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Senate

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.

Infinite Spirit, maker of Heaven and Earth, we experience peace because of the knowledge that You are the same yesterday, today, and forever. May we continue to find rest and peace in You as You continue to be our help in ages past and our hope for years to come. Loose us from the changes that create cynicism, pessimism, and despair. Remind us of the foolishness of seeking security apart from You.

Lord, bless the Members of this body. Help them in the making of laws to execute justice for the oppressed and to set the captives free.

We pray in Your merciful 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. STRANGE). Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Wilbur L. Ross, Jr., of Florida, to be Secretary of Commerce.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah.

(The remarks of Mr. HATCH pertaining to the introduction of S.J. Res. 24 are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

ORDER FOR RECESS SUBJECT TO THE CALL OF THE CHAIR

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that at 2:55 p.m., the Senate stand in recess subject to the call of the chair to prepare for Washington's Farewell Address.

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

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, 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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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 PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

PRESIDENT'S JOINT SESSION ADDRESS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I welcome the majority leader and everyone back after the first district work period of the year. Tomorrow night, the President will give his first address to a joint session of Congress. I will have more to say later this afternoon at the National Press Club about the first

month of the Trump administration and what we can expect from the speech. For now, I will just say that if past is prologue, the President will come to Congress with a populist message in an attempt to cloak what has been a hard-right, anti-working person administration.

His words are populist. He talks as though he favors the working men and women of America, but his actions are straight out of the hard-right playbook, which makes it easier for the special interests and puts greater burdens on the backs of the working class and the middle class.

Every American should be looking at what this President is doing, not saying, because, thus far, the two have been vastly different.

AFFORDABLE CARE ACT

Now for the ACA, Mr. President. This past week, Republicans across the country in both Chambers were greeted in townhalls by angry constituents who waited in long lines and packed high school gyms, auditoriums, and community centers wall to wall to question their Republican representatives about their plan to repeal the Affordable Care Act.

Americans are speaking loudly and clearly that their jobs, their hospitals—particularly rural hospitals—and their health care is on the line and want to know how Republicans plan to replace the law. On Friday, we saw the outline of the Republican plan. Like every single draft plan that Republicans have come up with, the outline we saw on Friday would raise costs and provide fewer benefits to average Americans and put the insurance companies back in the driver's seat. Average Americans under this Republican plan will get less, and they will pay more.

Today, President Trump is meeting with the insurance companies about this plan. What happened to the President we saw on the campaign trail railing against the special interests? It

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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turns out that the special interests are getting their way at the expense of working Americans—less coverage, higher premiums, fewer sick people insured.

My Republican friends listened to the outcry from their constituents: Don't repeal the Affordable Care Act and replace it with a threadbare health insurance plan that puts insurance companies back in charge. Keep the law and work with Democrats on reasonable fixes.

CABINET NOMINATIONS

Finally, Mr. President, I want to comment again on the Cabinet. The three nominees the Senate will consider this week are similar to the rest of the President's Cabinet in the number of conflicts of interest they possess, their lack of confidence and expertise, and their hard-right ideology. The Cabinet confirmation process has been like an assembly line of the least qualified and most conflicted nominees I have seen in my time in the Senate.

Just yesterday, the nominee to be the Secretary of the Navy withdrew his name from consideration because he couldn't disentangle himself from his massive personal business interests. He may have more integrity than some of the others who continued through the process with conflicts of interest hanging over their heads. The Secretary of the Navy nominee is 1 of 14 relatively high-level administration officials who have left, resigned or withdrawn their nomination in just the first month of this Presidency. That list includes the nominee for Secretary of Labor, Secretary of the Army, Secretary of the Navy, and the principal National Security Advisor.

It is clear the Trump administration did not properly vet or carefully select these picks. With that in mind, the Senate should carefully scrutinize the nominees this week on the floor and vote their conscience.

I yield the floor.

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

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, since Inauguration Day, the Senate has been slow making its way through confirming Cabinet Secretaries. Democrats, it seems, have used just about every trick in the book to try to slow down the process. There are Democrats in the Senate who are delaying things even when other Democrats in the Senate support the person who has actually been nominated by the President. (Mr. YOUNG assumed the Chair.)

Remember when President Obama took office, Republicans were far more willing to let the President have the

team he wanted. He had won the election and was entitled to his Cabinet.

We are now 39 days into President Trump's term, and the Senate has confirmed now 17 of his nominees—17 over 39 days. President Obama got 20 of his people confirmed in the first 9 days. It does seem the more the Democrats delay, the more the American people will see the Democrats are just being childish and spiteful.

NOMINATION OF RYAN ZINKE

One of the most recent people whom the Democrats have been delaying is Congressman RYAN ZINKE. He has been nominated to be Secretary of the Department of the Interior. We have all heard about his qualifications for the job. His time serving the people of Montana in the State senate and in the House of Representatives is something that people hold up as to why he is qualified for this job. He is a Navy SEAL. He is an adopted member of the Fort Peck Tribes. He is a westerner. As a westerner, RYAN ZINKE understands the importance of the position he has been now nominated to fill.

Don't take my word for it. Listen to Senator TESTER, Democrat from Montana, who came to the confirmation hearing for Congressman ZINKE and he said so. He said: "I believe it is very important for someone who knows the West to serve as Interior Secretary."

He was full of praise for this nominee. Senator TESTER took the time to come to the Energy and Natural Resources Committee and tell all of us on the committee about his support for Congressman ZINKE to be Secretary of the Interior. He actually said: "I am honored to introduce Congressman Zinke to this committee." He went on to say: "I trust that this Navy SEAL will shoot straight as they always do."

The Department of Interior manages an incredible amount of acreage and water resources. It is responsible for protecting thousands of species of animals and plants. The person who heads up this Department has a very big and important job to do. We need someone in this job who can work with the people who are most invested in the good stewardship of our natural resources, and that is the people who actually live on the land. I believe that Congressman ZINKE will do exactly that. He will work with States and with communities to find solutions that work for everyone, because America's natural resources actually belong to all of us.

He understands that Washington does not always get the answers right, and he certainly knows that when Washington comes up with a one-size-fits-all approach, it can do real damage. During Congressman ZINKE's confirmation hearing, I asked him about some of the policies that we have seen over the past few years that have been restricting American energy production. He said he thinks the correct policy on energy development is "all of the above."

Well, I agree. Do Democrats really object to using all of our options for creating the energy that we need to power our economy and our country?

We should be trying to make American energy as clean as we can, as fast as we can, and do it in ways that don't raise costs for American families. I think Congressman ZINKE understands this. I think he will do all that he can to make sure that we achieve what we need, which is the right balance.

Democrats on the committee actually think so as well. His nomination was reported out of the committee on a strong bipartisan vote of 16 to 6. That is a significant bipartisan show of support for the nominee. But the obstructionists on the other side should listen to their colleagues and give up the delaying tactics and senseless obstruction that is ongoing.

NOMINATION OF RICK PERRY

There is one other nomination I would like to mention today, and that is the nomination of Gov. Rick Perry to be Secretary of Energy. Once again, we have a nominee who is totally qualified to lead the Department. Democrats have no real objection to the candidate. They just want to delay. We need to have an Energy Secretary in place as soon as possible. Again, this was the nominee who drew bipartisan praise in his confirmation hearings. For his nomination, again, there was a bipartisan vote in the committee—a strong vote of 16 to 7.

Senator JOE MANCHIN, a member of the Democratic leadership, actually introduced Governor Perry at the hearing. He said that Rick Perry is "uniquely qualified to hold this position." Senator MANCHIN praised the nominee's ability to work across the aisle to get things done. That is important. It is important in a Cabinet Secretary, and it is important for all of us here in the Senate. I appreciate Senator MANCHIN and the other Democrats who reached across the aisle and have supported Rick Perry's nomination. They are willing to put aside the petty calls for gridlock that some of the other Members of their party have been making.

I mention the importance of having a responsible all-of-the-above energy policy. This includes energy sources such as liquefied natural gas. The problem right now is that the Energy Department has a very large backlog of permits to export this gas. These are permits where all of the environmental reviews have already been completed. Still, permits haven't been issued. The Energy Department has just been sitting on the permits. Bipartisan majorities in Congress have said that we need to speed up this permitting process. It is time for us to have a new Energy Secretary in office today to start tackling this backlog. That is something we need this Department to do. There is no need or reason for delay.

Governor Perry knows how to get this Department focused, how to get it moving, and how to make sure it is doing its job. There are reasonable and responsible Democrats here in the Senate who agree that doing the job is more important than just trying to run

out the clock. Governor Perry and Congressman ZINKE have been nominated to do important jobs for the American people. They are qualified. They are ready. We need them in office to do these jobs now. There is bipartisan support. We need to vote not some day in the future; we need to vote now.

The President deserves to have his Cabinet. He needs them in place. It is regrettable that a group of Democrats have decided to stand in the way of what is best for the American people—deliberate obstruction.

So I urge my colleagues on the other side of the aisle to stop the charade and stop the delays. It is time for us to vote on these nominations.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Ms. WARREN. 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. WARREN. Mr. President, I rise today to oppose President Trump's nomination of Wilbur Ross for Secretary of Commerce. Mr. Ross is a Wall Street billionaire with a long history of profiting from the suffering of others. He also has shady ties to Vladimir Putin's Russia. That is just his record. Because of that record, I do not have confidence that he will protect the interests of the American people as Secretary of Commerce.

This administration's disturbing ties to Russia have been all over the news. Here is what has been publicly reported as of today.

Our intelligence agencies have concluded that the Russian Government conducted a successful series of cyber attacks against the United States designed to help Donald Trump get elected President. Our intelligence agencies are actively examining a dossier alleging that the Russian Government has collected compromising information on President Trump, and numerous press reports indicate that investigators have already corroborated some of that dossier's contents.

The President's National Security Advisor resigned in disgrace and is the subject of an FBI counterintelligence investigation for his conversations with the Russian Government before the inauguration, conversations that may have been illegal and conversations that he has apparently lied about in public.

Knowingly or unknowingly, the Vice President of the United States has repeated these lies on national television. According to CNN, high-level advisers close to then-Presidential nominee Donald Trump were in constant communication during the campaign with Russians known to U.S. intelligence.

CNN confirmed the New York Times' original investigation with "multiple

current and former intelligence law enforcement and administration officials." Our allies documented regular calls between the Trump campaign and the Russians, confirming the reports of U.S. intelligence agencies. According to reports published in Newsweek, "the British government obtained information that people acting on behalf of Russia were in contact with members of the Trump campaign."

Many news outlets have reported on U.S. intelligence worries that NATO allies will no longer share sensitive information because they fear the new administration could share it with Russia. When asked about the regular points of contact between Russian intelligence operatives and his most senior campaign staff, President Trump refused to take the question seriously. He claimed the multiple reports of staff communications with Russian were "fake news."

Behind the scenes, Trump's chief of staff was pressuring the FBI to help cover up the links between Russia and the Trump campaign. We are 1 month into the Trump Presidency. I wish this were not happening. I wish things were normal, but this is not normal. It is shameful if we ignore all of it as we evaluate the President's nominees to critical foreign policy and national security jobs.

In this context, Mr. Ross's connections to Russia raise dangerous issues. We know that Ross installed a former KGB official and close associate of Vladimir Putin as the vice chairman of the Bank of Cyprus, a bank that Mr. Ross controlled and a bank that was flooded with Russian money. Now, how closely connected was this former KGB official to Vladimir Putin? Here is one hint. He was so closely connected to Putin that he was given a \$100 million payout by a Russian-controlled mining company as a golden parachute. He wasn't even the only Putin pal on Mr. Ross's board. That is right. Mr. Ross wanted the bank he controlled to have multiple board members from Putin's inner circle.

Mr. Ross surrounds himself with Russian oligarchs, and he has invested financially in their success. As he explained during his testimony before the Senate Commerce Committee, Mr. Ross has no intention of divesting from Diamond Shipping, a company that operates 33 oil tankers and jointly charters with even more. So a man who personally selected multiple Vladimir Putin associates to serve with him on the board of the bank he controls has been totally open about his plan to continue profiting from oil tankers shuttling over \$1 billion worth of crude oil through international waters while serving as Commerce Secretary.

It is not just one shipping company. Mr. Ross is retaining his investments in 11—11 separate entities, mostly private companies registered in the Cayman Islands. Among his retained interests, the state-owned China Investment Company will be one of Mr. Ross's largest fellow investors.

We have never seen a Cabinet like this in history. Like many of President Trump's other nominees and like President Trump himself, this nominee seems to see his time in public service as a chance to increase his own wealth. In other words, on any given deal, he might be working for the American people or he might just be working for himself. We will have no way to know.

President Trump has apparently asked Mr. Ross to lead American trade policy. He claims to want aggressive enforcement of antidumping and currency manipulation rules, which sounds great, but when Ross actually has this job, is he really going to be thinking about American workers or will he be thinking about how to make his KGB buddy from the Bank of Cyprus just a little richer or will he be thinking about how to help out his own oil tankers circling the globe or will he be thinking about his offshore companies and his coinvestors from China or will he be thinking about the next billion dollars he plans to make?

The American people should not be left guessing about who Mr. Ross will be working to protect. There is significant reason to believe the President of the United States has substantial financial ties with Russia, but nobody actually knows any of the details because he has failed to reveal his tax returns.

Now President Trump expects the Senate to rubberstamp his nomination of a top banker to Vladimir Putin's buddies to run the Commerce Department of the United States. This is dangerous and I will vote no. Mr. Ross's financial ties with Russians and his worldwide business deals are not the only problem with this nomination. He is practically a cartoon stereotype of a Wall Street fat cat with no interest in anyone but himself. Ross ran a secret club of top Wall Street tycoons called Kappa Beta Phi. I am not making this up. It is actually true.

So he runs this secret club, which apparently gathers every year to get drunk and entertain themselves by putting on off-color skits that make fun of the millions of Americans they have swindled over the years. That certainly reflects Mr. Ross's world view. This is a man who made a fortune from the housing crisis at the expense of working families. After buying the servicing rights to over \$100 billion in subprime loans, Mr. Ross swiftly got to work cheating borrowers out of their homes.

Here are just a few of the examples of Mr. Ross's approach to business: lying to borrowers about loan modifications; charging borrowers fees that were not authorized; taking payments from borrowers, then not applying those payments to their loans; forcing homeowners insurance on borrowers who already had homeowners insurance; robo-signing fraudulent foreclosure documents.

The violations were so widespread, his company had to settle with 49

States. Let me repeat that—49 States. A man who builds a fortune off illegally cheating people out of their homes has no business running our Commerce Department.

So let's summarize. Mr. Ross has extensive ties to Russia. He plans to keep making money from his major oil shipping companies while working as Commerce Secretary. He has made billions off the backs of struggling homeowners, and in his free time he hangs out with Wall Street tycoons who sit around and make fun of everyone else. This is disgusting. For all of these reasons—for any of them, really—I urge my colleagues to reject 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. SASSE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

RECESS SUBJECT TO THE CALL OF THE CHAIR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 2:56 p.m., recessed subject to the call of the Chair and reassembled at 3 p.m. when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. YOUNG).

READING OF WASHINGTON'S FAREWELL ADDRESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to the order of the Senate of January 24, 1901, as amended by the order of February 1, 2017, the Senator from Nebraska, Mr. SASSE, will now read Washington's Farewell Address.

Mr. SASSE, at the rostrum, read the Farewell Address, as follows:

To the people of the United States:

FRIENDS AND FELLOW-CITIZENS: The period for a new election of a citizen to administer the executive government of the United States being not far distant, and the time actually arrived when your thoughts must be employed in designating the person who is to be clothed with that important trust, it appears to me proper, especially as it may conduce to a more distinct expression of the public voice, that I should now apprise you of the resolution I have formed, to decline being considered among the number of those out of whom a choice is to be made.

I beg you at the same time to do me the justice to be assured that this resolution has not been taken without a strict regard to all the considerations appertaining to the relation which binds a dutiful citizen to his country—and that, in withdrawing the tender of service which silence in my situation

might imply, I am influenced by no diminution of zeal for your future interest, no deficiency of grateful respect for your past kindness, but am supported by a full conviction that the step is compatible with both.

The acceptance of, and continuance hitherto in, the office to which your suffrages have twice called me have been a uniform sacrifice of inclination to the opinion of duty and to a deference for what appeared to be your desire. I constantly hoped that it would have been much earlier in my power, consistently with motives which I was not at liberty to disregard, to return to that retirement from which I had been reluctantly drawn. The strength of my inclination to do this, previous to the last election, had even led to the preparation of an address to declare it to you; but mature reflection on the then perplexed and critical posture of our affairs with foreign nations, and the unanimous advice of persons entitled to my confidence, impelled me to abandon the idea.

I rejoice that the state of your concerns, external as well as internal, no longer renders the pursuit of inclination incompatible with the sentiment of duty or propriety and am persuaded, whatever partiality may be retained for my services, that in the present circumstances of our country you will not disapprove my determination to retire.

The impressions with which I first undertook the arduous trust were explained on the proper occasion. In the discharge of this trust, I will only say that I have, with good intentions, contributed towards the organization and administration of the government the best exertions of which a very fallible judgment was capable. Not unconscious in the outset of the inferiority of my qualifications, experience in my own eyes, perhaps still more in the eyes of others, has strengthened the motives to diffidence of myself, and every day the increasing weight of years admonishes me more and more that the shade of retirement is as necessary to me as it will be welcome. Satisfied that if any circumstances have given peculiar value to my services, they were temporary, I have the consolation to believe that, while choice and prudence invite me to quit the political scene, patriotism does not forbid it.

In looking forward to the moment which is intended to terminate the career of my public life, my feelings do not permit me to suspend the deep acknowledgment of that debt of gratitude which I owe to my beloved country for the many honors it has conferred upon me, still more for the steadfast confidence with which it has supported me and for the opportunities I have thence enjoyed of manifesting my inviolable attachment by services faithful and persevering, though in usefulness unequal to my zeal. If benefits have resulted to our country from these services, let it always be remembered to your praise and as an instructive example in our annals that, under cir-

cumstances in which the passions agitated in every direction were liable to mislead, amidst appearances sometimes dubious, vicissitudes of fortune often discouraging, in situations in which not unfrequently want of success has countenanced the spirit of criticism, the constancy of your support was the essential prop of the efforts and a guarantee of the plans by which they were effected. Profoundly penetrated with this idea, I shall carry it with me to my grave as a strong incitement to unceasing vows that Heaven may continue to you the choicest tokens of its beneficence; that your union and brotherly affection may be perpetual; that the free constitution, which is the work of your hands, may be sacredly maintained; that its administration in every department may be stamped with wisdom and virtue; that, in fine, the happiness of the people of these states, under the auspices of liberty, may be made complete by so careful a preservation and so prudent a use of this blessing as will acquire to them the glory of recommending it to the applause, the affection, and adoption of every nation which is yet a stranger to it.

Here, perhaps, I ought to stop. But a solicitude for your welfare, which cannot end but with my life, and the apprehension of danger natural to that solicitude, urge me on an occasion like the present to offer to your solemn contemplation, and to recommend to your frequent review, some sentiments which are the result of much reflection, of no inconsiderable observation, and which appear to me all important to the permanency of your felicity as a people. These will be offered to you with the more freedom as you can only see in them the disinterested warnings of a parting friend, who can possibly have no personal motive to bias his counsel. Nor can I forget, as an encouragement to it, your indulgent reception of my sentiments on a former and not dissimilar occasion.

Interwoven as is the love of liberty with every ligament of your hearts, no recommendation of mine is necessary to fortify or confirm the attachment.

The unity of government which constitutes you one people is also now dear to you. It is justly so; for it is a main pillar in the edifice of your real independence, the support of your tranquility at home, your peace abroad, of your safety, of your prosperity, of that very liberty which you so highly prize. But as it is easy to foresee that, from different causes and from different quarters, much pains will be taken, many artifices employed, to weaken in your minds the conviction of this truth; as this is the point in your political fortress against which the batteries of internal and external enemies will be most constantly and actively (though often covertly and insidiously) directed, it is of infinite moment that you should properly estimate the immense value of your national Union to your collective and individual happiness; that you should cherish a cordial,

habitual, and immovable attachment to it; accustoming yourselves to think and speak of it as of the palladium of your political safety and prosperity; watching for its preservation with jealous anxiety; discountenancing whatever may suggest even a suspicion that it can in any event be abandoned; and indignantly frowning upon the first dawning of every attempt to alienate any portion of our country from the rest, or to enfeeble the sacred ties which now link together the various parts.

For this you have every inducement of sympathy and interest. Citizens by birth or choice of a common country, that country has a right to concentrate your affections. The name of American, which belongs to you in your national capacity, must always exalt the just pride of patriotism more than any appellation derived from local discriminations. With slight shades of difference, you have the same religion, manners, habits, and political principles. You have in a common cause fought and triumphed together. The independence and liberty you possess are the work of joint councils and joint efforts—of common dangers, sufferings, and successes.

But these considerations, however powerfully they address themselves to your sensibility, are greatly outweighed by those which apply more immediately to your interest. Here every portion of our country finds the most commanding motives for carefully guarding and preserving the Union of the whole.

The North, in an unrestrained intercourse with the South, protected by the equal laws of a common government, finds in the productions of the latter great additional resources of maritime and commercial enterprise and precious materials of manufacturing industry. The South in the same intercourse, benefitting by the agency of the North, sees its agriculture grow and its commerce expand. Turning partly into its own channels the seamen of the North, it finds its particular navigation invigorated; and while it contributes, in different ways, to nourish and increase the general mass of the national navigation, it looks forward to the protection of a maritime strength to which itself is unequally adapted. The East, in a like intercourse with the West, already finds, and in the progressive improvement of interior communications by land and water will more and more find a valuable vent for the commodities which it brings from abroad or manufactures at home. The West derives from the East supplies requisite to its growth and comfort—and what is perhaps of still greater consequence, it must of necessity owe the secure enjoyment of indispensable outlets for its own productions to the weight, influence, and the future maritime strength of the Atlantic side of the Union, directed by an indissoluble community of interest as one nation. Any other tenure by which the West

can hold this essential advantage, whether derived from its own separate strength or from an apostate and unnatural connection with any foreign power, must be intrinsically precarious.

While then every part of our country thus feels an immediate and particular interest in union, all the parts combined cannot fail to find in the united mass of means and efforts greater strength, greater resource, proportionably greater security from external danger, a less frequent interruption of their peace by foreign nations; and, what is of inestimable value! they must derive from union an exemption from those broils and wars between themselves which so frequently afflict neighboring countries not tied together by the same government, which their own rivalships alone would be sufficient to produce, but which opposite foreign alliances, attachments, and intrigues would stimulate and embitter. Hence likewise they will avoid the necessity of those overgrown military establishments, which under any form of government are inauspicious to liberty, and which are to be regarded as particularly hostile to republican liberty. In this sense it is, that your Union ought to be considered as a main prop of your liberty, and that the love of the one ought to endear to you the preservation of the other.

These considerations speak a persuasive language to every reflecting and virtuous mind and exhibit the continuance of the Union as a primary object of patriotic desire. Is there a doubt whether a common government can embrace so large a sphere? Let experience solve it. To listen to mere speculation in such a case were criminal. We are authorized to hope that a proper organization of the whole, with the auxiliary agency of governments for the respective subdivisions, will afford a happy issue to the experiment. It is well worth a fair and full experiment. With such powerful and obvious motives to union affecting all parts of our country, while experience shall not have demonstrated its impracticability, there will always be reason to distrust the patriotism of those who in any quarter may endeavor to weaken its bands.

In contemplating the causes which may disturb our Union, it occurs as matter of serious concern that any ground should have been furnished for characterizing parties by geographical discriminations—northern and southern—Atlantic and western; whence designing men may endeavor to excite a belief that there is a real difference of local interests and views. One of the expedients of party to acquire influence within particular districts is to misrepresent the opinions and aims of other districts. You cannot shield yourselves too much against the jealousies and heart burnings which spring from these misrepresentations. They tend to render alien to each other those who ought to be bound together

by fraternal affection. The inhabitants of our western country have lately had a useful lesson on this head. They have seen in the negotiation by the executive—and in the unanimous ratification by the Senate—of the treaty with Spain, and in the universal satisfaction at that event throughout the United States, a decisive proof how unfounded were the suspicions propagated among them of a policy in the general government and in the Atlantic states unfriendly to their interests in regard to the Mississippi. They have been witnesses to the formation of two treaties, that with Great Britain and that with Spain, which secure to them everything they could desire, in respect to our foreign relations, towards confirming their prosperity. Will it not be their wisdom to rely for the preservation of these advantages on the Union by which they were procured? Will they not henceforth be deaf to those advisers, if such there are, who would sever them from their brethren and connect them with aliens?

To the efficacy and permanency of your Union, a government for the whole is indispensable. No alliances, however strict, between the parts can be an adequate substitute. They must inevitably experience the infractions and interruptions which all alliances in all times have experienced. Sensible of this momentous truth, you have improved upon your first essay by the adoption of a Constitution of government better calculated than your former for an intimate Union and for the efficacious management of your common concerns. This government, the offspring of our own choice uninfluenced and unawed, adopted upon full investigation and mature deliberation, completely free in its principles, in the distribution of its powers uniting security with energy, and containing within itself a provision for its own amendment, has a just claim to your confidence and your support. Respect for its authority, compliance with its laws, acquiescence in its measures, are duties enjoined by the fundamental maxims of true liberty. The basis of our political systems is the right of the people to make and to alter their constitutions of government. But the Constitution which at any time exists, until changed by an explicit and authentic act of the whole people, is sacredly obligatory upon all. The very idea of the power and the right of the people to establish government presupposes the duty of every individual to obey the established government.

All obstructions to the execution of the laws, all combinations and associations under whatever plausible character with the real design to direct, control, counteract, or awe the regular deliberation and action of the constituted authorities, are destructive of this fundamental principle and of fatal tendency. They serve to organize faction; to give it an artificial and extraordinary force; to put in the place of

the delegated will of the nation the will of a party, often a small but artful and enterprising minority of the community; and, according to the alternate triumphs of different parties, to make the public administration the mirror of the ill concerted and incongruous projects of faction, rather than the organ of consistent and wholesome plans digested by common councils and modified by mutual interests. However combinations or associations of the above description may now and then answer popular ends, they are likely, in the course of time and things, to become potent engines by which cunning, ambitious, and unprincipled men will be enabled to subvert the power of the people and to usurp for themselves the reins of government, destroying afterwards the very engines which have lifted them to unjust dominion.

