The House met at 4:30 p.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. WEBSTER of Florida).

DESIGNATION OF THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE
The Speaker pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:
WASHINGTON, DC, March 15, 2017.
I hereby appoint the Honorable DANIEL WEBSTER to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

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

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE
The Speaker pro tempore. Will the gentleman from Florida (Mr. DUNN) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.
Mr. DUNN 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.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE
The Speaker pro tempore. The Chair will entertain up to five requests for 1-minute speeches on each side of the aisle.

HONORING GEORGE COCHRAN
Mr. DUNN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.
Mr. DUNN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor George "Boogie" Cochran, Jr., who passed away peacefully at the age of 89 on March 1.
Mr. Speaker, Chief Cochran lived a life in full, one of family and of service. As a 17-year-old Leon High School student, he enlisted in the Navy in 1944. He served bravely aboard Navy destroyers in the Pacific campaigns. He participated in America’s nuclear weapons testing after the war, and in the action surrounding the Cuban Missile Crisis.
In 1963, in recognition of his dedicated and courageous service in the Navy, Chief Cochran was awarded the first annual Commander Ernest Evans Memorial Award aboard the USS Johnston.
He loved his family, his country, and his community. He represents the best of America.
Boogie, you will be missed by many, and may you rest in peace.

OPPOSING THE AMERICAN HEALTH CARE ACT
Mr. KILDEE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.
Mr. KILDEE. Mr. Speaker, my constituents have been calling all weekend. They do not support the Republican health care bill, TrumpCare.
Over the weekend, we received 750 calls or emails. Ninety-three percent of those have contacted me to say that they are against TrumpCare, and here is why:
Higher costs for less care; $2,400 annually for an average American family.
Millions kicked off health care. The Congressional Budget Office says 24 million. Some might say they are way off. So maybe it is 20 million. Maybe it is 30 million. Lots of Americans lose health care as a result of this plan.
An age tax. If you are age 50 to 65, fasten your seat belts; $6,971 in increased costs for lesser health care.
And huge, huge tax breaks for millionaires. The 400 richest Americans would get an average $7 million tax break.
This is not the right direction for this country. It is not the right direction for health care. We should reject it.

RECOGNIZING SHELBY TOWNSHIP, MICHIGAN, POLICE OFFICERS
Mr. MITCHELL asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.
Mr. MITCHELL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to highlight an act of bravery from police officers in an incident occurring just miles from my district office in Shelby Township, Michigan.
In mid-February, Sergeant Troy Titchenell and Officer Paul Fox responded to a call that a boy had fallen through the ice on Iroquois Lake. Sergeant Titchenell, without concern for himself, first on the scene, immediately got a life ring from a local resident and tossed it onto the ice. Officer Fox then arrived and walked onto the ice to take the rope attached to the life ring.

While towing the young man to safety, the ice broke and Sergeant Titchenell was thrown into the water up to his chest. With Officer Fox pulling on the rope and Sergeant Titchenell supporting the boy in the water, both were able to rescue the young man. I believe they saved a life that day.

This incident exemplifies the risks police officers will take to protect all of us. Their daily acts of bravery must be recognized. I am proud to highlight the actions of these courageous officers, and I am grateful to recognize their service to our community.

IN SUPPORT OF THE GREAT LAKES RESTORATION INITIATIVE

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

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in defense of one of our most magnificent natural wonders: the Great Lakes. They contain a fifth of the world's freshwater and are vitally important to the economy and the quality of life in my district.

The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, which has received strong support from both sides of the aisle, works to clean up the Great Lakes, control invasive species, restore habitats, and reduce runoff. Yet we have heard that President Trump may virtually eliminate funding for this program with an eye-popping irresponsible 97 percent cut to the budget; $300 million in funding would be reduced to just $10 million.

At the same time, his administration may gut EPA funds for climate science, clean air, and safe water.

Let me be clear. I am adamantly opposed to these cuts and will do everything in my power to stop them.

Tomorrow, on Great Lakes Day, the President is expected to release a budget proposal. I urge him to include robust funding for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative and the EPA programs and ensure we pass on a sustainable, healthy planet to our children.

IMPROVE THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT

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

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker. Original Pizza in Broomfield, Colorado, has been in business since the 1990s. Now they are being sued.

The plaintiff claims they do not have ADA-accessible parking signage or proper insulation wrapped around the pipes under the restroom sink.

The claims waged against Original Pizza are mostly false. The sink is compliant, and the parking issue could be fixed with a bit of paint. Not to mention, Original Pizza was never notified of the alleged violations by the plaintiff.

Now the plaintiff is demanding money to pay or a lawsuit will be filed. The same plaintiff has filed over 70 other lawsuits against businesses for alleged ADA violations.

Plaintiffs and attorneys hope companies will decide to settle rather than face an expensive court trial.

The ADA Education and Reform Act will require giving businesses notice and time to fix the alleged infraction before the lawsuit is filed. Notice and cure are a fair way to handle ADA violations.

And that is just the way it is.

CELEBRATING ADMIRAL LLOYD "JOE" VASEY'S 100TH BIRTHDAY

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

Ms. HANABUSA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to send my warmest aloha to Admiral Lloyd "Joe" Vasey on his belated 100th birthday celebration tonight in Honolulu.

After graduating from the United States Naval Academy in 1939, Admiral Vasey joined the submarine service and served under John S. McCain, Jr., father of United States Senator John McCain.

After the war and a long and distinguished service to our Nation, Admiral Vasey formed the CSIS Pacific Forum, an organization that has received strong support of United States Senator John McCain.

In his words: "There is no recognition for well over 150,000 brave Americans who were lost in the Pacific War. We need to honor them, and their families need a place to mourn."

Admiral Vasey's patriotism, devotion to duty, and desire for peace should be an example for us all.

Happy birthday, Admiral Vasey, and may you continue to have fair winds and following seas.

DENNIS COUNIHAN SELECTED AS SAVANNAH'S ST. PATRICK'S DAY PARADE GRAND MARSHAL

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

Mr. CARTER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Mr. Dennis Counihan for being named grand marshal of Savannah's 2017 St. Patrick's Day Parade. The annual St. Patrick's Day Parade in Savannah has been a beloved local tradition and an important family affair since its beginning in 1824.

This year they were a record-setting six nominees vying for the position, but Mr. Counihan rose above the rest due to his experience and dedication to Savannah.

Mr. Counihan's love for his community is emphasized through his work with the Hollander Senior Living company, where he purchases old real estate to be redesigned as nursing homes.

It seems as if Mr. Counihan was destined to be grand marshal, considering his family's role in the parade over the years. His brother Brian is currently the parade chairman, and his father, Michael, served as the parade's grand marshal in 1988.

Mr. Counihan has been on the parade committee since 1980. He certainly knows the dedicated effort that goes into making this event special and successful.

Congratulations, Mr. Counihan, on this great honor. I look forward to seeing the new additions you will bring to the parade.

INVESTING IN AMERICA'S INFRASTRUCTURE

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

Mr. PANETTA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to advocate for a national infrastructure plan.

I represent the central coast of California, and this winter we got rain. We got a lot of rain. So much so that it caused millions in damage to the area, including the closure of the famous Highway 1 in Big Sur, with major mudslides in the south and the loss of the 315-foot Pfeiffer Canyon Bridge in Big Sur.

That damage has left 450 people isolated: kids can't get to school; families are separated; and employers and employees are suffering, including the loss of $3 million in 1 month in the off-season.

But the effects of that damage extend beyond Big Sur to the surrounding towns, counties, and, actually, the entire State of California. People from all over the world come to Big Sur. They drive down from San Francisco. They drive up from Los Angeles. They patronize towns all along their way to Big Sur.

We understand why. It is the most beautiful place in the world. It is my home. And we want it to be open to all of you.
It is time that the Congress and our President help Americans by investing in our American infrastructure.

The IMPORTANCE OF MAINTAINING DACA

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

Mr. LOWENTHAL. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to stress the importance of maintaining action for Childhood Arrivals, commonly known as DACA.

DACA recipients were brought here to the United States as children, and in most cases America is the only home they have ever known. They want to contribute to our economy, to our society, and our country; and they will, unless we are foolish enough to stop them.

Taking any step against DACA would not only hurt DACA recipients, it would hurt the United States. Let’s protect these promising youth and keep this program intact while we work out a humane path to citizenship.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

Record votes on postponed questions will be taken later.

ARBUCKLE PROJECT MAINTENANCE COMPLEX AND DISTRICT OFFICE CONVEYANCE ACT OF 2017

The SPEAKER pro tempore. When the House adjourned on Wednesday, March 8, 2017, there was a pending motion by the gentleman from Florida (Mr. WEBSTER) to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 132) to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to convey certain land and appurtenances of the Arbuckle Project, Oklahoma, to the Arbuckle Master Conservancy District, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Florida (Mr. WEBSTER) has 16 minutes remaining, and the gentleman from California (Mr. HUFFMAN) has 19 minutes remaining.

Without objection, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. BROWN) will control the time of the gentleman from California.

There was no objection.

Mr. WEBSTER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. TIPTON) be allowed to manage the remainder of the time for the majority.

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

There was no objection.

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

H.R. 132, sponsored by Congressman Tom COLE of Oklahoma, conveys two buildings and two acres of land of the federal Arbuckle Project to the Arbuckle Master Conservancy District in Oklahoma. The district has operated and maintained the project for decades, and completed repayment of its capital costs for the project in 2016. While non-controversial, legislation is necessary in order to facilitate this and other Bureau of Reclamation title transfers. Under current law, these buildings and land remain in federal ownership until legislation is enacted to transfer the title to the District. Mr. COLE’s bill achieves this objective.

This title transfer is a win-win for the District and the federal government. The District will no longer be subject to certain federal paperwork requirements and the federal government will be relieved of all future liability and financial responsibilities associated with these facilities and land.

I urge adoption of the measure, which overwhelmingly passed the House on a bipartisan basis in the last Congress.

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

Mr. BROWN of Maryland. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 132 would allow a title transfer of two Federal buildings to the Arbuckle Master Conservancy District in south central Oklahoma. These buildings are part of the Arbuckle Project, which is a water project authorized by Congress in 1962 to provide flood control, recreational opportunities, and municipal water supply.

Nearly all of the facilities within the Arbuckle Project were already transferred to the Arbuckle Master Conservancy District in 2012 after the district finished repaying what it owed the Federal Government for construction. However, due to some overly narrow language in the legislation authorizing the Arbuckle Project, two buildings within the project have yet to be transferred.

Transferring the two remaining buildings will save taxpayer money that would otherwise be needed to operate and maintain the buildings and will also relieve the Federal Government of any potential future liability associated with the buildings. This is straightforward legislation that should be quickly passed.

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

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. WEBSTER of Florida). The question is on the passage of the bill (H.R. 132).

Mr. WEBSTER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 132.
Mr. TIPTON. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 648), to amend the Seedskadee Project Act (43 U.S.C. 620) to provide for the active storage capacity of the Fontenelle Reservoir to be used. This bill has been written in a balanced manner that respects existing laws, compacts, and treaties, and does not attempt to expand Wyoming’s entitlement to Colorado River supplies at the expense of other Colorado River Basin States.

H.R. 648 is a straightforward, non-controversial piece of legislation that is identical to a bill that was unanimously passed by the Committee on Natural Resources last Congress. I support H.R. 648 and urge its adoption. This bill has been written in a balanced manner that respects existing laws, compacts, and treaties, and does not attempt to expand Wyoming’s entitlement to Colorado River supplies at the expense of other Colorado River Basin States.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 648, sponsored by my colleague Cynthia Lummis, simply empowers Wyoming to better utilize its Colorado River water allocation through improved water storage at no cost to the Federal Government. I urge my colleagues to support this commonsense bill.

Mr. Speaker, I urge adoption of the measure, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BROWN of Maryland. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 648 would increase the amount of water that can be stored in the Fontenelle Reservoir in Lincoln County, Wyoming, by allowing the active storage capacity of the reservoir to be used. This bill has been written in a balanced manner that respects existing laws, compacts, and treaties, and does not attempt to expand Wyoming’s entitlement to Colorado River supplies at the expense of other Colorado River Basin States.

H.R. 648 is a straightforward, non-controversial piece of legislation that is identical to a bill that was unanimously passed by the Committee on Natural Resources last Congress. I support H.R. 648 and urge its adoption.

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

Mr. TIPTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as she may consume to the gentlewoman from Wyoming (Ms. CHENEY).

Ms. CHENEY. Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Colorado and my colleague from Maryland for their support of this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I introduced H.R. 648 so that we could begin the work necessary to increase the active storage capacity of the Fontenelle Reservoir. As a headwater State, Wyoming takes care of its water, and we know that water is our most important natural resource. We use water currently for domestic, municipal, fish and wildlife, and recreation. Power generation is a secondary purpose at the dam, and current uses also include industrial capacity for our trona miners, fertilizer producers, and fulfillment of a range of energy needs.

Mr. Speaker, this bill would simply authorize the Bureau of Reclamation to enter into a cooperative agreement with the State of Wyoming so that we could begin the process to study, design, and construct increased capacity for the reservoir. This is a process, Mr. Speaker, that has been held up previously by onerous NEPA requirements, and we need to move quickly so that we can begin to increase this capacity.

Currently the reservoir has 265,000 acre-feet to accommodate water as active capacity. This legislation would potentially add an additional 60,000 acre-feet of existing reservoir space. This bill would provide an affordable and efficient way to add more usable storage in the Colorado River Basin.
and would accomplish these goals without contemplating the construction of a new dam. The bill has the support of the Wyoming Water Development Office and the Wyoming Water Development Commission, which develops our State’s water resources for conservation, irrigation, distribution, recreation, and other public interests. Our Governor Matt Mead included this concept in the 2015 Wyoming water strategy.

Mr. Speaker, this bill will empower Wyoming to better utilize our water allocation and improve our water storage, and I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

Mr. BROWN of Maryland. Mr. Speaker, I have no additional speakers, and I yield back the balance of my time.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. TIPTON) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 648.

The question was taken.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. TIPTON) and the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. BROWN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Colorado.

Mr. TIPTON. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous materials on the bill under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 267, introduced by Congressman JOHN LEWIS, redesignates the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site in the State of Georgia, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 267

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 “Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historical Park Act of 2017.”

SEC. 2. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK ACT.

The Act entitled “An Act to establish the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historical Site in the State of Georgia, and for other purposes” (Public Law 96–428) is amended—

(1) in subsection (a) of the first section, by striking “Martin Luther King, Junior, National Historical Site in the State of Georgia” and inserting “Martin Luther King, Junior, National Historic Site in the State of Georgia”;

(2) by striking “Martin Luther King, Jr., National Historical Park” each place it appears and inserting “Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historical Park”;

(3) by striking “Martin Luther King, Junior, National Historical Site” each place it appears and inserting “national historical park”;

(4) by striking “historical site” each place it appears and inserting “historical park”;

SEC. 3. REFERENCES.

Any reference in a law (other than this Act), map, record, paper, or other record of the United States to “Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site” shall be deemed to be a reference to “Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historical Park”.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. TIPTON) and the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. BROWN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Colorado.

Mr. TIPTON. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous materials on the bill under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 267, introduced by Congressman JOHN LEWIS, redesignates the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site in the State of Georgia as the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historical Park. It also authorizes the National Park Service to include the Prince Hall Masonic Temple in the historical park’s boundaries.

The Prince Hall Masonic Temple long served as headquarters of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. This well-known civil rights organization was cofounded by Dr. King, who also served as its first president. Including the Prince Hall Masonic Temple within the unit’s boundaries will allow the National Park Service to provide technical assistance to the building’s owners with regard to repairs, renovations, and maintenance that will preserve its historic integrity.

Our Nation’s historic sites and historical parks provide us with the unique opportunity to share the very spaces in which the generations before us lived and worked. At these sites, Americans are able to metaphorically walk in the footsteps of our Nation’s Founders and of those who followed them and perfected their vision for our country. At this time of division in our country, it is important to be able to look back at leaders like Martin Luther King, Jr., who promoted unity and the dignity of the human person.

Congressman LEWIS’ bill before the House today will expand opportunities for Americans to learn about the legacy of Dr. King and other icons of the civil rights movement. I urge adoption of this legislation.

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

Mr. BROWN of Maryland. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

H.R. 267 is an important and historically significant piece of legislation that has broad bipartisan support. In fact, it passed the House on a voice vote just over a year ago. The bill accomplishes two primary goals: to designate the Martin Luther King, Jr., National Historic Site in Atlanta, Georgia, as a national historical park; and adjust the boundary of the park to include the Prince Hall Masonic Temple, the first headquarters of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. Taken together, these actions will enhance the National Park Service’s ability to tell and elevate the story of Dr. King.

The site, which is the final resting place of the great civil rights leader, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., continues to connect visitors with the historical and contemporary struggles for civil rights in this country.

These stories are as relevant today as they were half a century ago. By officially designating the area as a national historical park, this legislation will provide the site with the acknowledgement it so justly deserves.

Lastly, I want to thank Congressman Lewis, who remains an important and iconic civil rights leader, for bringing this important bill forward.

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

Mr. TIPTON. Mr. Speaker, I have no additional speakers, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BROWN of Maryland. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. LEWIS), my esteemed colleague.

Mr. LEWIS of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Colorado and the gentleman from Maryland for supporting this legislation.

I am a proud sponsor of the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historical Park Act.

First, let me thank each and every member and the staff from the Natural Resources Committee for their hard work and support of this act.

Mr. Speaker, this nonpartisan bill will simply change these historic Atlanta places from being a site to a park. At no additional cost to taxpayers, this bill will create the first national historic park in the State of Georgia. This small change will significantly improve the way the National Park Service preserves, shares, and presents the history of the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., site or park.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., was our moral compass. He represented the best of America. His mission was to create the beloved community, a community at peace with itself and our neighbors. Throughout his life, Dr. King urged each and every one of us to recognize the dignity and worth of every human being.

Passing this simple piece of legislation will improve how this important history and legacy is shared with visitors from across our country and from around the world.
Again, Mr. Speaker. I would like to thank the chair and ranking member for their support of this legislation.

Mr. TIPTON. Mr. Speaker, I continue to reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BROWN of Maryland. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. JOHNSON).

Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Maryland for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, today, I rise in proud support of my colleague, Congressman LEWIS, in supporting H.R. 267 and its efforts to redesignate the Martin Luther King Jr. National Historic Site as the Martin Luther King Jr. National Historical Park.

For decades, large numbers of people have descended on this site to see the birthplace where the dreamer was moved by destiny into leadership of the modern civil rights movement. The site as it stands now, which also contains the historic Ebenezer Baptist Church, has faced hardships over the years leading to budget cutbacks and a decrease in staff.

H.R. 267 would increase funding that would help preserve this American landmark and increase the size of the park so that future generations can continue to visit and enjoy.

Just like Dr. King never led a march without a plan, we shouldn't leave this critical piece of the civil rights movement without a plan for its future. We should work to preserve the place where Dr. King was born, lived, worked, worshipped, and where he is buried.

Mr. Speaker, I stand in strong support of H.R. 267, the Martin Luther King Jr. National Historical Park Act of 2017.

The time has come to update the historic sites and monuments at the Martin Luther King Jr., National Historic Site. This common sense legislation seeks to end the current restrictions that prevent the site from adopting a plan for its future. We should work to preserve the place where Dr. King was born, lived, worked, worshipped, and where he is buried.

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

Mr. JOYD B. HICE of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I take great pleasure that we may come to the floor today to celebrate and recognize the remarkable legacy of Martin Luther King Jr. Dr. King is characterized by modeling his life after Jesus, and to live a life dedicated to the service of others, whether that be preaching the Gospel to his congregation at Ebenezer Baptist Church, or to the pursuit of justice and equality.

Mr. Speaker, my home state of Georgia has the great honor of preserving King's legacy at the Martin Luther King Jr., National Historic Site. And today we have the opportunity under the leadership of my friend and fellow Georgian, JOHN LEWIS, to pass H.R. 267, the Martin Luther King Jr. National Historical Park Act, to re-designate the site as a National Historic Park.

I strongly believe that this site meets and exceeds the requirements for re-designation as a National Historic Park and fully support my friend in his effort. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank Congressman LEWIS for leading this legislation. As a cosponsor of this bill, a member of the Committee on Natural Resources, and as a fellow Georgian, I offer my strongest support and encourage my colleagues to vote in favor of H.R. 267.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by Mr. TIPTON that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 267, as amended. The question was taken.

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

Mr. TIPTON. Mr. Speaker, I object to the vote on the ground that a quorum is not present and make the point of order that a quorum is not present.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

The point of no quorum is considered withdrawn.

RECESS

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

Accordingly (at 5 o'clock and 5 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess.

AFTER RECESS

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

COMMUNICATION FROM THE CLERK OF THE HOUSE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Clerk of the House of Representatives:

OFFICE OF THE CLERK,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,

Hon. PAUL D. RYAN,
Speaker of the House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. SPEAKER: Pursuant to the permission granted in Clause 2(h) of Rule II of the Rules of the U.S. House of Representatives, the Clerk received the following message from the Secretary of the Senate on March 15, 2017, at 5:42 p.m.:

That the Senate passed without amendment H.R. 1362.

With best wishes, I am, Sincerely,

KAREN L. HAAS.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

Votes will be taken in the following order:

H.R. 132, by the yeas and nays; H.R. 648, by the yeas and nays; H.R. 267, de novo.

The first electronic vote will be conducted as a 15-minute vote. Remaining electronic votes will be conducted as 5-minute votes.

ARBUCKLE PROJECT MAINTENANCE COMPLEX AND DISTRICT OFFICE CONVEYANCE ACT OF 2017

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The unfinished business is the vote on the motion to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 132), to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to convey certain land and appurtenances of the Arbuckle Project, Oklahoma, to the Arbuckle Master Conservancy District, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

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

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 407, nays 1, not voting 21, as follows:
Mr. NOLAN changed his vote from "nay" to "yea."

So (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

The result of the vote was announced as above.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

AUTHORIZED THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR TO AMEND THE DEFINITIVE PLAN REPORT FOR THE SEEDSKADEE PROJECT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The unfinished business is the vote on the motion to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 648) to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to amend the Definitive Plan Report for the Seedskadee Project to enable the use of the active capacity of the Fontenelle Reservoir, on which the yea’s and nays were ordered.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. TROUT) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill. This will be a 5-minute vote.
I want to thank Mr. PASCRELL from the Ways and Means Committee for leading this issue in that committee and here on the floor, as well as ANNA ESHOO from the Energy and Commerce Committee, and more to come in the weeks to come.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from New York is recognized only to give notice.

Mr. CROWLEY. Mr. Speaker, the form of the remainder of the resolution is as follows:

Whereas, in the United States' system of checks and balances, Congress has a responsibility to hold the executive branch of government to the highest standard of transparency to secure the public interest is placed first;

Whereas, according to the Tax History Project, every President after Richard Nixon has disclosed their tax return information to the public;

Whereas, tax returns provide an important baseline disclosure because they contain highly instructive information including whether the candidate paid taxes, what they own, what they have borrowed and from whom, whether they have made any charitable donations, and whether they have taken advantage of tax loopholes;

Whereas, disclosure of the President's tax returns could help those investigating Russian influence in the 2016 election understand the President's financial ties to the Russian Federation and Russian citizens, including debts owed, and whether he shares any partnership interests, equity interests, joint ventures, or licensing agreements with Russia or Russians;

Whereas, it has been reported that President Trump's close senior advisers, including Carter Page, Paul Manafort, Roger Stone, and General Michael Flynn, have been under investigation by the Federal Bureau of Investigation for their ties to the Russian Federation;

Whereas, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov told Interfax, a Russian media outlet, on November 10, 2016, that "there were contacts" with Donald Trump's 2016 campaign, and it has been reported that members of President Trump's inner circle were in contact with senior Russian officials throughout the 2016 campaign;

Whereas, according to his 2016 candidate filing with the Federal Election Commission, the President has 564 financial positions in companies located in the United States and around the world;

Whereas, against the advice of ethics attorneys and the Office of Government Ethics, the President has refused to divest his ownership stake in his businesses;

Whereas, the Director of the non-partisan Office of Government Ethics said that the President's plan to transfer his business holdings to a trust managed by family members is "meaningless" and "does not meet the standards that . . . every President in the past four decades has met";

Whereas, the the Emoluments Clause was included in the U.S. Constitution for the express purpose of preventing federal officials from accepting any "present, Emolument, Office, or Title . . . from any King, Prince, or foreign state";

Whereas, the Trump International Hotel in Washington, D.C., has hired a "director of diplomatic sales" to generate high-priced business among foreign leaders and diplomatic delegations;

Whereas, the Trump International Hotel could receive up to $60,000 from the Kuwaiti government for a party it held at the hotel on February 22, 2017;

Whereas, the President used a legally dubious tax maneuver in 1986 that could have allowed him to avoid paying federal taxes for 18 years;

Whereas, the public still does not have a thorough understanding of the influences and conflicts President Trump has due to his various foreign and domestic business deals;

Whereas, on January 30, 2017, President Trump publicly issued an executive order announcing that pipeline makers in the U.S. must use American-made steel in their projects;

Whereas, on March 3, 2017, President Trump quietly reversed himself, issuing an order allowing the steel for the Keystone pipeline to be imported from foreign countries;

Whereas, without direct knowledge on the conflicts this President has due to his business interests, he could be advancing policies that create an uneven playing field for working Americans;

Whereas, the public should be able to examine his business interests, relationships, and conflicts to ensure that all policies put forward by the Trump administration solely benefit the American public and not his corporate business partners;

Whereas, the most signed petition on the White House website calls for the release of the President's tax return information to verify compliance with the Emoluments Clause, with 1,082,000 signatures as of the date of this resolution;

Whereas, the Chairmen of the Ways and Means Committee, Joint Committee on Taxation, and Senate Finance Committee have the authority to request the President's tax returns under Section 6103 of the tax code;

Whereas, the Joint Committee on Taxation reviewed the tax returns of President Richard Nixon in 1974 and made the information public;

Whereas, the Ways and Means Committee used IRC 6103 authority in 2014 to make public his presidential tax information of 51 taxpayers;

Whereas, the American people have the right to know whether or not their President is operating under conflicts of interest related to international affairs; federal taxes for 18 years; or domestic business deals;

Now, therefore, be it resolved, that the House of Representatives shall:
One, immediately request the tax return information of Donald J. Trump for tax years 2006 through 2015 for review in closed executive session by the Committee on Ways and Means, as provided under Section 6103 of the Internal Revenue Code, and vote to report the information thereof to the full House of Representatives;

Two, support transparency in government and the longstanding tradition of Presidents and Presidential candidates disclosing their tax returns.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair will now recognize the gentleman from New York to offer the resolution just noticed.

Does the gentleman offer the resolution?

Mr. CROWLEY. Mr. Speaker, I offer my resolution.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Clerk will report the resolution. The Clerk reads as follows:

RESOLUTION

Expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that the President shall immediately disclose his tax return information to Congress and the American people.

Whereas, in the United States’ system of checks and balances, Congress has the responsibility to hold the Executive Branch of government to the highest standard of transparency to ensure the public interest is placed first;

Whereas, according to the Tax History Project, every President after Richard Nixon has disclosed their tax return information to the public;

Whereas, tax returns provide an important baseline disclosure because they contain highly instructive information including whether the candidate paid taxes, what they own, what they have borrowed and from whom, whether they have made any charitable donations, and whether they have taken advantage of tax loopholes;

Whereas, disclosure of the President’s tax returns could help those investigating Russian influence in the 2016 election, understand the President’s ties to Russia.

The resolution I am offering can provide the transparency to help ease the concerns of Americans in every corner of our country. The Internal Revenue Code includes language laying out a path for the Ways and Means Committee to obtain the tax returns and review them in a respectful way. There is the precedent that I have stated earlier that provides for this to be used.

A growing number of Members and Senators from both parties have been saying we should have the President’s tax returns. One of those is Congresswoman STEVE KNIGHT of California who said to his constituents that the President’s tax returns should be made public, so I look forward to his support of this resolution.

The House must demonstrate that its Members are listening to our constituents’ concerns. The House must demonstrate that it cares about protecting the integrity of the House, of our government, of our Constitution, of our system of checks and balances. Let’s shine a bright light on the President’s conflicts together.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Does the gentleman from New York wish to present argument on the parliamentary question whether the resolution presents a question of the privileges of the House?

Mr. CROWLEY. Yes, Mr. Speaker, I do.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from New York is recognized.

Mr. CROWLEY. Mr. Speaker, under rule IX, clause 1, questions of the privileges of the House are “those affecting the rights of the House collectively, its safety, dignity, and the integrity of its proceedings.”

I would argue there is nothing more of a threat to the integrity of the House of Representatives than ignoring our duty to provide a check and balance, as our Founders expected of us, of the executive branch.

To restore the dignity of the House, we must use our authority to request President Trump’s tax returns and give the American people the transparency they deserve.

The American people know full well the scope of the President’s financial background, as related by television and the media; but they don’t know the details.

The Constitution includes a clause prohibiting foreign emoluments to the President. The Office of Government Ethics has warned us about the President’s decision not to divest or set up a blind trust, and there is a need to fully understand the President's business interests.

Mr. Speaker, we are seeing the President saying one thing, such as mandating the use of American-made steel on American pipelines, then quietly reversing himself to allow the use of foreign-made steel on the Keystone Pipeline, which is being built by a Canadian company.

The resolution I am offering can provide transparency to help ease the concerns of Americans in every corner of our country. The Internal Revenue Code includes language laying out a path for the Ways and Means Committee to obtain the tax returns and review them in a respectful way. There is the precedent that I have stated earlier that provides for this to be used.

A growing number of Members and Senators from both parties have been saying we should have the President’s tax returns. One of those is Congresswoman STEVE KNIGHT of California who said to his constituents that the President’s tax returns should be made public, so I look forward to his support of this resolution.

The House must demonstrate that its Members are listening to our constituents’ concerns. The House must demonstrate that it cares about protecting the integrity of the House, of our government, of our Constitution, of our system of checks and balances. Let’s shine a bright light on the President’s conflicts together.

We, the elected Representatives of our constituents and the broader American public, can judge whether his decisions are being made for himself,
his business, or for the greater good of the American people.

At the end of the day, if President Trump has nothing to hide, then he should be willing to do what every President since Richard Nixon has done, and that is, release his tax returns.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair would remind the gentleman from New York that the question is on, and his remarks must be confined to, the question of privilege.

Mr. CROWLEY. Mr. Speaker, I think I have been toeing that line very closely.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. A little bit over it.

Mr. CROWLEY. At the very least, even if he continues to hide behind the phony excuse of being under audit, he should release tax returns for 2016 as those are not under audit.

Mr. Speaker, this resolution is not about partisanship. It is about America.

No, you are not listening to your constituents, my colleagues. It is about America, my colleagues. They want to see these tax returns.

The American people expect more from the promise than heckling back and forth. They expect their Representatives from both sides of the aisles to demand these tax returns.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from New York will suspend.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman from New York (Mr. Crowley).

Mr. Speaker, this is a wonderful part of the Tax Code. I would submit to you, the question of whether the resolution presents a privilege of the House.

Mr. CROWLEY. Mr. Speaker, I appeal to the ruling of the Chair.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. CROWLEY cited the very source of what our proposal is, and that is, section 6103, and, particularly section 6103(f), of the Tax Code of the United States of America, which has been part of the Tax Code since 1924.

Mr. Speaker, this is a wonderful part of the Tax Code. Take my word for it. And it has been a wonderful part of the Tax Code since 1924.

It is very clear the main argument against this proposal, this resolution, has been whether in the last several weeks that this is an administrative part of the Tax Code. I would submit to you, Mr. Speaker, that this is not simply arranging the deck chairs on the Titanic. This has to do with all of us. This has to do with what we put in to our tax files when we submit them to the IRS.

There is real authority when you read this section. Mr. Speaker. I can assure you I will not read it. That will be for another time. But I can assure you it is very specific and goes beyond administrative authority. We are talking about appariitional authority.

We are talking about that three different committees in the House and the Senate call on anybody with due cause to have them submit their tax returns.

By the way, when you look at why section 6103 was put into the Tax Code in 1924, one of the greatest scandals in the 20th century, then you understand it was not just meant as an administrative situation.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we believe that it is imperative for the public to know and understand how such tax reform that we are about to go into pretty soon will benefit the President of the United States.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from New York must keep his remarks confined to the question of the privileges of the House.

Mr. CROWLEY. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that.

It is about America, Mr. Speaker. I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from New York must keep his remarks confined to the question of the privileges of the House.

Mr. CROWLEY. Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. That is the question before the House.

Mr. CROWLEY. I want to thank the gentleman from New York (Mr. Crowley).

Mr. Speaker, Mr. CROWLEY cited the very source of what our proposal is, and that is, section 6103, and, particularly section 6103(f), of the Tax Code of the United States of America, which has been part of the Tax Code since 1924.

Mr. Speaker, this is a wonderful part of the Tax Code. Take my word for it. And it has been a wonderful part of the Tax Code since 1924.

It is very clear the main argument against this proposal, this resolution, has been whether in the last several weeks that this is an administrative part of the Tax Code. I would submit to you, Mr. Speaker, that this is not simply arranging the deck chairs on the Titanic. This has to do with all of us. This has to do with what we put in to our tax files when we submit them to the IRS.

There is real authority when you read this section. Mr. Speaker. I can assure you I will not read it. That will be for another time. But I can assure you it is very specific and goes beyond administrative authority. We are talking about appariitional authority.

We are talking about that three different committees in the House and the Senate call on anybody with due cause to have them submit their tax returns.

By the way, when you look at why section 6103 was put into the Tax Code in 1924, one of the greatest scandals in the 20th century, then you understand it was not just meant as an administrative situation.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we believe that it is imperative for the public to know and understand how such tax reform that we are about to go into pretty soon will benefit the President of the United States.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from New York must keep his remarks confined to the question of the privileges of the House.

Mr. CROWLEY. Mr. Speaker, I appeal to the ruling of the Chair.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. CROWLEY cited the very source of what our proposal is, and that is, section 6103, and, particularly section 6103(f), of the Tax Code of the United States of America, which has been part of the Tax Code since 1924.

Mr. Speaker, this is a wonderful part of the Tax Code. Take my word for it. And it has been a wonderful part of the Tax Code since 1924.
A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK ACT OF 2017

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. ARRONDT). The unfinished business is the question on suspending the rules and passing the bill (H.R. 267) to redesignate the Martin Luther King, Jr., National Historic Site in the State of Georgia, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. Tipton) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

REPORT ON RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR THE EXPENSES OF CERTAIN COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES IN THE 115TH CONGRESS

Mr. HARPER from the Committee on House Administration, submitted a privileged resolution (Rept. No. 115-138) on the resolution (H. Res. 173) providing for the expenses of certain committees of the House of Representatives in the One Hundred Fifteenth Congress, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

PROVIDING FOR APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS OF BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF OFFICE OF COMPLIANCE

Mr. HARPER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on House Administration be discharged from further consideration of the H. R. 1228. Let me provide for the appointment of members of the Board of Directors of the Office of Compliance to replace members whose terms expire during 2017, and for other purposes, and ask for its immediate consideration in the House.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

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

There was no objection.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 1228

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

SECTION 1. APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS OF BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF OFFICE OF COMPLIANCE.

(a) Appointment of Members.—

(1) Members Replacing Members Whose Terms Expire in March 2017.—Notwithstanding the first sentence of section 301(e) of the Congressional Accountability Act of 1995 (2 U.S.C. 1381(e)), of the members of the Board of Directors of the Office of Compliance who are appointed to replace the 3 members whose terms expire in March 2017—

(A) shall have a term of office of 5 years; and

(B) shall have a term of office of 4 years, as designated at the time of appointment by the persons specified in section 301(b) of such Act (2 U.S.C. 1381(b)).

(2) Members Replacing Members Whose Terms Expire in May 2017.—In accordance with the first sentence of section 301(e) of the Congressional Accountability Act of 1995 (2 U.S.C. 1381(e)), the members of the Board of Directors of the Office of Compliance who are appointed to replace the 2 members whose terms expire in May 2017 shall each have a term of office of 5 years.

(b) Service of Current Members.—Notwithstanding the second sentence of section 301(e) of the Congressional Accountability Act of 1995 (2 U.S.C. 1381(e)) or section 3 of the Office of Compliance Administrative and Technical Corrections Act of 2015 (Public Law 114-6; 2 U.S.C. 1381 note)—

(1) an individual serving as a member of the Board of Directors of the Office of Compliance whose term expires in the 115th Congress may be reappointed to serve one additional term at the length designated under paragraph (1) of subsection (a), but may not be reappointed to any additional terms after that additional term expires; and

(2) an individual serving as a member of the Board of Directors of the Office of Compliance whose term expires in May 2017 may be reappointed to serve one additional term at the length referred to in paragraph (2) of subsection (a), but may not be reappointed to any additional terms after that additional term expires.

(c) Permitting Members To Serve Until Appointment of Successor.—Section 301(e) of the Congressional Accountability Act of 1995 (2 U.S.C. 1381(e)) is amended by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

“(3) PERMITTING SERVICE UNTIL APPOINTMENT OF SUCCESSOR.—A member of the Board may serve after the expiration of that member’s term until a successor has taken office.”

Amendment offered by Mr. Harper

Mr. HARPER. Mr. Speaker, I have an amendment at the desk.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Clerk will report the amendment.

The Clerk read as follows:

Add at the end the following new subsection (d)

(d) Authority of Congressional Leadership in Making Appointments.—Section 301(b) of the Congressional Accountability Act of 1995 (2 U.S.C. 1381(b)) is amended by striking the period at the end of the second sentence and inserting the following: “who are authorized to take such steps as they consider appropriate to ensure the timely appointment of the members of the Board consistent with the requirements of this section.”

Amendment offered by Mr. Harper

Mr. HARPER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to dispense with the reading of the amendment.

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

There was no objection.

The amendment was agreed to.

The bill was ordered to be engrossed and read a third time, was read the third time, and passed, and a motion to reconsider was laid on the table.
Mr. BUCK from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 115–39) on the resolution (H. Res. 198) providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 1259) to amend title 38, United States Code, to provide for the removal or demotion of employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs based on performance or misconduct, and for other purposes; providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 1367) to improve the authority of the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to hire and retain physicians and other employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes; and providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 1181) to amend title 38, United States Code, to clarify the conditions under which certain persons may be treated as adjudicated mentally incompetent for certain purposes, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

Mr. Speaker, let us remember and honor the courage and the loyalty.

These dogs provide an incredible service to our brave men and women overseas. They are responsible for saving lives and preventing injuries, sometimes at their own expense.

Many of our service members form very close bonds with these loyal companions. That is why I authored the Military Working Dog Military Retirement Act and was proud to see it pass with overwhelming bipartisan support last Congress. This new law guarantees that service dogs are returned and retired to the United States after serving overseas. Previously, military members were often forced to spend their own money to bring these animals home.

Mr. Speaker, let us remember and honor these four-legged heroes. They are a valuable component of protecting Americans through their courage and their loyalty.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of the mission of NOAA, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, now under attack by the Trump administration.

An assault on NOAA, Mr. Speaker, is an assault on science. NOAA is a data-driven organization with proven research in the public interest. NOAA defends our coasts from the surges we have seen from Sandy, Irene, and other storms. NOAA’s satellites keep watch day and night, providing up-to-the-second data to farmers, forecasters, and fishermen.

Mr. Speaker, I acknowledge the Trump administration’s denial of climate damage, but I do not understand it. Defunding NOAA, as the President’s budget purportedly does, does not make our climate problems simply go away. The mission of NOAA isn’t just about our environment. American businesses rely on its data every day to give them an economic advantage. After all, there is a reason NOAA is in the Department of Commerce to begin with.

Mr. Speaker, let us remember and honor the courage and the loyalty.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to a dear friend and former Member of this House, John Wold, of Casper, Wyoming, who passed away on February 19. Congressman Wold had a long career serving overseas. He also served Wyoming in our state legislature and as our Member of Congress. He was a leader and pioneer in the energy field, and he made numerous contributions, along with his incomparable wife, Jane, to our civic life and as a philanthropist.

I knew John my whole life. The friendship between our families goes back even farther. John was the oldest living former Member of Congress, and I was honored to receive his advice and counsel over the years.

I will never forget attending his 100th birthday this past summer in Casper and seeing the joy it brought him to be surrounded by so many of his wonderful children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren.

We will miss him, but the impact Congressmen Wold had on our State and our Nation and the legacy of leadership and honor he leaves behind will continue to be an inspiration for generations to come.

Mr. Speaker, let us remember and honor the courage and the loyalty.

I rise today to recognize Theresa Bryant, who is West Forsyth High School’s 2016-2017 Teacher of the Year.

This first-generation college graduate, Kiwanis member, and Key Club adviser has worked at West Forsyth in Clemmons since 2000, where she teaches sophomore English and Shakespeare as an elective.

Theresa’s proudest moment in the field of education is her role in the creation of the Shakespeare elective class. After an educational opportunity at the Globe Theatre in London, she worked with a colleague to create an intensive curriculum covering eight plays. The class has brought the words of the Bard to more than 4,000 students at West Forsyth, as well as four other schools in the district.

Theresa is known for her dedication to her students and making her lessons relevant to their different learning styles so everyone can understand the material.

We are lucky to have a teacher of her caliber serving students in North Carolina’s Fifth District.

Ms. Bass. Mr. Speaker, last month, the U.N. declared a famine in parts of South Sudan. As I rise today, more than 100,000 men, women, and children are facing immediate starvation. Arguably, this was an avoidable crisis.

Internal conflicts have worsened the dire living conditions for the people of South Sudan, and the government of the Republic of South Sudan must live up to its promise and ensure access to the most vulnerable communities by humanitarian organizations. According to recent estimates, without immediate action, an additional 5.5 million people living in South Sudan will experience famine.

Although we haven’t yet seen the President’s budget, it is reported that there is a 37 percent decrease in foreign aid. This could include severe cuts to humanitarian funding.

In this regard, I introduced H. Res. 187 in support of the efforts by USAID and other providers of humanitarian assistance in the international community. I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to support this bipartisan resolution, and, by doing so, begin an end to this crisis.

Mr. Langefvin. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to a dear friend and former Member of this House, John Wold, of Casper, Wyoming, who passed away on February 19. Congressman Wold had a long career serving overseas. He also served Wyoming in our state legislature and as our Member of Congress. He was a leader and pioneer in the energy field, and he made numerous contributions, along with his incomparable wife, Jane, to our civic life and as a philanthropist.

I knew John my whole life. The friendship between our families goes back even farther. John was the oldest living former Member of Congress, and I was honored to receive his advice and counsel over the years.

I will never forget attending his 100th birthday this past summer in Casper and seeing the joy it brought him to be surrounded by so many of his wonderful children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren.

We will miss him, but the impact Congressmen Wold had on our State and our Nation and the legacy of leadership and honor he leaves behind will continue to be an inspiration for generations to come.

Mr. Speaker, let us remember and honor the courage and the loyalty.
Mr. SWALWELL of California. Mr. Speaker, in every chapter from the story of America’s success, we find countless examples of the contributions made by immigrants. In fact, it begins in our prelude: we are a nation founded by immigrants.

Yet, over the weekend, a Member of this House, Mr. KING of Iowa, said: “We can’t restore our civilization with somebody else’s babies.”

There is nothing to restore. We are the greatest country in the world. But, worrying disparaging the value of somebody else’s babies, Mr. KING argues for an America void of people of color or who worship differently than he does. That is not who we are.

Behind me are a few small examples of somebody else’s babies: people who immigrated to America or whose families immigrated to America, practicing many different faiths, coming from many different countries.

They include the daughter of Chinese immigrants who became one of America’s most celebrated and best-selling authors, Amy Tan; the son of a Syrian migrant, Steve Jobs, who founded Apple; and the son of a Kenyan student, who recently finished two terms as the 44th President of the United States, Barack Obama.

These are not somebody else’s babies. These are immigrants and the children of immigrants, and they are our babies. I was born and baptized in Sac City, Iowa, located in Mr. KING’s district. It is where I learned from Exodus 22:21, “You must not mistreat or oppress foreigners in any way. Remember, you yourselves were once foreigners.” And from the Iowans I know, they were raised to accept and live the same way.

I hope my colleagues join me in denouncing bigoted, hateful, and divisive rhetoric, and let’s celebrate the beautiful diversity that has always made our Nation shine: these beautiful “somebody else’s babies” who are America’s babies.

FREEING UP RESTRICTIVE FUEL MILEAGE STANDARDS

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

Mr. LaMalfa. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to applaud the President’s decision to free up fuel mileage restrictions on the auto industry, also known as CAFE standards.

Speaking to auto industry workers in Detroit today, President Trump promised to reexamine stringent fuel efficiency rules that were hurried into place in the final days of the previous administration.

After committing to a review in 2018, the Obama administration changed course just before leaving office and decided to keep the requirements in place for model year vehicles 2022–2025. According to reviews by independent economists and engineers, these requirements would add at least an average of $3,800 in costs per vehicle, even after supposed fuel savings were considered.

Even more, this vastly limits consumer choice, whether someone wants to buy a minivan to move their family or someone else needs a sporty car.

Even worse, it is entirely unclear whether existing technology even allows the 60 percent jump from the 2016 requirement of 34.1 miles per gallon to reach the almost 55-mile-per-gallon requirement in only seven model years to 2025 without sacrificing safety and, yet again, eviscerating consumer choice.

The President’s decision to fully review these requirements will result in lower vehicle costs, allow safer vehicles, and boost our U.S. economy by supporting domestic manufacturing.

THE TRUTH MUST BE TOLD

(Ms. Jackson Lee asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. Jackson Lee. Mr. Speaker, let me join my colleagues, first of all, and say that this country is made up of somebody else’s babies; and I am very proud to be an American who sees the great talent of these babies who have become great leaders, such as teachers, scientists, doctors, lawyers, and members who do public service. Thank you to somebody else’s babies.

Let me also congratulate the district court in Hawaii, which has just rendered a decision to block the President’s Muslim ban again. Thank you for that wise and deliberative decision.

