highs. I think there is a lot of anticipa-

tion, a growing confidence not only in our
economy but that America is now back in a leadership role and that the whole world will end up benefitting—most importantly, the American people.

I am eager to learn about how Congress can continue to partner with our new President to make his administration a success, so that America can remain a success, and to make the rest of his campaign promises a reality.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate recess from 12 noon until 2:15 p.m. today.

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

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12 noon, recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. PORTMAN).

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.

REMEMBERING INA BOON

Mrs. MCCASKILL. Mr. President, I want to begin my remarks today by paying tribute to a strong, wonderful civil rights leader, Ina Boon, who passed away a few days ago. She was 90 years old, and she really was the strength and heart of so much of the civil rights work that went on in the St. Louis area.

She began working for the NAACP during the 1950s, and she will be sorely missed. She was an extraordinary woman. I think it is important to put a tribute to her in the record of the Senate.

Because of the other thing I want to talk about today, I want to mention that Ms. Boon, after graduating from Sumner High School in St. Louis, attended Oakwood University in Alabama, which is one of the special historically Black colleges and universities in our country.

SECRETARY DEVOS

Mr. President, that brings me to what I want to talk to the Senate about today and what I want to try to emphasize. Betsy DeVos has been given one of the most important positions in education in this country. Call me old-fashioned, but I think it is pretty important that the Secretary of Education have a basic working knowledge of history. It is one thing to appear for your confirmation and have no idea what the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act is or not have a working understanding of the Federal laws as they relate to education in this country, but it takes it to a whole new level that someone who is Secretary of Education would make the kind of statement that Secretary DeVos made in the last few days.

I want to read it aloud. This is the statement from the Secretary of Education following a listening session with historically Black college and university leaders: ‘‘If I choose to pull out the quote that I think is important for us to dwell on today. The quote is as follows: ‘Historically black colleges and universities are real pioneers when it comes to school choice.’’

Now, let’s talk about what historically Black colleges and universities were. It wasn’t about a choice. It was about racism. That is where these colleges came from. It wasn’t that a young Black student looked at the University of Alabama said to African-American students: ‘‘You can’t come here. You are not welcome. You are not allowed to darken our doors. There was no choice.’’

This was the Jim Crow era of racism and segregation.

In 1862, President Lincoln signed the Morrill Act which provided land for the purposes of colleges in each State. In 17 of those States, mainly in the South, Black students were prohibited by law from attending these land grant colleges. The second Morrill Act of 1890 required States to establish a separate land grant college for Blacks if Blacks were excluded from existing land grant colleges. Many of our great HBCU’s, like Alabama A&M, Florida A&M, and Lincoln University, in my home State of Missouri, became public land grant colleges after the second Morrill Act of 1890.

These schools were not established because someone thought there should be schools just for Blacks; these schools were established because racism left Blacks without any choice. When Blacks tried to attend schools like the University of Alabama and the University of Mississippi, they were blocked and there were riots. The fact that Secretary DeVos doesn’t understand this basic fact is appalling.

Her statement was wrong. It was offensive, and it should be corrected. We need the Secretary of Education to have a basic understanding of history in the United States of America, especially as it relates to education. Is there anything that was more important in the history of our country than the struggle for equality in education? Is there anything that is more important than recognizing and understanding that for years in this country, young Black people could be punished for learning how to read? They would be told: You are not welcome, even if the universities were public.

So shame on Secretary DeVos. Shame on her for not understanding history, for trying to shoehorn the racist history in our country into her talking points about school choice.

That is wrong, and it should be corrected.

I hope it was an oversight. If it was, I hope she will admit her mistake and acknowledge that historically Black colleges and universities in the United States of America were not about choice. They were about racism. They were about trying to provide an opportunity. They were mostly a movement that was largely led by ministers and academics from other parts of the country, trying to make sure that in a land that professes equality and justice for all, education is the most fundamental of opportunities that must be afforded to every single citizen.

As it wasn’t about choice, Secretary DeVos, it was about something else. It is important that as the leader of education in this country, you acknowledge the history that is the underpinning of the importance of historically Black colleges and universities in our country.

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. CARPER. 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. CARPER. Mr. President, I rise in opposition to the nomination of Representative Zinke to become Secretary of the Interior.

As is always the case, I take this opposing position with some trepidation. Having served as the Governor of my State, I appreciate the importance of deference to a chief executive’s decisions to build his or her team, but at the same time, I think we in the Senate have a constitutional obligation to provide our advice and to provide our consent because in the end not all nominees are best for the country we are pledged to protect.

Some of my western colleagues may wonder what stake a small State like Delaware on the east coast would have in the selection of a Secretary of the Interior. It turns out, there is plenty.

As the chief land steward of our great Nation, the Secretary of the Interior is tasked to multiple competing interests in the conservation, use, and appropriate management of the abundant land, wildlife, mineral and other resources found on our public lands. For that reason alone, we should expect a firm commitment from such a leader that the American taxpayer will receive full value for private use and profit from the use of our Nation’s resources, and we need assurances that the use of those resources will not abuse the quality of life for Americans while enhancing the profits of a very limited few.

That, I am very sad to say, does not appear to be Mr. Zinke’s track record.
For example, as a Congressman, I am told he opposed the Federal coal leasing moratorium ordered by his predecessor, Secretary Jewell. Some would call this an inappropriate reaction to an alleged war on coal, but let's just take a moment to look at the facts.

As you know, I live in a small State, Delaware, that is, as it turns out, getting smaller almost every day. With each passing tide and every coastal storm, a part of us—our land—disappears forever. We are fighting a valiant battle, and it is futile, a battle against an encroaching sea. This is not a result of variability in weather patterns or long-term trends in ocean dynamics, this is climate change at work.

We are not alone in feeling the effects of our Nation's dependence on and robust use of carbon-based fuels—like coal—over the past couple of centuries. There are Native Alaskan communities that have to move in their entirety. Think of that. They have to move because of the effects of storms, and waves—assisted by the absence of ice that used to protect them from fierce winter storm surges—are literally eating away at their communities. I am trying to imagine what it would be like as a family to get the news that you have to leave a place that has been your home for generations, the place from which your ancestors derived their sustenance, honored their forbears, and raised their legacies.

I also can’t imagine being a person who represents those people and families, having to help them come to grips with the realities of a changing world that we—if we act quickly and assertively—can begin to stabilize.

Before that designation, Delaware was the only State that was in a couple of years ago no national park. We were the only State that was in that situation. Simply put, Delaware was missing out on tourism and economic development that a national monument or park can bring.