Towards the preservation of your government and the permanency of your present happy state, it is requisite not only that you steadily discountenance irregular oppositions to its acknowledged authority but also that you resist with care the spirit of innovation upon its principles, however specious the pretexts. One method of assault may be to effect in the forms of the Constitution alterations which will impair the energy of the system and thus to undermine what cannot be directly overthrown. In all the changes to which you may be invited, remember that time and habit are at least as necessary to fix the true character of governments as of other human institutions, that experience is the surest standard by which to test the real tendency of the existing constitution of a country, that facility in changes upon the credit of mere hypotheses and opinion exposes to perpetual change from the endless variety of hypotheses and opinion; and remember, especially, that for the efficient management of your common interests in a country so extensive as ours, a government of as much vigor as is consistent with the perfect security of liberty is indispensable; liberty itself will find in such a government, with powers properly distributed and adjusted, its surest guardian. It is indeed little else than a name, where the government is too feeble to withstand the enterprises of faction, to confine each member of the society within the limits prescribed by the laws, and to maintain all in the secure and tranquil enjoyment of the rights of person and property.

I have already intimated to you the danger of parties in the state, with particular reference to the founding of them on geographical discriminations. Let me now take a more comprehensive view and warn you in the most solemn manner against the baneful effects of the spirit of party, generally.

This spirit, unfortunately, is inseparable from our nature, having its root in the strongest passions of the human mind. It exists under different shapes in all governments, more or less stifled, controlled, or repressed; but in

those of the popular form it is seen in its greatest rankness and is truly their worst enemy.

The alternate domination of one faction over another, sharpened by the spirit of revenge natural to party dissension, which in different ages and countries has perpetrated the most horrid enormities, is itself a frightful despotism. But this leads at length to a more formal and permanent despotism. The disorders and miseries which result gradually incline the minds of men to seek security and repose in the absolute power of an individual; and sooner or later the chief of some prevailing faction, more able or more fortunate than his competitors, turns this disposition to the purposes of his own elevation on the ruins of public liberty.

Without looking forward to an extremity of this kind (which nevertheless ought not to be entirely out of sight) the common and continual mischiefs of the spirit of party are sufficient to make it the interest and the duty of a wise people to discourage and restrain it.

It serves always to distract the public councils and enfeeble the public administration. It agitates the community with ill founded jealousies and false alarms, kindles the animosity of one part against another, fomented occasionally riot and insurrection. It opens the door to foreign influence and corruption, which find a facilitated access to the government itself through the channels of party passions. Thus the policy and the will of one country are subjected to the policy and will of another.

There is an opinion that parties in free countries are useful checks upon the administration of the government and serve to keep alive the spirit of liberty. This within certain limits is probably true—and in governments of a monarchical cast patriotism may look with indulgence, if not with favor, upon the spirit of party. But in those of the popular character, in governments purely elective, it is a spirit not to be encouraged. From their natural tendency, it is certain there will always be enough of that spirit for every salutary purpose. And there being constant danger of excess, the effort ought to be by force of public opinion to mitigate and assuage it. A fire not to be quenched, it demands a uniform vigilance to prevent its bursting into a flame, lest instead of warming it should consume.

It is important, likewise, that the habits of thinking in a free country should inspire caution in those entrusted with its administration to confine themselves within their respective constitutional spheres, avoiding in the exercise of the powers of one department to encroach upon another. The spirit of encroachment tends to consolidate the powers of all the departments in one and thus to create, whatever the form of government, a real despotism. A just estimate of that love of power and proneness to abuse it which predominates in the human

heart is sufficient to satisfy us of the truth of this position. The necessity of reciprocal checks in the exercise of political power, by dividing and distributing it into different depositories and constituting each the guardian of the public weal against invasions by the others, has been evinced by experiments ancient and modern, some of them in our country and under our own eyes. To preserve them must be as necessary as to institute them. If in the opinion of the people the distribution or modification of the constitutional powers be in any particular wrong, let it be corrected by an amendment in the way which the Constitution designates. But let there be no change by usurpation; for though this, in one instance, may be the instrument of good, it is the customary weapon by which free governments are destroyed. The precedent must always greatly overbalance in permanent evil any partial or transient benefit which the use can at any time yield.

Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports. In vain would that man claim the tribute of patriotism who should labor to subvert these great pillars of human happiness, these firmest props of the duties of men and citizens. The mere politician, equally with the pious man, ought to respect and to cherish them. A volume could not trace all their connections with private and public felicity. Let it simply be asked where is the security for property, for reputation, for life, if the sense of religious obligation desert the oaths, which are the instruments of investigation in courts of justice? And let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion. Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education on minds of peculiar structure, reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle.

It is substantially true that virtue or morality is a necessary spring of popular government. The rule indeed extends with more or less force to every species of free government. Who that is a sincere friend to it can look with indifference upon attempts to shake the foundation of the fabric?

Promote then, as an object of primary importance, institutions for the general diffusion of knowledge. In proportion as the structure of a government gives force to public opinion, it is essential that public opinion should be enlightened.

As a very important source of strength and security, cherish public credit. One method of preserving it is to use it as sparingly as possible, avoiding occasions of expense by cultivating peace, but remembering also that timely disbursements to prepare for danger frequently prevent much greater disbursements to repel it; avoiding likewise the accumulation of debt, not only by shunning occasions of

expense, but by vigorous exertions in time of peace to discharge the debts which unavoidable wars may have occasioned, not ungenerously throwing upon posterity the burden which we ourselves ought to bear. The execution of these maxims belongs to your representatives, but it is necessary that public opinion should cooperate. To facilitate to them the performance of their duty, it is essential that you should practically bear in mind that towards the payment of debts there must be revenue; that to have revenue there must be taxes; that no taxes can be devised which are not more or less inconvenient and unpleasant; that the intrinsic embarrassment inseparable from the selection of the proper objects (which is always a choice of difficulties) ought to be a decisive motive for a candid construction of the conduct of the government in making it, and for a spirit of acquiescence in the measures for obtaining revenue which the public exigencies may at any time dictate.

Observe good faith and justice towards all nations; cultivate peace and harmony with all; religion and morality enjoin this conduct, and can it be that good policy does not equally enjoin it? It will be worthy of a free, enlightened, and, at no distant period, a great nation, to give to mankind the magnanimous and too novel example of a people always guided by an exalted justice and benevolence. Who can doubt that in the course of time and things the fruits of such a plan would richly repay any temporary advantages which might be lost by a steady adherence to it? Can it be, that Providence has not connected the permanent felicity of a nation with its virtue? The experiment, at least, is recommended by every sentiment which ennobles human nature. Alas! is it rendered impossible by its vices?

In the execution of such a plan nothing is more essential than that permanent, inveterate antipathies against particular nations and passionate attachments for others should be excluded and that in place of them just and amicable feelings towards all should be cultivated. The nation which indulges towards another a habitual hatred, or an habitual fondness, is in some degree a slave. It is a slave to its animosity or to its affection, either of which is sufficient to lead it astray from its duty and its interest. Antipathy in one nation against another disposes each more readily to offer insult and injury, to lay hold of slight causes of umbrage, and to be haughty and intractable when accidental or trifling occasions of dispute occur. Hence frequent collisions, obstinate, envenomed, and bloody contests. The nation, prompted by ill will and resentment, sometimes impels to war the government, contrary to the best calculations of policy. The government sometimes participates in the national propensity and adopts through passion what reason would reject; at other times, it makes the animosity of the nation sub-

servient to projects of hostility instigated by pride, ambition and other sinister and pernicious motives. The peace often, sometimes perhaps the liberty, of nations has been the victim.

So likewise, a passionate attachment of one nation for another produces a variety of evils. Sympathy for the favorite nation, facilitating the illusion of an imaginary common interest in cases where no real common interest exists and infusing into one the enmities of the other, betrays the former into a participation in the quarrels and wars of the latter, without adequate inducement or justification. It leads also to concessions to the favorite nation of privileges denied to others, which is apt doubly to injure the nation making the concessions, by unnecessarily parting with what ought to have been retained and by exciting jealousy, ill will, and a disposition to retaliate in the parties from whom equal privileges are withheld. And it gives to ambitious, corrupted, or deluded citizens (who devote themselves to the favorite nation) facility to betray or sacrifice the interests of their own country without odium, sometimes even with popularity, gilding with the appearances of a virtuous sense of obligation, a commendable deference for public opinion, or a laudable zeal for public good, the base or foolish compliances of ambition, corruption, or infatuation.

As avenues to foreign influence in innumerable ways, such attachments are particularly alarming to the truly enlightened and independent patriot. How many opportunities do they afford to tamper with domestic factions, to practice the arts of seduction, to mislead public opinion, to influence or awe the public councils! Such an attachment of a small or weak towards a great and powerful nation dooms the former to be the satellite of the latter.

Against the insidious wiles of foreign influence (I conjure you to believe me, fellow citizens) the jealousy of a free people ought to be constantly awake, since history and experience prove that foreign influence is one of the most baneful foes of republican government. But that jealousy to be useful must be impartial; else it becomes the instrument of the very influence to be avoided, instead of a defense against it. Excessive partiality for one foreign nation and excessive dislike of another cause those whom they actuate to see danger only on one side, and serve to veil and even second the arts of influence on the other. Real patriots, who may resist the intrigues of the favorite, are liable to become suspected and odious, while its tools and dupes usurp the applause and confidence of the people to surrender their interests.

The great rule of conduct for us in regard to foreign nations is, in extending our commercial relations, to have with them as little political connection as possible. So far as we have already formed engagements, let them be fulfilled with perfect good faith. Here let us stop.

Europe has a set of primary interests, which to us have none or a very remote relation. Hence she must be engaged in frequent controversies, the causes of which are essentially foreign to our concerns. Hence therefore it must be unwise in us to implicate ourselves, by artificial ties, in the ordinary vicissitudes of her politics or the ordinary combinations and collisions of her friendships or enmities.

Our detached and distant situation invites and enables us to pursue a different course. If we remain one people under an efficient government, the period is not far off when we may defy material injury from external annoyance; when we may take such an attitude as will cause the neutrality we may at any time resolve upon to be scrupulously respected; when belligerent nations, under the impossibility of making acquisitions upon us, will not lightly hazard the giving us provocation; when we may choose peace or war, as our interest guided by justice shall counsel.

Why forgo the advantages of so peculiar a situation? Why quit our own to stand upon foreign ground? Why, by interweaving our destiny with that of any part of Europe, entangle our peace and prosperity in the toils of European ambition, rivalship, interest, humor, or caprice?

It is our true policy to steer clear of permanent alliances with any portion of the foreign world—so far, I mean, as we are now at liberty to do it, for let me not be understood as capable of patronizing infidelity to existing engagements (I hold the maxim no less applicable to public than to private affairs, that honesty is always the best policy)—I repeat it therefore, let those engagements be observed in their genuine sense. But in my opinion it is unnecessary and would be unwise to extend them.

Taking care always to keep ourselves, by suitable establishments, on a respectably defensive posture, we may safely trust to temporary alliances for extraordinary emergencies.

Harmony, liberal intercourse with all nations, are recommended by policy, humanity, and interest. But even our commercial policy should hold an equal and impartial hand; neither seeking nor granting exclusive favors or preferences; consulting the natural course of things; diffusing and diversifying by gentle means the streams of commerce but forcing nothing; establishing with powers so disposed—in order to give to trade a stable course, to define the rights of our merchants, and to enable the government to support them—conventional rules of intercourse, the best that present circumstances and mutual opinion will permit, but temporary, and liable to be from time to time abandoned or varied, as experience and circumstances shall dictate; constantly keeping in view, that it is folly in one nation to look for disinterested favors from another—that it must pay with a portion of its

independence for whatever it may accept under that character—that by such acceptance it may place itself in the condition of having given equivalents for nominal favors and yet of being reproached with ingratitude for not giving more. There can be no greater error than to expect or calculate upon real favors from nation to nation. It is an illusion which experience must cure, which a just pride ought to discard.

In offering to you, my countrymen, these counsels of an old and affectionate friend, I dare not hope they will make the strong and lasting impression I could wish—that they will control the usual current of the passions or prevent our nation from running the course which has hitherto marked the destiny of nations. But if I may even flatter myself that they may be productive of some partial benefit, some occasional good, that they may now and then recur to moderate the fury of party spirit, to warn against the mischiefs of foreign intrigue, to guard against the impostures of pretended patriotism—this hope will be a full recompense for the solicitude for your welfare by which they have been dictated.

How far in the discharge of my official duties I have been guided by the principles which have been delineated, the public records and other evidences of my conduct must witness to you and to the world. To myself, the assurance of my own conscience is that I have at least believed myself to be guided by them.

In relation to the still subsisting war in Europe, my proclamation of the 22d of April 1793 is the index to my plan. Sanctioned by your approving voice and by that of your representatives in both houses of Congress, the spirit of that measure has continually governed me, uninfluenced by any attempts to deter or divert me from it.

After deliberate examination with the aid of the best lights I could obtain, I was well satisfied that our country, under all the circumstances of the case, had a right to take—and was bound in duty and interest to take—a neutral position. Having taken it, I determined, as far as should depend upon me, to maintain it with moderation, perseverance, and firmness.

The considerations which respect the right to hold this conduct it is not necessary on this occasion to detail. I will only observe that, according to my understanding of the matter, that right, so far from being denied by any of the belligerent powers, has been virtually admitted by all.

The duty of holding a neutral conduct may be inferred, without anything more, from the obligation which justice and humanity impose on every nation, in cases in which it is free to act, to maintain inviolate the relations of peace and amity towards other nations.

The inducements of interest for observing that conduct will best be referred to your own reflections and ex-

perience. With me, a predominant motive has been to endeavor to gain time to our country to settle and mature its yet recent institutions and to progress without interruption to that degree of strength and consistency which is necessary to give it, humanly speaking, the command of its own fortunes.

Though in reviewing the incidents of my administration I am unconscious of intentional error, I am nevertheless too sensible of my defects not to think it probable that I may have committed many errors. Whatever they may be, I fervently beseech the Almighty to avert or mitigate the evils to which they may tend. I shall also carry with me the hope that my country will never cease to view them with indulgence and that, after forty-five years of my life dedicated to its service with an upright zeal, the faults of incompetent abilities will be consigned to oblivion, as myself must soon be to the mansions of rest.

Relying on its kindness in this as in other things, and actuated by that fervent love towards it which is so natural to a man who views in it the native soil of himself and his progenitors for several generations, I anticipate with pleasing expectation that retreat, in which I promise myself to realize without alloy the sweet enjoyment of partaking in the midst of my fellow citizens the benign influence of good laws under a free government—the ever favorite object of my heart, and the happy reward, as I trust, of our mutual cares, labors and dangers.

GEO. WASHINGTON.

UNITED STATES, 19th September 1796.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. ERNST). Without objection, it is so ordered.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR—Continued

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

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

TRIBUTE TO DR. CONSTANCE E. CLAYTON

Mr. CASEY. Madam President, I rise today, as I have every year that I have been in the Senate, which is quite a long time now—the last 10 years, going into 11—to give some remarks in commemoration of Black History Month. The way I have done that, and the way our office has done it, is to recognize a special figure in my home State of Pennsylvania, an individual who we are very proud of. Today we honor Dr. Constance E. Clayton, a trailblazing figure whose career in education positively impacted the lives of countless children in Philadelphia, and whose work

continues to pay dividends in the city public schools to this day. Throughout her long career as a teacher and administrator in the Philadelphia School District, Dr. Clayton never lost sight of her mission. In her words: “The children come first.”

A product of Philadelphia public schools, Dr. Clayton became the first African American and the first woman to serve as superintendent of the Philadelphia School District. This Black History Month, we celebrate Dr. Clayton's place in that history, but as we do, we should also ask ourselves if we are living up to her legacy and if we are putting the children first—all children everywhere first.

I will be seeing Dr. Clayton today and so many of her friends. The rules don't allow me to acknowledge anyone else in the Chamber. So I will do that later. But I do want her to know how much we appreciate her giving us this much time to pay tribute to her and to her work.

Connie Clayton's story is a great American story. Born to a plumber and social worker, she was raised by her mother and grandmother after her parents divorced when she was just 2 years old. She attended Paul Lawrence Dunbar Elementary School in Philadelphia.

Her mind, like that of so many children, was awakened by a special teacher. In her case, it was her fourth grade teacher at Dunbar, whose name she still readily recalls—Ms. Alice Spotwood. She remembers that Ms. Spotwood was kind, and she made learning fun. She also remembers that Ms. Spotwood seemed interested in her individually, even as she was interested in every other child in that classroom. Ms. Spotwood made Connie feel special.

Connie Clayton went on to attend Jay Cook Junior High School and Philadelphia High School for Girls, where she excelled academically. She thought she wanted to be a doctor, even taking 4 years of Latin at Girls High School on the theory that she would need to decipher dated medical jargon. Her enthusiasm waned when she realized that calling a body a corpus didn't make studying its contents any more appealing. She chose, instead, to focus on the mind, earning her bachelor's degree and her master of education degree from Temple University, before going on to her doctorate of education in educational leadership from the University of Pennsylvania, where she was a Rockefeller scholar.

Dr. Constance E. Clayton recognized that education—her education—was what empowered her to succeed. It started at Dunbar, where teachers like Ms. Spotwood first taught her to raise her sights and to reach out and to believe. So it is no coincidence that her first step in her professional life was to go back to Dunbar and return the favor. She took a role as a student teacher alongside many of the same people who taught her before she could imagine that the letters “Ph.D.” would

follow her name or that the title “Superintendent” would someday precede it.

In 1955, Dr. Clayton got her first full-time teaching job at Philadelphia’s Harrison Elementary School, where she taught fifth grade social studies. Grounded in that personal mission that children come first, Dr. Clayton’s years as a teacher revealed a unique gift for understanding children, their specific challenges and their particular needs. This is no doubt why, in the years that followed, she earned a role in developing the social studies curriculum for the entire district and led an effort to develop and train teachers to implement a Black history curriculum throughout the school district.

Dr. Clayton recalls understanding that for students at a predominantly Black school in Philadelphia, it is Black History Month every day, every month, and they need to see their lived experience reflected in the course material because they didn’t see many white picket fences where they were growing up. To paraphrase Carter Woodson, often known as the father of Black history himself: Kids need to learn, not just about Black history but about Black people in American history. Dr. Clayton recalls the reward of watching kids excited to learn that they, too, could be a painter, an author, an astronaut or whatever they wanted, and of watching the limits of those children’s imaginations dissolve before their eyes.

Dr. Clayton didn’t limit her own imagination either. In 1972, she was named executive director and associate superintendent of early childhood education programs for the Philadelphia School District.

Early childhood education is an issue dear to my own heart, as the sponsor of legislation here in the Senate to ensure universal early education nationwide. We know that the stakes for this issue are high. Early learning increases future income. It reduces the chance of arrest or incarceration, and it also reduces reliance on social services. Under Dr. Clayton’s leadership, the Philadelphia School District expanded and enhanced its early education program into a national model.

Connie Clayton’s passion for helping children and her competence did not go unnoticed. In 1982, she was chosen as superintendent of the Philadelphia School District, the first African American and the first woman to hold that role. She knew the expectation would be high, but her mother always told her: “Delete the word ‘can’t’ from your vocabulary.” So Connie hit the ground running hard, declaring in the press conference where she accepted the job that motto that would come to define her tenure: “The children come first.”

I have often said that there is a light inside of every child, and it is the obligation of adults, especially elected officials, to make sure that this light shines brightly to the full measure of

its potential. We know that from day one as superintendent, Dr. Connie Clayton knew her job was to nurture this light. But as a product of segregated education herself, she understood that our system doesn’t always allow every light to shine equally bright.

High minority schools often receive less funding, often have less experienced teachers, and often offer fewer high-level math and science courses. We know still today that this is true. Black K–12 students are almost four times as likely as White students to receive an out-of-school suspension and almost twice as likely to be expelled. Black students represent 16 percent of the public school population today but 42 percent of the population of justice facility education programs.

Connie Clayton refused to simply curse the darkness of these numbers. She worked to change them. She knew that an enlightened mind can empower students to overcome the traps laid by cynicism, indifference, and underfunding—to slip the bounds of low expectation, beat the odds, and then turn around and work to change them. A good education can take that light inside and make it flare.

She might have asked, and we still are asking: What, then, is a good education? Can some combination of facts and numbers alone contain this transformative power of education?

Well, W.E.B. Du Bois said: “Education must not simply teach work—it must teach life.” Dr. Clayton understood this in all of its implications, both clear and subtle. She knew it was clear that a good education starts with an open school.

In the 5 years preceding Dr. Clayton’s term as superintendent, there were five teacher strikes in Philadelphia that cost students 1,000 days in the classroom. But during her 11 years in office, there wasn’t a single strike. She knew it was clear that a good education requires funding. When she came in, the Philadelphia School District was facing a crushing \$90 million deficit. When she left, it was running a surplus, and she had created financial partnerships with area businesses, all without closing a single school.

Dr. Clayton knew it was clear that a good education comes from a good curriculum. When she came in, she noticed the school district had stopped teaching algebra. When she left as superintendent, she fostered a partnership with local university professors to teach the subject of algebra to a voluntary class that grew from 9 kids the first year to over 1,900.

She implemented a free breakfast program because she knew that students from certain parts of the district might not be able to get food in the morning. We know, as she knew well, that hungry kids cannot learn.

She reinstated summer school because she knew that a few credits here or there can mean the difference between a diploma and a dropout, and in

that difference lay the blueprints to divergent lives.

She treated her schools like second homes for children because she remembered, from all of her years of teaching, how the vast majority of parents wanted more for their kids than they were able to provide and that they just needed some help in filling the gaps.

She took just 1 week of vacation in 11 years as superintendent—that has to be some kind of national record—and just 1 day of vacation in her many years of teaching before that, because she felt not just a passion for her work but an urgency to see its results.

Dr. Clayton had a sense of urgency about educating these children, in the same way it was urgent for the followers of Sojourner Truth in the 19th century. It was urgent for the students in the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, known as SNCC, in the 20th century. They had that urgency. It has been urgent for all the ordinary lives before, between, and since. It was urgent for little Hannah A. Lions, a girl studying in Philadelphia in the 1830s whose family saved her school copybook as “proof that there were some educated [Black] people back when” and donated this copybook to the recently opened National Museum of African American History and Culture here in Washington, where it sits on display.

It was as urgent, of course, for Dr. Constance Clayton, when she attended segregated schools in the same city some 100 years after Hannah. That is because a good education is not just some combination of numbers and facts. It is enlightenment for a mind constrained, freedom for a soul repressed, and a passport to a future that transcends artificial limitations and unleashes potential.

Dr. Clayton worked feverishly to put one of those passports in the pockets of each student who passed through the Philadelphia schools under her watch. Her passion and her vision earned her a reputation as a reformer whom the New York Times wrote led an “educational renaissance” in Philadelphia.

She would do whatever it took to make schools better for her students. She pushed the district to meet the goals of the America 2000 Program, an ambitious plan to significantly increase the achievements of urban school districts across the country. She instituted the Homeless Student Initiative, a successful program to provide continuity in education and a level of consistent support to the hundreds, perhaps thousands, of homeless children in the district enduring the daily hardships of life in shelters. Connie worked to desegregate schools and made sure the district was providing employment opportunities to minority candidates.

Several years into her administration, the executive director of the Council of Great City Schools remarked of Dr. Clayton’s tenure as superintendent: “Looking at an array

of programs carried out in Philadelphia, you will see almost every innovative reform that has been proposed in urban schools." So it is no surprise that Dr. Clayton received all manner of awards and honors. Let me mention a few: the Dr. Constance E. Clayton Chair in Urban Education at the Graduate School of Education at the University of Pennsylvania, which was named in her honor—the first endowed professorship in the United States to be named after an African-American woman. She received the Distinguished Daughters of Pennsylvania Award and the Humanitarian Service Award from the Philadelphia Commission on Human Relations, as well as the 2008 Star Community Commitment in Education Award from the Philadelphia Education Fund, just to name a few. She has received honorary doctorates from 17 colleges and universities, not to mention being a visiting professor at Harvard Graduate School of Education. I could go on and on today.

She currently serves as trustee of the Philadelphia Museum of Art, chairing the African and Afro-American Collections and Exhibits Committee and is a life member of the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, where she has served in multiple leadership roles.

Connie Clayton's life has been a life of service. We know that in our State capitol—the building has the following inscription: "All public service is a trust given in faith and accepted in honor." Dr. Clayton honored the trust of public service. She validated the faith that the parents of all those students placed in her to carry out that trust, and she always put school-children first. So on behalf of those students and their parents and everyone else her work touched in the course of her long career, it is my distinct privilege to honor Dr. Constance E. Clayton in celebration of Black History Month on the Senate floor today. I want to convey our gratitude for her devotion to education and, of course, to the children of Philadelphia.

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. CORNYN. 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. CORNYN. Madam President, it has been since January 20 when President Trump was inaugurated that we have been trying to get his Cabinet choices confirmed here in the Senate. Unfortunately, it has been slow-walked to the point now that tonight we are going to be voting on the President's nominee to lead the Commerce Department, Mr. Wilbur Ross. I am grateful to Mr. Ross for wanting to serve the country in this way. I think President Trump has chosen wisely as to the Commerce Secretary.

One of the things President Trump said Mr. Ross will do is enter into the negotiation process on NAFTA, the North American Free-Trade Agreement. In my part of the world, in Texas, NAFTA is viewed positively; it is not a dirty word.

Some people have suggested that trade somehow has a negative impact on our economy, but I believe the evidence is to the contrary. As a matter of fact, just between Mexico and the United States—5 million jobs depend on binational trade between Mexico and the United States. I know from time to time we have differences of views with Mexico. I saw that Secretary Kelly and Secretary Tillerson were in Mexico City on Wednesday talking about some of those differences but reassuring our Mexican counterparts of our sincerity and good will in trying to work through those. But the fact is, we share a common border with Mexico. What happens in Mexico has an impact on the economy and public safety in the United States and vice versa.

So I am actually grateful for the conversation I have had with the Secretary of Commerce nominee, Wilbur Ross and that he is interested in updating NAFTA, the North American Free-Trade Agreement, rather than throwing the baby out with the bath water. I think that is a positive approach and one that I certainly support.

