

It is no wonder the American Bar Association—an organization that the Democratic leader and the former Democratic Judiciary Committee chairman have called the “gold standard”—gave Judge Gorsuch its highest rating, unanimously “well qualified.”

In that ABA rating, it noted: “Based on the writings, interviews, and analyses we scrutinized to reach our rating, we discerned that Judge Gorsuch believes strongly in the judicial branch of government, and we predict that he will be a strong but respectful voice in protecting it.”

The ABA isn't alone in its support for Judge Gorsuch. In fact, people from across the political spectrum have sung his praises, including many on the left that you might not expect—people like Professor Laurence Tribe, former President Obama's legal mentor, who called Gorsuch “a brilliant, terrific guy who would do the Court's work with distinction,” and Neal Katyal, former President Obama's top Supreme Court lawyer, who called him “one of the most thoughtful and brilliant judges to have served our nation over the last century.”

This is the Obama Solicitor General saying that he is “one of the most thoughtful and brilliant judges to have served our nation over the last century.”

There are liberal law professors, including Alan Dershowitz, who said Gorsuch would be “hard to oppose on the merits,” and Donald Elliot, who called him “a brilliant mind” who “tries very hard to get the law right . . . [and] follows the law as best he can wherever it might lead.”

At his confirmation hearing last week, we heard from former and current colleagues on the Federal bench who enthusiastically support his nomination. These are all Federal judges who know him well.

Judge John Kane, who was appointed to the district court in Colorado by President Carter, wrote that Judge Gorsuch has voted both to affirm and reverse his decisions. “In each instance,” he remarked, “I have felt I was clearly understood and properly informed.” He goes on to say:

I think Judge Gorsuch listens well and decides justly. His dissents are instructive rather than vitriolic. In sum, I think he is an excellent judicial craftsman.

Former colleagues on the Tenth Circuit testified last week on his behalf as well. Two former chief judges of that circuit—one appointed by President Reagan and another appointed by President Clinton—have written that Judge Gorsuch was “like most good judges, assiduously attentive to the facts and law in each case.” Judge Deanell Tacha and Judge Robert Henry went on to say that if Judge Gorsuch were confirmed to the Supreme Court, his other important traits are not likely to change either—things like “his fair consideration of opposing views, his remarkable intelligence, his wonderful judicial temperament expressed

to litigants and his collegiality toward colleagues.”

They conclude by saying:

If we seek to confirm to the Supreme Court a noted intellect, a collegial colleague, and [a] gifted and eloquent writer—as well as a person of exhibited judicial temperament—Gorsuch fits that bill. He represents the best of the judicial tradition in our country.

Perhaps David Frederick, a board member of the left-leaning American Constitution Society, best summed up why the Senate should confirm Judge Gorsuch. In a recent Washington Post op-ed, he praised Judge Gorsuch for his “reverence for our country's values and legal system.”

Mr. Frederick states:

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.

Therefore, this self-proclaimed “long-time supporter of Democratic candidates and progressive causes,” said that “the Senate should confirm [Gorsuch] because there is no principled reason to vote no.”

Let me repeat that. “The Senate should confirm him,” he said, “because there is no principled reason to vote no.”

Unfortunately, some of our Democratic colleagues are trying desperately to find any excuse to block this nomination. Although this is unfortunate, it is not surprising. Recall that the Democratic leader stated before Judge Gorsuch was even nominated that he would oppose any person on the President's long list of qualified candidates, even if it meant keeping the seat open for years.

Look, we know that our Democratic friends are under an enormous amount of pressure from some on the far left who want them to “resist.” It is clear that many radical special interest groups simply refuse to accept the results of the election and would like nothing more than to obstruct the serious work before the Senate.

We saw the impact that had on the Cabinet confirmation process, which represented a historic level of obstruction. We are seeing the same calls for obstruction now.

This much is clear. If our Democratic colleagues choose to hold up this nominee, then, they are acknowledging that they will go to any length—any length—to block any Supreme Court nominee of a Republican President. If Neil Gorsuch can't be confirmed, there is no nominee of any Republican President who our friends on the other side would argue deserves 60 votes. This isn't about the nominee at all. It isn't about his background. It isn't about his temperament. It isn't about his reputation as a judge. It is about those on the far left who want to prevent our country from moving forward.

Judge Gorsuch's suitability for the appellate court was so noncontroversial that not a single Senate Democrat

opposed his nomination—not then-Senator Obama, not then-Senators Biden, Clinton, or Kennedy, not even my good friend the Democratic leader—and there is no reason that Judge Gorsuch shouldn't receive similarly overwhelming bipartisan support now. This is an important moment for our country.

I urge each of our colleagues to rise to the moment and together move forward with the confirmation of our next Supreme Court Justice, Judge Neil Gorsuch, and give him the up-or-down vote that he deserves.

Will the Presiding Officer announce the business of the day.

#### 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

#### PROTOCOL TO THE NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY OF 1949 ON THE ACCESSION OF MONTENEGRO

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of Executive Calendar No. 1, the Montenegro treaty, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

Treaty document No. 114-12, Protocol to the North Atlantic Treaty of 1949 on the Accession of Montenegro.

#### AMENDMENT NO. 193

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I have an amendment that is at the desk that I ask the clerk to report.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Kentucky [Mr. McConnell] proposes an amendment numbered 193.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

The amendment is as follows:

At the end add the following:

“This Treaty shall be effective 1 day after ratification.”

Mr. McCONNELL. I ask for the yeas and nays on my amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

#### AMENDMENT NO. 194 TO AMENDMENT NO. 193

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I have a second-degree amendment at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Kentucky [Mr. McCONNELL] proposes an amendment numbered 194 to amendment No. 193.

Mr. McCONNELL. I ask unanimous consent that the reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

The amendment is as follows:

Strike "1 day" and insert "2 days".

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

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

#### RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

#### RUSSIA AND TRUMP CAMPAIGN INVESTIGATION

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I rise this afternoon on a few topics. First, on the investigation into the Trump campaign's potential ties to Russia, this is a matter of such gravity, we need to get it right. There should be no doubt about the integrity and impartiality of the investigation, either in the executive branch, where the FBI and Department of Justice are looking into it, or in Congress, where the Intelligence Committees of both Chambers are conducting an investigation.

Unfortunately, the House Intelligence Committee has come under a cloud of suspicion and partisanship. A few months ago, Chairman NUNES spoke to reporters at the request of the White House to tamp down stories on the links between the Trump campaign and Russia, which is exactly what his committee now must investigate. This past week, Chairman NUNES broke with the committee process and tradition to brief the President on information he had learned but hadn't yet shared with the committee. We have learned this morning that Chairman NUNES was at the White House the day before that event—doing what? We don't know. It could very well be the case that Chairman NUNES was briefing members of the administration about an investigation of which they are the subject.

Chairman NUNES is falling down on the job and seems to be more interested in protecting the President than in seeking the truth. You cannot have the person in charge of an impartial investigation be partial to one side. It is an inherent contradiction, and it undermines decades of bipartisan cooperation on the Intelligence Committee, which handles such sensitive information paramount to national security. It undermines Congress as a co-equal branch of government meant to hold the executive branch accountable for its actions, and it corrodes the

American people's confidence in our government.

If Speaker RYAN wants the House to have a credible investigation, he needs to replace Chairman NUNES. Congress was meant by the Framers to be separate and equal, and I sincerely worry that under his direction, Mr. NUNES is pushing the committee into a direction of obsequiousness and not one that is asking the hard questions and getting the important answers.

There has always been a grand tradition of bipartisanship on the Intelligence Committee. When Members go into the SCIF, the room where they get secure briefings, they check their partisanship at the door. Chairman NUNES is right on the edge of doing permanent damage to that grand tradition of bipartisanship. Chairman NUNES seems to be more of a partisan for the President than an impartial actor. He has not been cooperating like someone who is interested in getting to the unvarnished truth. His actions look like those of someone who is interested in protecting the President and his party, and that doesn't work when the goal of the committee is to investigate Russia and its connection to the President and his campaign.

Without further ado, Speaker RYAN should replace Chairman NUNES.

#### TRUMPCARE

Mr. President, on another matter, the failure of TrumpCare this past Friday was a good day for the American people. We can finally put to bed the disaster of a bill that was TrumpCare, which would have resulted in spottier coverage, 24 million fewer Americans with health coverage, and higher costs, premiums, and deductibles for the middle class, the working poor, and older Americans, all to finance close to \$600 billion in tax breaks for wealthy Americans. Americans should breathe a sigh of relief that TrumpCare will not become law. We are happy that it is gone. We can finally move on.

As I have said many times, we Democrats, provided our Republican colleagues drop "replace" and stop undermining the ACA, are willing to work with our Republican friends to improve the existing law. No one ever said the Affordable Care Act was perfect. We have ideas to improve it; hopefully, our colleagues on the Republican side do as well. I hope once "replace" is dropped and the ACA is no longer undermined by the administration, we can sit down and talk about it.