The economic opportunities afforded to States with national monuments and national parks, as it turns out, are significant—quite significant. Each State with a park or monument sees economic benefits of at least $1 million, I am told, if not more, in tourism, and countless others from across the world plan their vacations around America's national parks and monuments.

Believe it or not, if someone in some other country—whether it is Europe, Asia, Latin America, or Central America—if they are interested in coming to the United States, they go on the National Park Service website, and they often go there to see if there are any national monuments or parks. Isn’t that extraordinary. The economic opportunities afforded to States with national monuments and national parks are significant—again, around $1 million or more.

Delaware's national park celebrates Delaware's rich colonial history as the First State to ratify the U.S. Constitution. As it turns out, the Constitution was first ratified on December 7, 1787.

Many years before that—maybe 150 years before that—the first Finns and Swedes came to America, and they landed in what is now Wilmington, DE. They sailed across the ocean in the Kalmar Nyckel and the Fogel Grip from Sweden and Finland. It was before they even had a Finland, and the Swedes and Finns were one.

They sailed through the Delaware Bay and north to the Delaware River and came to an uncharted, unnamed river that headed off to the west, off of the Delaware River. They went about a mile. When they came, there were a lot of big rocks along the coastline, and they landed there at the rocks. They declared that spot the colony of New Sweden, which later became Wilmington, DE. They named it Fort Christina, and they built a church, the Old Swedes Church. It is the longest continuously operating church in America.

About 15 miles south of that spot on the Delaware River is actually the river they sailed up on and planted their flag, the Christina River. They named it after the 12-year-old child Queen of Sweden, but about 50 miles south of the Christina River, further down, there was the Cape Henlopen, and the Delaware River is the mouth of the Delaware River. The Cape Henlopen is where William Penn in the town of New Castle, and it is because William Penn first landed in America—not in an area

Review Act resolution to eliminate the Obama administration’s rule to curb wasteful releases of methane from Bureau of Land Management land-based operations—yet another example of willingness to sell the American people short in favor of a handful of energy companies. Wasted gas is wasted public revenue. Let me say that again. Wasted gas is wasted public revenue. Wasted methane is adding yet more of a very potent greenhouse gas to our atmosphere.

Reversing that opportunity to reflect some concerns for Americans, our climate, Delaware's and Alaska's shorelines, and our global obligation to put a lid on climate contributions, this nominee demurs.

We have seen this pattern of helping the few at the expense of the most across the board with too many of this President’s nominations. I believe this is ultimately un-American, unfair, and unacceptable.

I am concerned with Mr. Zinke's stance toward the use of the Antiquities Act by the President to designate lands as national monuments. Specifically, during his confirmation, we heard a willingness from Congress—either not or uninterested in revising the use of the Antiquities Act by the President to designate lands and historic sites across the Nation as national monuments.

Undermining the Antiquities Act is—believe and a lot of people believe—bad for conservation, is bad for historical preservation and is bad for economic development opportunities associated with national monuments and our national parks. For those who don’t know, the Antiquities Act has been used by Presidents dating back to the early 20th century—roughly 100 years—to preserve and protect our Nation's historic sites and preserve Federal lands for all of us—all of us—to enjoy.

During his time in office, President Obama utilized the Antiquities Act to safeguard and preserve Federal lands and cultural and historic sites. Ultimately, he designated over 550 million acres of land as national monuments, including what we call the Delaware national monument.

Delaware, as it turns out, has a special history with the Antiquities Act, which I just mentioned. Delaware is the First State to ratify the Constitution. As it turns out, the Constitution was first ratified on December 7, 1787.

We were the only State that was in a couple of years ago no national park. We were the only State that was in that situation. Simply put, Delaware was missing out on tourism and economic development that a national monument or park can bring.

The economic opportunities afforded to States with national monuments and national parks, as it turns out, are significant—quite significant. Each State with a park or monument sees economic benefits of at least $1 million, I am told, if not more, in tourism, and countless others from across the world plan their vacations around America's national parks and monuments.

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close to Philadelphia where they have Penn’s Landing. He landed in New Castle, DE, and he brought with him the deeds to the land that later became Pennsylvania and Delaware.

Further down the coast toward where the Delaware Bay meets the Brandywine River is a town called Lewes, DE. Lewes, DE, was settled by the Dutch, the first time unsuccessfully. The settlers lost their lives. The second time they came back in greater numbers and successfully settled Lewes, DE, and it ended up being the site of the Delaware Bay.

The Brits didn’t much like the idea that the Dutch had a foothold in that part of Delmarva, in what is now Sussex County, DE, and it was Ryvet. It is believed to be one of the oldest standing houses in all of North America.

If you drive up from Lewes headed north on Route 1 toward Dover Air Force Base, just before the Dover Air Force Base is a colonial plantation called the Dickinson Plantation, named after John Dickinson who was a penman, an early writer who spoke about and wrote some of the early writings that had been cited and encouraged the colonists in what is now America to rise up against the tyranny of the British Crown.

As you go a little further up Route 1 to Dover and go to downtown Dover, you come across an area where there used to be a tavern called the Golden Fleece Tavern, and that was the place where, on December 7, 1787, after three days and nights of debate and discussion, luckily, 25 early colonists decided to ratify the Constitution, which had come up the week before from Pennsylvania. We were the first State to ratify the Constitution.

A few years before that, a fellow named Caesar Rodney, who had been president of Delaware and later held any number of offices in the State even before it was a State, actually rode his horse right past the area where the Golden Fleece Tavern was—where the Constitution was ratified—and rode his horse all the way up to Philadelphia, PA, in order to get the tie-breaking vote in favor of the Declaration of Independence. That is a little bit of the history of Delaware.

The National Park Service decided 3 years ago that the early colonial settlement leading up to the ratification of the Constitution is what made Delaware unique, and our national park includes a number of those different components. Think of it almost as a necklace with different stones of value and interest around our State. That is what it is.

That is the national park today. It started off really as a national monument from the Antiquities Act. Given that kind of history, we need to make sure that future administrations and future Presidents have the ability to utilize the Antiquities Act to safeguard the country’s history, protect the outdoors for all of us to experience and to enjoy.

I urge my colleagues in the Senate to send what I think is an important message that we want people in our government are there to help people. I will be voting no on the Zinke nomination as a result, and I encourage my colleagues to consider doing the same.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Ms. HIRONO. 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. HIRONO. Mr. President, last November, I was in Maui celebrating the 100th anniversary of Haleakala National Park. The weather at the summit of the volcano was terrible. It was raining in sheets, with 40-mile-per-hour winds coming off the volcano, but I was there with over 40 schoolchildren to plant Haleakala silverswords—a special, threatened plant that only grows in the harsh climate at the summit of Haleakala volcano. The silversword can live for almost 100 years before it flowers, spreads its seeds into the wind, and dies.