I rise today in particular to really ask and wonder where we are in this country that a President of the United States can, first, tweet out that a former President committed a criminal felony: wiretapping.

In the last 48 hours, there is mash-mash of information coming from the press secretary or the director of communications and the President: Oh, maybe it was not wiretapping by the President of the United States formally, but it is generally wiretapping.

Mr. President, let me be very clear: the words of the Commander in Chief are known to carry great weight. It is the American people that have to trust and believe and be commanded and led.

I am saddened by the state that we are in right now. I am saddened that there is one position one day and another position another day. As a senior member of the Judiciary Committee, we cannot tolerate that kind of mismatched conversation. The truth must be told. The American people must know it. Members of Congress must know it. I believe committees should be investigating if there was a wiretap and not by the way of the former President. If not, tell the truth.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. Fitzpatrick). The Chair would remind Members to direct their remarks to the Chair.

HONORING TRINITY UNITED METHODIST ON ITS 200TH YEAR

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

Mr. Thompson of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, this year, the Trinity United Methodist Church in Bellefonte, Pennsylvania, marks its 200th year as a house of worship.

Founded in April of 1817, the church congregation began with just seven people. Schoolmaster and Methodist layman James McGee led the first meeting. Over the years, Trinity’s congregation has steadily grown, and today it boasts 200 members. The current church was built in 1875, and in 1962, an educational building was added on.

The church plays an important role in the Bellefonte community and it organizes several programs throughout the year, including a free community lunch, a New Year’s Day dinner, free public concerts, and a toy drive before Christmas for children in need.

Mr. Speaker, for the last 200 years, Trinity United Methodist Church has opened its doors for people to hear the Word of the Lord, but a church is much more than a building. It brings a love of God into the community and into the hearts of those who fill the seats each Sunday.

God bless Trinity United Methodist Church on the momentous occasion of its bicentennial.

BULLY BUSTERS

(Ms. Jayapal asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. Jayapal. Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of a group of 11- and 12-year-old girls from my district who have noticed an unsettling trend in modern politics and who are absolutely determined to do something about it. They see bullying from leaders who are supposed to be their role models. They witness fear, intimidation, and vitriol being thrown at religious minorities, LGBTQ people, women, immigrants, communities of color. And, yes, I am also somebody else’s baby.

In the face of this hate, these girls have decided to take action by forming the D.C. Bully Busters. These change-making girls, not even old enough to vote yet, but certainly old enough to make their voices heard, have vowed to stand up against the bullying they are seeing in American politics.

Mr. Speaker, if grade-schoolers can say that bullying, intimidation, and silently standing by are cowardly tactics that have no place in politics, then the adults who represent them must be courageous enough to do the same thing.
On Friday, I will be proudly signing the D.C. Bully Busters pledge, and I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to join me so that we can let everyone know at every level that bullying is never acceptable.

COMMONSENSE VA REFORM

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

Mr. BERGMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today as a cosponsor of H.R. 1259, the VA Accountability First Act.

This important piece of legislation targets vulnerabilities within the VA employment structure that prevent bad actors from being fired or demoted. This commonsense reform gives the Secretary of the VA the flexibility to dismiss or demote employees who are guilty of on-the-job inebriation, drug diversion, and sexual assault, just to name a few. Our veterans deserve quality care. They have earned quality care.

As chairman of the Veterans’ Affairs Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, it is my highest priority in making sure that our Department of Veterans Affairs is working for the men and women who have worn the cloth of our Nation and made the sacrifices that keep us free: our veterans.

This bill moves the needle in the right direction, and I commend Chairman Roe for introducing it.

HEALTHCARE REFORM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker’s announced policy of January 3, 2017, the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. FERGUSON) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. FERGUSON. Mr. Speaker, I would like to start by saying that, for the last 25 years, I practiced dentistry in Georgia’s Third District and I experienced a healthcare system that was broken and in desperate need of repair to reduce costs and increase access to care.

After the Affordable Care Act was signed into law, I saw my patients, my friends, my neighbors forced away from doctors who had treated them for their entire lives. Instead of decreasing costs, patients saw their costs skyrocket and their access to care limited. As a medical practitioner, I want what is best for my patients. Those are the people that I am fighting for: my neighbors and constituents who saw their premiums skyrocket, their quality and access to care limited or deterred by a government bureaucrat. I committed to them that I would repeal ObamaCare and undo the damage that it has done to our healthcare system.

The legislation we are currently considering in the House, the American Health Care Act, is centered on the beginning of keeping that promise.

This is not a choice between a broken healthcare system that existed before ObamaCare. It is a new direction that reflects an understanding of what works and what does not work. The legislation will enact many reforms that directly impact Americans by lowering costs and improving access to care.

Tonight, my colleagues and I are going to share with you in great detail what that legislation does. We have all been very open in our opposition to the Affordable Care Act, but it is also important for us to share with our constituents what we stand for and what we are working to do to reform this broken system.

We stand for patient-centered health care that meets the needs of our constituents in an affordable way. We stand for market-driven healthcare solutions and an industry that prioritizes personal freedom over government mandates.

We stand for the biggest entitlement reform in a generation to ensure that we protect our most vulnerable populations.

This is just a short list of the goals we are working towards, and I am excited to be joined by a number of my colleagues to explain more to the American people what is happening with our healthcare system.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. ARRINGTON). He served in the George W. Bush administration. He has worked with the FDC, and he has been a public servant in Lubbock, Texas, at Texas Tech University. He serves on the House Agriculture Committee, the Budget Committee, and the House Veterans’ Subcommittee.

Mr. ARRINGTON. Mr. Speaker, the facts are indisputable: President Obama’s attempt to plan our healthcare economy from Washington, D.C., has failed.

I have spent nearly 2 years crisscrossing 29 counties in west Texas, and I can report from the many stories from my constituents that no single law or policy has been more reviled, more destructive, or more intrusive than ObamaCare. It is absolutely crushing our small businesses and Main Street Americans everywhere.

The American Health Care Act repeals ObamaCare and is a step in the right direction to freeing the American people from the scourge of government-controlled health care.

For the first time since the passage of ObamaCare, according to the Congressional Budget Office’s report recently, the American Health Care Act will lower premiums over time by 10 percent, a far cry from the skyrocketing premiums we have seen over the last several years since the passage of the Affordable Care Act.

The report goes on to say that the American Health Care Act will reduce the deficit by $337 billion and make the biggest entitlement reform in generations, saving taxpayers well over $800 billion.

This bill strikes at the heart of ObamaCare by repealing its mandates, eliminating its taxes, and gutting its regulations.

Make no mistake, this legislation is not perfect. I will continue to fight for more conservative and more fiscally responsible policy outcomes like work requirements for able-bodied adults. But when the dust settles and the debate is over, we cannot allow perfect policy aspirations to deny any of the good, conservative results. The alternative, Mr. Speaker, is simply unacceptable.

Mr. FERGUSON. Mr. Speaker, the gentleman from Texas touched on some very important issues. One that he talked about was that this is just the beginning of a long journey that we must take to rebuild our American healthcare system.

This has been an open legislative process. More than 8 months ago, even before ObamaCare was a word, a group of us in the House, the Republican caucus here released A Better Way agenda, which detailed a consensus vision for patient-centered healthcare reform. Our bill, the American Health Care Act, is built on that framework.

These ideas are not new. They are not unvetted. They are a product of many conversations, debates, and work. Unlike the drafting of ObamaCare, we want our constituents to know what is in this legislation before we pass it. That is why every American can go to readthebill.gop and look at this legislation for themselves. In fact, I encourage anyone who hasn’t taken time to look at this legislation yet to go to readthebill.gop and read more about the American Health Care Act.

At no point in this process have I felt closed out of it. As a matter of fact, as a freshman, I can tell you that I have had my voice heard, I have been asked for input, and I have seen many of the ideas that I have spoken about be included in this bill.

This bill has not been crafted behind closed doors. It has not been kept in the shadows. As a matter of fact, it has taken 12 months to craft the American Health Care Act. As a Member sitting in conference, leadership has been very straightforward about the intentions of the bill, the basic framework of the bill, and I am excited to see that, as this process has gone through regular order, we have seen many amendments added to it, and we are continuing that process.

Regular order means that we have done something very unique here. We haven’t just taken a bill and passed it and then gone to read what is in it. We have taken a bill, worked through the committee process. Our colleagues on the Committee on Energy and Commerce and Committee on
Ways and Means have worked through some many long nights debating amendments in an open process.

Tomorrow the House Committee on the Budget will take up this business. I am a member on that committee, and I am looking forward to the process of going through the debate tomorrow. I am sure that it will be long, and I am sure many amendments will be debated; but I am excited about the opportunity that we have to move a piece of legislation forward, make it better, make it more conservative, but, most importantly, make sure that Americans have great health care, access to that health care at an affordable price.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. BACON). Mr. BACON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the American Health Care Act.

ObamaCare has failed, and we need to replace it. It has made health care inaccessible to many of the Americans it was created to help. Our premiums have skyrocketed, small business growth has been stunted as it can’t expand due to health care regulations, and employees have seen their hours cut. Individuals are forced to purchase health insurance that they do not want.

Over the past 2 years, I have met with many Nebraskans in my district. I keep hearing about the broken promises of ObamaCare and the tight stranglehold this law has created for the American people. I have heard from a young mother who had to pay for the whole bill of the delivery of her child. The ACA plan she was on had a $12,000 deductible, and that plan didn’t help her one cent.

Another citizen from Omaha, Jeanine, was happy with her healthcare insurance for decades. Five years ago, she was paying $323 a month and was satisfied with the coverage she had. Four years ago, she was told by her insurance company that she would have to pay more because she would need additional coverage, like maternity coverage, even though she was past that stage in her life. Two years ago, that insurance plan of Jeanine’s jumped to $690 a month—double.

However, her health insurance company had another policy under ACA which she could switch to. She did so for $150 a month with a $550 credit. At least, she had that plan until her insurance company sent her a notice that ACA was going away and sent Jeanine searching for another policy. She was forced to pay $337 billion and lower taxes by $883 billion.

The American Health Care Act will reduce the deficit and cut taxes. According to Monday’s CBO score, this bill will reduce the Federal deficit by $337 billion and lower taxes by $883 billion. That is good for America.

Finally, the American Health Care Act does this and yet preserves affordable insurance for those with pre-existing conditions and maintains a safety net for those who cannot pay premiums. These are things that I also promised to fight for, and they are in the bill.

I look forward to working with my fellow House Members on both sides of the aisle to deliver the best law for the American people. We are going to be debating this bill for the next few weeks, and we are going to make it better.

I am proud that this Congress and the Republican leadership have made a commitment to passing this legislation in an open and transparent process. This is a good first step toward fixing the mess of the ACA.

Before I vote on this, I encourage my colleagues and the American people to carefully read the bill so they can find out what is in it. Unlike ObamaCare, we don’t have to pass this to find out what is in it. We know now. This is a great step forward, a patient-centered, doctor-supported healthcare system that gives power back to the States and the bureaucrats of our healthcare decisions.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak on this.

Mr. FERGUSON. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. BACON) for his remarks.

He touched on some things that are very important, and that is the driving down of cost and how this is accomplished. Truly, when the patient is in control of their health care, they are also in control of the cost. We are fighting for consumer choice in a patient-driven healthcare system.

We understand, and I certainly understand, that patients and doctors need to be at the center of the healthcare conversation, not bureaucrats and not insurance clerks.

Our plan includes provisions to expand choice and give consumers more control over their healthcare dollars. The American Health Care Act significantly increases the amount individuals and families can contribute to their personal health savings accounts each year, allowing them to save more to pay for future healthcare expenses and the flexibility to use their healthcare dollars as they choose.

It also allows them to spend those healthcare dollars where they think that it will best benefit their families. It allows them to have the most intimate conversations with their healthcare providers and make sure that they are making the right decisions and using their dollars wisely. If the first question always is “does my insurance company pay for it?” you are always going to get the most expensive answer. However, if the patient has contributed to this process, the patient will be able to make some informed decisions through good conversations with their doctors, and they can better manage their own health care.

We are fighting for a system that puts patients first and allows Georgians in the Third District and all across this Nation to make their own healthcare decisions. That starts with a conversation between the doctor and the patient.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. RUTHERFORD). He is a former three-term sheriff from Florida, representing the greater Jacksonville area.

Mr. RUTHERFORD. Mr. Speaker, tonight I rise to speak of fairness, to speak of equity, to speak of parity for America’s hardworking taxpayers. I want to talk about bringing parity between Americans who get their insurance coverage through their employer and those who are forced to purchase their health insurance in the individual market.

Currently, over 150 million Americans who have employer-sponsored health insurance enjoy a tax benefit to
purchase that health insurance. However, Americans who purchase their insurance in the individual marketplace, like farmers, small-business owners, plumbers, and mechanics, do not have a similar kind of benefit. Mr. Speaker, simply put, this is just unfair.

However, the American Health Care Plan helps fix this inequity by offering a portable tax credit to help these Americans purchase the health insurance they choose. These credits are also age-adjusted so older Americans who have higher healthcare costs will also see a larger credit to assist them in purchasing that insurance.

Mr. Speaker, I can tell you, many individuals and families in Florida's Fourth Congressional District will benefit from this reform and for the first time will be on a more level playing field in purchasing their health insurance. We are fighting for basic fairness. No American, no small-business man or woman, no farmer, plumber, or mechanic should be disadvantaged because of where they work or where they are forced to purchase their insurance.

Mr. FERGUSON. Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Florida touched on something that is very important, that is fairness in the marketplace. I can tell you, as a small-business owner, I did not receive the same favorable tax treatment as the major corporations did under the Affordable Care Act. In fact, the effect I had to move into the individual market. I had to begin buying health insurance with post-tax dollars, and I was unable to afford the coverage not only for my family, but for the people that I had the pleasure of working with every single day in my business.

What Mr. RUTHERFORD talked about is leveling the playing field, and that is something that we need to do. It will increase innovation. It increases jobs. It increases success. It is so frustrating for Americans as they begin to build their small businesses and they begin to grow, and every single time that they take a step forward, the government takes more and more out of their pocket. Now we have a healthcare system that continues to rob them of their success.

Make no mistake; the healthcare system that we had prior to the Affordable Care Act was certainly not successful and it certainly was not the right way. But we have made it worse with this. What we have done is we have not only disenfranchised many small businesses and people who are growing their businesses and finding success, but we have also, quite candidly, done a poor job of maintaining our safety net. What we are fighting for is to increase affordable health care for all Americans, and this has meant listening to a lot of the feedback from our families and our constituents back home.

What we need to recognize is that, under our plan, dependents can continue to stay on their parents' insurance until age 26 and they are fully on their feet, if that is the right thing for their families to do. Americans told us that they like this flexibility, and we have listened to them.

Our plan will also ensure that those who have preexisting conditions can't be charged more than the health coverage they need. It also includes incentives, not mandates, to encourage Americans to have continuous coverage. This is good for the marketplace, and it will keep costs down for all Americans. Our portable tax credits will also increase access to coverage by assisting lower income individuals to purchase the health insurance that they need.

What is more, the American Health Care Act includes a Patient and State Stability Fund to help States expand the number of vulnerable patients who have access to health care. We know that States know how to best meet the unique needs of their citizens, and this is going to give them the flexibility to do just that to extend these funds are flexible, they allow things like cutting out-of-pocket expenses for patients, promoting access to preventive services, or increasing available options in the marketplace—all things that are needed.

These reforms will help drive down costs and increase access to care. This is good news for those who are worried about affordable coverage. Unlike ObamaCare, though, it means that their coverage provides them with meaningful access to care.

It does you no good to have an insurance plan that you cannot afford to use. Time and time again, I have patients, I have small-business owners, I have constituents from all over Georgia’s Third District that came to me and say: Just because I have this new insurance plan doesn’t mean that my family is getting better care. One such example was a gentleman that came into my district office just this past week. Three years ago, his health insurance for his family with four children was about $500, and he had a $3,000 family deductible. Last year, his premium had risen to $1,700 a month. And this year, he laid in front of me on my desk in the district office a bill for his health insurance that was $2,400 a month, and a $7,000 deductible.

One example was a gentleman that came into my district office just this past week. Three years ago, his health insurance for his family with four children was about $500, and he had a $3,000 family deductible. Last year, his premium had risen to $1,700 a month. And this year, he laid in front of me on my desk in the district office a bill for his health insurance that was $2,400 a month, and a $7,000 deductible. He is a small-business owner with nine employees. It is absolutely crushing his family expenses, and that is not fair.

What we have done is we have created an environment where we have tried unsuccessfully to expand access; and in doing so, we have seen costs on men and women across this Nation that are trying to do their best to move into the middle class. We have seen it destroy family finances. We have seen it create a situation where many families now pay more for their health insurance than they do for their own homes.

Mr. Speaker, in my case, that is the exact same thing. My insurance payment is more than my house payment, and that simply doesn’t seem right.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. TENNEY).

She has proven to be a great Member of Congress, I have enjoyed working with her thoroughly. Ms. TENNEY has some very revealing remarks going forward.

Ms. TENNEY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. FERGUSON), my esteemed colleague.

I rise today to recognize the New Yorkers who have been hit especially hard by the policies of the previous administration and ObamaCare’s so-called reforms to our healthcare system. Patients have been hurt, doctors have been burdened, and families and taxpayers are being crushed by this terrible law, and its thousands of pages of onerous regulations.

Our most vulnerable citizens—seniors, the hardworking middle class, and veterans—are in worse shape now in upstate New York than they were before ObamaCare. Ms. Tenney, from the 22nd District, patients are being denied high-quality care that they deserve and need.

With higher costs, less accessible and affordable care, and mountains of red tape, this law has hurt everything but a Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. Now, some deductibles are higher than a house payment, and premiums across the Nation have increased on average by 25 percent. Our families didn’t sign up for this.

Patients have had their plans canceled and their doctors are deemed out of network. They have fewer and worse choices than before. All the while, costs have skyrocketed with premiums and deductibles jumping by double digits and triple digits in some cases.

This failed law has hurt our economy, small-business owners, and family farms while driving hundreds of thousands of jobs and opportunities away from our communities. Small businesses are being crushed by ObamaCare and have either stopped hiring or dropped insurance coverage for their employees. The CBO estimated that ObamaCare will result in the loss of at least 2 million jobs. In fact, the number one complaint of small-business owners in my district throughout the last 6 years has been ObamaCare, and 70 percent of the new jobs are created by the small business in our community.

One small-business owner, in fact, told me that she had to lay off nearly a dozen employees just to keep up with the cost of ObamaCare. Just think of looking at 12 families and saying: You have now lost the primary caregiver in your family just to keep up with ObamaCare mandates.

Another family that I met with told me they had their insurance lost after being canceled three times, and now their options are either limited or unaffordable.

Another independent, self-insured man with three children told me that he had an insurance plan, but he had no
health care, with a $12,000 annual deductible.

This is unfair and it is unsustainable for small-business owners, particularly those in the independent market.

Hardworking middle class families in New York are being burdened with nearly the highest taxes in the Nation. New York is one of only four States that passes the 50 percent share Medicaid burden onto the local taxpayers, the percent of the State’s obligation to cover Medicaid costs are forced onto struggling local governments already suffocating under unfunded mandates from the State. This has caused property and sales taxes to increase year after year, crushing the pocketbooks of even the most vulnerable taxpayers.

In New York State, local taxpayers throughout our 63 counties will be forced to pay over $7.5 billion annually in this local share to support New York’s Medicaid program. New York’s Medicaid program is the largest in the Nation. In fiscal year 2018, the cost will be over $65 billion—or 42 percent of New York’s $152 billion proposed State budget. That is being the cost of the entire State of Florida’s State budget. Already, taxpayers in upstate and central New York are burdened with some of the highest combined property and sales tax in the country. Every penny that goes for this failing scheme is a penny less for our schools, our roads, care for our seniors, care for people with special needs, and actually the truly needy in our communities.

There is a better way that won’t leave anyone behind. It is vitally important that we begin to repeal ObamaCare so we can provide relief for people across the country and the State.

I am currently reviewing the American Health Care Act, a reform initiative proposed to alleviate the pressures ObamaCare has put on patients, providers, and taxpayers. The proposals in the American Health Care Act will lower premiums by 10 percent, reduce taxes by $883 billion, and reduce the Federal deficit dollars by $337 billion. All are a significant step in the right direction.

However, I will continue to listen to constituents in the 22nd District as the House carefully considers this legislation before we vote on it and any future bills to improve and restore our healthcare system for all.

Currently, if taxpayers must not be saddled with further debt and taxes to pay for lower quality and less access to care. Any new initiative must enshrine the freedom to choose a plan tailored to each person and each family. We also must look at the cost of the competitive marketplace which provides better and broader options for families across all economic sectors. Any new initiative must protect seniors and the truly needy in our society, because we do have an obligation and a desire to help them.

But the status quo is unacceptable. ObamaCare is inefficient, ineffective, and tramples our precious liberties. We, as their duly elected representatives, should do all in our power to patient-centered, cost-conscious, high-quality system of health care in this country. I will continue to fight for every person in my communities.

Mr. FERGUSON. Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from New York for her very candid remarks. As you can see, she touched on many important issues—the unfairness of the system that we have now, but also the importance of protecting our Medicaid safety net.

What have we seen under the Affordable Care Act is that we have seen our safety nets eroded. We are diverting resources away from the people that need them the most—the poor, the elderly, the blind, the disabled, children, and pregnant women—and we are pushing those resources to able-bodied men and women who do have the ability to work.

It is important to recognize that our legislation is probably the largest entitlement reform in a generation. Our legislation puts Medicaid back on a budget for the first time in history. It provides enhanced flexibility to the States to allow them to design effective and financially sound programs to meet their population’s unique needs.

Our plan also ensures that Medicaid prioritizes care for the most vulnerable, who it was originally intended for. We must do this because there are so many Americans, unfortunately, that have to depend on this safety net for their health care.

I understand this. In my hometown, in my dental practice, I treated patients who relied on Medicaid for their healthcare coverage. It was an honor to take care of them and to have very real discussions about their healthcare needs. I understand this vulnerable population very well. It is a part of my practice, and it was truly my pleasure to take care of them. I understand the unique circumstances that cause many of these individuals to be on Medicaid and to need this valuable safety net.

But we have to have an honest conversation about that. We have to be able to provide that safety net. And as we put more and more able-bodied men and women without children on that safety net, it is diverting resources away from those that need it the most. That is not right and that is not the American way. We are fighting to protect and strengthen this Nation’s healthcare safety net.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Kansas (Mr. MARSHALL). Dr. Marshall knows firsthand about healthcare. He was a practicing OB/GYN, a board chairman of a hospital, and he has served our Nation in the United States Army.

Mr. MARSHALL. Mr. Speaker, I am so proud to stand shoulder to shoulder with people like my colleague, Dr. DREW FERGUSON, from Georgia.

I am so proud to stand tonight with the President of the United States. I know that tonight Mr. Trump is speaking loudly on behalf of our healthcare bill. Mr. Trump is ready to take the fight on with us who feel like we need to restore this healthcare forward.

I am not sure how many of you grew up without power steering in your vehicles, but if you know anything about the lack of power steering—and I think back to the tractors I drove growing up. That tractor, you could not turn that wheel until you started the tractor moving—or if you had a Ford truck or a Dodge truck or a Chevy truck and it didn’t have power steering, you couldn’t turn that truck until it started moving.

Mr. Speaker, it is time to get this bill moving. We have to move health care forward. I am so tired of the rhetoric of repeal and replace. I am telling you, my constituents sent me here to fix health care. Forget the political rhetoric. I am ready to fix health care.

I am ready to stand shoulder to shoulder with Republicans, with Democrats, with people down the aisle, across the aisle, and with our President to get this healthcare bill passed.

Unfortunately, ObamaCare has failed. When this first came about, I was so excited. I was hoping that this would be a healthcare bill that would work. But, unfortunately, it is true that this healthcare bill is dying very quickly.

One-third of counties across this country no longer have a provider to take care of the exchange. My own State of Kansas is down to one provider. Today, even more insurance companies are bailing. This bill is dying. Doing nothing is simply not an option, Mr. Speaker.

As I visited with thousands of patients over the last several years and thousands of my constituents, they said there are several things that they thought were important that we save from this healthcare bill, the Affordable Care Act, and I think we have done just that:

Number one, we have protected the preexisting issue conditions; Number two, we are letting children stay on their parents’ health insurance until age 26;

Number three, we are ensuring that women are not charged more for health insurance just because they are a woman; and

Number four, we protected the doughnut hole and kept it closed for Medicare.

So I think we have saved the best things of the Affordable Care Act.

So what have we removed? Mr. Speaker, we removed almost $1 trillion of taxes. This is the most significant entitlement reform in our generation, the most significant entitlement reform since the 1960s started Medicaid.

What can we expect out of this bill? We expect premiums to decrease by 10 percent.
We expect to start reprioritizing Medicaid moneys. I want to make sure, Mr. Speaker, that we prioritize Medicaid moneys for those who need it the most: those with disabilities, children, and the elderly. And I want to make sure these people are at the front of the Medicaid line rather than at the end of the line.

This country cannot afford to give Medicaid to able-bodied Americans. We need to reprioritize the dollars that we have for those that need it the most.

Mr. Speaker, I spent $30 billion last year on Medicaid. We are on our way to spending $1 trillion on Medicaid if we don’t do something soon. This country cannot afford to spend $1 trillion on Medicaid.

Mr. Speaker, these are only the first steps of bending the cost curve downward for health care. We have to do more than just this bill. There are going to be more steps.

I have complete faith in Dr. Tom Price, the former HHS Secretary, that he will be deregulating health care, which is the most regulated business in the country right now. Give Dr. Price 60, 90 days to deregulate medicine and start encouraging competition, and we will start bending this cost curve downward.

We need to empower free markets. We need to empower States to have more local control. We are expanding healthcare savings accounts, but there are more things we need to do. This is just the start of healthcare reform.

This is the first chapter of a new book on healthcare reform. There are many more chapters to go. I cannot wait to improve health care, to improve quality and start driving the cost curve downward.

Mr. Speaker, thank you so much for allowing me the time to stand shoulder to shoulder with our President, as well as with Dr. Drew Ferguson, who is representing the State of Georgia so proudly. I am so proud to be called his freshman colleague.

Mr. FERGUSON. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank Dr. MARSHALL for his strong remarks and pointing out and highlighting several important things.

You know, one of the biggest things that we are fighting for as part of repealing ObamaCare is that we are fighting for our personal freedom. Right now, Americans have the “choice” of purchasing a government-mandated, one-size-fits-all product or paying a government-mandated penalty. In almost a third of all U.S. counties, and many in my home State of Georgia, consumers don’t even have the choice between insurances to purchase. This is not a choice.

With the passage of the American Health Care Act, no longer will the Federal Government mandate that Americans purchase a product that they don’t want, because we believe that individuals should have the freedom to make their own choices. We understand the unique dignity of every human being. This dignity calls for self-determination and personal freedom, and we are fighting for that freedom. It is important.

I want to thank all of my colleagues who have joined me tonight to share with you sentiments more about what we are fighting for.

First off, our legislation promotes personal freedom by eliminating the individual and employer mandates. Purchasing decisions should be left up to the consumer, not the Federal Government. Under our plan, no American is mandated to purchase a product that he or she does not want and cannot afford.

As I have shared, I have personal experience with how important the conversation between the patient and their doctor is. By almost doubling the cap on how much individuals can contribute to their personal health savings accounts each year and expanding where those dollars can be used, our plan puts patients back at the center of the conversation with their doctor, and they remove all of the government bureaucrats from the middle of that conversation.

Health care is personal. It should belong to the patient and their healthcare provider—and no one else. That is where the most important decisions are made.

We are also working to strengthen our safety net to ensure that our vulnerable populations continue to have access to health care. Our plan returns power to the States with the biggest entitlement reform in a generation. Our legislation also protects Americans with preexisting conditions, ensuring that no one is unable to purchase insurance because of an illness.

ObamaCare is a complex tangle of regulations and Federal overreach. With every day that passes, Americans and businesses feel the growing weight of what is called “ObamaCare.” But it is also irresponsible to return to a broken healthcare system that brought us ObamaCare.

Tomorrow, we will take the next step in the open legislative process as my colleagues and I on the Budget Committee do our part to send the American Health Care Act to the floor of the House for a vote. I am excited to take this step, but I want to be clear that this is only one part of repeal and reform. We are doing all that we can, and we are going to continue to push for conservative solutions with this bill. But it is not the final vote that we will take. There are many steps to go.

While it will take time and patience, I made a promise to repeal the Affordable Care Act and improve our healthcare system for all Americans. I am committed to this difficult road of building this healthcare system that puts patients first. The American people deserve the hard work and political will it will take to do this the right way.

Mr. Speaker, I am honored to have been joined by my colleagues tonight and glad to hear their comments, and I know that you have been as well. I want to point out that my colleagues have done an outstanding job tonight, and I believe that they have made some very, very salient points, and articulated reasons why we must step forward and do all that we can to reform our American healthcare system.

We have to control the cost. We have to do the things necessary to put patients back in control. And, Mr. Speaker, I have confidence that we must step forward and all that we can to reform our American healthcare system.

The American people put us here to join them in the fight to fix this broken system. I want to thank all of my colleagues tonight who are working so hard to bring this legislation to the floor of the House.

ROAD TRIP CAMARADERIE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. ARRINGTON). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 1, 2017, the gentleman from Texas—Mr. O’ROURKE—is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. O’ROURKE. Mr. Speaker, it is great to be here tonight. I just traveled with my good friend, colleague, and fellow Texan—and your fellow Texan—Will Hurd, who started with me in San Antonio, Texas, yesterday at 7 a.m., San Antonio time, where we, because of the inclement weather on the East Coast and because of his canceled flight and the possibility that mine might also be canceled, decided to rent a car in San Antonio and drive it here to Washington, D.C., in time for votes this evening that started at 6:30 east-coast standard time.

That road trip in a Chevy Impala, rented in San Antonio, took us from San Antonio to Austin, to San Marcos, to Dallas, to Waco, to Texarkana, and then into Little Rock in Arkansas, over into Tennessee—and into Memphis, Nashville, and Johnson City—and then through Virginia, 36 hours total, 31 of them either driving or at a pit stop fueling up on gas or grabbing a sandwich.

Mr. Speaker, there were really two reasons to do this. One was to make sure that we could get to work and not allow the weather delays or flight cancellations to stop us from doing the jobs that we were elected to do on behalf of the people that we represent, but the other reason was for a Democrat and a Republican to get together, get to know each other, understand the issues before this Congress from each other's perspective, and see if we couldn’t find some common ground.

In addition, because each of us so deeply believes in transparency and accountability, we allowed the people that we represent to join us on that trip. We live-streamed our entire journey on Facebook Live, with thousands of people from all over this country submitting their questions, their comments, their suggestions, their advice, their guidance, including where to get the best fried chicken in Memphis, Tennessee—which turns out to be Gibson’s Donuts—where Mr. Hurd from Texas and I had a chance to meet some
of the folks who make those doughnuts and some of the folks who eat them. It was one of the best parts of the trip.

Mr. Speaker, I am just so grateful that there is an opportunity, despite the distance between our two parties at times and despite the imperative to raise money, to campaign, to spend time away from each other, understandably, with our families or listening to constituents back in our home districts. Mr. Speaker, I am so grateful that we had a chance to spend some time together getting to know each other, getting to talk about the issues that are important to the people we represent and to this country at large.

Mr. Speaker, at this time, I yield to my friend from Texas (Mr. HURD), the gentleman who represents the 23rd Congressional District.

Mr. HURD. I would like to thank the Speaker, and I thank the gentleman from Texas for yielding.

One of my favorite quotes is from Teddy Roosevelt. He says: ‘Far better it is to dare mighty things, to win glorious triumphs, even though checked by failure, than to take rank with those who neither enjoy much nor suffer much, because they live in the gray twilight that knows neither victory nor defeat.’

There were a number of issues that I had a great 31 hours—I guess, 36 hours, 31 of it being in a vehicle. It was fun, and it was like going on a road trip with my buddy having a good time, but it was more than that.

Actually, I think I am going through separation anxiety. I want to know what Sarah is doing right now, or Carol. They were with us last late night in those last 3 hours of our trip when we were tired and hungry and ready to go to sleep. But these are folks that we didn’t know—and I didn’t even know what part of the country they were in—that kept us going, and it was because of their excitement about what we were doing that kept us going.

□ 2100

We talked many times about how this was an opportunity. In the press, in the media, we focus on the things that divide us, not the things that unite us; and it was a great opportunity to show that there is a lot between Republicans and Democrats that brings us together. It was great. We didn’t always agree, and we show that we could disagree without being disagreeable.

My heart was warmed. At the beginning of the trip, some of the responses to our trip were mean-spirited. By the end of it, I think people understood and appreciated that there is an opportunity, despite of what is even more important and necessary and, that is, getting to know each other, being able to work with each other, and solving the problems that are in the heart and mind of the American people.

I got to learn a lot about the gentleman from Texas (Mr. O’ROURKE), a person I would like to be able to call my friend, a battle buddy now, having spent so much time in a Chevy Impala with him. I still question why he positions himself so close to the steering wheel when he drives, but I think that is one of the things that another trip may have to help figure out.

Really, to all of those who watched, listened, shared, and read comments, thank you. Thank you because this was a truly wonderful experience and it made the entire trip worth it.

We made it on time. We actually got here early, which we weren’t expecting, and that is because of my good friend from the great State of Texas (Mr. O’ROURKE) discipline and tenacity going from point A to point B. We were able to do our job today, and we just want to say thank you to those who helped us do that.

Mr. O’ROURKE. Mr. Speaker, our journey began after picking up the car and the rental at the airport, having a cup of coffee, having lunch together. As my friend from Texas (Mr. HURD) says that too often we are in our own corners. And on our side, maybe that is in meetings about how to message those good things that we want to do for the American public or outside of this Chamber and away from our official responsibilities raising the resources in order to get reelected or to get our colleagues from the same party reelected.

Those are understandable and, yes, I think, necessary things to do, but sometimes we do them to the exclusion of what is even more important and necessary and, that is, getting to know each other, being able to work with each other, and solving the problems that are in the heart and mind of the American people.

For whatever it is worth, 36 hours later, I feel like I have the opportunity to do that with my friend from Texas. What I would like him to do, if he would, is to share with us and with you. Mr. Speaker, some of those things that we talked about were the takeaways or the conclusions or the things that we learned and shared.

I am going to tell you, at the outset, to set your expectations, we didn’t solve all of these problems. And we didn’t even come necessarily to common agreement on all of the big issues, but we definitely heard each other’s perspective. In some cases, we definitely moved a little bit in the positions that we started with. And I will say that I learned a lot.

I learned a lot about Mr. HURD, his background, his perspective, getting to talk to his dad, his sister, and his brother who all called in while we were traveling across the country. But I learned about those things that shape his views on the issues that he and I both care about and why, in some cases, he sees a different means to get to the same goal that I want to get to and that the people I represent want to get to.

There were a number of issues that we tackled and discussed.

I yield to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. HURD) to share some of those
So we have to, if we are going to solve these big problems, we have to do it together, plain and simple. The American people want us to do it together. And I think we get a taste of that over the last 36 hours, and it is something that will stick with me, and it is something that will bring me forward to working with the gentleman from Texas (Mr. O’ROURKE) from the great city of El Paso in the next days and weeks.

One of the things that I learned from the gentleman from Texas (Mr. O’ROURKE) was he is very good at thanking people. He is very good at thanking his team. He is very good at thanking people that have helped us, and I want to thank our teams.

The folks that make up the gentleman’s staff and my team, they stayed up longer than we did. They had to deal probably with more pressures than what we did. Rachel Holland in my office, Nancy Pack, Stoney Burke, Matthew Bumper, all the members of my team. Callie Strock, I know, in her new position, worked really hard to get things done. Chris Malen is one of the new members of my team. Austin Agrella did so much. They were excited to be a team together. More stores is someone who was so excited, and I think the first person who we saw when we got back. These were the people who enabled us to take away these lessons over the last 36 hours.

To those who watched, shared, asked questions, the Americans who tuning in and they had to tune out because they had to go to work, take care of a kid, get some sleep, or they were just bored by what we were doing. But they understood the premise was that we were not able or, in the gentleman from Texas’ (Mr. Hurd) case, his flight was canceled into Washington, D.C., because of the weather—I feared that mine might as well be—and that we rented a car and that we had to be in Washington, D.C., after leaving San Antonio at 7:00 a.m., by 6:30 p.m. on a Monday in order to vote and represent the interest of our constituency. If we are to be honest with each other, it was touch and go for a little while. We ran into a two-hour pileup just south of Waco when we were still in Texas.

My friend from Texas (Mr. Hurd) has a penchant for getting to know a town and wanting to spend some time in a coffee shop talking to the owner about the art of making coffee and the philosophy of coffee shops. It is a fascinating conversation to be sure, but it added precious minutes that I and many of our viewers felt we could not spare.

Yet, working together, balancing my friend’s natural curiosity and interests in the communities in which we were traveling, and my desperation to get to Washington, D.C., in time to cast our votes, we were able to arrive in 36 hours. Thirty-six hours total travel time we were able to arrive with almost 30 minutes to spare, which if you consider the context, the amount of hours, the 1,600-plus miles traveled, that is a remarkable feat.

Look, I don’t want to take too much from this, but I think we might be able to find some encouragement that two Members working their way across the largest State in the lower 48, and then through Arkansas, Tennessee, and Virginia, were able together to make decisions necessary to ensure that we were able to get to our destination in time, get our job done, and represent those people that we serve.

That, for some reason, Mr. Speaker, was interesting to people. We had thousands watching us, newspapers following, broadcast stations carrying the feed from our car.

Why? Because—and it shouldn’t be this way—this is such an unusual event for a Republican and Democrat, not to file a bill together—that happens fairly often and I am grateful for that—but to sit down and enjoy each other’s company, learn from each other, and take on the challenge of driving these 1,600 miles together.

I did not know my friend from Texas as well as I do now. 36 hours later, and I didn’t know how this was going to turn out in any way.

Were we going to be able to stand each other’s company? Were we going to be able to take each other’s driving? Were we going to be able to make the
congress. I think this is a chance to strengthen the institution, and I am grateful for the opportunity to serve here.

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

**LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

- Mr. MARINO (at the request of Mr. McCARTHY) for today on account of in-clement weather.
- Mr. PAYNE (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today on account of medical condition.
- Mr. RUSH (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today through March 24 on account of death in the family.

**ADJOURNMENT**

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

The motion was agreed to; accordingly (at 9 o’clock and 21 minutes p.m.), under its previous order, the House adjourned until tomorrow, Thursday, March 16, 2017, at 10 a.m. for morning-hour debate.

**REPORTS OF COMMITTEES ON PUBLIC BILLS AND RESOLUTIONS**

Under clause 2 of rule XIII, reports of committees were delivered to the Clerk for printing and reference to the proper calendar, as follows:

Mr. McCaul: Committee on Homeland Security, H.R. 1309. A bill to streamline the office and term of the Administrator of the Transportation Security Administration, and for other purposes (Rept. 115-37). Referred to the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union.

Mr. Harper: Committee on House Administration, House Resolution 173. Resolution providing for the expenses of certain Representatives in the One Hundred Fifteenth Congress (Rept. 115-38). Referred to the House Calendar.

Mr. BUCK: Committee on Rules. House Resolution 198. Resolution providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 1259) to amend title 38, United States Code, to provide for the removal or demotion of employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs based on performance or misconduct, and for other purposes; providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 1318) to amend title 38, United States Code, to clarify the conditions under which certain persons may be treated as adjudicated mentally incompetent for certain purposes (Rept. 115-39). Referred to the House Calendar.

**PUBLIC BILLS AND RESOLUTIONS**

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

- By Mr. Tipton (for himself, Mr. MULLIN, Mr. COLE, Mr. CARDENAS, and Ms. Michelle Lujan Grisham of New Mexico): H.R. 1528. A bill to amend the Higher Education Act of 1965 in order to fulfill the Federal mandate to provide educational opportunities for Native American Indians; to the Committee on Education and the Workforce.
- By Mr. Sanford (for himself and Mr. MEADOWS): H.R. 1529. A bill to prohibit the Secretary of the Treasury from using extraordinary measures to prevent the Government from reaching the statutory debt limit, or using extraordinary measures once such limit has been reached, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Ways and Means.
- By Mr. Issa (for himself, Mr. Walker, Mr. Royce of California, Mrs. CAROLYN B. MALONEY of New York, Mr. Hultgren, Mr. Franks of Arizona, Mr. Pittenger, Mr. Sanford, Mr. Babin, Ms. Brownley of California, Mr. Perugini, Mr. Moullin, Mr. Quigley, Mr. Petri of Texas, Mr. Schweikert, Mr. Polis, Mr. Delaney, Mr. King of New York, Mr. Ross, Mrs. Copley, Mr. Arrabito, Mrs. Stefanik, Mr. Hurd, Mr. Walberg, Mr. Bridenstine, Mr. Wilson of South Carolina, Mr. McHenry, Mr. Ryan, and Mr. Johnson): H.R. 1530. A bill to amend securities, commodities, and banking laws to make the information reported to financial regulatory agencies electronically searchable, to enable RegTech applications, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Financial Services, and in addition to the Committee on Agriculture, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.
- By Mr. Blumenauer (for himself, Mr. Beyer, Mr. Cartwright, Ms. Judy Chu of California, Mr. Connelly, Mr. Cooper, Mr. Grassley, Mr. Gutiérrez, Ms. Norton, Mr. Huffman, Mr. Kratinger, Mr. McHenry, Mr. Pallone, Mr. Pascrell, and Mr. Pocan): H.R. 1531. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide for the use of the Disaster Assistance Reserve Fund for the purposes for which they were collected, to ensure adequate resources for the cleanup of hazardous substances under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act of 1980, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Ways and Means, and in addition to the Committees on Agriculture, and in addition to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, Energy and Commerce, and the Budget, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.
- By Mr. Byrne (for himself, Mr. Gartz, Mr. Adherholt, Mr. Brooks of Alabama, Ms. Slaughter of North Carolina, and Mr. Rogers of Alabama): H.R. 1532. A bill to reaffirm that certain land has been taken into trust for the benefit of the Peabody Band of Creek Indians, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Natural Resources.
- By Ms. Clarke of New York: H.R. 1533. A bill to provide for further comprehensive research at the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke on unruptured intracranial aneurysms; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.
- By Mrs. Dingell: H.R. 1534. A bill to establish a program that provides disabilities-related subsidy or coupon that may be applied towards obtaining broadband Internet access service,
and for other purposes; to the Committee on Education and the Workforce, and in addition to the Committee on Energy and Commerce, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Mr. KEENAN of Kansas (for himself and Mr. ENGLISH):
H.R. 1554. A bill to restore the integrity of the Fifth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary, in addition to the Committees on Energy and Commerce, Ways and Means, and Financial Services, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Mr. REICHERT (for himself, Mr. POCAN, Mr. BARLETTA, Mr. KING of New York, Mr. PLATT, Mr. CARBONI, Mr. HUYSEN, Mr. COURTNEY, Mr. GOODLATT, Ms. ESZTY, and Mrs. WALORSKI):
H.R. 1556. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to increase and make permanent the exclusion for benefits provided to volunteer firefighters and emergency medical responders; to the Committee on Ways and Means.

By Mr. RICE of South Carolina (for himself, Mr. ROYCE of California, Mr. DUNCAN of South Carolina, Mr. MARCHANT, Mr. DAVID SCOTT of Georgia, Ms. SINEMA, Mr. VEASEY, Mr. ALLEN, Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia, Ms. ROBINSON of North Carolina, Mr. ROGERS of Alabama, Mr. BYRNE, Mr. BISHOP of Georgia, Ms. NAPOLITANO, Mr. CLYBURN, Mr. JUNGLES, Ms. SHEWELL of Alabama, Mr. PAULSEN, Mr. SANFORD, Mr. SIMPSON, Mr. GOWDY, and Mr. FERGUSON):
H.R. 1557. A bill to extend the National Revestment Act of 1996 to modify the credit for production from advanced nuclear power facilities; to the Committee on Ways and Means.

By Mr. ROSS:
H.R. 1552. A bill to preserve open competition and Federal Government authority to regulate the labor relations of Federal Government contractors on Federal and federally funded construction projects, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

By Mr. RYAN of Ohio:
H.R. 1553. A bill to award a Congressional Gold Medal to all United States nationals who voluntarily joined the Canadian and British armed forces and their supporting entities during World War I, to recognize their dedicated service; to the Committee on Financial Services, and in addition to the Committee on House Administration, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Mr. WALBERG (for himself, Mrs. DINGELL, and Mr. MOONEY of West Virginia):
H.R. 1554. A bill to include information concerning a patient's opioid addiction in certain medical records; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

By Mr. WALBERG (for himself, Mr. ELLISON, Mr. MCCLINTOCK, and Mr. CARDINAS):
H.R. 1555. A bill to restore the integrity of the Fifth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary, in addition to the Committees on Energy and Commerce, Ways and Means, and Financial Services, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Mr. BANKS of Indiana (for himself and Mr. JONES):
H.J. Res. 89. A joint resolution to authorize the use of United States Armed Forces against al-Qaeda, the Taliban, the Islamic State and al-Shabaab, associated organizations, and associated forces; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

By Mr. GOODLATTIE (for himself, Mr. BEATY, Mr. BRAT, Mr. COMSTOCK, Mr. CONNOLLY, Mr. GARRETT, Mr. GRIPFFITH, Mr. MCCaHIN, Mr. SCOTT of Virginia, Mr. TAYLOR, and Mr. WILKES):
H. Con. Res. 33. Concurrent resolution designating the George C. Marshall Museum and
CONSTITUTIONAL AUTHORITY STATEMENT

Pursuant to clause 7 of rule XII of the Rules of the House of Representatives, the following statements are submitted to describe the specific powers granted to Congress in the Constitution to enact the accompanying bill or joint resolution.

