any district of New York in the U.S. Congress.

First elected in 1944, Congressman Powell served the Harlem community for more than two decades during which he worked tirelessly to raise the minimum wage, supported education and training for the hearing impaired, bolstered vocational training and endeavored to provide continued aid to elementary and secondary schools and public libraries.

His presence as an African-American in the U.S. House of Representatives was not just poignant for symbolism’s sake. In 1951, Congressman Powell rose to become the Chairman of the House Committee on Education and Labor. For his efforts, President Lyndon B. Johnson in 1966 wrote that Congressman Powell’s record “represents the successful reporting of 49 pieces of bed-rock legislation. And the passage of every one of these bills attests to your ability to get things done.”

President Johnson continued “Even now, these laws which you so effectively guided through the House are finding abundant reward in the lives of our people.” Most striking was his affirmation that “only with progressive leadership could so much have been accomplished by one committee in so short a time. I speak for millions of Americans who benefit from these laws when I say that I am truly grateful.”

Congressman Powell’s example and work to build Harlem (formerly New York 22nd district) and provide opportunities for the African American community remain enshrined today. Most well-known is Adam Clayton Powell Jr. Boulvard running through Harlem and the Adam Clayton Powell Jr. State Office Building in Harlem. While these share his name, his contributions reached beyond Harlem. Congressman Powell successfully coordinated the merger of Freedman’s Hospital locally in Washington, D.C. Howard University has the largest concentration of black faculty and student scholars in the country and its College of Medicine stands today as a proud institution whose legacy contributing to African American society will continue to stand the test of time.

To my new colleagues, the Honorable Charles B. Rangel is no stranger to any of you. He has represented Harlem for almost 50 years beginning in the New York State Legislature and then in the U.S. House of Representatives. In this chamber, Congressman Rangel was a founding member of the Congressional Black Caucus. For over 40 years, this esteemed organization has served to “promote the public welfare through legislation designed to meet the needs of millions of neglected citizens.” Where Congressman Powell rose to chair the House Committee on Education and Labor, Congressman Rangel in his own right rose among his peers to chair the House Committee on Ways and Means and where his chairmanship represents the “most powerful gavel ever held by an African American in Congress.”

Congressman Rangel’s place in African American history transcends Harlem and New York City. In 1965 Congressman Rangel joined Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in the historical march from Selma, AL to Montgomery, AL to advance equal civil rights for African Americans. The poignancy of this grand act over those five days guided a career advocating for nondiscrimination, developing urban neighborhoods and protecting veterans like himself from disfranchisement.

Mr. Speaker, I am honored to have been given the opportunity share with my colleagues the legacies of African American Heritage Month and time to celebrate the contributions of African Americans in New York’s 13th Congressional District.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. LYNN JENKINS
OF KANSAS
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Monday, February 13, 2017

Ms. JENKINS of Kansas. Mr. Speaker, I was privileged to sign Roll Call votes 86 and 87 on the evening of February 13, 2017. I would have voted in favor of H.R. 244 which encourages the hiring and contributes to the well-being of our veterans, as well as provide community and charitable services supporting the veteran community. Lastly, I would have voted in favor of H.R. 974 which would boost veteran employment as the VA would be directed to give preference to organizations that employ a higher percentage of full-time employees when awarding contracts. Had I been present, I would have voted YEA on Roll Call No. 86 and YEA on Roll Call No. 87.

SENATE COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Title IV of Senate Resolution 4, agreed to by the Senate of February 4, 1977, calls for establishment of a system for a computerized schedule of all meetings and hearings of Senate committees, subcommittees, joint committees, and committees of conference. This title requires all such committees to notify the Office of the Senate Daily Digest—designated by the Rules Committee—of the time, place and purpose of the meetings, when scheduled and any cancellations or changes in the meetings as they occur.

As an additional procedure along with the computerization of this information, the Office of the Senate Daily Digest will prepare this information for printing in the Extensions of Remarks section of the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD on Monday and Wednesday of each week.

Meetings scheduled for Tuesday, February 14, 2017 may be found in the Daily Digest of today’s RECORD.

MEETINGS SCHEDULED
FEBRUARY 15

10 a.m. Committee on Armed Services; Subcommittee on Emerging Threats and Capabilities

To receive a closed briefing on Anti-Access Area Denial challenges in Europe.

SVC-217 Committee on Environment and Public Works

To hold an oversight hearing to examine modernization of the Endangered Species Act.