Silverswords have dotted the landscape of Haleakala’s summit for millennia, but invasive species, human activity, and climate change have pushed the plant near extinction. In the early 1900s, scientists estimated that as few as 50 plants remained on the volcano, but this changed after Haleakala became a national park in 1916. In the 190 years since, park rangers and visitors have made a concerted effort to protect the silverswords from feral goats and sheep and to make sure hikers don’t go off the trail and trample their shallow root systems.

After the passage of the Endangered Species Act, the silversword became listed as a threatened species. Through the law, conservationists have provided resources to help restore the silversword population on Haleakala for the hundreds of thousands of people who visit the park every year. Groups of students, including those whom I joined on that cold November day, have planted over 1,000 silverswords to supplement the population of silverswords. They were there to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Haleakala National Park.

I share this story because it demonstrates many of the reasons the Department of Interior is so important in the role it plays in preserving our public lands.

Business is booming at our national parks. In 2015, our national parks hosted 305 million visitors—a new record—and these visitors generated $17 billion in economic activity in nearby communities.

Our national parks are suffering from an overwhelming deferred maintenance backlog of $12 billion. Our national parks are also understaffed. Because of sequestration and a variety of other factors, 10 percent fewer people work in our national parks today than 5 years ago. This is at a time when visitors to our parks are ever growing. This means fewer rangers and support staff dedicated to maintaining parks like Haleakala and protecting species like the silversword. To add to this, the administration has put a 90-day hiring freeze in place that threatens nearly 2,000 permanent vacancies that are critical to helping our national parks function.

We need an Interior Secretary capable of standing up to the President to make preserving our public lands a priority. But during my meeting with Nominee Zinke and his confirmation hearing before the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, on which I sit, and his record in Congress—I did not receive the assurances and commitments I needed to support his confirmation as Interior Secretary. Although he expressed some support for the Land and Water Conservation Fund, or the LWCF— an important program that funds land purchases to add to protective areas like our national parks—he said the program could benefit from some “changes.” The only change I wish to see is to permanently reauthorize and fully fund the LWCF, which has suffered from chronic underfunding throughout its history, and I will continue to work with my colleagues, like Senator Maria Cantwell, who is ranking member of the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources in the Senate, to accomplish this goal.

We also need an Interior Secretary committed to preserving our public lands, not exploiting them for fossil fuel production. Congressman Zinke and the Trump administration are too wedded to the fossil fuel industry and fail this test as well.

Supporting alternative and renewable energy development is an issue people in Hawaii and, I would say, a lot of people in the rest of our country care about.

Earlier this year, I received a letter from Michael from Pahoa, who said that Representative Zinke “has consistently voted for carbon heavy energy sources. His anti-environmental record shows a leaning that could well mean that he will vote against efforts to expand federal lands and protect species.”
Congressman Zinke also does not share a commitment to protecting endangered and threatened species like the silversword. While in the House, Congressman Zinke voted to block funding for any listed endangered species. The Fish and Wildlife Service failed to conduct a 5-year review. It didn’t seem to matter to Congressman Zinke that the reason these reviews did not take place was because Republicans in Congress failed to appropriate funding to conduct these reviews and recover our Nation’s endangered species. He responded by saying that he would “work closely with Congress to ensure recovery programs are appropriately funded.” What he means by “appropriate,” but I do have a feeling that my view of sufficient funding, which is the question I asked him, and his answer that he would support appropriate funding are probably very different. In fact, I wonder if, under Secretary Zinke, there would have been the funding necessary to help Maui students plant their 1,000 silverswords on Haleakala’s summit.

This is wrong.

Congressman Zinke also does not share a commitment to combating climate change or supporting research that will help in that effort.

Washington, DC—do you notice how warm it is in February? It is 60 degrees. Washington, DC, is on track to have experienced the warmest February on record. We have a new administration stocked full of climate deniers. As Secretary of the Interior, Congress would be the steward of our Nation’s precious public lands, national parks, tribal lands, and historic and cultural resources. These lands not only play an important role in preserving habitat, landscapes, and history, they also create jobs and invigorate nearby communities.

During his confirmation hearing, I was excited to hear Congressman Zinke refer to himself as a Teddy Roosevelt conservationist.

We all know the important role Teddy Roosevelt played in protecting our natural resources. During his Presidency, Roosevelt set aside 227 million acres of public lands. In 1901, he created the U.S. Forest Service and established 150 national forests. In 1906, he signed into law the Antiquities Act, legislation that allowed either the President or Congress to set aside “historic landmarks, historic and prehistoric structures, and other objects of historic or scientific interest” in order to stop their destruction. With this act, he designated 18 national monuments, including several iconic areas.

A modern version of Teddy Roosevelt would be a wonderful selection to head the Department of Interior. But, after closely examining Representative Zinke’s record, he doesn’t appear to be a Teddy Roosevelt conservationist.

Last Congress, Representative Zinke voted in favor of an amendment to the House Interior appropriations bill that would have rolled back the authority of the President to use the Antiquities Act in seven Western States. He also supported a bill that would have effectively eliminated public review of hardrock mining activities on Federal lands. And he supported the Keystone XL pipeline.

Conservationist groups seem to have similar concerns about Congressman Zinke’s record.

The League of Conservation Voters gave him a 3 percent rating for 2015 and a 5 percent rating for 2016—hardly what you would expect from an environmental conservationist. This troubles me, as Representative Zinke, if confirmed, would be responsible for managing new monuments of great importance—namely, the Pullman National Monument, Bears Ears National Monument.

The Pullman neighborhood was originally developed a century ago by rail magnate George Pullman as a factory town that would help shape our country as we know it today.

It was the birthplace of the Nation’s first Black labor union, the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, which is credited with helping to create the African-American middle class and making crucial civil rights advancements in this country.

Pullman workers also fought for fair labor conditions in the late 19th century. During the economic depression of the 1890s, the Pullman community was one of the first industry-wide strikes in the United States, which eventually led to the creation of Labor Day as a national holiday.

The Pullman National Monument not only highlights stories from community leaders that are rarely represented in other national parks, but its location on Chicago’s South Side—easily accessible to millions of people by public transportation—also makes it particularly unique. Following its designation, the Pullman neighborhood joined the National Mall and the Statue of Liberty as one of the few DOI-managed lands in an urban area.

But Pullman now needs an Interior Secretary who is committed to dedicating resources that will ensure the monument is a driver of tourism and job creation in the community.