By Mr. TIPTON:
H.R. 1539.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
Article I, Section 8, Clause 18

By Mr. SANFORD:
H.R. 1538.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
H.R. 1534.

By Ms. CLARKE of New York:
H.R. 1535.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
H.R. 1531.

By Mr. JOHNSON of Ohio:
H.R. 1545.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

By Mr. WALBERG:
H.R. 1546.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

By Mr. RYAN of Ohio:
H.R. 1553.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

By Mr. BURKE:
H.R. 1554.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

By Mr. LOEBERSACK:
H.R. 1556.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

By Mr. MCNALLY:
H.R. 1547.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

By Mr. WALBERG:
H.R. 1555.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Article I, Section 8, Clause 9 of the Constitution of the United States; the power to constitute Tribunals inferior to the Supreme Court.

The purpose of the bill is to amend the civil asset forfeiture procedures and Section 8, Clause 9 extends to Congress the power to create inferior courts and to make rules of procedure and evidence for such courts.

By Mr. BANKS of Indiana:
H.J. Res. 69.

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

Article I, Section 8, Clause 11, the Congress has the power to declare war.

ADDITIONAL SPONSORS

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

H.R. 30: Mr. Franks of Arizona.
H.R. 38: Mr. Long.
H.R. 249: Mr. Garrett.
H.R. 256: Mr. Allen.
H.R. 273: Mr. Smucker.
H.R. 303: Mr. Courtney and Mr. Bishop of Michigan.
H.R. 305: Ms. Plaskett.
H.R. 354: Mr. Goodlatte and Mr. Ferguson.
H.R. 371: Ms. Sewell of Alabama and Mr. Espaillat.
H.R. 391: Mr. Hensarling.
H.R. 392: Mr. Hensarling, Mr. Allen of Green of Texas, Mrs. Davis of California, Mr. Bacon, Mr. Royce of California, Mr. Hill, Mr. King of California, Mr. Bera, and Mrs. Carolyn B. Maloney of New York.
H.R. 426: Mr. Dent.
H.R. 427: Ms. Slaughter.
H.R. 490: Mr. Mrazowski.
H.R. 502: Ms. Barragan, Mr. Cummings, Mr. DeFazio, Miss Rice of New York, Mr. Lipinski, Mr. Neal, Mr. Himes, Mr. Schrader, and Ms. Speier.
H.R. 613: Ms. Visclosky.
H.R. 632: Mr. Royce of California, Mr. Meeks, Mrs. Napolitano, and Mr. Cartwright.
H.R. 644: Mr. Goodlatte, Mr. Messer, Mr. Bucshon, and Mr. Smucker.
H.R. 672: Mr. Gibbs and Mr. Chabot.
H.R. 721: Mr. Poliquin, Mr. King of Iowa, Mr. Harris, and Mr. Marshall.
H.R. 739: Mr. Evans, Ms. Judy Chu of California, Ms. Wasserman Schultz, and Mr. Ellison.
H.R. 747: Mr. Valadao, Mr. Sanford, Mr. Williams, and Ms. Stefanik.
H.R. 757: Mrs. Comstock and Mr. Sherman.

CONGRESSIONAL EARMARKS, LIMITED TAX BENEFITS, OR LIMITED TARIFF BENEFITS

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

The amendment to be offered by Chairman David P. Roe, or a designee, to H.R. 1259, the VA Accountability First Act of 2017, does not contain any congressional earmarks, limited tax benefits, or limited tariff benefits as defined in clause 9 of rule XXI.

The amendment to be offered by Representative Brad Wenstrup, or a designee, to H.R. 1367, to improve the authority of the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to hire and retain physicians and other employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes, does not contain any congressional earmarks, limited tax benefits, or limited tariff benefits as defined in clause 9 of rule XXI.
The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. 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.

Our Father in Heaven, clothed in dazzling splendor, we bow our hearts in Your presence. You are our helper, our defender, and our refuge. You are our hope for years to come.

Strengthen our Senators for today’s challenges. Direct their thoughts, words, and actions, enabling them to follow Your leading. Use them to transform dark yesterdays into bright tomorrows. Lord, give them peace during turbulent moments and a faith that will not shrink under pressure. Make their words fountains of life. Help them to understand what really matters so that they may live pure and blameless lives that glorify You.

We pray in Your marvelous 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.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PAUL). The majority leader is recognized.

NOMINATIONS

Mr. MCCONNELL, Mr. President, a few short months ago, our colleague Dan Coats retired from his post here in the Senate. At that time, I had a chance to reflect on our friend’s impressive career, and I noted that we could expect him to rise to the occasion if called to serve his country once again. Well, that is exactly what Dan Coats is doing now. This time he will be taking on the role of National Intelligence. It goes without saying that the President made an excellent choice in selecting Dan for this job.

Our former colleague from Indiana has served his Nation in the Army, in the House of Representatives, as the Ambassador to Germany, and, of course, he has also served his State here in the Senate where he was a leader on issues regarding our national security and intelligence community. I look forward to the Senate confirming him today.

We are also working toward an opportunity to support another of the President’s exceptional selections, LTG H.R. McMaster, his choice for National Security Advisor. The Chairman of the Armed Services Committee recently called him “an outstanding choice” and “a man of genuine intellect, character, and ability.”

He will now be tasked with adapting his vast experience to the responsibility of coordinating our national security policy at a time when our Nation faces myriad threats and challenges. I know each of us appreciates the willingness of both former Senator Coats and General McMaster to take on these challenging positions and their continued efforts to keep our country safe.

Now onto another well-qualified nominee we will advance soon. Next week Judge Neil Gorsuch will come before the Senate Judiciary Committee for the hearing on his nomination to the Supreme Court. Senators from both sides of the aisle will have an opportunity to hear from him directly, ask questions, and listen to the testimony of others who are familiar with his professional background, abilities, and character.

I know we are all looking forward to his hearing and to learning even more about this exceptional nominee, but here is what we already know about Judge Gorsuch. The American Bar Association is an organization that the Democratic leader and former Democratic chairman of the Judiciary Committee have deemed the gold standard for evaluating judicial nominations. What have they done? They awarded him their highest rating: unanimously “well qualified.”

Leading liberal lawyers like former President Obama’s Acting Solicitor General, Neal Katyal, and former President Obama’s legal mentor, Professor Laurence Tribe, sing his praises. Mr. Katyal says Judge Gorsuch is “an extraordinary judge and man” whose “years on the bench reveal a commitment to judicial independence.” Professor Tribe says that Judge Gorsuch “is a brilliant, terrific guy who would do the Court’s work with distinction.”

To that list, you can now add former law partner and longtime Democrat, David Frederick, who is a board member of the liberal American Constitution Society. Other board members of the ACS include people like former Obama Solicitor General Donald Verrilli, and left-leaning law professor Erwin Chemerinsky, among others.

The ACS is anything but a conservative group. Yet now, even one of its own board members has backed Judge Gorsuch’s nomination. In an op-ed recently published by the Washington Post, Mr. Frederick called Judge Gorsuch “brilliant, diligent, open-minded and thoughtful.” He went on to say:

Gorsuch’s approach to resolving legal problems as a lawyer and judge embodies a reverence for our country’s values and legal system. The facts developed in a case matter to him; the legal rules established by legislatures and through precedent deserve deep respect; and the importance of treating litigants, counsel and colleagues with civility is deeply ingrained in him.

• This “bullet” symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.
Mr. Frederick, who practiced law with Judge Gorsuch, states:

Over the course of his career, [Neil Gorsuch] has represented both plaintiffs and defendants. He has defended large corporations, but also sued them. He has advocated for the Chamber of Commerce, but also filed (and prevailed with) class actions on behalf of consumers. We should applaud such independence as sound and spirit in Supreme Court nominees.

And Mr. Frederick observes:

As a judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 10th Circuit, Gorsuch has not been the reflexive, hard-edged conservative as many depict him, but rather, has ruled for plaintiffs and for defendants; for those accused of crimes as well as for law enforcement; for those who entered the country illegally; and for those harmed by environmental damage.

As this self-proclaimed “longtime supporter of Democratic candidates and progressive causes” points out, Judge Gorsuch will be the type of Justice each of us should want on the High Court. And though he knows he may not always agree with Neil Gorsuch’s rulings as a jurist on the Supreme Court, Frederick says we need judges like Neil Gorsuch “who approach cases with fairness and intellectual rigor, and who care about precedent and the legitimacy of judges.”

The bottom line is this: “The Senate should confirm him because there is no principled reason to vote no.” Let me repeat that. “The Senate should confirm [Gorsuch],” Frederick said, “because there is no principled reason to vote no.” This is a board member of the left’s flagship legal group in America, and on this point, he happens to be absolutely right.

So as colleagues on both sides will continue to find at next week’s hearings, “there is [simply] no principled reason to vote no” when Judge Gorsuch’s nomination comes before the full Senate.

REPUBLICAN HEALTHCARE BILL

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, one final matter: Last year, President Obama said his signature healthcare law had “real problems.” He recognized that there are “people who are hurt by premium increases or a lack of competition and choice.” President Clinton called it “the craziest thing in the world.” And the Democratic Governor of Minnesota said that “the Affordable Care Act is a bigger affordability monster for increasing numbers of people.” So even Democrats recognize that the ObamaCare status quo is unacceptable.

Costs have continued to climb higher. Insurers have dropped out of the marketplace. ObamaCare is a disaster, and it is going to keep getting worse unless we act. My home State of Kentucky, like so many others across the country, just can’t take it anymore.

Republicans promised the American people relief from ObamaCare, and we are working hard to keep that promise. The legislation the House introduced to repeal and replace is already moving through the committee process.

Here are some things the Congressional Budget Office said about it: It will lower premiums by double digits. It will help stabilize the healthcare market. It will significantly reduce taxes on families and lower the deficit by hundreds of billions of dollars as well. Those are the things we heard from CBO.

Instead of forcing Americans to buy something they may not want as ObamaCare does, it will actually give Americans the freedom to choose the type of coverage that is right for them. I appreciate the hard work the House is doing to advance this legislation. We look forward to receiving it here in the Senate. When we do, I expect to consider amendments as part of our robust debate.

But remember, this bill is only one part of a three-pronged strategy to help bring relief to the American people. The first prong is this bill, the second prong is executive action, and the third prong is legislation to reform the healthcare market and make it more competitive for consumers.

The one thing we shouldn’t do is nothing. ObamaCare is a failed law that is hurting the middle class. Maintaining the current ObamaCare status quo is really not a good option. We are fulfilling our promise to the American people, and I urge all of our colleagues to join us.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

TRUMPCARE

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, first, on the Republican healthcare bill, my good friend the Republican leader says that there should be amendments on the floor. On such an important matter, it would be astounding if we didn’t have committee hearings and committee votes on such a bill. I know there is an attempt to rush it through, but if it is such a fine product, it ought to withstand the scrutiny of hearings and of markups in the various committees. To rush it through is an indication that the sponsors of the bill, the supporters of the bill, are not very proud of it, and that is a theme that has continued with the executive branch and the Speaker of the House.

As we know, CBO estimated that it would cause 24 million fewer Americans to have health insurance—I don’t hear the Republican leader mention that. It has continued with the executive branch and the Speaker of the House.

We have heard from the other side of the aisle that access is what is important. No, it isn’t. Access doesn’t get you healthcare. You have to walk into a Lamborghini dealer and look at a Lamborghini, but I can’t afford one. That is true of average Americans, and that is true of healthcare as well. Access doesn’t get you healthcare, and it is a far cry from what people need.

Because the bill helps so many fewer Americans, because the bill seems to be a tax break for the wealthy above all, it is having its troubles, and nobody seems to really want to buy it. That is why Republicans on both ends of Pennsylvania Avenue don’t want their name near any end of the bill.

As I said yesterday, Speaker Ryan doesn’t want to call it TrumpCare, even though he wrote the bill. President Trump doesn’t want to call it TrumpCare. If it is so good, why doesn’t any Republican want to put their name on it? It is Abbott and Costello: You put your name on it; no, you put your name on it. That is not an indication that people are proud of this legislation, and it is particularly ironic with President Trump. President Trump slaps his name on buildings, ties, steaks, hotels, and golf clubs, but not this healthcare bill, that he supports in his daily tweets. He has spent 30 years of his business career trying to put his name on nearly everything, but not this healthcare bill, even though he is inviting wary Republicans to the White House to try and see if it is the right thing to do.

Today his Vice President is here on the Hill lobbying recalcitrant Republicans. He has dispatched HHS Secretary Price, the person he picked, to lobby for the bill. His own Press Secretary says the White House is in full sale mode. Make no mistake about it, this is the President’s bill, and he should be straight with the American people about it. We call it TrumpCare. That is what it is.

NOMINATION OF NEIL GORSUCH

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, next week the Senate Judiciary Committee will begin its hearing on President Trump’s nomination to the Supreme Court, Judge Neil Gorsuch. As I have said before, we in the Senate have a special responsibility to judge whether this nominee, Judge Gorsuch, will tip the scales on the Court in favor of Big Business and powerful special interests over average Americans. The Court has steadily been moving in that direction under Justice Roberts.

My colleague SHELDON WHITEHOUSE and the ranking member of the Judiciary Committee, SENATOR wichtig, have documented in 5-to-4 cases that the Court, over the last decade, has almost always tilted in favor of the powerful and against those who are average Americans. In fact, the Court has said that Justice Roberts has been judged the most pro-corporate Court since World War II. So this country can ill afford another Justice who will side with the powerful.

Judge Gorsuch may act like a studied, neutral judge, but his record suggests he actually has a rightwing, pro-corporate, special interest agenda. In today’s New York Times, this morning we learned that Judge Gorsuch’s career
has been nurtured by a far-right billionaire and corporate titan, Philip Anschutz, who has gone out of his way to fund hard-right judicial causes, including the Federalist Society and the Heritage Foundation. President Trump outsourced his choice of a Supreme Court justice to these organizations, and they recommended Judge Gorsuch.

Neil Gorsuch represented Mr. Anschutz’s firm as a young lawyer. He has earned his favor and patronage ever since. It was Anschutz’s top lawyer, a recommendation who represented Anschutz here on the Hill, who lobbied for Gorsuch to get the spot on the Federal appeals court. Judge Gorsuch has been partners in an LLC with two of Anschutz’s top advisers, building a vacation home together. Of course, there is no problem with that. Anyone can be partners. But it goes to show the longstanding intertwined ties between one of the leading advocates for a hard-right pro-corporate agenda, Mr. Anschutz, and Judge Gorsuch. The long history of ties between Judge Gorsuch and Mr. Anschutz suggests a judge whose fundamental economic and judicial philosophy is favorable to the wealthy and the powerful and the far right.

Judge Gorsuch may sometimes express sympathy for the less powerful verbally, but when it comes to rule, when the chips are down, he has far too often sided with the powerful few Americans trying to get a fair shake. He has repeatedly sided with insurance companies that want to deny disability benefits to employees. In employment discrimination cases, Bloomberg found he sided with employers 66 percent of the time. In one of the few cases where he sided with an employee, it was a Republican woman who alleged she was fired for being a conservative.

On money in politics, the scourge, the poison of our political system—disclosed dark money—Judge Gorsuch seems to be in the same company as Justices Thomas and Scalia, willing to restrict the most commonsense contribution limits.

Judge Gorsuch’s record demonstrates he prefers CEOs over citizens, executives over employees, corporations over consumers.

Later this morning, I will be meeting with people who have personally experienced or who have a real-life implication of Judge Gorsuch’s decisions: Alphonso Maddin from Michigan, a truckdriver who was fired because he left his vehicle when freezing; Patricia Caplinger from Missouri, who sued Medtronic after being injured by a medical device that was implanted in a non-FDA-approved manner; David Hwang and Katherine Hwang, whose late mother, Proffer Grace Hwang, sued Kansas State University after being fired following a 6-month leave for cancer and requesting to work remotely because of an flu epidemic. Their stories illuminate the real-world effects of a judge who sides with Anschutz-like interests over everyday Americans like Mr. Maddin, Ms. Caplinger, and the Hwang family.

My colleague, my friend, the Republican leader, said there is no principled reason to be opposed to Judge Gorsuch. Yes, if your principles say the law should be used time and time again to support powerful corporate interests over average Americans, maybe there is no principled objection. But for most Americans, the overwhelming majority of whom want the Court to bring justice to the people who have less power—and the Court is their last resort—there are plenty of principled reasons to vote against Judge Gorsuch.

Because of starkly unequal concentrations of wealth and ever-increasing corporate power, aided and abetted by decisions like Citizens United, because they have skewed the playing field even more decisively to special interests and away from the individual citizen, we need a nominee who would reverse that trend, not exacerbate it.

Donald Trump campaigned on helping average people. His nominee sidesteps with corporate interests against average people like Mr. Maddin, Ms. Caplinger, and the Hwang family over and over again. From all indications, Judge Gorsuch is not the kind of nominee who has sympathy and helps average Americans when it comes to judging and the law.

I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. 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 legislative clerk read the nomination of Daniel Coats, of Indiana, to be Director of National Intelligence.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the time until 10 a.m. will be equally divided in the usual form.

The Senator from North Carolina. Mr. BURR. Mr. President, I rise today to support Senator Dan Coats, our former colleague and a friend, as the President’s nominee to be the next Director of National Intelligence. Dan Coats has been asked to lead our Nation’s intelligence community of over 100,000 individuals during, I think, the most profound period of threats and change. Let me say to my colleagues, it is a job that Dan Coats is well prepared to do.

After graduating from Wheaton College, Dan served honorably in the U.S. Army before serving the State of Indiana as a House Member, as a Senator, and for not only Indiana but this country as Ambassador to Germany.

While in the Senate, Dan was engaged and was a valuable member of the Senate Intelligence Committee. He dedicated countless hours to understanding and overseeing the intelligence community—in essence, one of 15 people who certified for 85 others and for the American people that we do everything we can to keep America safe but we do it within the parameters of the rule of law. He is well versed in the operational capabilities and authorities. He understands the threat we are facing at home and abroad. He understands that we need to improve our ability to collect against our adversaries, and Dan will be an ardent advocate for intelligence collection but, again, never jeopardizing that line of what is legal and what is not.

Dan’s legislative experience also translates to his understanding and his appreciation of the need for transparency with the appropriate oversight committees and, more importantly, with the Congress and the American people.

Dan’s intellect, his judgment, his honorable service, and his commitment to the workforce make him a natural fit as Director of National Intelligence. I have absolute trust that he will lead the community with integrity, and he will ensure that the intelligence enterprise operates lawfully, ethically, and morally.

So today I rise in this austere body to urge my colleagues to support the President’s nominee for Director of National Intelligence in March. We have gone from January until March with one of the most important posts of this administration unfilled. Congress must act quickly, and it is my hope that Members, before the end of this day, will make sure we have a Director of National Intelligence in place.

I urge my colleagues to support this nomination.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

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 Daniel Coats, of Indiana, to be Director of National Intelligence.


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 Daniel Coats, of Indiana, to be Director of National Intelligence, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

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

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

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 88, nays 11, as follows:

[Roll Call Vote No. 88 Ex.]

YEAS—88

Alexander
Barasso
Bennet
Blumenthal
Blunt
Boosman
Brown
Burr
Cassell
Capito
Cardin
Carroll
Casidy
Coats
Cochran
Collins
Coons
Cotton
Corry
Coryn
Cortez Masto
Cortez Masto
Cromer
Cruz
Cwynar
Daines
Dankley
Durbin
Enzi
Ernst
Feinstein
Fischler
Fischer
Blair
Booker
Buckworth
Gillibrand

NAYS—11

Baldwin
Booher
Brown
Duckworth
Gilibrand

NOT VOTING—1

Isakson

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 88, the nays are 11.

The motion is agreed to.

The Senate adjourned.

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, first of all, I thank my friend the Senator from Texas for giving me the courtesy of letting me get in my comments about the nomination of former Senator Dan Coats to hold this position recommended by the 9/11 Commission and established by the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004.

Dan Coats is a friend of mine and many in this body. He represented Indiana in both the U.S. House and for separate terms in the U.S. Senate. He was also U.S. Ambassador to Germany from 2001 to 2005. As mentioned, for 6 years I served with the nominee, Mr. Sen — the Select Committee on Intelligence. I have always found Dan to be fair-minded and know him to be an advocate for strong oversight of the intelligence community. He believes in the need for intelligence that is timely, of the highest quality, and free of political interference.

During my private meeting with him, as well as during his confirmation hearing, Senator Coats committed to find and follow the truth, regardless of where it leads, agreeing that his primary job will be “to speak truth to power,” to the President, to policy and military leaders, and to Members of Congress. I know these are traits he will continue to employ if confirmed as the next Director of National Intelligence.

During James Clapper’s most recent tenure as the DNI, in 6 years he put in place some fundamental changes in how the Intelligence community operates. He reoriented the Office of the DNI to focus on intelligence integration with an emphasis on mission. He often was willing to roll up his sleeves and take on the hard challenges of trying to get the intel community to operate on the same IT backbone systems. If confirmed, I have encouraged Senator Coats to build upon former Director Clapper’s efforts, which are critical to ensuring that policymakers, warfighters, law enforcement, and national security officers receive intelligence products that are timely, relevant, and objective.

Of course, if confirmed, Director Coats will take on the job as the Nation’s chief intelligence officer, leading the intelligence community during a very difficult time because unfortunately this President, along with his closest advisers, has repeatedly and unfairly disparaged the professionalism and actions of the Nation’s intelligence professionals. These are men and women who maintain the highest standards of professionalism and integrity. They anonymously sacrifice for the country, often in the face of grave personal danger.

As DNI, Senator Coats is committed to defending the values and integrity of the men and women of the intelligence community, even when the White House may not like to hear it.

Another challenge Senator Coats will face is that the job is to effectively support the Senate Intelligence Committee’s ongoing investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 Presidential election. Last week, I went to CIA headquarters in Langley, along with a number of other Members of Congress, on the beginning of the raw intelligence that led the community to conclude that Russia massively interfered in our last Presidential election. Both in public and in private, Senator Coats has promised he will support the committee’s investigation to the fullest. We will hold him to that commitment.

On this topic, I want to reiterate on the Senate floor what I have already said numerous times. This investigation is not about being a Democrat or Republican nor about retiligating the 2016 election. The investigation is about upholding the core values and sanctity of democracy that all American should fear. It is all about holding Russia accountable for their improper interference in our elections and arming our allies—one of which has an election today—with information about the means employed by Russia in our elections so they can use that information to protect the integrity of their own electoral process.

We will work to ensure that this critical investigation is done right, done in a bipartisan manner, free of any political interference, and with a clear voice that the Senate Intelligence Committee is unable to keep up these commitments, I am prepared to support another process.

Finally, let me acknowledge two other things.

During Senator Coats’ confirmation hearing, he was asked about his role on the National Security Council, including the Principals Committee. He assured us that he will be attending these meetings and participating in them despite the confusion created by an Executive order that appeared to divest the DNI from these meetings. If he is not included in these meetings, I will expect to know about it and the reason why.

Senator Coats has also committed to me personally and to the committee that he will not support the return of waterboarding and other so-called enhanced interrogation practices, nor will he support reestablishing secret detention sites into the activities of the intelligence community. He reassured the committee that he will follow the law as it now stands and that he will not advocate for changes to that law or recommend a reinterpretation of the law based on any personal beliefs. The law is clear: No interrogation techniques outside the Army Field Manual are allowed.

Finally, Senator Coats has also reassured me and all of the members of the committee that if confirmed, he will always present to the President, to his Cabinet advisers, and to those of us in Congress the unvarnished facts as represented by the best judgments of the intelligence community whether or not these views of the President, with ours in Congress, or with anyone else’s who might receive them.
For these reasons, I support the movement. I was glad to see 88 Members of this body support Dan’s movement forward. I believe he will be a great fifth Director of National Intelligence.

I thank my friend the Senator from Texas for giving me time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I thank my friend, the Senator from Virginia, who is the vice chair of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, for his remarks.

I, too, support the nomination of Dan Coats to be the next Director of National Intelligence and succeed James Clapper, who has been in the intelligence business for nearly 50 years. He has big shoes to fill, but I have every confidence Dan Coats can do that.

One of the things I hope he looks at is that post-9/11, when the Office of the Director of National Intelligence was created, we basically created another layer in the intelligence community. As the Presiding Officer and other Members know, the DNI—the Office of the Director of National Intelligence—has grown by leaps and bounds. I just hope he takes a good, hard look at the layers we have created, perhaps at the duplicative functions that do not necessarily make our intelligence any better but that do create more problems in managing what is a very important office to our national security and certainly to the intelligence community.

Mr. President, on another matter, in spite of the snow yesterday, I recognize the fact that this is Sunshine Week. Sunshine Week is a movement that was created to highlight the need for more transparent and open government. Justice Brandeis is also often quoted when one talks about transparency in government and its importance to a functioning democracy when he said that sunlight is the best disinfectant.

As I indicate, I would much rather have people change their behavior in their knowing that their actions are going to be public rather than to pass new laws and new regulations. To me, knowing that the public is going to be aware of what one is doing causes people, typically, to be on their best behavior. I think that is the reason I support Justice Brandeis’ comment that sunlight is the best disinfectant. I believe that is true.

I have done my best to keep that sentiment in mind to create legislation that presses our democracy toward more openness in the Federal Government, not less. That is because I believe our country grows stronger when open government is the basic requirement for a healthy democracy. Of course, when voters know and understand what their government is doing, they are in the best position to change its direction if they disagree with it or to reaffirm that direction by casting their votes as informed members of the electorate.

Democracy can only work when the public knows what government is doing and can hold it accountable, so I am glad that at this time of year, we can look back at the successful efforts we have made to promote transparency while looking ahead to the last.

Last Congress, I introduced the Freedom of Information Act Improvement Act. It is a law that strengthens the existing Freedom of Information Act, the law which is the chief open government law, by requiring Federal agencies to operate under a presumption of openness when considering whether to release government information in their custody.

We passed it last summer, and President Obama signed it into law. This important new law accomplishes some of the most sweeping and meaningful reforms in its history to the Freedom of Information Act, and it is already making an impact by helping the public access more information.

Because of the Freedom of Information Act Improvement Act, last October, the CIA released a portion of its official history of the Bay of Pigs invasion, which has been kept classified for decades. This is a critical part of our Nation’s history that is worth knowing, and I believe it is no longer necessary to keep it under wraps in order to protect America’s national security. This serves as an example of what we are trying to accomplish with this law and others like it so as to build upon the idea the Founding Fathers recognized hundreds of years ago, that a truly democratic system depends on an informed citizenry to hold its leaders accountable. That is an idea everyone in this Chamber, on both sides of the aisle, can agree upon.

I am thankful to the senior Senator from Vermont, Mr. LEAHY, for working with me on the Freedom of Information Act Improvement Act and making it a priority. As a matter of fact, Senator LEAHY has been my partner on a number of important issues in this important area over the years that we have both been in the Senate.

I also appreciate Chairman GRASSLEY’s leadership, the chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, for stewarding this bill through the Committee, and I appreciate Leader MCCONNELL for making sure this was a priority for this Chamber.

In looking ahead, I will continue working with Chairman GRASSLEY to make sure Federal agencies are implementing this law in a timely manner, and I look forward to doing more to strengthen government transparency measures in the future.

Finally, to next week, the Judiciary Committee will take up the nomination of Neil Gorsuch for the U.S. Supreme Court so he may fill the seat that was vacated by the death of Justice Scalia. That process, of course, begins, I believe, with considering his qualifications and his credentials, but heading into next week, we already know a lot about his record.

He has been praised by people across the political spectrum—from liberals to conservatives—as a highly qualified and exceptional judge with impeccable integrity. He served with great distinction on the Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals, based out of Denver, for the last 10 years, after having been confirmed by this Chamber unanimously. His hometown newspaper, the Denver Post, encouraged the President to nominate Judge Gorsuch before his nomination was even announced. This, of course, was the same newspaper that endorsed Hillary Clinton for President. Clearly, Judge Gorsuch has won the respect of those across the political spectrum and on both sides of the aisle. Last week, the American Bar Association announced its unanimous decision to grant Judge Gorsuch the highest rating available; that of “well qualified” as a nominee to serve on the Supreme Court of the United States.

I should point out that both the minority leader and the chairman of the Judiciary Committee—the senior Senator from Vermont—have called the American Bar Association’s rating system the “gold standard” when it comes to assessing the qualifications of judicial nominees.

Judge Gorsuch will also bring decades of experience on the bench, as I mentioned a moment ago. He has also served in private practice, as an attorney with the Justice Department, and, of course, as a Federal judge. It is time to move forward with the President’s nominee to fill the seat that was left open by the death of the late Justice Scalia, and I believe Judge Gorsuch is just the man to fill it.

I look forward to hearing from him next week as we consider his nomination to this important position.

I express my gratitude to Chairman GRASSLEY and the ranking member, Senator FEINSTEIN, for their efforts thus far in putting things together, and I look forward to working with the rest of my colleagues on the Judiciary Committee to consider the nomination of Judge Gorsuch, starting next Monday, March 20.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I know both sides are working on trying to get an arrangement for the vote.

Mr. President, I also want to tell my colleague from Texas and the Ranking Member, Senator Grassley, for their efforts thus far in putting things together, and I listened very carefully to his remarks with respect to transparency in government. He has had a long interest in the Freedom of Information Act and the like. I noted that he made a comment about the Bay of Pigs, about which information is still classified, and I know something about this because my dad wrote a book about the subject. My hope is that my friend from Texas and his interest in transparency will also extend to some other areas.

I have been very familiar with my colleague’s record with respect to Freedom of Information Act issues, which really is impressive. I
hope to get him involved in some other areas of transparency—perhaps in campaign finance reform and the issue I am going to be speaking about today, that of getting the American people the information—after 6 years of stonewalling by how many law-abiding Americans are getting swept up in what will be Dan Coats’ top priority, that of the reauthorization of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act.

I want my colleague to know, in my being very much aware of his good work on the Senate Intelligence Committee, that we are going to try and conscript them into some other transparency issues as well.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, may I ask the Senator to yield to consider a couple of brief consent requests?

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, of course.

I will tell my colleague, as to what the majority and the minority have agreed to, as soon as those consent requests are ready, then we will take a time out from my remarks and make sure that matter is resolved.

As we wait for the matter Senator CORNYN has mentioned, I will begin the discussion of the nomination of Dan Coats to be the Director of National Intelligence.

I have known Senator Coats for many years. He has been the lead co-sponsor of the bipartisan Federal income tax reform proposal, which has been a special priority of mine. I do not know of a single U.S. Senator who does not like Senator Coats. He is honest, a straight shooter, and gracious. My remarks are not about my personal affection for Senator Coats.

The reason I am voting against the nomination is due to the matter I just touched upon with the Senator from Texas, which is, for 6 years, it has been impossible to get the intelligence community to provide the Congress and the American people the information that is absolutely critical to the debate on reauthorizing the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act. For 6 long years, Democrats and Republicans, both in this body and in the other body, have been trying to get this information.

So this morning, given the fact that this legislation would be the top priority of Senator Coats, as he said in the Intelligence Committee, I want the Senate and the country to understand why this is important.

First, I am happy to yield to my friend from Texas.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I thank my colleague for yielding for my brief consent requests.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, thank my friend and colleague for yielding for these brief consent requests.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I thank my colleague. Now, as we consider the nomination of Senator Coats, and recognize that his top priority, by his admission, is the reauthorization of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act—particularly section 702—I want to begin this discussion by saying that it is because the intelligence community has stonewalled Democrats and Republicans in both this body and in the other body for 6 years on the information that we need to do good oversight that I have come to the floor to outline what I think the central issue is all about.

I am going to begin my remarks by way of saying that, at a time when Americans are demanding policies that give them more security and more liberty, increasingly, we are seeing policies come from both this body and the other body that provide less of both. And one of the policies that I think we must weaken strong encryption. Weakening strong encryption is bad from a security standpoint, and it is bad from a liberty standpoint. When government creates policies that give the American people less of both—less security and less liberty—obviously, the American people are not going to react well.

My view is that when the government—particularly intelligence agencies—don’t level with the American people about large-scale surveillance of law-abiding Americans, our people are justifiably angry. When the government tries to keep this information secret—as I have pointed out on this floor before—in America, the truth always comes out. Leveling with the American people is the only way for agencies to have the credibility and the legitimacy to effectively do their jobs. They have critically important jobs in keeping us all safe.

Now, with respect to Senator Coats, at his confirmation hearing, since he said the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act would be his top priority, I asked our former colleague from Texas many Americans—innocent, law-abiding Americans—have actually been swept up in the surveillance program known as section 702 of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act. Under section 702, the government conducts warrantless surveillance of foreigners who are reasonably believed to be overseas. It does this work by compelling telecommunications companies and internet service providers to provide the content, phone calls, and emails, and other individual communications.

Now, there are several different ways this happens, and I will get to that in the course of these remarks. What we are talking about—what I want people to understand—is that this goes to the content of communications. This is not about metadata collection. Congress, as the Senate knows, reform that in the USA FREEDOM Act. This is surveillance without any warrants, and once the FISA Court signs off on the overall program, the details are up to the government.

Now, this was not always the case. For decades, individual warrants were required when the government needed the assistance of the country’s telecommunications firms. Then the Bush administration created a secret, but legal, warrantless wiretapping program.

After the program was revealed, the government then went to the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act Court to get approval. But when the government ran into some trouble with the court, the Bush administration argued that the Congress should consider a different program. It was first passed in 2007 under the name Protect America Act. That became the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act Amendments Act of 2008.

Now, fortunately, the Congress included a sunset provision, which is why it was up for reauthorization in 2012, and that is why it is up for reauthorization this year. This year it is Senator Coats’ top priority. Whoever is the head of the intelligence community will be the point person for this legislation.

I want it understood that the reason that I am going through this background is that American people deserve a fully informed debate about the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act reauthorization. You cannot have that debate—you cannot ensure that the American people have security and liberty—unless you know the impact of section 702 of that bill on the constitutional rights of law-abiding Americans.
So for 6 years, in this body, Democrats and Republicans—and in the other body, Democrats and Republicans—have been asking the same question: How many law-abiding Americans are having their communications swept up in all of this collection? Without even an estimate of this number, I don’t think it is possible to judge what section 702 means for the core liberties of law-abiding Americans. Without this information, the Congress can’t make an informed decision about whether to reauthorize section 702 or what kind of reforms might be necessary to ensure the protection of the individual liberties of innocent Americans.

At Senator Coats’ nomination hearing before the Senate Intelligence Committee, I asked Senator Coats whether he would commit to providing Congress and the public with this information. I will say, because of my respect for Senator Coats and our long-time cooperation on issues like tax reform of others, I hoped that Senator Coats would be the one—after 6 years of struggling to get this information—to make a commitment to deliver it to the Senate Intelligence Committee before work on the reauthorization began. Instead, Senator Coats said: “I will do everything I can to work with Admiral Rogers at the NSA to get you that number.”

If confirmed, I hope that happens. But after asking for the number of law-abiding Americans who get swept up in these searches for years, and getting stonewalled by the executive branch, hoping to get the information we need to do real oversight is just not good enough.

“The problem—the lack of information on the impact of this law on the privacy of Americans—goes all the way back to the origins of the authority. In December of 2007, the Bush administration, in its statement of administration policy on the FISA Amendments Act, stated that it would likely be impossible to count the number of people located in the United States as communications were reviewed by the government. In April of 2011, our former colleague Senator Mark Udall and I then asked the Director of National Intelligence, James Clapper, for an estimate. In July of that year, the Director wrote back and said: “It is not reasonably possible to identify the number of people in the United States whose communications may have been reviewed under the authority of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act.”

He suggested reviewing the classified number of disseminated intelligence reports containing a reference to a U.S. person, but that is very different than the number of Americans whose communications have been collected in the first place. And that is what this is all about: How many law-abiding Americans are being swept up in these searches? It will be an increasingly important issue as the nature of telecommunications companies continues to change, because it is now a field that is globally interconnected. We don’t have telecommunications systems just stopping at national borders. So getting the number of Americans whose communications have been collected in the first place is the prerequisite to doing real oversight on this law and doing our job, at a time when it is being reauthorized and the American people want both security and liberty and understand that the two are not mutually exclusive.

So Director Clapper then suggested reviewing the classified number of targets that were later determined to be located in the United States. But the question has never been about the targets of 702, although the mistaken targeting of Americans and the people in our country is another serious question. The question that Democrats and Republicans have been asking is about how many Americans are being swept up by the program. The law, is supposed to only target foreigners overseas.

So let me repeat that. That is what the law says. The Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act says that the targets of the intelligence information. Obviously, that is broad. It doesn’t even require that a target be suspected of wrongdoing. So let us know when Americans are communicating with “bad guys”—and I want to find out when Americans are communicating with “bad guys”—and I want to find out when Americans are communicating with “bad guys” overseas, which, contrary to the law, the target turns out to be an American or someone in the United States. The full impact of these mistakes on law-abiding Americans is not readily apparent. The first reauthorization of section 702 noted that there were compliance incidents involving surveillance of foreigners in the United States and surveillance of Americans. This is in violation of the law, and it happens.

The second way in which Americans can be swept up in section 702 collection is when they communicate with an overseas target. This is usually called incidental collection and is often misrepresented. I have heard many times that the program is intended to find out when Americans are communicating with “bad guys”—and I want to know it. But the statute requires the collection be conducted “to acquire foreign intelligence information.” As implemented, the standard for targeting individuals under the program is that the government has reason to believe those people possess, are expected to receive, or are likely to communicate foreign intelligence information. Obviously, that is broad. It doesn’t even require that a target be suspected of wrongdoing.

It is also important to note that the government is prohibited from collecting communications only when the sender of an email and everyone receiving that email are located outside the United States. So an American in the United States could send an email to another American in the United States, but if
the email also goes to an overseas target, it is going to be collected.

That then brings us to the different kinds of collection under section 702 and how they affect the liberties of our people in different ways. In one form of collection, PRISM, the government orders an internet service provider to provide the government with messages to and from a specific email address. Then there is something known as upstream collection, which is when foreign communications are collected off the telecommunications and internet backbones. In other words, phone calls and email messages are collected in transit. This kind of collection raises a number of other reasons to be concerned about how many law-abiding Americans are getting swept up. For one, it is through upstream collection that the government can collect emails that are neither to nor from a target. The email merely has to be about a target, meaning, for example, it is between the target’s email and someone else in the content. In other words, the government can collect emails to and from Americans, none of whom are of any interest to the government whatsoever, so long as the target’s email address is in the email. The government requires only that one of the parties to the communication, who, again, could be another American, is overseas, and even that requirement is harder for the government to meet in practice. The number of situations like this is pretty obvious. You don’t even have to be communicating with one of the government’s targets to be swept up in Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act collection. You don’t even have to be communicating with a foreigner. You or somebody emailing you just needs to reference a target’s email address.

I have now mentioned that this target is not necessarily a terrorist because the law allows for surveillance “to acquire foreign intelligence information.” That has been interpreted to allow targeting of individuals who the government has reason to believe possess, are expected to receive, or are likely to communicate foreign intelligence information. It is a broad standard, and the government could then collect the communications of all kinds of foreigners around the world. Think about how easy it would be for an American business leader to be in contact with a large set of potential targets of this program. Consider how easy it would be for Americans, communicating with other Americans, to forward the emails of these people. All of this could be collected by the government.

The upstream collection also includes the collection of what are called multicomunications transactions. This is when the NSA collects an email that is to, from, or about a target, but that email is embedded among multiple other communications that are not. These communications may have nothing to do with the target, but the government just kind of, sort of ends up with them—and some of them are sent and received entirely within the United States.

These are the ways in which law abiding Americans—innocent, law-abiding Americans who have done absolutely nothing, and it is their privacy and their constitutional rights that have caused Democrats and Republicans in this body and in the other body to seek the actual numbers of how many law-abiding Americans are getting swept up. And there are some indications that are supposed to target foreigners overseas.

The reason this is important is that the program is getting bigger and bigger. The exact numbers are classified, but the government’s public reporting confirms steady increases in collection. At some point, the size of the program and the extent to which Americans’ communications are being collected raises obvious concerns about the Fourth Amendment. The question is not if the program raises constitutional concerns, but when. And that gets to the heart of what our bipartisan coalition has been concerned about: If its purpose is to provide to the Senate to know as part of reauthorizing this law how many Americans are being swept up by this program, we cannot determine whether the government has crossed a constitutional line.

The Privacy and Civil Liberties Oversight Board, an agency the Congress has tasked to look at these issues, has raised the very same concerns I am outlining this morning. In the 2014 report by the Board—the nonpartisan organization Congress has tasked to look at these issues, has raised the very same concerns I am outlining this morning. In the 2014 report by the Board—the nonpartisan organization Congress has tasked to look at these issues, has raised the very same concerns I am outlining this morning. In the 2014 report by the Board—the nonpartisan organization Congress has tasked to look at these issues, has raised the very same concerns I am outlining this morning. In the 2014 report by the Board—the nonpartisan organization Congress has tasked to look at these issues, has raised the very same concerns I am outlining this morning. In the 2014 report by the Board—the nonpartisan organization Congress has tasked to look at these issues, has raised the very same concerns I am outlining this morning. The Department of Justice has concluded that the lack of information about the collection of the communications of law-abiding Americans’ communications under section 702 “hammers persons to gauge whether the program adversely balances national security interests with the privacy of U.S. persons.” The Privacy and Civil Liberties Oversight Board, an agency the Congress has tasked to look at these issues, has raised the very same concerns I am outlining this morning. In the 2014 report by the Board—the nonpartisan organization Congress has tasked to look at these issues, has raised the very same concerns I am outlining this morning. The Department of Justice has concluded that the lack of information about the collection of the communications of law-abiding Americans’ communications under section 702 “hammers persons to gauge whether the program adversely balances national security interests with the privacy of U.S. persons.” They went on to say:

The program [is] close to the line of constitutional reasonableness. At the very least, too much expansion in the collection of U.S. persons’ communications or the uses to which those communications are put may push the program over the line.

They recommended exactly what our bipartisan coalition has been calling for—that the government provide to the Congress and, to the extent consistent with national security, that the public and the Congress get data on the collection of communications of law-abiding Americans.

The most frequently heard argument against what our bipartisan group of House and Senate Members has been calling for is that, whatever number of communications are being collected on law-abiding Americans, it is minimized, which implies that information about Americans is hidden.

This is a particularly important issue. I have heard my colleagues on the other side say frequently: Well, if law-abiding Americans are having their communications swept up, we shouldn’t get all concerned about that because widespread communication is being minimized. Somehow that means it is not getting out; it is being hidden. That is not necessarily what happens. To begin with, all that collection does not stay at the National Security Agency. All the emails collected through the PRISM component of section 702 go to several other agencies, including the CIA and the FBI. Then we have those three agencies, in particular, authorized to conduct searches through all the data for communications that are to, from, or about Americans: Look for an American’s name, telephone number, email address, even a key word or phrase. They can do that without any warrant. There doesn’t have to be even a suspicion that an American is engaged in any kind of wrongdoing. The FBI’s authorities are even broader. The FBI can conduct searches for communications that are to, from, or about an American to seek communications of a national security interest to the government. Moreover, neither the FBI nor the CIA reports on the number of such communications that it conducts using metadata collected under section 702.

The authority to conduct searches for Americans’ communications in section 702 data is new. Before 2011, the FISA Court prohibited queries for U.S. persons. I am going to repeat that. Under the Bush administration and in the first 2 years of the Obama administration, it was not possible to conduct these backdoor, warrantless searches of Americans. Then the Obama administration sought to change the rules and obtained authority to conduct them. In April 2014, the Director of National Intelligence’s response to questions from me and Senator Mark Udall publicly acknowledged these warrantless searches. By June the House voted overwhelmingly to prohibit them. That prohibition didn’t become law, but I can tell you that it is going to be considered in the context of this reauthorization. The House voted overwhelmingly to prohibit these warrantless searches.

So the question really is this: What exactly is the privacy impact of these warrantless searches for Americans? In 2014, I managed to extract from the intelligence community some, but not all, necessary information about how many Americans had been subject of the searches. That was a step forward, but what the data doesn’t tell us is who all the targets of these searches are. More to the point, it doesn’t tell us how many Americans are potentially the subject of these searches. If the number
March 15, 2017

CONGRESSIONAL RECORD — SENATE

S1817

is small, the potential for abuse, obviously, would be smaller. If the number is large, the potential for abuse is much greater. Without an understanding of the size of the pool from which the government can pull the communications of law-abiding Americans, there is just no way of knowing how easy it would be for the government to use this law as a means to read the emails of a political opponent, a business leader, a journalist, or an activist.

I now want to turn to the ultimate form of abuse, and that is something called reverse targeting. It is prohibited by law and defined as collection “if the purpose of the acquisition is to target a particular, known person reasonably believed to be in the United States.” This prohibition also applies to U.S. persons. The question, though, is how this is defined and how the public can be assured it is not happening.

If you look at the language, you can see why there has been bipartisan concern. The collection is only prohibited if the purpose is to get the communications of Americans. The question obviously has risen: What if getting the Americans’ communications is only one of a collection of communications to, from, and about overseas target? What is actually acceptable here?

This issue was concerning in 2008, when the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act Amendments Act passed with a provision allowing the government to conduct warrantless searches. But that was before the country knew about the collection of emails that are only about a foreign target and that could be to and from Americans. That was before the Obama administration sought and obtained authority to conduct warrantless searches for communications to, from, and about Americans out of section 702 PRISM collection.

That makes an important point to me. This bipartisan coalition—of which I have been a part—has fought back against executive branch overreach, whether it is a Democratic administration or a Republican administration. I cited the fact that President Obama brought back something with the great potential for abuse and that President Bush said he wanted no part of. As we look at these issues, it is important to understand exactly what the scope of the problem is. Each of the agencies authorized to conduct warrantless searches—the NSA, FBI, CIA—are also authorized to identify the overseas targets of section 702. The agencies that have developed an interest in Americans’ communications, which are actually looking for these communications, are the same agencies that are in a position to encourage ongoing collection of those communications by targeting the overseas party.