SD-406 Committee on Foreign Relations

To hold hearings to examine ending modern slavery, focusing on building on success.
10:30 a.m.
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies
To hold hearings to examine mental health care, focusing on examining treatments and services.
SD-138

2:30 p.m.
Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
Subcommittee on Surface Transportation and Merchant Marine Infrastructure, Safety and Security
To hold hearings to examine stakeholder perspectives on our multimodal transportation system.
SR-253

Special Committee on Aging
To hold hearings to examine stopping senior scams, focusing on developments in financial fraud affecting seniors.
SD-562

2:45 p.m.
Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
To hold hearings to examine government operations susceptible to waste, fraud, and mismanagement.
SD-342

FEBRUARY 16
9:30 a.m.
Committee on Armed Services
To hold hearings to examine reshaping the United States military.
SD-G50

10 a.m.
Committee on Finance
To hold hearings to examine the nomination of Seema Verma, of Indiana, to be Administrator of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, Department of Health and Human Services.
SD-215

Committee on Foreign Relations
To hold hearings to examine the nomination of David Friedman, of New York, to be Ambassador to Israel, Department of State.
SD-419

Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions
To hold hearings to examine the nomination of Andrew F. Puzder, of Tennessee, to be Secretary of Labor.
SD-430

Committee on Rules and Administration
Organizational business meeting to consider committee rules, an original resolution authorizing expenditures by the Committee during the 115th Congress, and the omnibus budget resolution for Senate Committees.
SR-301

10:30 a.m.
Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
Subcommittee on Aviation Operations, Safety, and Security
To hold hearings to examine stakeholder perspectives on improving the Transportation Security Administration for the security of the traveling public.
SR-253

2 p.m.
Select Committee on Intelligence
To hold closed hearings to examine certain intelligence matters.
SH-219

2:45 p.m.
Committee on Foreign Relations
Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere, Transnational Crime, Civilian Security, Democracy, Human Rights, and Global Women’s Issues
To hold hearings to examine democracy and human rights, focusing on the case for United States leadership.
SD-419

FEBRUARY 28
2 p.m.
Committee on Veterans’ Affairs
To hold a joint hearing with the House Committee on Veterans’ Affairs to examine the legislative presentation of the Disabled American Veterans.
SD-G50

MARCH 1
10 a.m.
Committee on Veterans’ Affairs
To hold a joint hearing with the House Committee on Veterans’ Affairs to examine the legislative presentation of the American Legion.
SD-G50

2 p.m.
Committee on Veterans’ Affairs
To hold a joint hearing with the House Committee on Veterans’ Affairs to examine the legislative presentation of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.
SD-G50

MARCH 8
10 a.m.
Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
To hold an oversight hearing to examine the Federal Communications Commission.
SH-216

MARCH 9
10 a.m.
Committee on Veterans’ Affairs
To hold a joint hearing with the House Committee on Veterans’ Affairs to examine the legislative presentation of multiple veterans service organizations.
SD-G50

MARCH 22
10 a.m.
Committee on Veterans’ Affairs
To hold a joint hearing with the House Committee on Veterans’ Affairs to examine the legislative presentation of multiple veterans service organizations.
SD-G50

2 p.m.
Committee on Veterans’ Affairs
To hold a joint hearing with the House Committee on Veterans’ Affairs to examine the legislative presentation of multiple veterans service organizations.
SD-G50
HIGHLIGHTS

Senate confirmed the nomination of Steven T. Mnuchin, of California, to be Secretary of the Treasury.

Senate confirmed the nomination of David J. Shulkin, of Pennsylvania, to be Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

Senate

Chamber Action

Routine Proceedings, pages S1095–S1133

Measures Introduced: Sixteen bills and one resolution were introduced, as follows: S. 351–366, and S. Res. 60.

Pages S1129–30

Mulvaney Nomination—Cloture: Senate began consideration of the nomination of Mick Mulvaney, of South Carolina, to be Director of the Office of Management and Budget.

A motion was entered to close further debate on the nomination, and, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, a vote on cloture will occur on Wednesday, February 15, 2017.

Prior to the consideration of this nomination, Senate took the following action:

Senate agreed to the motion to proceed to Legislative Session.

Page S1123

Senate agreed to the motion to proceed to Executive Session to consider the nomination.

Page S1123

Pruitt Nomination—Cloture: Senate began consideration of the nomination of Scott Pruitt, of Oklahoma, to be Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency.

A motion was entered to close further debate on the nomination, and, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, a vote on cloture will occur upon disposition of the nomination of Scott Pruitt, of Oklahoma, to be Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency.

Prior to the consideration of this nomination, Senate took the following action:

Senate agreed to the motion to proceed to Legislative Session.

Page S1123

Senate agreed to the motion to proceed to Executive Session to consider the nomination.