Public lands have certainly been a great economic driver in Utah, and the Bears Ears National Monument will no doubt build on this.

The 1.35 million acre swath of land, declared a national monument by President Obama, covers forested mesas to redrock canyons and will protect the region’s abundant cultural resources, which include well-preserved cliff dwellings, rock and art panels, artifacts, and Native American burials.

Bears Ears is special, as it is the first monument of its kind to be proposed and advocated for by a united coalition of tribes, who served its protection because of its important place in all of their respective cultures.

Congressman Zinke is well aware of the monument and has said his first priority as Secretary would be to go to Utah and make a recommendation regarding the status of the Bears Ears National Monument.

While this monument designation has been met with opposition from Utah politicians, the attacks on the Bears Ears Monument do not reflect the views of all Utahans.

Recently, Utah’s paper of record, the Salt Lake Tribune, called the political fervor a “blindness.”
That blindness can be sourced to Utah’s one-party political system that has given us leaders who are out of touch with their constituents.” It continues, “The Bears Ears monument may be with us forever, and there is no bucket of gold waiting if it does go away. The presidential proclamation bent far toward the same boundaries and shared management [Utah Rep. Rob] Bishop pursued with his Public Lands Initiative.”

Sadly, attacks on monument designations are ongoing now.

One of our greatest conservation Presidents, Teddy Roosevelt, faced a great deal of opposition to his designation of a national monument you may be familiar with, the Grand Canyon. Most Americans can’t imagine an America without the iconic Grand Canyon, a true national treasure.

But, at the time of its 1908 designation, groups were opposed to protecting this area. For years after its designation, miners fought against additional protections for the Grand Canyon. In the end, conservationists won out, and by 1919, the Grand Canyon was made into a national park to be protected for future generations.

Roosevelt said, “It is also vandalism wantonly to destroy or to permit the destruction of what is beautiful in nature, whether it be a cliff, a forest, or a species of mammal or bird. Here in the United States we turn our rivers and streams into sewers and dumping-grounds, we pollute the air, we destroy forests, and exterminate fishes, birds and mammals—not to speak of vulgarizing charming landscapes with hideous advertisements. But at last it looks as if our people were awakening.”

Since Roosevelt’s time, we have made a lot of progress in protecting our lands and waters, but still have a long way to go. That is why the next Interior Secretary needs to take a step forward.

Since 2017 began, 100 bomb threats have been called into Jewish schools and Jewish community centers. It sounds like it is from another time, but this is what rising anti-Semitism looks like in our country. Granted, we knew weird stuff was happening: Pepe, David Duke—this is not America. But now the threat of violence is real. It is coming through the phone lines of American schools every day, and it is loud and clear. This rising threat demands leadership. It demands that we regularly and quickly denounced anti-Semitism and do everything we can do to stop it from growing. But that is not what we have seen so far from this administration.

Now, the baseline expectation of an unequivocal, quick and regular disavowal of anti-Semitic or anti-Muslim rhetoric from the leader of the free world is no longer being met. Instead, we have to extract it from the administration. We have to ask for it when it doesn’t come. We have to ask for it when it comes.

What is even sadder is that this administration has avoided any opportunity—even the easy ones, even the most obvious ones—to stand against anti-Semitism.

Just over a month ago, the world marked Holocaust Remembrance Day. The White House put out a statement without a single mention of the 6 million Jews who were killed in the Holocaust. Here is the crazy thing: The first draft mentioned Jews. The State Department drafted the initial statement which mentioned Jews, like every Holocaust Remembrance Day statement before it did. Then it went to the White House where someone thought: Let’s make edits. Let’s take out Jews. That is what we have from a statement about International Holocaust Remembrance Day. This was someone’s decision. It was an intentional decision. Who would decide that, and why would that be done?

Why remove the mention of Jews? It is like mentioning slavery and not mentioning African Americans. It is like mentioning internment and not mentioning Japanese Americans. When you are talking about genocide, it is not irrelevant to talk about who did it and to whom it happened. But, the White House didn’t mention Jews, and it didn’t apologize when people were rightfully confused. Only now that violence has been unleashed, that Jewish cemeteries are being desecrated, that people’s children are being threatened on a daily basis are we seeing the minimum from the White House to recognize the rise of anti-Semitic sentiments and actions.

I am worried. Local communities have taken it upon themselves to lead the way and stand up together. This is what leadership looks like. It looks like Muslim Americans showing up to cemeteries to help to restore Jewish headstones. It looks like local police raising money and people taking time to hold a vigil in solidarity with their Jewish neighbors. There have been far too many bystanders to the increasing anti-Semitic care or what we stand for. That is not the United States of America.

This week, as Jewish communities are reviewing bomb threat guidance and looking at best practices for security, it is up to all of us to take action and to do everything we can to beat back rising anti-Semitism.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. 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.

RUSSIA

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, it has now been almost 5 months since our intelligence community first detailed how Russia launched a cyber act of war on America and our last Presidential election—5 months. In those 5 months, how many times have my Republican colleagues come to the floor of the Senate to discuss this national security threat, this cyber attack by Russia? How many times has the party of Ronald Reagan—who so clearly understood the threat of the Soviet Union—spoken on the Senate floor about this Russian cyber attack on America? Zero. That is right—zero. They have found more than 35 occasions to talk about stripping health care from millions of Americans, and they made time to urgently rush votes dismantling environmental and anti-corruption regulation, but to talk about how a former KGB official launched a cyber act of war against America aimed at eroding trust in our historic democracy and electing the candidate seen as more sympathetic to Russia—zero. Not once.

Why would Russian dictator Vladimir Putin favor President Trump in the last election? Well, I just returned from a week visiting our allies in Eastern Europe. I can tell you, they are puzzled by this, too, and they are worried. They are worried that Donald Trump, the new President, is already advancing and will further advance policies sympathetic to Vladimir Putin’s dangerous agenda, specifically weakening the Western transatlantic democratic alliance.

Regardless of the partisan leanings of who was in government in the nations
I just visited—populist, social democrat, conservative, liberal—the concerns in each of these nations of Poland, Lithuania, and Ukraine were the same. Is the United States’ history of championing democracy and collective security in Europe ending? Are we backing away from those commitments just as Russia is more aggressively challenging them? Is the American President really using phrases like “enemy of the people” to describe the free press in American media? You see, last night I visited the Russian President Putin’s residence and asked to acknowledge Russia’s attack or to criticize Vladimir Putin. You see, the President of the United States has trouble, a real habit of lashing out at everyone and anyone involved in a perceived slight, a dangerous and unbecoming behavior when granted the privilege to be President of this great Nation.