I believe this bipartisan group believes that there is very substantial potential for abuse. Because of these decisions taking place in the executive branch without any judicial oversight, it is possible that no one would ever know.

To quote the Privacy and Civil Liberties Oversight Board: “Since the enactment of the FISA Amendments Act of 2008, the extent to which the government acquired communications of U.S. persons under Section 702 has been one of the biggest open questions about the program, and a continuing source of public concern.” The Board noted that the executive branch has responded with justifiable reasons for why it couldn’t provide the number of how many innocent law-abiding Americans get swept up in these searches. One excuse has been the size of the program. But as Members—Democrats and Republicans—have said repeatedly, an estimate, perhaps based on a sample, is sufficient. Nobody is dictating how this be done.

Another excuse has been that determining whether individuals whose communications have been collected are Americans is an impossibly invasive of privacy. Now this is something of a head-scratcher. I will just say that, as to the value of knowing how many law-abiding Americans get swept up in these searches, privacy advocates have stated that this far-fetched theory, this far-fetched excuse for not furnishing it, doesn’t add up in terms of the benefit of finding how many Americans are swept up in these warrantless searches.

The government is genuinely concerned about the privacy implications of calculating the number. I and many of my colleagues, both Democrats and Republicans, have been willing—and we renewed this in the last few weeks—to have a discussion about the methodology under consideration.

In the months ahead, the Senate is going to be debating a number of issues relating to this topic, such as U.S. persons searches, reverse targeting, and the collection of communications that are just about a target. The Senate is going to discuss how to strengthen oversight by the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court, the Congress, and the privacy board. The Director of National Intelligence will be right in the center of the debate.

There is more information that the American people need. There is more information that this body needs in order to carry out its responsibility to do real oversight here. The center of these discussions and theShapes of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act involves one question: How many innocent, law-abiding Americans have been swept up in this program that has been written and developed to target foreigners overseas? Congress’s judgment about the impact of section 702 depends on getting this number. An assessment of the program’s constitutionality rests on the understanding of the impact it has on Americans. A full grasp of the implications of the searches of the communications of Americans requires knowing how many Americans’ communications are being searched through. Countless questions related to the reauthorization of the program all require that the public have this information.

I am just going to close by way of saying what those questions are because if you want to do real oversight over a critically important program, you are going to have to respond to these questions. The questions are these: Should there be safeguards against reverse targeting? Should Congress legislate on “upstream” collections and the collection of communications about targets? What raises unique concerns about the collection of the communications of law-abiding Americans? Are the rules related to the dissemination, use, and retention of these communications adequate? Should there be limits on the use of these communications by the FBI for non-intelligence purposes?

Just think about that one for a minute. What does it mean to people in our part of the world where people feel that liberty and security are not mutually exclusive, but they are going to insist on both? What does it mean to them on the question of whether there ought to be limits on the use of this information by the FBI for non-intelligence purposes? That is exactly the kind of question that people are going to ask.

I am heading home today for town-hall meetings in rural areas, and those are exactly the kind of questions that Oregonians ask. People understand this is a dangerous time. That is not at issue.

I serve on the Intelligence Committee, along with Senator FEINSTEIN, and I have been one of the longer serving members. The fact that this is a dangerous world is not a debatable proposition. There are a lot of people over here who do not understand our country well. But what I say to Oregonians and what I will say again this weekend is this: Any politician who tells you that you have to give up your liberty to have security is not somebody who is working in your interest because smart policies give you both.

That is why I started talking about the benefits of strong encryption—critically important for security. These questions are ones that I don’t think are particularly partisan. That is why a big group of Democrats and Republicans and in the other body have been seeking the information about how many law-abiding Americans get caught up in these efforts to target a foreigner overseas. We are now at a critical moment. A government surveillance program, with very obvious implications for privacy and constitutional rights, is up for reauthorization by the end of the year. While more information may be part of the answer, we have to have the best possible estimate to answer those questions that I just outlined.

The American people want Congress to get to the bottom of questions that go right to the heart of our having
policies that promote both their security and their liberty. I think the public expects a full debate. You can’t have a full and real debate over the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act unless you have some sense of how many law-abiding Americans are getting swept up in these searches for foreigners.

I believe the American people expect serious oversight over it. They want assurance that their representatives in Congress have a sense of what is actually being voted on. After years of secret surveillance programs being revealed only in the news media, I think the public has rightly insisted on more openness and transparency.

So getting the information that I have described today, which will deal with Senator Coats’ top priority of reauthorizing the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, is a critical first step. We know full well the impact of this program on Americans, then you can have a full and real discussion—a real debate in Congress with the public and with the Director of National Intelligence.

I refer to the Senate Intelligence Committee, despite very much liking Dan Coats and his being the bipartisan cosponsor of what is still the only Federal income tax reform proposal we have had in the Senate. When it was authored, I said that I cannot support any nominee to be the head of national intelligence if that nominee will guarantee that before this reauthorization is brought before the Senate and brought to the Intelligence Committee, that we have the information needed to do our job, to do real oversight, to show the American people it is possible to come up with policies that promote security and liberty. For that reason I invite my friendship with Senator Coats, I cannot support the nomination.

I yield the floor.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, never being one to let President so maligned our intelligence community. President Trump has repeatedly belittled and ridiculed the work of intelligence officials, calling their assessments of Russia’s hack into U.S. elections “fake news.” Over Twitter, President Trump accused intelligence officers of executing a Nazi-like smear campaign against him. President Trump has sided with the likes of Julian Assange and Vladimir Putin over our own community.

More disturbingly, President Trump seems to hold shallow views on critical intelligence questions like torture. On the campaign trail, Mr. Trump constantly vowed to reinstate torture, asserting that only “stupid people” would think otherwise. In an interview with the New York Times, Mr. Trump admitted that he was “surprised” that Defense Secretary Mattis opposed torture, while adding that he would “guide” by mass sentiments on torture. Mr. Trump’s pronouncements on torture are dangerous, irresponsible, and rally our enemies.

Senator Dan Coats has an enormous challenge ahead of him. President Trump removed the Director of National Intelligence from the National Security Council, marginalizing the intelligence community’s essential role in informing national security decisions.

President Trump reportedly plans to hire a New York billionaire with close ties to Steve Bannon to conduct a review of the intelligence agencies, a core responsibility of the Director of National Intelligence, and Senator Coats’ handling assessments of Russia may meet with skepticism in a White House that views Putin so favorably.

I am encouraged by Senator Coats’ willingness to work with the Congress in a bipartisan manner, particularly on probes related to Russia’s hack into our election. I expect Senator Coats to maintain his commitment to follow the law on enhanced interrogation techniques and not to seek to change them. And to support his nomination to the Office of the Director of National Intelligence.

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I have a tremendous amount of respect for Lieutenant General McMaster and a great deal of concern for his willingness to answer the call of service for his Nation as National Security Advisor.

So I want to be clear that none of my comments are intended as a reflection on General McMaster himself.

But I am greatly concerned about the current state of the organization that General McMaster is being asked to run and that the way in which the President and his senior advisers appear to be running it is creating great risk for our Nation.

The President’s first National Security Advisor, who lasted less than a month in office, had failed to register for the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act—a function he held throughout the Presidential campaign and into the transition—so much for America first.

The initial Executive order structuring the National Security Council system for the new administration deliberately omitted the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs and the Director of National Intelligence from the Principals Committee—in other words, a National Security Council without the insight and guidance of our intelligence community.

Every administration can structure the White House as it sees fit, but national security without intelligence or military advice is, frankly, mind-boggling.

At the same time, the NSC was to include Steve Bannon, the President’s political adviser. Although previous White Houses have had staff from outside the NSC sit in on NSC meetings on occasion and as appropriate, never before has an administration suggested that the NSC’s work of safeguarding our Nation be subordinate to the political goals of safeguarding a President’s political position and public opinion ratings.

Alongside the NSC, this White House has established a so-called Strategic Initiatives Group under Mr. Bannon, which is reportedly undertaking strategic reviews of our sensitive issues—including U.S.-Russia relations. Running a shadow NSC with crossing lines of jurisdiction and authority seems like a recipe for disaster.

So all of this has created an environment of dysfunction and an organization in severe distress. It is one thing to run a family real estate company in this way, but this is our national security that is at stake.

If there is a crisis tonight—on the Korean Peninsula, with Russia, in the Middle East or Persian Gulf—it is far from clear that the NSC is in a position to provide our senior policymakers with the options they need and the decision-space necessary to safeguard America in a dangerous and unpredictable world.

I wish General McMaster all the best, but hope that he is approaching the challenges of his job with clear-eyed conviction.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, in a few short months, President Trump has undermined U.S. credibility and our standing abroad. He has called for a nuclear arms race, asserted the United States should reinvade Iraq to take its oil, lavished praise on Vladimir Putin, and shut out allies like Australia and Germany. He has issued two Muslim bans—a move lauded by the Islamic State and condemned by top military, intelligence, and diplomatic officials of both parties.

President Trump has put our national security apparatus under enormous stress. He has appointed Steve Bannon, an extremist with the explicit ambition to “destroy the state,” to the National Security Council—the highest body charged with protecting the state. He has failed to nominate officials for dozens of crucial national security positions, hobbling our ability to respond to a future national security crisis. He has repeatedly denigrated our intelligence agencies, rejecting findings that clearly demonstrated Russia’s role in his election. He has accused the FBI of breaking the law by wiretapping Trump Tower, a groundless claim for which he has offered no proof.

I therefore support the nomination of Herbert McMaster—a respected military strategist with a reputation for an independent mind. He has demonstrated throughout his career that he is willing to challenge and criticize U.S. leadership, irrespective of party. He does not appear to be sympathetic to the views of President Trump or Steve Bannon that the United States is at war with the entire Muslim world. Instead, while commanding U.S. forces in Iraq, General McMaster told his soldiers: “Every time you treat an Iraqi dignitarily, you are working for the enemy.”

I am concerned with General McMaster’s handling of sexual assault
allegations against two of his cadets at West Point. McMaster’s reluctance to interfere with the training of these cadets, despite allegations of sexual assault, was in violation of Army policy. I am a strong supporter of efforts to reform the military’s handling of sexual assault. I support General McMaster’s retaining his rank while he serves as National Security Advisor. I do so with the hope that General McMaster will remain faithful to his reputation for dissent, will challenge President Trump when he takes a dangerous approach to the world, will restore order to the National Security Council, and will steward a foreign policy that makes America safer.

Mr. UDALL. 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. UDALL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded. The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

FREEDOM OF THE PRESS

Mr. UDALL. Mr. President, this week is Sunshine Week, a week when we applaud open government and when we celebrate the institutions that hold government accountable. Throughout our Nation’s history, one of the most important has been the press, the free press. Donald Trump, as candidate and President, has repeatedly attacked the press. He has called it the “enemy of the people,” he has labeled the national media outlets as “fake news,” and he has directed respected reporters who have reported for years.

He has singled out mainstream newspapers like the New York Times, Politico, and the Los Angeles Times, and television outlets like ABC, NBC, CBS, CNN. That is how this President operates. He acts like a bully, and not just with the media. He attacks the courts when article III judges disagree with him, and when they find he is breaking the law. He attacks sitting judges for deciding against him, even those appointed by Republican Presidents. Without basis, he attacks our intelligence agencies, and he even demeans career public servants who risk their lives to keep our Nation safe. The President’s goal is obvious, to undermine the institutions in our country who threaten him, who criticize him. Authoritarians have used this strategy for centuries and continue to do so today in countries where democracy is weak or nonexistent and where autocracy or kleptocracy is strong.

But this is the United States. We are an example to the world of democratic principles and action. The President’s repeated attacks on our democratic institutions need to stop and they need to stop now. A free and robust press is critical for democracy to work, period, end of story. Our Nation’s history of a free press dates back to our founding. Free press in the colonial United States was protected under several restrictions on free speech in England. During the latter half of the 17th century, all books and articles were required to be licensed by the government to be published. Then, “seditious libel,” describing “hatred or contempt” upon the Crown or the Parliament by written word—was a criminal offense. So to speak against the Crown was a criminal offense. Truth was not a defense.

No publication could criticize the Crown or the government, even if it was accurate. The first newspapers in the Colonies operated under licenses from the colonial Governor. But by 1721, James Franklin, Benjamin Franklin’s older brother, was publishing one of the first colonial independent newspapers, the New England Courant, in Boston.

Ben Franklin was his apprentice, typesetter, and sometimes contributed under a pseudonym. Several years later, in 1735, Ben Franklin began publishing his own independent newspaper, the Pennsylvania Gazette. His newspaper became the most popular in the Colonies and was published until 1800. By 1735, the tenets of seditious libel were coming undone. John Peter Zenger, the publisher of the New York Weekly Journal, ran articles harshly critical of the colonial government. Zenger was arrested and tried for libel. While he admitted he published the articles, his lawyer argued truth was a defense. The press, the lawyer argued, has “a liberty both of exposing and opposing tyrannical power by speaking and writing the truth.” The judge, however, instructed the jury as to the law at the time, that Zenger must be found guilty if he published the articles, whether truthful or not, but after 10 minutes of deliberation, the jury acquitted Zenger. These were some of the beginnings of a free press in our Nation.

The first rights in the Bill of Rights are freedom of religion, the press, speech, petition, and assembly. The press, as an institution, is expressly protected by the Constitution. In 1798, the drafters of the Bill of Rights understood that a free press was essential to the growth and success of our new democracy. They understood that debate, disagreement, the free flow of ideas, make an informed public, that the press helps educate voters.

They understood all too well that government power needed to be checked and that the press holds the powerful in check by investigating and exposing arbitrary conduct, abuse, and corruption. A democracy cannot exist without a free press. It is as simple as that, but our President does not seem to understand this or he does not care.

According to him, the press is “dishonest,” “not good people,” “sleazy,” and “among the worst human beings.” Those are all quotes by our President. Established press organizations are the “fake news,” and a few weeks ago he declared the press “an enemy of the people.” We have not heard attacks like this since Watergate, and even then, it wasn’t so much so fast. The President’s subordinates are now given license to accuse and to limit press access.

Chief Strategist Steve Bannon said the press should “keep its mouth shut and just listen for a while.” This quote from Mr. Bannon has extra significance today because he is no longer the head of a rightwing media company. In a controversial move, President Trump issued an Executive order to add him to the National Security Council’s Principal’s Committee.

Those are all quotes by our President.

Now, don’t get me wrong. The press does not always get it right. They make mistakes. News organizations have their biases. Mistakes should be corrected and bias should be tempered by using accepted journalistic methods and professional judgment and following journalism’s ethics code. Mistakes and professional judgment are not the same thing as reporting “fake news.” The President’s Republican colleagues have been too silent in the face of attacks. Few in Congress have stood up against the President’s hostility to the press. Government officials are afraid to disagree. Just last week, at a Senate Commerce Committee hearing, I asked the FCC Chair, Mr. Pai, a yes or no question, does he agree with the President when he declared the press is the enemy of the people.

Mr. PAI. I do not.

Mr. UDALL. He did not engage. He would not answer. He let stand the President’s remarks. The President’s characterization of the press as the enemy is reminiscent of President Nixon. And Nixon said: “Never forget. The press is the enemy. The press is the enemy. The press is the enemy,” as recorded on his secret tapes.

The press was Nixon’s enemy because the press exposed his criminal conduct which led to his resignation. The press is Trump’s enemy because the press exposes his and his associates’ ties to
Russia, the President’s myriad Trump organization conflicts of interest, his constant barrage of misrepresentations of fact.

Nixon’s Press Secretary called the Washington Post investigative reporting “sordid and shabby journalism. Like President Trump’s accusation of fake news, that same Post reporting won the paper a Pulitzer Prize.

Watergate was a break-in of the Democratic National Committee during the Presidential campaign. Nixon ordered his Chief of Staff to have the CIA block the FBI’s investigation into the source of the funding for the Watergate burglary. During this last Presidential election, we had a cyber-break-in of the DNC. Even after 17 U.S. intelligence agencies concluded Russia hacked the DNC to sway the election, Candidate Trump refused to accept their analysis.

The President’s Chief of Staff pressured the public to publicly deny that Trump associates had contact with the Russians, while his Chief Counsel reportedly breached the firewall seeking information from the FBI about an investigation into the President and his associates. Since the press began to look hard at the ties between President Trump and the Trump organization, his associates and Russia, the President has not let up on his criticism. Just last week, the President threatened to withdraw from the nuclear agreement.

The job of the press is not to be nice. It is to gather the facts and report them. Now that the President of the United States has called the reputable U.S. news organizations fake news, others are doing the same. Russia’s Foreign Ministry spokesman recently accused a CNN reporter of spreading “fake news because the reporter asked about accusations from U.S. officials that the Russian Ambassador is a spy.

This is a dangerous path. Putin has threatened an independent press in the Russian Federation, imposing restrictions after restriction on the news media. Reporters have been harassed, threatened, and jailed. The numbers of truly independent media organizations in Russia have been reduced to a very few, and they have been replaced by state-owned, state-run news media, like RT, formerly known as Russia Today, a propaganda bullhorn for Putin, according to Secretary John Kerry.

The President admires Putin as a strong leader and he uses this strength to silence an independent press. We do not want our press silenced.

Justice Brandeis, in a famous defense of freedom of speech, in the 1917 First Amendment case, said: “[T]hose who won independence by revolution were not cowards. They did not fear political liberty.” Does President Trump fear political liberty?

The irony of the President’s accusations of “fake news” is that he himself has spread misinformation and fanned the flames of internet-driven lies, from questioning the citizenship of his defeated presidential opponent to his unsubstantiated accusation that President Obama wiretapped Trump Tower.

We have entered into an era in U.S. politics never seen before in my lifetime. We cannot allow this to be sanitized or explained away. The phrase “alternative facts” has become a national joke because it sounds like something from George Orwell’s “1984.” It is not acceptable for a President to falsify, misrepresent, or flat out lie. The President’s party in Congress should not allow this. They should not look the other way and continue to profess that the emperor’s clothes are grand.

Reacting to Mr. Trump’s attacks on the press, President George W. Bush responded:

“I consider the media to be indispensable to democracy. We need an independent media to hold people accountable. Power can be very addictive and corrosive . . . and it’s important for the media to hold to account people who abuse their power—whether it be here or elsewhere.”

That was President George W. Bush’s recent comment.

President Bush’s prescription for democracy in 2017 is the same as the drafters of the First Amendment in 1789: A free and independent and robust media is essential to democracy, and any broad-based attack on the press is an attack directly on our democracy.

There is one thing President Trump must understand: The press won’t go away. They won’t stop reporting on the decisions he makes. He can spend the next 4 years attacking the press, but they will still be there—just as they were after Nixon resigned.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

Mr. SULLIVAN. 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.

Mr. SULLIVAN. Madam President, every week for the past few months, I have been coming down to the Senate floor to recognize a special Alaskan, someone who makes my State—what we believe is the most beautiful and unique State in our country—a better place for all of us. I call this person our Alaskan of the Week.

Does President Trump fear political liberty? The irony of the President’s accusations of “fake news” is that he himself has spread misinformation and fanned the flames of internet-driven lies, from questioning the citizenship of his defeated presidential opponent to his unsubstantiated accusation that President Obama wiretapped Trump Tower.

We have entered into an era in U.S. politics never seen before in my lifetime. We cannot allow this to be sanitized or explained away. The phrase “alternative facts” has become a national joke because it sounds like something from George Orwell’s “1984.” It is not acceptable for a President to falsify, misrepresent, or flat out lie. The President’s party in Congress should not allow this. They should not look the other way and continue to profess that the emperor’s clothes are grand.

Reacting to Mr. Trump’s attacks on the press, President George W. Bush responded:

“I consider the media to be indispensable to democracy. We need an independent media to hold people accountable. Power can be very addictive and corrosive . . . and it’s important for the media to hold to account people who abuse their power—whether it be here or elsewhere.”

That was President George W. Bush’s recent comment.

President Bush’s prescription for democracy in 2017 is the same as the drafters of the First Amendment in 1789: A free and independent and robust media is essential to democracy, and any broad-based attack on the press is an attack directly on our democracy.

There is one thing President Trump must understand: The press won’t go away. They won’t stop reporting on the decisions he makes. He can spend the next 4 years attacking the press, but they will still be there—just as they were after Nixon resigned.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

Mr. SULLIVAN. 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.

TRIBUTE TO PASTOR EVELYN ERBELE

Mr. SULLIVAN. Madam President, every week for the past few months, I have been coming down to the Senate floor to recognize a special Alaskan, someone who makes my State—what we believe is the most beautiful and unique State in our country—a better place for all of us. I call this person our Alaskan of the Week.

Last week, I had the opportunity to recognize Glen Hanson, who volunteers his time by flying in what we refer to as the Iditarod Air Force—members of the Alaska volunteer community pilots who fly supplies in for the Last Great Race.

I know the pages are really interested in the Last Great Race. So, just as a quick update, we had a winner. It is still going on, but one musher, Mitch Seavey, crossed the finish line in Nome, AK, in record time last week. I encourage everybody to take. It is beautiful. Flanked by the towering Tongass National Forest, it is a place full of life and spirit, mountains, forests, lots of rain, lots of salmon, and lots of jaw-dropping scenery.

Yet, like most places across our country, it has its challenges, and it has a challenge with homelessness, like many communities in America and America itself. Luckily, for all of us, Ketchikan is also home to a very caring community that has set its sights on helping its fellow Alaskans. One of these people is Pastor Evelyn Erbele, our Alaskan of the Week, who has dedicated her life to helping others.

Evelyn is the co-pastor with her husband Terry of the First United Methodist Church of Ketchikan. There is a day shelter in the church’s social hall, which provides a hot meal, shower, clothes, and a place for the community’s homeless to go every day of the week.

Oftentimes when we think of homelessness, we think of people not having a place to sleep, but it is also important to remember that being homeless means having no place to go during the day. First City Homeless Services—Day Shelter gives people a place to go during the day. Pastor Evelyn oversees the shelter. According to the manager of the shelter, Chris Ovarrado, who himself has been homeless, she does so with commitment and with kindness and with compassion.

“She has a heart of gold and gives 100 percent,” said one resident of Ketchikan about Evelyn.

Evelyn met her husband Terry in Seward, AK, where she was a nurse in 1976. From Seward, they set out on a journey to help people around the world—Nigeria, Lithuania, Russia.

In 2009, Evelyn—now with a Ph.D. in theology and ordained by the Methodist Church—went up the Alaskan
Highway from Bellingham to Ketchikan with her husband. She didn’t know when she accepted the job at the Methodist Church in Ketchikan as co-pastor that she would be overseeing the day shelter. At first, according to her, the work was unsettling. “I never intentionally walked side by side with people who are homeless,” she said. She continued: “Initially, I may have been biased. I was using the word ‘them’ when I would describe the people I was working with. One day, the Lord said to me, Evelyn, you are them. You are my child no less or no more than they are.” She said that after hearing that voice, she realized she wasn’t working with “them” anymore. “I was working with men and women who were in a place that I easily could have been.”

In her years working to help the homeless in her community in Ketchikan, she realized that not everybody who is homeless fits neatly into “one basket.” There are lots of reasons for homelessness, she said, and the homeless may have many, many faces: men, women, children, families, the old, and the young.

As the President of the United States, the National Security Council has experienced a number of changes since coming to office, the President’s primary national security adviser, Michael Fallon, who will be the next head of the White House. I have met him. I have a great deal of respect for both his integrity and his abilities, but I remain deeply concerned that General McMaster’s judgment may not be followed and instead the fevered dreams of Mr. Bannon will influence the most sensitive national security discussions and decisions. It has been reported he doesn’t want to see NATO exist or the European Union. Those are political decisions in a body charged with giving the President advice on security. So this should concern all of us, especially Lieutenant General McMaster.

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

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

NOMINATION OF HERBERT MCMASTERM. Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, since coming to office, the President’s National Security Council has experienced more turnover than any in history at this stage in a Presidency. The President’s first National Security Advisor and head of the NSC, Michael Flynn, was fired after only a month in his position. The Council itself has been reshaped in ways that concern all of us. Permanent postings for the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Director of National Intelligence have been removed and a permanent seat has been installed for White House Political Adviser Steve Bannon.

This organization is a disturbing and profound departure from past administrations. On the most sensitive matters of national security, the President should be relying on the informed counsel of members of the intelligence and military communities, not political advisers who made their careers running a White nationalist website.

The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff is the President’s primary military adviser and, along with that of the Director of National Intelligence, is the only independent, apolitical voice on the NSC. President Trump’s move to strip them of their seats is baffling and potentially endangers our national security. The President has installed in their stead one of the most strident, ideological voices in his orbit.

On the most sensitive issues of national security, we have to have fact-based decisions. The President has to get the most dispassionate and accurate advice. With all due respect, that is not Mr. Bannon’s forte. His installation on the principals list of the NSC moves it further away from what it needs to be and closer toward a shadow council of a dangerously ideological West Wing.

The bottom line is, this decision was poorly thought out and ill-conceived. It puts a filter on the information going to the President and will make us less safe. My concerns are shared by Members on both sides of the aisle. I know that from conversations I have had with some.

It has special relevance today because we are about to vote on re-appointing H.R. McMaster to lieutenant general, who will be the next head of the NSC. General McMaster, by all accounts, will have a grounding presence in the national security apparatus of the White House. I have met him. I have a great deal of respect for both his integrity and his abilities, but I remain deeply concerned that General McMaster’s judgment may not be followed and instead the fevered dreams of Mr. Bannon will influence the most sensitive national security discussions and decisions. It has been reported he doesn’t want to see NATO exist or the European Union. Those are political decisions in a body charged with giving the President advice on security.

So this should concern all of us, especially Lieutenant General McMaster.

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

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

NOMINATION OF NEIL Gorsuch. Mr. FLAKE. Mr. President, as I did 2 weeks ago and will continue to do until he is confirmed, I raise to support the nomination of Neil Gorsuch to serve on the Supreme Court. Judge Gorsuch is an accomplished, mainstream jurist, and I look forward to helping to make sure that he receives an up-or-down vote on the Senate floor.

Next week, my colleagues and I on the Judiciary Committee will hold confirmation hearings on Judge Gorsuch. I look forward to hearing his testimony. I am confident that he will impress the country with his knowledge of and respect for the law, just as he has impressed me and my colleagues.

But before the hearings get under way, I thought I would use this opportunity to highlight an additional aspect of his life and his jurisprudence that make him an ideal nominee to serve on the High Court. So far I have spoken on the floor about his fitness to fill Justice Scalia’s seat, as well as his defense of the separation of powers and his support for religious liberty. Today I would like to discuss a more personal aspect of Judge Gorsuch’s background—the fact that he is a westerner.

As an Arizonan, I cannot overstate how important it will be to have a fellow westerner serving on the Supreme Court.

Where you are from influences your understanding of cultural and regional sensitivities. When you look at the current makeup of the Supreme Court, there is an unusual lack of geographic diversity. Of the eight current Justices, five of them were born in New York or New Jersey, and that number was six before Justice Scalia’s passing. Granted, Justice Kennedy is from the Commonwealth of Virginia, but much of Northern California is about as culturally western as Justice Breyer’s hometown of Boston.

The Supreme Court is in desperate need of a western perspective. Judge Gorsuch fits that bill. When I had the opportunity to meet Judge Gorsuch in my office last month, we discussed our respective western backgrounds. I talked to him about my days growing up on a cattle ranch in rural Arizona. He told me about his days spent with his family working on a ranch in New Mexico that he always considered a western ranch. He also told me about his home outside of Boulder, where his daughters raise and show chickens and goats. I was pleased to learn that each year he takes his law clerks to the Western Stock Show in Denver, home to the Nation’s largest rodeos. By now, I think we have all seen the picture of him fly fishing with Judge Scalia. While all this demonstrates how much he has embraced the western lifestyle, what makes Judge Gorsuch a true westerner is more than just where he lives or where his personal interests are. Judge Gorsuch’s western values are evident in his jurisprudence, which reflects a strong commitment to public service. Arizona has had its share of distinctively western senators. In fact, it was from this very desk that the late Barry Goldwater, one of Arizona’s favorite sons, steered the public policy debate.
for years after he chose to leave a successful career in the private sector. Judge Gorsuch’s career reflects the same ethos.

Early on, a young Neil Gorsuch rocketed to the top of the legal profession, becoming a partner in one of Washington’s most prestigious firms. A graduate of Yale Law School and of enjoying the comforts of a lucrative private sector career, he left it all behind for a high-responsibility, low-profile job at the Department of Justice.

After his time in D.C., Neil Gorsuch could have easily retired or returned to a white-shoe legal practice. Instead, he returned to his home State of Colorado to serve as a judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit. Throughout his tenure on the Federal bench, Judge Gorsuch’s western disposition has shine through in his jurisprudence.

I have already spoken of his skepticism toward the administrative state, with its executive bureaucracies, which, he reasons, “swallow huge amounts of core judicial and legislative power and concentrate Federal power in a way that seems more than a little difficult to square with the Constitution of the framers’ design.”

He shares a healthy skepticism over an overly intrusive and heavy-handed bureaucracy with millions of his Federal westerners. Judge Gorsuch recognizes how Federal regulations interfere with the ability of Western States to govern themselves, whether it is a former administration’s Clean Power Plan, its ozone rules, or even management of the Mexican gray wolf.

In numerous opinions, Judge Gorsuch has given voice to many of the frustrations experienced by his western neighbors. From his criticism of an overly assertive DC court that often feels compelled to intervene from 2,000 miles away to his recognition of excessive litigation that arises from the complexity of property rights out West, he speaks our language.

These are perspectives any westerner is familiar with, but they may not be obvious to others, including folks from New York and New Jersey. If confirmed, Judge Gorsuch will already bring generational and religious diversity to the Court. Perhaps more than anything, it will be his western perspective that most enriches the debate in the years to come.

As I have said before, Judge Gorsuch deserves fair consideration by those who serve in this body, and he deserves an up-or-down vote on the Senate floor. He should be confirmed overwhelmingly, and I am confident that he will be.

Joining us on the floor today are several members of the Senate from Western States. I see that the Senator from Wyoming has joined us. I think he has some thoughts about Neil Gorsuch and his nomination to the Court.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, joining my colleague here on the floor, I agree with all of the comments the Senator from Arizona has made. They are interesting because as to the history of the State of the Senator from Arizona and his family history, Judge Gorsuch has a similar history, to the point that a great-grandfather of his lived in Wyoming. I found a picture of that hotel from 1878, which was 12 years before Wyoming became a State. I got that picture from the hotel. As I said why I tried to visit the University of Wyoming and got a copy of the picture and gave it to Judge Gorsuch.

In front of the hotel in 1878, there was a stagecoach with six horses lined up ahead of it. The Wolf Hotel was a halfway stop on the stagecoach line between a couple of communities in Wyoming. They were about 40 miles apart. So that is the heritage from which Judge Gorsuch comes.

I think the western heritage is important. But I think that additionally important is what the Senator referred to—his judicial temperament, being such a mainstream member of the judiciary, and this general belief inherent within him of a judge is to apply the law, not to legislate from the bench.

We have seen so much legislating from the bench. I think you just don’t get that if you take somebody from the Rocky Mountain West who has this view of the Nation and an understanding of the rule of law and the Constitution.

So I think we are going to see that when the Senate Judiciary Committee begins its hearings next week on Judge Gorsuch’s nomination to the Supreme Court. I visited with him, reviewed his writings, and then compared it to what I saw when I visited with Justice Scalia when he came to Wyoming. The Senator from Arizona mentioned the picture of the two working together, fishing together.

I just think he is the right person to continue that incredible legacy of Justice Scalia.

Mr. FLAKE. Will the Senator yield?

Mr. BARRASSO. Yes.

Mr. FLAKE. You point out the sensitivities that you have when you come from the West. A lot of it has to do with, if you are in a rural area in particular, you are—as my family grew up—working on the land. Much of that land is either owned by or controlled by the State government, Tribal governments, or public lands. That is what we need now in 2017 on the U.S. Supreme Court. I believe he deserves an up-or-down vote. I believe he will be confirmed as people get a chance to see him, get to know him, get to know him better.

I see a couple of us joined on the floor by another colleague, also from the Rocky Mountain West, the Senator from Montana. You have heard from Arizona, Wyoming, and now Montana. I would ask him about his thoughts about this nomination by President of Neil Gorsuch to the Supreme Court.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.
Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, I want to thank my esteemed colleague from Wyoming, Senator BARRASSO, for his comments. He shared many of the same views I have.

As I think about the job I do as a Senator, one of the most important jobs we have as Senators is approving a Supreme Court Justice. An Associate Justice of the Supreme Court can serve an average of 27 years. We think about Justice Scalia; he served 30 years. God willing, he probably will serve 30 years or more, perhaps. Think about that. My wife and I have four children. They are going through the college years and so forth. They are in their early and midtwenties. They will likely be grandparents when Judge Gorsuch wraps up his career on the Supreme Court, assuming he is approved.

That is why a decision like this about whom to vote for, whom to stand behind, whom to stand with is so important, it is for today, it is for our children and our grandchildren. The people want a Supreme Court Justice who does not legislate from the bench. The people want a Supreme Court Justice who upholds the rule of law and follows the Constitution. The people want a Supreme Court Justice with a record of constitutional jurisprudence and legal restraint to match what we saw from Justice Antonin Scalia.

The people want a Supreme Court Justice who understands that he is beneath the law, he is subject to the law. He is there to interpret the law, not to make the law. He clerked for Justice Byron White. He clerked for Justice Kennedy of the Supreme Court of the United States. In fact, in 2006, Judge Gorsuch was nominated by then-President Bush to the Tenth Circuit in Denver, CO. He was confirmed without any opposition, including the support of 11 current Democratic Senators. In fact, some of those Democrats included Harvard Law classmate Barack Obama, Vice President Joe Biden, and the current minority leader, CHUCK SCHUMER. During his time as a judge on the Tenth Circuit, he has built a solid reputation as a respected jurist with a very distinguished record.

One thing about serving on the Tenth Circuit Court for 10 years: You can run, but you can’t hide. He has left a track record. It is a consistent record of defending the Constitution, including respecting the separation of powers and respecting federalism and the Bill of Rights to protect every American from government overreach and government abuse.

When I had the opportunity to sit down with Judge Gorsuch, it was back in early February. We spoke about the rule of government and federalism. We spoke about the Second Amendment. We spoke about protecting life and upholding our civil liberties. We spoke about our shared western values, mine as a native Montanan, his as a native Coloradan, both of us westerners. I know he understands our way of life. He understands Montana values. In fact, his face lit up as we talked about the love of the outdoors and his passion for hiking and fishing.

As chairman of the Western Caucus, it is important to me to have someone who understands western values, someone who understands the impact the law and his decisions will have on the West as westerners, we fight to protect our Fourth Amendment rights. We champion federalism so that power not expressly given to the Federal Government in the Constitution is returned back to the States and to the people. We will tirelessly fight to protect the Second Amendment. These are western values.

By the way, the Second Amendment is not primarily about hunting. Our Founders were not thinking about deer hunting or elk hunting when they were discussing the Second Amendment. It was about liberty. It was about freedom. These are western values. Judge Gorsuch’s background shows that he recognizes and adheres to these values. He will uphold the law. He will rightfully check the administration and Congress when their actions are not done under the law, like President Obama’s EPA power plan or the WOTUS rule. These are actions that cripple western economies, and they are politically charged.

I would also like to mention that Senator CORY GARDNER of Colorado and I were just at the White House meeting, just an hour ago. We were at the White House meeting with over a dozen Tribes who represent hundreds of other Tribes, we were there to discuss our support for Neil Gorsuch to be a Supreme Court Justice. I can tell you, it was great to be there with one of my hometown Tribes from Montana, the CSKT. They have endorsed Neil 30 years. They understand that we need a mainstream, commonsense westerner on the Supreme Court.

By the way, when you look at Neil Gorsuch’s record on Indian Country issues, as a member of the Tenth Circuit Court for 10 years, he has a track record of ruling on some very complicated issues that face Indian Country. He understands sovereignty. That is very important. That is why you are seeing Tribes endorsing Judge Gorsuch. It is importantly that people people deserve nine members on the Supreme Court. Neil Gorsuch is the mainstream judge the American people want and deserve to fill out the Court.

I am looking forward to what will happen next week in those hearings. You are going to see a very, very bright, a very, very thoughtful, a very, very kind, and a very, very humble jurist who understands and upholds the rule of law. I am excited for our country that we have such a phenomenal nominee. I look forward to casting my vote to confirm him to the highest Court in our great country.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

Mr. MCCAIN. 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. MCCAIN. Mr. President, what is the parliamentary situation right now? The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate is considering the Coats nomination.

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, I understand that we will be voting in about 10 minutes; is that correct?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. That is correct, sir.

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, I have had the great honor and privilege of knowing the nominee to be our Director of National Intelligence for many years. In fact, I came to the House of Representatives in the election of 1984, and I had the honor of knowing Dan Coats beginning at that time.

As is well known, Dan Coats left the Senate and became our Ambassador to Germany, where he did an outstanding job. He came back to the U.S. Senate and served in this body with distinction and honor. Now he goes on to serve as the Director of National Intelligence.

I could argue that a dedicated, experienced, knowledgeable, and courageous Director of National Intelligence...
is now needed more than at any time that I can remember in the last many years.

With divisions within the intelligence community, there are challenges to the credibility of the intelligence community along the lines that I have been discussing. There are questions about the activities of the intelligence community. For example, the President of the United States alleges that Trump Tower was “wiretapped,” in his words, by the previous administration, and we see the former Director of National Intelligence both before the Congress and on national television stating that those allegations are not true.

There are probably more questions and more controversy surrounding our intelligence services than at any time since anyone can remember, since Watergate. So this is a perfect time, in my view, for Dan Coats to assume the highest responsibilities of our Director of National Intelligence. He has the respect and indeed affection of Members on both sides of the aisle because of his successful efforts at working in a bipartisan fashion. He served on the Intelligence Committee. He served on that committee in a very dedicated and knowledgeable fashion.

I hope my colleagues will unanimously vote in favor of our former colleague. Both sides of the aisle know him, and we know him well. I wish I had some of his qualities of congeniality. He has always been respectful of other views. Even in the fiercest debates that we might have, he has always been respectful of those who disagree. So he comes to the job with the much needed credibility that will make him immediately effective.

Let’s be frank. The intelligence communities are probably under greater attack in a whole variety of ways, both on whether the American people trust them to do the job that they are doing or whether they have become a partisan organization. I think that with the respect and appreciation and affection that those of us who had the privilege of knowing him—on both sides of the aisle—and knowing what an honorable and decent person he is, he will not only serve as an effective Director of National Intelligence, but he will serve to restore credibility.

God knows we need credibility at this time as we see the Russians trying to affect the outcome of our election, as we see today the Russians trying to affect the French election and possibly the German election, as we see unprecedented cyber attacks—more than at any time in the past. With the challenge of cyber alone, where our adversaries or our potential adversaries are equal to or even, in some cases, more capable of exercising their abilities and capabilities in the cyber realm, then we are in a very difficult and challenging struggle.

That is why I think that many times in history, not only does the man make the job but the job makes the man. I am confident, in the case of Senator Dan Coats, that will be the case.

I thank the Democratic leader for allowing this vote to take place so Dan Coats can get to work immediately.

I urge my colleagues to offer their support with their vote for this nomination of a great and good gentleman who has volunteered to serve his Nation, for which all of us should be appreciative, and I am sure we are.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill 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. Without objection, I so order.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. ALEXANDER), the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. COOK), and the Senator from Georgia (Mr. ISAKSON).

Further, if present and voting, the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. ALEXANDER) would have voted “yea” and the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. COOK) would have voted “nay.”

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

The result was announced—yeas 85, nays 12, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 89 Ex.]

YEAS—85

Barrasso
Benner
Blumenthal
Burr
Brown
Cantwell
Capito
Cardin
Carper
Casey
Cassidy
Cochran
Collins
Cochrane
Corker
Coxon
Cromartie
Cotton
Crapo
Cruz
Daines
Donnelly
Durbin
Enzi
Ernst
Feinstein
Fischer
Flake
Franke
Gardner
Graham
Grassley
Hassen
Hatch
Hirono
Jackson
Kaine
Kennedy
King
Klobuchar
Lankford
Leahy
Lee
Manchin
McCain
McCaskill
McConnell
McCrery
Merkley
Markowski
Murphy
Nelson
Perdue
Peters
Portman
Perdue
Risch
Robert
Ron Wyden
Rubio
Sasse
Schatz
Schumer
Scott
Shelby
Shabazz
Strange
Sullivan
Tester
Thune
Tillis
Toomey
Van Hollen
Warner
Whitehouse
Wicker
Young

NAYS—12

Baldwin
Booker
Duckworth
Gillibrand
Harris
Markley
Merkley
Paul
Sanders
 Udall
Warren
Wyden

NOT VOTING—3

Alexander
Corker
Isakson

The nomination was confirmed. The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona, Mr. MCCAIN, Mr. President, I move to reconsider the vote, and I move to table the motion to reconsider the PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to. Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to address the Senate for 1 minute.

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

nomination of Herbert M. McMaster

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, I urge my colleagues to render an “aye” vote for the nomination of Herbert McMaster to remain in active duty at the three-star level. He is experienced. He is talented. He knows what it is like to be in combat with the enemy, and I believe he is badly needed in this important position. I urge my colleagues to render an “aye” vote.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The bill clerk read the nomination of Lt. Gen. Herbert R. McMaster, Jr., to be Lieutenant General in the United States Army while assigned to a position of importance and responsibility under title 10, U.S.C., section 601.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the cloture motion is withdrawn.

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

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. ALEXANDER), the Senator from Wyoming (Mr. BARRASSO), the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. COOK), and the Senator from Georgia (Mr. ISAKSON).

Further, if present and voting, the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. ALEXANDER) would have voted “yea,” and the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. COOK) would have voted “nay.”

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

The result was announced—yeas 86, nays 10, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 89 Ex.]
March 15, 2017

CONGRESSIONAL RECORD — SENATE

[Rollcall Vote No. 90 Ex.]

YEAS—96

Baldwin Drake Paul
Bennet Franken Perdue
Blumenthal Gardner Peters
Blunt Graham Porter
Boozman Grassley Reed
Brown Hatch Risch
Burk Kaine Sasse
Cantwell Heinrich Rounds
Capito Hoeven Schatz
Cardin Booker Shumer
Cardno Collins Shelby
Coons King Stabenow
Coryn Klobuchar Strange
Cortez Masto Lasak Sullivan
Cotton Leahy Tester
Crapo Lee Thune
Cruz Manchin Tillis
Daines McCain Toomey
Donnelly McConnell Udall
Durbin Menendez Van Hollen
Durbin Moran Warner
Etest Markowski Whitehouse
Ernst Murphy Wicker
Feinstein Murray Wyden
Fischer Nelson Young

NAYS—10

Alexander Corker Schumer
Barrasso Cassidy Warren
Baucus McCaskill Wicker
Harris Merkley Wyden
Hirono Sanders

NOT VOTING—4

Alexander Cassidy
Barrasso Insko

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Colorado.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. REED. Mr. President, I voted to support Lieutenant General H.R. McMaster retaining the grade of lieutenant general while serving as the National Security Advisor to the President. To be clear, this vote was to permit Lieutenant General McMaster to remain in the grade of lieutenant general while serving in this position. It is not to confirm him as the National Security Advisor.

Lieutenant General McMaster was appointed by the President to a position that does not require Senate confirmation. Indeed, he is already serving as National Security Advisor. The only remaining question is whether he will serve in the military grade of lieutenant general on Active Duty.

The position of National Security Advisor is one of the most important in our government. Not only does it require someone capable of providing timely and thoughtful counsel on national security matters, it entails coordinating advice and action across multiple executive agencies with responsibilities in the national security arena. Further, it necessitates a large measure of independence and knowledge.

This is not the first time we have considered an Active-Duty military officer for this position. Lieutenant General McMaster would be the third such officer to so serve, following Admiral John Poindexter under President Reagan and General Colin Powell under President George Herbert Walker Bush.

As Senator Sam Nunn described the question with respect to the nomination of then-Lieutenant General Powell, in Senator Nunn’s words, “A military officer who knows that his next promotion depends on the Secretary of Defense and the top generals and admirals in the Pentagon may simply not, over a period of time, be able to make completely objective decisions based on the facts available to him, his pay, and his future depend on one department, and that one department is an active player in the government.”

This question centers on Lieutenant General McMaster’s ability to retain the necessary measure of independence as he discharges his duties to the President. I ultimately believe, after careful consideration, that Lieutenant General McMaster will be able to balance these roles and provide advice and direction to the President’s son-in-law, Mr. Kushner, in regard to the retention of a key intelligence analyst who had been brought in by Major General Flynn. This is a worrisome sign that Lieutenant General McMaster might have a title and responsibilities but not the authority he needs. I indeed hope he has that authority and exercises it wisely.

I would also like to note that there have been reports about decisions Lieutenant General McMaster made as Commanding General at Fort Benning in allowing lieutenants under his command to attend schools while being investigated for allegations of sexual misconduct. I want to assure my colleagues that the Committee held a closed and classified executive session with Lieutenant General McMaster present to answer all our questions. The Committee thoroughly considered the facts and voted to confirm his third star by a strong bipartisan vote.

We are again taking a rather extraordinary step in voting on an Active-Duty military officer to serve as National Security Advisor for the first time in 25 years, but these are extraordinary times. Our Nation faces complex national security challenges, and 3 months into a new administration, we are on a second National Security Advisor already. We have an organized National Security Council and an enormous number of vacancies in the State and Defense Departments.

Lieutenant General McMaster has the opportunity to bring order to the chaos. Therefore, I believe the Senate should confirm his grade of Lieutenant General while he serves as National Security Advisor.
I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I take this time to talk about the Republican American Health Care Act that was released, I guess, about a week or two ago, affectionately known as TrumpCare. I start by saying, what is this legislation trying to achieve? When I listen to the Republicans talk about why they have introduced this bill, what their concern is with the Affordable Care Act, they usually mention their No. 1 concern is to deal with the increased premium costs that Americans have had under the Affordable Care Act. They normally will point to the individual marketplace, where increases in premium costs as the market has adjusted to the ratings of those who entered the individual marketplace.