Page S1123

Ross Nomination—Cloture: Senate began consideration of the nomination of Wilbur L. Ross, Jr., of Florida, to be Secretary of Commerce.

A motion was entered to close further debate on the nomination, and, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, a vote on cloture will occur upon disposition of the nomination of Wilbur L. Ross, Jr., of Florida, to be Secretary of Commerce.

Prior to the consideration of this nomination, Senate took the following action:

Senate agreed to the motion to proceed to Legislative Session.

Page S1123

Senate agreed to the motion to proceed to Executive Session to consider the nomination.

Page S1123

Zinke Nomination—Cloture: Senate began consideration of the nomination of Ryan Zinke, of Montana, to be Secretary of the Interior.

A motion was entered to close further debate on the nomination, and, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, a vote on cloture will occur upon disposition of the nomination of Ryan Zinke, of Montana, to be Secretary of the Interior.

Prior to the consideration of this nomination, Senate took the following action:

Senate agreed to the motion to proceed to Legislative Session.

Page S1123

Senate agreed to the motion to proceed to Executive Session to consider the nomination.

Page S1123

Carson Nomination—Cloture: Senate began consideration of the nomination of Benjamin S. Carson, Sr., of Florida, to be Secretary of Housing and Urban Development.

Page S1124
A motion was entered to close further debate on the nomination, and, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, a vote on cloture will occur upon disposition of the nomination of Ryan Zinke, of Montana, to be Secretary of the Interior.

Prior to the consideration of this nomination, Senate took the following action:

Senate agreed to the motion to proceed to Legislative Session.

Senate agreed to the motion to proceed to Executive Session to consider the nomination.

Perry Nomination—Cloture: Senate began consideration of the nomination of James Richard Perry, of Texas, to be Secretary of Energy.

A motion was entered to close further debate on the nomination, and, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, a vote on cloture will occur upon disposition of the nomination of Benjamin S. Carson, Sr., of Florida, to be Secretary of Housing and Urban Development.

Prior to the consideration of this nomination, Senate took the following action:

Senate agreed to the motion to proceed to Legislative Session.

Senate agreed to the motion to proceed to Executive Session to consider the nomination.

McMahon Nomination—Agreement: A unanimous-consent agreement was reached providing that at approximately 10 a.m., on Tuesday, February 14, 2017, Senate begin consideration of the nomination of Linda E. McMahon, of Connecticut, to be Administrator of the Small Business Administration, under the previous order.

Nominations Confirmed: Senate confirmed the following nominations:

By 53 yeas to 47 nays (Vote No. EX. 63), Steven T. Mnuchin, of California, to be Secretary of the Treasury.

By a unanimous vote of 100 yeas (Vote No. EX. 64), David J. Shulkin, of Pennsylvania, to be Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

Messages from the House:

**Committee Meetings**

(Committees not listed did not meet)

**BUSINESS MEETING**

Committee on Armed Services: Committee announced the following subcommittee assignments:

Subcommittee on Airland: Senators Cotton (Chair), Inhofe, Wicker, Tillis, Sullivan, Cruz, Sasse, King, McCaskill, Blumenthal, Donnelly, Warren, and Peters.

Subcommittee on Cybersecurity: Senators Rounds (Chair), Fischer, Perdue, Graham, Sasse, Nelson, McCaskill, Gillibrand, and Blumenthal.

Subcommittee on Emerging Threats and Capabilities: Senators Ernst (Chair), Wicker, Fischer, Perdue, Cruz, Heinrich, Nelson, Shaheen, and Peters.

Subcommittee on Personnel: Senators Tillis (Chair), Ernst, Graham, Sasse, Gillibrand, McCaskill, and Warren.

Subcommittee on Readiness and Management Support: Senators Inhofe (Chair), Rounds, Ernst, Perdue, Strange, Kaine, Shaheen, and Hirono.

Subcommittee on SeaPower: Senators Wicker (Chair), Cotton, Rounds, Tillis, Sullivan, Strange, Hirono, Shaheen, Blumenthal, Kaine, and King.

Subcommittee on Strategic Forces: Senators Fischer (Chair), Inhofe, Cotton, Sullivan, Cruz, Graham, Donnelly, Heinrich, Warren, and Peters.

Senators McCain and Reed are ex officio members of each subcommittee.