Unfortunately, the administration has already done several things that undermine the law and hurt the people. During the final weeks of open enrollment, the Trump administration discontinued the public advertising campaigns that encouraged people to sign up for insurance. The administration is working behind the scenes to give insurers flexibility to offer Americans less coverage for the healthcare they need, and the Executive order that President Trump issued directing agencies to facilitate the repeal and re-

placement of the ACA has destabilized the marketplace. Now that TrumpCare is off the table, the President should rescind the Executive order.

Today, I am urging the President and his entire administration to immediately cease all efforts to undermine the ACA. People's lives are at stake.

The President should not hope that the healthcare system for tens of millions explodes. He should not want premiums to go up on his watch. He should not hope that Americans lose treatment for opioid addiction on his watch. This approach is wrong, and wrong in two ways: First and foremost, it is wrong because it hurts people. The President must be a leader. It is not leadership for the President to hurt people and actively work to undermine our Nation's healthcare system simply because he is angry that he didn't get his way on repealing the ACA. That is not Presidential, that is petulance.

Secondly, this approach will not work politically. Donald Trump is no longer an outsider; he is President. The American people are looking to him to help solve their problems. If he doesn't, it is going to hurt him and his party. Pointing the finger of blame isn't going to solve anyone's problems. That strategy is not only bad for the American people and beneath the Presidency, it will backfire politically. He is in charge. People want him to make their lives better, not make them worse because of some political anger or vendetta.

I know many of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle do care deeply about fixing the Nation's healthcare problems, and we are ready to do that with them in a bipartisan way. But, of course, repeal must be taken off the table, and the President must stop hurting citizens by undermining the Affordable Care Act.

#### TAX REFORM

Mr. President, finally, on tax issues, now that the jig is finally up on healthcare, our Republican friends have signaled they will turn to taxes. I hope they have learned the lessons of TrumpCare. One of the reasons TrumpCare failed so spectacularly was that Republicans tried to rush and ram it through via a reconciliation process, even though it was deeply unpopular with the public. The last poll showed only 17 percent of Americans supported TrumpCare, so that means a large number even of Trump supporters were opposed to it.

Why was it so unpopular? Probably because TrumpCare would have given the wealthiest among us a monster tax cut while hammering older Americans and the middle class with higher costs for less care.

So I say to my friends on the other side of the aisle: If you try to pass a Republican tax plan using the same reconciliation method in order to get a huge tax break for the wealthy and already profitable and powerful corporations, it will fail. The American people are not crying out for tax breaks on

the wealthiest Americans. God bless the wealthy. They are doing just fine without the tax breaks, but thus far it seems our Republican colleagues are headed in that direction.

Even though the President campaigned as a populist, his administration has been all hard-right, pro-corporate, pro-special interests, totally against the working people. If the President and Republicans in Congress continue in that direction, proposing policies that shift burdens off the wealthy and powerful, not aiming to help the middle class and working families, their efforts will continue to fail, and it will turn tax reform into a partisan issue. The White House says tax reform isn't partisan, but it surely will be if they propose massive tax cuts only for the wealthy. My prediction: If Republicans go down that road, the Republican tax scheme will meet the same fate as TrumpCare. I hope they will not go down that road; I hope they will not.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

#### BORDER ADJUSTMENT TAX

Mr. SCHATZ. Mr. President, last week TrumpCare died, and lots of people are trying to figure out exactly what happened. In my view, it was not a lack of strategy; it was not a lack of effort; it was not a lack of personal relationship between the Speaker and the President. It died because the policy stank. It died because people actually—left, right, and center—decided that cutting Medicaid by \$900 billion in order to provide a tax cut for the wealthiest Americans of the exact same amount was just not a good idea in policy or in politics.

Now that TrumpCare has crashed and burned, Republicans are essentially going to try to do the same thing—tax cuts for the rich. Yet, this time, instead of funding it by cutting Medicaid, they are going to charge people more for groceries. Here is their proposal: They want to cut taxes for corporations again. That is what they want to do. Whether one is talking about infrastructure or whether one is talking about healthcare or whether one is talking about so-called tax reform, their solution to everything is to cut taxes for corporations. They want to cut taxes for corporations again, but this time American families will pay for it through taxes on groceries and the other stuff they have to buy on a day-to-day basis.

We have seen this before. It is a giveaway for corporations and the wealthiest among us, but, as usual, they have to find a pay-for, a way to make the arithmetic work, a way to pay for it.

They are going to keep proposing so-called solutions for healthcare, infrastructure, or in this case tax reform, but they are basically the same proposal. It is a subsidy for Wall Street. It is because they cannot help themselves.

This particular giveaway will cost the average American family thousands of dollars. Families will have to pay more for gas, medicine, clothes, cars, food. That is how a so-called border adjustment tax works. Everything one buys in the United States will be taxed, and everything outside of the United States will not be taxed. The sort of principle behind that is that somehow we are going to stimulate exports and disincentivize imports. It is not just that you are paying more on the stuff that is imported; it is that everything in the United States that you purchase you will have to pay more for in order to incentivize exports. But all you are doing is charging the American people more. This is essentially a sales tax.

I talked to members of my staff, and they were trying to get into the sort of technocratic, legal details about whether it is technically a sales tax or a value-added tax or a border adjustment tax that fits into some other legal category. But for a regular person, it does not matter what you call it; if you pay more and the government is collecting it, it is an increase in taxes.

They are going to dazzle you with complexity, and I think some in the House Republican leadership are very skillful at trying to make this more complicated than it is. They are trying to dazzle you with complexity so you do not know what they are doing. They are raising taxes on groceries and all of the stuff you buy. That is their version of tax reform.

I can understand. The Tax Code is awful, it is a mess, and we have been trying to do tax reform for I think 30 years. It is not unreasonable for the average American to say "Yes, you ought to reform the Tax Code," but, remember, when they talk tax reform, they want you to have to go to the store and buy a steak, a hotdog, a head of lettuce, gasoline, pillows, diapers, paper—whatever you need—and it is going to cost more with so-called tax reform. If they succeed, the average American family could pay up to \$1,700 more per year in order that corporations can get their tax cuts. Think about what \$1,700 means for families across the country. For a family of four, with two kids in middle school, \$1,700 pays for a few months' worth of groceries. In Hawaii, \$1,700 will cover rent for a month, and in lots of other places, it will cover rent for 4 or 5 months. For some people, it pays a year's worth of an electric bill. In the State of Hawaii, it will pay for 4 or 5 months of your electric bill.

We know for certain this will hurt consumers, but on a macroeconomic level—in other words, for the entire

country—we have no idea what a border adjustment tax would actually do in terms of our international relationships.

I understand. I voted against the Trans-Pacific Partnership and the trade promotion authority. I have been very, very concerned about the extent to which we have not been getting the better of these trade deals, especially when it comes to people who are in unions across the country. But we do not want to engage in a trade war. We do not want to screw up American manufacturing, American farming. We have no idea what the impact would be. Even if one is willing to accept increasing the cost of goods in the United States for some theoretical possibility that this will incentivize exports, we have no idea what it is going to do to the American economy overall. Even in the best-case scenario, entire industries will fall apart.

Take tourism. In 2016 alone, tourism supported nearly 5.5 million American jobs directly and almost 10 million more in industries like restaurants and retail. The tourism industry pumps \$2.6 billion into our economy every day. That is more than \$30,000 per second.

I will say one other thing about tourism. As we worry about automation, as we worry about artificial intelligence, as we worry about a global economy that is going to eviscerate some of our core industries, tourism is one thing that cannot be taken away from us. If people want to go to Los Angeles, if people want to go to Cleveland, if people want to go to Hawaii, if people want to go to St. Louis, MO, or Kansas City, MO, or Florida, these are jobs that cannot be taken away. So if you want to infuse cash into an economy, create a tourism economy—all of these jobs and all of this revenue will be under threat if this works out the way they want it to work out because the dollar will be so strong that Americans will want to travel abroad and foreigners will want to travel far, far away from us.

Why are we punishing consumers and small businesses? Why are we putting entire industries at risk? House Republicans will tell you it is because they think the corporate tax is too high, but here is the truth: Right now, major corporations have huge teams of tax lawyers who set up fake shell companies so that they get around paying Federal taxes at all, or they abuse loopholes to drastically lower what they owe to the U.S. Government. That is why we see some corporations that end up paying zero dollars in Federal income tax year after year even though they are making a healthy profit in the United States.

Together, Republicans and Democrats should be going after these tax dodgers. Instead of just getting rid of loopholes, they have decided to tax consumers. This makes no sense, and that is why we have to stop it.

Last week, we saved healthcare for 24 million Americans because people

across the country of all political persuasions stood up to fight. This week, the fight goes on. Once again, far too many people are in the crosshairs. I believe strongly that so long as we continue to stand together, we can win this one too. A huge tax cut for the wealthy cannot be funded by increasing the cost of groceries.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

#### NOMINATION OF JUDGE NEIL GORSUCH

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, earlier today in the Senate Judiciary Committee, we considered the nomination of Judge Neil Gorsuch to serve as the next Justice on the U.S. Supreme Court. According to Judiciary Committee practice, that nomination was held over for a week, which means that Judge Gorsuch will be voted out of the Senate Judiciary Committee on April 3, and it will be available for floor action thereafter.