So it was very interesting, as I took a look at the Congressional Budget Office analysis of what the Republican TrumpCare bill would do. The Congressional Budget Office, let me remind my colleagues, is the objective scorekeeper. The leader of the Congressional Budget Office was appointed by the Republican leadership. It is the professional career people who make their best judgment of the impact of legislation that we are considering.

Remember, the Republicans have said their principal objective is to bring down the cost, particularly for those entering the individual marketplace, but according to the Congressional Budget Office, in 2018-19, the average rate in the individual marketplace will increase by 15 to 20 percent. Let me say that again. The Congressional Budget Office tells us the premium increases under TrumpCare will increase for the individual 15 to 20 percent.

Now, that could be a lot higher. That is the average. So let me give you the numbers. When we are looking at age, with an income of $26,500, under the Affordable Care Act, you would pay $1,700 in premiums. Under TrumpCare, you would pay $14,600, or a 750-percent increase. That would equal to about 55 percent of your income in the health insurance premiums. Obviously, that is not affordable. A person of that age and income would have no ability to purchase insurance at an affordable rate under the American Health Care Act or TrumpCare.

Let me take a look at some other reasons why we may be looking at this repeal-and-replacement bill. I listened to the President. I listened to my colleagues, and they say, first, they want to make sure they do no harm, that everyone will be at least as well off as they are today, and that there would be more choice to the consumers in buying health insurance.

Once again, I point to the Congressional Budget Office, the objective scorekeepers. What would happen if TrumpCare were enacted? What would happen as far as individuals who currently have health insurance today? According to the Congressional Budget Office, next year, 2018, there would be 14 million less people insured than there are under the Affordable Care Act. If you project that out to 2026, they indicate there would be 24 million more people who would lose their insurance.

Let me quote from The Baltimore Sun in this morning’s editorial, where they pointed out that number: Twenty-four million would equal all the residents of Utah, Mississippi, Arkansas, Nevada, West Virginia, Idaho, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Alaska, Wyoming combined would have no insurance coverage. That is what 24 million represent in America. Clearly, this bill is designed to do no harm because 24 million more Americans will certainly be in worse shape.

Then I heard the President talk about the fact that he wants to do no harm to the Medicare Program or the Medicaid Program. I took a look again at what this bill does in regard to Medicare because the bill repeals the tax on high income; that is, there is currently in law a tax for unearned income above $250,000, a tax that goes into the Medicare trust fund, Part A. The TrumpCare repeals that tax. Therefore, the Medicare trust fund doesn’t get the income. That would reduce the solvency of the Medicare trust fund by 3 years, jeopardizing the Medicare system. Clearly, if this bill was aimed at not hurting Medicare, it hasn’t achieved that purpose.

Let’s talk a little about Medicaid. What does this bill do to Medicaid? According to the Congressional Budget Office, it shifts hundreds of billions of dollars from the Federal Government to our States. Our States clearly cannot handle that. I have heard from my Governor, I am sure my colleagues heard from our other Governors, There are 28,000 Marylanders who have received insurance coverage as a result of the Medicaid expansion under the Affordable Care Act. They very well would lose their coverage.

What does that mean? Well, they better stay well because they are not going to get preventive healthcare covered by insurance. They are less likely to get their preventive healthcare services and the screenings, and, yes, they will return once again to use the emergency room of hospitals as their last resort in order to get their family’s healthcare needs—to the most expensive way to get healthcare in our Nation.

With the elimination of essential health benefits for Medicaid expansion enrollees, what does that mean? That means the Medicaid population—which in Maryland is hundreds of thousands going to—would lose their essential health benefits, which includes mental health and addiction services.

We are in the midst of an opioid drug addiction epidemic in America. I have traveled my entire State and have had roundtables with law enforcement and health officials, and they tell me about the growing number of addictions in their community. One of the things they need to do is to be able to get people care and treatment, and we are saying we are going to cut off treatment for the people who don’t have health insurance. TrumpCare would do, cutting off those benefits.

This bill would shift costs. What do I mean by that? Well, it adds costs to the healthcare system. If an individual is healthy and enters into the healthcare system the way they should, it is a lot less costly than entering our healthcare system in a more acute fashion or using our emergency rooms rather than using healthcare providers who are a lot less expensive and more efficient.

So we are going to add to the cost of our healthcare system because of inefficiencies. Many times that extra cost is not paid for by those who have no health insurance; the fact is, it becomes part of what we call uncompensated care. We had that before the Affordable Care Act. With the increase in uncompensated care, all of us who have insurance will pay more because we are going to pay for the people who don’t have health insurance, who use the healthcare system and don’t pay for the healthcare system. That is a formula for extra costs for all of us.

This legislation would be an attack on women’s healthcare. It would attack and eliminate not only the funding for Planned Parenthood, which is critically important in many parts of our country where they are the only healthcare provider for women’s healthcare needs, but it would eliminate essential health benefits for Medicaid expansion enrollees, which include maternal health. Those guarantees that exist today would no longer be there. With the pressure on the States, it is unlikely that they would be able to maintain the same degree of coverage for our women. Women are more likely to be vulnerable and on Medicaid.

It is an attack on our elderly. I have already talked about Medicare solvency, reducing Medicare solvency by 3 years, but there are more attacks than that. Over half—I think it is 60 to 65 percent of the cost of Medicaid goes to senior care, long-term care or to care
for individuals with disabilities. Most families in America get their costs covered for long-term care through Medicaid. The States are not going to be able to maintain the same level of coverage with the loss of hundreds of billions of dollars from the Federal government. As we are increasing the income eligibility for long-term care insurance, it is important that individuals with disabilities will be in jeopardy of losing a lot of their long-term care coverage.

The legislation, TrumpCare, increases the loss ratios for older people from 3 to 1 to 5 to 1. That increases the cost for older Americans. The CBO has consistently erred on the high side for ObamaCare enrollment estimates years ago when it was reasonable to expect a significant number of illegal voters’ casting ballots in the last election. The TrumpCare enrollment estimates were closer to being on the nose than those produced by the CBO’s fellow forecasters at the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services and RAND Corporation.

Once again, Mr. Trump and his minions have been caught making up facts. The President promised the ObamaCare replacement would provide insurance for everyone and it would be less expensive. Nobody can make that claim about TrumpCare. As the CBO points out, premiums will rise 15-20 percent overall for the first two years, and more for older Americans.

The American public expects us to work together to improve our healthcare system. Instead of repealing and replacing the Affordable Care Act with this legislation that will put us in much worse shape, we should be looking at how we can build on the progress we have already made under the Affordable Care Act.

Yes, we can bring down costs. Let’s bring down costs by taking on the cost of prescription drugs. We know that Americans overpay on prescription drugs. There is no reason for a pharmacy benefit manager to overcharge for a prescription. We need Congress and the states to pass legislation using an independent purchasing model.

Yes, we should have more competition with insurance carriers. Why not have a public option and see how well the private companies can compete with a public option?

Yes, we can improve the way we deliver care and make it more cost-effective. We need to stop the overutilization of health services and encourage people to get care they may need in a timely manner, which has consistently misled American citizens. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MCCAIN. 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. MCCAIN. Mr. President, I am pleased to be in the company of the distinguished Senator from Maryland. Mr. CARDIN, the ranking member on the Foreign Relations Committee and one who is most knowledgeable on issues of national security and foreign policy. I believe that Senator SHAHEEN from New Hampshire will be joining us.

This is an issue that I am sorry has to be brought up in this fashion. It concerns a little country that wants to be a part of the European Union, that wants to be a part of the values, customs, and ideals of the West and has been under significant pressure and even assault from Russia.

In fact, although it wasn’t as recognized as it should have been at the time, Russia has sought to keep Montenegro from becoming a NATO member, launching an anti-NATO campaign that has been both insidious and scurrilous. Russia has exerted outsized influence to stop Montenegro’s membership, calling further NATO enlargement a “provocation.” Russia went so far as to plot a coup d’état in which they planned to assassinate the Montenegrin Prime Minister and seize control of government buildings in the capital. I repeat: The Russians tried a coup in Montenegro. They wanted to kill the Prime Minister and overthrow the government in order to keep Montenegro from becoming a part of NATO.

If we send this clear message to Russia that it won’t have veto power over NATO enlargement decisions—and, frankly, I am puzzled that there is any objection to this, considering the fact that Montenegro has spent the last 7 years preparing for NATO eligibility. This has strengthened the country’s defense and intelligence forces and transformed the country into a strong Western ally.

It is a small country and a beautiful country, but it is an important Balkan nation. Its membership in NATO would improve the stability in the region, where, I know my colleagues would agree, there is great instability. Stopping Montenegro’s NATO candidacy would represent a significant shift in U.S. policy and signify an acquiescence to Moscow’s growing influence in the Balkans, producing a ripple effect throughout the region that would have profound ramifications on our shared security and stability in Europe, and the foundation of that

MONTENEGRO’S ACCESSION INTO NATO

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, I am pleased to be in the company of the distinguished Senator from Maryland. Mr. CARDIN, the ranking member on the Foreign Relations Committee and one who is most knowledgeable on issues of national security and foreign policy. I believe that Senator SHAHEEN from New Hampshire will be joining us.
peace and stability is NATO. That is why we should stand with Montenegro or risk undermining our vision of a Europe that is whole, free, and at peace. I see my two colleagues here, Senator CARDIN and Senator SHAHEEN. So I will conclude by saying this. This is a small country. This is a small country that has been the scene of conflict for centuries. This is a small country with a freely elected democratic government. This is a small country whose population wants to be part of NATO. They want to be part of the West. If we keep turning this down after 25 of the 28 governments in NATO have voted in favor of Montenegro’s accession to NATO, my friends, we would be sending a terrible, terrible message.

So in a few minutes, I will ask unanimous consent for us, as the U.S. Senate, to move forward with treaty consent.

First, I would like to yield to my colleague from Maryland, Senator CARDIN.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, first let me thank Senator McCAIN for his strong leadership on this issue and so many issues that deal with U.S. national security.

Montenegro is a small country, but the principle that no non-NATO country can veto accession into NATO is very much a major national security issue for the United States. Make no mistake about it. Russia is trying to interfere with Montenegro’s accession into NATO.

I am also pleased to hear from Senator SHAHEEN, who has been one of the great leaders in the Senate on our European transatlantic relations, and I know how strongly she feels. I just want to underscore points that Senator McCAIN made. I am the ranking Democrat on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and the Senate Foreign Relations Committee did approve unanimously by voice vote the accession of Montenegro into NATO. The Presiding Officer was part of that discussion, and I thank him for his help in moving this issue forward.

This is not a controversial issue among the Members of the Senate or the Congress. This is something that should have been done by now. As Senator McCAIN has pointed out, 25 of the 28 member states have already ratified the protocol, according to their own procedures. The Senate must act.

On the one hand, the 2016 NATO summit in Warsaw was bolstering NATO’s resilience and its capacity to deter Russian aggression against NATO’s eastern flank. At that summit, NATO invited Montenegro to become its 29th member.

As Senators McCAIN and CARDIN have already said, Russia is opposed to Montenegro’s accession into NATO. It has warned Montenegro of retaliation if it pursues NATO membership. Furthermore, there is evidence that what that retaliation looked like.

During Montenegro’s general election last October, 20 people were arrested on suspicion of plotting, with support from Russia, to overthrow the government and assassinate the Prime Minister—all because he has supported NATO accession.

When we were in Munich for the security conference a couple of weeks ago, Senator McCAIN and I and the congresional delegation that was there heard from Montenegro’s Prime Minister Djukanovic, who talked about what he experienced from the Russians and about the Russian effort to overthrow his government, a duly elected democracy.

Just last month, their chief special prosecutor announced that his government had evidence that Russia’s Federal Security Service was involved in a failed coup.

Mr. President, I have two news articles about this story that I ask unanimous consent be printed in the RECORD so that everybody understands that it is very clear what is going on. Without being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From CNN, Feb. 21, 2017]

**MONTENEGRO: RUSSIA INVOLVED IN ATTEMPTED COUP**

(by Milena Veselinovic and Darran Simon)

Montenegro's chief special prosecutor has told a local TV station authorities believe Russian security services were involved in a plot to kidnap the country's then-prime minister and overthrow the government last October.

Militivoje Katnic said Montenegro officials have evidence that Russia’s Federal Security Service was involved in a plot to stop Montenegro from joining the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, or NATO. “Behind these events are nationalist structures from Russia, but we now know that certain Russian state authorities were involved also on a certain level,” Katnic said.

Katnic said the alleged mastermind behind the failed coup was a man named Eduard Sismakov, who is a former deputy Russian military attaché in Poland. Sismakov was deported to Russia for espionage in 2014, according to the prosecutor.

According to Katnic, Sismakov is also known as Eduard Shirikov, and was issued a passport with the different name by Russian authorities. “The passport was given to him by certain Russian state bodies under another name, and he is a member of the Russian military structures.” Katnic said Sismakov’s real name is Eduard Sismakov, that is his personal identity and we will charge him under that personal identity.”

Katnic added: “It is clear that the passport could not have been issued under another name as well as everything else—sending to Serbia, organizing everything—without the involvement of certain structures.”

The Interpol Red Notice says Sismakov—listed under the name Eduard Shirikov—pre pared acts against the then-prime minister and security of Montenegro. The Interpol Red Notice is an international database of suspects that is shared with other law enforcement agencies. Sismakov’s country of birth is listed as Russia.

Katnic said another alleged plotter is Vladimir Popov. Popov, who is of Russian origin, is also wanted by Interpol for the same acts, according to the Interpol Red Notice.

Katnic said another alleged plotter, Nemanja Ristic, was involved in the coup attempt, and Ristic has said he was connected to Russia’s Federal Security Service. His task was to recruit a team to send to Montenegro to execute the coup, Katnic said. Katnic, who wanted to halt for attempted terrorism, according to Interpol’s Red Notice.

The Kremlin’s spokesman, Dmitry Peskov, on Monday dismissed the allegations.

“Day after day, we are faced with absurd accusations about Russia. Day after day we...
deny those accusations. We say absolutely that there cannot be talk about the official involvement of Moscow in the internal events in Montenegro. Russia does not get involved in situations that are especially in such countries as Montenegro with which we have a very good relationship," Peskov said during a conference call with journalists.

Montenegro is in accession talks to join the alliance after NATO formally invited the southeastern European county in December 2015.

At the time, Russian President Vladimir Putin called the incident "an enemy act." The ratification process for Montenegro to join NATO is in its final stages, according to NATO.

[From the Guardian, Nov. 11, 2016]

SERRA DEPORTS RUSSIANS SUSPECTED OF PLOTTING MONTENEGRO COUP

Serbia has deported a group of Russians suspected of involvement in a coup plot in neighboring Montenegro, the Guardian has learned, in the latest twist in a murky sequence of events that apparently threatened the lives of two European prime ministers.

The plot was allegedly going to dress in police uniforms to storm the Montenegrin parliament in Podgorica, shoot the prime minister, Milo Djukanovic, and install a pro-Russian government.

The Russian fingerprints on the October plot have heightened intrigue about Moscow’s ambitions in a part of Europe hitherto thought to be gravitating towards the EU’s orbit.

A group of 20 Serbians and Montenegrins, some of whom had fought with Moscow-backed separatists in eastern Ukraine, were arrested in Podgorica, the Montenegrin capital. In Serbia, meanwhile, several Russian nationals suspected of coordinating the plot were caught with €120,000 and special forces uniforms.

According to a Belgrade daily, the Russians also have an encryption equipment and were able to keep track of Djukanovic’s whereabouts.

Diplomatic sources told the Guardian the Belgrade government quietly deported the Russians after the intervention of the head of the Russian security council, Nikolai Patrushev, who flew to Belgrade on 26 October in an official visit to contain the scandal.

The country’s interior minister Nebojsa Stefanovic denied the government carried out any deportations connected to the plot. A senior Belgrade government source said Patrushev, a former FSB (federal security service) chief, apologised for what he characterised as a rogue operation that did not have the Kremlin’s sanction. In Moscow, a Security Council official told Tass that Patrushev “did not apologise to anyone, because there is nothing to apologise for.”

The Serbian government was further rattled three days after Patrushev’s visit when a cache of arms was found near the home of Vucic’s car would normally slow down on his way to the house.

Stanovoj said there were ‘‘strong suspicions’’ that the crime was planned, and someone had been hired to kill Vucic for €10m, but he would not specify who was behind the alleged plot, saying further investigation would show whether people ‘‘outside the region’’ were involved.

“You know the people who don’t like a strong Serb president, they drove Vucic and who could contribute some money, €10m or so, to see this kind of thing done,’’ Stefanovic told the Guardian.

“Worse was the case of two agents who were potentially hired to do this kind of thing were from the region, but not from Serbia, and that there were crime groups that are operating in the region. But the motives for these were just the trigger persons,’’ the minister added.

“[We believe that] criminal gangs are just being used to do the job, but the motives are not linked to the gangs. The assassination of the prime minister is not something that even they would do lightly, we believe they are being used.’’

Since the discovery of the weapons, Vucic has announced plans to shake up the intelligence service, saying the security situation was “even more serious than we expected.’’

“There will be changes in the secret service,’’ he told the public broadcaster, RTS. “I believe in the skills of people who didn’t show that they have these capacities, but I’ll take responsibility for this.’’

It is unclear whether there is a connection between the assassination plots against Vucic and Djukanovic. But the intrigue of the past month comes against a backdrop of deep Russian involvement.

Djukanovic has been instrumental in pulling his country to the verge of NATO membership—an accession protocol was signed in May—which has dashed Russian hopes of securing a naval foothold on the Adriatic. According to the Montenegrin press, Moscow lobbied hard in recent years for transit and maintenance facilities at the ports of Bar and Kotor.

The importance of such facilities was demonstrated last month when a Russian carrier and its battle group was denied refueling in European ports along the way to support the Russian military effort in Syria. In Serbia, Vucic has been seeking a delicate balance between NATO and Russia, and the country’s armed forces have conducted military exercises with both, although far more recently in recent years with NATO.

Vucic has also granted diplomatic status to Russian officials staffing a Serbian-Russian humanitarian center established in the city of Nis in 2012, infuriating Moscow.

Western officials suspect the center of being a Trojan horse, which could expanded as a hub for intelligence and paramilitary operations in the region. Diplomatic status, they point out, would have allowed equipment to be brought in without oversight by Serbian customs.

Some analysts have suggested the operation could have been mounted as a “semi-freelance” one, giving enough distance from Moscow to be plausibly deniable if was uncovered.

“Both sides have an interest in playing this as a freelance, vigilante-type thing, it allows them both to save face. Whether that’s actually true is unclear. There’s simply not enough evidence either to support or disprove it,’’ said Vladimir Frolov, a Moscow-based analyst.

“Judging the amount of logistical and financial support they got, it looks likely they acted with at least a tacit understanding that this was sanctioned,’’ Frolov added.

In Albania, a few days after the would-be coup, a former intelligence officer, Leonid Reshetnikov, who ran a hawkish research institute in Moscow, was relieved of his duties by President Sali Berisha. Strategic Studies has a branch office in Belgrade, and Reshetnikov had given strong backing to

the anti-Nato opposition party in Montenegro.

A regional analyst who did not want to be named said his understanding from intelligence sources was that the incidents in the Balkans were probably linked to Russian attempts to gain influence and leverage in the Balkans in the run-up to an anticipated Hillary Clinton US trip, which was expected to take a harder line on Russian activity in the region.

In Moscow, the Russian foreign ministry took a dim view of this Guardian report on the Balkan events. Maria Zakharova, spokeswoman for the Russian foreign ministry wrote: “The publication in the Guardian is yet another link to ‘Russian nationalists’ who had planned to kill the prime minister of Montenegro is a classic provocation aimed at spreading knowingly false information.”

Mrs. SHAHEEN. The best thing we can do in the United States in the Senate is to approve Montenegro’s accession because that sends a very clear message to Russia that we are not going to put up with that kind of interference.

What I don’t understand is why anybody in this body wants to prevent us from approving this accession. Are we supporting Russia in its activities? Are they opposed to NATO? What is the deal here? They need to come forward and tell us why their objections are. Why aren’t they letting this go through? Why are they willing to stand up for Russia and not for Montenegro and not for Europe and not for the United States?

Those are the questions that I have, and I want whoever objects to come to the floor and tell us why they are objecting, because Montenegro and our NATO partners deserve at least that much.

It is now time to stand up strong for Montenegro, for their right to self-determination, for their right to join NATO, for the West and for NATO. I hope that we are all able to get this through this afternoon.

I will defer to my colleague from Arizona to make the unanimous consent request.

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, I want to thank the Senator from New Hampshire and the Senator from Maryland. This issue probably doesn’t matter a lot to many of our voters. It probably is not something that is uppermost in their minds. But because of your hard work here in the Senate and your in-depth knowledge of the issues and challenges that face this country, in what is arguably the most uncertain and turbulent time in the last 70 years, you have taken the time and the effort to learn about this small country, this small beautiful country whose only wish, whose only desire is to be a part of our community of NATO so that they can come under the umbrella of protection and move forward with a thriving democracy in a very volatile part of Europe.

I want to especially thank Senator SHAHEEN and Senator CARDIN for their advocacy, affection, and appreciation.
of the citizens of the small country who are only seeking what we sometimes take so much for granted. So I especially want to thank them.

I also want to thank the chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, Senator McCain, also was very involved in getting this through.

So, Mr. President, if there is objection—and I note that the Senator from Kentucky is on the floor, and I will say before I read this, if there is objection, you will be hearing the objectives of Vladimir Putin. You are achieving the objectives of trying to dismember this small country that has already been the subject of an attempted coup.

I have no idea why anyone would object to this, except that I will say, if they object, they are now carrying out the desires and ambitions of Vladimir Putin, and I do not say that lightly.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

So, Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that at a time to be determined by the majority leader, in consultation with the Democratic leader, the Senate proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 1. Montenegro, Treaty Document No. 114–12; that it be considered as having advanced through the various parliamentary stages up to and including the presentation of the resolution of ratification; that any committee declarations be agreed to as applicable; that there be no amendments in order to the treaty or the resolution of ratification; that there be 2 hours for debate, equally divided in the usual form; that upon the use or yielding back of time, the Senate proceed to vote on the resolution; that any statements be printed in the RECORD; that if the resolution of ratification is agreed to, the treaty be considered as having come into force; that if the resolution of ratification is agreed to as applicable; that the presentation of the resolution of ratification be agreed to; that the treaty be considered as having entered into force of Montenegro that Senator Shaheen, Senator Cardin, and I, and many other Senators, will not stop until this resolution is passed and we can strengthen not only Montenegro the nation and NATO, but the region.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

Mr. Cardin. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

SUBSTANCE MISUSE CRISIS

Ms. Hassan. Mr. President, I rise to deliver my first official speech on the Senate floor. I begin by saying how deeply grateful I am to the people of New Hampshire for the great trust they have bestowed upon me.

I come from a State that combines rugged individualism with a strong sense of community. It is what I often call our “all hands on deck” approach, where we come together, we pitch in, and we help our friends and neighbors when they need it.

Right now, we see this approach each and every day with those on the front lines of our State’s devastating substance misuse crisis. Law enforcement officials, medical professionals, and citizens in every corner of our State are working together to turn the tide on this deadly epidemic. The heroin, opioid, and fentanyl crisis is the most pressing public health and safety challenge facing New Hampshire. This epidemic takes a massive toll on our communities, our workforce, and our economy. I know it: It is ravaging other States all across our Nation too.

This crisis does not discriminate. It affects people in every community and from all walks of life. In 2016 alone, roughly 500 people in New Hampshire lost their lives to this epidemic, and the spread of synthetic drugs, like fentanyl, is increasing dramatically the number of lives lost and
is killing people faster with smaller amounts of drugs. Last year, more than 70 percent of confirmed New Hampshire drug deaths involved fentanyl. Lives are at stake, so every Member of this body must come together and put partisan politics aside to get results for our people.

The people of my State have a long tradition of sharing their stories and making their priorities known to the elected officials who represent them, and I plan to go. I hear stories from those who have been affected by this crisis. I hear inspiring stories from those in recovery who are working to put their lives back together, and I hear tragic stories from siblings, parents, and friends who know the pain of having a loved one taken from them far too soon. All of these stories are critical in breaking down the stigma of addiction and pushing for solutions. Instead of simply writing in an obituary that a loved one died suddenly, more and more families, including the families of one of my son’s high school classmates, are speaking out and telling the painful stories of addiction and loss.

Last year, at our annual Easter egg hunt that I hosted as Governor, I was approached by a woman on our statehouse lawn who was carrying a baby. After I took a picture and I admired the baby, she pulled me aside and said the little boy she was holding was not her son but her grandson and that his mother had died from an overdose 1 month earlier. She was there on the day before Easter, as we celebrated our spring ritual of renewal and hope, and shared that pain with me so we could move forward to help others in her situation.

Just this week, on Monday, I met with a man named Phil, from Laconia, who is now in recovery. Phil said that over a year and a half ago, he had lost his job and everything because of his substance use disorder. Now, thanks, in part, to the fact that he was able to gain coverage through the Affordable Care Act’s Medicaid expansion. Phil is substance-free. He has gone on to become a recovery coach, and he helped found a recovery center in Laconia, where he works to help others with the same challenges he had.

We can never thank those in recovery and those who have lost loved ones enough for speaking out about this issue and for working tirelessly and courageously to try to prevent others from suffering as they have, but while thanking them is appropriate, it is not enough. The bravery of survivors and those in recovery need to be marked by our constant vigilance and by urgent action.

I am grateful to the Senators who have been true leaders on this issue, especially my fellow Senator from New Hampshire, Jeanne Shaheen, who has fought tirelessly to secure funding to combat this crisis and help the people of our State. The passage of the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act was an important step, as was the 21st Century Cures Act, which included some funding to fight the opioid epidemic. The Cures Act will not provide enough funding for our State, and I will continue fighting, alongside Senator Shaheen, that the Federal Government provides New Hampshire with the resources we need.

I am pleased that there has been bipartisan support for combating this crisis in the Senate, but we must continue to commit ourselves to our government and with those on the front lines to battle this crisis.

During my time as a member of the National Governors Association, I worked with my fellow Governors from both parties to push for steps, including passing emergency Federal funding to support States’ efforts to combat this crisis, and at the State level in New Hampshire, we proved that we could come together to implement a comprehensive, all-hands-on-deck strategy to support those on the front lines and help save lives.

During my time as Governor, we secured $5 million in additional State funding for treatment, prevention, recovery, and housing programs. We worked together to provide law enforcement with additional resources through a program called Operation Granite Hammer. We expanded drug courts throughout New Hampshire, and we were able to join hands on fentanyl. In order to prevent the overprescribing of opioids, we took steps to improve provider training and update the rules for prescribers.

Critically, Republicans and Democrats put their differences aside and came together to pass and reauthorize the New Hampshire Health Protection Program, also known as Medicaid expansion. Passing and reauthorizing this program included healthy debate and, at times, very heated argument. What matters is that after those debates, we were able to take this essential step forward to continue strengthening our families, our businesses, and our economy.

Medicaid expansion is providing quality, affordable health coverage to over 50,000 Granite Staters, including coverage for behavioral, health, and substance use disorder treatment. Thousands of people have received addiction treatment after gaining coverage through the Medicaid expansion program in New Hampshire. What is clear and what I hear from people in recovery centers all across my State is that lives are being changed and saved as a result of Medicaid expansion.

Take, for example, Ashley, of Dover, NH. I first met Ashley at the Farnum Center in Manchester, and I have been inspired by her story ever since. Ashley is living proof of the positive impact of Medicaid expansion.

Ashley had struggled for nearly a decade with heroin addiction, during which time she was arrested, her husband died from an overdose, and she lost the custody of her young child. Yet, as a result of her courage, perseverance, and the treatment she received for her substance use disorder under Medicaid expansion, Ashley’s story is one of progress. She has been in recovery for over a year now, employed, is working at Safe Harbor Recovery Center to help others who are struggling with addiction, and has moved to employer-sponsored insurance coverage.

It was an honor to have Ashley attend the President’s joint address to Congress as my guest of honor, and I will continue to carry her story with me in these Chambers and beyond.

It is not just in New Hampshire. Republican Governors and some of my Republican colleagues in the Senate have made clear just how critical Medicaid expansion is to their States. As the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities has found, 2.8 million people with substance use disorders, including 220,000 with opioid disorders, have coverage under the Affordable Care Act. That is real and essential progress, but we know we have far more work to do. I am committed to working with Members of both parties in the Senate to continue building on these efforts.

What we cannot afford to do, however, is to allow a partisan agenda to pull us backward. I am extremely concerned about the effect that legislation introduced by House Republicans last week—also known as TrumpCare—would have on our efforts to combat substance misuse. Make no mistake, this legislation would end Medicaid expansion, which experts have said is the most important tool available to fight the substance misuse crisis. This plan also cuts and caps the traditional Medicaid Program, which means States will be forced to either raise taxes or cut eligibility and coverage. As a former Governor, I know full well the impact the decisions in Washington can have on our communities. Repealing Medicaid expansion and caps on traditional Medicaid will severely hurt the ability of those on the front lines to save lives and combat this deadly epidemic.

Substance use disorder treatment providers have been clear that if Medicaid expansion is repealed, they will have to significantly cut back on the help they can provide to those in need. To pull the rug out from millions of people across the country who are seeking a lifeline from the throes of addiction is unconscionable. We cannot let that happen.

In addition to making the substance misuse crisis worse, TrumpCare would affect countless others across New Hampshire and America. We are working with individuals who buy their own insurance who would see their premiums skyrocket to older Americans who would now be forced to pay an age tax, to women and families who would be hurt by the provisions that defunds Planned Parenthood.

We know there is more work to do to improve and build on the Affordable
Care Act, but this TrumpCare bill is not the answer, and I am working with my colleagues to fight against this legislation.

Furthermore, I am working on additional legislation that would help combat this substance misuse crisis. I joined Senator Portman in introducing the STOP Act, bipartisan legislation that would help stop dangerous synthetic drugs like fentanyl and carfentanyl from being shipped through our borders to drug traffickers here in the United States. These synthetic drugs are only making this crisis more dangerous, causing a spike in deaths in New Hampshire and across the Nation. We must do everything possible to stop them from entering our country.

I joined a bipartisan group of colleagues, led by Senator Klobuchar, to introduce the SALTS Act, which would empower law enforcement to crack down on synthetic substances and better prosecute drug traffickers.

I also joined Senators Manchin, Shaheen, and several of our colleagues to reintroduce the LifeBOAT Act, which would establish a permanent funding stream to provide and expand access to treatment.

These are essential steps we need to take now. I will also continue evaluating additional legislative steps to support treatment, prevention, recovery, and law enforcement efforts. We know that this will not be easy.

The scourge of addiction requires us, at times, to change the way we have always done things at a quicker pace than is sometimes comfortable but that can never be an excuse for inaction.

Every day, I am reminded of the stories like those of the grandmother I met at the annual Easter egg hunt, Phil’s and Ashley’s, and those of the thousands in my State who continue to feel the effects of a crisis that is taking far too many lives. By making their voices heard, citizens in New Hampshire are breaking through the stigma of addiction and, in turn, are helping others seek the treatment and recovery they need. It is incumbent upon all of us to ensure that those critical services are there for them.

We must all continue to speak up and fight for those who are voiceless and those who continue to struggle. We must work towards policies that can truly make a difference because often when we reach out, people reach back, but if we are silent or if we allow the rug to be pulled out from under those seeking help, this epidemic will only get worse. It will devastate the families, our communities, and our businesses.

I am going to continue to fight to make progress, and I am willing to work with anyone to help those struggling to get the treatment they need and to support all of the dedicated professionals who are on the frontlines of battling this crisis. We will have to continue to fight together, each and every one of us, every single day, to build on our efforts to combat this epidemic, and by working together, we can and we will stem and turn the tide.

Thank you, Mr. President.

I yield the floor.

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

CONGRATULATING SENATOR HASSAN

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Mr. President, I just wanted to say how pleased I am to be able to join my colleague from New Hampshire on the floor for her official maiden address. It is so nice to see so many of our women colleagues here for this as well.

As she pointed out, I just wanted to echo the great work Senator Hassan has done, especially as Governor, in expanding the Medicaid Program in New Hampshire and providing treatment for so many people, especially when it comes to the heroin and opioid epidemic, and why we are so concerned about any efforts to roll that back—because that would kick thousands of people in New Hampshire off of treatment with nowhere else to go. I certainly plan to continue to join her as we fight for this effort, and I know our colleagues are going to help us in that. I believe that if we all work together, we can make progress, as she has so eloquently stated.

So congratulations to Senator Hassan for her first official maiden speech. I know it will be just one of many more to come.

(REMARKS OF MRS. SHAHEEN PURSUANT TO THE SUBMISSION OF S. 630 ARE PRINTED IN TODAY’S RECORD UNDER “STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS.”)

Mrs. SHAHEEN. I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The clerk: Mr. Warner.

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.

REPUBLICAN HEALTHCARE BILL

Ms. WARREN. Mr. President, last week Republicans in the House released a bill to repeal the Affordable Care Act and cut Medicaid to the bone. On Tuesday, the Congressional Budget Office—those are the independent budget experts who analyze policies under consideration here in Congress—estimated that the plan would rip health insurance coverage away from 21 million Americans and cut $880 billion in the Medicaid program. And as a bonus, the plan provides hundreds of billions of dollars in tax breaks for the rich. Who comes up with a plan like this? What kind of healthcare bill has, as its central feature, ripping away health insurance from tens of millions of American citizens?

What kind of politician thinks they were sent to Congress to destroy the financial stability of millions of middle-class families and give wealthy donors a tax break that they don’t need? Who thinks that the central problem in America is that middle-class families have too much healthcare coverage and that the richest people in America need government to hand them more? There is no other way to say it: This bill is just part of a Republican plan to help the rich get richer and kick dirt in everyone else’s face.

This bill is an economic disaster, and at its center, it is cruel—cancer survivors losing coverage, seniors facing premium increases of $12,000 a year, people with disabilities forced into nursing homes. And one of the cruelest things is what this bill will do to individuals, to families, and to communities struggling with the opioid crisis.

Last year in Massachusetts, nearly 2,000 people died from opioid use. That is more than double the number who died in 2013. That is right, double. Between 2014 and 2015, Massachusetts had the second largest jump in drug overdose deaths from drug overdoses than any other State except North Dakota.

Last week, I was on the front lines in Lynn Community Health Center, where dedicated staffers are trying to meet the crisis head on. This week, I went to Manet Community Health Center, where a coordinated team in Quincy is battling the opioid crisis. While I was there, I not only met with the professionals, I saw the mamas and the babies, the people who are in recovery, and people who reach out to those who are still in the grip of drugs. The opioid crisis isn’t happening to someone else’s family or in someone else’s community. It is happening to our families in our communities, and we need to do more to stop this plague before it takes another of our loved ones.

We need to do more; what we absolutely cannot do is less. We cannot take away the resources already committed to fighting the opioid crisis so that some millionaire can get a tax break. Current law, the ACA, requires all insurance plans to cover substance use disorder treatment and prevention as essential health benefit. That means that your insurance company can’t turn off the access to treatment just when you need it most by saying: Sorry, we just don’t cover that. Current law, the ACA, gave people the chance to get that insurance through health exchanges and subsidies. Millions more people got private insurance. And through Medicaid expansion, millions more were covered by Medicaid. So there it is, our first line of defense in the war on opioid addiction.

The ACA currently means that more people are covered, and that coverage includes substance abuse treatment. What does the Republican plan do? It
takes away coverage for 24 million people. That is 24 million people who no longer have any access to substance use disorder treatment and prevention services. And then they want to let insurance companies jack up the out-of-pocket costs for substance abuse programs and mental health programs. In fact, some Medicaid plans would be able to drop this coverage altogether. So millions more people would lose their one lifeline if someone in their family is taken by drugs.

Don’t let me be wrong. What we are doing right now is not enough. Even now, only 10 percent of those who need treatment for substance use disorder receive it and 90 percent can’t get help, but that means we need more, not less help.

Repealing the protections for mental health and substance use disorders in the ACA would yank more than $5 billion in actual funding that is currently going to mental health and treatment services. That is why the Republican plan to deal with the opioid crisis. Ask any family trying to get treatment for a loved one who is addicted to drugs. We already have an opioid treatment gap. Gutting the ACA is like shoving a stick of dynamite into the treatment gap and then lighting the fuse. And if the Republicans get their way, people will lose health coverage. People will lose access to recovery services. People will die.

Now is the time to stop this cruel bill in its tracks before it hurts real people. Now is the time to speak out about the importance of the ACA and Medicaid to you and to your family.

If you or someone you know has been touched by the opioid epidemic, you know how much this matters. Maybe you have a sister, a child, a church member, or a high school friend who has struggled with substance use disorder. Maybe you know someone who has fought on the frontlines of this crisis as a first responder, community advocate, as a first responder.

If you do, then you know the stakes in this debate over the ACA and Medicaid. Now is the time to act. Don’t wait. If the Republicans end up destroying help for millions of people, don’t wake up the next morning and wonder if you could have said more or if you could have raised your voice back when it mattered. No, the Republicans are trying to pass this terrible healthcare bill now, now is the time to speak out. It is time to stand up and to tell Republicans to end their cruel healthcare plan. Our families and our communities are counting on us and we cannot let them down. Please, speak out.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

RECOGNIZING THE 45TH IDITAROD RACE

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, we have been talking a lot about the weather here in Washington, DC, the past couple of days. We got a little bit of snow yesterday in some parts. People are still kind of plowing out of their driveways. I am looking at the daffodils that were out 3 days ago, and they are now buried, and the cherry blossoms are a little bit crispy on the trees.

So many of us are not feeling like spring has really sprung here. But in Alaska, in my home State, when we think of spring, one of the things that brings a smile to the face of so many of us is that it means it is time for the Iditarod, the Last Great Race on Earth. It is an exciting time of the year for so many, when we come together to celebrate a 1,000-mile race across some pretty desolate territory in the State of Alaska.

The race itself has a much storied history, one that is somewhat unique to the State of Alaska and to our culture. The race commemorates a life-saving race that was undertaken to the community of Nome. Back in 1925, diphtheria had raged through the community, and there was no way to get the serum to Nome. We did not have aircraft that could make it that far. Remember February 2, 1925—February 2.

So it was determined, after a great deal of debate and discussion and pros and cons, that a dog team relay to get the diphtheria serum to Nome. There are names of dogs that have now become infamous, like Togo, Fritz, and Balto, which led this amazing race. Today, the memory of that lifesaving race is lived on in a race that features just a little bit shy of 1,000 miles, again across pretty frozen isolated areas. It involves 1,000-plus dogs that are in the running.

For many of us, there are 1,000 more reasons that you really would not want to do that. But I have to tell you, as I look at these mushers, as I look at these dogs, and as I look at all that goes into the mushing history of our State, it makes me excited about not only the men and women who are the mushers but the true athletes, the K-9 athletes, and all that they give up.

I was home in Anchorage last weekend for the ceremonial start on Saturday. It is a great deal of hoopla. There are not too many communities in America where you actually truck snow into the downtown part of your community, fill the streets up with snow so that the dog teams can launch from downtown. Thousands of people gather to watch the start. We were commemorating the 45th annual Iditarod race.

The official start was on Monday morning in Fairbanks, AK, a town that I also call home, having gone to high school there. The route this year was from Fairbanks, where they call the northerly route, up to Nome. It shaves a little bit of the miles off. I think this year it was about 979 miles. So it was not quite 1,000 miles, but still good enough to test a man or a woman and their dogs.

It was kind of tough starting in Fairbanks on the morning of the race. Temperatures were around 50 below. They hit the river, went right past the house where I grew up and downriver. By the time they got to the first checkpoint there at Tanana, the temperatures were 50 below and people were talking about how you stay warm on a sled and who has bad frostbite that is coming back after years of running.

Let’s just put it this way. The Iditarod is not for the timid or the weak. It takes real grit to run this race. When you think about all the hoopla that comes with the ceremonial start and all the people who came out in the community, then you get on the trail and you are alone. You are by yourself. We have 26 different checkpoints between Fairbanks and Nome. I know where you are going to, but there is an appreciative audience of the villagers who come out to cheer them on.

Again, the villagers can’t offer help with taking care of the teams. The mushers have to do it themselves. But there is a lot of time to think and reflect about the beauty surrounding you, a lot of time to worry about whether or not you have moose or wolf or bear or whatever is out there keeping you company. But truly, this is not only an endurance race, but it is a race that challenges the mind. There are stretches of just almost mind-numbing isolation in the cold where you are just focusing on your team in front of you.

But as you can see, when you get out—this is right on the outskirts of Nome; this is coming in at the end of the race—there is a lot of isolation out there. The temperatures that you are dealing with are tough on a human being. Over the course of this past week, the temperature range was a 70-degree range. The temperature in Nome yesterday at the conclusion was 4 degrees above zero. So it is on the positive side, which was good news for the mushers. But that is a pretty substantial range that you are going through.

It is an amazing race in terms of the strategy that goes into it. You would think: Well, you just get your dogs in line and you know where you are going to feed them. You know where you are going to let them rest.

But the strategy that goes into a race like this is really quite unique to the various mushers. What we have seen with this race is truly an extraordinary fast race, where the winner was averaging between 10 and 11 miles per hour between some of these checkpoints. It is pretty extraordinary to have your dogs keep up a pace like that.

Some mushers will hop off their sleds and run alongside their dogs when they are going uphill, just to take some of
the weight off the sled. But think about that. You have been going for a week. You have been going around the clock pretty much for some of these. You are exhausted. You are freezing cold. Now you are going to jog behind your dogs to lighten the load. This is, again, Manion. Many of these mushers, as they are approaching the end, will keep their strongest dogs, shed the nonessential gear, and switch to a lighter sled to push through on the final stretch.

But there are a lot of different tactics. When a dog is tired, you can put them in the basket so the dog can rest, kind of like a coach on a basketball team: You need to put on the bench and just kind of take a breather here. We do it with the dogs as well. But this is a race not only about the endurance, but it also is one where there is a great deal of work to ensure that these high-performance athletes are cared for and that their safety is looked after.

There are 44 veterinary checkpoints along the trail, and is just not right, mushers can leave them at a checkpoint to ensure their wellbeing so that they are not pushed too much. Again, putting them in a basket, making sure that the dogs are cared for. Veterinarians are at every step along the way. The vets check the dogs out at every checkpoint. The mushers have to carry the veterinary check record, if you will.

These vets are not local vets. There are actually volunteers that volunteer to come to Alaska for the Iditarod and go out there along the trail to one of these checkpoints and to do the checks before the race and after the race.

When I was in Anchorage last week, I was visiting with a veterinarian from Colorado. The Presiding Officer probably might even know him. But he comes every year. This was his eighth Iditarod. He volunteers his time because, again, it is an amazing race with amazing athletes. They are the ones who get the care and attention. I don’t know that there are any doctors out along the trail for the mushers, but the dogs are well cared for.

It is required and there is mandatory rest that is taken. Mushers can determine where the 24-hour rest period is taken. There are two 8-hour stops, one along the Yukon River and one at White Mountain, just before you get to Nome. But, again, you think about the demands on the individual as they are running 24 hours a day.

There is a story out of this year’s race about a musher. I think it was day 3 into the race. A team comes into the checkpoint. They are clipping right along. They are standing right along the runners of his sled and just kind of fell off his sled.

He had a pretty good team, if I can just say. They were obviously following the trail from teams ahead of them. That team just went on and ended up at the checkpoint there. It was a little while later that another musher came along and saw this musher walking, following his dog’s footprints. He gave him a ride to the next checkpoint where his dogs were all there just waiting for him, saying: You know, we got here first. Where were you?

But it kind of speaks to some of the issues that along the trail. There is need to be a time frame until this year, when there was no two-way communication devices that were allowed—none at all. So as to your cellphone, you could not have your cellphone with you.

It was designed to make sure you were not gaining unfair advantage in determining where other mushers were ahead of you or behind you. But for safety reasons, I think there is a recognition that being able to send out an alert if you need it is probably wise and important. A thousand miles is a lot of land to cover. There are a lot of things that can go wrong when it is just you and your dogs along the trail.

The news. The news is big about the 45th Iditarod. Musher wins the race. Dallas Seavey, the winner, a fabulous gentleman by the name of Mitch Seavey, blasted the overall record—extraordinarily impressive. He set the iditarod record of 8 days, 3 hours, 49 minutes, and 13 seconds. What is worth noting about this is that this is the fastest time. The next fastest time, the fastest time that we had had up until this year, was the year prior, which was set by his son. Think about that. What athletic competition, what sport can you have a father and a son go in toe to toe beating the all-time record? Last year, the 29-year-old son was the winner. This year, the 57-year-old dad is the winner. And who came in second this year? The son.

When I was at the ceremonial start and I had the opportunity to see Mitch Seavey, I went up to him, and I said: OK, I know everyone is betting on Dallas Seavey to win because it would be win No. 5 for him, but I am going with the old guy.

Fifty-seven is not so old. Mitch Seavey certainly demonstrated that just yesterday. The Seavey family is Iditarod legend. Dan Seavey, who is Mitch’s father, ran the very first Iditarod in 1973, and then some 44 years later, his son Mitch and his grandson Dallas are still going at it. Mitch won in 2004 and in 2013, and his son Dallas won in 2012, 2014, 2015, and 2016—again, a father and son kind of trading off second and third places during each race.

It is extraordinary when you think about the records that have been broken with this race, and the closeness of the race is exciting to look at. When the second and third place finishers came in—Dallas came in just 2 minutes ahead of the third place musher, Nicolas Petit, who calls Girdwood his hometown, as does one of our young pages here, and it is a place I call home as well.

So there is a lot of excitement with the winners, not only with Mitch Seavey’s record-smashing race but also the fact that he is the oldest racer to win, at 57. Again, as he reminded us, 57 isn’t that old.

I will acknowledge that both Dallas and Nicolas Petit came in breaking last year’s record as well.