We have a lot more Cabinet posts that remain vacant in the executive branch because our friends across the aisle have decided that somehow serves their political interests. But it does not serve the public's interests and it does not serve the country's interests to have a brandnew administration without the ability of the President to pick and choose the people he wants to help him govern the country. It creates more problems, and it also prevents us from getting on with the other important business of the Congress and working together with this President to try to move the country forward in so many important ways.

I am glad we will actually consider Congressman ZINKE's nomination for the Department of Interior later this evening, but we are going to have to go through this arduous process, this procedural process of cloture and postcloture time-burning before we can actually vote on this qualified nominee. I have said before that by holding up these qualified nominees, they are not only preventing the executive branch from working for the benefit of the American people, but they are also keeping us from our other job. After we get out of the personnel business, we need to get about the business of legislating and producing results for the American people. So I hope that at some point and at some point soon, our Democratic friends will let us move on from the confirmation process and get down to work where we can make that progress.

NOMINATION OF NEIL GORSUCH

One of the areas in which I am very excited about our ability to effect change will be in considering the President's nominee to fill the seat left vacant by the tragic passing of Justice Antonin Scalia. It has been a month since President Trump nominated Judge Neil Gorsuch to that position. As Americans—including Members of the Senate—are familiarizing themselves with his incredible record, I have been glad to see folks on both sides of the aisle speak so well of him, not just his sterling character and his sterling legal career but how he appears to be really the role model for the type of person you would want to see sitting on the Supreme Court of the United States. Those who know him and his work understand that he exemplifies the integrity, intellect, and accomplishment we would expect from someone on our highest Court.

Some of our colleagues across the aisle—notably the minority leader—have complained that Judge Gorsuch has refused to prejudge certain issues he has been asked about that will likely come before him as a member of the Supreme Court of the United States. I think Judge Gorsuch has it right. It is common practice for Supreme Court nominees, reflecting the judicial ethics of not deciding cases before they are actually presented, to decline to answer those sorts of speculative questions. Justice Ginsburg, whom the minority leader clearly respects, made this point eloquently, and Supreme Court nominees have adhered to the norm ever since. If following the well-conceived practices developed by people like Justice Ginsburg of declining to answer questions about how they would decide a case if it came before the Supreme Court—certainly if that is the rule she would embrace, then that ought to be good enough for Judge Gorsuch as well.

I think it reflects the fact that our friends across the aisle who are looking for something to complain about with Judge Gorsuch simply can't find anything, and so they are creating this false choice of asking him to decide cases before he even assumes the bench on the Supreme Court, which clearly is unethical for any judge to do because judges are not politicians running on a platform; a judge's job is to decide the law according to the law and the Constitution. How can you possibly know before the case is presented what the facts might be or how the issue might be presented to the court?

Every ethicist, every legal scholar who has had a chance to comment on such things understands that we can't ethically require judges to say how they would decide cases before they go on the court. If they did, I think they would be disqualified from serving because they would really be just a politician wearing a black robe but one who is unaccountable to the American people since they serve literally for life.

Editorial boards across the country and even former Obama administration officials have recognized Judge Gorsuch as a man who would “help restore confidence in the rule of law.” Before he was even announced as the nominee, an editorial in the *Denver Post*, his hometown newspaper, encouraged President Trump to select him. They called Judge Gorsuch “a brilliant legal mind and talented writer.” That same paper, by the way, endorsed Hillary Clinton for President. But they agree that Neil Gorsuch is a tremendous nominee for the Supreme Court.

Just last week, the *Washington Post* issued an article titled “Simply stated, Gorsuch is steadfast and surprising.” Well, that is a very concise way to put it, and it is actually a great summary. He is steadfast in his belief in originalism; that is, the text of the Constitution actually means what it says, not based on some desire to see some particular policy affected that has nothing to do with the literal text of the Constitution. That is what judges do—they interpret a written Constitution, not an evolving Constitution or decide cases based on their public policy preferences.

It is clear that Judge Gorsuch is independent. He interprets the law as a judge should—with fairness and without bias.

To put it another way, Judge Gorsuch is exactly the kind of nominee you would hope to see from any administration, and it is gratifying to see him nominated to this important seat by President Trump. I am sure, because of the qualities I have described, that is why he was previously confirmed unanimously by the U.S. Senate to his current position on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit.

Judge Gorsuch is a tremendous jurist and scholar. He will be appearing before the Senate Judiciary Committee in March for questioning by members of the Judiciary Committee, and then there will be a vote. He has been confirmed by the Senate before unanimously, as I said, because he was then and is now a mainstream pick with an exceptional legal record. The more we learn about him, it seems the more we hear from folks along his journey from childhood, to law school, to his professional life, commending his intellect, integrity, and his strong sense of character. I believe he is simply the right man for the job. I look forward to considering him before the Judiciary Committee and to confirming him soon.

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

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

CALLING FOR THE APPOINTMENT OF A SPECIAL COUNSEL

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, I have been concerned. As I read the press and talk with officials, I learn more about the troubling connections between the Russian Government and President Trump's campaign and administration.

We already knew—it is very, very factual—that Russian President Putin ordered a multifaceted campaign to undermine public faith in our election and to help President Trump win in November. That is something all of us as Americans should be concerned about. Whether you are a Republican, a Democrat, or an Independent, when you have that kind of an attack on our democracy, it is a concern to all of us.

Reports indicate that Trump officials were in repeated contact with senior Russian intelligence officials during this time. This comes on the heels of the President's National Security Advisor having to resign after providing misleading details on conversations he had with the Russian Ambassador concerning U.S. sanctions. But there is a lot we still don't know, including the extent of the contacts, who directed them, whether people who at one point or another left the Trump campaign were involved, whether there was collusion, and, of course, the obvious question: What did the President know and when he did he know it?

The American people deserve to know the facts. They deserve a full and fair investigation that is free from any political influence. The White House has already demonstrated it is not going to respect the independence of this investigation. The fact that the White House Chief of Staff attempted to use the FBI—in violation of Justice Department policies—to suppress news reports about Russian contacts reveals why we really can't trust the White House to play by the rules. And, of course, the rules are very, very clear.

For these reasons, I am calling on Attorney General Sessions to step aside on this issue and to appoint a special counsel to conduct an independent investigation. That is not an attack on Attorney General Sessions. I have known him for 30 years. I just want to make sure we do not have these continuing questions about what the President knew and when he knew it.

Even a cursory review of the Justice Department's recusal standards reveals that the Attorney General does not—indeed, cannot—have the independence necessary to assure wary Americans that this investigation will be driven by the facts, not by relationships. Certainly those who have served as prosecutors—Attorney General Sessions has; I have—know that there are times when the prosecutor has to step aside and let someone else do it just so that everybody can be confident in the investigation.

In fact, Justice Department regulations mandate that “no employee shall

participate in a criminal investigation or prosecution if he has a personal or political relationship with . . . [a]ny person or organization substantially involved in the conduct that is the subject of the investigation.” Of course, a “political relationship” is defined as “a close identification with an elected official . . . arising from service as a principal adviser thereto.” Prior to his confirmation, when we were holding the confirmation hearings on then-Senator Jeff Sessions, I asked him whether he met the standard. It is not really a close call. The rule perfectly describes the relationship between Attorney General Sessions and President Trump. But he brushed the question off, claiming that he was “merely . . . a supporter of the President's during the campaign.”

Well, that is an obvious mischaracterization of the role he played as a top adviser to the Trump campaign. Attorney General—then-Senator—Sessions was widely recognized as a central figure in the campaign. He had his fingerprints all over the President's policies. In fact, one of the President's top advisers, Steve Bannon, even called him the President's “clearinghouse for policy and philosophy.” That is a pretty close connection. I could hardly think of anything closer. To suggest the Attorney General was just “a supporter” and that he did not have a “political relationship” with the Trump campaign, when you look at the Bannon comments, that is patently false.

If the Attorney General refuses to follow the Department's recusal standard—now as the head of the Department, well, then, I would hope he would follow his own recusal standards. Last year, just days before the election, then-Senator Sessions and other Trump campaign surrogates wrote an op-ed. He criticized then-Attorney General Lynch for not recusing herself from matters involving Secretary Clinton. The basis of his complaint was a “39-minute conversation”—to use his words—that Attorney General Lynch had with former President Bill Clinton in Phoenix, AZ. I would hope he would set the same standard for himself that he sets for others because it is kind of hard to talk about a half-hour conversation and say that requires recusal when it comes to the Clintons, but a year's worth of vigorously campaigning with and vigorously advising does not when it comes to the Trump campaign. A year working on the Trump campaign doesn't count, but 39 minutes talking to former President Clinton does? Come on. If that is the standard for recusal in one case—I won't do the math on how many times 39 minutes goes into a year, but I would say, using Jeff Sessions' own standards, he has far, far, far more reason to recuse himself in this matter.

During the 20 years I have worked with him, Jeff Sessions has often spoken of his commitment to the rule of law. I know he feels strongly about

that, just as I do. As Senators, every one of us should. Certainly every one of us who has had the privilege to be a prosecutor should have a commitment to the rule of law. Well, Attorney General Sessions' commitment is now being tested.

Whether we apply the Justice Department's recusal standard, which is very, very clear, or use the Jeff Sessions' 39-minute recusal standard, it is clear that Attorney General Sessions must step aside. In fact, nothing less than the integrity of our democracy is at stake with this investigation. And I do not say that lightly. Nothing less than the integrity of our democracy is at stake with this investigation. What did everybody know? When did they know it?

It is essential that the investigation be led by someone who—in both appearance and in reality—is impartial and removed from politics. That does not describe someone who was in the trenches of a political campaign with the subjects of the investigation while they were allegedly engaged in the activity under investigation, or somebody who has been described by Steve Bannon as a “clearinghouse for policy and philosophy” for President Trump.

For the good of the country, for the good of all of us—Republicans, Democrats, Independents—the Attorney General really has just one thing to do: Appoint a special counsel and let the public have the answers. What did everybody know? When did they know it? It is pretty simple. The people of Vermont, and I suspect throughout the country, would like to have those answers that go to the bedrock of our democracy.

In my 42 years here, I have never seen anything that has concerned me so much as another country that does not have the best interests of the United States at heart trying to interfere in our election, another country trying to determine what the United States does. This is a country that does not have the United States' best interests at heart but a country that wants to manipulate the United States. This U.S. Senator, for the time I have in office, will continue to speak out against it.

Mr. DURBIN. Will the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. LEAHY. Yes, of course, I will yield to the distinguished Senator.

Mr. DURBIN. I thank my colleague from the State of Vermont and, for many years, my fellow colleague on the Senate Judiciary Committee for his statement. I couldn't agree with him more that we need an independent, transparent investigation of this Russian invasion into the body politic of America in an effort to subvert our sovereignty. It was made by a country that is not our friend and was made at a time when they were trying to influence the outcome of an election.

I just want to note to my colleague and friend from Vermont that during the break I visited Poland, Lithuania,

and Ukraine. It was interesting. In Poland, they put up with the notion of Putin's interference on a daily basis. The most frightening prospect, of course, is the movement of military forces, which we hope never occurs, but they look at it as a very real threat. They have what they call the hybrid war. They said it isn't just the military; it is also his cyber attacks on our country, and it is also his propaganda on our country.

One of the Polish leaders asked me a question: We have been wondering, Senator, if the United States is not willing to confront Russia with its invasion of your sovereignty in your Presidential election, would you be willing to stand up for your NATO allies if there is an effort of aggression by Putin? Would you be willing to stand up against Russia in those times?

I think that is a legitimate issue. If we don't take what the Senator has raised very seriously about putting independence in the investigation of this matter, and we don't do it with dispatch, shame on us. But it is also going to say to the world that we did not respond in a positive and forceful way when it came to this aggression against the United States.

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, if I might respond to my good friend and senior Senator from Illinois, he has been a friend and colleague for decades. The Judiciary Committee and the whole Senate has benefited from his knowledge.

What the leader of Poland said to the distinguished Senator is a very chilling thing, Madam President. He knows from his own family ancestors how bad an area can be if it is under the domination of something like the then-Soviet Union and now Russia. He also knows from his own experience as an American how important it is that we have the freedoms we have.

I was privileged, along with my wife Marcelle and several others—Senator COCHRAN, Senator UDALL, and Senator BENNET and Congressman MCGOVERN—to visit Cuba and have long discussions with people who would like to see real democracy come, and then to go to Colombia where they have fought for over 50 years a terrible internal civil war with countless deaths and atrocities and to see how they were trying to bring back the rule of law and the rule of democracy. And we just sit there, and it is so easy for us who grew up in an era in which we believe in our democracy and we believe in our voices being heard, where sometimes we win elections and sometimes we lose them, but we believe in the fairness of it. It is so easy to sit there and think: But we do it right.

This makes me wonder. Can we continue to say that? Can we be the beacon to the rest of the world? Can we say: Do as the United States does because we are open, we are transparent, we are honest.

Well, this has not been open, transparent, or honest. Let's make it so.

Let's not let it drag on. Let's go to it now so people can then start debating issues. I expect there will be areas where I will agree with the new administration and there are areas where I disagree with the new administration. But I want to know I am agreeing and disagreeing with an American administration, not with Vladimir Putin's administration.

So I am moved by what my friend from Illinois has said. I hope the rest of the country listens because we are supposed to be the example. We pride ourselves on being the example. We are the oldest existing democracy in the world. Let's not do anything that will come back to haunt us.

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. TESTER. 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.

NOMINATION OF RYAN ZINKE

Mr. TESTER. Mr. President, I am very pleased to see the majority of the Senate move forward and vote on the nomination of a fellow westerner, Montana's Congressman, and the next Secretary of the Interior, RYAN ZINKE. I appreciate RYAN's willingness to serve in this very important post. The Department of the Interior is vital to Montana's economy, and I am glad to see someone from the West selected to lead it.

The job of the Interior Secretary is critically important, especially today as America's public lands come under attack by way too many folks who want to see them transferred to the States or outright sold off. Selling them off to the States is the first step in selling our public lands to the highest bidder, and we can't let that happen.

Congressman ZINKE has publicly said that he will not sell off our public lands nor transfer them to the States, and in Montana, your word is your bond. For that, I am pleased to support his nomination.

Congressman ZINKE's to-do list is no doubt long, and I look forward to working with him to check that list off for the people of Montana.

Montana is home to some of the world's most prized public lands, including Glacier and Yellowstone National Parks and the Bob Marshall Wilderness. The fact is, our public lands are huge economic drivers, creating and sustaining more than 64,000 jobs in Montana alone through our outdoor recreation economy and thereby pumping billions of dollars back into our local economies.

That is why, when a foreign mining company threatened the gateway to Yellowstone National Park, I was pleased that Congressman ZINKE expressed interest in joining me and local

businesses and community leaders to protect it. I look forward to working with him to permanently safeguard the doorstep of Yellowstone National Park because Montanans know there are some places more valuable than gold, and Yellowstone is one of those places.

I feel confident that Congressman ZINKE will handle the issues before him with Montana common sense—issues like our national parks, and coming up with a responsible solution to the deferred maintenance backlog that is wreaking havoc on our national park system; the Land and Water Conservation Fund, and how to work with Congress and work in this administration to ensure full and devoted funding to initiatives like LWCF, the visionary Land and Water Conservation Fund; in Indian country, living up to our trust responsibilities that we owe to America's sovereign Indian nations; and in resource development, how to responsibly manage our public lands for energy and resource development, and how to balance that with respect to clean water and clean air and wildlife.

Of course, there are always some issues where Congressman ZINKE and I don't see eye-to-eye, but he has publicly committed to working with Congress to try and address some of the most important issues of this Nation's economy as it applies to our public lands. Montana's economy is no exception, and I will take him at his word.

As a Montanan, I know how important the Department of the Interior is to our way of life, and I am optimistic that Congressman ZINKE will do right by Montana and the country in his new role. Montana will be watching. For that matter, the country will be watching, and I know Congressman ZINKE will make us proud.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MURPHY. 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. MURPHY. Mr. President, believe it or not, there are some smart people out there in America who are not billionaires. I know it doesn't seem like it as we debate yet another megarich Wall Street titan to head another department in the Federal Government, but billionaires do not actually have a monopoly on wisdom in this country.

But it doesn't seem that this is what our new President thinks. If they all get confirmed, Donald Trump's Cabinet will have a net wealth that is greater than one-third of all Americans. Think about that for a second. The Cabinet of the United States will have a net wealth all together that is greater than one-third of every single American—the poorest third of Americans—if you put them all together.

He has nominated millionaires and billionaires to head the Department of

Education, the Department of Labor, the Department of the Treasury, the Department of Commerce—the nominee we are now debating—and the Department of Health and Human Services. He even nominated two of his rich friends to head the Army and the Navy.

I heard President Trump talk over and over the past 2 years about how he was going to drain the swamp once he got here. As far as I can tell, all he has done thus far is just sell the swamp to his rich friends.

I am not saying that billionaires like Wilbur Ross aren't smart. You have to be pretty savvy in order to make all of that money for yourself or for your investors. There is honor in making money. That is the American dream—to have the opportunity, if you want it, to become very rich, to become very affluent, to create a business that makes you, your family, and maybe those who invested in it very well off. I have a lot of friends who have made a lot of money in and around Wall Street. I don't begrudge the fact that they did it. But making a lot of money for yourself doesn't automatically equate to the ability to run an agency or to run a country.

President Trump made a whole bunch of money for himself, but his first month on the job as President has been a series of not just domestic embarrassments but international embarrassments—writing Executive orders without even checking with the Cabinet to see if what he is doing is legal or illegal; not being able to fill positions in the White House or in Federal agencies—the number of foreign diplomats who tell me they have no idea whom to call right now in the Federal Government is as embarrassing as it is maddening—getting into public spats with even our most reliable allies like Germany and Australia; spending most of his time in pitch battles with the media and his own staff, rather than working with us on trying to solve the problems of this country.

Donald Trump is good at making money for himself, but those skills, as we have found, do not translate very well to running a country. Maybe that is because when the entire focus of your entire life is making as much money as humanly possible for yourself, you cannot pivot on a dime all of a sudden and start putting all of your energy into helping other people. Maybe life doesn't work like that. So that is what really worries me about these billionaire nominees.

A few weeks ago, I was on the floor talking about the now-Secretary of State Rex Tillerson. He spent his career at Exxon helping to build a very successful business, but in doing so, he hurt a lot of people. Exxon deals with horrible dictators who used those oil revenues in order to help murder thousands of their people. That was good for business, but it was awful for humanity.

Andy Puzder, who is no longer a nominee for the Department of Labor,

openly mocked his workers. He suggested they just got in the way of the efficient operation of his business, and he pined for the day when robots would replace them.

Now we are debating Wilbur Ross to be Secretary of Commerce. Wilbur Ross made a lot of money for himself, but he has taken advantage of the very bad trade deals that this body has passed in order to offshore thousands of U.S. jobs. One such company that he owned, a textile company, employed 4,700 workers in factories in North Carolina and South Carolina. That was inefficient in Wilbur Ross's desire to make as much money for himself as he could. So he took those 4,700 jobs and he shipped them to Guatemala. He said: This project will benefit from Guatemala's realistic wages.

When Mr. Ross acquired an auto parts factory in Carlisle, PA, a decade ago, in order to make more money for himself, he took a hard line with the workers, demanding cuts in wages and benefits that were worth between 25 and 30 percent of the workers' earnings. That is what he needed to do in order to squeeze as much money out of that company to make himself a few extra million dollars. When the union rejected the demands of Mr. Ross and when the workers rejected those demands, he shut the plant down and moved their work to North Carolina, to Canada, and to Mexico.

Wilbur Ross, Rex Tillerson, Steve Mnuchin, and Andy Puzder spent their entire lives obsessed with making as much money for themselves as possible and not letting anyone's good fortune get in their way. They fired workers, they foreclosed on people's homes, they shipped jobs overseas, and they supported brutal dictators—all of it justifiable as long as it meant they would make more money for themselves and for their investors. How on Earth has that become a qualification to serve the public, to serve at the highest level of the U.S. Government?

I am on the floor today to oppose the nomination of Wilbur Ross to be Secretary of Commerce—not because he didn't do a good job enriching himself through the myriad of businesses that he owned and operated during his time in the private sector but because during that time he trampled on the rights of workers, he offshored jobs, and he eliminated people's livelihoods in order to make more money for himself. All of the things that Candidate Trump talked about taking on were the things that Wilbur Ross was doing as he took advantage of these trade agreements to kill jobs in the United States and offshore them to other places.

President Trump said he was going to fight for the working guy. He isn't. He is doing the exact opposite. He is turning the keys of this government over to his wealthy friends so that they can potentially profit off of taxpayer dollars, so that they can deregulate the industries that, by the way, they are going to return to when their term is

up. They will get richer, just like they have through their entire lives, while the rest of us pay for it.

It is time for us to recognize that billionaires in this country do not have a monopoly on wisdom. Sometimes the very skills that allow you to make a fortune for yourself don't equate to the skills necessary to fight for everybody else through public service. I would urge my colleagues to oppose the nomination of Wilbur Ross to be Secretary of Commerce.

I yield the floor.

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. THUNE. 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. THUNE. Mr. President, I rise to voice my strong support for the nomination of Wilbur Ross to be Secretary of Commerce. We held a hearing on his nomination on January 18, 2017. Mr. Ross has also completed the required paperwork and responded to all of the committee questions for the record. Five weeks ago, on January 24, the Commerce Committee acted by voice vote to favorably report his nomination to the floor. We invoked cloture on Mr. Ross's nomination by a vote margin of 66 to 31 on February 17, with 15 Democratic Senators voting to invoke cloture.

I am glad the Senate will finally confirm his nomination today after a long and unnecessary delay. When he is confirmed, Mr. Ross will bring decades of business, entrepreneurial, and civic experience to this important position.

Mr. Ross is perhaps best known for his expertise in revitalizing distressed businesses, such as those in the U.S. steel industry. At a time when most investors had abandoned the industry, he organized the International Steel Group in 2002, and through acquisitions, he made it the largest integrated steel company in North America. Later, it merged with Mittal Steel to form the largest steel company in the world. It is for this reason that all of the major steel-industry labor unions also support his confirmation.

I ask unanimous consent that the letter of support for the confirmation of Wilbur Ross from the United Steelworkers, dated January 9, 2017, be printed in the RECORD at the conclusion of my remarks.

Mr. Ross's nomination is also supported by a bipartisan group of former Secretaries of Commerce, including Secretary William M. Daley, who served as Commerce Secretary under President Clinton, and later as Chief of Staff to President Barack Obama.

Mr. Ross's strong record of achievement in business led Bloomberg Businessweek to name him one of the "50 Most Influential People in Global Finance" in 2011. It is also why he is

the only person elected to both the Turnaround Management Hall of Fame and the Private Equity Hall of Fame.

Mr. Ross's nomination comes at an important time in our Nation's economic recovery. I believe his extensive management experience in the private sector and his understanding of the challenges faced by workers and businesses alike will equip him well for the job of leading the Department of Commerce.

This large Department, which has 12 different bureaus and nearly 47,000 employees located in all 50 States and around the world, oversees a diverse array of issues, from trade to fishery management and from weather forecasting to the Census Bureau. Mr. Ross's experience turning around businesses should help them anticipate and mitigate the risk of major programs like FirstNet, the independent authority charged with creating a nationwide broadband network for first responders and the acquisition of critical weather satellites by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

I would also like to underscore that the collaboration between the public and private sectors is one of the hallmarks of the Department's work, as exemplified by the ongoing development of cyber security best practices and standards, which the Commerce Committee has strongly endorsed. I look forward to Mr. Ross continuing his collaboration and strengthening it where necessary.

I believe Mr. Ross's business know-how and intelligence make him an excellent candidate to serve as the next Secretary of Commerce. I strongly support his nomination. I hope my colleagues on both sides of the aisle will support his nomination as well. It is high time we got this position filled and got this experienced person—someone who has a wide range of know-how all across the business sector and our economy—into a position where he can make a difference in helping to create jobs and grow this economy for our country.

I see that my colleague from Florida, Senator NELSON, the ranking Democrat on the Commerce Committee, is here as well. I would love to yield the floor to him and hear what he has to say about this nomination.

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

UNITED STEELWORKERS,
Pittsburgh, PA, January 9, 2017.

UNITED STATES SENATE,
Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR: On behalf of the United Steelworkers (USW) representing hundreds of thousands of American workers, we urge you to support Wilbur Ross, Chairman and Chief Strategy Officer of WL Ross & Co., LLC, to serve as Secretary of the U.S. Department of Commerce.

Mr. Ross has shown a deep commitment to the future of our domestic manufacturing sector. Many of us have seen firsthand how he has worked to keep production and manufacturing jobs here in the U.S. The USW worked directly with Mr. Ross to save thou-

sands of jobs in the steel industry at a time of crisis. In fact, there are now thousands of our members in the steel and auto parts sectors that are working because of our ability to work together to save a critical piece of America's industrial base.

He knows what it takes to get the economy back on track, create jobs, and keep jobs from leaving the United States and build a framework so that American workers and companies are competitive and innovative in the 21st Century. There is much work to be done to restore America's manufacturing base and the good jobs it supports. As Secretary, Wilbur Ross will be someone who has a deep understanding of the challenges this vital sector faces.

We urge the Senate to move swiftly on his nomination and look forward to working with him to create more jobs for American workers.

Sincerely,

LEO W. GERARD,
USW International President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. LANKFORD). The Senator from Florida.

Mr. NELSON. Mr. President, I, too, support Wilbur Ross. I know him. He lives in Palm Beach. I think he is a very good selection to be our next Secretary of Commerce. He is certainly qualified to do this job. He gave extensive answers during his confirmation hearing before the Commerce Committee. He has accumulated significant experience in dealing with the international business community, and he has detailed to the committee—in our examination of him, he detailed many of his ideas.

There have been some questions that have been raised about some of his business ties, particularly involving some of his foreign activities. One example is the Bank of Cyprus, which has significant levels of Russian investment. In the wake of the former National Security Advisor, General Flynn's resignation and under the overhanging question of the unlawful Russian involvement in a U.S. election, I certainly thought that it was prudent to get Mr. Ross's assurances on this matter in his dealings with the Bank of Cyprus and certain Russians who were involved in the Bank of Cyprus, so on February 16, I sent him a letter, along with four other members of the Commerce Committee, requesting information on any contact Russian investors in the Bank of Cyprus may have with officials from the Trump campaign or the Trump organization. I have spoken with Mr. Ross on at least two occasions since sending him the letter, one of those being today. He has verbally reiterated to me that he only had one meeting, approximately an hour, with one of the bank's Russian investors and that it occurred in 2014. The timing is important—2014—because that was before the Presidential campaign. He also assured me that he knows of no loans or interaction between the bank and anyone affiliated with the Trump campaign or organization.