**House of Representatives**

**Chamber Action**

Public Bills and Resolutions Introduced: 28 public bills, H.R. 1011–1028; and 9 resolutions, H.J. Res. 71; and H. Res. 1141–115, 117–122 were introduced.
Report Filed: A report was filed today as follows:

H. Res. 116, providing for consideration of the joint resolution (H.J. Res. 66) disapproving the rule submitted by the Department of Labor relating to savings arrangements established by States for non-governmental employees, and providing for consideration of the joint resolution (H.J. Res. 67) disapproving the rule submitted by the Department of Labor relating to savings arrangements established by qualified State political subdivisions for non-governmental employees (H. Rept. 115–11). Page H1124

Speaker: Read a letter from the Speaker wherein he appointed Representative Meadows to act as Speaker pro tempore for today. Page H1101

Recess: The House recessed at 12:10 p.m. and reconvened at 2 p.m. Page H1103

Member Resignation: Read a letter from Representative Price, wherein he resigned as Representative for the Sixth Congressional District of Georgia, effective at 9 a.m. on February 10, 2017. Pages H1103–04

Whole Number of the House: The Chair announced to the House that, in light of the resignation of the gentleman from Georgia, Mr. Price, the whole number of the House is 432. Page H1104

Recess: The House recessed at 2:06 p.m. and reconvened at 4:29 p.m. Page H1104

Suspensions: The House agreed to suspend the rules and pass the following measures:

Designating the Department of Veterans Affairs health care center in Center Township, Butler County, Pennsylvania, as the “Abie Abraham VA Clinic”: H.R. 609, to designate the Department of Veterans Affairs health care center in Center Township, Butler County, Pennsylvania, as the “Abie Abraham VA Clinic”; Pages H1104–06

Working to Integrate Networks Guaranteeing Member Access Now Act: H.R. 512, amended, to title 38, United States Code, to permit veterans to grant access to their records in the databases of the Veterans Benefits Administration to certain designated congressional employees; Pages H1106–08

Agreed to amend the title so as to read: “To amend title 38, United States Code, to permit veterans to grant access to their records in the databases of the Veterans Benefits Administration to certain designated congressional employees, and for other purposes.”. Page H1108

Honoring Investments in Recruiting and Employing American Military Veterans Act of 2017: H.R. 244, amended, to encourage effective, voluntary private sector investments to recruit, employ, and retain men and women who have served in the United States military with annual presidential awards to employers recognizing such efforts, by a 2⁄3 yea-and-nay vote of 409 yeas to 1 nay, Roll No. 86; and

Agreed to amend the title so as to read: “To encourage effective, voluntary investments to recruit, employ, and retain men and women who have served in the United States military with annual Federal awards to employers recognizing such efforts, and for other purposes.”. Page H1109–11

Boosting Rates of American Veteran Employment Act: H.R. 974, to amend title 38, United States Code, to authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, in awarding a contract for the procurement of goods or services, to give a preference to offerors that employ veterans, by a 2⁄3 yea-and-nay vote of 407 yeas with none voting “nay”, Roll No. 87. Pages H1111–12

United States-China Economic and Security Review Commission—Appointment: The Chair announced the Speaker’s appointment of the following individuals on the part of the House to the United States-China Economic and Security Review Commission for a term expiring on December 31, 2018: Mr. Larry Wortzel, of Williamsburg, Virginia and Mr. Robert Glenn Hubbard of New York, New York. Page H1112


National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service—Appointment: The Chair announced the Speaker’s appointment of the following individual on the part of the House to the National Commission on Military, National and Public Service: Mr. Thomas Kilgannon of Centreville, Virginia. Pages H1112–13

Medal of Valor Review Board—Appointment: The Chair announced the Speaker’s appointment of the following individuals on the part of the House to the Medal of Valor Review Board for a term of four years: Mr. Brandon Clabes of Choctaw, Oklahoma and Mr. Brian Murphy of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Page H1113

American Folklife Center in the Library of Congress—Appointment: The Chair announced the Speaker’s appointment of the following individual on the part of the House to the Board of Trustees of
the American Folklife Center in the Library of Congress for a term of six years: Ms. Patricia A. Atkinson of Carson City, Nevada.

Recess: The House recessed at 5:23 p.m. and reconvened at 6:30 p.m.

Senate Message: Message received from the Senate by the Clerk and subsequently presented to the House today appears on page H1104.

Quorum Calls—Votes: Two yea-and-nay votes developed during the proceedings of today and appear on pages H1113–14, and H1114–15. There were no quorum calls.

Adjournment: The House met at 12 noon and adjourned at 8:31 p.m.

Committee Meetings

MISCELLANEOUS MEASURE

Committee on Oversight and Government Reform: Full Committee held a markup on H.J. Res. 27, disapproving the action of the District of Columbia Council in approving the Death with Dignity Act of 2016. H.J. Res. 27 was ordered reported, without amendment.