So for the sixth year in a row, we have had a Seavey champion. You talk about a family of champions, this is pretty amazing. This one is Mitch’s third win, and it is an extraordinary win.

I spoke to Mitch not too long ago to offer him my congratulations and I told him: As a parent of two 20-somethings, I like the command you demon- strate. You have still got it in you. You are going to be a fierce competitor.

But what Mitch told me was really a lovely statement. He said that what was so great was to be at the finish line seeing his son coming in and seeing Dallas genuinely happy at Mitch’s win. He said that they were head-to-head competitors all throughout the race.

Mitch and Dallas didn’t make that five-time win that he was hoping for, that so many of us Alaskans were hoping for, but he was so genuinely proud of his father.

As of this afternoon, we have 10 mushers who have crossed the finish line. I wish all of the other mushers and their fearless dogs good luck as they continue to make their way to Nome over the next few days and beyond.

This is an event that I love to celebrate with my colleagues. I love to brag about the amazing men and women, not just the Alaskans but from all over the country and really from all over the world. Our fourth place finisher is from Norway, Joar Leifseth Ulsom. He was right up there all the way to the end. It is men. It is women. Jessie Royer was the first woman in, and she came in fifth place. Ally Zirkle crossed in eighth place. So they are remarkable men and women—Alaskans, Americans, and people from truly around the globe—who come to compete.

Truly the ones we celebrate with great enthusiasm and gusto are these canine athletes that demonstrate to us all that there is no end, there is no limit to their love to run, their love to compete, and their desire to excel.

I am pleased to be able to celebrate with colleagues from the Senate in recognizing the 45th Iditarod race, the Last Great Race on Earth.

With that, Mr. President, I yield the floor.

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

CONGRESSIONAL REVIEW ACT
RESOLUTION
Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. President, I want to take the chance to have just a brief comment on what the Senate has just completed. We have worked through a process of identifying what is called the Congressional Review Act. Most Americans are not
familiar with this because it is so seldom used. In fact, it has only been used one time before this Congress successfully.

It is a moment for the Congress to be able to look back at regulations that have been promulgated by the administration and ask: Was that the intent of the law?

It is something that we have worked at for a long time to be able to get as a frequent part of this national conversation. The REINS Act allows Congress to be able to look at each major regulation when it comes out from the administration and ask the simple question: When the regulations are created, are they consistent with the statute? That is what regulations are. No administration can just invent policy and say: We think this is a good thing to do. That is the task of Congress. That is why the Constitution says that all legislative powers shall reside in the Congress, because an administration can’t make up the law. It has to come from this body, from the House of Representatives, and then be signed by the President. After that is done, then regulations are created that have to be consistent with the law.

The REINS review process was created years ago to allow Congress to have a second glance at regulations as they are put out and say: Is that consistent with the statute we passed? This Congress has already gone through too many of those.

In the last 6 months of the Obama administration, many regulations were created. When they were created, they were not consistent with the statute. This Congress has already turned back billions of dollars of regulations from the American people. One of those was done this week. Ironically, it is an issue that deals with unemployment benefits and drug testing.

Many States have requested the ability to do drug testing for unemployment benefits. And this is not a situation where this Congress believes that all people on unemployment benefits need to be drug tested or are unemployed because of drug use—far from it. In 2012, Congress passed the Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act. In that, it allowed States, if they chose to—they don’t have to if they chose to—to do drug testing for benefits eligibility, for unemployment benefits under multiple circumstances. One of them is if the applicant was terminated from their employment based on the unlawful use of a controlled substance. In other words, if they were just fired from a previous job because they were using drugs, they wouldn’t be able to get unemployment benefits because they had already been certified as a drug user. The second one is that if the only available suitable work meant that they had to be drug tested, then they could be drug tested.

What is the design of this? The design of the policy was to encourage people to get back to work. If they were fired from a previous job because they used drugs, it is a natural thing to say: Before you can get unemployment benefits, we want to make sure you have gotten off drugs since that time period you were fired, or if you will be drug tested for the only job that is available to you in your targeted area, you are not able to take that job if you haven’t already had some sort of drug testing.

It is a commonsense measure, and it is given to the States to say to the States: You can choose to do this or not to do it. If you choose to do it, you can, because unemployment benefits are a partnership between the Federal Government and local States.

We believe this is one tool of many to be able to help people who are trapped in the addiction of drugs to have one more incentive to be able to get off that addiction. Multiple different methods are also used within States to enable them to walk alongside families and individuals and help them get off those substance abuse habits as well.

It is a powerful motivator to say to people: If you want to get some support into your family to help you transition back into a job, the law says that to be on unemployment benefits, you have to be available for work. And if this person is currently addicted to drugs and using drugs, they are not available for work.

This measure was passed in 2012. The Obama administration took 4 years to promulgate the rules, they created a set of rules so complex, so complicated, with so many exceptions built into it, that the rule meant nothing. It put us in the situation of saying: What Congress passed 4 years ago, we actually wanted that to go into effect to give those States the right to be able to do it.

So this Congress—the House of Representatives overwhelmingly voted and this week the Senate also voted to be able to block out that last-minute regulation from the Obama administration, which they took 4 years to promulgate, and to be able to say to the States: If you choose to do drug testing with someone who was fired from a previous job because of drug use or because the only job available to that person will have drug testing, if you want to help families be able to get off substance abuse and to be able to set this standard for them, you can.

We have an epidemic of drug use in our Nation. We should do everything we can to not only deal with the interdiction of drugs coming into the country but to also deal with abuse of drugs in our country. This is one of those measures, and I am glad my State and other States will again have that opportunity to be able to use this.

OKLAHOMA WILDFIRES

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. President, on January 15, 2017, an incredible ice storm came through my State. For some States that haven’t seen ice storms, they are beautiful, but boy are they destructive. As freezing rain comes down, it lands on power lines, lands on trees, destroys the trees, power lines come down, and it is incredibly difficult for families and for regions when this happens. You can’t move. You can’t function. You can’t travel the streets because they are covered with ice. It is very destructive.

In northwestern Oklahoma, we have experienced an ice storm like that on January 15. That ice storm devastated the Woodward area and all over the northwestern—trees, debris, damage, power out for weeks in that area.

This week, in early March, we started having spring starting to warm up. The forecasters from the National Weather Service and the Forest Service saw the forecast coming out of rapidly dropping humidity levels and very high winds, with a lot of defire damage that was done in acres. It was the perfect storm for wildfires.

They prepositioned assets in that area to be able to respond if they broke out, but on March 6—just a week and a half after the ice storm—wildfires were raging across northwestern Oklahoma. Four large fires in particular broke out simultaneously in multiple areas. Some of them were started by some of those same power lines that were weakened by the ice storm. Now the wind conditions—60 miles an hour—are taking down those weak power lines, and they are striking the ground and starting a fire spontaneously out in a field.

There were four individual fires across this area, covering 31,000 acres just in Oklahoma. One of those fires spread straight across the Kansas border and burned an additional 472,000 acres. To give you a point of reference of how large these fires were, the total fire damage, the fires, some sort of smoke—60 miles an hour—were taking down those weak power lines, and they are striking the ground and starting a fire spontaneously out in a field.

Let me give you a picture of what we faced in this area as I went out last Friday with Senator INHOFE to tour the area both from the air and on the ground and to talk to farmers and those individuals who are trying to work through this very difficult process. Those farmers and ranchers are facing something you can’t even imagine in their fields. For miles, there is no grass. The cattle that did survive the fire had literally no grass to eat in their pasture for miles. Hundreds of miles of fence line were taken down. Each mile of fence in Oklahoma, just a simple barbed wire fence, costs about $10,000, and hundreds of miles of fence line were destroyed.

We have animals that burned alive as they tried to escape the fire. We had deer that, as they were running across the fields, got caught up in the barbed wire fence and 16-mile-an-hour winds, and the 16-mile-an-hour flame caught up with the deer in the fence and burned them alive as they tried to escape.
We have families who have lost absolutely everything.

We have volunteer firefighters across much of this area who would literally be fighting the fire in one county in one area and hear on the radio about how the fire had broken out in another county on a road right near their own home, and literally volunteer firefighters fighting one fire could hear on the radio about the destruction of their home at a different fire.

In different places, the volunteer firefighters and those who were gathered, both career and volunteers, would see a raging fire at the home of their neighbor, of people they knew. In western Oklahoma, you know your neighbors in that area. You know the folks in the county. They would head out to a home as the fire was rushing at them and try to fight it off, try to cut a fire line to be able to stop it. Eventually, the fire would get so close, they would literally take their fire equipment and park it outside of the fence line between the fire and the home and spray down their equipment in hopes that the fire would jump over the house as the firefighters just huddled behind their own equipment hoping the fire didn’t come to them and the destruction of several homes by using that extreme method.

Neighbors took their own farm equipment and their own tractors and created fire lines to be able to protect their neighbors’ homes.

These small community firefighters fought fires for hours and hours. They saved a lot of lives, and they saved a lot of structures.

I can’t even begin to tell you the pain of walking through that area, what has been described by many as walking across a moonscape of destruction where there is literally nothing left.

What have we seen in that? I will state that what we have seen is a tenacious spirit from people who survived an ice storm—without power for weeks in many areas, and then had a wildfire come right behind it and destroy what was left. Over 20,000 bales of hay have already been donated from farmers all over Oklahoma who are trying to feed the cattle that are still left—20,000 bales. Understand the expenditure of 20,000 bales of hay being donated but also understand the efforts of all the truck drivers who loaded up their vehicles and personally paid the gas and the diesel to get there, to literally take their fire equipment and personally paid the gas required are more expensive than the hay that is in the back of their vehicles who loaded up their own equipment and personally paid the gas.

Neighbors took their own farm equipment and their own tractors and created fire lines to be able to protect their neighbors’ homes.

I want to tell the folks that the devastation they face is not something that will be recovered from quickly. Springtime will come soon, and the area that is just black earth right now will spring to life with green grass again in the weeks ahead. But the loss of those fence lines, the loss of thousands of animals, the loss of homes, the loss of structures, will take a very long time to make up.

I have continued to encourage the pastors and churches in that area to walk alongside some families who will have a hard time recovering from this for a long time. I have encouraged our Oklahoma agencies and our Federal agencies to do what we can to be able to step in with repairing fence lines and helping them recover from a very traumatic event.

My wife and I stood with a rancher who talked about going out into the field after the fire. His home was completely destroyed. As he traveled out to the field around him checking on his cattle, he found dead cattle but also found cattle with their faces completely burned, blinded, with coyotes chasing them down. He said all he could do was stand there in the field and cry. These are going to be long days.

I am grateful that there are neighbors taking care of neighbors. I am proud of the people of Oklahoma who have done so in a selfless way. I am proud of the people of Oklahoma who have done so in a selfless way. I am proud of the people of Oklahoma who have done so in a selfless way.

I want to tell this Senate and the people of the United States that this was a wildfire as big as the State of Rhode Island, and many people haven’t even heard of it. But I can assure all of you that the folks in Oklahoma have experienced it, and we will walk through it together as a Nation.

With that, Mr. President, I yield back.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. LANKFORD. 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.

SUNSHINE WEEK

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, this week is Sunshine Week, an annual nationwide celebration of the good that comes from peeling back the curtains on government. Sunshine Week coincides with the National Freedom of Information Day and President James Madison’s birthday, both of which occur on March 16.

James Madison understood the value of an informed citizenry as a necessary check against those in power. We shouldn’t forget his call for the people to “arm themselves with the power which knowledge gives.”

More recently in our Nation’s history, Justice Brandeis declared, “sunlight is said to be the best of disinfectants.”

These sentiments hold true to this day. A government that operates in darkness—and a public that’s kept in the dark—sows the seeds of waste, fraud, and abuse.

In the face of secrecy and obstruction, the public has a vital weapon: the Freedom of Information Act, FOIA.

Over 50 years ago, President Lyndon Johnson signed FOIA, establishing the public’s judicially enforceable right to government information.

Before FOIA, the people had to justify their need for information to the government, but after FOIA, the government has to justify its refusal to release information to the public. FOIA’s enactment marked a crucial step toward a government more accountable to the people.

No doubt, FOIA manifests Congress’s recognition of the need to carefully balance between the public’s right to know and the government’s interest in protecting certain information from disclosure, but practice and history demonstrates this balance has all too often been tilted away from transparency.

Many in government have continued to find ways to undermine citizens’ right to know under FOIA. Transparency should be the norm, not the exception; yet, when it comes to FOIA requests, we have continued to see a government bent on cultural of delay, deny, and defend. When this happens, FOIA’s effectiveness is undermined and the public becomes even more skeptical of its government.

We have seen this in one way or another under every administration, both Republican and Democratic, since FOIA’s enactment, but the trend toward secrecy and obstruction in recent years should alarm all of us.

According to a March 14 Associated Press report, “The Obama administration in its final year spent a record $36.2 million on legal costs defending its refusal to turn over federal records under [FOIA].”
In 2016, the Obama administration set records for “outright denial of access to files, refusing to quickly consider requests described as especially newsworthy, and forcing people to pay for records who had asked the government to waive search and copy fees.”

The government acknowledged when challenged that it had been wrong to initially refuse to turn over all or parts of records in more than one-third of such cases, the highest rate in at least six years. We simply cannot continue down this path.

Fortunately, a truly bipartisan and bicameral effort last year resulted in the enactment of the FOIA Improvement Act of 2016. I was proud to be a cosponsor of this important piece of legislation and to have worked closely with my colleagues on the Judiciary Committee, as well as the open government community, in ensuring its passage. It achieves some of the most meaningful and necessary reforms to FOIA in history.

We are already witnessing some of the positive impacts of these reforms.

For example, the National Security Archive, a nonprofit open government advocate group, fought for years to achieve the public release of certain historical documents about the Bay of Pigs invasion. But time and again, they were met with legal hurdles put up by the Central Intelligence Agency, CIA.

Then last October, however, the CIA released these historically significant documents. In doing so, the CIA’s Chief Historian stated that the Agency is “releasing this draft volume today because recent 2016 changes in the [FOIA] require us to release some drafts that are responsive to FOIA requests if they are more than 25 years old.”

This is excellent news. It is just one example of the good that can result from bipartisan work toward a common goal. American people look forward to hearing many other such stories of important information finally being made publicly available under FOIA, thanks to these recent reforms.

But we can’t just rest on our laurels. No matter which party is in control of Congress or the White House, continuing oversight of FOIA—and the faithful implementation of its amendments—is essential to ensure the law’s effectiveness as a tool for the public good.

As chairman of the Judiciary Committee, I am proud during this Sunshine Week to join Senators Feinstein, Cornyn, and Leahy in sending letters to the Trump administration to learn more about specific steps taken to carry out the FOIA Improvement Act of 2016 and efforts underway to improve the proactive disclosure of information.

Compliance with both the letter and spirit of FOIA should always be a top priority of any administration, so I look forward to hearing back about progress made.

Before President Trump took office, I stood on this floor and urged him to reverse the secrecy and obstruction that defined the Obama administration’s FOIA track record. Today I reiterate that call.

A new administration provides a new opportunity to get it right.

This Sunshine Week, let’s recommit to working together toward improving open government, fulfilling FOIA’s promise, and ensuring a more informed citizenry.

DISCHARGE PETITION—S.J. RES. 34

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, hereby direct that the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation be discharged from further consideration of S.J. Res. 34, a joint resolution providing for congressional disapproval under chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, of the rule submitted by the Federal Communications Commission relating to “Prohibiting Discrimination in Broadband and Other Telecommunications Services,” and further, that the resolution be placed upon the Legislative Calendar under General Orders.

Jeff Flake, Mike Rounds, Thom Tillis, John Boozman, Todd Young, John Thune, Cory Gardner, Steve Daines, David Perdue, Tim Scott, Dan Sullivan, Mitch McConnell, Thad Cochran, Michael B. Enzi, Dean Heller, John Hoeven, James M. Inhofe, Roger F. Wicker, Patrick J. Toomey, Ron Johnson, Richard C. Shelby, John Cornyn, Orrin Hatch, Shelley Moore Capito, Jerry Moran, Mike Crapo, Rob Portman, Deb Fischer, Pat Roberts.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

REMEMBERING JOSEPH “JOE” CELESTINO GALLEGOS

- Mr. BENNET. Mr. President, I wish to honor the life of Joseph “Joe” Celestino Gallegos, a beloved leader and constituent from my home State of Colorado. Mr. Gallegos passed away on December 11, 2016, at the age of 60, after a battle with cancer. He was a true visionary and leader in his hometown of San Luis, the oldest town in Colorado, where he was elected to a fourth term as Costilla County commissioner just a few months ago.

- Mr. Gallegos was a fifth-generation farmer and rancher with deep ties to the American West. His family property, the Corpus A. Gallegos Ranches, was settled in 1860 and recognized as a “COLORADO CENTENNIAL FARM” in 1990. The son of educators, Mr. Gallegos spent his youth in Page, Junction and Colorado Springs, CO, and in Questa, NM. He spent his weekends, vacations, and summers working the family ranch in San Luis and tending to livestock in the surrounding mountains of the Sangre de Cristo Range.

- After graduating from Colorado State University in Fort Collins with a degree in mechanical engineering, Mr. Gallegos became an engineer in the oil fields. His work took him to Texas, Louisiana, North Dakota, Wyoming, Ireland, and Africa before he returned to San Luis permanently in 1986.

- Working with his father on the family ranch, Mr. Gallegos soon became a trailblazing advocate for the land, people, and culture of San Luis and Costilla County, working selflessly to preserve the area’s rich local traditions. Mr. Gallegos was one of the founders of the SANGRE DE CRISTO AQUELIA ASSOCIATION, which protects some of the oldest water rights in the State of Colorado, and his work has inspired younger generations to respect local water rights and aequilia conservation. He served on the Costilla County Conservancy Board for 13 years and was also a member and ditch rider of the San Luis People’s Ditch, which holds the oldest water right in Colorado.

- Mr. Gallegos was elected as a Costilla County commissioner four times, serving in office for 12 years. He was passionate about creating and sustaining local jobs; rehabilitating structures and historic structures; and supporting veterans, senior citizens, and youth. One of the projects of which he was most proud was the restoration of the old Costilla County courthouse. Built in 1893, it is one of just two intact adobe courthouses in Colorado. Mr. Gallegos also worked to restore the Lobatos Bridge, the southernmost bridge over the Rio Grande River in Colorado, originally built in 1892.

- He oversaw the construction of a Health and Human Services complex and a senior citizens’ center; helped create a county Trails, Open Space, and Recreation Program; supported the effort to name State Highway 159 as the Costilla County Veterans Memorial Highway; and developed the Costilla County Biodiesel Project. He also pursued other renewable energy initiatives such as biomass heat for county shops and solar electricity for county buildings.

- Outside of his work, Mr. Gallegos also earned a second-degree black belt in martial arts and was gifted at training and riding horses.

- Mr. Gallegos was a man whose generosity touched the lives of countless others. Over 500 people attended his funeral service at the Centennial High School in San Luis. He is survived by his daughter Patricia Vialpando, her sisters Annmarie Gonzales and Cristina Miers, and their families; his sister Marie Rafaela Gallegos-McCord, his brothers Aquín, “Jerry” Gallegos, James “Jimmy” Gallegos, and their families; his niece Elaiza Gallegos; his nephews Adrien and Django Gallegos; and two very special people, Rose Mendoza-Green and her granddaughter Celena.

- I join with the people of Costilla County and the San Luis Valley in honoring Mr. Gallegos’s life, and I send my deepest condolences to his family and loved ones.
TRIBUTE TO ROCKY ERIKSON

Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, this week, I have the distinct honor of recognizing Rocky Erickson for his long run as the voice of Montana sports. When traveling along the many roads in Big Sky Country or stopping in at a local watering hole for a bite to eat, if you are in earshot of a radio and that radio is tuned to local sports, there is a good chance that Rocky is on the other end of the broadcast.

Rocky grew up on his family’s wheat farm in the small McCone County community of Vida. After high school, he studied telecommunications at Liberty University in Lynchburg, VA. Shortly after completing his degree, Rocky returned to eastern Montana and began to provide Montana sports fans with high quality commentary. Rocky’s distinguished broadcasting career began in the early 1980s and continues today. This past weekend, he was calling the play by play for the Montana High School State Basketball Championship tournament games. Rocky’s Montana sports shows are broadcast daily on 40 stations, and he has been recognized by his peers as the “Montana Sportscaster of the Year” on nine separate occasions. His native son of Vida, population 70, has gone on to do great things within his industry. His broadcasts are sincerely appreciated by sports fans across Montana.

Attending a Montana sporting event helps one appreciate how valued and unifying local sports can be to our communities. Rocky has shared these treasured experiences with many Montanans by giving his audience a rich texture and personal touch in each broadcast. Thank you, Rocky, for your outstanding work, and I hope to hear you again soon.

HONOREES OF THE 28TH ANNUAL MAINE WOMEN’S HALL OF FAME

Mr. KING. Mr. President, today I wish to honor two exceptional women, Dr. Ann Koch Schonberger and the late Clara Swan, who are the new inductees to the Maine Women’s Hall of Fame. Clara and Ann have made a vital impact on the lives of women in their communities and across the State of Maine. We celebrate their dedication to improving the lives of thousands of students during her 30-plus years at the Husson University campus in Bangor. Clara herself was a graduate of the school, known as the Maine School of Commerce when she graduated in 1939 and Husson in 1938. Clara was also a woman’s basketball coach for 19 years, amassing a record of 240 wins, 34 losses, and 7 ties, which included two undefeated seasons. Clara’s legacy will not only live on in her former students and players, but at her former institution as well. In 2002, Husson named its fitness center in Clara’s honor. She somehow found the time to volunteer at St. Joseph’s Hospital, and she delivered meals to seniors’ homes as part of the Meals on Wheels program. Clara lived an active life until she died at the age of 104 this past January.

Congratulations to both Ann and Clara for their induction into the Maine Women’s Hall of Fame. Clara and Ann join the ranks of Senator Margaret Chase Smith, Senator Olympia Snowe, and Senator Susan Collins, remarkable women who have inspired women in Maine and across the country. Maine is lucky to benefit from such outstanding leaders and pioneers for women in higher education. I thank Ann and Clara for their service and their many contributions to the women and communities of our State.

MESSAGE FROM THE HOUSE

At 10:06 a.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mr. Coyle, the Clerk, was read. The message announced that pursuant to 36 U.S.C. 2302, and the order of the House of January 3, 2017, the Speaker appoints the following Members of the House of Representatives to the United States Holocaust Memorial Council: Mr. Deutch of Florida and Mr. Schneider of Illinois.

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–1015. A communication from the Secretary of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Exemptions for Security Swaps” (RIN 0690–5228) received during adjournment of the Senate on the Office of the President of the Senate on March 10, 2017, to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC–1016. A communication from the Secretary of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Exempting the Spruce Run Womancare Alliance, helping women heal from domestic abuse and other forms of violence. Ann strives to bring to Maine the Spruce Run mantra of “imagining communities without isolation, violence, abuse and fear.”

The late Clara Swan was born in Princeton, ME, and spent her life serving as an educator, administrator, and coach. Clara’s legacy will not only live on in her former students and players, but at her former institution as well. In 2002, Husson named its fitness center in Clara’s honor. She somehow found the time to volunteer at St. Joseph’s Hospital, and she delivered meals to seniors’ homes as part of the Meals on Wheels program. Clara lived an active life until she died at the age of 104 this past January.

Congratulations to both Ann and Clara for their induction into the Maine Women’s Hall of Fame. Clara and Ann join the ranks of Senator Margaret Chase Smith, Senator Olympia Snowe, and Senator Susan Collins, remarkable women who have inspired women in Maine and across the country. Maine is lucky to benefit from such outstanding leaders and pioneers for women in higher education. I thank Ann and Clara for their service and their many contributions to the women and communities of our State.

MESSAGE FROM THE HOUSE

At 10:06 a.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mr. Coyle, the Clerk, was read. The message announced that pursuant to 36 U.S.C. 2302, and the order of the House of January 3, 2017, the Speaker appoints the following Members of the House of Representatives to the United States Holocaust Memorial Council: Mr. Deutch of Florida and Mr. Schneider of Illinois.

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–1015. A communication from the Secretary of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Exemptions for Security Swaps” (RIN 0690–5228) received during adjournment of the Senate on the Office of the President of the Senate on March 10, 2017, to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC–1016. A communication from the Secretary of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Exempting the Spruce Run Womancare Alliance, helping women heal from domestic abuse and other forms of violence. Ann strives to bring
EC-1025. A communication from the Director of Congressional Affairs, Office of New Reactors, Nuclear Regulatory Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Applicable Code Cases” (NUREG–0800) (SRP 3.9.1) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 13, 2017, to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-1026. A communication from the Director of Congressional Affairs, Office of New Reactors, Nuclear Regulatory Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Determination of Rupture Locations and Dynamic Effects Associated with the Postulated Rupture of Piping” (NUREG–0800) (SRP 5.2.1.2) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 13, 2017, to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-1027. A communication from the Director of Congressional Affairs, Office of New Reactors, Nuclear Regulatory Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Seismic and Dynamic Qualification of Mechanical and Electrical Equipment” (NUREG–0800) (SRP 5.2.1) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 13, 2017, to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-1028. A communication from the Director of Congressional Affairs, Office of New Reactors, Nuclear Regulatory Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled “Applicable Liquidation in Fluid System Piping Inside and Outside Containment” (NUREG–0800) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on March 13, 2017, to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC-1030. A communication from the Chief Human Resources Officer, United States Postal Service, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Postal Service’s fiscal year 2016 annual report relative to the Notification and Federal Employee Antidiscrimination and Retaliation Act of 2002 (No PRIA Act) to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC-1031. A communication from the Chairman, Mississippi River Basin Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to the memorial construction; to the Committee on Rules and Administration.

PETITIONS AND MEMORIALS

The following petition or memorial was laid before the Senate and was referred or ordered to lie on the table as indicated:

POM-11. A concurrent resolution adopted by the Legislature of the State of Louisiana memorializing the United States Congress to recognize that the Louisiana coastal area is an area in crisis and to enact federal regulatory reform and disaster recovery regulations that minimize delays in the processes by which the Louisiana residents of the crises faced as a result of coastal land loss and natural disasters; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

HR–22. A concurrent resolution (No. 4)

Whereas, the citizens of Louisiana are no strangers to natural disasters and have been heavily involved in the fight for flood protection infrastructure that will protect our vital region, home to two million people who live and work at the epicenter of our nation’s valuable energy, wetlands, and seafood resources; and

Whereas, Louisiana’s three million acres of wetlands are lost at the rate of about sixteen square miles per year, but reducing these losses is proving to be difficult and extremely costly; and

Whereas, Louisiana’s wetlands today represent nearly forty percent of the wetlands located in the United States, but Louisiana accounts for nearly eighty percent of the losses experienced in the continental United States; and

Whereas, many studies indicate that major shifts in the course of the Mississippi River over thousands of years built the land in south Louisiana through its delta building process; and

Whereas, man-made levees have contributed significantly to the degradation of the wetlands with the disintegration intensified by the channelization caused by the construction of the Mississippi River levees and man-made canals; and

Whereas, the coastal flooding that previously provided sediments critical to the healthy growth of wetlands that sustain our deltaic system has been virtually eliminated by construction of large levees that channel the river for over a thousand miles which in turn cause the sediment carried by the river to now be discharged into the Gulf of Mexico far from the area thereby depriving wetlands of vital sediment; and

Whereas, Louisiana’s coastal area is critical to our nation’s energy security with half of the country’s oil refineries, a network of pipelines that serve ninety percent of the nation’s offshore energy production and thirty percent of its natural gas supply, and a port complex supporting twenty percent of all waterborne commerce vital to thirty-one states; and

Whereas, these valuable and necessary human activities such as energy exploration, commercial and recreational navigation, agriculture, and development during the past century have affected the wetlands, directly and indirectly, enabling salt water from the Gulf of Mexico to intrude into brackish and freshwater wetlands and contributing to wetland and land losses by enhancing the vulnerability of our coastal communities; and

Whereas, the state has committed extensive resources to address this crisis, through the establishment of the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority tasked with development of a state Master Plan to provide hurricane protection, coastal restoration, the reduction of saltwater intrusion, and improving hydrology throughout the coastal area by allowing water to move between the interior and extratropical waters of the system, including a mitigation plan that will create an additional one thousand three hundred and fifty-two acres of coastal marsh, and risk reduction plans; and

Whereas, the state has substantially increased its financial commitment to the coastal restoration plan and progress on projects that maintain land and reduce risk, however capricious regulatory requirements waste tax payer money, delay or deny projects, and increase risk both to the federal treasury, and our citizens resulting in increases in federal investment in infrastructure that provides coastal protection in coastal Louisiana; and it be further resolved

Resolved, That a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the Secretary of the United States Senate and the clerk of the United States House of Representatives for each member of the Louisiana delegation to the United States Congress as well as the Governor’s Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness (GOSEP) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to enable collaboration between the federal, state, and local officials to clear regulatory hurdles which show up everywhere about the value of our critical communities, ecosystems, and our unique hurricane protection and disaster recovery needs.

EXECUTIVE REPORT OF COMMITTEE

The following executive report of a nomination was submitted:

By Mr. JOHNSON for the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

*Elaine C. Duke, of Virginia, to be Deputy Secretary of Homeland Security.

*Nomination was reported with recommendation that it be confirmed subject to the nominee’s commitment to respond to requests to appear and testify before any duly constituted committee of the Senate.

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 Mrs. SHAHEEN (for herself, Mr. MCCAIN, Mr. REED, Mr. TILLIS, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, and Mr. Kaine):

S. 630. A bill to amend the Afghan Allies Protection Act of 2009 to make 2,500 visas available for the Afghan Special Immigrant Visa program, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. MARKEY:

S. 631. A bill to amend the FAA Modernization and Reform Act of 2012 to provide guidance and limitations regarding the integration of unmanned aircraft systems into United States airspace, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

By Mr. COONS (for himself, Ms. Stabenow, Mr. Rubio, and Mr. Nelson):  

S. 632. A bill to amend title 28 of the United States Code to authorize the appointment of additional bankruptcy judges, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. GRASSLEY (for himself, Mrs. Blackburn, and Mr. Wyden):

S. 633. A bill to amend the Congressional Accountability Act of 1995 to apply whistleblower protections available to certain executive branch employees to legislative branch employees, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

By Mr. GARDNER (for himself and Mr. Lankford):

S. 634. A bill to require reductions in the direct cost of Federal regulations that are passed on to the Federal Government or in the debt ceiling; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.
S. 636. A bill to allow Americans to earn paid sick time so that they can address their own health needs and the health needs of their families; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. WYDEN (for himself, Mr. RYAN, Mr. BROWN, and Ms. HARRIS):

S. 637. A bill to amend titles XI and XVIII of the Social Security Act to provide greater tax incentives for volunteerism and to develop programs to increase youth employment; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. PORTMAN (for himself, Ms. FEINSTEIN, and Mr. BROWN):

S. 638. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide appropriate rules for the deduction of the deduction for income attributable to domestic production activities with respect to certain contract manufacturing or production arrangements; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. PORTMAN (for himself, Mr. BENNET, and Ms. CAPITO):

S. 639. A bill to clarify that nonprofit organizations that promote the membership of humanity may accept donated mortgage appraisals, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

By Mr. DURBIN (for himself, Mr. BROWN, Mr. MARKEY, Mr. CARDIN, Mr. CASEY, and Mr. VAN HOLLEN):

S. 640. A bill to prioritize funding for an expanded and sustained national investment in basic science research; to the Committee on the Budget.

By Mr. DURBIN (for himself and Ms. BALDWIN):

S. 641. A bill to prioritize funding for an expanded and sustained national investment in basic science research; to the Committee on the Budget.

By Mr. PAUL (for himself, Mr. LEE, Mr. CRAPO, Mr. KING, Mr. UDALL, and Mr. REINCE):

S. 642. A bill to restore the integrity of the Fifth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States; and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. GRASSLEY (for himself, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Mr. CORKY, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. LEARNEY, Mr. FRANKEN, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, and Mr. MARKEY):

S. 643. A bill to provide for media coverage of Federal court proceedings; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. COCHRAN (for himself and Mr. WICHER):
Code, is treated the same as other orders to serve on active duty for determining the eligibility of members of the uniformed services and veterans for certain benefits and for calculating the deadlines for certain benefits; to the Committee on Armed Services.

By Mr. CARPER (for himself, Mr. BENNET, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mr. BOOKER, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mr. MURPHY, Mr. DUCKWORTH, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. FRANKEN, Mrs. GILLIBRAND, Ms. HIRONO, Mr. KAIN, Mr. LEAHY, Mr. MENENDEZ, Ms. MURKLEY, Mr. MURPHY, Mrs. MURR- 
RAN, Mr. REED, Mr. SANDERS, Mr. VAN HOLL N, Ms. WARR EN, Mr. WYDEN, and Ms. HARRIS): S. 668. A bill to nullify the effect of the recent executive order regarding border security and immigration enforcement; 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. Kaine (for himself, Mr. McCAIN, Mr. RUBIO, and Mr. MUR- 
PHY): S. Res. 87. A resolution expressing the sense of the Senate concerning the ongoing conflict in Syria as it reaches its six-year mark in March, the ensuing humanitarian crisis in Syria and neighboring countries, the resulting humanitarian and national security challenges, and the urgent need for a political solution to the crisis; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

By Ms. Stabenow (for herself, Mrs. GILLIBRAND, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Mr. BROWN, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. FRANKEN, Mr. PETERS, and Ms. BALDWIN): S. Res. 88. A resolution expressing the sense of the Senate that the President and the Secretary of State should ensure that the Government of Canada does not permanently store nuclear waste in the Great Lakes Basin; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

By Mr. Enzi (for himself and Mr. MENENDEZ): S. Res. 89. A resolution supporting the designation of March 2017 as “National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month”; considered and agreed to.

By Mr. Kaine (for himself and Mr. WARE): S. Con. Res. 9. A concurrent resolution recognizing the George C. Marshall Museum and George C. Marshall Research Library in Lexington, Virginia, as the National George C. Marshall Museum and Library; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

ADDITIONAL COSPONSORS

S. 29

At the request of Mr. Tester, the name of the Senator from California (Mrs. FeinStein) was added as a cosponsor of S. 29, a bill to permit disabled law enforcement officers, customs and border protection officers, firefighters, air traffic controllers, nuclear materials couriers, members of the Capitol Police, members of the Supreme Court Police, employees of the Central Intelligence Agency, performers in intelligence activities abroad or having specialized security requirements, and diplomatic security special agents of the Department of State to receive retirement benefits in the same manner as if they had not been disabled.

S. 34

At the request of Mr. Johnson, the name of the Senator from Missouri (Mr. Blunt) was added as a cosponsor of S. 34, a bill to amend chapter 5 of title 5, United States Code, to provide for the en bloc consideration in resolutions of disapproval for “midnight rules”, and for other purposes.

S. 92

At the request of Mr. Reed, the name of the Senator from Ohio (Mr. Brown) was added as a cosponsor of S. 92, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to expand the denial of deduction for certain excessive employee remuneration, and for other purposes.

S. 201

At the request of Mr. Johnson, the name of the Senator from Alabama (Mr. Strange) was added as a cosponsor of S. 201, a bill to authorize the use of unapproved medical products by patients diagnosed with a terminal illness in accordance with State law, and for other purposes.

S. 205

At the request of Mr. Thune, the name of the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. Cotton) was added as a cosponsor of S. 205, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to repeal the estate and generation-skipping transfer taxes, and for other purposes.

S. 236

At the request of Mr. Wyden, the names of the Senator from Iowa (MRS. ERSN) and the Senator from Vermont (Mr. Leahy) were added as cosponsors of S. 236, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to reform taxation of alcoholic beverages.

S. 255

At the request of Mr. Schatz, the name of the Senator from Oregon (Mr. Merkle) was added as a cosponsor of S. 255, a bill to increase the rates of pay under the Federal Employee Retirement System and other statutory pay systems and for prevailing rate employees by 3.2 percent, and for other purposes.

S. 275

At the request of Ms. Heitkamp, the name of the Senator from Kansas (Mr. Moran) 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. 324

At the request of Mr. Hatch, the names of the Senator from Michigan (Mr. Peters) and the Senator from Maine (Mr. King) 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 name of the Senator from Maryland (Mr. Van Hollen) was added as a cosponsor 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. 376

At the request of Mr. Blunt, the name of the Senator from Michigan (Mr. Peters) was added as a cosponsor of S. 376, a bill to enable concrete masonry products manufacturers to establish, finance, and carry out a coordinated program of research, education, and promotion to improve, maintain, and develop markets for concrete masonry products.

S. 382

At the request of Mr. Menendez, the name of the Senator from Michigan (Ms. Stabenow) 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. 415

At the request of Ms. Cortez Masto, the name of the Senator from New Hampshire (Mrs. Shaheen) was added as a cosponsor of S. 415, a bill to nullify the effect of the recent Executive order that makes the vast majority of unauthorized individuals priorities for removal and aims to withhold critical Federal funding to sanctuary cities.

S. 445

At the request of Mr. Cardin, the name of the Senator from New Hampshire (Ms. Shaheen) was added as a cosponsor of 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.

S. 448

At the request of Mr. Brown, the name of the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. Rounds) was added as a cosponsor of 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.

S. 459

At the request of Mr. Brown, the name of the Senator from New Hampshire (Ms. Shaheen) was added as a cosponsor of S. 459, a bill to designate the area between the intersections of Wisconsin Avenue, Northwest and Davenport Street, Northwest and Wisconsin Avenue, Northwest and Edmunds Street, Northwest in Washington, District of Columbia, as “Boris Nemtsov Plaza”, and for other purposes.

S. 479

At the request of Mr. Brown, the name of the Senator from New Hampshire (Mrs. Shaheen) was added as a cosponsor of S. 479, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to waive coinsurance under Medicare for colorectal cancer screening tests, regardless of whether therapeutic intervention is required during the screening.
At the request of Ms. CANTWELL, the names of the Senator from Wisconsin (Ms. BALKIN), the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. CASEY), and the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. COCHRAN) were added as cosponsors of S. 497, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to provide for Medicare coverage of certain lymphedema compression treatment items as items of durable medical equipment.

At the request of Mr. CASEY, the name of the Senator from West Virginia (Mr. MANCHIN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 515, a bill to require the Secretary of Labor to maintain a publicly available list of all employers that relocate a call center overseas, to make such companies ineligible for Federal grants or guaranteed loans, and to require disclosure of the physical location of business agents engaging in customer service communications, and for other purposes.

At the request of Mrs. GILLIBRAND, the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. BLUMENTHAL) was added as a cosponsor of S. 629, a bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to provide for Medicare coverage of certain lymphedema compression treatment items as items of durable medical equipment.

At the request of Mr. PETERS, the name of the Senator from Michigan (Mr. ROBPORT) was added as a cosponsor of S. 608, a bill to nullify the effect of the March 6, 2017 executive order that temporarily restricts most nationals from six countries from entering the United States.

At the request of Mrs. KAINE, the name of the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. HAGERTY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 544, a bill to amend the Afghan Special Immigrant Visa program, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

At the request of Mrs. FISCHER, the name of the Senator from Virginia (Mr. Kaine) was added as a cosponsor of S. 630. A bill to amend the Afghan Special Immigrant Visa program, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

At the request of Mrs. HIRONO, the name of the Senator from Hawaii (Ms. HIRONO) was added as a cosponsor of S. 544, a bill to amend the Afghan Special Immigrant Visa program, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

At the request of Mr. TESTER, the name of the Senator from Montana (Mr. BUTZOS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 544, a bill to amend the Afghan Special Immigrant Visa program, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

At the request of Mr. McCAIN, the name of the Senator from Arizona (Mr. HUNSTON) was added as a cosponsor of S. 544, a bill to amend the Afghan Special Immigrant Visa program, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

At the request of Mrs. FEINSTEIN, the name of the Senator from California (Ms. GARTNER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 544, a bill to amend the Afghan Special Immigrant Visa program, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

At the request of Mrs. FEINSTEIN, the name of the Senator from New York (Ms. GILLIBRAND), the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. BLUMENTHAL) and the Senator from Massachusetts (Ms. WARREN) were added as cosponsors of S. 629, a bill to amend the Federal Food, Drugs, and Cosmetic Act to ensure the safety and effectiveness of medically important antimicrobials approved for use in the prevention, control, and treatment of animal diseases, in order to minimize the development of antibiotic-resistant bacteria.

At the request of Mr. CASSIDY, the name of the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. SHELBY) and the Senator from Kentucky (Mr. CONDORI) were added as cosponsors of S. J. Res. 27, a joint resolution disapproving the rule submitted by the Department of Labor relating to “Clarification of Employer’s Continuing Obligation to Make and Maintain an Accurate Record of Each Recordable Injury and Illness”.

**STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS**

By Mrs. SHAHEEN (for herself, Mr. MCCAIN, Mr. REED, Mr. TILLIS, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, and Mr. KAINES):

S. 630. A bill to amend the Afghan Special Immigrant Visa program, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

Mr. Kaine. Mr. President, I come to the floor again today to speak about a program I have been working on that has had bipartisan support for a number of years; that is, the Afghan Special Immigrant Visa Program. This program allows Afghans, including interpreters, who have supported the U.S. mission in Afghanistan and who face threats as a result of their service to apply for refuge in the United States. As I said, this has had strong bipartisan support. I have worked with Senators McCaIN, TILLIS, LEAHY, GRAHAM, and so many others here in the Chamber to try to make sure we provide enough visas for those Afghans who are being threatened and who want to come to the United States.

I wish to point out that the Trump administration, even as it has sharply restricted immigration and refugee programs, has made exceptions for those who served alongside our soldiers and diplomats. When the administration’s original Executive order on immigration was released, there was bipartisan anger that Iraqi interpreters were not protected because this program has served not just those in Afghanistan who have helped us but also those in Iraq. So the administration recognized its mistake and has made an exception for Iraqi SIV recipients, and now they have exempted Iraq from their Executive order.

It is really past time that we rally renewed support for the Afghan SIV Program. Last week, we learned that the State Department has stopped interviewing applicants for the Afghan SIV because there are more applicants in the final stages of the process than there are visas. Unless Congress acts, the final visas will be exhausted by the end of May. It is estimated that more than 10,000 applicants are still in some stage of the process of obtaining these visas.

For these Afghans, it really is no exaggeration to say that this is a matter of life and death. Interpreters who served the U.S. mission are being systematically hunted down by the Taliban, and unless Congress acts, this program will lapse and we will abandon these Afghans to a harsh fate.

The United States promised to protect those Afghans who served our mission with great loyalty and at enormous risk, and it would be a stain on our national honor to break this promise. It would also come at an immense strategic cost. U.S. forces and diplomats have always relied on local people to help us accomplish our missions. We continue to require this assistance in Afghanistan, and we will need this support in other places in the future where we face conflict. So we have to ask, if we don’t keep our promise, why would anyone agree to help the United States if we abandon those who assist us? This is exactly why the former commander of U.S. forces in Afghanistan, GEN David Petraeus, and his predecessor, GEN Stanley McChrystal, have pleaded with Congress to extend the Afghan SIV Program. In a letter to Congress, the刷最刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷刷
the ultimate price for serving the American mission. As Captain Breen later said, one day there will be a granite monument with the names of all of the American servicemembers who died in Iraq and Afghanistan. Wisssam served to have her name on that monument, too, because she took great risks and she gave her life while serving the United States.

To be eligible for a visa through the Afghan SIV Program, new applicants must have at least 2 years of faithful and valuable service to the U.S. mission. To receive a visa, they must also clear a rigorous screening process that includes an independent verification of their service and then an intensive interagency review.

We know that the service of these individuals has been critical to our successes in Afghanistan.

Last month in Keene, NH, I met with a refugee who had been granted asylum from Afghanistan named Patmana Rafiq Kunary. Patmana had worked closely with the U.S. Agency for International Development in Kabul. She went door to door, encouraging women to take out microloans to start their own businesses. Patmana eventually became vice president for operations at the USAID-sponsored Microloan Program.

In fact, just today I talked to a woman reporter from Afghanistan named Patmana, and I told her that one of the things that keep us in Afghanistan supporting our soldiers is concern about what is happening to the women in Afghanistan.

For Patmana, going door to door and working closely with Americans—this was dangerous work. She drew unwelcome attention wherever she went, and she became a high-profile target for the Taliban and others. And then one day in 2013, she got a call at her USAID office. It was from the distraught wife of one of her USAID colleagues, another woman’s husband who had just been murdered, apparently in retaliation for her work with the Americans.

Realizing that her life was in danger, too, Patmana applied for a special immigrant visa. For 2 years, she and her husband were subjected to repeated interviews at the U.S. Embassy in Kabul. Her background was checked and rechecked before visas were finally granted. She told me that they would move frequently. They couldn’t stay in one place very long because the Taliban would find them. And she said occasionally there was a knock on her relatives’ door, saying “We know where Patmana is,” and that would be a signal to move.

And her husband now live happily in Keene, NH. I am pleased to say her husband has found work as an auditor in Keene, NH. I am pleased to say her husband has found work as an auditor in Keene, NH. I am pleased to say her husband has found work as an auditor in Keene, NH. I am pleased to say her husband has found work as an auditor in Keene, NH. I am pleased to say her husband has found work as an auditor in Keene, NH. I am pleased to say her husband has found work as an auditor in Keene, NH. I am pleased to say her husband has found work as an auditor in Keene, NH. I am pleased to say her husband has found work as an auditor in Keene, NH. I am pleased to say her husband has found work as an auditor in Keene, NH.

The many contributions of these Afghans—both in Afghanistan and now as residents or citizens of the United States—those contributions help explain why senior U.S. commanders and diplomats have urged Congress to extend the Afghan SIV Program. Our Secretary of Defense, GEN James Mattis, during the confirmation process, said: “Most of our units could not have accomplished their missions without the assistance, often at the risk of their lives, of these courageous men and women.” We would never leave an American warrior behind on the battlefield. Likewise, we must not leave behind the Afghan interpreters who served side by side with our warriors and diplomats.