Mr. Ross has been forthcoming with me, and I believe him in what he has told me, that it is true to his belief. But I want to say that at the same

time, the White House and the way they have handled this matter is not doing Wilbur Ross any favors. There are a number of Senators on the Commerce Committee who are extremely troubled and frustrated that the White House has chosen to sit on Mr. Ross's written response to the questions I and other Senators have posed, and they have refused to provide them to the Senate prior to tonight's vote. This is despite repeated phone calls to the White House—repeated phone calls. It is also despite repeated phone calls from me to Mr. Ross to ask him to get the White House off the dime since he has told me he has already filled out the answers in writing—they are just sitting in the White House. So there is someone in the White House who is making the decision that they don't want the Senate to have, in writing, what Mr. Ross has told me verbally in a private conversation.

If that is any indication of the level of transparency Congress and the American people can expect from this White House, then it appears that there is going to be a lot left on the floor and there is going to be the appearance of being in the dark on a lot of important matters. That is not the way you do confirmations. You do it in a collaborative fashion, especially when you have a good nominee like Wilbur Ross. The President proposes, the Congress disposes. The President nominates, the Congress confirms.

Not only is this lack of transparency unsettling, it is behavior that everyone in this Senate should agree is unacceptable and should not be tolerated. I do not want this to be taken out on Wilbur Ross because of the administration's secretive behavior. Instead, as I said at the outset, following my colleague, the chairman of the committee, I am going to urge our colleagues to support his nomination, but the problem is that Wilbur Ross is going to get fewer "yes" votes than if the White House would release his written statements to all of those Senators' questions.

As I said, I know Wilbur Ross. He is a good man. One of the reasons, aside from this problem of communication with the White House, is that Wilbur Ross brought forth candid answers about the work of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, NOAA. That agency, which is a part of the Department of Commerce, impacts the daily lives of every single American. NOAA provides the satellite data that is critical to observing hurricanes and severe weather and everyday forecasts that we have now come to rely on, that we pull up on our smartphones to find out what the weather is going to be. Where do you think that comes from? A lot of it comes from data from NOAA satellites.

Through the National Weather Service, NOAA provides the weather forecasts that drive this economy, answering questions like whether a farmer's crops are going to get rain today or

warning of dangerous tornadoes, particularly plaguing the State of the Presiding Officer. Of course, we remember the ones that just devastated parts of Georgia and Florida just a few weeks ago.

The National Ocean Service tells us if ships will have enough clearance to get their cargo into a port on time because it often depends on the tide as to how much depth there is with that heavy load of cargo, if they can get in the channel.

NOAA also provides world-class science regarding atmospheric conditions, including climate change and its impacts. My State of Florida, the impacts of climate change—we are ground zero. It is not unusual now that at seasonal monthly high tides, the streets of Miami Beach are flooded, and city wellfields have now had to be moved further to the west away from the Atlantic Ocean because of the rise of sea level and therefore the saltwater intrusion into the freshwater aquifer. Since 2006, Miami Beach has flooded significantly more often than it used to. Rain-related flooding events in southeast Florida have increased by 33 percent, and tide-related flooding has increased by a whopping 400 percent. That is not good for business.

We simply cannot afford to deny what is happening. The impacts of climate change are affecting Florida. They are also affecting a lot of other places around the world, read: Bangladesh.

NOAA quite literally saves lives and property, so naturally I fully expect any nominee for Secretary of Commerce to unequivocally support the ability of the experts at NOAA to do what they do best: collect the data, do the research, and provide critical products and services to the public free from political interference and free from censorship.

The Department of Commerce has three Nobel laureate scientists who are employees. While some of the nominees for other key administration posts have either been less than forthright, less than committal, or less than knowledgeable about the very real threat posed by climate change, Wilbur Ross candidly and explicitly assured me during his nomination hearing in our Commerce Committee that he believes—and I will quote him—that "science should be left to the scientists." I urge his fellow Cabinet nominees to follow suit. Don't do what we have seen—the intimidation techniques of saying that you can't use the term "climate change" or "sea level rise." Let the scientists do their work. Wilbur Ross also assured me that he would work collaboratively "to address the impacts of changes in sea level and ocean temperatures on coastal communities and fisheries."

So I want to say to the Senate that I appreciate Wilbur Ross's candor, his commitment, and his recognition that the important weather and climate work being done in NOAA directly ben-

efits commerce. I am confident he is going to follow through.

I also want to thank him, at his age, for offering himself for public service. This is a very schooled, experienced individual.

I hope this hiccup with the White House not being transparent and not returning what he has already written as answers to the Senator's questions—this problem—is going to disappear and, that rather than hinder him, as they have, they will instead support him, as they should.

For that reason, I am here to ask my colleagues to vote yes on Wilbur Ross's nomination.

I yield the floor.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, creating jobs, fostering economic growth, maintaining sustainable development, and improving standards of living of all Americans are central tasks for any administration, and they are the mission of the Commerce Department.

Congress created the Department of Commerce and Labor in 1903, and then renamed the Department of Commerce in 1913 as the offices working on labor were transferred to the Department of Labor. Through 12 bureaus and nearly 47,000 employees, the Department runs programs that affect broad swaths of the American economy.

The Department includes the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, which warns of dangerous weather, charts seas, and protects ocean and coastal resources. The Department includes the Patent and Trademark Office, which fosters technology and innovation, and the National Institute of Standards and Technology, headquartered in Gaithersburg, MD, which promotes innovation and industrial competitiveness. The Department includes the Census Bureau and Bureau of Economic Analysis, which provide economic data to help business and policymakers make intelligent decisions. The Department includes the International Trade Administration, which ensures that Americans have access to international markets and safeguards Americans from unfair competition. And the Department includes the Economic Development Administration to promote job growth in economically distressed communities.

To run the Commerce Department, President Trump has nominated Wilbur Ross, Jr., a 79-year-old private-equity billionaire with extensive holdings and extensive potential conflicts of interest. I have real questions about whether Mr. Ross is out of touch with ordinary Americans. And I have real questions about whether Mr. Ross's personal interests will conflict with his job as Commerce Secretary, if he is confirmed.

The Commerce Secretary enforces our trade laws, including against major trade competitors like China. Last year, Mr. Ross told Bloomberg TV that he had extensive holdings in China. Mr. Ross said, "We have—various portfolio

companies have almost 20 factories doing one thing or another over there.” And the New York Times reported that Mr. Ross is vice chairman of the Bank of Cyprus, making him a de facto business partner with Viktor F. Vekselberg, one of Russia’s most prominent businesspeople and a person with ties to the Kremlin. Several newspapers have reported that Mr. Ross plans to keep millions of dollars invested in offshore entities whose values could be affected by policies that he implements as Commerce Secretary. Mr. Ross reported plans to hold on to investments in an oil-tanker company and 10 other entities that invest in shipping and real estate financing, according to Federal financial-disclosure and ethics filings cited in the reports.

I have questions about Mr. Ross’s ability to work for Americans. Starting in the 1990s, Mr. Ross ran an investment firm that specialized in distressed assets. The Securities and Exchange Commission said that Mr. Ross’s firm had failed to disclose how it calculates its fees for some funds, which led to investors to pay roughly \$10.4 million of management fees that they should not have in the decade leading up to 2011.

The Commerce Secretary is a part of the President’s economic team; yet Mr. Ross appears all too willing to play fast and loose with fiscal showdowns. When, in April 2011, Bloomberg’s Mark Crumpton asked Mr. Ross whether S&P’s downgrade of America’s credit rating is “a step in the right direction,” Mr. Ross said it was. Ross said: “Well I think it’s a step in the right direction in that it will put pressure on the Democrats in the Senate and on the President to go along with some of the Republican reviews about really cutting the budget deficit and ultimately cutting the total indebtedness of the United States. So in that limited sense I think it is a step in the right direction.”

Mr. Ross was all too quick to dismiss the strain that a furlough put on Federal Government workers. In October 2013, CNBC’s Betty Liu had this exchange with Mr. Ross:

Ross: I think shutting down the government—so-called shutting down the government, which it’s not really shut down—

Liu: What do you mean?

Ross: Well, many parts of it are still quite open. And it’s just at the fringe that it—that it really matters.

Liu: Yeah, but tell that to the government workers though who are furloughed, right?

Ross: Yeah, but they’re going to get their pay. They know they’ll get their back pay. So I don’t see that that’s a permanent damage.

Mr. Ross was all too quick to dismiss the pain of homeowners who lost their homes in the financial crisis. Bloomberg TV’s Betty Liu had this exchange with Mr. Ross:

Ross: I think you have to look far and wide to find a home owner who’s an actual victim. These are all theoretical things. They’re mostly technical problems that the banks did wrong. To the best of my knowledge—

Liu: I think it’d be really hard to find, to pinpoint down to individuals, right?

Ross: Well there’s never been a case that I know of where someone was dispossessed who didn’t have a mortgage and wasn’t in default.

Liu: What do you mean?

Ross: Well all these claims that there was robo signing and all these imperfections, that’s true. Those were not what should be. But the real question is was anyone actually dispossessed wrongly.

Liu: Of their property.

Ross: Yeah, incorrectly. And I don’t think you find a single case.

The Commerce Secretary oversees the NOAA and the National Weather Service. But in a conversation with Fox Business’s Neil Cavuto, Mr. Ross was dismissive of the reality of climate change. Mr. Ross said: “Well, I think unless the weatherman can tell me if it will rain tomorrow why would I believe you can make a 100 year forecast. So, I’m skeptical about the underlying basis.”

And so President Trump has nominated to be Commerce Secretary a person who has so much wealth and so many foreign interests that it appears that it will be difficult for him to work in the interests of middle-class Americans. His extensive foreign business interests call into question his ability to fight to enforce America’s trade laws. Mr. Ross has expressed cavalier attitudes toward economic brinksmanship and shown little concern for the people laid off or who lose their homes as a result. And Mr. Ross has expressed an open skepticism toward the reality of climate change that calls into question his ability to run the agency that does research into global climate. For these reasons, I cannot support his nomination.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kansas.

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

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

ENDING GLOBAL HUNGER

Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, I am here on the floor tonight to speak about our Nation’s efforts to end global hunger. It is an undertaking that countless individuals, foundations, and government agencies have devoted a significant amount of time, resources, and effort attempting to solve.

Those who have dedicated their lives to feeding the hungry deserve our deepest gratitude and respect. They made the decision to improve the lives of others less fortunate than themselves, and they often have done that at their own loss of comfort and their own well-being. There is no nobler a calling than trying to do something for someone else, especially when it costs you something as well.

Regardless of our faith, our creed, or our religion, almost all of us are taught early in life that it is our duty to help those in need. Americans consistently have taken that moral responsibility to heart. As individuals,

we help our neighbors through our churches and other local organizations. We help feed our hometowns. As a country, we lead the world in providing food aid to millions of people who are in need of that assistance.

In 1983, at a signing of a World Food Day proclamation, President Reagan cited 450 million people in developing countries who were undernourished. Our global population has risen by 3 billion people since that time, and today there are nearly 800 million undernourished people in the world who do not have enough food to lead healthy, normal lives.

While strides are being made in the fight against food insecurity, it is clear that our commitment cannot waiver, and ending hunger must remain a priority.

At that same White House ceremony, President Reagan chided the Soviet Union for failing to provide humanitarian relief to those in need. President Reagan offered a direct challenge to the Kremlin to explain why the Soviet Union only provided weapons but not food assistance to the underdeveloped world.

While the threats in the world today are different than those faced during the Cold War, American food assistance remains a powerful foreign policy tool. American food aid elevates our country’s moral standing and leadership in the world, as realized by President Reagan, but our efforts to reduce food insecurity also serve our own national interests by promoting political, economic, and social stability in the world.

Food-related hardships and hunger—either due to price increases or food shortages—act as a catalyst for protests and armed conflicts. We have witnessed regions of the world that are critical to America’s strategic interests descend into chaos due to people not having access to affordable food.

From 2007 to 2011, spikes in global food prices led to increased food insecurity and unrest in the world. In the Middle East and North Africa, food-related challenges were one of the major drivers of the mass uprising that we call the Arab Spring.

In Syria, Islamic State rebels use the promise of food and basic necessities to recruit soldiers. Food shortages have led refugees to leave camps and return to an active war zone in search of food for themselves and their families.

Closer to home, food prices contributed to rioting in Haiti in 2007 and 2008. As food prices increased and economic conditions deteriorated, U.S. Coast Guard interceptions of people from Haiti attempting to immigrate to our country rose by 20 percent, straining Coast Guard resources.

The National Intelligence Council warns that a continuation of the fundamental contributors to food insecurity—such as expanding populations, slowing of agricultural yields, and gaps in infrastructure and distribution systems—will result in increased food insecurity, hunger, and instability in the

Middle East, Africa, and South Asia over the next 10 years without greater, greater intervention by the United States and others.

In America, we take our food system for granted. Americans spend less than 10 percent of our disposable income on food. Even though less than 2 percent of our country is directly engaged in farming, Americans have direct access to the safest, most affordable, and highest quality food in the world.

I am proud of the wheat farmers and the ranchers in my home State of Kansas. Agriculture production is a noble calling. Feeding the world is important and a meaningful way to spend one's life, and Kansas families have done it for generations.

Our country's food system at home is critical to our own security and well-being, and helping other countries achieve food security and stability serves our national interests as well.

Utilizing U.S.-grown commodities in food aid programs also benefits American farmers and ranchers by creating export markets for our agricultural products, sometimes reducing an excess of supply.

Almost 10 percent of exports of the hard red winter wheat grown in Kansas in 2016 was utilized by international food programs, representing a significant market share for wheat grown in our State. Today's low commodity prices only serve to highlight the need for ag export markets for producers.

A few months ago, I called on the U.S. Agency for International Development and the Department of Agriculture to significantly increase the amount of wheat in our global food aid programs.

Our country's abundance of food imparts a moral duty to provide humanitarian relief to those in need. We have witnessed great unsettlement and mass migration in the world due to political instability and civil wars. The vast majority of people affected, including displaced refugees whose lives were uprooted and whose ability to feed themselves was taken away, are suffering through no fault of their own.

In other parts of the world, people are born into such poverty that simply finding sufficient food is a daily challenge. Reading recent articles, the question has often been: Where am I going to find food to feed my family?

People in Cambodia indicate they have no idea. It is a day-to-day, moment-to-moment, meal-to-meal experience. Even if that food is available, it is often not accessible to people without the means to pay for it.

Many of these people—weary, desolate, and hungry—survive only because of the generosity of the American people. Those hungry and less fortunate depend on a nation with moral strength and clarity to give them a helping hand.

There is still more work to be done in the fight against hunger, and America ought to continue to rise to the challenge of providing food and helping

people feed themselves throughout the world.

It is a turbulent world stricken with conflict, and sometimes the hunger and problem seem so great that it would be easy just to walk away and say it is too big of a problem to solve. But certainly we have the ability.

We have the means to feed one person. If we can feed one, why not two? And if we can all feed two, why not three?

We can't simply look at this challenge as being too big to overcome and that the world will always have hungry people and then just say: We have no responsibility to respond.

Food aid provided by the U.S. reduces despair and increases stability. My point is that it has a moral component. It is the right thing to do, but it is also beneficial to our own Nation, providing stability around the globe and increasing our own national security.

The importance of these issues motivated me when I was in the House to chair the House Hunger Caucus, and now I cochair the Senate Hunger Caucus. I can't remember what year it was, but I had a midlife crisis. I have probably had several since then. But my thoughts were at that point in time, back in my House days, that at least then I thought of myself as a pretty good Member of Congress. I answered the mail. I met with constituents. I visited my State on a weekend-by-weekend basis. I had input. I did the things that a good Member of Congress is supposed to do. I represented my constituents well.

But we all can do something more than just be a good Member of Congress, and that was my conclusion. If there is an issue that we want to champion, if there is an issue on which we want to make a difference, if there is a moral cause we want to rise to the occasion to support, hunger, particularly for Congressman—now a Senator—from Kansas, ought to be a place I put my stake in the ground and go to work.

I suppose I have taken a few months off of this issue—and maybe I am having another midlife crisis—but it is time for me to reengage and to engage effectively as best I can to see that we live up to a moral commitment that also benefits our own country.

So I now cochair the Senate Hunger Caucus. I have since I came to the Senate. I serve with a number of my colleagues, including the one who is on the floor tonight, the Senator from Illinois. I ask my colleagues to join us in the effort to meet the needs of a hungry world, to take the step to see that one more person is fed, one more family has less insecurity, one more mother or father no longer worries about whether their children are going to go to bed hungry.

Former Kansas Senator Bob Dole has set many standards in the way that he led his life, which we should all aspire to meet, not the least of which is his unwavering commitment to ending hunger. Those of us in this Senate

today ought to seek to carry on Senator Dole's legacy. I would encourage my colleagues to join me and others as we work to put the Senate Hunger Caucus together, to enhance its ability to address the issues that we face in the real world to fight hunger.

I am committed to reengaging these efforts. Along with the other caucus cochairs—Senators BOOZMAN, CASEY, DURBIN, and BROWN—I would extend an invitation to each of my colleagues to join that caucus so that we can take the small step of fighting hunger by becoming more knowledgeable, more aware and engaging in the moral and strategic battle to end hunger around the globe.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, let me start by commending my colleague from Kansas. It is an honor to join him in this Senate Hunger Caucus effort. He does it in the tradition of Senator Bob Dole of Kansas. Along with George McGovern, they were two of the most unlikely political allies. They really dedicated a large part of their public lives to fighting hunger.

I am happy to join him in the memory of Paul Simon, who did the same for the State of Illinois. So I am looking forward to joining the Senator in this effort. I hope the Senator doesn't have to suffer another midlife crisis in the future. Let's continue this in a good bipartisan spirit.

I thank the Senator from Kansas.

Mr. President, I have come to the floor repeatedly in recent months to raise concerns about the Russian cyber act of war against our Nation, about Russia's aggression elsewhere against the West, this President's disturbing alliance with Russia, and the majority party's incredible silence on the Senate floor on these matters.

Well, I just spent several days visiting our allies in Eastern Europe—notably Poland, Lithuania, and Ukraine—and return even more concerned.

You see, regardless of the partisan leanings of who is in government in these nations, the concern is the same.

Is the United States, history's champion of democracy and collective security in Europe, backing away from these values and commitments just as Russia is more aggressively challenging them?

Is the American President really using phrases like “enemy of the people” to describe a free press—a term used by Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin, that was so ominous that Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev later demanded the Communist Party halt its use because it “eliminated the possibility of any kind of ideological fight”?

Are the Trump administration's bizarre blinders to Vladimir Putin's aggression and true nature—and the silence of too many of my Republican colleagues on this danger—a harbinger of some kind of Western retreat to the Russians?

Well, I met with many of our dedicated diplomatic and military personnel in the region who, as part of ramped up reassurance efforts by the previous administration, are working to keep Putin in check.

These included more than 100 U.S. military personnel working with their Lithuanian counterparts about an hour outside of the capital in Rukla. These U.S. troops and their colleagues rotate out of Poland and throughout the Baltics to augment their NATO partners in deterring a Russian attack.

Mr. President, the concerns about Russian aggression are legitimate and warrant serious attention. Let's take a look at just recent Russian actions in Europe. One day after President Trump spoke to Putin on the phone in late January, Russian-backed separatists increased their fighting in Ukraine—leading to the highest death toll in months.

After Vice President PENCE tried to reassure allies at the Munich Security Conference the other week, Russia agreed to start accepting identification documents issued by the separatists in eastern Ukraine—one step closer to annexing the illegally seized territory.

Putin is strong-arming Belarussian President Lukashenko to allow Russian troops to remain based in Belarus following an upcoming significant military exercise. Russia is putting more and more sophisticated weapons into Kaliningrad, which when combined with permanent troops in Belarus, will significantly increase security threats to the region. Russia just announced a referendum to rename land it illegally seized by force in Georgia.

Putin is trying to stir unrest in Kosovo where NATO is trying to maintain stability after the horrific violence of the Balkan war. He attempted a coup in Montenegro. And Russia continues its aggressive disinformation campaign and cyber attacks throughout Europe, trying to manipulate elections and sow instability and lack of trust in democratic institutions. One Polish expert summed all this up wisely, saying “if the United States does not respond to the Russian attack on its election, Putin will feel he has a free hand to keep taking such destabilizing actions in the West.” I worry that is what is already happening.

So, what is the response to these actions by this White House and the majority party—the party of Ronald Reagan who understood the Russians so well?

So far, with the exception of a few important voices, largely silence.

In fact, as I have mentioned here before, since October when the first intelligence reports came out about the Russian attack on our election, not a single Republican has come to the floor to discuss this act of cyber war by a former KGB official on our country.

And our President, who has attacked hundreds by Twitter for even the most benign perceived slight, has refused to say anything negative about Putin.

Obviously, we need to get to the bottom of the Russia attacks on our election and if anyone in the Trump campaign had inappropriate contact with the Russians. An independent commission led by respected individuals such as Sandra Day O'Connor or Colin Powell could lead such an effort. And we need to see the President's tax returns to clarify what his son said in 2008 regarding Trump's businesses seeing “a lot of money pouring in from Russia.”

We need to pass the bipartisan Russian sanctions bills pending in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee—one that tightens sanctions on Russia for its actions here and abroad and one that requires congressional approval before any sanctions on Russia are lifted.

And we need to make sure we include continued support to Ukraine and for the European Reassurance Initiative in our next appropriations bills.

Mr. President, I remember as a young Congressman trying to get into Lithuania more than 25 years ago when it courageously tried to hold an election breaking free from the Soviet Union.

Those brave Lithuanians had little but their idealism and a few rifles to protect themselves from the Soviet tanks.

But in the end they prevailed, and one by one, Eastern European nations freed themselves from Communist tyranny, a struggle Ukraine is still fighting against Russia.

Today one can still visit the KGB museum in the capital of Lithuania—a hall of horrors that nobody should ever forget. One Lithuanian member of parliament I met, who remembers life not only under the Soviets but also under the Nazis, recalled how his mother had survived 4 years in a Nazi concentration camp.

He emotionally said that he had always seen the United States as the champion of freedom, democracy, and a Western global order. I could tell he was deeply worried about any backsliding on that important role and any possibility of returning to the darker days in Europe.

I don't know exactly what Steve Bannon is whispering in Trump's ear regarding his dark world view and indifference to the transatlantic Western alliance, but this post World War II partnership has served American and global interests. The relationship has brought stability to Europe after decades of horrific war. It has brought democracy and common markets and served as a check against the Soviet Union and now Russia.

I am glad Vice President PENCE made some references to this at the Munich Security Conference, but those words will not be enough on their own. Quite simply, any sympathies in the White House with Russian efforts to undermine the transatlantic relationship are outrageous and dangerous, and I will oppose them here in the Senate.

To reiterate, Mr. President, during the Presidents Day break, I took a trip

to three capitals, which I consider to be timely and important visits: Warsaw, Poland; Vilnius, Lithuania, and Kiev, Ukraine. I have been to these cities many times, and I have a particular attachment to them. My mother was born in Lithuania, and so returning there, as I have for over 35 years, I have seen a sweep of history as that small Baltic State has moved from a republic of the Soviet Union to a free and independent nation today. I am so proud of the courage of Lithuanians that had brought them to this moment.

Going to Warsaw, Poland, is natural for a Senator from Chicago. We have more Polish Americans in that city and in our State than anyplace outside of Poland. We are very proud of our Polish heritage. They are wonderful people. They are not only hard-working, good Polish Americans, but they are also always thinking about their own homeland, which was under the control of the Warsaw Pact, a Soviet-inspired alliance, for decades, at the expense of their freedom.

I also visited Kiev, Ukraine. That capital has become well known to many of us since the invasion by Vladimir Putin, which is the point I would like to make.

The thing that ties these three countries together, despite their differences in history, is the fact that if you ask each of these countries today to identify the major external threat to their existence and to their freedom, they would identify Vladimir Putin of Russia. I found that in Warsaw, again in Vilnius, the capital of Lithuania, as well as in Ukraine.

It was interesting—and Senator JEANNE SHAHEEN joined me on my trip to visit Poland—that as we met with the leaders of that nation, we heard repeatedly their concerns about Russian aggression. It was something that was critically important to them. They were heartened by statements made by Vice President PENCE at the Munich conference about the future of the NATO alliance, but let's put it in context. The reason the Vice President had to travel from Washington to Munich, Germany, to say to the Western world that was gathered there that the NATO alliance was still strong was because the current President of the United States, Donald Trump, had tweeted that NATO was obsolete, and one of his followers, Steve Bannon of Breitbart fame, had questioned whether we should be engaging in these kinds of alliances.

Well, I think those alliances are critical. The NATO alliance has been one of the most successful in history. So when Vice President PENCE went to Munich to assure our NATO allies that we were still on their side, it was an important message.

I did find one other thing telling and memorable about that trip to Warsaw. One of the Polish leaders said to me: We have read that the Russians invaded your election. We are used to this. He called it the hybrid war. He

said: It isn't just aggression by Russians with military aggression, which is scary enough, but it is a war of cyber aggression and a war of propaganda, and clearly Vladimir Putin believed in your last Presidential election that he could use some of those same tactics that he uses against Poland and the Baltics in the United States. This leader in Poland then challenged me: What are you going to do about that? Now that you know that Vladimir Putin has invaded your election, now that your intelligence agencies tell you that, will you do something? Will you take this seriously? Will you investigate it? He said: Our worry in Poland is, if you will not respond to Vladimir Putin's invasion into your cyber space, what will you do if he invades Poland? Will you stand by us as you promised in article 5? If you don't take him seriously when he invades your sovereignty, will you take it seriously when he invades ours?

It is an important question and a right question. I hope we take a lesson from it—not to take Vladimir Putin for granted, not to view him as a superhero or great leader but to understand that people around the world are watching to see how we react to this Russian invasion of our election.

In Lithuania, they face propaganda on a daily basis. German troops under the flag of NATO are now in Lithuania making it clear that we are committed to the future and security of that nation. What did Vladimir Putin and the Russian propagandists do as soon as these German troops moved into Lithuania? They created an absolutely false rumor that a German soldier had raped a Lithuanian woman. It wasn't true, but it was the kind of false information that they have spread in the hopes of undermining the confidence of Lithuania and the NATO alliance.