As the Nation—and perhaps even the world—knows, we held lengthy hearings last week to review his qualifications, his experience, and his approach to judging. I have to say that he really impressed everybody who approached this whole issue with an open mind about whether he was qualified to serve on the High Court. But unfortunately, as those of us who work in the Senate know, there has already been a threat by the Democratic leader to filibuster his nomination.

It is really important for the country to recall that there has never been a successful partisan filibuster of a nominee to the U.S. Supreme Court. Sometimes people want to talk about Abe Fortas in 1968, but ultimately Abe Fortas, who was nominated to be Chief Justice of the Supreme Court by his friend and mentor, Lyndon Johnson, asked to withdraw his nomination after one failed cloture vote and ultimately ended up resigning from the Supreme Court of the United States in disgrace. It is hardly a precedent for what Democrats have said they are going to do with regard to this good man and this good judge, Neil Gorsuch.

I understand my friend the Democratic leader has a tough job. He has a split caucus—those who want to take Democrats over the ledge and those who would like to try to find some way to work out a reasonable accommodation. Unfortunately, he is under a lot of pressure from the radical groups on the left to do whatever he can to tank this superb nominee. Again, this would be unprecedented in American history.

It is true that Democrats in 2013 did the so-called nuclear option, which has established a new precedent in the Sen-

ate with regard to lower court judges—circuit court judges and district court judges—along with Cabinet nominees. Ironically, the so-called Reid precedent of 2013 has kind of come back to bite them a little bit, as President Trump now has been able to see all of his Cabinet members confirmed with 51 votes, or, in the case of one, 50 plus the Vice President.

I was glad to see a quote from a report in a Vermont publication from our friend the senior Senator from Vermont, the former chairman of the Judiciary Committee, in which he said he wasn't inclined to filibuster the nomination of Judge Gorsuch and that he deserves a minimum of an up-or-down vote. So I hope others will follow the lead of Senator LEAHY, who has been in the Senate a long time in the majority and in the minority. He realizes it is important to maintain a certain level of tradition and decorum here in the Senate, because usually what goes around comes around. Unfortunately, this new precedent of filibustering Supreme Court Justices, if allowed to happen, is going to continue to be very damaging to the Senate and even to the country.

I hope he is still of that same mind—that he is not inclined to filibuster the nomination of Judge Gorsuch. If he takes that position, I know he will influence a lot of colleagues on the other side of the aisle because of his distinguished record of service in the Senate and in the Judiciary Committee.

I look forward to the committee approving Judge Gorsuch's nomination next week and then taking that nomination up on the Senate floor and confirming the nomination of Neil Gorsuch to serve as the next Associate Justice on the U.S. Supreme Court.

#### OBAMACARE

Mr. President, last week, a lot of attention was focused on the House of Representatives and their efforts to fix our Nation's healthcare system.

We have said for a long time that ObamaCare needs to be repealed and replaced. I stand by that comment, and I know many of our colleagues do as well. But I want to make something else clear. The failure of ObamaCare isn't a problem for Democrats or Republicans alone. It is a problem for the entire country, and particularly those who find their premiums going up by double digits every year, their deductibles unaffordable, or even choices drying up because insurance companies simply have withdrawn from the individual market. Our colleagues on the Democratic side have repeatedly recognized the problems with ObamaCare, even though they pushed it through on a partisan vote 7 years ago.

The fact of the matter is that the President promised: If you like your healthcare policy, you can keep it; if you like your doctor, you can keep your doctor; and, premiums for a family of four will go down by an average of \$2,500. None of that has proven to be

true. People were misled into believing that ObamaCare would somehow be the gold standard for healthcare in the country, and people are being hurt now by high premiums, high deductibles, and fewer choices. Indeed, 30 million people remain uninsured in this country because of the cost or the fact that they just decide that they don't want to buy government-mandated healthcare. They either pay a penalty through the IRS or they simply get a hardship exemption. There are 30 million people currently uninsured, more or less, under ObamaCare.

I want to remind our colleagues on the other side that they understand ObamaCare needs some work, and many of them have made repeated calls to fix it. Last year, for example, the junior Senator from Wisconsin said of ObamaCare:

There were things obviously that need perfecting, need revisiting. Even if it were perfect, over time we would have to make adaptations, and so I think we would absolutely want to strengthen it.

Not even our colleague, the junior Senator from Wisconsin, is saying ObamaCare is delivering 100 percent on the promise. She is saying it needs some work.

The senior Senator from Indiana has echoed this sentiment. He said:

I supported the Affordable Care Act because I wanted to help working- and middle-class families to have access to healthcare. That doesn't mean the law is perfect, and it doesn't mean that we don't still have work to do. That's why I'm working with my colleagues to make this bill stronger.

We haven't seen any proposals from our friends across the aisle on how to fix the law, which they concede is far from perfect. Instead, what we have seen is their standing back, watching Republicans trying to do this by ourselves and coming up short last week in the House of Representatives. To my mind, that is not commendable behavior on their part. I thought we all came here to the U.S. Senate to try to do things and fix problems for the constituents we represent. It is purely partisan to say: We know ObamaCare is falling apart, and it is not delivering as we promised. And, oh yes, you Republicans can try to fix it, but if you don't have the votes to do it, we are just going to sit back and applaud or react with glee from a partisan perspective because our political opponents somehow came up short when it came to the votes in the House.

The truth is, ObamaCare didn't bring massive relief for working- and middle-class Americans. For many, it made life more difficult with skyrocketing premiums, losing their plans and the doctors they wanted, and having fewer options to choose from.

I will quote one of our colleagues on the other side of the aisle, the junior Senator from North Dakota. Her website says: "With any major legislation, there are improvements that need to be made so that it works as well as possible, and that holds true for the

healthcare reform law," speaking of ObamaCare.

She goes on to say that she is committed to "correcting the parts of the healthcare reform law that do not make sense, improve on others, and implement new ideas to improve on healthcare costs and improve quality."

I am grateful to our colleague from North Dakota for her honesty and open take on where things stand with respect to ObamaCare, but that is just a start. What we need to do now is work together to try to address the failings of ObamaCare where it is not delivering as promised and where even our colleagues across the aisle have said that it needs to be fixed in order to make sure that people have access to affordable, accessible quality healthcare. They don't have that now.

My point is that ObamaCare was a bill sold to the American people under false pretenses by the previous administration, and it has proved to be a disaster for many people. I was reading an article—I think it was either in the Washington Post or the New York Times today—about a woman in Texas who runs a hair care salon and who has intentionally kept her number of employees under the threshold under which ObamaCare's employer mandate would be invoked. So rather than spending time focusing on growing her business and improving her business, she has consciously kept it smaller, with fewer employees, because she knows that the burden of complying with the ObamaCare employer mandate will ultimately make her business less profitable. And when her business is less profitable, it means she can hire fewer people and perhaps can't pay the wages or the benefits she would like to pay her employees.

So I would just say to our colleagues across the aisle that I understand you think you had a pretty good day last week when the Republicans couldn't pass the healthcare plan on their own in the House, but I don't think this is a time for people to enjoy other people's failed efforts to try to improve the status quo. It is a mandate, I believe, for all of us to work together to address the flaws that we know exist—that they admitted exist—to try to do better when it comes to affordable, accessible healthcare for the American people.

This law will fail. Insurance companies will withdraw from the market, and the individual market serving roughly 18 million people will literally dry up and go away. Imagine how those families are going to be impacted.

I wouldn't want to be somebody who said: Well, I had an opportunity to fix it; yes, I had an opportunity to address your concerns when it came to affordable healthcare, but for partisan political reasons, I simply stood down and did nothing and literally washed my hands of it.

So before this law collapses—and it will—I hope our colleagues across the aisle will start offering their ideas and

their solutions to bring better healthcare to families across the country. That is what I think our constituents expect of us. That is in the finest tradition of the U.S. Senate, and our constituents deserve no less.

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. RUBIO. 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. RUBIO. Mr. President, I am pleased that in the Senate we are about to take a vote on ratifying the protocol of the accession of Montenegro to NATO.

What I wanted to do was to take a few moments to explain to people why I think this is an important vote and an important moment for our security as a nation but also to protect our interests abroad and that of our allies.

We all know that NATO—the North Atlantic Treaty Organization—was started right after World War II. It was primarily designed in the Cold War to confront the threats posed by the Soviet Union and its allies in the Warsaw Pact. Of course those threats have changed since the end of that Cold War.

Here is what hasn't changed. What hasn't changed is the need for America and her allies in a strong way to remain engaged in the world. That need has not changed. What has not changed is the need for democracies to be able to come together and collectively defend not just their interests but the interests of all people around the world where freedom is threatened. The difficult, painful lesson of history is that dictators and tyrants are never pleased with what they have. They always want more. They always need more. That is why it is so important that those nations on Earth—luckily and in a blessed way, more people than ever before find themselves living in societies where the people get to choose their leaders.