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION DISAPPROVING THE RULE SUBMITTED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR RELATING TO SAVINGS ARRANGEMENTS ESTABLISHED BY STATES FOR NON-GOVERNMENTAL EMPLOYEES; HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION DISAPPROVING THE RULE SUBMITTED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR RELATING TO SAVINGS ARRANGEMENTS ESTABLISHED BY QUALIFIED STATE POLITICAL SUBDIVISIONS FOR NON-GOVERNMENTAL EMPLOYEES

Committee on Rules: Full Committee held a hearing on H.J. Res. 66, disapproving the rule submitted by the Department of Labor relating to savings arrangements established by States for non-governmental employees; and H.J. Res. 67, disapproving the rule submitted by the Department of Labor relating to savings arrangements established by qualified State political subdivisions for non-governmental employees. The committee granted, by record vote of 8–3, closed rules for H.J. Res. 66 and H.J. Res. 67. The rule provides one hour of debate on each joint resolution equally divided and controlled by the chair and ranking minority member of the Committee on Education and the Workforce. The rule waives all points of order against provisions in each joint resolution. The rule provides each joint resolution one motion to recommit. Testimony was heard from Representatives Walberg and Francis Rooney of Florida.

Joint Meetings

No joint committee meetings were held.

COMMITTEE MEETINGS FOR TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 2017

(Committee meetings are open unless otherwise indicated)

Senate

Committee on Armed Services: to receive a closed briefing on long-term defense challenges and strategies, 9:30 a.m., SVC–217.

Subcommittee on Personnel, to hold hearings to examine Department of Defense single servicemember and military family readiness programs, 2:30 p.m., SR–222.

Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs: to hold hearings to examine the Semiannual Monetary Policy Report to the Congress, 10 a.m., SD–106.

Select Committee on Intelligence: to hold closed hearings to examine certain intelligence matters, 2:30 p.m., SH–219.

House

Committee on Armed Services, Full Committee, hearing entitled “The Evolving Threat of Terrorism and Effective Counterterrorism Strategies”, 10 a.m., 2118 Rayburn.

Committee on Education and the Workforce, Subcommittee on Health, Employment, Labor, and Pensions, hearing entitled “Restoring Balance and Fairness to the National Labor Relations Board”, 10 a.m., 2175 Rayburn.

Committee on Energy and Commerce, Subcommittee on Digital Commerce and Consumer Protection, hearing entitled “Self-Driving Cars: Road to Deployment”, 10:15 a.m., 2123 Rayburn.

Committee on Foreign Affairs, Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade, hearing entitled “Defeating Terrorism in Syria: A New Way Forward”, 2 p.m., 2172 Rayburn.


Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Full Committee, markup on H.R. 195, the “Federal Register Printing Savings Act of 2017”; H.R. 624, the “Social Security Fraud Prevention Act of 2017”; the “Searching for and Cutting Regulations that are Unnecessarily Burdensome Act of 2017”; the “Regulatory Integrity Act of 2017”; the “OIRA Insight, Reform, and Accountability

Committee on Rules, Full Committee, hearing on H.J. Res. 69, providing for congressional disapproval under chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, of the final rule of the Department of the Interior relating to “Non-Subsistence Take of Wildlife, and Public Participation and Closure Procedures, on National Wildlife Refuges in Alaska”; and H.J. Res. 43, providing for congressional disapproval under chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, of the final rule submitted by Secretary of Health and Human Services relating to compliance with title X requirements by project recipients in selecting subrecipients, 3 p.m., H–313 Capitol.

Committee on Science, Space, and Technology, Subcommittee on Research and Technology, hearing entitled “Strengthening U.S. Cybersecurity Capabilities”, 10 a.m., 2318 Rayburn.

Committee on Veterans’ Affairs, Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs, hearing entitled “Exploring National Work Queue’s Impact on Claims Processing”, 10:30 a.m., 334 Cannon.

Committee on Ways and Means, Full Committee, markup on the committee’s Authorization and Oversight Plan for the 115th Congress; Views and Estimates on the Fiscal Year 2018 Federal Budget; and ratification of subcommittee assignments and appointments to the Joint Committee on Taxation, 10:15 a.m., 1100 Longworth.
Next Meeting of the SENATE
10 a.m., Tuesday, February 14

Senate Chamber

Program for Tuesday: Senate will begin consideration of the nomination of Linda E. McMahon, of Connecticut, to be Administrator of the Small Business Administration, and vote on confirmation of the nomination at approximately 11 a.m.

Next Meeting of the HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
10 a.m., Tuesday, February 14

House Chamber

Program for Tuesday: Consideration of H.R. 428—Red River Gradient Boundary Survey Act (Subject to a Rule).

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