We made a solemn promise to these brave people, and I am going to do everything I can to ensure that we keep this promise. I know there is a lot of bipartisan support in this body to do that. So today I am introducing the Keep Our Afghan Allies Act with Senators McCAIN, REED, and TILLIS. This legislation would authorize additional special immigrant visas and would help ensure that the program does not lapse and leave behind thousands of Afghans who helped us with the threat by the Taliban.

In addition, I intend to work closely with Senators who are negotiating legislation to fund the Federal Government in order to ensure that additional visas are included in any bills that move forward. The Afghan interpreters and support these efforts.

By MR. DURBAN (for himself, MR. BROWN, MR. MARKEY, MR. CARDIN, MR. CASEY, and MR. VAN HOLLEN):

S. 640. A bill to prioritize funding for an expanded and sustained national investment in research to combat prostate cancer, bladder cancer, and kidney cancer; and for other purposes.

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 “American Cures Act”.

SEC. 2. CAP ADJUSTMENT.

(a) In General.—Section 251(b)(2) of the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985 (2 U.S.C. 901(b)(2)) is amended—

(1) by redesignating subparagraph (D) as subparagraph (E); and

(2) by inserting after subparagraph (C), the following:

“(D) BIOMEDICAL RESEARCH.—

“(1) NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH.—If a bill or joint resolution making appropriations for a fiscal year is enacted that specifies amounts for the National Institutes of Health at the Department of Health and Human Services, those adjustments for that fiscal year shall be the amount of additional new budget authority provided in that Act for such programs for that fiscal year, but shall not exceed—

“(I) for fiscal year 2017, $2,966,000,000 in additional new budget authority;

“(II) for fiscal year 2018, $2,918,000,000 in additional new budget authority;

“(III) for fiscal year 2019, $2,843,000,000 in additional new budget authority; and

“(IV) for fiscal year 2020, $2,740,000,000 in additional new budget authority.

“(b) DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE HEALTH PROGRAM.—If a bill or joint resolution making appropriations for a fiscal year is enacted that specifies amounts for the Department of Defense health program, then the adjustments for that fiscal year shall be the amount of additional new budget authority provided in that Act for such programs for that fiscal year, but shall not exceed—

“(I) for fiscal year 2017, $901,000,000 in additional new budget authority;

“(II) for fiscal year 2018, $1,087,000,000 in additional new budget authority; and

“(III) for fiscal year 2019, $1,013,000,000 in additional new budget authority.

“(c) NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH, PREVENTION.—If a bill or joint resolution making appropriations for a fiscal year is enacted that specifies amounts for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at the Department of Health and Human Services, then the adjustments for that fiscal year shall be the amount of additional new budget authority provided in that Act for such programs for that fiscal year, but shall not exceed—

“(I) for fiscal year 2017, $64,634,000,000 in additional new budget authority;

“(II) for fiscal year 2018, $8,743,000,000 in additional new budget authority; and

“(III) for fiscal year 2019, $5,911,000,000 in additional new budget authority.

“(d) VETERANS AFFAIRS.—If a bill or joint resolution making appropriations for a fiscal year is enacted that specifies amounts for the Department of Veterans Affairs, then the adjustments for that fiscal year shall be the amount of additional new budget authority provided in that Act for such programs for that fiscal year, but shall not exceed—

“(I) for fiscal year 2017, $1,430,000,000 in additional new budget authority;

“(II) for fiscal year 2018, $1,828,000,000 in additional new budget authority; and

“(III) for fiscal year 2019, $2,294,000,000 in additional new budget authority.

“(e) MEDICAL AND PROSTHETICS RESEARCH PROGRAM OF THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.—If a bill or joint resolution making appropriations for a fiscal year is enacted that specifies amounts for the medical and prosthetics research program of the Department of Veterans Affairs, then the adjustments for that fiscal year shall be the amount of additional new budget authority provided in that Act for such programs for that fiscal year, but shall not exceed—

“(I) for fiscal year 2017, $35,100,000 in additional new budget authority;

“(II) for fiscal year 2018, $241,000,000 in additional new budget authority;

“(III) for fiscal year 2019, $356,000,000 in additional new budget authority;

“(IV) for fiscal year 2020, $482,000,000 in additional new budget authority; and

“(V) for fiscal year 2021, $518,000,000 in additional new budget authority.

“(f) VETERANS AFFAIRS, PROSTHETICS RESEARCH, HEALTH.—If a bill or joint resolution making appropriations for a fiscal year is enacted that specifies amounts for the prosthetics research program of the Department of Veterans Affairs, then the adjustments for that fiscal year shall be the amount of additional new budget authority provided in that Act for such programs for that fiscal year, but shall not exceed—

“(I) for fiscal year 2017, $36,000,000 in additional new budget authority;

“(II) for fiscal year 2018, $65,000,000 in additional new budget authority;

“(III) for fiscal year 2019, $86,000,000 in additional new budget authority;

“(IV) for fiscal year 2020, $134,000,000 in additional new budget authority; and

“(V) for fiscal year 2021, $172,000,000 in additional new budget authority.

“(g) DEFINITIONS.—As used in this paragraph:

“(I) ADDITIONAL NEW BUDGET AUTHORITY.—The term ‘additional new budget authority’ means—

“(aa) with respect to the National Institutes of Health, the amount provided for a fiscal year, in excess of the amount provided in fiscal year 2016, in an appropriation Act enacted to support the National Institutes of Health;

“(bb) with respect to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the amount provided for a fiscal year, in excess of the amount provided in fiscal year 2016, in an appropriation Act enacted to support the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; and

“(cc) with respect to the Department of Defense health program, the amount provided for a fiscal year, in excess of the amount provided in fiscal year 2016, in an appropriation Act enacted to support the Department of Defense health program.
amount provided in fiscal year 2016, in an appropriation Act and specified to support the Department of Defense health program; and

`(dd) with respect to the medical and prosthetics research program of the Department of Veterans Affairs, the amount provided for a fiscal year, in excess of the amount provided in fiscal year 2016, in an appropriation Act and specified to support the medical and prosthetics research program of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

`(II) CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION.—The term ‘Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’ means the appropriations accounts that support the various institutes, offices, and centers that make up the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

`(III) DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE HEALTH PROGRAM.—The term ‘Department of Defense health program’ means the appropriations accounts that support the various institutes, offices, and centers that make up the Department of Defense health program.

`(IV) MEDICAL AND PROSTHETICS RESEARCH PROGRAM OF THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.—The term ‘medical and prosthetics research program of the Department of Veterans Affairs’ means the appropriations accounts that support the various institutes, offices, and centers that make up the medical and prosthetics research program of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

`(V) NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH.—The term ‘National Institutes of Health’ means the appropriations accounts that support the various institutes, offices, and centers that make up the National Institutes of Health.

`(b) FUNDING.—There are hereby authorized to be appropriated—

`(I) for the National Institutes of Health, the amounts provided for under clause (1) of such section 251(b)(2)(D) in each of fiscal years 2017 through 2021, and such sums as may be necessary for each subsequent fiscal year;

`(II) for the Secretary of Health and Human Services, acting through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the amounts provided for under clause (1) of such section 251(b)(2)(D) in each of fiscal years 2017 through 2021, and such sums as may be necessary for each subsequent fiscal year;

`(III) for the Department of Defense health program, the amounts provided for under clause (1) of such section 251(b)(2)(D) in each of fiscal years 2017 through 2021, and such sums as may be necessary for each subsequent fiscal year;

`(IV) for the National Science Foundation, the amounts provided for under clause (iv) of such section 251(b)(2)(D) in each of fiscal years 2017 through 2021, and such sums as may be necessary for each subsequent fiscal year.

`(c) MINIMUM CONTINUED FUNDING REQUIREMENT.—Amounts appropriated for each of the programs and agencies described in section 251(b)(2)(D) of the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985, as added by subsection (a) for each of fiscal years 2017 through 2021, and each subsequent fiscal year, shall not be less than the amount of additional new budget authority for those programs and agencies for fiscal year 2016.

`(d) EXEMPTION OF CERTAIN APPROPRIATIONS FROM REDUCTION ORDER.—In general.—Section 252(g)(1)(A)(i) of the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985 (2 U.S.C. 905 et seq.) is amended by inserting after ‘‘Advances to the Unemployment Trust Fund and Other Funds (16—

3077)’’ the following:

‘‘Appropriations under the American Cures Act.’’

(2) APPLICABILITY.—The amendment made by this section shall apply to any sequestra-
"By Mr. GRASSLEY (for himself, Mr. KLOEWE, Mr. CORKNAY, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. GRAHAM, Mr. LEAHY, Mr. FRANKEN, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, and Mr. MARKEY): S. 643. A bill to provide for media coverage of Federal court proceedings; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, affirming the public’s right to know how their government is run, Sunshine Week is an annual reminder of the importance of transparency and accountability in a government of the people, by the people, and for the people. In the spirit of government transparency, I am pleased to join a bipartisan group of colleagues to introduce the Sunshine in the Courtroom Act of 2017. This important piece of legislation furthers the public’s right to attend, via permitting Federal judges at all Federal court levels to open their courtrooms to television cameras and radio broadcasts.

For decades, and with great results, States have allowed cameras in their courtrooms. In fact, all 50 States and the District of Columbia now allow some news coverage of proceedings, and it is time we join them. This openness in our courts improves the public’s understanding of the legal system and what happens inside our courts.

However, our Federal judicial system unnecessarily remains a mystery to many across the country. The bill I am introducing with Senator KLOEWE and a number of cosponsors from both sides of the aisle, will greatly improve public access to Federal courts by letting Federal judges open their courtrooms to television cameras and other forms of electronic media. Letting the Sun shine in on our Federal courtrooms will allow Americans and other forms of electronic media.

The Sunshine in the Courtroom Act will ensure that the introduction of cameras into Federal courtrooms goes as smoothly as it has at the State level. This legislation leaves the presence of the cameras in Federal trial and appellate courts to the sole discretion of the judges—it is not mandatory. The bill also provides a mechanism for Congress to study the effects of this legislation on our judiciary before making this change permanent through a 3-year sunset provision. The bill protects the privacy and safety of witnesses by giving them the right to have their faces and voices obscured. Additionally, the bill prohibits the televising of jurors and includes a provision to protect the due process rights of each party.

It is time to open the courthouse doors and let the light shine in on the Federal judiciary. Granting the public greater access to an already public process will inspire a new appreciation for our judges who pledge equal and impartial justice for all.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the text of this 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. 643

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 “Sunshine in the Courtroom Act of 2017”.

SEC. 2. FEDERAL APPELLATE AND DISTRICT COURTS.

(a) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

(1) PRESIDING JUDGE.—The term “presiding judge” means the judge presiding over the court proceeding concerned. In proceedings in which more than one judge participates, the presiding judge shall be the senior active judge so participating or, in the case of a circuit court of appeals, the senior active circuit judge so participating.

(2) APPLICABILITY.—The amendment made by this section shall apply to any sequestration order issued under the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985 (2 U.S.C. 900 et seq.) on or after the date of enactment of this Act.

By Mr. GRASSLEY (for himself, Mr. KLOEWE, Mr. CORKNAY, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. GRAHAM, Mr. LEAHY, Mr. FRANKEN, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, and Mr. MARKEY): S. 643. A bill to provide for media coverage of Federal court proceedings; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, affirming the public’s right to know how their government is run, Sunshine Week is an annual reminder of the importance of transparency and accountability in a government of the people, by the people, and for the people. In the spirit of government transparency, I am pleased to join a bipartisan group of colleagues to introduce the Sunshine in the Courtroom Act of 2017. This important piece of legislation furthers the public’s right to attend, via permitting Federal judges at all Federal court levels to open their courtrooms to television cameras and radio broadcasts.

For decades, and with great results, States have allowed cameras in their courtrooms. In fact, all 50 States and the District of Columbia now allow some news coverage of proceedings, and it is time we join them. This openness in our courts improves the public’s understanding of the legal system and what happens inside our courts.

However, our Federal judicial system unnecessarily remains a mystery to many across the country. The bill I am introducing with Senator KLOEWE and a number of cosponsors from both sides of the aisle, will greatly improve public access to Federal courts by letting Federal judges open their courtrooms to television cameras and other forms of electronic media. Letting the Sun shine in on our Federal courtrooms will allow Americans and other forms of electronic media.

The Sunshine in the Courtroom Act will ensure that the introduction of cameras into Federal courtrooms goes as smoothly as it has at the State level. This legislation leaves the presence of the cameras in Federal trial and appellate courts to the sole discretion of the judges—it is not mandatory. The bill also provides a mechanism for Congress to study the effects of this legislation on our judiciary before making this change permanent through a 3-year sunset provision. The bill protects the privacy and safety of witnesses by giving them the right to have their faces and voices obscured. Additionally, the bill prohibits the televising of jurors and includes a provi
shall order the face and voice of the witness to be disguised or otherwise obscured in such manner as to render the witness unrecognizable to the broadcast audience of the trial proceeding.

(II) the presiding judge in a trial proceeding shall inform each witness who is not a party that the witness has the right to request that the face and voice of that witness be obscured during the testimony of the witness.

(III) EXCEPTION.—The presiding judge shall not permit any action under this subparagraph—

(1) if that judge determines the action would constitute an infringement of the due process rights of any party; and

(II) until the Judicial Conference of the United States promulgates mandatory guidelines under paragraph (5).

(8) No media coverage of jurors—The presiding judge shall not permit the photographing, electronic recording, broadcasting, or televising of any juror in a trial proceeding, or of the jury selection process.

(9) Discretion of the judge—The presiding judge shall have the discretion to obscure the face and voice of an individual if good cause is shown that the photographing, electronic recording, broadcasting, or televising of the individual would threaten—

(1) the safety of the individual;

(2) the security of the court;

(3) the integrity of future or ongoing law enforcement operations; or

(4) the interest of justice.

(10) District Court Authority—The authority under this paragraph shall terminate 3 years after the date of the enactment of this Act.

(11) Interlocutory appeals barred—The decision of the presiding judge under this subsection, not to permit, or to terminate the photographing, electronic recording, broadcasting, or televising of a court proceeding may not be challenged through an interlocutory appeal.

(12) Advisory guidelines—The Judicial Conference of the United States may promulgate advisory guidelines to which a presiding judge, at the discretion of that judge, may refer in making decisions with respect to the management and administration of photographing, recording, broadcasting, or televising described under paragraphs (1) and (2).

(5) MANDATORY GUIDELINES—Not later than 6 months after the enactment of this Act, the Judicial Conference of the United States shall promulgate mandatory guidelines that a presiding judge is required to follow for the protection of certain vulnerable witnesses, including crime victims, minor victims, families of victims, cooperating witnesses, undercover law enforcement officers or agents, and witnesses subject to section 3502 of title 18, United States Code, relating to witness relocation and protection, or minors under the age of 18 years. The guidelines shall provide for determination, at the earliest practicable time in any investigation or case, which witnesses should be considered vulnerable under this section.

(6) PROCEDURES—In the interests of justice and fairness, the presiding judge of the court in which a matter is desired to be surreptitious to promulgate rules and disciplinary measures to define, in the courtroom use of any media or media equipment and the acquisition or distribution of any of the images or sounds obtained in the courtroom, the presiding judge shall have discretion to require written acknowledgment of the rules by anyone individually or on behalf of any entity before being allowed to acquire any images that areऔन्नत in the courtroom.

(7) No broadcast of conferences between attorneys and clients—There shall be no audio pickup or broadcast of conferences which occur in a court proceeding between attorneys and their clients, between co-counsel of a client, between adverse counsel, or between counsel and the presiding judge, unless the conferences are not part of the official record of the proceedings.

(8) EXPENSES—A court may require that any accommodations to effectuate this Act be made without public expense.

(9) INHERENT AUTHORITY—Nothing in this Act shall limit the inherent authority of a court to protect and preserve the courtroom to preserve the decorum and integrity of the legal process or protect the safety of an individual.

By Mr. DURBIN (for himself, Mr. GRASSLEY, Mr. FRANKEN, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, and Ms. KLOBUCHAR):

S. 649. A bill to permit the televising of Supreme Court proceedings; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

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 “Cameras in the Courtroom Act”.

SEC. 2. AMENDMENT TO TITLE 28.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 45 of title 28, United States Code, is amended by inserting at the end the following:

§ 678. Televising Supreme Court proceedings

“The Supreme Court shall permit television coverage of all open sessions of the Court unless the Court decides, by a vote of the majority of justices, that allowing such coverage in a particular case would constitute a violation of the due process rights of 1 or more of the parties before the Court.”

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The chapter analysis for chapter 45 of title 28, United States Code, is amended by inserting at the end the following:

§ 678. Televising Supreme Court proceedings.”

SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS


Mr. KAINÉ (for himself, Mr. MCCAIN, Mr. RUBIO, and Mr. MURPHY) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations:

S. Res. 87

Whereas the transnational Salafist-jihadi organizations ISIL and al Qaeda are utilizing the conflict in Syria and the actions of the Assad regime to recruit and mobilize fighter and popular support; Whereas the crisis in Syria has led to the creation of terrorist safe havens controlled by ISIL and al Qaeda, along with other extremist groups, which have become bases from which to plan, direct, and inspire attacks against the United States and its allies and partners; Whereas the spread of violence perpetrated by the Syrian conflict and the flow of refugees is a threat to the security of United States allies in the Middle East and Europe, and increases demo-cratic burdens on Syria’s neighbors, most notably Lebanon and Jordan, as well as Turkey and Iraq; Whereas the Syrian conflict has allowed Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and its proxies to increase their influence in parts of Syria and potentially threaten Israel’s borders; Whereas United Nations Security Council resolutions 2332 (2016), 2286 (2016), and 2139 (2014) call for the implementation of a cessation of hostilities in Syria and reaffirm the international community’s support for the immediate, direct, and uninhibited access of humanitarian workers throughout the Syrian Arab Republic; Whereas the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees estimates that the Syrian conflict has created 4,800,000 refugees and 6,600,000 internally displaced persons; Whereas widespread and systematic attacks on civilians, schools, hospitals, and other civilian infrastructure, in violation of international humanitarian law, continue in Syria, in particular as a result of actions of the Assad regime and its Russian and Iranian supporters; Whereas wide-spread and systematic violations of the human rights of the people of Syria continue to be perpetrated by the Assad regime; Whereas, according to Amnesty International, the Assad regime has a documented record of committing mass human rights abuses against detainees, including 5,000 to 13,000 detainees summarily executed by hanging between September 2011 through December 2015; Whereas the regime of Bashar al-Assad has repeatedly blocked civilian access to or diverted humanitarian assistance, including medical supplies, from besieged and hard-to-reach areas, in violation of United Nations Security Council resolutions; Whereas the Assad regime is subject to and in violation of both United Nations Security Council Resolution 2198 (2014) on the Framework for a Comprehensive Elimination of Chemical Weapons and United Nations Security Council Resolution 2299 (2015) Condemning the Use of Chlorine Gas in Syria; Whereas the Governments of the Russian Federation and Iran have supported the Assad regime, perpetuated the conflict, and deployed tactics and strategies that have caused grave harm to civilians, including targeting of civilians and humanitarian actors; Whereas there exists sufficient documentation, as well as credible, clear, and compelling reporting, to charge Bashar al-Assad with war crimes and crimes against humanity; Whereas the Assad regime has used chemical weapons, use of barrel bombs against noncombatants, widespread use of torture, summary executions, prolonged solitary confinement, and indiscriminate targeting of civilians and humanitarian actors; Whereas the United States Government has invested over $5,800,000,000 in humanitarian assistance to communities and people directly impacted by the Syrian conflict, including $864,000,000 that will be provided this fiscal year to respond to the needs of the people displaced by the Syrian conflict; and
WHEREAS the United States Armed Forces are leading the Global Coalition to Counter ISIL and are deployed with Coalition allies within the territory of Syria and are working with local Syrian partners to defeat ISIL and stabilize territory taken from it; Now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED—

(1) strongly condemns the regime of Bashar al-Assad for committing war crimes and crimes against humanity during the Syrian conflict, including the use of chemical weapons, in violation of its obligations as required by United Nations Security Council Resolution 2118 (2013), and for the widespread use of torture, summary executions, prolonged sieges, forcible relocations, and indiscriminate targeting of civilians and civilian infrastructure;

(2) condemns the Assad regime and the Government of the Russian Federation for using indiscriminate cluster munitions on civilian areas and infrastructure and for the deliberate targeting of United Nations humanitarian aid convoys;

(3) urges all parties to the conflict, particularly the Russian Federation, Iran, and Iranian-backed militias, to immediately halt indiscriminate attacks, the imposition of starvation and other forms of warfare directed against civilians and civilian infrastructure;

(4) strongly urges all parties to the conflict to allow safe and immediate, unimpeded access to humanitarian assistance throughout Syria, respecting the safety, security, independence, and impartiality of humanitarian workers and ensuring freedom of movement to deliver aid, particularly in areas of Syria controlled by opposition forces;

(5) affirms the neutrality of medical professionals providing humanitarian assistance and health care on a non-political basis, and condemns any such personnel or interference in the provision of medical care, particularly in areas of Syria controlled by opposition forces;

(6) encourages the President to make it the policy of the United States Government to continue to coordinate a comprehensive and generous response to the Syrian humanitarian crisis, including assistance and development, and protection of human rights inside Syria and in the region;

(7) directs the President to support the immediate and full implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 2286 (2016), which calls for a cessation of hostilities, without exception, including against al Qaeda and its affiliated organizations, to facilitate the provision of humanitarian assistance and reconstruction of war-affected communities in Syria;

(8) affirms that the elimination of al Qaeda and ISIS safe havens in Syria, from which those organizations can plan and launch attacks against the United States and its partners, is a vital national security interest of the United States;

(9) commends the Syrian Democratic Forces, the Syrian Arab Coalition, and other local, Syrian partner forces for their support of Operation Inherent Resolve and the efforts of the Global Coalition to Counter ISIL;

(10) affirms that the stability of key European and Middle Eastern partners in the region is vital for the national security of the United States and prevent the proliferation of conflict for undermining that stability is a top priority for the United States;

(11) calls on the international community to continue the active participation of the United States Government in a robust and effective diplomatic process to achieve a political agreement to the Syrian conflict; and

(12) urges the President to develop and submit to the Committees on Foreign Relations and Armed Services of the Senate within 90 days a strategy for providing long-term stability and security in areas seized from ISIL.

Mr. KAINÉ. Mr. President, 6 years ago, the Syrian people rose up against the tyranny of the Assad regime and hoped that the international community would stand by their side in this monumental endeavor. Nearly half a million Syrians have been killed by this conflict. More than 8 million Syrians have been forced to flee their homes and continue to face starvation and sieges by pro-Assad forces. Assad’s barrel bombs and Russian airstrikes still target hospitals and schools. Syria’s neighbors have provided refuge to nearly 5 million, mostly women and children. At the same time, many Syrians continue to risk their lives in an attempt to find safety on Europe’s shores.

In the vacuum left by Assad’s devastation, extremist groups like ISIS and al-Qaeda have found fertile ground. Anarka, Raqqa, Baghuz, Brussel, Paris, and British bombing in Homs and Hama have just a few of the places impacted by ISIS. As long as the Syrian conflict continues, violence and extremism will continue to spiral out of the region. It is time for the United States and international community to hold the Assad regime and its backers accountable for their actions. The Trump administration should take an active role in resolving this conflict. The Syrian conflict has profound implications—leaving this to the Russians and hoping that they can end this war is not a strategy. American leadership, along with support from regional actors and the international community, is the only meaningful approach towards bringing peace to Syria and its citizens and justice to the Assad regime for its brutal actions.

I am pleased to introduce this resolution with Senator SCHATZ and MR. RUBIO and MR. MURPHY that condemns the Assad regime’s blatant disregard for international law and human life and asks the Trump administration to pursue a strategy that can help bring the brutal conflict to a peaceful conclusion. The resolution also denounces Iran and Russia for their political and military support of the Assad regime and calls for protection of civilians and humanitarian workers.

SEVENATE RESOLUTION 88—EX-PRESSING THE SENSE OF THE SENATE THAT THE PRESIDENT AND THE SECRETARY OF STATE SHOULD ENSURE THAT THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA DOES NOT PERMANENTLY STORE NUCLEAR WASTE IN THE GREAT LAKES BASIN

Ms. STABENOW (for herself, Mrs. GILLIBRAND, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Mr. BROWN, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. FRANKEN, Mr. PETERSON, and Mr. PALLADIN) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations:

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 9—RECOGNIZING THE GEORGE C. MARSHALL MUSEUM AND GEORGE C. MARSHALL RESEARCH LIBRARY IN LEXINGTON, VIRGINIA, AS THE NATIONAL GEORGE C. MARSHALL MUSEUM AND LIBRARY

Mr. KAINÉ (for himself and Mr. WARNER) submitted the following concurrent resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources:

S. CON. RES. 9

Whereas General George C. Marshall served as Army Chief of Staff during World War II,
Special Ambassador to China, Secretary of State, and Secretary of Defense;

Whereas General George C. Marshall was promoted to General of the Army in 1944, one of only four Army five-star generals in the history of the United States;

Whereas General George C. Marshall was awarded the Congressional Gold Medal in 1946 for his military strategy and vital role during World War II;

Whereas General George C. Marshall was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1953 for developing the European economic recovery strategy known as the Marshall Plan;

Whereas the George C. Marshall Foundation was established in 1953 and is devoted to preserving the legacy of General George C. Marshall through educational scholarship programs and facilities;

Whereas the George C. Marshall Foundation opened the George C. Marshall Museum and George C. Marshall Research Library in 1964 in Lexington, Virginia, on the post of the Virginia Military Institute, which is the alma mater of General George C. Marshall;

Whereas the George C. Marshall Museum educates the public about the military and diplomatic contributions of General George C. Marshall through extensive exhibits and programs;

Whereas the George C. Marshall Research Library maintains the most comprehensive collection of records documenting the life and legacy of General George C. Marshall:

Resolved by the Senate (the House of Representatives concurring), That Congress recognizes the George C. Marshall Museum and George C. Marshall Research Library in Lexington, Virginia, as the National George C. Marshall Museum and Library.

Mr. KAIN. Mr. President, I would like to recognize the George C. Marshall Foundation’s museum and library as the National George C. Marshall Museum. General George C. Marshall was born in Uniontown, PA to a Virginia family. He is a distant relative of Chief Justice John Marshall, the fourth Supreme Court Justice of the United States. General Marshall graduated from the Virginia Military Institute in 1901 as senior first captain of the Corps of Cadets.

General Marshall served in a variety of posts in the Philippines, the United States, France, and China, distinguishing himself as a military leader. In 1939 he was named Chief of Staff by President Roosevelt and was responsible for building, supplying, and deploying over 8 million soldiers. Marshall also urged military readiness prior to the attack on Pearl Harbor.

After World War II, President Truman sent General Marshall to China to broker a coalition government between the Nationalist allies under Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek and the Communists under Mao Zedong. In 1946, General Marshall received the Congressional Gold Medal of Honor. President Truman appointed Marshall Secretary of State in 1947. In what became known as the Marshall Plan, as Secretary of State Marshall oversaw the postwar European economic recovery strategy. In 1953, General Marshall received the Nobel Peace Prize for his postwar work as the only career officer in the U.S. Army to ever receive this honor.

The George C. Marshall Foundation was established in 1953 and officially opened in 1964. The foundation’s museum is located in Lexington, Virginia and is dedicated to educating the public and the military and diplomatic career of General George C. Marshall. The foundation has devoted its mission to educating the public about the important contributions of General Marshall through its museum and research library. The Museum has five extensive exhibits and houses General Marshall’s Nobel Peace Prize.

I am proud to introduce this resolution which will recognize and honor General George C. Marshall.

AUTHORITY FOR COMMITTEES TO MEET

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, I have 10 requests for committees to meet during today’s session of the Senate. They have the approval of the Majority and Minority leaders.

Pursuant to rule XXVI, paragraph 5(a), of the Standing Rules of the Senate, the following committees are authorized to meet during today’s session of the Senate:

- Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs Committee
- Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee
- Committee on Foreign Relations
- Homeland Security Committee
- Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
- Committee on Veterans’ Affairs

The Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, March 15, 2017, at 10 a.m. to conduct a hearing entitled “Assessing U.S. Sanctions on Russia: Next Steps.”

The Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation is authorized to hold a meeting during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, March 15, 2017, at 10 a.m. in room 106 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building.

The Committee on Environment and Public Works is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, March 15, 2017, at 10 a.m. in room 406 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building.

The Committee on Foreign Relations is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, March 15, 2017, at 11 a.m., to hold a hearing entitled “Six Years of War in Syria: The Human Toll.”

The Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, March 15, 2017, at 10 a.m.

The Committee on the Judiciary is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on March 15, 2017, at 2:30 p.m. in room SD-226 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building.

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, I am proud to introduce this resolution which will recognize and honor General George C. Marshall.
Relations Committee be discharged from further consideration of S. Res. 83 and the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration.

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

The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 83) expressing the sense of the Senate regarding the trafficking of illicit persons into the United States from Mexico and China.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Mr. LANKFORD. I ask unanimous consent that the Foreign Relations Committee be discharged from further consideration of and the Senate now proceed to the consideration of S. Res. 83.

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

The resolution (S. Res. 83) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

(The resolution, with its preamble, is printed in the RECORD of March 8, 2017, under “Submitted Resolutions.”)

HONORING IN PRAISE AND REMEMBRANCE THE EXTRAORDINARY LIFE, STEADY LEADERSHIP, AND REMARKABLE, 70-YEAR REIGN OF KING BHUMIBOL ADULAYADEJ OF THAILAND

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Foreign Relations Committee be discharged from further consideration of and the Senate now proceed to the consideration of S. Res. 83, submitted earlier today.

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

The resolution (S. Res. 83) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

(The resolution, with its preamble, is printed in the RECORD of March 1, 2017, under “Submitted Resolutions.”)

SUPPORTING THE DESIGNATION OF MARCH 2017 AS “NATIONAL COLORECTAL CANCER AWARENESS MONTH”

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. President, I 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 senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 89) supporting the designation of March 2017 as “National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month.”

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Mr. LANKFORD. I 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. 89) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

(The resolution, with its preamble, is printed in the RECORD of March 21, 2017, under “Submitted Resolutions.”)

EXPRESSING SUPPORT FOR THE DESIGNATION OF MARCH 21, 2017, AS “NATIONAL ROSIE THE RIVETER DAY”

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Judiciary Committee be discharged from further consideration of and the Senate now proceed to the consideration of S. Res. 76.

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

The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 76) expressing support for the designation of March 21, 2017, as “National Rosie the Riveter Day.”

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. President, I 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.

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

The resolution (S. Res. 76) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

(The resolution, with its preamble, is printed in the RECORD of March 1, 2017, under “Submitted Resolutions.”)

ORDERS FOR THURSDAY, MARCH 16, 2017, THROUGH TUESDAY, MARCH 21, 2017

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate adjourns its business today, it adjourn, to then convene for pro forma sessions only, with no business being conducted, on the following dates and times and that following each pro forma session, the Senate adjourn until the next pro forma session: Thursday, March 16 at 11:30 a.m. and Monday, March 20 at 10 a.m.; I further ask that when the Senate adjourns on Monday, March 20, it next convene at 10:30 a.m. on Tuesday, March 21; that following the prayer and pledge, the morning business be conducted; that the time for the two leaders be reserved for their use later in the day; further, that following leader remarks, the Senate be in a period of morning business for 1 hour, with Senators permitted to speak therein; finally, that the morning business hour be equally divided, with the majority controlling the first half and the Democrats controlling the final half.

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

ORDER FOR ADJOURNMENT

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. President, if there is no further business to come before the Senate, I ask unanimous consent that it stand adjourned under the previous order, following the remarks of Senator HATCH.

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

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

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

NOMINATION OF NEIL GORSUCH

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, I rise today to once again address the nomination of Judge Neil M. Gorsuch to be the next Associate Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court.

I am extraordinarily pleased that the President has nominated such an outstanding individual to fill the seat that was held by my friend, the late Justice Antonin Scalia, for nearly three decades.

In the weeks since Judge Gorsuch’s nomination, I have done my best to make the case that he is exactly the kind of Justice that we need: one that is well-versed in the timeless words of Marbury v. Madison—say what the law is, not what he wishes the law would be.

In my view, his outstanding credentials and his understanding of the proper role of a judge under our Constitution make him a choice that should command universal support. Unfortunately, this feeling does not appear to be as broadly shared as it should be.

Leftwing activists are demanding a scorched-earth approach to Judge Gorsuch’s nomination, and I am afraid that the same dynamic of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle appear to have been swept up in this fervor. Their opposition stems from two different
sources and has taken two different forms.

The first cause is the visceral reaction among some to our new President. After last year’s bitterly fought election campaign, many on the left simply refuse to accept the legitimacy of the new administration and are dead set on all-out opposition to every initiative, every policy, and every nominee of this President. As a case in point, we are in mid-March and the President is still waiting for the Senate to confirm his Cabinet nominees. This hasn’t happened, to my knowledge, in the 40 years I have been in the Senate.

Skeptical of any nominee’s willingness to hold an administration that nominated him accountable to the law, they are demanding assurances about how Judge Gorsuch would rule on the administration’s most controversial moves.

The Supreme Court confirmation process should not be treated as just another forum to litigate the wisdom and lawfulness of the new administration’s policies. Not only does such an approach distract from the proper focus to do Justice Sotomayor’s analysis of judicial philosophy, it also threatens to undermine the very independence Democrats claim to want in a Supreme Court Justice.

As I have explained in detail as recently as last week, nominees of both parties for decades have refused to speculate on cases that may come before them in order not to prejudice their potential future judgments. Moreover, the advice and consent function of the Senate, Judge Gorsuch is bound by the code of conduct for United States judges, one of the canons of which prohibits a judge from making “public comment on the merits of a matter pending or impending in any court.”

In light of this longstanding, necessary, and, in Judge Gorsuch’s case, legally mandated practice, I have found it extraordinarily disappointing to hear some of my colleagues try to turn that canon’s quality into a weapon for judges to protect their independence. For example, the minority leader has repeatedly castigated Judge Gorsuch for refusing to take a definitive stand on the legality of the new administration’s policies, accusing him of “avoiding answers like the plague.”

For those of us all political stripes who want a Supreme Court Justice who decides cases on the basis of the law rather than whether the result serves a particular political or policy agenda—be it Republican or Democrat, conservative or liberal, pro-Trump or anti-Trump—Judge Gorsuch’s refusal to prejudge his approach from the outset should be celebrated, not condemned.

As Justice Sotomayor said recently: “Any self-respecting judge who comes in with an agenda that would permit that judge to tell you how they will vote is the kind of person you don’t want as a judge.”

Put more colorfully, there is a plague threatening judicial independence; here, this plague takes the form of the minority leader’s attempt to extract these sorts of inappropriate answers, and Judge Gorsuch is wise to avoid that. The minority leader should know better.

Moreover, we know the minority leader does know better, given his many years of service on the Judiciary Committee and, in particular, how he acquiesced to the same approach when now Justices Sotomayor and Kagan were presented with similar timely hypotheticals during their confirmation processes.

Sadly, I have little doubt that this line of attack on Judge Gorsuch will continue to infect the confirmation process, but we should be completely clear and unambiguous about what these attempts to get Judge Gorsuch to answer hypothetical questions about the legality of the administration’s policies represent. They are illegitimate, partisan attempts to derail his nomination, cloaked in a cloak of alleged concern about his independence. Americans should not be under any illusions that these proper concerns about independence amount to anything else.

To turn to the second source of opposition to Judge Gorsuch’s nomination, one need only examine this week’s New York Times heading, which blamed: “Democrats Line of Attack on Gorsuch: No Friend of the Little Guy.” This same line has been repeated by various leftwing interest groups and by some of my colleagues here in the Senate. They should be ashamed. As I have explained extensively in the past, the judge’s critics view the judiciary as simply an extension of politics, just an other forum to re-litigate battles that they lost in the policymaking process. In their view, the job of a judge is not to apply the law to the facts dispassionately, but rather to pick winners and losers on the basis of the political popularity of the litigants and the policy consequences of the decision.

While such an approach is antithetical to the role of a judge under the Constitution, it has become an entrenched article of faith for most of those on the left. As such, they have approached Judge Gorsuch’s nomination in a predictable manner: cherry-picking and mischaracterizing his writings to create a political agenda with total disregard of what the law commanded in each of those cases.

Simply put, this line of attack on Judge Gorsuch is ludicrous. Any reasonable analysis of his opinions shows that his decisions apply to laws enacted by the people’s elected representatives, without regard to his own personal preferences. His approach manifests the Constitution’s vision of the appropriate role of a judge that has been prominently embraced by Justice Scalia: “If you’re going to be a good and faithful judge, you have to resign yourself to the fact that you are not always going to like the conclusions you reach. If you like them all the time, you’re probably doing something wrong.”

Today, I want to examine just a few of the cases seized on by Judge Gorsuch’s liberal critics to demonstrate just how their attacks are. Compass Environmental v. Occupational Safety and Health Review Commission involved a Tenth Circuit ruling against a firm for failing to provide adequate training to protect workers from electric shock hazards. Judge Gorsuch did indeed rule in the firm’s favor, but the case did not present the question of whether the company should do more to protect its workers. Rather, the case turned on the question of whether the Secretary of Labor satisfied the standard of showing any evidence to demonstrate that the firm in question was providing less training than what is the norm in the industry.

One need only examine the judge’s opinion to understand how that specific legal burden was met, reaching the same conclusion as the administrative law judge below.

Mildle v. Horne touches one on of the liberals’ faith talking points: the supposed need to regulate political speech in order to fight money in politics. While this case has been characterized as some invitation for wealthy and large corporations to exert undue influence in politics, it actually turned on a rather narrow and technical question of whether a $200 disparity in the contribution limits for major party and write-in candidates for the Colorado State House of Representatives amounted to an equal protection violation.

Judge Gorsuch joined the majority opinion of his colleagues—an Obama appointee, by the way—in agreeing that it did constitute such a violation, and then wrote a brief concurrence outlining how unclear Supreme Court precedent was on this particular point.

Moreover, he stated how “clear” it was that “with a liberal judgment the political speech of the party could have achieved its stated policy objectives . . . without offending” the Constitution.

In essence, Judge Gorsuch adopted a particularly narrow position on a relatively minor issue in the grand scheme of campaign finance law, meriting none of his opponents’ extrapoloations about larger issues of political speech.

Finally, several of Judge Gorsuch’s writings have called into question the so-called Chevron doctrine, under which Federal courts defer to administrative agencies’ interpretations of the law. His opponents have seized on this to argue that Judge Gorsuch is somehow reflexively opposed to regulation. Nothing could be further from the truth.

These critics of Judge Gorsuch should recall that the Chevron deference first flourished as a reaction against liberal judges overturning the deregulatory actions of the Reagan administration. I myself am a skeptic of
Chevron and have led the fight to overturn it with my Separation of Powers Restoration Act. But as the name of my legislation suggests, overturning Chevron is about restoring the constitutional allocation of powers between the three branches, maintaining fidelity to the text of the Administrative Procedure Act, and ensuring that the bureaucracy abides by the law no matter its policy goals.

These are a few of Judge Gorsuch’s opinions that have been most prominently mischaracterized as driven by a political agenda, when in reality their results are demanded by the law. Sadly, I expect that these mischaracterizations and inappropriate demands of Judge Gorsuch will continue to appear in this confirmation process. They don’t have any better arguments, and those arguments are not only flawed, but they are wrong and inappropriate.

Let me quote from a prominent liberal law professor, Harvard’s Noah Feldman, to sum up how I think we all should feel about this strategy:

I’m not sure who decided that the Democratic critique of U.S. Supreme Court nominee Judge Neil Gorsuch would be that he doesn’t side with the little guy. It’s a truly terrible idea. . . . (S)iding with workers against employers isn’t a jurisprudential position. It’s a political stance. And justices—including progressive justices—shouldn’t decide cases based on who the parties are. They should decide cases based on their beliefs about how the law should be interpreted.

That is a liberal law professor agreeing with me, really, and condemning these types of ad hominem attacks by people who know better or should know better.

I urge my colleagues on the other side of the aisle to resist the temptation to give in to partisan and ideological pressure to engage in these tactics I described earlier, and I hope people will pay attention to what I have suggested. These are unworthy of the Senate’s role, and they are unmerited with respect to such a stellar nominee as Judge Gorsuch, a man who is clearly committed to the proper, independent role of a judge.

I urge all of my colleagues to join me in helping to ensure his speedy confirmation. This man is a decent, honorable, intelligent man who deserves the support of this decent, honorable, intelligent body. The arguments of the other side are without merit and, frankly, are really abysmal, and I sure hope they will reconsider and vote for this man who will be an excellent Justice on the U.S. Supreme Court.

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

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL 11:30 A.M. TOMORROW

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands adjourned until 11:30 a.m. tomorrow. Thereupon, the Senate, at 6:04 p.m., adjourned until Thursday, March 16, 2017, at 11:30 a.m.

CONFIRMATIONS

Executive nominations confirmed by the Senate March 15, 2017:

IN THE ARMY

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY TO THE GRADE INDICATED WHILE ASSIGNED TO A POSITION OF IMPORTANCE AND RESPONSIBILITY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 601:

To be lieutenant general

LT. GEN. HERBERT R. MCMASTER, JR.

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE

DANIEL COATS, OF INDIANA, TO BE DIRECTOR OF NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE.
HONORING BRIDGEPORT CITY COUNCIL PRESIDENT TOM MCCARTHY ON ST. PATRICK'S DAY

HON. JAMES A. HIMES OF CONNECTICUT
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 15, 2017

Mr. HIMES. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to extend my sincere congratulations to Tom McCarthy for being awarded the title of Grand Marshal of the 34th Annual Greater Bridgeport St. Patrick’s Day Parade. In his fifteen years as City Councilman, nine of which he has served as President, Tom McCarthy has dedicated himself to serving Bridgeport and representing its citizens with thoughtfulness, competence and ability. Tom McCarthy’s hard work and dedication to the City of Bridgeport is much appreciated, and this honor is well deserved.

IN RECOGNITION OF JENNIFER MORGAN

HON. PATRICK MEEHAN OF PENNSYLVANIA
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 15, 2017

Mr. MEEHAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the accomplishments and contributions of Jennifer B. Morgan of Newtown Square, PA.

Jennifer Morgan was appointed President of SAP North America in 2014, a position in which she oversees some 20,000 employees with more than 100,000 customers in every sector and industry of the U.S. economy.

With Jennifer at the helm, SAP has launched a successful expansion into groundbreaking new cloud computing services and other innovative new business segments. SAP is not only one of the largest employers in Delaware County, PA, it’s also a good corporate citizen, sponsoring and supporting non-profits and economic development in our region.

Jennifer is a groundbreaking female executive, and one of far too few females at the pinnacle of American business and industry. She’s prioritized diversity in the workplace, promoted pay equality and worked to level the playing field for all employees.

This National Women’s History Month, Jennifer is being honored by the Delaware County Women’s Commission with their Woman of Achievement Award. It’s a fitting honor to an outstanding leader in our community.

DOJ’S FAILURE TO PROTECT VOTING RIGHTS

HON. TERRI A. SEWELL OF ALABAMA
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 15, 2017

Ms. SEWELL of Alabama. Mr. Speaker, today I rise in protest of President Trump and his Justice Department’s failure to protect Americans’ voting rights. The right to vote is a sacred right for which Americans have fought for generations. From the battlefields of the Revolutionary War, to the Women’s Suffrage Movement, to Bloody Sunday in my hometown of Selma, Alabama, Americans have risked their lives for the right to vote.

Unfortunately, The Trump Justice Department recently decided to dismiss their discriminatory purpose claim against Texas’s voter ID law. Texas’s current draconian Voter ID law places harsh restrictions on minorities and young voters. In 2013, the Department of Justice filed a lawsuit against the state of Texas claiming that their voter photo identification law, SB 14, violated Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act. Since then, two courts have agreed that this law is discriminatory. So it is incredibly disturbing that the new Department of Justice reversed their position and withdrew their lawsuit. This action represents a dramatic shift from the Obama Administration’s policy of protecting Americans’ voting rights.

The American people deserve a Justice Department that values and protects the right to vote. New barriers to voting are being erected across the country, threatening the integrity of our electoral process and our democracy. For example, after the Supreme Court struck down key provisions of the Voting Rights Act, many states, like Alabama and Texas responded to the Supreme Court’s decision by imposing voter ID laws similar to those of the Jim Crow era. These laws are blatantly discriminatory, undemocratic, and un-American.

In Alabama, the state government passed a law requiring a photo ID to vote while simultaneously closing 34 DMV offices. Doing so had a discriminatory effect on 8 out of the 10 counties in Alabama with the highest percentage of Black registered voters. Clearly we cannot yet trust certain states to protect their citizens’ right to vote. As Americans, we should all be horrified of these laws and the Department of Justice’s failure to fight these regressive measures.

States must not be allowed to return to an era of mass-voter discrimination, and historically, it has been the responsibility of the Justice Department to protect Americans from new Jim Crow like laws. Unfortunately, President Trump’s Justice Department seems to be rolling back this policy.

In 2015, I introduced the Voting Rights Advancement Act, legislation that would require states with a recent history of voter discrimination to seek approval from the U.S. Department of Justice before making any changes to their electoral laws. Specifically, this bill will re-store Section 4(b) of the VRA which the Supreme Court invalidated in Shelby County v. Holder. Under the new Trump Administration, it is more important than ever that we pass the Voting Rights Advancement Act, and have an independent Justice Department that is committed to protecting Americans’ right to vote.

HONORING THE LIFE OF DEBORAH MANNING

HON. ELISE M. STEFANIK OF NEW YORK
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 15, 2017

Ms. STEFANIK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor a remarkable woman who dedicated her life to serving New York’s 21st District. Deborah Manning was born in Ticonderoga, New York, and served as Hague Town Clerk for 23 years.

In the 21st District, we are proud of Deborah Manning’s legacy of dedicated public service, and we honor the life she led with integrity and compassion.

I would like to extend my deepest condolences to her friends and family.