In fact, the vast number and range of those attacked or insulted via Twitter is so significant that I need consider whether it’s not the single most important target of the Senate to list all of the targets of President Trump’s attacks on Twitter. So if you make any criticism or joke about President Trump, make any perceived slight, run a department store, lead a labor union, do just about anything, you may be a victim of one of his Twitter attacks, except, of course, if you happen to be a former Communist KGB official who now leads Russia, a nation that recently attacked our election.

How is it possible? How is it sensible? How is this not an abdication of the President’s responsibilities? Russian President Putin launched a cyber attack and war on the United States and its democracy. November 8, 2016, is a day that will live in cyber infamy because of this Russian attack on the United States of America. President Putin interfered in our election and tried to influence the selection of people in the United States to choose their leader. The evidence is overwhelming. It has been available in increasing amounts for almost 5 months. The White House is silent, in denial.

Republican Senators are largely silent, and not one of them has come to the Senate floor to even address this issue. Meanwhile, Vladimir Putin continues his aggressive military cyber disinformation campaign throughout Europe.

Just last week, the Washington Post reported that the White House led an effort to discredit news stories that described contacts between the Trump campaign and Russian Government officials. The House Intelligence Committee chairman, Congressman Nunes of California, a Republican, went so far as to dismiss these claims of Russian interference in the campaign for the President of the United States and to condemn the leaks that have brought the information to the attention of the American people. Rather than doing their part to ensure an impartial, independent investigation of these chilling facts, the White House has tried to spin it out of existence. In fact, yesterday, it was reported that the White House Press Secretary asked CIA Director Michael Pompeo and the chairmen of the Senate and House Intelligence Committees to help discredit articles about Trump campaign aides’ contacts with Russian officials.

John Brennan, who was head of the Central Intelligence Agency under President Obama, was asked in an interview last night if he could imagine being contacted by the White House and asked to spin a story one way or the other. He said it was unthinkable. It just wasn’t done under previous administrations. Here we are, not even 6 weeks into this Presidency, and it is already happening.

Can anyone here—anyone—imagine what would happen if the situation had been reversed? I can just imagine the howls of “treason” and “impeachment.” Such a thing should be confirmed until there were answers and accountability if this had happened and there was an effort by the Russians to influence an election in favor of the Democrats.

Think of that. Here was Khrushchev saying to use the Stalin term “enemy of the people”; it is too divisive. Now it is being used to describe the media, a description that has been offered by the new President of the United States. Are the Trump administration leaders trying to reassert Putin’s aggression and true nature—and the silence of too many of his colleagues on this danger—a harbinger of some kind of Western retreat when it comes to Russian aggression?

It is true this is happening in 2017. President Trump has called NATO obsolete. That is a stark and completely wrong statement, so bad that it required the Vice President of the United States to travel to Munich, Germany, last week and reassure our allies who have been part of our alliance since World War II that NATO was not obsolete.

When has it happened in history that the President of the United States would deliver the sweeping, erroneous, dangerous statement about the most important alliance in the world and then send his Vice President out on a repair job? The President has surrounded himself with people like Steve Bannon, who reportedly once called himself a Leninist and seems bizarrely sympathetic to Putin’s dictatorial model and weakening the European alliance.

It turns out that the just-resigned National Security Advisor, LTG Michael Flynn, the one who was fired by the previous administration, the one who led chants unworthy of a great democracy about locking up Hillary Clinton, was, in fact, speaking to Russian officials before he or Donald Trump had taken office and, suspiciously, just after President Obama imposed sanctions on Russia for its attack on our election.

President Trump still refuses to release his tax returns to clarify what his son says was a 2005 regarding Trump’s businesses seeing “a lot of money pouring in from Russia.” President Trump even said yesterday: “I haven’t called Russia in 10 years.” That is hard to verify. He spoke to Vladimir Putin on the telephone just a month ago, which was followed, incidentally, a day later by renewed fighting by the Russian-backed separatists in Ukraine.

President Trump visited Russia in 2013. He tweeted at the time: “I just got back from Russia—learned lots & lots.” Clearly, he did not learn enough about Vladimir Putin. As if that were not enough, still not enough, he refuses to acknowledge Russia’s attack or to criticize Vladimir Putin. You see, the President of the United States has trouble, a real habit of lashing out at everyone and anyone involved in a perceived slight, a dangerous and unbecoming behavior when granted the privilege to be President of this great Nation.

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These committees and their activities are important, critical, but they are largely invisible and their deliberations are interminable. We are waiting, hoping that they will come up with information to help us spare the United States from a future attack by Russia or any other foreign power on the sovereignty of our Nation.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maine.

HOME HEALTH CARE PLANNING IMPROVEMENT ACT

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I rise today to urge my colleagues to support the Home Health Care Planning Improvement Act, which I have introduced with my friend and colleague from Maryland, Senator CARDIN. Our legislation aims to help ensure that our seniors and disabled citizens have timely access to home health services available under the Medicare program.

Nurses, physician assistants, nurse practitioners, certified nurse midwives, and clinical nurse specialists are all playing increasingly important roles in the delivery of healthcare services, particularly in rural and medically underserved areas of our country where physicians may be in scarce supply.

In recognition of their growing role, Congress, in 1997, authorized Medicare to begin paying for physician services provided by those health professionals as long as those services are within their scope of practice under State law. Despite their expanded role, these advanced practice registered nurses and physician assistants are currently unable to order home healthcare services for their Medicare patients. Under current law, only physicians are allowed to certify or initiate home healthcare for Medicare patients, even though they may not be as familiar with the patient’s case as the nonphysician provider.

In fact, in many cases, the certifying physician may not even have a relationship with the patient and must rely upon the input of the nurse practitioner, physician assistant, clinical nurse specialist, or certified nurse midwife to order the medically necessary home healthcare. At best, this requirement adds more paperwork and a number of unnecessary steps to the process before home healthcare can be provided. At worst, it can lead to needless delays for Medicare patients in their home care that they need simply because a doctor is not readily available to sign the requisite form. The inability of these advanced practice registered nurses and physician assistants to order home health care is particularly burdensome for our rural communities.

The Home Health Care Planning Improvement Act would help ensure that our Medicare beneficiaries get the home health care they need and when they need it, by allowing physician assistants, nurse practitioners, clinical nurse specialists, and certified nurse midwives to order home health services.

It only makes sense. They can order it when the patient is in certain facilities, but then they lose the right to order it when the patient goes home. That just doesn’t make sense. These are skilled professionals who know what the patients need, and we should not be burdening the system with unnecessary paperwork.