These alliances we have around the world—NATO being chief among them—help advance our strategic and economic interests, but most importantly, they help to keep our country safe.

There is a lot of talk about how much countries are paying into NATO, and it is true that the United States is by far the largest contributor to NATO. I think that is a combination of two things: one, decisions that were made by some of our allies in Europe on how they want to spend their government's money, and the other is just the reality that we are the United States of America, and as the United States of America, we will always find that we are always making a disproportionate share and contribution on everything, from global aid to fight off hunger and disease, to collective security.

While we can urge our allies, encourage our allies, and ask our allies to make a greater contribution to their own defense, we should not fall into the trap of diminishing what they are doing and what they have done.

First of all, in Europe today, many of our NATO allies are increasing their defense spending. They are doing so in response to Russia's aggression in Ukraine and its increased aggression elsewhere in the region. Their soldiers are joining ours in deploying to Central and Eastern Europe to reassure our allies who are facing aggression and potential aggression from Vladimir Putin.

With all this talk about NATO and money and how much everyone is giving, I think it is important to take a moment to also understand that our NATO allies have fought beside us and have died beside Americans in Afghanistan, where more than 1,100 soldiers of the NATO-led coalition paid the ultimate price with their lives. It is important to note this because on September 11, 2001, Paris was not attacked, Berlin was not attacked, and London was not attacked on that horrible day; yet these nations and others, our partners, invoked a shared commitment that led them to stand beside us on the other side of the world in an effort to prevent another attack like September 11 from taking place again on American soil or anywhere in the world.

Montenegro is not even a member of NATO yet. Yet it sent hundreds of servicemembers to join the American-led coalition in Afghanistan.

I have always argued that when our alliances, such as NATO, are under pressure from our potential adversaries and foes, we need to continue to expand and allow countries that meet the standards set by the alliance to join. That has never been more important than it is now, given the uncertainty and security challenges we face in Europe, especially as Vladimir Putin continues his aggression and continues to threaten stability in the region.

To be frank, Putin would love nothing more than to destroy NATO. In fact, you can see him trying to do that on a regular basis. He has tried to divide these countries, turn them against each other. He supports candidates throughout Europe who would take their countries out of NATO, constantly calling into question its viability. Vladimir Putin wants countries like Montenegro to remain in his sphere of influence and what I would call his sphere of threat, as his recent attempts to deploy his asymmetrical tools to influence Montenegrin politics have shown. That is why it is so important that we are moving to ratify Montenegro's access to NATO and to strengthen our relationship with Montenegro through NATO.

As the Senate and as a country, we are sending a clear message to Vladimir Putin that we will not accept the establishment of a Russian sphere of influence over countries that desire to

ally themselves with the free and democratic community of nations.

Today, I have tried to refrain from using the term “Russian” sphere of influence or “Russia” because the fact is, as I said to someone earlier today or yesterday, there is a difference between Russia and Vladimir Putin, and the events of the last 48 hours remind us of that. We are watching as many Russians who also desire to join the community of nations have turned out in cities and in places across Moscow and in other places in the thousands. They have turned out to protest the rampant corruption that fuels the Putin regime. And the Putin regime, as all totalitarian regimes do, has cracked down. They have arrested and detained hundreds of peaceful protesters. I ask you to compare that to Montenegro, whose membership in NATO will help the United States and Montenegro deepen our already strong bilateral relationship.

The stakes here are extraordinarily high for the United States and for our European allies. The Senate needs to send a strong message of solidarity with those in Europe who are standing up to the anti-democratic tactics of Vladimir Putin and his cronies.

That is why today I will be proud to cast my vote in support of Montenegro's accession into NATO, and I hope my colleagues here in the Senate will do the same and join me in doing so as well.

Mr. 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.

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.

#### HEALTHCARE

Ms. WARREN. Mr. President, last week Republicans in Congress came within an inch of ripping health insurance away from 24 million people in order to give tax breaks to rich people. That collapsed, and it collapsed because the American people stood up and said no—no to kicking seniors out of nursing homes, no to booting kids with rare diseases off of their treatments, no to gutting funding for opioid addiction.

All across this country—in every corner of this country—for months people spoke up about how the Affordable Care Act and Medicaid are saving their lives and saving their families from financial ruin. They poured their hearts out, they raised their voices, and they demanded to be heard. Last week they won.

The collapse of the Republicans' cruel scheme is a huge relief to millions of people in this country, but I am not here to celebrate. I am here to warn the American people about what is coming next, because instead of listening to the American people about

what they want, the President of the United States has threatened to sabotage healthcare in America. It isn't subtle. One hour after the Republicans admitted they didn't have the votes in Congress to destroy the Affordable Care Act, President Trump sat behind his desk in the Oval Office and told the entire Nation that he wants to trigger a meltdown of our healthcare system because he thinks that would be helpful to him politically.

Just so there is no confusion, I want to quote him word for word. He said: “The best thing we can do, politically speaking, is let ObamaCare explode.”

Now let's be clear. It is deeply wrong for the President of the United States—whose one and only job is to look out for the American people—to root for the failure of our country's healthcare system. It is deeply wrong for the President of the United States to announce that he is going to drag down our entire healthcare sector—a sector that accounts for more than one-sixth of the entire U.S. economy—just so he can stand on top of the wreckage and waggle his fingers and say: I told you so.

Healthcare for millions of Americans is not a game. It is not entertainment. It is not a reality TV show. Healthcare is literally life and death, and it touches everyone in this country from elderly grandparents to tiny babies.

President Trump is responsible for making healthcare in this country work. It is his job. He is President of the United States. His party controls both Houses of Congress. A legitimate President doesn't clap and cheer when things get worse for the American people. A legitimate President doesn't pound his chest about sabotaging the health and security of the American people because it is politically expedient. A legitimate President does his job.

The President's admission that he wants our healthcare system to collapse is a dangerous sign of where things are headed. For 7 years Republicans in Congress have rooted against healthcare in this country, cheering every stumble and working at every turn to hobble the law and make it harder for people to get affordable insurance. President Trump cannot repeal the Affordable Care Act on his own, but he can strip healthcare from millions of Americans and make it too expensive for millions more. He can do that all on his own. In fact, he is already working on it.

A few days after he took office, President Trump signed an Executive order directing his agency to use every tool at their disposal to try to disrupt the Affordable Care Act. In January, he also pulled down government's efforts to get more people signed up for health insurance. Why? So fewer people would use the health exchanges, fewer would get insurance, and premiums would go up for those who did sign up—all in an effort to make ObamaCare fail.

Senator PATTY MURRAY and I asked the inspector general at the Depart-

ment of Health and Human Services to investigate this reckless move, and now an independent investigation has been launched into this despicable incident. But the President has more tools at his disposal to undercut the Affordable Care Act all by himself. The President can redefine what insurance plans have to cover, stripping out critical benefits like birth control coverage. The President can withhold payments that insurers rely on to keep private health plans affordable. The President can allow States to put new conditions on Medicaid, conditions like taking away healthcare coverage if a woman doesn't get back to work soon enough after giving birth.

If the President decides to launch an all-out effort to sabotage American healthcare so he can manufacture a crisis to score political points, he can hurt a lot of people.

But there is a better way. If Republicans want to work on ideas to actually improve healthcare in America, to expand coverage, to expand access, or to reduce premiums and out-of-pocket costs, I am eager to throw up my sleeves and go to work. For years, Massachusetts has led the Nation in bipartisan health reform. We have lots to contribute on this, and lots of other Democrats are ready to get to work, too.

The American people aren't stupid. They know the difference between a bill that kicks 24 million people off of their health insurance and a bill that actually improves care. They know the difference between a President who fights to make health care better and a President who plans to sabotage healthcare. They know the difference between a fireman and an arsonist. If this President and this Congress continue to play politics with the lives of millions of people, I promise you that the American people will see it, they will know it, and they will rise up once again to fight it.

Thank you, Mr. President.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, I take the floor to urge an “aye” vote on invoking cloture on the issue of Montenegro's admittance into NATO. I would point out that 25 of the 28 nations in NATO have already voted in favor of Montenegro's accession into NATO. Only the United States, Spain, and the Netherlands have yet to weigh in.

I would like to point out that Montenegro's admittance into NATO is a critical test of the alliances's open-door policy. I don't ask my colleagues to take my word for it. I would just like to point out that our Supreme Allied Commander in Europe, General Curtis Scaparrotti, last week declared that Montenegro's accession into NATO is “absolutely critical,” that they have had this desire. They have met the map, and they understand NATO's outreach and ability to bring



in those who want to determine their own means of government and become part of NATO.

If we were to lose this, it would be a setback to many of the other nations and peoples, particularly in Eastern Europe, who were looking forward to and have their eyes on the West and becoming part of NATO.

I would point out to my colleagues that the Russians attach some importance to Montenegro because they tried a coup to overthrow the government. The Russians tried a coup to overthrow the government of this small, beautiful, and strategically important nation.