I met with the President of Lithuania, Dalia Grybauskaitė, and she is a very decisive leader. I thought of Margaret Thatcher's style when I met with President Grybauskaitė. She is an "Iron Lady" in her own right to protect Lithuania and other Baltic States from Russian aggression.

The last trip we made was to Ukraine, and Congressman MIKE QUIGLEY of Chicago joined me in that visit. In that visit, we had a chance to meet late at night, 9 o'clock at night with the President of Ukraine, Petro Poroshenko, who was kindly waiting for us to get off the plane and come join him at his Presidential offices. They are struggling even to this day. As President Trump is in conversation with President Putin about future relationships, sadly, at that very same moment, aggression by the Russians in Ukraine was growing. Over 10,000 people have been injured or died now because of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. There is speculation, and I hope it is just that, that some backroom negotiations are underway to recognize this Russian aggression in Ukraine. I sincerely hope that never happens. We should never condone

what Vladimir Putin has done to that country of Ukraine. They are struggling now to get back on their feet. They are making reforms that are unpopular but necessary. They are strengthening their economy and at the same time they are fighting a war.

I left there with two resolves. One was to make sure we provide military equipment necessary for Ukraine to be successful to ward off this Russian aggression; No. 2, to continue to work with them in terms of building their economy and reform; and, No. 3, that we have a visible physical presence with those NATO forces in the Baltic States and in Poland. We have a great alliance in these countries. In Poland the Illinois National Guard has been a longtime ally of the Polish forces, and we are very proud of that relationship.

When it came to Lithuania, we were able to see a group from Fort Carson in Colorado. It was a tank command. I never saw prouder soldiers in my life—American soldiers anxious to show this Senator the Abrams M1 and the fighting vehicles they were using preparing for the possibility of defending Lithuania and the Baltics. It was an inspiring moment.

I made my statement part of the record, and I know the Senator from South Dakota is seeking the floor, but I left there committed to the NATO alliance and committed to the effort to stop the aggression of Vladimir Putin, committed as well to come home to the United States and say to my colleagues in the Senate and House that we have to take it seriously when Vladimir Putin tries to change the outcome of an American election. It is a sad day in American history. I believe November 8, 2016, is a day that will live in cyber infamy for what Vladimir Putin tried to do in the United States. For us to ignore it, to sweep it under the table, to hide it behind some committee door, when no one knows what is going on inside, is not the appropriate answer. We need an independent, transparent investigation of what the Russians did, a special prosecutor at the executive level, and an independent commission like the 9/11 Commission, headed by notable Americans like GEN Colin Powell or Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, who will bring all the facts to light so we know once and for all the truth of what happened and make certain it never happens again.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. ERNST). The Senator from South Dakota.

REPEALING AND REPLACING OBAMACARE

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, 2 weeks ago, major health insurer Humana announced its decision to completely withdraw from ObamaCare exchanges for 2018. The company decision was not particularly surprising. Humana had already sharply reduced its participation in the exchanges for 2017, but the decision did confirm yet again that President Obama's healthcare law is on its last legs.

Choices on the exchanges declined sharply for 2017 as insurer after insurer cut back on participation. Nearly one-third of U.S. counties have just one choice of insurer on their exchange for 2017. Meanwhile premiums on the exchanges are soaring. Exchange premiums increased a staggering 25 percent on average for 2017. That is a 25-percent premium increase for just 1 year. How many working families can afford a 25-percent increase in their healthcare premiums for 1 year?

Things are even worse in some States. Seven States saw an average premium increase of more than 50 percent for 1 year. It is no surprise that many people who have ObamaCare insurance have found they can't afford to actually use their plan. Well, Democrats can talk about coverage all they want, but coverage doesn't mean much if you can't afford to actually take advantage of it.

It is time to give the American people some relief. Over the next few weeks, Congress will continue with the process of repealing and replacing ObamaCare. Our priority is replacing ObamaCare with personalized, patient-centered healthcare that is affordable for every American. ObamaCare was supposed to lower healthcare costs for Americans, but it has spectacularly failed to do so. Our reform efforts will focus on keeping healthcare affordable, including increasing competition, expanding innovation, and increasing flexibility.

ObamaCare has defaulted to a one-size-fits-all solution when it comes to healthcare. That means that many Americans have found themselves paying for healthcare that they don't need or want.

We need much more flexibility in insurance plans. A thriving healthcare system would offer a wide variety of choices that would allow Americans to pick a plan that is tailored to their needs. We also need to give Americans the tools to better manage their healthcare and to control costs. Along with keeping healthcare affordable, we are going to focus on restoring decisionmaking power to the American people.

ObamaCare has put Washington bureaucrats in charge of healthcare decisions that should be made by individuals in consultation with their doctor. We are going to move control away from Washington and give it back to individuals. We are also going to ensure that States have the power to innovate and embrace healthcare solutions that work for individuals and employers in their States.

Our healthcare system wasn't perfect before ObamaCare—nobody is denying that—but ObamaCare has just made things worse. The American people are ready for healthcare reform that actually works, and that is exactly what Republicans are going to give them.

NOMINATION OF NEIL GORSUCH

Madam President, in addition to healthcare reform, another Republican

priority for this spring is confirming Judge Neil Gorsuch to the Supreme Court. The Judiciary Committee will hold hearings on his confirmation beginning March 20, and I am hopeful Judge Gorsuch will be confirmed not too long thereafter. President Trump made an outstanding choice when he chose Judge Gorsuch for the Supreme Court.

Judge Gorsuch has a distinguished resume. He graduated with honors from Harvard Law School and received a doctorate from Oxford University where he was a Marshall Scholar. He clerked for two Supreme Court Justices, Byron White and Anthony Kennedy, and he worked in both private practice and at the Justice Department before being nominated to the Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals, where he served with distinction for the last 10 years.

He is widely regarded as a brilliant and thoughtful jurist and a gifted writer whose opinions are known for their clarity. Above all, however, he is known for his impartiality, for his commitment to following the law wherever it leads, whether he likes the results or not. "A judge who likes every outcome he reaches is very likely a bad judge," Judge Gorsuch has said more than once. Why? Because a judge who likes every outcome he reaches is likely making decisions based on something other than the law, and that is a problem. The job of a judge is to interpret the law, not write it, to call the balls and strikes, not to rewrite the rules of the game.

Everyone's rights are put in jeopardy when judges step outside their role and start changing the law to suit their personal opinions. Judge Gorsuch's nomination has been met with acclaim from conservatives, and it has also been met with acclaim from liberals. I think one of the biggest reasons for that is because both groups know Judge Gorsuch can be relied on to judge impartially.

Here is what Neal Katyal, an Acting Solicitor General, had to say about Judge Gorsuch: "His years on the bench reveal a commitment to judicial independence—a record that should give the American people confidence that he will not compromise principle to favor the president who appointed him."

The Colorado Springs Gazette recently highlighted a letter signed by 96 prominent Colorado lawyers and judges and sent to the senior Senator from Colorado. Here is what those individuals had to say about Judge Gorsuch in that letter:

We hold a diverse set of political views as Republicans, Democrats, and Independents.

Many of us have been critical of actions taken by President Trump. Nonetheless, we all agree that Judge Gorsuch is exceptionally well-qualified to join the Supreme Court. We know Judge Gorsuch to be a person of utmost character. He is fair, decent, and honest, both as a judge and a person. His record shows that he believes strongly in the independence of the judiciary.

Well, that is a pretty significant tribute. Again, those weren't just conservatives speaking.

Given Judge Gorsuch's character, his sterling record, and deep commitment to impartiality and the rule of law, it is no surprise that his nomination has won support from liberals and conservatives alike or that the American people are liking what they see when it comes to Judge Gorsuch.

Well-known Democratic pollster Mark Penn recently noted that Judge Gorsuch is "off to an excellent start in his nomination process." Unfortunately, there are still far-left extremists who would like to see Democrats in the Senate attempt to block Judge Gorsuch's confirmation, but I am hopeful that my colleagues will ignore these voices for obstruction and, instead, listen to the many voices—liberal and conservative—that are highlighting just why Judge Gorsuch would be an outstanding addition to the Supreme Court.

I recently met with Judge Gorsuch, and I could not have been more impressed. I look forward to hearing from him again at his confirmation hearings, and I hope the Senate will act to confirm him shortly thereafter. He is the kind of judge all of us should want on the Nation's highest Court.

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. SCHUMER. 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. SCHUMER. Madam President, I rise to echo the concerns expressed by my colleague from Florida, BILL NELSON, about the White House's refusal to provide written testimony relevant to Mr. Ross's nomination prior to the vote this evening.

Mr. Ross was a key economic adviser to the Trump campaign, and he has had business ties with the Bank of Cyprus, a bank with significant Russian investors. I understand that the Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee, of which my friend from Florida is the ranking member, sent a letter to Mr. Ross to get more information about those ties. That is a perfectly reasonable request, especially given the circumstances. This information is particularly relevant to the Senate since, in recent days, questions about connections between the Trump administration and Russia have proliferated.

While Mr. Ross told my friend from Florida that there is nothing to worry about, the White House is sitting on Mr. Ross's written response to Senator NELSON's letter. So the Senate will not get written answers to these important questions before voting on this nomination.

This is just another example of this administration's abandoning trans-

parency and trying to jam nominees through without making all of the relevant information public and available. They have not enjoyed a good few weeks with these nominees. They have gotten them through but with a lot of pain and a lot of public disconcert, and here we have another example.

We are getting to the end of the Cabinet nominees—a nominee with ties to Russia. There is a document that states what they are. As is so typical of this administration, which stonewalls and despises transparency, they do not let the letter be freed and be made available until after the vote on a sensitive issue and one that is important to national security—Russia and this administration's relationship to it. This is another black mark on this Nation's administration.

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. THUNE. 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. THUNE. Madam President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

Under the previous order, all postcloture time has expired.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Ross nomination?

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Georgia (Mr. ISAKSON).

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

The result was announced—yeas 72, nays 27, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 73 Ex.]

YEAS—72

Alexander	Ernst	Murkowski
Barrasso	Feinstein	Nelson
Bennet	Fischer	Paul
Blunt	Flake	Perdue
Boozman	Gardner	Peters
Brown	Graham	Portman
Burr	Grassley	Risch
Capito	Hassan	Roberts
Carper	Hatch	Rounds
Casey	Heitkamp	Rubio
Cassidy	Heller	Sasse
Cochran	Hoeven	Schatz
Collins	Inhofe	Scott
Coons	Johnson	Shaheen
Corker	Kaine	Shelby
Cornyn	Kennedy	Strange
Cortez Masto	King	Sullivan
Cotton	Klobuchar	Tester
Crapo	Lankford	Thune
Cruz	Lee	Tillis
Daines	McCain	Toomey
Donnelly	McCaskill	Warner
Duckworth	McConnell	Wicker
Enzi	Moran	Young

NAYS—27

Baldwin	Heinrich	Reed
Blumenthal	Hirono	Sanders
Booker	Leahy	Schumer
Cantwell	Manchin	Stabenow
Cardin	Markey	Udall
Durbin	Menendez	Van Hollen
Franken	Merkley	Warren
Gillibrand	Murphy	Whitehouse
Harris	Murray	Wyden

NOT VOTING—1

Isakson

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Colleagues, let me just say, this next vote will be the last vote of the evening.

Mr. President, I move to reconsider the vote on the nomination, and I move to table the motion to reconsider.

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

The motion was agreed to.

CLOTURE MOTION

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of RYAN ZINKE, of Montana, to be Secretary of the Interior.

Mitch McConnell, Roger F. Wicker, John Boozman, Orrin G. Hatch, Roy Blunt, Steve Daines, Tim Scott, Chuck Grassley, John Hoeven, Michael B. Enzi, John Barrasso, John Thune, Mike Rounds, Mike Crapo, James M. Inhofe, Joni Ernst, John Cornyn.

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

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of RYAN ZINKE, of Montana, to be Secretary of the Interior shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. WYDEN (when his name was called). Present.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Georgia (Mr. ISAKSON).

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 67, nays 31, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 74 Ex.]

YEAS—67

Alexander	Cornyn	Gardner
Barrasso	Cortez Masto	Graham
Bennet	Cotton	Grassley
Blunt	Crapo	Hatch
Boozman	Cruz	Heinrich
Burr	Daines	Heitkamp
Capito	Donnelly	Heller
Cassidy	Enzi	Hoeven
Cochran	Ernst	Inhofe
Collins	Feinstein	Johnson
Coons	Fischer	Kaine
Corker	Flake	Kennedy

King	Paul
Lankford	Perdue
Lee	Portman
Manchin	Risch
McCain	Roberts
McCaskill	Rounds
McConnell	Rubio
Moran	Sasse
Murkowski	Scott
Murphy	Shelby
Nelson	Strange

Sullivan
Tester
Thune
Tillis
Toomey
Udall
Warner
Wicker
Young

NAYS—31

Baldwin	Gillibrand	Reed
Blumenthal	Harris	Sanders
Booker	Hassan	Schatz
Brown	Hirono	Schumer
Cantwell	Klobuchar	Shaheen
Cardin	Leahy	Stabenow
Carper	Markey	Van Hollen
Casey	Menendez	Warren
Duckworth	Merkley	Whitehouse
Durbin	Murray	
Franken	Peters	

ANSWERED "PRESENT"—1

Wyden

NOT VOTING—1

Isakson

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 67, the nays are 31. One Senator responded "present."

The motion is agreed to.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

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.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

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.

CONFIRMATION OF WILBUR ROSS

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, today Mr. Ross joins the growing list of billionaires appointed by the Trump administration. It is not their wealth that concerns me, but their past conflicts with the agencies they are promoted to lead and support, providing guidance for policy and for administration of the laws. It is for this reason I cannot support Mr. Ross today.

Every American has a stake in the strength of our economy. We rely on the Department of Commerce to facilitate trade, investment, and innovation in a direction that ensures long-term benefits for Americans. Today while the wealthiest among us continue to profit, middle class families are working long hours to pay their bills and put food on their tables. The cost of living is outstripping their family budgets, and we must get ahead of this curve.

Mr. Ross has a background of buying fledgling companies, and while he might turn around the profit margins of those

companies, it is at the cost of American jobs. He has been called fair and practical, but has also committed his career in business by expanding in low-cost countries like Mexico and China. The economic policies of this country cannot be built on representing the interests of rich investors, but must also be creative in spurring job growth in American communities where industry has disappeared. We can shape our global trade policy in ways that benefit the United States, without having to do so under the assumption that the United States needs to operate in isolation in order to realize economic success. We can build industry at home, while partnering abroad in trade for our products. But it will take the commitment of the next Secretary to focus on our human capital as innovators and not as mere cost considerations.

Although America's role in the global market is expanding, our closest trade partner remains across our northern border. Each year, we export hundreds of billions of dollars' worth of goods and services to Canada, making it our largest export market in the world. Vermont is an active contributor to this flow of commerce. Supporting initiatives that strengthen this partnership will benefit local businesses in Vermont and across the Nation. Mr. Ross wants to renegotiate the North American Free Trade Agreement, and while we can debate the merits of NAFTA, the talk of renegotiating this agreement without the partnership of Mexico and Canada has many Vermont businesses concerned about the implications for their future and for the Vermont jobs that depend on our export markets.

We live in a global economy, and I work with Vermont businesses every day who rely on importing goods and materials in order to successfully create a final products that are a combination of U.S. and foreign made. This is the reality for many businesses today. I do not criticize the decisions a businessowner makes for the quality of their product. But every large corporation makes a choice between cheaper overseas labor and materials or investing in the workforce here at home for greater gains in the future. That is a choice that Mr. Ross has made on several occasions for the benefit of profits not workers.

I have said it time and again, but America thrives when our middle class is strong. As Secretary, Mr. Ross will be expected to represent the interests of all Americans. I hope he takes this commitment seriously and works across party lines to create new industry and opportunity that take root in the very communities that suffer from lack of it. The Secretary of Commerce cannot look at individuals as statistics of profit or loss, but must understand the innovative spirit that brings opportunity where it may otherwise be lost.

COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

RULES OF PROCEDURE

Mr. COCHRAN. Mr. President, the Senate Committee on Appropriations has adopted rules governing its procedures for the 115th Congress. Pursuant to rule XXVI, paragraph 2, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, on behalf of myself and Vice Chairman LEAHY, 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:

SENATE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

COMMITTEE RULES—115TH CONGRESS

I. MEETINGS

The Committee will meet at the call of the Chairman.

II. QUORUMS

1. Reporting a bill. A majority of the members must be present for the reporting of a bill.

2. Other business. For the purpose of transacting business other than reporting a bill or taking testimony, one-third of the members of the Committee shall constitute a quorum.

3. Taking testimony. For the purpose of taking testimony, other than sworn testimony, by the Committee or any subcommittee, one member of the Committee or subcommittee shall constitute a quorum. For the purpose of taking sworn testimony by the Committee, three members shall constitute a quorum, and for the taking of sworn testimony by any subcommittee, one member shall constitute a quorum.

III. PROXIES

Except for the reporting of a bill, votes may be cast by proxy when any member so requests.

IV. ATTENDANCE OF STAFF MEMBERS AT CLOSED SESSIONS

Attendance of staff members at closed sessions of the Committee shall be limited to those members of the Committee staff who have a responsibility associated with the matter being considered at such meeting. This rule may be waived by unanimous consent.

V. BROADCASTING AND PHOTOGRAPHING OF COMMITTEE HEARINGS

The Committee or any of its subcommittees may permit the photographing and broadcast of open hearings by television and/or radio. However, if any member of a subcommittee objects to the photographing or broadcasting of an open hearing, the question shall be referred to the full Committee for its decision.

VI. AVAILABILITY OF SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

To the extent possible, when the bill and report of any subcommittee are available, they shall be furnished to each member of the Committee thirty-six hours prior to the Committee's consideration of said bill and report.

VII. AMENDMENTS AND REPORT LANGUAGE

To the extent possible, amendments and report language intended to be proposed by Senators at full Committee markups shall be provided in writing to the Chairman and Ranking Minority Member and the appropriate Subcommittee Chairman and Ranking Minority Member twenty-four hours prior to such markups.

VIII. POINTS OF ORDER

Any member of the Committee who is floor manager of an appropriations bill is hereby

authorized to make points of order against any amendment offered in violation of the Senate Rules on the floor of the Senate to such appropriations bill.

IX. EX OFFICIO MEMBERSHIP

The Chairman and Ranking Minority Member of the full Committee are ex officio members of all subcommittees of which they are not regular members but shall have no vote in the subcommittee and shall not be counted for purposes of determining a quorum.

CONFIRMATION OF SCOTT PRUITT

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, I had very serious concerns about the nomination of Attorney General Scott Pruitt for Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, EPA, and opposed his nomination. His record on the environment is abysmal. My office received a great number of comments from people in the State of Vermont, which takes environmental protection very seriously, as well as from all over the country. They fear that Mr. Pruitt is bought and paid for by the fossil fuel industry and the protection of our environment is in serious jeopardy. Make no mistake, the nomination of Scott Pruitt was a nomination designed to protect the fossil fuel industry and not the environment.

In many ways, Scott Pruitt is the worst of the worst of all of Trump's nominees. Donald Trump was going to drain the swamp. He promised to "break the cycle of corruption" and "give new voices a chance to go into government service." Well, guess who is running the swamp now: the same corporate cronies Trump promised to drain out of Washington.

Scott Pruitt wants to be the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, but he is no friend of the environment. He boasts on his website that he is a "leading advocate" against the EPA. He said, "The agency's actions are at best incompetent, and at worst reprehensible." He testified to the House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology in May 2016 that "the EPA was never intended to be our Nation's frontline environmental regulator."

What is particularly troubling is his record as Oklahoma's attorney general—as Oklahoma's chief enforcer of clean air and water protections for his constituents—he sued the EPA 14 times and still has 8 active cases against the EPA. In all but one of these 14 cases Pruitt brought against the EPA, he was on the side of corporate interests. And in 13 of the 14, these companies or trade associations were also financial contributors to Mr. Pruitt's political causes.

Shockingly, Scott Pruitt disbanded the Environmental Protection Unit of the Oklahoma Attorney General's Office. He claims that he continued environmental protection, but the State budget shows that funding for "environmental law" in the attorney general's office fell from \$486,000 in 2011 to 0 in 2014. In the State's 2016 budget, there was a line item for "environ-

mental law"—with \$0. In fact, of the more than 700 press releases he issued as Oklahoma's top law enforcement official, not one touts an environmental enforcement case in Oklahoma. It seems clear that he abandoned all meaningful environmental protection. This is concerning because reports show that the Trump administration is considering eliminating the EPA's Office of Enforcement, which would mean that the Agency would no longer be able to independently enforce our Nation's antipollution laws.

At a time when we have to strengthen environmental protection, Mr. Pruitt will be working overtime to carry out President Trump's goal to destroy the EPA. Does this sound like someone who should be running the EPA? Not to me. More than 230 different environmental, health, and public interest groups agree that Pruitt is unqualified—so do former EPA employees. More than 770 of them from across the country all signed on to a letter that asked us to reject Pruitt as the next EPA Administrator. When hundreds of environmental groups and former EPA employees tell us that this guy is not qualified, maybe we should listen.

The scariest thing about Scott Pruitt being the Administrator of the EPA is that our EPA should be working nonstop to address the most pressing environmental issue of our time—the global crisis of climate change. In 2009, the EPA Administrator found that the carbon pollution causing climate change threatens the public health and welfare of current and future generations; yet President Trump has called climate change a "hoax." In November 2012, he tweeted: "The concept of global warming was created by and for the Chinese in order to make U.S. manufacturing non-competitive."

Perhaps it should come as no surprise that Mr. Pruitt takes the same page from President Trump. Pruitt said in March 2016, "Reasonable minds can disagree about the science behind global warming, and disagree they do." He also said "The debate about climate change is just that, a debate. There are scientists that agree, there are scientists that don't agree, to the extent of man's contribution and whether it is even harmful at this point," he added "We've had ebb and flow, we've had obviously climate conditions change throughout our history and that is scientific fact. It gets cooler. It gets hotter. And we do not know the trajectory is on an unsustainable course. Nor do we know, the extent by which the burning of fossil fuels, and man's contribution to that, is making it far worse than it is."

When I questioned Mr. Pruitt in his confirmation hearing on January 18, he said: "I believe . . . the degree of human activity's impact on the climate is subject to more debate on whether the climate is changing or whether human activity contributes to it." He even told me that he thinks that his opinion on climate change is

immaterial to his role as EPA Administrator. This is ludicrous. It is not immaterial—it is in fact essential—that we have an EPA Administrator who agrees with the scientific data and is willing to lead the fight against climate change. Yet, in his answers, he stated, “there is a diverse range of views regarding the key drivers of our changing climate among scientists. I believe that these differences should be the subject of robust and open debate free from intimidation. If confirmed, I will continue to encourage an honest debate on our changing climate, the role of human activity, our ability to measure the degree and extent of human activity, and what to do about it.”

Almost all—97 percent—of scientists have concluded that climate change is real. It is caused by human activity. And it is already causing devastating problems in our country and around the world. If we do not move aggressively to transition our energy system away from fossil fuels toward sustainable energy like solar, wind, and geothermal, the problem will become much worse.

Just this month, a report in the peer-reviewed journal *The Anthropocene Review*, researchers found that humans are causing the climate to change 170 times faster than natural forces. This is just another reason why it is unacceptable for Mr. Pruitt to say that he “believe[s] the ability to measure with precision, the degree of human activity’s impact on the climate is subject to more debate on whether the climate is changing or whether human activity contributes to it.”

For 200 years, we have been burning increasing amounts of fossil fuels to heat our buildings, generate electricity, and power our vehicles. When we burn fossil fuels, we release significant amounts of carbon pollution into the atmosphere. In fact, today, humans release more than 35 billion tons of CO₂ in the atmosphere every year. According to NASA, the concentration of atmospheric carbon dioxide has never exceeded 300 parts per million in the past 650,000 years. In 2013, CO₂ levels reached 400 parts per million for the first time.

So it should not come as a surprise to hear that the planet is warming at an alarming rate: 2016 was the hottest year on record, and 16 of the 17 hottest years have occurred since 2000. Nor should it come as a surprise that we are already seeing devastating effects of climate change all across the United States and around the globe: more intense wildfires, heatwaves, drought, extreme storms, flooding, rising sea levels, and more. Americans are worried. A study released last month shows that more than 6 in 10 Americans say that they worried about global warming.

But climate change is not the only area that makes Americans worried about Pruitt being the EPA Administrator. They are worried about Pruitt’s inaction in the face of a growing number of earthquakes in Oklahoma. In the

past few years, Oklahoma has been plagued by thousands of earthquakes, which the U.S. Geological Survey said are tied to fracking wastewater injection. Oklahoma’s current earthquake rate is now 600 times higher than its prefracking rate. Oklahoma now has more earthquakes on a regular basis than California.

In 2011 in Prague, OK, *The Oklahoman* newspaper reported a 5.6 earthquake, stating that scientists “believe the earthquake was caused by injection wells in the area.” To put that in perspective, an earthquake in the magnitude 5 range, like the one reported, releases as much energy as the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima in 1945. But, before 2009, there were, on average, two earthquakes a year in Oklahoma that were magnitude 3 or greater. By 2013, there were 109 magnitude 3 or greater earthquakes; by 2014, that had grown to 585 magnitude 3 or greater earthquakes; and by 2015, there were 907 magnitude 3 or greater earthquakes.

The damage was extensive; 40 to 50 buildings in Cushing, OK, were substantially damaged in a November 2016 earthquake. In reaction to the then-largest earthquake in September 2015, the Pawnee Nation passed a resolution against fracking activities after suffering damage to seven historic tribal buildings. The Ponca Nation also passed has a moratorium on fracking because the earthquakes have caused damage to their crumbling water infrastructure and buildings. Scientists say that Oklahoma is “almost certain” to have more earthquakes, with heightened risks of a large quake probable to endure for a decade.

The Attorneys General in my State of Vermont, California, and New York have all frequently acted quickly to address environmental problems; yet, during Mr. Pruitt’s hearing, he told me he did nothing to help folks in Oklahoma who had been hurt by earthquakes caused by fracking in Oklahoma. Pruitt’s sole response to my questions during his hearing about what he had done to address the earthquake problem in his State was to say he has “acknowledged that he is concerned.” That is it. “He’s concerned.” He did not stand up and say he will do everything he can to stop future earthquakes as a result of fracking. He did not sue the corporations who were causing the earthquakes on behalf of the people of Oklahoma. He did not hold a press conference. He did nothing.