Our bipartisan legislation is supported by the National Association for Home Care & Hospice, the American Nurses Association, the American Academy of Physician Assistants, the American College of Nurse Midwives, the American Association of Nurse Practitioners, and the Visiting Nurse Associations of America.

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budget on foreign aid. I saw a poll recently, a legitimate poll conducted, and it asked people: How much of the Federal budget do you think goes out of the country? And the average was 26 percent. That is what people thought. Of course, the truth is, it is nothing even close to that.

I want to begin by saying that today foreign aid as a part of our overall budget is less than 1 percent of the total spent by the U.S. Government. It spends—less than 1 percent. The second thing people bring up is: Well, but we have so many problems in America. We do. We have real issues we need to confront. Why do we spend so much money on things when we have so many problems here at home? That is a legitimate question. People should ask that. I think it is important for those of us who believe in global engagement and believe in the function of foreign aid, not to ever take it for granted, and to constantly examine it to make sure the money is being spent well and that it is worth spending at all. That is what I wanted to come to the floor to do today for a few minutes.

I know we are soon going to end a budget cycle. There will be debate, and every dollar in the budget should justify itself. I want to explain for a moment why I believe global engagement and foreign aid are so critical.

Here is the first reason. The world has always been interconnected, especially for America. We are not a small, obscure nation. We are the most influential, the most powerful, the most powerful nation on the planet. I can tell you that almost without exception, if there is a major crisis anywhere on this planet, it will eventually have a nexus to life in America in one way or another.

You are one of the controversial issues that has been debated in Washington and being discussed politically is the Syrian refugees. I remember a couple of years ago that people would tell me: Well, it is very sad what is happening in Syria, but what does that have to do with us? Well, 2 or 3 years later, I think we all know the answer; that is, when refugees are created anywhere in the world, it is natural that a significant percentage of them want to come to the richest, freest, safest nation in the world, and that is the United States of America.

It also impacts our allies. We have seen it in Europe where a tremendous strain was placed upon our allies in Europe. A significant amount of the budget in Germany, where I was recently just visiting, is being spent on dealing with the refugee crisis and the impact it is having on them. I would tell you that what happens in the world has a direct consequence to the United States.

Here is another fact for why it matters to America. This is a key fact that I was able to pull up today—or my staff was. Twelve of the fifteen top trading partners of the United States were once recipients of U.S. foreign assistance.

I think the best way to justify foreign assistance is to understand the history of it. Let's go back in time. Let's go to the end of the Second World War. Europe was in ruins. Japan was in ruins. The United States, had it behaved like most great powers in history, would have abandoned those nations itself or the United States would have conquered them and made Japan a colony or made Germany a dependent on the United States. Instead, through the Marshall Plan, the United States rebuilt Western Europe and in particular Germany. Through additional assistance, the United States provided aid to rebuild post-war Japan. For the Japanese, between 1946 and 1992, the United States invested $2.2 billion—or $38 billion in today's dollars—in Japan's reconstruction efforts. That amounts to more than one-third of the $65 billion in goods the United States exported to Japan just last year, in 1 year alone.

What is the result of this aid? Here is the result. Today we have a prosperous, unified Germany, which is a strong member of NATO and a strong ally of the United States. We have in Japan the world's third largest economy and one of the most important allies of this great country of ours in the Asia-Pacific region. This would not have been possible without U.S. assistance. Did it help the people of Japan and the people of Germany? Absolutely. Did it help the people of the United States? Without question.

Is the world a better place today because Germany is a free democratic nation involved in trade, involved in alliances with us, deploying troops around the world for NATO missions? Without a doubt. Is the world a better place because Japan is the third largest economy and a strong ally of the United States in the Asia-Pacific region? Without a doubt. That is an example of the fruit of U.S. engagement.

Some would say: Well, that was after the Second World War. That was a catastrophic event, but as a matter of course, what else has borne fruit? Isn't this just money we throw down a hole and never see results of? I would tell you that is not the case.

I would point to South Korea. It is hard to believe, but just a few decades ago South Korea was poorer than North Korea. South Korea had less than one-fifth the per capita income of North Korea. Today, South Korea is an industrialized, fully developed economy—one of the largest economies in the world. A nation that not long ago was a military dictatorship is now a vibrant, functioning democracy and a strong American ally.

Again, another example—do you want one in our own hemisphere? Look at the country of Colombia. Not long ago, Colombia was basically a failed state. That country had been overrun by drug cartels—the Medellin Cartel, the Cali Cartel. The government was on the verge of collapse. Presidential candidates were being assassinated—an extraordinary source of instability in the Western Hemisphere. Colombia still has challenges, but in helping them move forward with Plan Colombia, today trade between the United States and Colombia is at $14 billion, and as of last year, it would pay wages to its citizens. What is more, Colombia is now a force multiplier for our cousins. For example, if you visit Honduras, as I did during the summer, and you see the Honduran police and the Honduran special forces being trained to take on the criminal elements and cartels in that country, do you know who is there training them alongside of our people? The Colombians—the Colombian military units who have the same uniform, the same training, the same weaponry, and the same practices as the Green Berets of the United States, and they are a force multiplier. Today, Colombia is doing the things America once had to do because of the aid we provided them, and they are perhaps our strongest ally in the Western Hemisphere.

It goes on and on from a human perspective. You think about America and America's Feed the Future Initiative. It is an initiative that has trained thousands of farmers in Tanzania over the last decade. Now our country exports to them, and exports to Tanzania from the United States have increased by 500 percent.

An important point, by the way, is that there have been reductions in foreign aid over the last few decades. Today, we spend 50 percent less on foreign aid than we did as a percentage of our gross domestic product when President Reagan was in office, which was near the end of the Cold War. There is rationale for this, as well, for our economy and for our national security.

From an economic perspective, 95 percent of the people on the planet who buy things—live outside of the United States. Seven of the ten fastest growing economies happen to be in the developing world. So if you are an American company that makes things—and I know we want to make things in America again—you have to sell them to someone. If you can only sell them to 5 percent of the world's population that happens to live in the United States, you are a very small market. One of the reasons the United States does so well is we have a very large market, but imagine how much more you could sell, how much more money you could make, how much more value you would have for your shareholders, how many more employees and jobs you would create if you could sell to more of that 95 percent of the people around the world. You cannot sell to people and people cannot be consumers if they are starving. They cannot be consumers if they are dying of HIV/AIDS. They cannot be consumers if they are suffering from malaria. They cannot be consumers if they live in an unstable country.