I would just point out that our Secretary of State, Rex Tillerson, wrote a letter urging Montenegro's membership to be ratified, saying that it was "strongly in the interests of the United States." In his letter he strongly emphasized that Montenegro's accession to NATO would support greater integration, democratic reform, trade, and security and stability in the entire Balkans region.

I won't take too much time in the Senate except to say that I think this is more than an accession or non-accession of a small 750,000-person nation. It is a test in this contest that we are now engaged in with Vladimir Putin, who has committed to extending the reach and influence of the Russian Government and Russian influence to the point where he attempted a coup to overthrow the freely elected government of Montenegro. That coup failed, but I can assure my colleagues that if we turn down Montenegro, it will not remain the democracy that it is today.

General Breedlove, who is our former commander in Europe said:

Montenegro is a very strategic place. Can you imagine A2/AD Bubbles in Montenegro?

I urge my colleagues for a resounding "aye" vote in bringing cloture to an end and bringing Montenegro into the community of NATO, which is needed more now than at any time since the end of the Cold War. I, also, by the way, recommend to my colleagues a visit to, really, one of the more beautiful countries on Earth.

I yield for the Senator from South Carolina.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Carolina is recognized.

Mr. GRAHAM. Mr. President, for one, I want to let the people of Montenegro know that this day has been a long time coming. We would not be here had it not been for Senator McCain's constant, persuasive, passionate voice, and this day has finally arrived in the Senate.

As to Senator McConnell, I want to thank him for making floor time. I regret we had to do it this way, but when one Senator objects, then, it puts the pressure on the rest of us. One Senator can stop legislation like this. It was one Senator, and he has every right to do so. But I want to thank Senator McConnell for putting aside floor time so that we can vote in the Senate to

allow Montenegro to be a part of NATO.

Senator McCain has traveled the world as much as anybody I know. I have been to Montenegro with him at least once, if not twice. It is a beautiful place. They share our values. They want to move forward in terms of their democracy. They want to be part of NATO. They want to be part of free markets. They want the rule of law to replace the rule of the gun. Montenegro is trying to do everything that Putin hates—where you can actually vote for your own leaders, where you can have a judicial system that works, where people can walk the streets without fear, and where the leadership doesn't steal the country blind.

I want to let the people of Russia know—for those who went into the streets yesterday or the day before to protest the corruption of the Putin regime—that you have my undying respect and admiration, because I can only imagine how hard that was.

For the people of Montenegro, I know they have been waiting a long time for this day to come because Russia and, generally, Putin have been trying to overthrow their government.

To those people in this body who proclaim they are for freedom and liberty, here is what I suggest. If you are not for other people's freedom and other people's liberty, you will eventually lose yours. The idea that we can be safe and free and not engage the world and sit on the sidelines and watch people like Putin turn the world order upside down and not be affected is at best naive. It is worse than naive, but I want to be nice and say it is just naive.

What Putin is doing throughout the world is trying to break the backs of the world order, NATO, and the European Union. He is trying to drive a wedge between the NATO countries, and he will be the biggest beneficiary of that. He is trying to break the back of the European Union. Alliances of democracy are his worst nightmare. This is a huge step in the right direction.

I want to thank Senator McCain for being the most consistent voice in this body, and Senators McConnell and Schumer for allowing this vote. But our work is not done because it is one thing to vote in favor of Montenegro's entering NATO over Russia's objections. That is not enough. Senator McCain and myself, Senators Cardin and Rubio—Democrats and Republicans—all have crafted legislation to punish Russia for interfering in our elections. And they did. They are trying to break the backs of democracy in Ukraine, Georgia, and the Baltic nations. I hope the next thing we do in this body, in short order, on Russia is to punish them for their efforts to interfere and change and destabilize American democracy. I don't think they changed the outcome, but it was the Russians who did this to the Democratic Party, and I think every Republican should be equally offended.

I hope we can find some time on the floor, starting in the committee, to

pass a Russia sanctions bill that, I believe, would get 80 votes. This is a great step in the right direction for people in Montenegro. It is a rebuke of Putin, but it is not enough.

Again, I thank Senator McCain for his leadership toward the people in Montenegro, and I know he has been worried about what is happening in America. I hope he finds some comfort in what we are doing here today.

I hope the rest of the world, particularly Europe, which is in the crosshairs of Putin, will understand that America is coming back and it is coming back strongly.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

Mr. McCain. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from South Carolina, particularly on the issue of Russian sanctions.

Yesterday, we saw the people of Russia, particularly the younger people, demonstrating peacefully in the streets of the cities and towns throughout Russia in order to protest the corruption and dictatorship of Vladimir Putin. At the time, the leader of the opposition was jailed. He was in the process of putting together a study that showed that Medvedev, who was Putin's puppet, was one of the wealthiest people on Earth.

I was heartened by the willingness and the courage of the people of Russia to stand up and protest a corrupt, dictatorial, and brutal government that, unfortunately, they are saddled with.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. Corker. Mr. President, one of my chief responsibilities as chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee is to help protect the men, women, and institutions that keep America safe, including not only the State Department but the North Atlantic Treaty Alliance.

NATO was founded in 1949 as an alliance that was committed to the collective defense of its members—that an attack on one constitutes an attack on all. The alliance's self-defense clause has only been invoked once, after 9/11, when our allies deployed with us to Afghanistan.

Our militaries, in their working together, allow NATO to function. NATO members have committed to spending 2 percent of their GDPs on their militaries, but only the United Kingdom, Estonia, Poland, Greece, and the United States currently hit that goal. While the other members are working on growing their defense budgets, I have long held the belief that they must do so faster.

Regardless, part of what makes NATO great is its open doors. States that are interested in becoming allies are encouraged to join the Partnership for Peace. When those states then meet the criteria for membership, they are welcomed into the alliance.

This process is exactly what occurred with Montenegro. Just after becoming

an independent country in June of 2006, Montenegro joined the Partnership for Peace in December 2006. Exactly 3 years later, Montenegro obtained its Membership Action Plan. Six years after that, NATO recognized that Montenegro had met all of the necessary standards for membership and invited the country to begin talks to become part of the alliance. Then, in May of 2016, NATO's Foreign Ministers signed the protocol to formally open the way for Montenegro to join. As of today, every other NATO member has already ratified this treaty and Montenegro's inclusion.

Beyond such procedural steps, Montenegro has long been contributing to shared security challenges. For example, Montenegro actively supported the NATO-led operation in Afghanistan from 2010 until its end in 2014 and now is supporting the follow-on mission to train, advise, and assist Afghan security forces. It is important to note that Montenegro has taken these steps despite Russia's best efforts to undermine their progress every step of the way.

I thank Senator BEN CARDIN; the Europe and Regional Security Cooperation Subcommittee chairman, RON JOHNSON; and my other colleagues on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee for their support and constructive work during this process.

We have moved this treaty ratification twice now—once in the last Congress and again in January—to demonstrate our commitment to NATO and to Montenegro.

I also thank Senator MCCAIN, both as a former member of our committee as well as the chair of the Armed Services Committee, for his unwavering support in bringing Montenegro into the alliance.

Lastly, on behalf of the committee, I urge all of my colleagues to support this treaty amendment that serves American security interests for a strong NATO.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kentucky.

Mr. PAUL. Mr. President, President Trump said in his inaugural address that we have defended other nations' borders while refusing to defend our own. I think he was right. Today, the question is, Will we add another commitment to defend yet another foreign country?

For decades, NATO has been an organization in which the United States disproportionately spends our blood and our treasure. The other NATO countries have largely hitched a ride on a U.S. train that subsidizes their defenses and allows them to direct their revenues to their own domestic concerns. In short, Uncle Sam is the Uncle Patsy for the rest of the world.

The question today is, Will adding to NATO another country with fewer than 2,000 soldiers be in our self-interest?

It has fewer than 2,000 soldiers and is a small country in a distant part of the world. Will they make you sleep safer

at night? The answer is an emphatic no.

There is no national security interest that an alliance with Montenegro will advance. If we invite Montenegro into NATO, it will be a one-way street, with the United States committing to defending yet another country and with you, the taxpayer, being stuck with the bill.

Even the advocates of Montenegro's joining NATO admit as much. The Senate hearing on admitting Montenegro to NATO was really just a punching session about Russia. Not one word was said about allowing Montenegro into NATO or how it would advance our own national security. We were going to send a message to Russia. Even the citizens of Montenegro are divided on this. About half of them want to be in NATO, and the other half does not want to be in NATO.

But it is not really about them; it is about us. Is admitting Montenegro to NATO good for us? Our national security is our national security. Is Montenegro going to defend the United States? Are they of any importance to our national security or, perhaps, will they entangle us in local, historic, regional conflicts in the area?

We must ask: Is Montenegro an asset to the defense of the United States? That is the question at hand.

The answer is a simple one. Admitting Montenegro to NATO will do nothing to advance our national security, and it will do everything to simply add another small country to NATO's welfare wagon.