REMEMBERING IRON BILL DOWLING

HON. TED POE OF TEXAS
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 15, 2017

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, today, March 15, 2017 the last alarm will be sounded for one of Houston’s finest, Captain William “Iron Bill” Dowling. Although Iron Bill fought tirelessly these last few years, he went home with the Good Lord shortly before his 44th birthday: March 14, 1973–March 7, 2017.

While we mourn the loss of this Houstonian Hero, we also remember his service to his city and country. On May 31, 2013, Houston Fire Department suffered its most tragic event in its history. A 5-alarm blaze at a hotel in southwest Houston claimed the lives of four firefighters and injured fourteen other firefighters when the roof collapsed, some critically.

The following lives were lost:

Captain EMT Matthew Renaud, 35, of Station 51;
Engineer Operator EMT Robert Bebee, 41, of Station 51;
Firefighter EMT Robert Garner, 29, of Station 68;
Probationary Firefighter Anne Sullivan, 24, of Station 68.

They were the best we had in Houston, and we are still saddened that they are gone.

One of the brave who survived was Captain Dowling.

Iron Bill was honored serving Houston, the community in which he was raised. A graduate of Klein Oak High School, Captain Dowling left
Texas to serve his nation as an enlistee with the United States Marine Corps. In 1993, on leave from Marine boot camp training, he married his high school sweetheart, Jacki. As a Marine, Iron Bill served 4 years, including a deployment to Somalia with I Marine Expeditionary Unit, in support of Operation Restore Hope, 1995. He then moved home to Texas and to Jacki to begin his career and to start a family. Twenty-one years later, Captain Dowling and Jacki have three children: Forrest, Faith and Foster.

Iron Bill’s patriotic spirit and love of the community led him to join the Houston Fire Department. He graduated from the Houston Fire Department Academy in 2000 and steadily rose through the ranks. He worked at Stations 12, 19, and 48 before making Captain at Station 68 in January of 2013. Firehouse 68 is located at the corner of Bissonnet and South Gessner in the heart of Southwest Houston. In 2013, the fire apparatus of Firehouse 68 made 14,847 responses, making it the third busiest fire station in the City of Houston. There, at Firehouse 68, Captain Dowling became known as Iron Bill, a fitting nickname to describe a strong and courageous hero.

It was just five months after he arrived at Station 68 that Captain Dowling and fellow firefighters received an alarm call that would take them to the gates of hell. On the night of the heat of the Texas noonday sun, Captain Dowling along with the four other firefighters rushed into the hotel to find potential trapped guests. While the firefighters were in the hotel, the roof collapsed, trapping and killing Garner and Sullivan from Station 51. Captain Dowling’s legs were crushed and burned, but he remained calm, radioed for help and waited for his brothers to pull him from the flames.

The attending physician in the ambulance said that Captain Dowling, though severely injured, kept asking about the condition of his crew. He was more concerned for the safety of others than himself, the testament of a true hero. He told the doctor, on the way to the hospital, to tell his wife and children that he would fight for them. Hearing this comes as no surprise to Captain Dowling’s family; they knew him as a fighter.

Captain Dowling was seriously injured with burns over thirty percent of his body, and he was placed in a medically induced coma for months at Memorial Hermann Hospital and Medical Center. He subsequently had both legs amputated and suffered brain damage. A long road of recovery was ahead for Captain Dowling, but surrounded by a team of doctors, his family, firefighter family, friends, church and the entire city and state of Texas, Iron Bill was not alone. Deservingly, Captain Dowling was placed in a medically induced coma for long road of recovery was ahead for Captain Dowling. Thanks to firefighters from College Station, Piano, Montgomery County, Conroe, Weatherford, Pearland, New Braunfels, South Montgomery County, Fort Worth, Sugar Land, China Grove, Kemah, West University, Kingwood, Nacogdoches, Bexar County ESD 2, Lewisville, Galveston, Lubbock, Baytown, Southlake, Benbrook, Seguin, Austin, Dallas, Westfield, Waco, Hutchins, Tomball, and The Woodlands.

As the family of Iron Bill mourns the loss of a great man, I hope they know the community of Tomball, the greater Houston area and Texas’ Second District will keep the family in their thoughts and prayers. Our community will always be grateful for his service and sacrifices. Once a hero, always a hero. That’s the man we call Iron Bill. And that’s just the way it is.

CELEBRATING MAPLE SEASON IN NEW YORK’S 21ST DISTRICT

HON. ELISE M. STEFANIK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 15, 2017

Ms. STEFANIK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor a time-honored tradition in New York’s 21st district. Specialty crop products are a critical part of the North Country’s economy, and maple holds a special and delicious place among them. Every year in late winter and early spring, the cultivation of maple tree sap gives rise to the reason to celebrate.

New York State is home to the largest resource of tappable maple trees within the United States. Every year, our farms produce thousands of gallons of sap, which will then be made into syrup and other maple products. These products are not only a staple in households across the region, they also encourage tourism and support our small and local businesses.

The benefits of maple syrup production are a source of celebration for communities throughout the North Country. Throughout March, maple festivals are held across New York, with families and friends gathering to enjoy delicious products and attend tours of locally owned farms.

In our district, the Toad Hill Maple Farm has been producing high quality maple products for over 30 years. Utilizing more than 100 acres of land and currently standing as the largest maple producer in Warren County, the system used at Toad Hill can turn 1,000 gallons of sap into 25 gallons of syrup per hour.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to stand on the House floor today to support our North Country maple farmers.

IN RECOGNITION OF SYDNEE WILBANKS’ SERVICE AND ACTIVISM ON BEHALF OF THE SOUTHEAST MICHIGAN COMMUNITY

HON. DEBBIE DINGELL

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 15, 2017

Mrs. DINGELL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Cynthia Wilbanks, the University of Michigan’s Vice President for Government Relations, for receiving the United Way of Washtenaw County’s 2017 Woman of the Year Award. Ms. Wilbanks has served Washtenaw County and southeast Michigan with distinction through her involvement in nonprofit and community organizations.

Cynthia Wilbanks has been an effective advocate and leader in southeast Michigan through her work at the University of Michigan and on behalf of the community. While serving as the University’s Vice President of Government Relations, Ms. Wilbanks has championed initiatives to strengthen the University community and coordinate the University’s policies and responses to federal, state and local legislation. In addition, Ms. Wilbanks serves on the boards of directors of numerous nonprofit organizations, including the Riverside Arts Center Foundation, Center for Michigan, and Ann Arbor SPARK, a Michigan-based business incubator. She is also an active member of United Way and served as the University of Michigan United Way’s Campaign Chair for four straight years.

Ms. Wilbanks has also distinguished herself through her outstanding record of public service. She has served on the staff of several U.S. Representatives, including working as Rep. Carl Pursell’s district director from 1979 through 1992. During her time as a public servant, Ms. Wilbanks was a tireless advocate who fought for policies to benefit southeast Michigan and its residents. Her record of achievement has helped make Michigan a great place to live and work.

Ms. Wilbanks’ leadership and hard work have been critical to the growth and success of the University of Michigan as well as the greater southeast Michigan community. As a result of her efforts, Ms. Wilbanks was named one of the 100 most influential women in Metro Detroit by Crain’s Detroit Business in 2002 and has also received the Girl Scouts of the Huron Valley Council’s Women of Distinction Award. These accolades, in addition to being named Woman of the Year, are a testament to Ms. Wilbanks’ record of success and continued activism in the community. It is my hope that Ms. Wilbanks continues to build on these accomplishments in the coming years.
Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring Cynthia Wilbanks and her tremendous work on behalf of the University of Michigan and the community at large. She has distinguished herself through her outstanding professional and volunteer efforts.

RICHARD BLANKENSHIP

HON. BRAD R. WENSTRUP
OF OHIO
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 15, 2017

Mr. WENSTRUP. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the life and memory of Richard Blankenship of Hillsboro, Ohio.

Richard’s time here on earth will be remembered by many as serving both his community, and his country. He was a U.S. Army veteran, having served his country with dedication.

And that dedication and passion was felt in the Cincinnati and Hillsboro communities, where Richard served in a number of different roles, influencing the lives of many.

From the Cincinnati Bengals, to the Southern State Community College, to East Clinton High School, where he served as both a coach and a teacher. At Finneytown Local Schools, where he taught and held various coaching positions, teaching students important lessons of teamwork and leadership.

When Richard retired from teaching in Finneytown in 2003, he said “I will miss being with students and parents, but it’s time to hang up my gym shoes.”

Richard, our communities are better for having you here, teaching our children, students, and those around you, and changing their lives for the better.

My thoughts are with the Blankenship family.

HONORING THE LIFE OF MICHAEL F. RING

HON. ELISE M. STEFANIK
OF NEW YORK
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 15, 2017

Ms. STEFANIK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor a remarkable man who dedicated his life to serving the 21st District of New York.

Michael Ring was a loving father and a successful business owner, but he was also a man who believed in public service and the importance of participatory government. Michael worked as a broadcast engineer throughout the North Country. However, this is only a portion of his immense contribution to the community.

Mr. Ring worked for the betterment of others during his time as an advisor to the Jefferson County Board of Cooperative Education Services as well as through his efforts as Co-Chair of the Watertown Area Emergency Alert System. His guidance and care could be seen in his time as a volunteer teacher, college student mentor and PTA member as well as through his participation in a multitude of groups that advocated for the importance of national security.

I first met Mike when he was a fellow candidate for Congress in 2013. I was immediately struck by Mike’s genuine kindness, generosity, warmth, and dedication to mentoring others. Mike made friends with people from around the globe and advocated on their behalf. He also was a self-published author of wonderful books. I will miss seeing Mike’s smile at community events in Jefferson County.

I would like to extend my sincerest condolences to the family and friends of Michael Ring, especially his beloved wife Penny. Thank you for sharing him with us all.

HONORING THE LIFE OF CONGRESSMAN ELIGIO “KIKI” DE LA GARZA

HON. VICENTE GONZALEZ
OF TEXAS
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 15, 2017

Mr. GONZALEZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the life of Congressman Eligio “Kika” de la Garza, who passed away this Monday, March 13, 2017.

De la Garza served as the federal representative for the 15th District of Texas from 1965 to 1997. During his Congressional service, he was Chairman of the Committee on Agriculture and a Member of the Committee from 1981 to 1997.

De la Garza was a founding member of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus.

At the age of 17, de la Garza joined the United States Navy and served for two years, and then the United States Army. He then earned his Juris Doctor from St. Mary’s University in San Antonio. While at St. Mary’s, de la Garza was again deployed, this time to the Korean War where he was an artillery officer in the United States Army.

De la Garza was elected to the Texas House of Representatives in 1951, at the young age of 24, serving six terms before being elected to the U.S. House of Representatives.

During his tenure in the U.S. House of Representatives, de la Garza endeavored to improve the lives of rural Texans, working to expand and improve federal support for farmers and ranchers. He also stood up for the disenfranchised, supporting landmark civil rights legislation that led to important progress for our society.

Born and raised in the Rio Grande Valley, de la Garza understood the importance of maintaining strong international relations and was a staunch supporter of the U.S.-Mexico relationship. He was the first Member of Congress to receive Mexico’s Order of the Aztec Eagle Award and Israel’s Vulcan Center’s Lifetime Achievement Award—both awards recognized his efforts to cultivate stronger, more constructive ties between the United States and its allies. As a founding member and chairman of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus and the first Hispanic to chair a standing committee in the U.S. House of Representatives, he is an inspiration for the next generation of Latino leaders.

Mr. Speaker, this week our country lost a statesman, public servant, husband, father, grandfather, and friend, but his legacy will live on. It is a privilege to follow in the footsteps of Eligio “Kika” de la Garza, who was genuinely committed to empowering rural areas and the Hispanic community.

IN RECOGNITION OF HIS HOLINESS THE GYALWANG DRUKPA JIGME PEMO WANGCHEN

HON. CAROLYN B. MALONEY
OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 15, 2017

Mrs. CAROLYN B. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to His Holiness the Gyalwang Drukpa Jigme Pema Wangchen on the occasion of his birthday.

His Holiness the Gyalwang Drukpa is the head of the 1,000 year-old Drukpa Lineage of Buddhism, which originates from the Indian Scholar-Saint Naropa, an unbroken ancient lineage that continues to thrive. The Drukpa Lineage has over 30 million followers worldwide and has a profound cultural influence throughout the Himalayas and all faiths and nationalities.

Inspired by a strong belief that all individuals can work for the benefit of their communities, His Holiness the Gyalwang Drukpa is a world-renowned humanitarian, environmentalist, and champion of gender equality. His good works have been recognized by the United Nations and the Indian Government. The non-profit Waterkeepers Alliance named His Holiness the Guardian of the Himalayas.

His Holiness the Gyalwang Drukpa and his followers provided relief services to tens of thousands in the Himalayas following the devastating 2015 earthquake in Nepal and continue to rebuild the community. Additionally, he supports and organizes clinics which provide access to medical services in remote communities.

His Holiness the Gyalwang Drukpa works tirelessly to empower, educate, protect and inspire women and men in the Himalayas and around the world and has led efforts to ensure that the rights of peoples of all faiths and nationalities are equally respected and protected.

His Holiness the Gyalwang Drukpa personally trekked and bicycled thousands of miles across the Himalayas to further the goals of gender equality and environmental stewardship.

His Holiness supports myriad educational initiatives which seek to improve people’s lives through education while simultaneously fostering respect for and knowledge of indigenous cultures. In furtherance of this aim, His Holiness has led efforts to preserve local art and to disseminate globally knowledge about the local cultural heritage.

His Holiness the Gyalwang Drukpa has led multiple initiatives to protect the environment in the Himalayas. As part of the One Million Trees project, His Holiness organized in 2012 the largest simultaneous tree planting initiative to support clean air and protect against soil erosion.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing the spiritual and humanitarian leadership of His Holiness the Gyalwang Drukpa Jigme Pema Wangchen on the occasion of his birthday.
Mr. REICHERT. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to recognize Ms. Lisa Cohen, Executive Director of the Washington Global Health Alliance, in light of her retirement. During a CODEL to the Middle East I visited Afghanistan as a freshman in Congress and visited an abandoned school meant for female students. Yet unfortunately, it was not used for very long due to rule of law that girls are not allowed to be educated. Since then, I made it a mission to serve as a Co-Chair on the Global Health and Poverty Caucus and fought for the opportunity that girls can and should be educated. And I could not have done this without the extremely important and valuable partnership of Ms. Cohen. From day one, Ms. Cohen has never said no in helping me fight for human rights around the world, and in fact, she has taught and encouraged me to take on other global issues that we must stand for today. Ms. Cohen has been such a wonderful force in the global community, and not just in the Seattle area, but around the country, as she has been diligently working to form an alliance in the Atlanta region too. With more alliances for global health, we can someday have a world where polio no longer exists and every woman can give a healthy birth to a child in a fully-functioning hospital. I will truly miss working with Ms. Lisa Cohen of the Washington Global Health Alliance, but am delighted to know that Ms. Cohen has been such a wonderful force in the global community, and not just in the Seattle area, but around the country, as she has been diligently working to form an alliance in the Atlanta region too. With more alliances for global health, we can someday have a world where polio no longer exists and every woman can give a healthy birth to a child in a fully-functioning hospital. I will truly miss working with Ms. Lisa Cohen of the Washington Global Health Alliance, but am delighted to know thatMs. Cohen has been such a wonderful force in the global community, and not just in the Seattle area, but around the country, as she has been diligently working to form an alliance in the Atlanta region too. With more alliances for global health, we can someday have a world where polio no longer exists and every woman can give a healthy birth to a child in a fully-functioning hospital. I will truly miss working with Ms. Lisa Cohen of the Washington Global Health Alliance, but am delighted to know thatMs. Cohen has been such a wonderful force in the global community, and not just in the Seattle area, but around the country, as she has been diligently working to form an alliance in the Atlanta region too. With more alliances for global health, we can someday have a world where polio no longer exists and every woman can give a healthy birth to a child in a fully-functioning hospital. I will truly miss working with Ms. Lisa Cohen of the Washington Global Health Alliance, but am delighted to know that
CONGRESSIONAL RECORD — Extensions of Remarks

E329

ABBY HOUSE WINS TEXAS HISTORY ESSAY CONTEST

HON. PETE OLSON
OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 15, 2017

Mr. OLSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Abby House of Needville, TX, for being the grand-prize winner of the Save Texas History essay contest in the seventh grade division.

The statewide contest is sponsored by the Texas General Land Office’s Save Texas History program. The essay students were asked to write was, “What history in your community, or in Texas, is worth saving?” Abby wrote about the storied history of the Imperial Sugar building in Sugar Land, TX. The students’ essays were judged based off of how compelling their story was, how useful and interesting the facts were, grammar, spelling and organization. For winning the grand-prize, Abby received numerous prizes from the San Antonio Tourism Council, from Six Flags Fiesta Texas tickets, to tickets to the San Antonio Zoo, and more. She is currently a seventh grader at Needville Junior High School.

On behalf of the Twenty-Second Congressional District of Texas, congratulations again to Abby House for winning the grand-prize of the Save Texas History essay contest. We’re proud to have her represent TX–22 and look forward to seeing her future accomplishments.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. KYRSTEN SINEMA
OF ARIZONA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 15, 2017

Ms. SINEMA. Mr. Speaker, due to illness, I was unable to vote on roll call votes 138 through 158. Had I been present, I would have voted: nay on roll call number 138; nay on roll call number 139; aye on roll call number 140; aye on roll call number 141; aye on roll call number 142; aye on roll call number 143; aye on roll call number 144; aye on roll call number 145; aye on roll call number 146; aye on roll call number 147; nay on roll call number 148; aye on roll call number 149; aye on roll call number 150; aye on roll call number 151; nay on roll call number 152; aye on roll call number 153; aye on roll call number 154; aye on roll call number 155; aye on roll call number 156; aye on roll call number 157; and nay on roll call number 158.

COMMEMORATING THE 24TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BANGLADESH ASSOCIATION OF FLORIDA’S ASIAN FOOD FAIR & CULTURAL SHOW

HON. ALCEE L. HASTINGS
OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 15, 2017

Mr. HASTINGS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the Bangladesh Association of Florida. For 24 years, this fine organization has presented the Asian Food Fair & Cultural Show in Palm Beach County. This annual program is eagerly awaited by citizens around South Florida for its exciting and diverse performances of singing, dancing, acrobatics and food from many Asian nations.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have been involved with the people of the Bangladesh Association of Florida since the inception of this wonderful program. It is one of the cultural highlights of every year. It is widely appreciated and greatly enjoyed by everyone who experiences its variety of entertainment. We are fortunate to have it on our schedule of great events.

The Bangladesh Association of Florida’s Asian Food Fair & Cultural Show is eagerly awaited by citizens around South Florida for its exciting and diverse performances of singing, dancing, acrobatics and food from many Asian nations. The program is eagerly awaited by citizens around South Florida for its exciting and diverse performances of singing, dancing, acrobatics and food from many Asian nations.
I urge my colleagues to join me in working to strengthen the Superfund program by ensuring that polluters continue to pay. With our environment at such a high risk, we need a fully funded Superfund program now more than ever. Restoring these taxes will go a long way towards making certain that funds are available to clean up America’s most toxic waste sites and to help keep our communities and our families safe, healthy and economically secure for future generations.

CHRIS NILSSON NAMED TECHNOLOGY ADMINISTRATOR OF THE YEAR

HON. PETE OLSON
OF TEXAS
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. OLSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Chris Nilsson of Fort Bend County, TX, for being named as the Texas Computer Education Association’s (TCEA) Technology Administrator of the Year for 2017. Chris is a Lamar Consolidated Independent School District’s Director of Technology Integration and oversees computer technicians and the district’s Campus Instructional Technology Specialists. He was nominated by two of the technology specialists thanks to his exemplary vision and technology management. His colleague, David Jacobson, the district’s Chief Technology Information Officer, said he’s done an outstanding job leading and uniting two departments and is very deserving of this recognition. His expertise is an asset for both the school district and the students.

On behalf of the Twenty-Second Congressional District of Texas, congratulations again to Chris for being named as TCEA Technology Administrator of the Year. We’re very proud of him and look forward to his future accomplishments.

THOMAS S. WILLIAMSON, JR.
HON. ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON
OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing the extraordinary life of Thomas S. Williamson, Jr., who passed away this month at the age of 70. Mr. Williamson was a former president of the D.C. Bar and a member of our Federal Law Enforcement Nominating Commission, which advises me on the selection of important federal officials for the District of Columbia, including federal district court judges and the U.S. Attorney for the District of Columbia. Tom will be especially remembered as a champion for equal legal access to justice for all. His service will be held at the National Cathedral tomorrow.

Tom Williamson began his career at the law firm Covington & Burling LLP in 1974, where he became a partner, focusing on employment law, complex litigation, and health and welfare law matters for states. As a student, Tom played varsity football at Harvard College and excelled academically. He went on to Oxford University, where he was a Rhodes Scholar, and then to the University of California at Berkeley School of Law. From the beginning of his career and for more than 40 years, Tom had a deep commitment to pro bono service and civil rights. His passion for equal justice was influenced by his experience as a child when his family integrated a white neighborhood in Piedmont, California and experiencing the racism that resulted.

District residents are particularly grateful to Tom, who was an influential member of a team of attorneys representing the District in Adams v. Clinton, a case that sought voting rights for the District in the House and Senate. Throughout his years in successful private practice, Tom continuously provided legal service to those most in need of good lawyers—whether providing pro bono service to residents or leading the defense of the District’s marriage equality law. Tom’s career in law also included public service, where he served as the deputy inspector general at the U.S. Department of Energy and the solicitor of the U.S. Department of Labor.

Mr. Speaker, as my thoughts are with Tom’s wife, Shelly Brazier, and his family, I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing the extraordinary life of Thomas S. Williamson, Jr.

BRAIN AWARENESS WEEK

HON. EARL BLUMENAUER
OF OREGON
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, March 13 through 17, 2017 commemorates Brain Awareness Week, which presents an important opportunity to educate lawmakers, students, and the broader public about brain science, and its many impacts and benefits. This is critical when you consider that brain disorders and diseases affect the lives of nearly 100 million Americans—from Alzheimer’s to ALS to mental illness.

Neurological and neurodegenerative disorders are among the leading causes of disability in the United States and around the world—greater than heart disease and cancer put together. As society ages, this number will increase exponentially as will the cost to the healthcare system and to the economy. Yet, the underlying causes of most neurological diseases remain unknown.

Neuroscience is the next great frontier. Research and work being done in this field needs to be front and center in both the private world and Congress. The bipartisan Congressional Neuroscience Caucus’ mission is to build awareness of the intrinsic role brain research plays in understanding ourselves and our society. As the Co-Founder and Co-Chair, I am committed to working on these important issues and hope my colleagues will join our efforts as members of the Congressional Neuroscience Caucus.
10 a.m. Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
To hold hearings to examine opportunities to improve and expand infrastructure important to Federal lands, recreation, water, and resources. SD-366
Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions
To hold hearings to examine FDA user fee agreements, focusing on improving medical product innovation for patients. SD-430

2:30 p.m. Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
Subcommittee on Consumer Protection, Product Safety, Insurance, and Data Security
To hold hearings to examine fighting back against scams used to defraud Americans. SR-253

MARCH 22
9 a.m. Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions
To hold hearings to examine the nomination of R. Alexander Acosta, of Florida, to be Secretary of Labor. SD-430

10 a.m. Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
To hold hearings to examine the promises and perils of emerging technologies for cybersecurity. SD-106

10 a.m. Committee on Foreign Relations
To hold hearings to examine the state of global humanitarian affairs. SD-419
Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
To hold hearings to examine perspectives from the DHS frontline, focusing on evaluating staffing resources and requirements. SD-342
Committee on Veterans' Affairs
To hold a joint hearing with the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs to examine the legislative presentation of multiple veterans service organizations. SD-32

10:30 a.m.
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Department of Defense
To hold hearings to examine defense readiness and budget update. SD-192

2:30 p.m.
Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
Subcommittee on Oceans, Atmosphere, Fisheries, and Coast Guard
To hold hearings to examine the state of the Coast Guard, focusing on ensuring military, national security, and enforcement capability and readiness. SR-253

MARCH 29
2:30 p.m. Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
Subcommittee on Federal Spending Oversight and Emergency Management
To hold hearings to examine the effect of borrowing on Federal spending. SD-342

3 p.m. Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship
To hold hearings to examine how small businesses confront and shape regulations. SR-428A
HIGHLIGHTS

Senate confirmed the nomination of Daniel Coats, of Indiana, to be Director of National Intelligence.

Senate

Chamber Action

Routine Proceedings, pages S1809–S1851

Measures Introduced: Thirty-nine bills and four resolutions were introduced, as follows: S. 630–668, S. Res. 87–89, and S. Con. Res. 9. Pages S1839–41

Measures Passed:

Faleomavaega Eni Fa'aau'a Hunkin VA Clinic: Committee on Veterans' Affairs was discharged from further consideration of H.R. 1362, to name the Department of Veterans Affairs community-based outpatient clinic in Pago Pago, American Samoa, the Faleomavaega Eni Fa'aau'a Hunkin VA Clinic, and the bill was then passed. Page S1848

Trafficking of illicit fentanyl into the United States from Mexico and China: Committee on Foreign Relations was discharged from further consideration of S. Res. 83, expressing the sense of the Senate regarding the trafficking of illicit fentanyl into the United States from Mexico and China, and the resolution was then agreed to. Pages S1848–49

Honoring King Bhumibol Adulyadej of Thailand: Committee on Foreign Relations was discharged from further consideration of S. Res. 9, honoring in praise and remembrance the extraordinary life, steady leadership, and remarkable 70-year reign of King Bhumibol Adulyadej of Thailand, and the resolution was then agreed to. Page S1849

National Rosie the Riveter Day: Committee on the Judiciary was discharged from further consideration of S. Res. 76, expressing support for the designation of March 21, 2017, as “National Rosie the Riveter Day”, and the resolution was then agreed to. Page S1849

National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month: Senate agreed to S. Res. 89, supporting the designation of March 2017 as “National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month”. Page S1849

Pro Forma Sessions—Agreement: A unanimous-consent agreement was reached providing that the Senate adjourn, to then convene for pro forma sessions only, with no business being conducted on the following dates and times, and that following each pro forma session, the Senate adjourn until the next pro forma session: Thursday, March 16, 2017 at 11:30 a.m.; Monday, March 20, 2017 at 10 a.m.; and that when the Senate adjourns on Monday, March 20, 2017, it next convene at 10:30 a.m., on Tuesday, March 21, 2017. Page S1849

Breyer and Reeves Nominations—Agreement: A unanimous-consent agreement was reached providing that following morning business on Tuesday, March 21, 2017, Senate begin consideration of the nominations of Charles R. Breyer, of California, to be a Member of the United States Sentencing Commission, and Danny C. Reeves, of Kentucky, to be a Member of the United States Sentencing Commission; that the time until 12 noon be equally divided, and that following the use or yielding back of time, Senate vote on confirmation of the nominations en bloc, with no intervening action or debate; and that no further motion be in order. Page S1849

Nominations Confirmed: Senate confirmed the following nominations:

By 85 yeas to 12 nays (Vote No. EX. 89), Daniel Coats, of Indiana, to be Director of National Intelligence. Pages S1811–24, S1851

During consideration of this nomination today, Senate also took the following action:

By 88 yeas to 11 nays (Vote No. 88), three-fifths of those Senators duly chosen and sworn, having voted in the affirmative, Senate agreed to the motion to close further debate on the nomination. Pages S1811–12

By 86 yeas to 10 nays (Vote No. EX. 90), Lt. Gen. Herbert R. McMaster Jr., U.S. Army. Pages S1824–26, S1851
A unanimous-consent agreement was reached providing that the motion to invoke cloture on the nomination be withdrawn.

Messages from the House:

Executive Communications:

Petitions and Memorials:

Executive Reports of Committees:

Additional Cosponsors:

Total Votes: Three record votes were taken today.

Adjournment: Senate convened at 9:30 a.m. and adjourned at 6:04 p.m., until 11:30 a.m. on Thursday, March 16, 2017. (For Senate’s program, see the remarks of the Acting Majority Leader in today’s Record on page S1849.)

Committee Meetings

Ballistic Missile Defense Program

Committee on Appropriations: Subcommittee on Department of Defense received a closed briefing regarding a ballistic missile defense program update from Vice Admiral James D. Syring, USN, Director of the Missile Defense Agency, Department of Defense.

Stem Education

Committee on Appropriations: Subcommittee on Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies concluded a hearing to examine STEM education, focusing on preparing students for the careers of today and the future, after receiving testimony from Sarah Tucker, West Virginia Council for Community and Technical College Education, Charleston; Larry Plank, Hillsborough County Public Schools, Tampa, Florida; Neil Lamb, HudsonAlpha Institute for Biotechnology, Huntsville, Alabama; and Caroline King, Washington STEM, Seattle.

Warfare in the 21st Century

Committee on Armed Services: Subcommittee on Airland concluded a hearing to examine all arms warfare in the 21st century, after receiving testimony from Lieutenant General David A. Deptula, USAF (Ret.), Mitchell Institute of Aerospace Power Studies; Colonel Douglas A. Macgregor, USA (Ret.), Burke-Macgregor Group; and Paul Scharre, Center for a New American Security 20YY Warfare Initiative.

Assessing U.S. Sanctions on Russia

Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs: Committee concluded a hearing to examine assessing U.S. sanctions on Russia, focusing on the next steps, after receiving testimony from Eric Lorber, Foundation for Defense of Democracies, and Elizabeth Rosenberg, Center for a New American Security, both of Washington, D.C.; and Rodney D. Ludema, Georgetown University Department of Economics, Rockville, Maryland.

Unmanned Aircraft Systems

Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation: Committee concluded a hearing to examine unmanned aircraft systems, focusing on innovation, integration, successes, and challenges, after receiving testimony from Earl Lawrence, Director, Unmanned Aircraft Systems Integration Office, Federal Aviation Administration; Diana Marina Cooper, Precision Hawk USA Inc., Raleigh, North Carolina, on behalf of the Small UAV Coalition; Ben Fowke, Xcel Energy, Minneapolis, Minnesota; Brendan Schulman, DJI Technology, Inc., New York, New York; John Villasenor, University of California, Los Angeles; and Emilio T. Gonzalez, Miami-Dade Aviation Department, Miami, Florida.

Solutions to Control Invasive Species

Committee on Environment and Public Works: Committee concluded a hearing to examine innovative solutions to control invasive species and promote wildlife conservation, after receiving testimony from Jim Kurth, Acting Director, Fish and Wildlife Service, and Jamie K. Reaser, Executive Director, National Invasive Species Council, both of the Department of the Interior; Brian R. Nesvik, Wyoming Game and Fish Department Chief Game Warden and Chief of the Wildlife Division, Cheyenne; Carter Roberts, World Wildlife Fund, Washington, D.C.; and David Ullrich, Great Lakes Fishery Commission, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Six Years of War in Syria

Committee on Foreign Relations: Committee concluded a hearing to examine six years of war in Syria, focusing on the human toll, after receiving testimony from Neal Keny-Guyer, Mercy Corps, Portland, Oregon; David Miliband, International Rescue Committee, New York, New York; and Farida, Abdulkhalek, and Abu Rajab, all of the Syrian American Medical Society, Aleppo, Syria.
BUSINESS MEETING

Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs: Committee ordered favorably reported the following business items:

S. 585, to provide greater whistleblower protections for Federal employees, increased awareness of Federal whistleblower protections, and increased accountability and required discipline for Federal supervisors who retaliate against whistleblowers;

S. 582, to reauthorize the Office of Special Counsel, with an amendment;

S. 576, to amend title 5, United States Code, to extend certain protections against prohibited personnel practices;

S. 317, to provide taxpayers with an annual report disclosing the cost and performance of Government programs and areas of duplication among them, with an amendment;

S. 500, to amend the Homeland Security Act of 2002 to make the Assistant Secretary of Homeland Security for Health Affairs responsible for coordinating the efforts of the Department of Homeland Security related to food, agriculture, and veterinary defense against terrorism;

S. 218, to restrict the inclusion of social security account numbers on documents sent by mail by the Federal Government, with an amendment;

S. 188, to prohibit the use of Federal funds for the costs of painting portraits of officers and employees of the Federal Government;

H.R. 274, to provide for reimbursement for the use of modern travel services by Federal employees traveling on official Government business;

H.R. 366, to amend the Homeland Security Act of 2002 to direct the Under Secretary for Management of the Department of Homeland Security to make certain improvements in managing the Department's vehicle fleet, with an amendment; and

The nomination of Elaine C. Duke, of Virginia, to be Deputy Secretary of Homeland Security.

K–1 VISA FIANCE FRAUD

Committee on the Judiciary: Committee concluded a hearing to examine visas, focusing on investigating K–1 fiance fraud, after receiving testimony from Greg Nevano, Deputy Assistant Director for Illicit Trade, Travel, and Finance Division, Homeland Security Investigations, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, and Daniel M. Renaud, Associate Director, Field Operations, Donald Neufeld, Associate Director, Service Center Operations, and Matthew Emrich, Associate Director, Fraud Detection and National Security, each of Citizenship and Immigration Services, all of the Department of Homeland Security; David T. Donahue, Acting Assistant Secretary of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs; Grace Huang, Asian Pacific Institute on Gender-Based Violence, Oakland, California; Jamal Hussain, Lakewood, California; and Elena María Lopez, Bordentown, New Jersey.

AUTOCRACIES TOOLS FOR UNDERMINING DEMOCRACIES

Committee on the Judiciary: Subcommittee on Crime and Terrorism concluded a hearing to examine the modus operandi and toolbox of Russia and other autocracies for undermining democracies throughout the world, after receiving testimony from former President of the Republic of Estonia Toomas Hendrik Ilves, Institute for International Studies Center for International Security and Cooperation, Stanford, California; Heather C. Conley, Center for Strategic and International Studies, and Kenneth L. Wainstein, Cadwalader, Wickersham and Taft LLP, both of Washington, D.C.; and Ben Buchanan, Harvard University Belfer Center Cybersecurity Project, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

VETERANS HEALTH

Committee on Veterans’ Affairs: Committee concluded a hearing to examine Government Accountability Office’s high risk list and the Veterans Health Administration, after receiving testimony from Debra A. Draper, Director, Health Care, Government Accountability Office; and Michael J. Missal, Inspector General, and Carolyn Clancy, Deputy Under Secretary for Health for Organizational Excellence, Veterans Health Administration, both of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

INTELLIGENCE

Select Committee on Intelligence: Committee met in closed session to receive a briefing on certain intelligence matters from officials of the intelligence community.
House of Representatives

Chamber Action

Public Bills and Resolutions Introduced: 28 public bills, H.R. 1528–1555; and 3 resolutions, H.J. Res. 89; H. Con. Res. 33; and H. Res. 199 were introduced.

Pages H2081–83

Additional Cosponsors:

Pages H2084

Reports Filed:

Reports were filed today as follows:

H.R. 1309, to streamline the office and term of the Administrator of the Transportation Security Administration, and for other purposes (H. Rept. 115–37);

H. Res. 173, providing for the expenses of certain committees of the House of Representatives in the One Hundred Fifteenth Congress (H. Rept. 115–38); and

H. Res. 198, providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 1259) to amend title 38, United States Code, to provide for the removal or demotion of employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs based on performance or misconduct, and for other purposes; providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 1367) to improve the authority of the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to hire and retain physicians and other employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes; and providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 1181) to amend title 38, United States Code, to clarify the conditions under which certain persons may be treated as adjudicated mentally incompetent for certain purposes (H. Rept. 115–39).

Pages H2084

Speaker: Read a letter from the Speaker wherein he appointed Representative Webster (FL) to act as Speaker pro tempore for today.

Page H2081

Suspension:

The House agreed to suspend the rules and pass the following measures:

Authorizing the Secretary of the Interior to amend the Definite Plan Report for the Seedskadee Project to enable the use of the active capacity of the Fontenelle Reservoir: H.R. 648, to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to amend the Definite Plan Report for the Seedskadee Project to enable the use of the active capacity of the Fontenelle Reservoir, by a 2/3 yea-and-nay vote of 408 yeas with none voting “nay”, Roll No. 160; and

Pages H2064–65

Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historical Park Act of 2017: H.R. 267, amended, to redesignate the Martin Luther King, Junior, National Historic Site in the State of Georgia.

Pages H2065–66, H2071

Recess: The House recessed at 5:05 p.m. and reconvened at 6:30 p.m.

Page H2066

Question of Privilege: Representative Crowley rose to a question of the privileges of the House and submitted a resolution. The Chair ruled that the resolution did not present a question of the privileges of the House. Subsequently, Representative Crowley appealed the ruling of the Chair and Representative McCarthy moved to table the appeal. Agreed to the motion to table the appeal of the ruling of the Chair by a yea-and-nay vote of 223 yeas to 183 nays with 1 answering “present”, Roll No. 161.

Pages H2068–71

Providing for the appointment of members of the Board of Directors of the Office of Compliance to replace members whose terms expire during 2017: The House agreed to discharge from committee and pass H.R. 1228, as amended by Representative Harper, to provide for the appointment of members of the Board of Directors of the Office of Compliance to replace members whose terms expire during 2017.

Page H2071

Quorum Calls—Votes: Three yea-and-nay votes developed during the proceedings of today and appear on pages H2067, H2067–68 and H2070–71. There were no quorum calls.

Adjournment: The House met at 4:30 p.m. and adjourned at 9:21 p.m.
Committee Meetings

CRAFTING AN INFORMATION WARFARE AND COUNTER–PROPAGANDA STRATEGY FOR THE EMERGING SECURITY ENVIRONMENT

Committee on Armed Services: Subcommittee on Emerging Threats and Capabilities held a hearing entitled “Crafting an Information Warfare and Counter-Propaganda Strategy for the Emerging Security Environment”. Testimony was heard from Timothy Thomas, Senior Analyst, Foreign Military Studies Office; and public witnesses.

DISRUPTER SERIES: ADVANCED MATERIALS AND PRODUCTION

Committee on Energy and Commerce: Subcommittee on Digital Commerce and Consumer Protection held a hearing entitled “Disrupter Series: Advanced Materials and Production”. Testimony was heard from public witnesses.

MODERNIZING ENERGY INFRASTRUCTURE: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES TO EXPANDING HYDROPOWER GENERATION

Committee on Energy and Commerce: Subcommittee on Energy held a hearing entitled “Modernizing Energy Infrastructure: Challenges and Opportunities to Expanding Hydropower Generation”. Testimony was heard from Kieran Connolly, Vice President, Generation and Asset Management, Bonneville Power Administration; and public witnesses.

EXAMINING THE CREATION AND MANAGEMENT OF MARINE MONUMENTS AND SANCTUARIES

Committee on Natural Resources: Subcommittee on Water, Power and Oceans held a hearing entitled “Examining the Creation and Management of Marine Monuments and Sanctuaries”. Testimony was heard from public witnesses.

HOUSE BILL TO IMPROVE THE AUTHORITY OF THE SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS TO HIRE AND RETAIN PHYSICIANS AND OTHER EMPLOYEES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES; VA ACCOUNTABILITY FIRST ACT OF 2017; VETERANS 2ND AMENDMENT PROTECTION ACT

Committee on Rules: Full Committee held a hearing on H.R. 1367, to improve the authority of the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to hire and retain physicians and other employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes; H.R. 1259, the “VA Accountability First Act of 2017”; and H.R. 1181, the “Veterans 2nd Amendment Protection Act”. The committee granted, by record vote of 8–3, a structured rule for H.R. 1259. The rule provides one hour of general debate equally divided and controlled by the chair and ranking minority member of the Committee on Veterans’ Affairs. The rule waives all points of order against consideration of the bill. The rule makes in order as original text for the purpose of amendment an amendment in the nature of a substitute consisting of the text of Rules Committee Print 115–7 and provides that it shall be considered as read. The rule waives all points of order against that amendment in the nature of a substitute. The rule makes in order only those further amendments printed in part A of the Rules Committee report. Each such amendment may be offered only in the order printed in the report, may be offered only by a Member designated in the report, shall be considered as read, shall be debatable for the time specified in the report equally divided and controlled by the proponent and an opponent, shall not be subject to amendment, and shall not be subject to a demand for division of the question. The rule waives all points of order against the amendments printed in part A of the report. The rule provides one motion to recommit with or without instructions. Additionally, the rule grants a structured rule for H.R. 1367. The rule provides one hour of general debate equally divided and controlled by the chair and ranking minority member of the Committee on Veterans’ Affairs. The rule waives all points of order against consideration of the bill. The rule makes in order as original text for the purpose of amendment an amendment in the nature of a substitute consisting of the text of Rules Committee Print 115–6 and provides that it shall be considered as read. The rule waives all points of order against that amendment in the nature of a substitute. The rule makes in order only those further amendments printed in part B of the report. Each such amendment may be offered only in the order printed in the report, may be offered only by a Member designated in the report, shall be considered as read, shall be debatable for the time specified in the report equally divided and controlled by the proponent and an opponent, shall not be subject to amendment, and shall not be subject to a demand for division of the question. The rule waives all points of order against the amendments printed in part B of the report. The rule provides one motion to recommit with or without instructions. Lastly, the rule grants a closed rule for H.R. 1181. The rule provides one hour of debate equally divided and controlled by the chair and ranking minority member of the Committee on Veterans’ Affairs. The rule
waives all points of order against consideration of the bill. The rule provides that the bill shall be considered as read. The rule waives all points of order against provisions in the bill. The rule provides one motion to recommit. Testimony was heard from Representatives Roe of Tennessee, Walz, Esty, Takano, Wenstrup, and Lynch.

REAUTHORIZATION OF THE MATERNAL, INFANT, AND EARLY CHILDHOOD HOME VISITING PROGRAM

Committee on Ways and Means: Subcommittee on Human Resources held a hearing entitled “Reauthorization of the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program”. Testimony was heard from public witnesses.

Joint Meetings

No joint committee meetings were held.

NEW PUBLIC LAWS

(For last listing of Public Laws, see DAILY DIGEST, p. D213)

H.R. 609, to designate the Department of Veterans Affairs health care center in Center Township, Butler County, Pennsylvania, as the “Abie Abraham VA Clinic”. Signed on March 13, 2017. (Public Law 115–9)

COMMITTEE MEETINGS FOR THURSDAY, MARCH 16, 2017

Senate

No meetings/hearings scheduled.

House

Committee on Agriculture, Subcommittee on Biotechnology, Horticulture, and Research, hearing entitled “The Next Farm Bill: Agricultural Research”, 10 a.m., 1300 Longworth.


Committee on Appropriations, Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies, oversight hearing on Department of Transportation and Department of Housing and Urban Development, 9 a.m., 2358–A Rayburn.

Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies, hearing entitled “Investing in the Future—Early Childhood Education Programs at the Department of Health and Human Services”, 10 a.m., 2358–C Rayburn.

Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs, hearing entitled “Members’ Day”, 10 a.m., HT–2 Capitol.

Committee on Armed Services, Subcommittee on Readiness, hearing entitled “The Current State of the U.S. Navy”, 8 a.m., 2118 Rayburn.


Subcommittee on Tactical Air and Land Forces, hearing entitled “The Effect of Sequestration and Continuing Resolutions on Army Modernization and Readiness”, 3:30 p.m., 2118 Rayburn.

Committee on the Budget, Full Committee, markup on reconciliation submissions, 10 a.m., 1334 Longworth.

Committee on Education and the Workforce, Full Committee, hearing entitled “Honoring Our Commitment to Recover and Protect Missing and Exploited Children”, 10 a.m., 2175 Rayburn.

Committee on Energy and Commerce, Subcommittee on Environment, hearing entitled “Reinvestment and Rehabilitation of Our Nation’s Safe Drinking Water Delivery Systems”, 10 a.m., 2322 Rayburn.


Committee on Financial Services, Subcommittee on Monetary Policy and Trade, hearing entitled “Sound Monetary Policy”, 10 a.m., 2128 Rayburn.

Subcommittee on Housing and Insurance, hearing entitled “Flood Insurance Reform: A Community Perspective”, 2 p.m., 2128 Rayburn.


Committee on the Judiciary, Full Committee, markup on S. 305, the “Vietnam War Veterans Recognition Act of 2017”, 10 a.m., 2141 Rayburn.


Committee on Natural Resources, Subcommittee on Federal Lands, hearing entitled “Identifying Innovative Infrastructure Ideas for the National Park Service and Forest Service”, 10 a.m., 1324 Longworth.

Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Full Committee, markup on H.R. 756, the “Postal Service Reform Act of 2017”; and H.R. 760, the “Postal Service Financial Improvement Act of 2017”, 1 p.m., 2154 Rayburn.


Next Meeting of the SENATE
11:30 a.m., Thursday, March 16

Senate Chamber

Program for Thursday: Senate will meet in a pro forma session.

Next Meeting of the HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
10 a.m., Thursday, March 16

House Chamber

Program for Thursday: Consideration of H.R. 1181—Veterans 2nd Amendment Protection Act (Subject to a Rule). Consideration of H.R. 1259—VA Accountability First Act of 2017 (Subject to a Rule). Consideration of H.R. 1367—To improve the authority of the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to hire and retain physicians and other employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes (Subject to a Rule).

Extensions of Remarks, as inserted in this issue

HOUSE
Blumenauer, Earl, Ore., E329, E330
Dingell, Debbie, Mich., E326
Gonzales, Vicente, Tx., E327
Hastings, Alcee L., Fla., E329
Himes, James A., Conn., E325
Maloney, Carolyn B., N.Y., E327, E328
Meehan, Patrick, Pa., E325
Norton, Eleanor Holmes, The District of Columbia, E330
Olson, Pete, Tex., E328, E329, E329, E330, E330
 Poe, Ted, Tex., E325
Reichert, David G., Wash., E328
Rooney, Thomas J., Fla., E328
Sewell, Terri A., Ala., E325
Sinema, Kyrsten, Ariz., E329
Stefanik, Elise M., N.Y., E326, E327
Wenstrup, Brad R., Ohio, E327
Wilson, Joe, S.C., E329