So there is an economic rationale for our investment around the world. We
We have talked about the health clinics in the schools and the humanitarian relief efforts. I remember going to the Philippines about 3 or 4 years ago. One of the first things people mentioned to me was that after that horrible storm that killed and hurt so many people, they woke up one morning and saw a U.S. aircraft carrier off the horizon, and they knew things were going to be better because America was on the scene. Think about the power and what that means for our Nation and the impact it has on people around the world. This is part of it.

By the way, when we travel abroad—when you are an American and you are in another country and you lose your passport or your wallet gets stolen or you have any sort of an issue—you have to work abroad, as do many people whom I know, and we get the calls in our office from people who have kids who are studying abroad and have an issue and have to go to the consulate for the embassy or the budget that pays for that stuff. This is the budget that pays for that.

If you are a company that decides “I want to do business in this new country. I want to fly to this country and sell some goods,” you go back to America and hire 20 more people so that we can build products to sell. I want to expand our reach,” it is our U.S. Embassies and the agencies working within them that are helping to make that connection for American businesses. That is part of this budget.

When we talk about this, I think it is critical for us as leaders to explain to the American people just exactly what it is we are talking about. We always want to put America first. We always want to think about the American people first. That is our obligation. But I think this is part of that. If you really want to help the American people, you have to ensure that the world we live in is a more peaceful place.

I close by saying that this always gets back to the argument that some make: Why does it have to be us? We have been involved in this for so long, and we have spent so much money and so much blood and treasure around the world for the cause of freedom, democracy, humanitarianism, and the like. Why does it have to be America?

I think that gets to the fundamental question of, what kind of country do we want to be? The choice before us is that it has to be America because there is no alternative. That is the point I hope people remember and understand. There is no alternative for America in the world today. If America decides to withdraw from the world, if America decides to step back, if America declines and our influence around the world becomes less palpable, what will replace it?

There are only two things that can replace it—not the U.N. There are only two things that can step into whatever America leaves if it steps back. No. 1 is totalitarianism. For the growing movement around the world led by China and Russia and North Korea and Iran, it is the totalitarian regimes. That is the first thing that can step in and fill the vacuum. The other is nothing. The other alternative to America is nothing and the vacuum that vacuum leads to instability, and that instability will lead to violence, and that violence will lead to war. That will ultimately come back and impact us whether we want it to or not. This is the choice before us.

Without a doubt, I am the sponsor of a law that we passed last year, foreign aid accountability. I want to make sure that every dollar of American taxpayer money that is invested abroad for these purposes is spent well and is not going to line the pockets of corrupt dictators. I 100 percent agree with that. Yet this idea that somehow we can just retreat from our engagement in the world is bad for national security, it is bad for our economy, and it isn’t good for policymakers who want to put the American people first. By the way, it doesn’t live up to the standards of who we as a people.

I have said this many times before, and that is why I am engaged, by my faith, by what that means to our Nation and what that means to our military. I believe that to whom much is given, much is expected. That is what the ancient words and Scripture teach us. I think that principle is true for people, and I think that principle is true for nations. I believe in the depth of my heart that our Country and our President honored America’s willingness to step forward and help those around the world, and I believe He will continue to do so as long as we use our blessings not just for our good but for the good of mankind.

I hope that in the weeks to come, as we debate the proper role of government and the proper way to fund it, we understand what a critical component foreign aid and the international affairs budget is to our national security, our economic interests, and our very identity as a people and as a nation.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Ms. Murkowski. 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. Murkowski. Mr. President, we have the nomination of Representative Ryan Zinke to be the Secretary of the Interior as the business before the body today, and I wish to spend a few moments this afternoon speaking about him, his qualifications, and why I believe he will be a strong Secretary of the Interior.

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thirds of Alaska—nearly 224 million acres—is under Federal management. To put that into perspective, that is more land than is occupied by the entire State of Texas, and it is an area about 177 times larger than the State of Delaware. Therefore, the land is not only more land than is occupied by the State of Texas—are held under Federal management. It is for this reason we in Alaska call the Interior Secretary our “landlord.” He might not necessarily like that fact, but that is what he is effectively.

While it might sound strange if you are from an Eastern State such as Massachusetts or New York, which have hardly any Federal lands within their borders, the decisions that are made by the Department of the Interior literally determine the livelihoods of thousands of Alaskans, as well as the stability and the success of our State. When the Department of the Interior chooses to work with us, Alaska is able to grow and prosper, even as our land is owned and managed under the most stringent environmental standards in the world. When the Department chooses not to work with us, as was all too often the case in the last administration, the people of Alaska suffer. Building Alaska’s economy, budget, and our future are all threatened at the same time. I start with that context to help the Senate understand why I take this confirmation process so seriously whenever a new Interior Secretary is nominated.

I consider whether the nominee is right for the job and whether he or she will do right by the people of Alaska, as well as other western states. I talk with the nominee and ask him or her questions on everything from ANCSA and ANILCA to wilderness and wildlife management. When I make a decision, I am making it as a Senator for Alaska and as the chairman of both the authorizing committee and the Appropriations subcommittee for the Department of Interior.

Today, after a great deal of review and careful consideration, I am very pleased to be here to speak in strong support of our new President’s nominee for the Department of the Interior, Walter E.B. Zinke. I believe Representative Zinke is an excellent choice to be our next Secretary of the Interior. Maybe I am a little bit partial here, but the fact that he is a fellow westerner, hailing from the Treasure State of Montana—that helps with my decision. He is a lifelong sportsman. He loves to hunt and fish. That also resonates with me. I also understand he is a pretty good downhill skier, and I like that too. He is a trained geologist. He has worked on energy issues for nearly two decades as a Navy SEAL, a term in the Montana Senate, and most recently as the sole U.S. Congressman for his home State.

Representative ZINKE’s life and career have prepared him well to serve as Secretary of the Interior. He was born in the state of Montana. ZINKE understands it. He understands its people. He has substantive knowledge of the challenges facing the Department and truly a firsthand experience in trying to solve them. He has also shown that he understands the need for the Department to be a partner for Alaska and other western states, which contain the vast majority of our nation’s Federal lands.

We had an opportunity in the Energy and Natural Resources Committee to hold a hearing to consider Representative ZINKE’s nomination on January 17. It seems like an eternity ago now, but what I remember very clearly from that morning is the positive and very compelling way he shared with us.

Representative ZINKE told us he grew up in a “small timber and railroad town next to Glacier National Park.” He explained that he believes the Secretary of the Interior is “the voice of the manager and steward of majestic public lands, the champion of our great Indian nations, and the manager and voice of our diverse wildlife.” He did show us—and spoke to it in the committee hearing—that he understands and values Federal lands, invoking Teddy Roosevelt and pledging to follow the multiple-use doctrine.