Advocates for expanding NATO believe that, unless the whole world joins NATO, Russia will conquer the world, but the truth is more nuanced. During the Cold War, the myth of Russian might was endlessly circulated here at home, and the effect was the production of endless munitions and ever-expanding debt. You are still paying the tab for that. The Cold War ended, and the Soviet Union failed, not because our military might overcame them but because our economic system outlasted them. They were defeated. Capitalism defeated socialism.

If there is one message that Americans should get, it is that capitalism is stronger than socialism. We should not flirt with political leaders in our country who promote what caused the Soviet Union to fail.

Now we are told we must fear Russia again—fear the Russian bear. Yet, if you look closely, you will see that Russian aggression around the world and particularly around the former Soviet satellites is an attempt to mask a weak economy that runs the same risk of overextension that caused the Soviet Empire to collapse. Russia is weak. Russia is weak because of corruption, oligarchy, and human rights abuses. If Russia continues on this path, it may well encounter the same cataclysm that brought down the Soviet Empire.

Without question, Russia is an adversary, a country that ignores inter-

national norms, does not respect the territorial integrity of its neighbors. Yet someone must ask: Is it in our national interest to insist that countries of the former Soviet Union be in NATO?

The debate today is not just about Montenegro. The same cheerleaders for Montenegro's being in NATO want Ukraine in NATO and want Georgia in NATO. This is about NATO's expansion in general, and this is a chance to have a real debate.

If both Ukraine and Georgia were in NATO today, we would be involved in a world war with Russia. Shouldn't someone speak up? Shouldn't we have some sort of national debate before we commit our sons and daughters to war in a faraway land?

One thing is for certain: Russia will always care more about those lands than we will. Does that make Russian aggression right? Absolutely not.

Our decision—the decision at hand—is: Are we willing to send our sons and daughters to fight in border disputes over Montenegro? Most Americans couldn't find Montenegro on the map. Are you willing to send your kids there to fight?

That is what this is about, and this is sluffed over. They are going to forbid amendments. I forced this debate. Nobody wanted to have this debate. They want to rubberstamp it. They want no debates, and they want to send your kids to war with no debate. Today, they will pass this over my objections, but they will allow no amendments. When I finish this speech, I will ask for an amendment, and it will be denied because they do not want to debate whether your sons and daughters go to war. I find that appalling. I am ashamed of a Senate that will not have a debate and will not have a vote.

From the very beginning, our Republic was founded on a deep suspicion of entangling alliances. Our Founders wanted to do everything possible to avoid the endless, chronic wars in Europe. In Europe, for centuries, Kings from one nation fought their brothers and their cousins in other nations. This meaningless fratricide continued even into the 20th century.

The Founding Fathers were emphatic in their desire to avoid endless war. Washington wrote that our true policy was to steer clear of a permanent alliance with any portion of the foreign world. Jefferson echoed this when he famously wrote of peace, commerce, and honest friendship with all nations and of entangling alliances with none.

Even in modern times, such military heroes as President Eisenhower opposed intervention in Hungary, even when the naked aggression of the Soviets was appalling. Eisenhower likely may have had no real opportunity, though, because the Soviet Union had rolled in with 200,000 troops and 4,000 tanks.

At least part of the decision not to go into Hungary in the fifties was not for a lack of sympathy for freedom, not for



a lack of sympathy for self-determination of a country. It was the real political decision of a nuclear confrontation with a nuclear Russia.

Fast-forward to today. For 16 years, we have been at war in the Middle East—16 years. If I had been here, I would have voted for going after the people who had attacked us on 9/11. Our justified response, though, has drug on and on. There are people who are fighting in the war who were not born on 9/11. The Congress voted after 9/11 to go to war. It voted to go after the people who planned and plotted the attacks on the World Trade Center. That vote from 15 years ago is used to justify all war that is everywhere on the planet.

There has been no meaningful debate on the wars we are currently involved in in the Middle East. We currently fight illegally and unconstitutionally in the Middle East because your representatives are afraid to have a public debate. They will stifle debate at all costs, and they will broker no amendments. They will allow no amendments to occur.

Our unrestricted, unvoted-upon involvement in war everywhere informed my opposition to expand NATO. Everyone likes to talk about NATO's article 5 obligation to come to the defense of any NATO allies that are attacked. That is in the treaty. If Montenegro is attacked, we will have to respond, but my concern is that many in Congress believe that article 5, in saying that we have to defend Montenegro, farms out to an international body this power to declare war, and they do not think they have to vote again.

You don't believe me?

They have not voted for 15 years for war, and we are still at war. We continue to go to new countries for war with no vote. Do you think that Montenegro will not be attacked and that there will not be a war without a vote? This is their history. Their history is one of not obeying the Constitution. David Fromkin puts it this way: "If it is now agreed by treaty that an attack on a . . . NATO ally is deemed an attack on the United States, then it can be argued that the President is empowered without congressional authorization to send us to war."

Don't believe me? We have been at war for 15 years. We have been at war with dozens of new tribes, dozens of new countries, with no votes on war.

The most important vote a legislator will ever take is whether to go to war. Yet today we will vote for an automatic war if somebody invades Montenegro. And mark my words—they won't obey the Constitution. They will say: We voted to put them in NATO. Article 5 says we have to defend them.

That is not the law of the land, and we should have to vote in Congress. But nobody obeys the law. So if you are worried about whether your kids will be sent to the Balkans or whether your kids will be sent to Ukraine or Georgia, call your representative and tell them: Stop.

This is the crux of the debate. Congress has abdicated its role in declaring war. For 16 years, we have been at war in the Middle East with dozens of different tribes and dozens of countries and yet no vote. People say: Well, we should fight ISIS. Well, let's vote on it. Let's declare war or not. But you can't tell me that ISIS has anything to do with 9/11. They don't. Many of their fighters weren't even born then.

The authorization for war in Iraq was specific to a specific enemy in a specific place. So was the authorization after 9/11. The authorization for war in Afghanistan was specific. It says: necessary and appropriate force against those who planned, authorized, committed, or aided the September 11 attacks. It was actually put in the authorization for force that it was about 9/11. None of what is going on is about 9/11 anymore. They are not the same people. Some of the people we are fighting now didn't like those people.

There is a whole confusing set of religious wars that have been going on for 1,000 years in the Middle East. Yet your representatives will say: Send me your son, send me your daughter, but we don't have time to vote on whether it should be a declared war.

This vote is now used to justify a war around the globe, a vote from 9/11— from 15 years ago. It is a lie, and it is a disservice to our young men and women to have them fight under false pretenses where the Senators don't seem to have time to have a debate. No active war anywhere around the globe that the United States is involved with has been authorized by Congress.

We dropped more bombs the other day in Pakistan. We sent a man right into Yemen. Raise your hand if you know what the hell is going on in Yemen and who is fighting whom and who is our enemy. The one we killed the other day was al-Qaida—probably a bad guy. He was actually fighting against the Houthis, whom we are also fighting against.

Who are the good guys? Shouldn't we have a debate? Shouldn't we decide whether we are going to war in Yemen? Should we be giving the Saudis bombs? They bombed a funeral procession. They killed 150 civilians and 500 people. We just let it go on. We keep giving them weapons. I have tried to stop selling bombs to the Saudi Arabians, but the majority up here says: Keep giving them to them. Keep giving them the weapons, and let them indiscriminately kill whoever the hell they want.

So NATO—should we expand it? Perhaps what we should do is make it clear that the NATO treaty is not a blind, open-ended promise to go to war anywhere, anytime.

Before we go to final passage, I will offer one amendment. This amendment will be blocked because they do not want debate and because they will be embarrassed if they have to vote against this amendment. But realize what this amendment asks. My amendment states that nothing in the NATO

treaty—particularly the article 5 promise to come to the rescue of anyone attacked—none of this can happen without an official vote to declare war. So what is my amendment stating? The Constitution—article I, section 8—says we don't go to war without a vote and a debate. Do you know what they will do to get around it? I think we can assume that they are against the Constitution because they are not going to allow the amendment. How long would it take? It takes 15 minutes to vote around here. I am about done speaking. We could have one 15-minute vote on an amendment. I would grant back the time if we would have a vote, but they don't want to debate it because they are embarrassed that they are sending your sons and daughters to war without ever debating or voting on it.

This, to me, is a tragedy. It is sad to me. It makes me ashamed of the body that we will do this. Probably what is worse is then they clamor to the floor, their mouths agape, ajar, calling other people traitors, acting as if I care less about your sons and daughters because I want to have a debate on war before we go to war, preventing an amendment from happening and then having the gall to come to the floor and accuse their philosophic opponents of being traitors and being allies with the Russians.

Is this what we have come to? Is this where we are as America, that you can't take a principled stand against war; that you can't stand up on principle and say: Are we really going to go to war over Montenegro, over Ukraine? Are we really going to go to war over Georgia? And then you are accused of not being patriotic to your country.

I care as much as anybody about our soldiers. When I talk to our young men and women who serve, do you know what they tell me? They want someone to stand up and have a debate. They will do what they are told. Our soldiers are brave, and they will go where they are told, and they will obey orders. But the people here who are these mouthpieces for war, who think every soldier wants to go to war, I suggest they go out and meet the soldiers and ask them whether they want the civilian Senators to debate and have a formal declaration of war. That is all I am asking for—15 minutes and an amendment that says we will obey the Constitution.