These earthquakes are so concerning because the EPA “regulates the construction, operation, permitting, and closure of injection wells used to place fluids underground for storage or disposal” as part of its role in preventing contamination of drinking water. So, if we let Pruitt will nor lead the EPA, there is nothing to say he will not abandon efforts to regulate waste fracking water injection to protect the American people from earthquakes. If

his past record is any indication, it is very questionable that he will take action to protect communities from harmful effects like these.

Maybe the reason so many are concerned he will abandon efforts to enforce environmental laws and why he was willing to abandon Oklahomans when they needed him is because he is in the pocket of corporate industry. Pruitt received more than \$350,000 in contributions from the fossil fuel industry. Pruitt raised huge amounts for his two Federal PAC—known as Liberty 2.0 and Oklahoma Strong. According to Politico, Liberty 2.0 has raised more than \$168,000 from energy interests, and Oklahoma Strong leadership has raised \$72,000.

In 2014, in a Pulitzer Prize winning investigation, the New York Times exposed that Pruitt and numerous other Republican attorneys general had formed secret alliances with energy corporations. The New York Times also exposed the Defense Fund, which is a dark money offshoot of the Republican Attorneys General Association. The Defense Fund received \$175,000 in 2014 from Freedom Partners, which coordinates the Koch brothers’ political activities. The New York Times also detailed how, in 2011, Pruitt wrote a letter to the EPA Administrator claiming that Federal regulators were grossly overestimating the amount of air pollution caused by energy companies drilling new natural gas wells in his State. Pruitt did not write the letter on behalf of Oklahoma residents; he did it on behalf of one of Oklahoma’s biggest oil and gas companies, Devon Energy. As he fought for corporate donors, the American Lung Association named three urban regions in Oklahoma as having the 25 most heavily polluted air regions in the United States.

These examples of Pruitt’s corrupt relationship with corporate polluters are so shocking and dangerous because he wants to lead the EPA, an Agency which is most responsible for protecting our kids and grandkids from the very polluters he has protected for so long. For the sake of our children and grandchildren and the future of this planet, were there none of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle who would speak out to say that Mr. Pruitt should not be confirmed as head of the EPA?

The last time I checked, no one voted to pollute the environment in the last election. The majority of Americans do not agree that we should be dismantling protections that ensure clean air and clean water. In fact, according to Gallup, more than 7 in 10 Americans worry about drinking water pollution and air pollution. That is why we cannot allow Scott Pruitt to drive the EPA into the ground. He has shown that he wants to dismantle basic air, water, and climate protections.

We cannot rollback decades of progress. In fact, we are in desperate need of strong laws and regulations to

protect the environment and fight climate change. Do not be fooled. Scott Pruitt is not for protecting American citizens and the environment, but for protecting giant polluting corporations. With a record like his, we cannot expect Pruitt to safeguard our drinking water and air from pollution. With Pruitt, the environment will be auctioned off to the highest corporate bidder no matter the cost to the American public. It was for all these reasons that I strongly opposed Mr. Pruitt's nomination, and I urged my colleagues to join me in voting no.

Ms. CORTEZ MASTO. Mr. President, I speak in unity with my colleagues and highlight the irreparable harm that will be done to our environment and communities now that Scott Pruitt has been confirmed to be the head of the Environmental Protection Agency.

Mr. Pruitt has focused his career on working against the EPA's fundamental mission of protecting our Nation's environment, instead pushing an anti-environment agenda dictated by big corporations that have funded his campaigns and political career.

Mr. Pruitt has been serving as Oklahoma's attorney general since 2010, during which he has spent countless hours working to undermine and repudiate the very Agency he is nominated to run.

Throughout his tenure, Mr. Pruitt sued the EPA 14 times over orders that seek to protect our environment and the health and safety of our communities.

Included in Mr. Pruitt's lawsuits were efforts to undercut basic, commonsense measures that are essential to Americans' health and safety: EPA safeguards for clean air and clean water. Yes, Mr. Pruitt supports undoing measures that ensure the air we breathe is not polluted and the water we drink is free of contaminants.

And during his confirmation hearing, Mr. Pruitt contradicted his own record and biography, calling into question his knowledge of basic principles. Pruitt claimed he believes that the EPA has "a very valuable role." And yet his own LinkedIn profile brags that he is "a leading advocate against the EPA's activist agenda."

Almost 4,000 Nevadans reached out to my office urging me to vote against Mr. Pruitt.

I want to read some stories from Nevadans who voiced their concerns about Mr. Pruitt and what is at stake for them—as well as countless other families across the country.

From Jean Pierre LeBarry of Las Vegas, NV:

I am of Basque descent, as is my whole family. I grew up in Northern Nevada, as many other Basque folks did, on a ranch. We did not have running water or even electricity. We did have our sheep though. We were sheep ranchers, across the great state of Nevada the industry flourished, but before I had heard Al Gore say anything about climate change, I saw its effects in our state [Nevada]. We stopped getting as much snow-

fall; we would scour the desert for water to keep our herd alive on the range. Year after year it got worse, slowly killing our industry, thinning our herd, and giving me first hand example of how severe climate change is. This was more than 30 years ago I saw these changes taking place. After I left the ranch, I worked as a government employee for the Bureau of Land Management, until I retired. To see how much disregard Scott Pruitt would have for my family and their struggles with the deterioration of our climate; it is appalling that anyone would dare to confirm his nomination to head the Environmental Protection Agency, the very agency he has tried so hard to dismantle already.

From Sharon Ingram-Bevans of Reno, NV:

My Husband was a Vietnam Vet and he died last March after a 10 year illness directly related to environmental pollution. He was stationed at Camp Le Juhen North Carolina, exposed to drinking water full of jet fuel, and some great general's idea to have young Marines scrape and repaint Agent Orange boxes while serving in the Refugee camps at Okinawa Japan. Our Daughter has Thyroid disease due to this exposure also. If we only paid attention to how we use and dispose of substances we might have a better world to give to our children. There is no Planet "B" and even rich people need clean air and water.

From Brittany Lamborn of Las Vegas, NV:

I was born and raised in Nevada. My sister, brother, and I grew up in the Las Vegas valley, surrounded by majestic mountain ranges, fragrant pines, and breathtaking sunsets. Away from the glitz and glamour of the Strip, I could lose myself in the beauty of Red Rock or walk the trails on Mt. Charleston. My mom would take us to Gilcrease Orchard to pick fresh produce. My dad would take us on stargazing trips to Cathedral Gorge in Panaca. I have never wished for another home. Home means Nevada.

Now I have two young children of my own. I put on a brave face every morning so that they do not see my fear that increases with each day. I fear that these God given wonders will not be protected for them. I fear that the overwhelming need to consume will eat up our natural resources. And I fear that, unchecked, we will do irreparable harm to the only planet we have. When the dust has cleared, I fear: What will be left for our children?

Climate change is a fact, not a feeling or an opinion. We need someone at the helm of the Environmental Protection Agency that will protect every Gilcrease Orchard, every Red Rock, and every Cathedral Gorge in the United States. Scott Pruitt is not that man.

I know I am not the only Senator whose office was contacted by countless constituents, urging us to put the health and safety of our children and our environment first and oppose Mr. Pruitt's nomination.

I promised Nevadans I would come to Washington and fight for them and their priorities, and that is why I could not support Mr. Pruitt to lead the EPA. I urged my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to do the same.

TRIBUTE TO MAJOR GENERAL CAMILLE M. NICHOLS

Mr. REED. Mr. President, today I want to pay special tribute to an ex-

ceptional officer of the U.S. Army, MG Camille M. Nichols. Currently serving as the director of the Department of Defense Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office, General Nichols will retire after more than 41 years of Active military service on April 1, 2017. From enlisted private, to academy graduate, to two-star general, MG Camille Nichols has demonstrated the Army values of duty, integrity, selfless service, and dedication to country. Many of my colleagues and I have had the pleasure of working with Major General Nichols on a number of issues and programs, and it is my distinct privilege to recognize her accomplishments.

MG Camille Nichols began her military career in 1975, as an enlisted soldier in the U.S. Army. While serving in Germany and at the insistence of her leadership, she applied for acceptance as a cadet candidate to the U.S. Military Academy Preparatory School, thus enabling her to join the U.S. Military Academy Class, USMA, class of 1981. Upon her graduation from USMA, Major General Nichols was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the Corps of Engineers. Throughout her years of service, Major General Nichols attended numerous advanced military and civilian schools, receiving three masters degrees, and while working full time, earned a Ph.D. in engineering management from George Washington University.

After serving in several command and high-level staff positions, General Nichols developed expertise in contracting and acquisition procedures and systems. These demonstrated abilities were recognized by her selection as one of the general officers named to stand up the U.S. Army's Contracting Command. It cannot be overstated that, in all her leadership and staff roles, Camille Nichols positively influenced the lives of thousands of military personnel while she did the Nation's bidding around the world and at home. From Korea to Saudi Arabia; from Operation Iraqi Freedom/New Dawn to commanding general of U.S. Army Contracting Command, Major General Nichols has been out front, pressing hard to ensure the Army is well-equipped with a 21st century fighting force capable of defeating the enemy.

As the director of the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office, Major General Nichols' undeterred leadership, soldier-scholar depth and breadth of knowledge, commitment to eliminating sexual assault, and commonsense approach to problem solving have contributed immeasurably to the improvement and execution of Sexual Assault Prevention and Response program and the DOD-wide strategy. She also spearheaded specialized policies and strategies focusing on prevention efforts, combating retaliation, and addressing the needs of male victims. Major General Nichols' efforts have been instrumental in shaping and articulating program initiatives, plans,

and objectives to Congress, senior defense leaders, and the American public, earning the respect of both her superiors and peers.

I ask that you and our colleagues join me, as well as Major General Nichols' family, many friends, and peers in saluting this distinguished officer's many contributions and sacrifices in the defense of our great Nation. It is fitting that today we publicly recognize her service and wish her health, happiness, and success in the years to come. Congratulations, Major General Nichols, on completing an exceptional and exemplary career.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO MAJOR GENERAL FRANK VAVALA

• Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, it is with great pleasure that I rise today on behalf of Delaware's congressional delegation—Senator CHRIS COONS, Congresswoman LISA BLUNT ROCHESTER and myself—to honor the exemplary service of MG Frank Vavala, the adjutant general for Delaware for the past 18 years. As Governor of Delaware, I had the distinct pleasure of nominating him to serve as Adjutant General in February 1999, and I believe to this day it is one of the best appointments I have ever made. Over the past 17 years, General Vavala has been responsible for the mission readiness of all Delaware National Guard units for both Federal and State missions. He served as a cabinet member and trusted military adviser to me when I was Governor, as well as to the three Governors who succeeded me: Governor Ruth Ann Minner, Governor Jack Markell, and Governor John Carney. In January 2017, he was promoted to the rank of lieutenant general Delaware, becoming the first three-star general to lead the Delaware National Guard.

During General Vavala's tenure, the Delaware National Guard has deployed close to 11,000 soldiers and airmen to support our State and country. Nearly half of them were deployed abroad to Bosnia, South America, Africa, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Iraq, and Afghanistan, among other countries. Once in theater, these men and women accomplished almost every mission imaginable. They ran entry control points, provided security, established and maintained communications and conducted medical evacuation from the battlefield. They also transported supplies, patients, personnel, and dignitaries in both UH-60 Blackhawk helicopters and C-130 aircraft. Back at home, the Delaware Guard activated nearly 5,000 soldiers and airmen to provide support during 11 snowstorms, 8 hurricanes—including Hurricane Katrina, where hundreds of Delawareans went to help in Mississippi and Louisiana just 24 hours after the devastating storm made landfall, 1 tornado, dozens of floods, Noreasters, and

three Presidential inaugurations. General Vavala oversaw all operations as soldiers and airmen helped transport emergency workers and patients, evacuate flooded areas, get residents to shelter, safety, and medical assistance, and even set up emergency communications around the state.

Like many successful leaders, General Vavala did not keep regular office hours. He routinely came to work early, stayed late, and worked on weekends. He was known for taking the time to recognize, thank, console, and care for everyone under his command from the newest private to the most senior officer. He valued every person who wore the uniform equally. I have met Guard men and women for years who say that when they were in a time of need, General Vavala was there for them, even if it was just taking time to drop them an email or note. Sometimes they wondered how he found out about what was going on in their lives, but however he did it, he found out. He prioritized his soldiers and airmen over his own career. Instead of focusing the spotlight on his individual accomplishments, General Vavala put the focus on his soldiers and airmen, and it made his career a success by default.

In addition to holding dozens of leadership positions in the Delaware Guard, General Vavala held prominent national positions as president of the Adjutants General Association of the United States and chairman of the board of the National Guard Association of the United States, NGAUS. During his tenure as chairman of the board, NGAUS was the main driver responsible for passing one of the most significant pieces of military legislation in a generation—the National Guard Empowerment Act. General Vavala provided key testimony before the House Armed Services Committee and was instrumental in advocating for the passage of this important legislation. In January 2012, Delaware's 146th General Assembly passed H.J. Res. 10, recognizing General Vavala for his leading role in helping to reshape the U.S. military.

General Vavala is from a proud military family, having served with both his father, COL Frank P. Vavala, and brother MSG Gerald P. Vavala. Before serving as Adjutant General, he worked full time for the DuPont Company, where he was employed as marketing services supervisor for 31 years. He has been honored with the Anthony of Padua Founders' Award and the Italian-American Man of the Year Award. He also cares about his community, organizing food drives for the Food Bank of Delaware, and he is a person of deep faith who takes seriously what the Bible tells us about caring for others and focused that into his career as Adjutant General.

I believe General Vavala has been successful in no small part because he possesses some of the finest leadership qualities that I have ever observed in a military leader. Frank Vavala under-

stands that leaders are humble, not haughty. They have the heart of a servant. They understand that their role is to serve, not be served. General Vavala leads by example. It is not do as I say, but do as I do. He knows that the best leaders aren't afraid to keep out of step when everyone else is marching to the wrong tune. Leaders unite, not divide. They build bridges not walls. They are aspirational—purveyors of hope, if you will—and they appeal to our better angels. Like the very best leaders, Frank has always sought to do what is right, not what is easy or expedient. He embraces the Golden Rule and treats other people the way he would want to be treated. General Vavala surrounds himself with the best people he can find. When his team does well, he gives the credit to them. And when the team falls short of the mark, this leader takes the blame. Finally, when General Frank Vavala knows he is right, he never gives up. As a leader, General Frank Vavala is in a class of his own, and he is one whom other leaders, both civilian and military would do well to emulate.

On behalf of Senator COONS and Congresswoman BLUNT ROCHESTER, let me wholeheartedly thank General Vavala for his service to our country and our State. The leadership and commitment he modeled helped keep Delaware and our Nation more safe and secure. Today, we are honored to be able to offer General Vavala our sincere congratulations on a job well done. From our hearts, we wish him and his wife Jane, who he has been married to for 50 years—along with their children Anne, Jane, and Nick and their three granddaughters—many happy, healthy, and successful years to come. Bravo Zulu.●

MESSAGE FROM THE HOUSE

At 12:02 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mrs. Cole, one of its reading clerks, announced that pursuant to section 4 of the United States Semiquincentennial Commission Act of 2016 (Public Law 114-196), 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 Semiquincentennial Commission: Mr. MEEHAN of Pennsylvania, Mr. ADERHOLT of Alabama, and from private life: Mr. Jim Koch of Newton, Massachusetts, Mr. Val Crofts of Milton, Wisconsin, Dr. Wilfred McClay of Norman, Oklahoma, and Mrs. Lynn Young of Rockdale, Texas.

The message also announced that pursuant to section 161(a) of the Trade Act of 1974 (19 U.S.C. 2211), and the order of the House of January 3, 2017, the Speaker appoints the following Members of the House of Representatives as Congressional Advisors on Trade Policy and Negotiations: Mr. BRADY of Texas, Mr. REICHERT of Washington, and Mr. NUNES of California.

The message further announced that pursuant to 22 U.S.C. 276h 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 Interparliamentary Group: Ms. SÁNCHEZ of California, Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas, Mr. POLIS of Colorado, Mrs. TORRES of California, and Ms. LOFGREN of California.

EXECUTIVE AND OTHER COMMUNICATIONS

The following communications were laid before the Senate, together with accompanying papers, reports, and documents, and were referred as indicated:

EC-805. A communication from the Assistant to the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Amendments to the Capital Plan and Stress Test Rules" (RIN7100-AE59) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 14, 2017; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC-806. A communication from the Chairman, Federal Financial Institutions Examination Council, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Description of Office, Procedures, and Public Information" (12 CFR Part 1101) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 14, 2017; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC-807. A communication from the Attorney Advisor, Federal Highway Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "National Performance Management Measures; Assessing Pavement Condition for the National Highway Performance Program and Bridge Condition for the National Highway Performance Program" (RIN2125-AF53) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 14, 2017; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-808. A communication from the Associate General Counsel for General Law, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to a vacancy in the position of Commissioner, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, Department of Homeland Security, received in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 14, 2017; to the Committee on Finance.

EC-809. A communication from the Chief of the Publications and Regulations Branch, Internal Revenue Service, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Dividend Equivalents from Sources within the United States" (RIN1545-BM33) (TD 9815) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 14, 2017; to the Committee on Finance.

EC-810. A communication from the Chief of the Publications and Regulations Branch, Internal Revenue Service, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Revenue Procedure for Early Voluntary Country-by-Country Filing" (Rev. Proc. 2017-23) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 14, 2017; to the Committee on Finance.

EC-811. A communication from the Chief of the Publications and Regulations Branch, Internal Revenue Service, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Updated Withholding Foreign Partnership Agreement and Withholding Foreign Trust Agreement" (Rev. Proc. 2017-21) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 14, 2017; to the Committee on Finance.

EC-812. A communication from the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to law, an addendum to a certification, of the proposed sale or export of defense articles and/or defense services to a Middle East country (OSS-2017-0164); to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC-813. A communication from the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to law, an addendum to a certification, of the proposed sale or export of defense articles and/or defense services to a Middle East country (OSS-2017-0163); to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC-814. A communication from the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to law, an addendum to a certification, of the proposed sale or export of defense articles and/or defense services to a Middle East country (OSS-2017-0162); to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC-815. A communication from the Director of Regulations and Policy Management Staff, Food and Drug Administration, Department of Health and Human Services, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Refuse to Accept Procedure for Premarket Tobacco Product Submissions; Revised Effective Date" (Docket No. FDA-2016-N-1555) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 14, 2017; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

EC-816. A communication from the Director of Regulations and Policy Management Staff, Food and Drug Administration, Department of Health and Human Services, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Clarification of When Products Made or Derived From Tobacco Are Regulated as Drugs, Devices, or Combination Products; Amendments to Regulations Regarding 'Intended Uses'; Delayed Effective Date" ((RIN0910-AH19) (Docket No. FDA-2015-N-2002)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 14, 2017; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

EC-817. A communication from the Assistant General Counsel for Regulations, Office of Policy and Research, Department of Housing and Urban Development, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects" (24 CFR Part 60) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 14, 2017; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

EC-818. A communication from the Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report on D.C. Act 21-603, "Omnibus Public Safety and Justice Amendment Act of 2016"; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-819. A communication from the Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report on D.C. Act 21-604, "Nonwoven Disposable Products Act of 2016"; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-820. A communication from the Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report on D.C. Act 21-605, "West End Parcels Development Omnibus Amendment Act of 2016"; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-821. A communication from the Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report

on D.C. Act 21-606, "Green Yards Recognition Act of 2016"; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-822. A communication from the Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report on D.C. Act 21-607, "Historic Preservation of Derelict District Properties Act of 2016"; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-823. A communication from the Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report on D.C. Act 21-608, "H Street, N.E., Retail Priority Area Clarification Temporary Amendment Act of 2016"; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-824. A communication from the Associate General Counsel for General Law, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, ten (10) reports relative to vacancies in the Department of Homeland Security, received in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 14, 2017; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-825. A communication from the Acting Chief Privacy Officer, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report entitled "Department of Homeland Security Privacy Office Fiscal Year 2016 Semiannual Report to Congress"; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-826. A communication from the Acting Director, Employee Services/Recruitment and Hiring, Office of Personnel Management, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Medical Qualification Determination" (RIN3206-AL14) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 14, 2017; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-827. A communication from the Acting Director, Employee Services/Recruitment and Hiring, Office of Personnel Management, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Recruitment and Selection through Competitive Examination" (RIN3206-AN46) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 14, 2017; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-828. A communication from the Associate General Counsel for General Law, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to a vacancy in the position of Under Secretary for Intelligence and Analysis, Department of Homeland Security, received in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 14, 2017; to the Select Committee on Intelligence.

EC-829. A communication from the Associate General Counsel for General Law, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to a vacancy in the position of Under Secretary for Intelligence and Analysis, Department of Homeland Security, received in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 14, 2017; to the Select Committee on Intelligence.

EC-830. A communication from the Associate General Counsel for General Law, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to a vacancy in the position of Under Secretary for Intelligence and Analysis, Department of Homeland Security, received in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 14, 2017; to the Select Committee on Intelligence.

EC-831. A communication from the Associate General Counsel for General Law, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, two (2) reports relative

to vacancies in the position of Assistant Secretary/Director, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Department of Homeland Security, received in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 14, 2017; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

EC-832. A communication from the Acting Assistant Attorney General, Office of Legislative Affairs, Department of Justice, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to the Bureau of Prisons' compliance with the privatization requirements of the National Capital Revitalization and Self-Government Improvement Act of 1997; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

EC-833. A communication from the Associate General Counsel for General Law, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to a vacancy in the position of Assistant Secretary/Director, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Department of Homeland Security, received in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 14, 2017; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

EC-834. A communication from the Associate General Counsel for General Law, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to a vacancy in the position of Director, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, Department of Homeland Security, received in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 14, 2017; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

EC-835. A communication from the Acting Assistant Attorney General, Office of Legislative Affairs, Department of Justice, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to the Victims Compensation Fund established by the Witness Security Reform Act of 1984; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

EC-836. A communication from the Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, Department of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Fisheries of the Northeastern United States; Summer Flounder Fishery; Quota Transfer" (RIN0648-XF073) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 14, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-837. A communication from the Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, Department of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Exchange of Flatfish in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Management Area" (RIN0648-XE880) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 14, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-838. A communication from the Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, Department of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Shortraker Rockfish in the Western Regulatory Area of the Gulf of Alaska" (RIN0648-XE894) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 14, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-839. A communication from the Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, Department of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Several Groundfish Species in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Management Area" (RIN0648-XE925) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 14, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-840. A communication from the Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, Department of Commerce, transmitting, pursu-

ant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Big Skate in the Central Regulatory Area of the Gulf of Alaska" (RIN0648-XE922) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 14, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-841. A communication from the Assistant General Counsel, Office of the General Counsel, Consumer Product Safety Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Safety Standard for Sling Carriers" (CPSC Docket No. CPSC-2014-0018) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 14, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-842. A communication from the Deputy Chief, Disability Rights Office, Federal Communications Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "Structure and Practices of the Video Relay Service Program; and Telecommunications Relay Services and Speech-to-Speech Services for Individuals with Hearing and Speech Disabilities" ((CG Docket No. 10-51 and CG Docket No. 03-123) (DA 17-76)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 14, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC-843. A communication from the Attorney Advisor, Federal Highway Administration, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled "National Goals and Performance Management Measures; Assessing Performance of the National Highway System, Freight Movement on the Interstate System, and Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program" (RIN2125-AF54) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 14, 2017; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

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. CASEY (for himself, Mr. GRASSLEY, Mr. LEAHY, and Ms. COLLINS):

S. 443. A bill to amend the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967 and other laws to clarify appropriate standards for Federal employment discrimination and retaliation claims, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Ms. HEITKAMP (for herself and Mr. HELLER):

S. 444. A bill to amend the Investment Company Act of 1940 to expand the investor limitation for qualifying venture capital funds under an exemption from the definition of an investment company; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

By Ms. COLLINS (for herself and Mr. CARDIN):

S. 445. A bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to ensure more timely access to home health services for Medicare beneficiaries under the Medicare program; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. CORNYN (for himself, Mr. BARASSO, Mr. BLUNT, Mr. BOOZMAN, Mrs. CAPITO, Mr. COCHRAN, Mr. CRAPO, Mr. CRUZ, Mr. DAINES, Mr. ENZI, Mrs. ERNST, Mrs. FISCHER, Mr. GRAHAM, Mr. GRASSLEY, Mr. HATCH, Mr. HELLER, Mr. HOEVEN, Mr. ISAKSON, Mr. MCCAIN, Mr. MORAN, Ms. MURKOWSKI,

Mr. PERDUE, Mr. PORTMAN, Mr. ROBERTS, Mr. ROUNDS, Mr. RUBIO, Mr. THUNE, Mr. WICKER, Mr. YOUNG, Mr. JOHNSON, and Mr. FLAKE):

S. 446. A bill to allow reciprocity for the carrying of certain concealed firearms; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Ms. BALDWIN (for herself, Mr. RUBIO, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mr. CASEY, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, Mrs. GILLIBRAND, Mr. HATCH, Mr. JOHNSON, Mr. MARKEY, Mr. MCCAIN, Mr. PETERS, Mr. SCHUMER, Mr. THUNE, Ms. WARREN, and Mr. BOOKER):

S. 447. A bill to require reporting on acts of certain foreign countries on Holocaust era assets and related issues; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

By Mr. BROWN (for himself and Ms. COLLINS):

S. 448. A bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to provide for treatment of clinical psychologists as physicians for purposes of furnishing clinical psychologist services under the Medicare program; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. MARKEY:

S. 449. A bill to promote worldwide access to the Internet, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

By Mr. MANCHIN:

S. 450. A bill to award a Congressional Gold Medal to members of the Armed Forces who fought in defense of Guam, Wake Island, and the Philippine Archipelago between December 7, 1941 and May 10, 1942, and who died or were imprisoned by the Japanese military in the Philippines, Japan, Korea, Manchuria, Wake Island, and Guam from April 9, 1942 until September 2, 1945, in recognition of their personal sacrifice and service to the United States; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

By Mr. CARDIN (for himself and Mr. BOOZMAN):

S. 451. A bill to amend the Water Resources Research Act of 1984 to reauthorize grants for and require applied water supply research regarding the water resources research and technology institutes established under that Act; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

By Mr. FLAKE (for himself, Mr. MCCAIN, Mr. WICKER, Mrs. CAPITO, and Mr. COTTON):