As other colleagues have come to the floor today to speak about Representative ZINKE’s nomination, several have spoken to the issue of the Antiquities Act, speaking more directly than to the issue of multiple-use as it relates to our public lands. Yet, in outlining the concept of multiple-use that Representative ZINKE believes and follows, it is probably best to look to his own words that he said when he was before us in the committee. On multiple-use, Representative Zinke said the following:

In multiple-use, in the spirit of Roosevelt, it means you can use it for multiple purposes. I am particularly concerned about public access. I am a hunter, a fisherman. But multiple uses are also making sure what you’re going to do, you know, and you go in with both eyes open, that means sustainability. That means that it doesn’t have to be in conflict if you have recreation over mining.

You just have to make sure that you understand, you’re making sure each of those uses are. It’s our public land. What I have seen most recently is our access is being shut off, roads are being shut off, and we’re all getting older. And when you don’t have access to hunting areas, traditional fishing areas, it makes it an elite sport.

And I’m also concerned about the elitism of our traditional hunting, fishing, and snowmobiling. Making our public lands accessible in the spirit of multiple-use. Single use, if you look at the current model of some of our national parks and some of our areas, I agree. There are some areas that need to be set aside that are absolutely appropriate for no reason.

There are special places in our country that deserve that recognition. But a lot of it is traditional uses of what we find in North Dakota and Montana where you can hunt and fish, you can drill an oil well. Make sure there is a reclamation project. Make sure there is minimal permit, minimal EPA. If you are doing something that’s more intrusive, make sure you monitor the water. Everyone enjoys clean water and we should.

I think necessary when things are in conflict. I think you have to do it right.

I think it is important to put those comments of Representative ZINKE on the record because it is clear that, again, he recognizes the multiple uses of our public lands. There are certain places that are special but ensuring, again, that the doctrine of multiple-use is respected as initially intended.

Representative ZINKE also told us that he would have three main tasks if he is confirmed as Secretary of the Interior. The first, he said, is to “restore trust by working with rather than against local communities and states.”

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I think it is important to put those comments of Representative ZINKE on the record because it is clear that, again, he recognizes the multiple uses of our public lands. There are certain places that are special but ensuring, again, that the doctrine of multiple-use is respected as initially intended.

Representative ZINKE also told us that he would have three main tasks if he is confirmed as Secretary of the Interior. The first, he said, is to “restore trust by working with rather than against local communities and states.”

President Obama’s first nominee for Interior Secretary on inauguration day back in 2009—not so with Representative ZINKE. It has now been 6 weeks since we held his nomination hearing and almost a full month since we reported his nomination from our committee, he drew bipartisan support when we reported his nomination to the full Senate on January 31. He has drawn widespread support from dozens and dozens of stakeholder groups all across the country: from the Alaska Federation of Natives, the Blackfeet Tribe, the Choctaw Nation, the National Congress of American Indians, the Safari Club International, Ducks Unlimited, the Congressional Sportsmen’s Foundation, the National Association, the Public Lands Council, and the American Exploration & Mining Association. These are just a few of the many stakeholders that have praised or endorsed Representative Zinke to be our next Secretary of the Interior.

I am glad we are finally here today on the verge of confirming Representative ZINKE to this position. I would remind the Senate that despite many people differing on who President Obama’s first nominee for Interior Secretary on inauguration day back in 2009—not so with Representative ZINKE. It has now been 6 weeks since we held his nomination hearing and almost a full month since we reported his nomination from our committee, he drew bipartisan support when we reported his nomination to the full Senate on January 31. He has drawn widespread support from dozens and dozens of stakeholder groups all across the country: from the Alaska Federation of Natives, the Blackfeet Tribe, the Choctaw Nation, the National Congress of American Indians, the Safari Club International, Ducks Unlimited, the Congressional Sportsmen’s Foundation, the National Association, the Public Lands Council, and the American Exploration & Mining Association. These are just a few of the many stakeholders that have praised or endorsed Representative Zinke to be our next Secretary of the Interior.

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February 28, 2017

CONGRESSIONAL RECORD — SENATE

TRIBUTE TO BRIAN AND JOANNE LEBER

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I would like to take a moment to recognize my constituents, Brian and Joanne Leber, of Leber Jeweler Inc. in Chicago, IL. A third-generation, family-owned busi-
ness founded in 1925, Brian and his wife, Joanne, are dedicated to so-
cially conscious and eco-friendly fine jewelry. Leber Jeweler Inc. has been in-
strumental in not only serving as a model for responsible and ethical prac-
tices, but also being an inspiration for the larger jewelry industry. Brian and Joanne also have a deep history of activism and philanthropy, ad-
vocating for important policies that support human rights.

In 1999, Brian and Joanne developed and launched Earthwise Jewelry. Leber Jeweler Inc. was the first company in the United States to use conflict-free Canadian diamonds, and the landmark collection also utilizes fairly traded gemstones and recycled metals, all sourced, mined, designed, and produced with concerns for both the environment and fair-labor standards.

Brian and Joanne also have been not-
ably advocates for the responsible sourcing of precious stones and metals, including of rubies and jadeite from Burma and gold and tung-
sten from the Democratic Republic of Congo. In 2007, Brian testified before Congress in support of the Tom Lantos Block Burmese JADE Act, and in 2009, he advocated for the suspension of Zimbabwe from the Kimberley Process for its human rights abuses in the Marange diamond fields. Then, in 2010, Brian supported efforts to pass bipar-
tisan legislation that would create a mechanism to enhance transparency in the sourcing of conflict minerals and help American consumers and inves-
tors make informed decisions.

I have had the privilege of traveling to the Democratic Republic of Congo twice, in 2005 and 2010. It is a nation of breathtaking natural beauty, but like too many others, it has suffered from the paradox of the resource curse. De-
spite being rich in natural resources that should seemingly promote growth and development, the Democratic Re-
public of Congo has faced decades of weak governance, poverty, and incom-
prehensible violence. And fueling much of the violence, at least in part, has been the conflict of the resource curse.

I have seen firsthand the efforts of people like Dr. Jo Lusi and Dr. Denis Mukwege, who founded the HEAL Afri-
can Capital and the Panzi Hospital, re-
spectively, restoring health and dig-
ity to the survivors of sexual vio-
ence. When I chaired the first-ever hearing in the U.S. Senate about the uses of rape as a weapon of war in 2008, Dr. Mukwege stressed the importance of not just treating the consequences of sexual violence in the Congo, but ad-
ressing the root causes.

LEAGUE BUSINESS

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

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