If article 5 says we need to go to war and Montenegro is attacked, we will do the proper thing. We will come to the floor of the Senate. We are not sending troops to Montenegro without a vote on the floor of the Senate. Is that too much to ask for? We will see.

Mr. President, I call up my amendment No. 199 that says we should obey the Constitution and that we should declare war before we go to war.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. JOHNSON). Is there objection to setting aside the pending amendment?

Mr. CORKER. Mr. President, I reserve the right to object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. CORKER. Mr. President, I work very close with my friend from Kentucky. There were some awfully strong things that were just said. I don't think they were directed necessarily at me.

I think there has been a little bit of an evolution here. I know that the reason we are having to go through this process of filibustering a treaty is the fact that the Senator from Kentucky wanted a vote on an unrelated amendment relative to surveillance here in our own country. When he was unable to get that agreement, he decided to filibuster a treaty. So that is what is happening here.

I am interested to hear this evolution of why we are having this debate. Let me just say, having dealt with this issue firsthand—and I know he knows this—this filibuster is about something totally unrelated to the amendment that is being offered right now.

I know the Senator from Kentucky, my friend, knows that I have offered authorizations for the use of force. I did so against Syria, and I am glad to have a debate on authorizations for the use of force, and I think we should. I know the administration is developing a strategy around ISIS right now, and when they complete that, it is my hope that we will, in fact, update the 2001 AUMF.

I think it has been stated by past administrations that the authorization they are utilizing as it relates to ISIS is legal. I believe them to be correct. But I will say that I agree we ought to have another debate on the issue of authorizing the fight against ISIS, and I hope we will do so as soon as this administration completes the process of laying out what their plan is. Then we can debate that and then hopefully update that authorization. I don't know what that has to do with a treaty with Montenegro. There has been a lot that has been said, and I don't know how it necessarily ties together. But the fact is, when you enter into an article 5 treaty—which has, by the way, passed out of our committee on two occasions—you are, in fact, saying under article 5 that a war against one is a war against all and that we will come to their defense. So the amendment itself, if we were to vote on it, would basically negate that.

I think the Senator from Kentucky could have had this vote, but the fact is that 98 Senators wanted to have this vote—have wanted to have this vote for months, I might add—and we have had to come to this point of filing cloture.

So, with that, with good will toward the Senator, with good will toward the other 97 Senators here who would like to pass this posthaste, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Kentucky.

Mr. PAUL. Mr. President, it is important to know what just happened. We closed off the debate, and as far as a fil-

buster goes, we are having a debate and a vote. What they wanted was a rubberstamp and an easy passage without debate. We are having a bit of a debate, and that is good. Unfortunately, we will not be allowed to amend the bill.

My amendment is germane to the bill. It has to do with what article 5 means in the treaty we are signing. What it says is that we will not necessarily take article 5 to mean that we are going to war, that we would do the constitutional duty, and that is to vote about whether we go to war. So the amendment is very clear that we would obey the Constitution.

By blocking the vote, we have to realize that those blocking the vote have decided that really it should be automatic, that your sons and daughters will be sent to war automatically without a vote, without a declaration of war. You say: Well, maybe they don't mean that. Maybe they would obey the Constitution.

They don't now. So everything in evidence shows us that the chance that in the future they will obey the Constitution is about zero. But so ashamed are they of the fact that we will fight more wars without a declaration, without a vote—they won't allow a vote on the amendment because they would be voting against the Constitution. So, instead, they will block the amendment.

That is essentially what this debate is about: Are we automatically obligated to go to war without a vote by Congress? That is what the vote is about. It is incredibly germane. It goes to the heart of the bill. It goes to the heart of the NATO treaty. Does article 5 mean you automatically go to war, or would you go through the normal processes of going to war? Now, some will say: Oh, well, we would never go to war. It might not be so bad, but it would be difficult.

Do you know when we have gone to war? We have actually gone unanimously when we have done it the right way. When we were attacked on 9/11 and they came to Congress, do you know what the vote was? Unanimous. We are not about letting people attack us as a country, and I would have voted for that.

When we were attacked in Pearl Harbor, what did FDR do? The thing that great leaders would do—and I am not a huge fan always of FDR, but he did the right thing. He came to Congress the next day. I think it was on December 8 that they voted unanimously to go to war. That is the way it was done once upon a time.

When you are attacked, people do rally to the country and they rally to the flag, but we shouldn't have an automatic stamp that says: We are going to war anywhere without any restraint, without any control or separation of power.

So I object strenuously to this, and I wish we were more open in this body and in our country to a debate about when we are going to go to war.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. CORKER. Mr. President, before I suggest the absence of a quorum, I would like to say that the Constitution calls for treaties to be enacted by this body, which is what we are doing today. Everybody understands what NATO is and has understood it since the late 1940s. This is the kind of treaty that we would like for other people to be a member of, and today Montenegro, which has gone through the full process of accession, hopefully will be passed through this body.

This is the last country, by the way—every other country that is a member of NATO has voted to cause Montenegro to join NATO.

I know my friend from Maryland, the ranking member, Senator CARDIN, has just arrived. I know he has a few words to say. He is a strong supporter of Montenegro's accession, as is the vast majority of this Senate.

I will let the comments from the Senator from Kentucky lie. We are doing our constitutional duty by passing a treaty that we all understood. It has been debated fully in committee. It has been passed out twice. I am glad we are doing so. The fact is, this has been blocked by one Senator who wanted to vote on something totally unrelated to this and was using this as leverage. That is what is occurring here, nothing else. We are finally, through cloture, having a vote on something that the majority of people in the Senate want to pass.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for up to 7 minutes prior to the vote.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I thank Chairman CORKER for the manner in which this resolution of ratification has been handled in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. It has been handled in a nonpartisan way. We have had hearings, we have had votes, we have had a lot of conversations about it, and at last we are going to get a chance to vote on the ratification. So I come to the floor to speak in support of this resolution of ratification regarding the Protocol to the North Atlantic Treaty of 1949 on the Accession of Montenegro.

I have been a strong supporter of Montenegro's bid to join NATO. It will enhance our security, it will strengthen the alliance, and it will send a strong message of resolve to Russia as it invades its neighbors and seeks to upend the international order. Montenegro's inclusion in NATO will have positive repercussions across the continent and will send an important message of hope to aspirant countries.

Last week, I met with Montenegro's Foreign Minister, and he described Russia's persistent efforts to weaken support for NATO membership in Montenegro. Last October, Russia interfered in the Montenegrin elections.

There was a plot to assassinate the former Prime Minister of Montenegro and take over the Montenegrin Parliament. The suspects in that case scurried back to Moscow, and the Russian authorities refused to turn them over to the Montenegrins or even make them available for questioning in Moscow. To this day, Russian-supported NGOs and media propaganda continue to rail against Montenegro's NATO membership.

Russia does not get a veto over decisions of the alliance. We need to send a strong message of resolve. This is not an isolated circumstance with Russia. We have seen how they interfered in our elections. We have seen what they are doing in Europe today.

We see all these different activities by Russia, and we have to protect ourselves. One way we protect ourselves is by making our own decisions as to who should be admitted into NATO. Another is that we should have an independent commission take a look at what Russia was doing in their interference with our elections and what they are trying to do in trying to compromise our democratic system of government. I think the events that occurred in recent weeks of additional contacts that Russia made with members of the Trump administration just underscore the importance for that independent commission to take a look at what happened.

I stand here today in support of NATO enlargement. The Senate Foreign Relations Committee recently voted by voice vote in support of this bid—unanimously, Democrats and Republicans. This is not a partisan issue. We have had a request from the President to take up this issue. Nearly all NATO members have approved Montenegro's bid. We are among the last to ratify, and we must get the job done. Tonight, we can take a major step forward in that regard.

What is the case for Montenegro's membership? Admission of Montenegro would mark another important step forward, fully integrating the Balkans into international institutions that have helped to contribute to peace and stability over the years in Europe. Croatia and Albania joined the alliance in 2009 and have been valuable contributors to accomplishing NATO's objectives since then. I hope that Montenegro's admission will help them motivate the reforms necessary for other Balkan countries to join.

Montenegro has made outsized contributions to NATO missions, despite not being a full member. I understand that in Afghanistan, Montenegro has rotated 20 percent of its armed forces through the ISAF and the resolute support missions. Twenty percent of their force—that is a substantial contribution. It also contributed to the peace-keeping mission in Kosovo and other NATO missions.

No country outside the alliance gets a veto over who gets to join, especially Russia. So we must send a strong sig-

nal. I urge my colleagues to pass this resolution and get it to the President so the President can deposit the instrument of ratification at NATO in support of Montenegro's bid. I urge my colleagues to support the mission.

I yield back the remainder of my time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

#### CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. CORKER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum call be waived.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

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

#### 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 Treaties Calendar No. 1, treaty document No. 114-12, Protocol to the North Atlantic Treaty of 1949 on the Accession of Montenegro.