S. 452. A bill to amend the Clean Air Act to delay the enforcement and implementation of the 2015 national ambient air quality standards for ozone; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

By Mr. FLAKE (for himself, Mr. MCCAIN, and Mr. COTTON):

S. 453. A bill to require the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency to include in any proposed rule that limits greenhouse gas emissions and imposes increased costs on other Federal agencies an offset from funds available to the Administrator for all projected increased costs that the proposed rule would impose on other Federal agencies; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

By Mr. FLAKE (for himself, Mr. MCCAIN, and Mr. COTTON):

S. 454. A bill to amend the Clean Air Act with respect to exceptional event demonstrations, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

By Mr. TESTER:

S. 455. A bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to count resident time spent in a critical access hospital as resident time spent in a nonprovider setting for purposes of making Medicare direct and indirect graduate medical education payments; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. BENNET (for himself, Mr. RUBIO, Mr. VAN HOLLEN, and Mr. GARDNER):

S. 456. A bill to amend the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act to establish a program to increase the development of new drugs to treat pediatric cancers, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. TESTER (for himself, Mr. FRANKEN, and Mr. KAINE):

S. 457. A bill to amend the Higher Education Act of 1965 to establish a scholarship program for educators of rural students and provide for loan forgiveness for rural educators, to amend the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 to provide professional development grants for rural elementary schools and secondary schools, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. TESTER (for himself, Mr. FRANKEN, and Mr. UDALL):

S. 458. A bill to support the education of Indian children; to the Committee on Indian Affairs.

By Mr. RUBIO:

S. 459. A bill to designate the area between the intersections of Wisconsin Avenue, Northwest and Davis Street, Northwest and Wisconsin Avenue, Northwest and Edmunds Street, Northwest in Washington, District of Columbia, as "Boris Nemtsov Plaza", and for other purposes; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

By Ms. HIRONO (for herself and Mr. SCHATZ):

S. 460. A bill for the relief of Vichai Sae Tung (also known as Chai Chaowasaree); to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. HEINRICH (for himself and Mr. HELLER):

S. 461. A bill to allow Homeland Security Grant Program funds to be used to safeguard faith-based community centers across the United States, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

By Mr. HATCH (for himself, Mr. MCCONNELL, Mr. CORNYN, Mr. BARRASSO, Mr. BLUNT, Mr. BOOZMAN, Mr. BURR, Mrs. CAPITO, Mr. CASSIDY, Mr. COCHRAN, Ms. COLLINS, Mr. CORKER, Mr. CRAPO, Mr. CRUZ, Mr. DAINES, Mr. ENZI, Mrs. ERNST, Mrs. FISCHER, Mr. FLAKE, Mr. GARDNER, Mr. GRAHAM, Mr. GRASSLEY, Mr. HELLER, Mr. HOEVEN, Mr. INHOFE, Mr. ISAKSON, Mr. JOHNSON, Mr. KENNEDY, Mr. LANKFORD, Mr. LEE, Mr. MCCAIN, Mr. MORAN, Ms. MURKOWSKI, Mr. PAUL, Mr. PERDUE, Mr. PORTMAN, Mr. RISCH, Mr. ROBERTS, Mr. ROUNDS, Mr. RUBIO, Mr. SASSE, Mr. SCOTT, Mr. SHELBY, Mr. STRANGE, Mr. SULLIVAN, Mr. THUNE, Mr. TILLIS, Mr. TOOMEY, Mr. WICKER, and Mr. YOUNG):

S.J. Res. 24. A joint resolution proposing an amendment to the Constitution of the United States relative to balancing the budget; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

SUBMISSION OF CONCURRENT AND SENATE RESOLUTIONS

The following concurrent resolutions and Senate resolutions were read, and referred (or acted upon), as indicated:

By Mr. CORKER (for himself and Mr. CARDIN):

S. Res. 68. A resolution raising awareness of modern slavery; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

By Mr. BOOKER (for himself, Mr. COCHRAN, Mr. SCOTT, Mrs. GILLIBRAND, Ms. HARRIS, Mr. MARKEY, Mr. CASEY, Mr. CARPER, Mr. COONS, Mr. SCHUMER, Ms. BALDWIN, Ms. HASSAN,

Mr. MENENDEZ, Ms. WARREN, Mr. REED, Mr. WICKER, Ms. MURKOWSKI, Mr. PORTMAN, Mr. MORAN, Mr. PAUL, Ms. HIRONO, Mr. BENNET, Ms. STABENOW, Mr. NELSON, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mr. LEAHY, Mrs. MURRAY, Mr. WARNER, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. KAINE, Mr. SANDERS, Mrs. SHAHEEN, Mr. DONNELLY, Mr. WYDEN, Mr. CARDIN, Mr. FRANKEN, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Ms. CORTEZ MASTO, Mr. UDALL, Mr. TILLIS, Mr. ISAKSON, Mr. PERDUE, Mr. MCCAIN, Mr. LANKFORD, Mr. BURR, Mr. HELLER, Ms. COLLINS, Mr. GRASSLEY, Mr. ALEXANDER, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, Mr. SHELBY, Mr. STRANGE, Mr. PETERS, Mr. RUBIO, and Mr. MURPHY):

S. Res. 69. A resolution celebrating Black History Month; considered and agreed to.

By Ms. HIRONO (for herself, Mr. SCHUMER, Mr. DURBIN, Mrs. MURRAY, Ms. BALDWIN, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mr. BOOKER, Mr. BROWN, Mr. CARPER, Mr. COONS, Ms. CORTEZ MASTO, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, Mrs. GILLIBRAND, Mr. KAINE, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Mr. LEAHY, Mr. MARKEY, Mr. MENENDEZ, Mr. MURPHY, Mr. REED, Mr. SANDERS, Mr. SCHATZ, Mr. VAN HOLLEN, Ms. WARREN, Mr. WYDEN, and Mr. FRANKEN):

S. Res. 70. A resolution recognizing the 75th anniversary of Executive Order 9066 and expressing the sense of the Senate that policies that discriminate against any individual based on the actual or perceived race, ethnicity, national origin, or religion of that individual would be a repetition of the mistakes of Executive Order 9066 and contrary to the values of the United States; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

ADDITIONAL COSPONSORS

S. 66

At the request of Mr. HELLER, the name of the Senator from Massachusetts (Mr. MARKEY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 66, a bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to permit certain retired members of the uniformed services who have a service-connected disability to receive both disability compensation from the Department of Veterans Affairs for their disability and either retired pay by reason of their years of military service or Combat-Related Special Compensation, and for other purposes.

S. 93

At the request of Mrs. ERNST, the name of the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. TILLIS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 93, a bill to allow women greater access to safe and effective contraception.

S. 105

At the request of Mrs. FISCHER, the name of the Senator from Nebraska (Mr. SASSE) was added as a cosponsor of S. 105, a bill to amend the Consumer Financial Protection Act of 2010 to transition the Bureau of Consumer Financial Protection to a 5-member board of directors.

S. 116

At the request of Mr. HELLER, the name of the Senator from Delaware (Mr. COONS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 116, a bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to permit veterans who have a service-connected, perma-

nent disability rated as total to travel on military aircraft in the same manner and to the same extent as retired members of the Armed Forces entitled to such travel.

S. 134

At the request of Mr. NELSON, the name of the Senator from Illinois (Ms. DUCKWORTH) was added as a cosponsor of S. 134, a bill to expand the prohibition on misleading or inaccurate caller identification information, and for other purposes.

S. 191

At the request of Mr. CASSIDY, the name of the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. ROUNDS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 191, a bill to improve patient choice by allowing States to adopt market-based alternatives to the Affordable Care Act that increase access to affordable health insurance and reduce costs while ensuring important consumer protections and improving patient care.

S. 206

At the request of Mr. KAINE, the name of the Senator from New York (Mrs. GILLIBRAND) was added as a cosponsor of S. 206, a bill to amend the Higher Education Act of 1965 to allow the Secretary of Education to award job training Federal Pell Grants.

S. 207

At the request of Ms. KLOBUCHAR, the names of the Senator from New Hampshire (Ms. HASSAN) and the Senator from Florida (Mr. RUBIO) were added as cosponsors of S. 207, a bill to amend the Controlled Substances Act relating to controlled substance analogues.

S. 236

At the request of Mr. WYDEN, the names of the Senator from California (Mrs. FEINSTEIN) and the Senator from Washington (Ms. CANTWELL) were added as cosponsors of S. 236, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to reform taxation of alcoholic beverages.

S. 248

At the request of Mr. MURPHY, the name of the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 248, a bill to block implementation of the Executive order that restricts individuals from certain countries from entering the United States.

S. 251

At the request of Mr. WYDEN, the name of the Senator from Florida (Mr. NELSON) 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. 275

At the request of Ms. HEITKAMP, the name of the Senator from Colorado (Mr. BENNET) was added as a cosponsor of S. 275, a bill to allow the financing by United States persons of sales of agricultural commodities to Cuba.

S. 294

At the request of Mr. NELSON, the name of the Senator from Georgia (Mr.

ISAKSON) was withdrawn as a cosponsor of S. 294, a bill to amend the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act to clarify the Food and Drug Administration's jurisdiction over certain tobacco products, and to protect jobs and small businesses involved in the sale, manufacturing and distribution of traditional and premium cigars.

At the request of Mr. NELSON, the name of the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. INHOFE) was added as a cosponsor of S. 294, *supra*.

S. 301

At the request of Mr. LANKFORD, the name of the Senator from Wyoming (Mr. BARRASSO) was added as a cosponsor of S. 301, a bill to amend the Public Health Service Act to prohibit governmental discrimination against providers of health services that are not involved in abortion.

S. 324

At the request of Mr. HATCH, the names of the Senator from New York (Mr. SCHUMER), the Senator from New York (Mrs. GILLIBRAND) and the Senator from Vermont (Mr. LEAHY) were added as cosponsors 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. 341

At the request of Mr. GRAHAM, the names of the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MORAN), the Senator from Rhode Island (Mr. REED), the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. BLUMENTHAL), the Senator from Illinois (Mr. DURBIN), the Senator from Colorado (Mr. BENNET), the Senator from Massachusetts (Ms. WARREN), the Senator from Delaware (Mr. COONS), the Senator from Montana (Mr. TESTER), the Senator from Indiana (Mr. DONNELLY) and the Senator from Rhode Island (Mr. WHITEHOUSE) were added as cosponsors of S. 341, a bill to provide for congressional oversight of actions to waive, suspend, reduce, provide relief from, or otherwise limit the application of sanctions with respect to the Russian Federation, and for other purposes.

S. 370

At the request of Mr. CRUZ, the names of the Senator from Nebraska (Mr. SASSE) and the Senator from Texas (Mr. CORNYN) were added as cosponsors of S. 370, a bill to eliminate the Bureau of Consumer Financial Protection by repealing title X of the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act, commonly known as the Consumer Financial Protection Act of 2010.

S. 377

At the request of Mr. MENENDEZ, the name of the Senator from Delaware (Mr. COONS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 377, a bill to amend the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 to clarify report dates, modify the criteria for determinations of whether countries are meeting the minimum standards for elimination of trafficking, and highlight the importance of concrete actions by countries to

eliminate trafficking, and for other purposes.

S. 379

At the request of Mr. WHITEHOUSE, the name of the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. BLUMENTHAL) was added as a cosponsor of S. 379, a bill to amend title II of the Social Security Act to eliminate the five month waiting period for disability insurance benefits under such title for individuals with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis.

S. 382

At the request of Mr. MENENDEZ, the name of the Senator from Florida (Mr. NELSON) was added as a cosponsor of S. 382, a bill to require the Secretary of Health and Human Services to develop a voluntary registry to collect data on cancer incidence among firefighters.

S. 387

At the request of Mr. PERDUE, the name of the Senator from Nebraska (Mr. SASSE) was added as a cosponsor of S. 387, a bill to amend the Consumer Financial Protection Act of 2010 to subject the Bureau of Consumer Financial Protection to the regular appropriations process, and for other purposes.

S. 397

At the request of Mr. PERDUE, his name was added as a cosponsor of S. 397, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to ensure fairness in Medicare hospital payments by establishing a floor for the area wage index applied with respect to certain hospitals.

S. 422

At the request of Mrs. GILLIBRAND, the names of the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. BOOZMAN) and the Senator from Delaware (Mr. COONS) were added as cosponsors of S. 422, a bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to clarify presumptions relating to the exposure of certain veterans who served in the vicinity of the Republic of Vietnam, and for other purposes.

S. 426

At the request of Mr. TESTER, the name of the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MORAN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 426, a bill to increase educational assistance provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs for education and training of physician assistants of the Department, to establish pay grades and require competitive pay for physician assistants of the Department, and for other purposes.

S. 438

At the request of Mr. BLUNT, the name of the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. COTTON) was added as a cosponsor of S. 438, a bill 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.

S.J. RES. 16

At the request of Mr. WYDEN, the name of the Senator from Florida (Mr. NELSON) 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.J. RES. 18

At the request of Mr. SULLIVAN, the name of the Senator from Arizona (Mr. FLAKE) was added as a cosponsor of S.J. Res. 18, a joint resolution providing for congressional disapproval under chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, of the final rule submitted by the Department of the Interior relating to Non-Subsistence Take of Wildlife, and Public Participation and Closure Procedures, on National Wildlife Refuges in Alaska.

S.J. RES. 19

At the request of Mr. PERDUE, the name of the Senator from Arizona (Mr. MCCAIN) was added as a cosponsor of S.J. Res. 19, a joint resolution providing for congressional disapproval under chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, of the rule submitted by the Bureau of Consumer Financial Protection relating to prepaid accounts under the Electronic Fund Transfer Act and the Truth in Lending Act.

S.J. RES. 23

At the request of Mr. CRUZ, the name of the Senator from Texas (Mr. CORNYN) was added as a cosponsor of S.J. Res. 23, a joint resolution disapproving the rule submitted by the Department of Labor relating to drug testing of unemployment compensation applicants.

S. RES. 60

At the request of Mr. DAINES, the names of the Senator from Idaho (Mr. RISCH) and the Senator from New York (Mrs. GILLIBRAND) were added as cosponsors of S. Res. 60, a resolution designating May 5, 2017, as the "National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Native Women and Girls".

STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

By Mr. CORNYN (for himself, Mr. BARRASSO, Mr. BLUNT, Mr. BOOZMAN, Mrs. CAPITO, Mr. COCHRAN, Mr. CRAPO, Mr. CRUZ, Mr. DAINES, Mr. ENZI, Mrs. ERNST, Mrs. FISCHER, Mr. GRAHAM, Mr. GRASSLEY, Mr. HATCH, Mr. HELLER, Mr. HOEVEN, Mr. ISAKSON, Mr. MCCAIN, Mr. MORAN, Ms. MURKOWSKI, Mr. PERDUE, Mr. PORTMAN, Mr. ROBERTS, Mr. ROUNDS, Mr. RUBIO, Mr. THUNE, Mr. WICKER, Mr. YOUNG, Mr. JOHNSON, and Mr. FLAKE):

S. 446. A bill to allow reciprocity for the carrying of certain concealed firearms; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the text of the bill be printed in the RECORD.

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

S. 446

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 “Constitutional Concealed Carry Reciprocity Act of 2017”.

SEC. 2. RECIPROCITY FOR THE CARRYING OF CERTAIN CONCEALED FIREARMS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 44 of title 18, United States Code, is amended by inserting after section 926C the following:

“§926D. Reciprocity for the carrying of certain concealed firearms

“(a) IN GENERAL.—Notwithstanding any provision of the law of any State or political subdivision thereof to the contrary—

“(1) an individual who is not prohibited by Federal law from possessing, transporting, shipping, or receiving a firearm, and who is carrying a government-issued photographic identification document and a valid license or permit which is issued pursuant to the law of a State and which permits the individual to carry a concealed firearm, may possess or carry a concealed handgun (other than a machinegun or destructive device) that has been shipped or transported in interstate or foreign commerce in any State other than the State of residence of the individual that—

“(A) has a statute that allows residents of the State to obtain licenses or permits to carry concealed firearms; or

“(B) does not prohibit the carrying of concealed firearms by residents of the State for lawful purposes; and

“(2) an individual who is not prohibited by Federal law from possessing, transporting, shipping, or receiving a firearm, and who is carrying a government-issued photographic identification document and is entitled and not prohibited from carrying a concealed firearm in the State in which the individual resides otherwise than as described in paragraph (1), may possess or carry a concealed handgun (other than a machinegun or destructive device) that has been shipped or transported in interstate or foreign commerce in any State other than the State of residence of the individual that—

“(A) has a statute that allows residents of the State to obtain licenses or permits to carry concealed firearms; or

“(B) does not prohibit the carrying of concealed firearms by residents of the State for lawful purposes.

“(b) CONDITIONS AND LIMITATIONS.—The possession or carrying of a concealed handgun in a State under this section shall be subject to the same conditions and limitations, except as to eligibility to possess or carry, imposed by or under Federal or State law or the law of a political subdivision of a State, that apply to the possession or carrying of a concealed handgun by residents of the State or political subdivision who are licensed by the State or political subdivision to do so, or not prohibited by the State from doing so.

“(c) UNRESTRICTED LICENSE OR PERMIT.—In a State that allows the issuing authority for licenses or permits to carry concealed firearms to impose restrictions on the carrying of firearms by individual holders of such licenses or permits, an individual carrying a concealed handgun under this section shall be permitted to carry a concealed handgun according to the same terms authorized by an unrestricted license of or permit issued to a resident of the State.

“(d) RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.—Nothing in this section shall be construed to preempt any provision of State law with respect to the issuance of licenses or permits to carry concealed firearms.”.

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections for chapter 44 of title 18, United States Code, is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 926C the following:

“926D. Reciprocity for the carrying of certain concealed firearms.”.

(c) SEVERABILITY.—Notwithstanding any other provision of this Act, if any provision of this Act, or any amendment made by this Act, or the application of such provision or amendment to any person or circumstance is held to be unconstitutional, this Act and amendments made by this Act and the application of such provision or amendment to other persons or circumstances shall not be affected thereby.

(d) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by this Act shall take effect 90 days after the date of enactment of this Act.

By Mr. HATCH (for himself, Mr. McCONNELL, Mr. CORNYN, Mr. BARRASSO, Mr. BLUNT, Mr. BOOZMAN, Mr. BURR, Mrs. CAPITO, Mr. CASSIDY, Mr. COCHRAN, Ms. COLLINS, Mr. CORKER, Mr. CRAPO, Mr. CRUZ, Mr. DAINES, Mr. ENZI, Mrs. ERNST, Mrs. FISCHER, Mr. FLAKE, Mr. GARDNER, Mr. GRAHAM, Mr. GRASSLEY, Mr. HELLER, Mr. HOEVEN, Mr. INHOFE, Mr. ISAKSON, Mr. JOHNSON, Mr. KENNEDY, Mr. LANKFORD, Mr. LEE, Mr. MCCAIN, Mr. MORAN, Ms. MURKOWSKI, Mr. PAUL, Mr. PERDUE, Mr. PORTMAN, Mr. RISCH, Mr. ROBERTS, Mr. ROUNDS, Mr. RUBIO, Mr. SASSE, Mr. SCOTT, Mr. SHELBY, Mr. STRANGE, Mr. SULLIVAN, Mr. THUNE, Mr. TILLIS, Mr. TOOMEY, Mr. WICKER, and Mr. YOUNG):

S.J. Res. 24. A joint resolution proposing an amendment to the Constitution of the United States relative to balancing the budget; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, 70 years ago this May, the Senate Appropriations Committee sent to the full Senate a constitutional amendment to require a balanced Federal budget. It had been proposed by Senator Millard Tydings, a Democrat from Maryland. In its report, the committee said this: “In no other way except by an amendment to the Constitution can Congress be compelled to balance its budget in peacetime.”

Seven decades of experience proved that the Appropriations Committee was right, and we have never been in a more serious, perilous situation than we are today.

Two essential facts compel me once again to introduce a constitutional amendment to require fiscal responsibility: the gravity of the national debt crisis and the fact that neither willpower nor legislation will solve it.

The greatest challenge in describing the gravity of the national debt crisis is deciding how much of the bad news to present at one time. During the 2008 Presidential campaign, one of the candidates criticized the outgoing President for adding \$4 trillion to the national debt. That increase, Barack

Obama said, was not only irresponsible but “unpatriotic.” The national debt on inauguration day 2009 was \$10.6 trillion, and on inauguration day 2017 it was \$19.9 trillion. If a \$4 trillion increase was irresponsible and unpatriotic, what words describe a \$9.3 trillion increase?

President Obama won the 2008 election with the Government Accountability Office warning that the Nation’s long-term fiscal outlook was unsustainable. In its January 2017 assessment of the Nation’s fiscal health, GAO reports that the national debt as a share of GDP in 2016 was 75 percent higher than the average since World War II. As it had been before, GAO concluded that “the federal government’s fiscal path is unsustainable.”

One way to understand the gravity of the national debt is to compare it to the size of the economy, or the gross domestic product. In other words, we can compare what we owe to our ability to pay. When President Obama took office, the national debt was 82 percent of GDP and is now 105 percent of GDP today. Some economists prefer to evaluate the national debt as a percentage of tax revenue; that is, by comparing what we owe to what we earn. The national debt rose from approximately 350 percent of Federal revenue when President Obama took office to 600 percent of Federal revenue today.

But neither numbers nor percentages tell the whole story because the national debt crisis is becoming not only a bigger crisis but a different kind of crisis. During the last several years of skyrocketing national debt, the interest rate on that debt has been nearly zero. If interest rates had been at the historical average, annual interest costs would be more than twice what they are today and on their way to consuming more than half of all Federal revenue. And now interest rates are starting to creep up. The Concord Coalition and the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget both anticipate that over the next decade, interest payments on the national debt alone will approach \$1 trillion per year. That is interest payments. In other words, as GAO found in its new fiscal report, the growing national debt now means that the rising cost of servicing that debt becomes one of the drivers of the growing debt itself. This is becoming what one study calls a self-propelling crisis.

A national debt of this magnitude dampens the economic growth necessary to minimize borrowing to fund the government, and rising interest costs for such a monstrous debt add to the debt on which more interest must then be paid. Last month, for instance, the Treasury Department echoed this point in its financial report with the U.S. Government for fiscal year 2016. The Treasury Department concluded:

The debt-to-GDP ratio rises at an accelerating rate despite primary deficits that flatten out because higher levels of debt lead to higher net interest expenditures, and higher net interest expenditures lead to

higher debt. The continuous rise of the debt-to-GDP ratio . . . indicates that current policy is unsustainable.

We can also consider the legislative budget and economic outlook from the Congressional Budget Office. I want to highlight a few things that stood out to me.

First, annual budget deficits are on their way back up after 6 years of decline. In fact, the budget deficit for fiscal year 2016 will be one-third larger than in 2015.

Second, CBO projects that the national debt will rise by nearly \$10 trillion over the next decade. Looking beyond the next decade, CBO says that under current law, the national debt will explode to more than 150 percent of GDP—by far the highest level in American history.

Third, CBO also says that interest on the national debt is itself an increasingly forceful engine driving the debt even higher. Interest payments on the national debt are increasing nearly twice as fast as spending on Social Security and Medicare. Just last month, CBO Director Keith Hall said that over the next 10 years, interest payments are expected to triple in nominal terms and double relative to GDP.

Fourth, CBO repeated some of the serious negative consequences of this national debt for the budget, the economy, and the Nation. In addition to substantially higher interest payments, these include lower productivity and wages, less flexibility by lawmakers to respond to fiscal challenges, and increased likelihood of a fiscal crisis.

In addition to these problems, former Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Michael Mullen and experts from the Heritage Foundation to the Brookings Institution warn that the national debt crisis is a serious threat to national security.

Economists tell us that national debt above 90 percent of GDP for a sustained period of time will lead to substantially slower economic growth and higher interest rates. The United States is now in the longest period in its history with the national debt above that toxic 90-percent level. Not surprisingly, since the recession ended in June 2009, the national debt has grown more than twice as fast and GDP has grown less than half as fast as during the comparable period after previous recessions.

It is no wonder to me and to many others that more than two-thirds of Americans say that their concern over the national debt is growing and more than three-quarters of Americans say that the national debt should be among Congress's top three priorities. The national debt was once such a top priority. In fact, America's Founders were so determined to avoid debt that their commitment to fiscal balance was often called our unwritten fiscal constitution. President George Washington, for example, told Congress that the regular redemption of the public debt was the most urgent fiscal pri-

ority. That was George Washington. Thomas Jefferson wrote in 1798 that if he could add a single amendment to the Constitution, it would prohibit the Federal Government from borrowing. That commitment, of course, is long gone. The Federal budget has been balanced in only a dozen of the last 80 years. And, as I said earlier, we are in the longest period in American history with a debt above 90 percent of GDP.

As its fiscal willpower failed, Congress has also tried to address the debt crisis by legislation. The first bill requiring a balanced budget was introduced in 1934 when the national debt was 40 percent of GDP. Fifty years later, Congress enacted the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act. Since then, we have enacted multiple budget control acts and budget enforcement acts, only to see the national debt climb from 42 percent of GDP in 1985 to 105 percent of GDP today.

Good intentions will not balance the Nation's checkbook. Statutes that Congress can change or ignore will not keep our fiscal house in order. Neither willpower nor legislation will tackle the national debt crisis. Pretending otherwise is the fiscal equivalent of fiddling while Rome burns.

All the evidence—every bit of it—proves true the conclusion drawn by the Appropriations Committee 70 years ago. In no other way except by amendment to the Constitution can Congress be compelled to balance its budget in peacetime. We have, as lawyers put it, exhausted our other remedies for this crisis. This would be a very different country—a freer and more prosperous country—if Congress had already proposed the only solution that exists, a constitutional amendment which requires fiscal responsibility.

The first balanced budget amendment was introduced in the House of Representatives in 1936. As you can see, the national debt as a percentage of GDP has been going up by leaps and bounds. I introduced my first balanced budget amendment in June of 1979, during my first term in the Senate when the national debt was 32 percent of GDP. That share of GDP doubled by 1997 when the Senate came within one vote of passing a balanced budget amendment that I introduced—one vote. It rose to 95 percent when the Senate last voted on a balanced budget amendment in 2011 and is 105 percent of GDP today.

Since this crisis is already so grave and getting worse, since the only way to tackle it is through the Constitution, we should propose a balanced budget amendment and let the American people decide whether to take this step. After all, Congress cannot amend the Constitution. A requirement that Congress keep its fiscal house in order cannot become part of the Constitution until that is approved by three-quarters of the States.

Congress, however, is not the only way to propose constitutional amend-

ments. Article V of the Constitution also allows the States to apply for a convention to propose constitutional amendments. Concerned citizens have been working since the mid-1970s to reach the two-thirds threshold for calling such a convention to propose a balanced budget amendment and are only six States away from that goal. Since Congress has never called an article V convention, questions remain unresolved and theories untested regarding that method of proposing an amendment. I can assure my colleagues, however, that Congress's continued failure to propose a balanced budget—and a balanced budget amendment at that—guarantees that our fellow citizens will continue working to force that course upon us.

There are two facts that we must face: the gravity of the nation's debt crisis and the failure to address it by willpower or legislation. Perhaps some of my colleagues believe that the Congressional Budget Office is wrong in its disturbing projections and dire warnings; that the Government Accountability Office is mistaken and the fiscal path we are on is sustainable after all; that the Treasury Department is wrong about the spiral of increased debt and growing interest payments—some people feel that way; that the Concord Coalition and the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget are wrong about how national debt interest payments will continue to grow and add to the debt; and that economists are wrong to warn about the impact of sustained national debt of this magnitude.

If my colleagues are convinced that everyone else is wrong and our fiscal future is just fine after all, then they should say so and then try to make that case to the American people. Even they will not do that because they know they are wrong, yet we can't seem to get them to do what is right. I, for one, think that would be a very tough sell for them to make. Americans have been polled about this issue dozens of times over the years by major polling firms and national news organizations. Three-quarters of Americans supported a balanced budget amendment in 1976, and three-quarters support it today.

Perhaps all of these polls over the last 40 years are wrong. Perhaps the American people are content watching their national debt swallow the economy. Perhaps our fellow citizens are actually OK with slower economic growth, a rising threat to national security, the greater likelihood of a fiscal crisis, and an unsustainable path to fiscal disaster. If that is what the American people actually believe, then they certainly are inclined to ratify a balanced budget amendment.

The real reason Members of Congress refuse to give the American people this choice is that they know what the American people will say. I say with respect, but as strongly as I can, that this is not a legitimate basis for refusing to propose a balanced budget

amendment. In our system of government, as Founder James Wilson once put it, the people are the masters of government. They alone have authority to set rules for government. This choice must be theirs, not ours.

Here is the heart of the matter. First, the national debt crisis poses a significant and growing threat to the economic and national security of this country. In fact, we have never been in such an extended, perilous period as we are right now. Second, Congress has tried and failed to address this crisis by either willpower or legislation and will actually do so only if the Constitution requires it. Third, the decision of whether to use the Constitution to require fiscal responsibility belongs to the American people, not to Congress.

We can either take the responsibility we were elected for and propose a balanced budget amendment or the American people may do it for us. I hope we have the guts to do what is right. Our very country is hanging in the balance. The rest of the world depends on the United States and the strong principles of the United States, and we need to do what is right.

I think it is time for us to wake up and realize this is the Congress that can make the difference. After all these years of impropriety and excessive spending, we can do it. We can live within certain constraints. It may take a period of time to wind this down, but we can do it. This amendment does provide for some ways of getting there.

SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS

SENATE RESOLUTION 68—RAISING AWARENESS OF MODERN SLAVERY

Mr. CORKER (for himself and Mr. CARDIN) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations:

S. RES. 68

Whereas it is estimated that tens of millions of children, women, and men around the world are subjected to conditions of modern slavery;

Whereas the International Labour Organization estimates that modern slavery generates more than \$150,000,000,000 in criminal profits each year;

Whereas, despite being outlawed in every nation, modern slavery exists around the world, including in the United States;

Whereas, around the world, 55 percent of forced labor victims are women or girls, and nearly 1 in 5 victims of slavery is a child;

Whereas global leadership continues to coalesce around real and coordinated actions to end modern slavery, as exemplified in statements by senior officials such as U.K. Prime Minister Theresa May, who has stated, "Britain is leading the way in pioneering international efforts to crack down on modern slavery—one of the great scourges of our world—wherever it is found.";

Whereas, on December 23, 2016, the End Modern Slavery Initiative, a bipartisan initiative, was authorized to help establish a powerful effort in concert with the private sector and foreign governments to eliminate modern slavery and human trafficking around the globe; and

Whereas, each year, individuals around the world join together to call for an end to modern slavery by symbolically drawing a red "X" symbol on their hands to share the message of the END IT movement: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) commends each individual who supported the END IT movement on February 23, 2017;

(2) notes the dedication of individuals, organizations, and governments to end modern slavery; and

(3) calls for concerted, international action to bring an end to modern slavery around the world.

SENATE RESOLUTION 69—CELEBRATING BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Mr. BOOKER (for himself, Mr. COCHRAN, Mr. SCOTT, Mrs. GILLIBRAND, Ms. HARRIS, Mr. MARKEY, Mr. CASEY, Mr. CARPER, Mr. COONS, Mr. SCHUMER, Ms. BALDWIN, Ms. HASSAN, Mr. MENENDEZ, Ms. WARREN, Mr. REED, Mr. WICKER, Ms. MURKOWSKI, Mr. PORTMAN, Mr. MORAN, Mr. PAUL, Ms. HIRONO, Mr. BENNETT, Ms. STABENOW, Mr. NELSON, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mr. LEAHY, Mrs. MURRAY, Mr. WARNER, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. KAINE, Mr. SANDERS, Mrs. SHAHEEN, Mr. DONNELLY, Mr. WYDEN, Mr. CARDIN, Mr. FRANKEN, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Ms. CORTEZ MASTO, Mr. UDALL, Mr. TILLIS, Mr. ISAKSON, Mr. PERDUE, Mr. MCCAIN, Mr. LANKFORD, Mr. BURR, Mr. HELLER, Ms. COLLINS, Mr. GRASSLEY, Mr. ALEXANDER, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, Mr. SHELBY, Mr. STRANGE, Mr. PETERS, Mr. RUBIO, and Mr. MURPHY) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 69

Whereas in 1776, people envisioned the United States as a new nation dedicated to the proposition stated in the Declaration of Independence that "all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness . . .";

Whereas Africans were first brought involuntarily to the shores of America as early as the 17th century;

Whereas African Americans suffered enslavement and subsequently faced the injustices of lynch mobs, segregation, and denial of the basic and fundamental rights of citizenship;

Whereas in 2017, the vestiges of those injustices and inequalities remain evident in the society of the United States;

Whereas in the face of injustices, people of good will and of all races in the United States have distinguished themselves with a commitment to the noble ideals on which the United States was founded and have fought courageously for the rights and freedom of African Americans and others;

Whereas African Americans, such as Lieutenant Colonel Allen Allensworth, Maya Angelou, Arthur Ashe Jr., James Baldwin, James Beckwourth, Clara Brown, Blanche Bruce, Ralph Bunche, Shirley Chisholm, Holt Collier, Frederick Douglass, W. E. B. Du Bois, Ralph Ellison, Medgar Evers, Alex Haley, Dorothy Height, Lena Horne, Charles Hamilton Houston, Mahalia Jackson, Stephanie Tubbs Jones, B.B. King, Martin Luther King, Jr., Thurgood Marshall, Constance Baker Motley, Rosa Parks, Walter Payton,

Bill Pickett, Homer Plessy, Bass Reeves, Hiram Revels, Amelia Platts Boynton Robinson, Jackie Robinson, Aaron Shirley, Sojourner Truth, Harriet Tubman, Booker T. Washington, the Greensboro Four, and the Tuskegee Airmen, along with many others, worked against racism to achieve success and to make significant contributions to the economic, educational, political, artistic, athletic, literary, scientific, and technological advancements of the United States;

Whereas the contributions of African Americans from all walks of life throughout the history of the United States reflect the greatness of the United States;

Whereas many African Americans lived, toiled, and died in obscurity, never achieving the recognition they deserved, and yet paved the way for future generations to succeed;

Whereas African Americans continue to serve the United States at the highest levels of business, government, and the military;

Whereas the birthdays of Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass inspired the creation of Negro History Week, the precursor to Black History Month;

Whereas Negro History Week represented the culmination of the efforts of Dr. Carter G. Woodson, the "Father of Black History", to enhance knowledge of Black history through the Journal of Negro History, published by the Association for the Study of African American Life and History, which was founded by Dr. Carter G. Woodson and Jesse E. Moorland;

Whereas Black History Month, celebrated during the month of February, originated in 1926 when Dr. Carter G. Woodson set aside a special period in February to recognize the heritage and achievement of Black people of the United States;

Whereas Dr. Carter G. Woodson stated: "We have a wonderful history behind us. . . . If you are unable to demonstrate to the world that you have this record, the world will say to you, 'You are not worthy to enjoy the blessings of democracy or anything else.'";

Whereas since the founding of the United States, the Nation has imperfectly progressed toward noble goals;

Whereas the history of the United States is the story of people regularly affirming high ideals, striving to reach those ideals but often failing, and then struggling to come to terms with the disappointment of that failure, before committing to trying again;

Whereas on November 4, 2008, the people of the United States elected Barack Obama, an African-American man, as President of the United States; and

Whereas on February 22, 2012, people across the United States celebrated the groundbreaking of the National Museum of African American History and Culture on the National Mall in Washington, District of Columbia, which opened to the public on September 24, 2016; Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) acknowledges that all people of the United States are the recipients of the wealth of history provided by Black culture;

(2) recognizes the importance of Black History Month as an opportunity to reflect on the complex history of the United States, while remaining hopeful and confident about the path ahead;

(3) acknowledges the significance of Black History Month as an important opportunity to commemorate the tremendous contributions of African Americans to the history of the United States;

(4) encourages the celebration of Black History Month to provide a continuing opportunity for all people in the United States to learn from the past and understand the experiences that have shaped the United States; and

(5) agrees that, while the United States began as a divided country, the United States must—

(A) honor the contribution of all pioneers in the United States who have helped to ensure the legacy of the great United States; and

(B) move forward with purpose, united tirelessly as a nation “indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.”

SENATE RESOLUTION 70—RECOGNIZING THE 75TH ANNIVERSARY OF EXECUTIVE ORDER 9066 AND EXPRESSING THE SENSE OF THE SENATE THAT POLICIES THAT DISCRIMINATE AGAINST ANY INDIVIDUAL BASED ON THE ACTUAL OR PERCEIVED RACE, ETHNICITY, NATIONAL ORIGIN, OR RELIGION OF THAT INDIVIDUAL WOULD BE A REPETITION OF THE MISTAKES OF EXECUTIVE ORDER 9066 AND CONTRARY TO THE VALUES OF THE UNITED STATES

Ms. HIRONO (for herself, Mr. SCHUMER, Mr. DURBIN, Mrs. MURRAY, Ms. BALDWIN, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mr. BOOKER, Mr. BROWN, Mr. CARPER, Mr. COONS, Ms. CORTEZ MASTO, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, Mrs. GILLIBRAND, Mr. KAINE, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Mr. LEAHY, Mr. MARKEY, Mr. MENENDEZ, Mr. MURPHY, Mr. REED, Mr. SANDERS, Mr. SCHATZ, Mr. VAN HOLLEN, Ms. WARREN, Mr. WYDEN, and Mr. FRANKEN) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary:

S. RES. 70

Whereas, on December 7, 1941, the Imperial Japanese Navy launched a surprise attack against the United States naval base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, which led to—

(1) increased prejudice and suspicion toward Japanese Americans; and

(2) calls from civilians and public officials to remove Japanese Americans from the west coast of the United States;

Whereas, on February 19, 1942, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 (7 Fed. Reg. 1407; relating to authorizing the Secretary of War to prescribe military areas) (referred to in this preamble as “Executive Order 9066”), which led to—

(1) the exclusion of all individuals of Japanese ancestry in the United States; and

(2) the incarceration of 120,313 United States citizens and lawful permanent residents of Japanese ancestry in incarceration camps during World War II;

Whereas President Gerald Ford formally rescinded Executive Order 9066 in Presidential Proclamation 4417, dated February 19, 1976 (41 Fed. Reg. 7741) (referred to in this preamble as “Presidential Proclamation 4417”);

Whereas Presidential Proclamation 4417—

(1) states that Japanese Americans were and are loyal people of the United States who have contributed to the well-being and security of the United States;

(2) states that the issuance of Executive Order 9066 was a grave mistake in United States history; and

(3) resolves that actions such as the actions authorized by Executive Order 9066 shall never happen again;

Whereas, in 1980, Congress established the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians to investigate the circumstances surrounding the issuance of Executive Order 9066;

Whereas, in 1983, the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians issued a report entitled “Personal Justice Denied” in which the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians concluded that—

(1) the promulgation of Executive Order 9066 was not justified by military necessity; and

(2) the decision to issue Executive Order 9066 was shaped by “race prejudice, war hysteria, and a failure of political leadership”;

Whereas, on August 10, 1988, the Civil Liberties Act of 1988 (Public Law 100-383; 102 Stat. 903) was enacted—

(1) to acknowledge the grave injustice done to citizens and permanent residents of the United States of Japanese ancestry by requiring the evacuation, relocation, and internment of those individuals during World War II;

(2) to apologize for “fundamental violations of the basic civil liberties and constitutional rights of these individuals of Japanese ancestry” and provide monetary reparations to Japanese Americans who had been incarcerated by the Federal Government; and

(3) to establish the Civil Liberties Public Education Fund to ensure that “the events surrounding the exclusion, forced removal, and incarceration of civilians and permanent resident aliens of Japanese ancestry will be remembered, and so that the causes and circumstances of this and similar events may be illuminated and understood”;

Whereas the terrorist attacks carried out in the United States on September 11, 2001, have led to heightened levels of suspicion and hate crimes, xenophobia, and bigotry directed toward the Arab, Middle Eastern, South Asian, Muslim, Sikh, and Hindu American communities, including—

(1) on August 5, 2012, an attack on the Sikh Temple of Wisconsin in Oak Creek, Wisconsin, which led to several injuries and the death of 6 Sikh Americans; and

(2) on February 10, 2015, the execution-style shooting of 3 Muslim American students in Chapel Hill, North Carolina;

Whereas the terrorist attacks carried out in Paris, France, on November 5, 2015, have led to renewed calls from public officials and figures to register Muslim Americans and bar millions of individuals from entering the United States based solely on the religion of those individuals, repeating the mistakes of 1942;

Whereas Executive Order 13769 (82 Fed. Reg. 8977; relating to protecting the Nation from foreign terrorist entry into the United States) (in this preamble referred to as “Executive Order 13769”), issued on January 27, 2017, embodies an unconstitutional, disruptive step backwards that has promoted discrimination against individuals based on national origin and religion, which is contrary to the values of the United States; and

Whereas, on February 9, 2017, the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit unanimously upheld the decision of a Federal district court judge to temporarily block the implementation of Executive Order 13769: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) recognizes the historical significance of February 19, 1942, as the date on which President Franklin Delano Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 (7 Fed. Reg. 1407; relating to authorizing the Secretary of War to prescribe military areas) (referred to in this resolving clause as “Executive Order 9066”), which restricted the freedom of Japanese Americans;

(2) recognizes the historical significance of February 19, 1976, as the date on which President Gerald Ford issued Presidential Proclamation 4417 (41 Fed. Reg. 7741), which formally terminated Executive Order 9066;

(3) supports the goals of the Japanese American community in recognizing a National Day of Remembrance to increase public awareness about the unjust measures taken to restrict the freedom of Japanese Americans during World War II;

(4) expresses the sense that the National Day of Remembrance described in paragraph (3) is an opportunity—

(A) to reflect on the importance of upholding justice and civil liberties for all people of the United States; and

(B) to oppose hate, xenophobia, and bigotry;

(5) recognizes the positive contributions that people of the United States of every race, ethnicity, religion, and national origin have made to the United States;

(6) steadfastly confirms the dedication of the Senate to the rights and dignity of all people of the United States; and

(7) expresses the sense that policies that discriminate against any individual based on the actual or perceived race, ethnicity, national origin, or religion of that individual would be—

(A) a repetition of the mistakes of Executive Order 9066; and

(B) contrary to the values of the United States.

PRIVILEGES OF THE FLOOR

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, Robert Ivanauskas is a congressional detailee to the Energy Committee. I ask unanimous consent that he be granted floor privileges through December 31, 2017.

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

Mr. NELSON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that privileges of the floor be granted to Harry Knight, a detailee from the Department of Commerce, during the pendency of the first session of the 115th Congress.

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

RECOGNIZING FEBRUARY 26, 2017, AS THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF DENALI NATIONAL PARK AND PRESERVE IN THE STATE OF ALASKA

On Friday, February 17 (legislative day of Thursday, February 16), 2017, the Senate adopted S. Res. 55, with its preamble, as amended, as follows:

S. RES. 55

Whereas Alaska Natives have lived on the land surrounding the Denali area and used the resources of the land for food, shelter, clothing, transportation, handicrafts, and trade for thousands of years;

Whereas Judge James Wickersham, of Fairbanks, Alaska, discovered gold in the Kantishna Hills following his attempted ascent of Denali in 1903, prompting a gold rush with several thousand prospectors and the establishment of successful placer and commercial mining operations that lasted for decades;

Whereas explorer Belmore Browne and hunter-naturalist Charles Sheldon visited the Denali region, observed the natural splendor of Denali, and, along with Alaska's territorial delegate to Congress, Judge Wickersham, and pioneering biological survey naturalist Edward Nelson, tirelessly advocated for Denali's protection;

Whereas early proponents of national parks, such as the Boone and Crockett Club,

the Campfire Club of America, and the American Game Protective and Propagation Association, sponsored early expeditions, including those of Sheldon and Brown, and advocated for the creation of a national park at Denali;

Whereas in 1910, miners from the Kantishna Hills discovered an approach by which Denali might be climbed, relying on years of observations while following quartz leads and hunting sheep in the foothills of the Denali area;

Whereas Athabascan Walter Harper joined Archdeacon Hudson Stuck, Harry Karstens, and Robert Tatum to successfully summit the highest peak of Denali in 1913, opening the door for thousands of individuals to test their own endurance and fortitude by attempting to climb the giant massif;

Whereas President Woodrow Wilson signed into law the Act entitled "An Act to establish the Mount McKinley National Park, in the Territory of Alaska", approved February 26, 1917 (39 Stat. 938, chapter 121), for the benefit and enjoyment of the people of the United States and the preservation of the Denali area's scenic beauty, animals, birds, and fish;

Whereas Congress expanded the boundaries of Mount McKinley National Park in 1922, 1932, and 1980 and renamed that national park Denali National Park and Preserve after the traditional Koyukon Athabascan name for the highest peak in the park, Deenaalee, meaning the High One;

Whereas Denali National Park and Preserve protects and interprets Denali, which is the highest mountain in North America, at 20,310 feet, and the tallest above-water mountain, with a vertical relief of almost 18,000 feet measured from its base;

Whereas Denali National Park and Preserve preserves a wild subarctic landscape with a rich and diverse tapestry of plant life and intact ecosystems where bears, wolves, caribou, moose, and Dall sheep roam as they have for thousands of years;

Whereas Denali National Park and Preserve protects a wide array of fossils that point to an age 70,000,000 years ago, when dinosaurs roamed that northern land;

Whereas Denali National Park and Preserve contains 2 of the oldest-known archaeology sites in North America, the oldest of which dates to just over 13,000 years old;

Whereas glaciers still blanket $\frac{1}{4}$ of Denali National Park and Preserve and continue to shape the landscape by carving mountains, feeding silt-laden rivers, and depositing rock and silt across the valleys;

Whereas Denali National Park and Preserve was designated as an International Biosphere Reserve in 1976 and has become a premier international tourist destination;

Whereas in 2016, nearly 600,000 visitors set foot in Denali National Park and Preserve, the greatest number of visitors in the history of Denali National Park and Preserve and a record number of visitors for the State of Alaska;

Whereas Denali National Park and Preserve has provided a wide array of visitor experiences to tourists, including hiking, dog mushing, rafting, and cycling;

Whereas Denali National Park and Preserve's historic Denali Park Road provides visitors with unparalleled opportunities to experience and explore millions of acres of an accessible wildlife sanctuary that represents one of the crown jewels of the United States;

Whereas residents of the State of Alaska continue their subsistence way of life by hunting and gathering in the majority of Denali National Park and Preserve;

Whereas Denali National Park and Preserve hosts the only working sled dog kennel in a national park, and winter patrols are

conducted inside Denali National Park and Preserve using the age-old tradition of dog mushing; and

Whereas Denali National Park and Preserve, known for its breathtaking scenery and iconic wildlife, protects more than 6,000,000 acres of towering mountains, expansive valleys, glacial rivers of ice, braided streams, and wildland for the benefit of all people of the United States: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) congratulates and celebrates Denali National Park and Preserve on its centennial anniversary;

(2) encourages all people of the State of Alaska and the United States to visit and experience this national treasure; and

(3) designates February 26, 2017, as "Denali National Park and Preserve Day".

AUTHORIZING APPOINTMENT OF ESCORT COMMITTEE

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Presiding Officer of the Senate be authorized to appoint a committee on the part of the Senate to join with a like committee on the part of the House of Representatives to escort the President of the United States into the House Chamber for the joint session to be held at 9 p.m. on Tuesday, February 28, 2017.

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

APPOINTMENTS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair, on behalf of the Democratic leader, pursuant to the provisions of S. Res. 64, adopted March 5, 2013, appoints the following Senators as members of the Senate National Security Working Group for the 115th Congress: Dianne Feinstein of California (Democratic Administrative Co-Chairman), Jack Reed of Rhode Island (Democratic Co-Chairman), Robert Menendez of New Jersey (Democratic Co-Chairman), Richard J. Durbin of Illinois, Bill Nelson of Florida, Benjamin L. Cardin of Maryland, Robert P. Casey, Jr., of Pennsylvania, Heidi Heitkamp of North Dakota, and Tammy Duckworth of Illinois.

CELEBRATING BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of S. Res. 69, submitted earlier today.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 69) celebrating Black History Month.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I further ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, and the motions to

reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

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

The resolution (S. Res. 69) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

(The resolution, with its preamble, is printed in today's RECORD under "Submitted Resolutions.")

ORDERS FOR TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 2017

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it adjourn until 10 a.m. on Tuesday, February 28; 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, and morning business be closed; further, that following leader remarks, the Senate proceed to executive session and resume consideration of the Zinke nomination postcloture; finally, that all time during leader remarks, morning business, recess, and adjournment of the Senate count postcloture on the Zinke nomination.

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

ORDER FOR ADJOURNMENT

Mr. MCCONNELL. 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 Mr. DAINES.

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

The Senator from Montana.

NOMINATION OF RYAN ZINKE

Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, tonight the Senate took a long overdue step forward in finally confirming Congressman RYAN ZINKE to be our next Secretary of the Interior. You know, we could have done this on January 20. You see, RYAN ZINKE is not a controversial nominee. He is a westerner. He is a Montanan whom we need serving as our next Secretary.

Back on January 17, when the Energy and Natural Resources Committee had a hearing on RYAN ZINKE's nomination, I detailed for the committee exactly why he is a good fit for this job.

Frankly, it is shameful that it took this body this long to move forward on RYAN ZINKE's nomination. You see, this is a historic moment for Montana, as Congressman ZINKE will be the first Montanan ever to serve in a President's Cabinet. That dates back to statehood in 1889.

Back in 1979, there was a junior from Bozeman High School and another junior from Whitefish High School who

were both headed to Dillon, MT, for Boys State. They were both Boys State delegates. In fact, the keynote speaker that year was a newly elected U.S. Senator. He had been elected in the fall of 1978. This was June of 1979, at Boys State, and this Senator was named Max Baucus.

So 38 years later, that kid from Bozeman was serving on the U.S. Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, and that kid from Whitefish was testifying before that very same committee to be the next Secretary of the Interior.

You see, RYAN ZINKE was also captain of the soon-to-be undefeated State champion Whitefish Bulldogs football team. He was also president of his class.

After high school RYAN went on to the University of Oregon, where he was a full-scholarship, starting athlete for the Oregon Ducks football team, where he won numerous awards for both outstanding academic and athletic performance. He majored in geology, a subject matter that I know has served him well in serving the people of Montana.

RYAN ZINKE was a U.S. Navy SEAL commander whose assignments included the elite SEAL Team Six. In fact, part of that tenure was serving under General Mattis—now Secretary Mattis—as the commander of Joint Special Forces in Iraq at the very height of insurgent activity.

During his 23 years as a U.S. Navy SEAL, RYAN conducted special oper-

ations on four continents. RYAN ZINKE earned two Bronze Stars and many other awards for his service to our Nation. We should all be thankful to him, to his wife Lola, and their children for his service.

Following his retirement from the Navy, after more than two decades of honorable service to our Nation, RYAN came back home to Montana, and he continued to serve again, this time in our State government. RYAN ran for and won a seat in the State senate and then as Montana's sole Representative in the U.S. House.

For the past couple of years, RYAN has been a strong supporter of conservation, of responsible natural resources development, of LWCF, as well as increased recreational access to our public lands.

RYAN grew up 30 minutes from Glacier National Park. I grew up about 60 minutes from Yellowstone National Park. We both understand the importance of our national parks.

RYAN is intimately familiar with the vast jurisdiction of the Department of Interior because he has lived it. He has seen his own hometown suffer due to bad government policies that hurt rural communities like Libby, where the logging industry has been decimated; like Malta, like Colstrip, which depend on our public lands for access.

Above all, RYAN is a Montanan who grew up on our public lands. He knows that we must strike the right balance between conservation and responsible energy development, and he under-

stands more than most that these one-size-fits-all policies from Washington, DC, never work for real America. The bureaucrats in Washington, DC, often-times can't even find Montana on a map.

RYAN ZINKE is whip smart. He is a guy you want in your corner while you are fighting in the streets of Fallujah for your life or you are fighting on the floor of Congress for your livelihood. He listens. He fights for what he believes in. I have absolutely no doubt he will be a fighter for America; he will be a fighter for our public lands as the next Secretary of the Interior. So I look forward to confirming RYAN ZINKE within the next day and a half.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL 10 A.M. TOMORROW

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 8 p.m., adjourned until Tuesday, February 28, 2017, at 10 a.m.

CONFIRMATION

Executive nomination confirmed by the Senate February 27, 2017:

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

WILBUR L. ROSS, JR., OF FLORIDA, TO BE SECRETARY OF COMMERCE.