Mitch McConnell, Cory Gardner, Steve Daines, John Barrasso, Joni K. Ernst, Bob Corker, John Cornyn, Lindsey Graham, Jeff Flake, James M. Inhofe, Roy Blunt, David Perdue, John McCain, Pat Roberts, Tom Cotton, Jerry Moran, Mike Rounds.

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 Protocol to the North Atlantic Treaty of 1949 on the Accession of Montenegro shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk called the roll.

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

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

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 97, nays 2, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 97 Ex.]

#### YEAS—97

Alexander	Daines	Kennedy
Baldwin	Donnelly	King
Barrasso	Duckworth	Klobuchar
Bennet	Durbin	Lankford
Blumenthal	Enzi	Leahy
Blunt	Ernst	Manchin
Booker	Feinstein	Markey
Boozman	Fischer	McCain
Brown	Flake	McCaskill
Burr	Franken	McConnell
Cantwell	Gardner	Menendez
Capito	Gillibrand	Merkley
Cardin	Graham	Moran
Carper	Grassley	Murkowski
Casey	Harris	Murphy
Cassidy	Hassan	Murray
Cochran	Hatch	Nelson
Collins	Heinrich	Perdue
Coons	Heitkamp	Peters
Corker	Heller	Portman
Cornyn	Hirono	Reed
Cortez Masto	Hoeven	Risch
Cotton	Inhofe	Roberts
Crapo	Johnson	Rounds
Cruz	Kaine	Rubio

Sanders	Strange	Warner
Sasse	Sullivan	Warren
Schatz	Tester	Whitehouse
Schumer	Thune	Wicker
Scott	Tillis	Wyden
Shaheen	Toomey	Young
Shelby	Udall	
Stabenow	Van Hollen	

NAYS—2

Lee

Paul

NOT VOTING—1

Isakson

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 97, the nays are 2.

Three-fifths of the Senators duly chosen and sworn having voted in the affirmative, the motion is agreed to.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I rise today in favor of the resolution of ratification for Montenegro's accession to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, better known as NATO.

Many of my colleagues are unaware of the fact that the State of Maine has a special relationship with Montenegro. It is through the National Guard State Partnership Program.

I thank the majority leader, Senator MCCONNELL, Chairman CORKER, Senator MCCAIN, the Democratic leadership, Senator JOHNSON, Senator MURPHY, and all of those who were instrumental in bringing this resolution to the floor for consideration today.

Montenegro's accession to NATO will serve the strategic interests of the United States, it will help to promote stability in the Balkans, and it will make us safer. Montenegro has already proven its support for American interests, having sent troops to Afghanistan in support of NATO- and U.S.-led operations there. Although not yet a member of the European Union, Montenegro also voluntarily joined the EU sanctions regime against Russia in response to Moscow's illegal annexation of Crimea and destabilizing actions in eastern Ukraine. Most important, I have great confidence that Montenegro will meet the collective defense obligations of NATO membership.

For the past 10 years, with the assistance of the Maine National Guard through the State Partnership Program, Montenegro has worked hard to reform its military and to strengthen the rule of law to come into compliance with NATO requirements, as defined in NATO's Membership Action Plan. Even today, Maine National Guard members are deployed to Montenegro to assist its Ministry of Defense in furthering its integration into NATO standards and processes.

I want to take this opportunity to express my appreciation to all of the

members of the Maine National Guard who have participated in this operation, including the former and current adjutant general, GEN Bill Libby and GEN Doug Farnham, as well as our current guardsman stationed in Montenegro, Army CPT Nicolas Phillips. All of them have worked very hard during the past 10 years to help Montenegro get ready for this highly significant moment.

We must be clear-eyed about the fact that the Russian Federation has undertaken an extensive overt and covert campaign to derail Montenegro's bid to join NATO. These efforts include a brazen plot to disrupt Montenegro's elections last October and to turn the public against the pro-NATO ruling government there. According to Montenegro's special prosecutor assigned to the investigation, at least two Russian intelligence officers actively participated in this plot, which fortunately was disrupted.

Ratifying Montenegro's NATO membership demonstrates our firm resolve against Russia's efforts to deny other countries the opportunity to participate in NATO free from outside interference. That is why the Supreme Allied Commander for Europe and NATO testified just last week before the Senate Armed Services Committee that it is "absolutely critical" that Montenegro join NATO.

As President Trump prepares to travel to the NATO leaders' summit in Brussels at the end of May, I can think of no better action for the Senate to have taken ahead of his visit than our action tonight to finally ratify Montenegro's membership in NATO. In the meantime, I also look forward to the continued special relationship between Montenegro and the great State of Maine.

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

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

## LEGISLATIVE SESSION

### MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

### WEEK ON THE STATUS OF BLACK WOMEN

Mrs. GILLIBRAND. Mr. President, I wish to request that the U.S. Government officially recognize the last week

in March as the Week on the Status of Black Women. During the week of March 27, 2017, as part of Women's History Month and in honor of the United Nations Declaration designating 2015 as the Decade of Afro-Descendants, this week marks the perfect occasion on which to begin an annual recognition and celebration of Black women's contributions to American society.

Black women have long gone above and beyond the call of duty in their contributions to American society through civic engagement, high voter turnout, and serving as leaders in their communities. Even in the face of grave oppression throughout our Nation's history, Black women have continued to stand strong and contribute to the well-being of their families, communities, and our country as a whole. A recognition of the Week on the Status of Black Women by the Trump administration and Congress would send a clear message that the Federal Government recognizes the unique struggles and achievements of Black women in America.

Black women have consistently played a leading role in shaping our Nation's history, often behind the scenes and with little recognition. Harriet Tubman escaped slavery and bravely returned to the enslaved South over a dozen times to lead her people to freedom on the Underground Railroad. A century later, Rosa Parks witnessed the oppression of her fellow Black women and took an active role in organizing the Montgomery Bus Boycott, while also taking up Black women's sexual harassment claims. Today, a Black woman, Carla Hayden, is our Nation's Librarian of Congress. Recognition of the Week on the Status of Black Women would honor the sacrifices of women such as Harriet Tubman and Rosa Parks, who paved the way for so many Black women in public service, business, and other industries today.

Yet even as Black women throughout our Nation's history have been leaders in American civic life, Black women today still continue to face many undue burdens. No one in America should have to choose between earning a paycheck and taking care of their family, but too many Black women who serve as primary family breadwinners are forced to make this painful choice. Black women continue to earn less than their male counterparts and also less than women who are not Black. Black women remain at the economic margins of society, and we all have a responsibility to help fix that.

This year, a coalition of organizations advocating for the well-being of women and communities of color will partner to elevate the stories, histories, and realities of Black women's lives. Each day of the week, starting on March 27 and continuing through March 31, will focus on a different challenge Black women face in society today, ranging from disproportionate experience with police violence to dis-

criminatory media representation. Exploring these issues and acknowledging the centrality of Black women to our history and social fabric, along with recognizing the unique intersection of gendered and racialized inequities they face, is critical. As we continue to work to extend equal rights to all Americans, we must ensure that Black women are a leading part of this movement. I hope and request that this year will be a continuation of years past in celebration and intentional recognition of Black women in America through the Week on the Status of Black Women.

### REMEMBERING ENI F. H. FALEOMAVAEGA

Ms. HIRONO. Mr. President, today I wish to honor the life and dedicated service to our country of my friend and colleague, Eni F. H. Faleomavaega of American Samoa. I had the honor of serving with him in the U.S. House and was deeply saddened to hear of his passing on Wednesday, February 22, 2017.

Eni served 13 terms as the Delegate from American Samoa, and we worked together because of his close ties to Hawaii. Eni's strong ties and service to Hawaii makes him a "keiki o ka aina." He was a graduate of Kahuku High School and the Church College, the forerunner to Brigham Young University in Laie, HI. Eni was a passionate advocate for indigenous peoples including native Hawaiians. Whether it was Federal recognition or health and housing programs for native Hawaiians, Hawaii could always count on Eni's outspoken support and assistance. One of the stories Eni enjoyed sharing was about his experience sailing on the voyaging canoe Hokulea in 1987, and in August 2014, he welcomed the arrival of the Hokulea and Hikianalia arrival in American Samoa and offered his best wishes to Malama Honua Worldwide Voyage.

I always appreciated his warm presence at the annual Kamehameha Day Lei Draping Ceremony at the capitol where he would often perform traditional Samoan chant and dance. Of course, he also served his American Samoa constituents in Congress with distinction for two decades. During his service in the House, he rose to become the first Asian-Pacific American to serve as chairman of the House Foreign Affairs' Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific. He brought his unique perspective as a Pacific Islander to this post and constructively worked to raise the concerns of the region in Congress.

Eni was also a veteran of the Vietnam war and a selfless advocate for his fellow veterans in American Samoa and across the Nation. Thanks to Eni's efforts, American Samoa veterans can now receive their healthcare from a Department of Veterans Affairs clinic built in Pago Pago with funds he helped secure. It is therefore most appropriate that the House and Senate