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Senate

The Senate met at 2 p.m. and was called to order by the Honorable TODD YOUNG, a Senator from the State of Indiana.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Almighty God, from the rising of the Sun to the coming of the evening, we lift Your Name in grateful praise.

Surround our lawmakers with the power of Your presence, sustaining them in their challenging world. Lord, strengthen them to do what is right so that our Nation will be exalted by Your love. Empower them to treat one another with respect and honor. Teach them to hate what is evil and to cling to what is good. Remind them of how fleeting are the days of their lives as You give them the wisdom to prepare for eternity.

Eternal Father, we exalt You and praise Your Name, for in perfect faithfulness You continue to expose us to the unfolding of Your loving providence.

We pray in Your marvelous Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Presiding Officer led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

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

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. HATCH).

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, May 8, 2017.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable TODD YOUNG, a Senator from the State of Indiana, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ORRIN G. HATCH,
President pro tempore.

Mr. YOUNG thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to consider the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Heather Wilson, of South Dakota, to be Secretary of the Air Force.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will be 4 hours of debate, equally divided in the usual form.

Who yields time?

If no one yields time, time will be charged equally to both sides.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The majority leader is recognized.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, today the Senate will move to confirm Heather Wilson as Secretary of the Air Force. Wilson is a Rhodes Scholar, Air

Force Academy graduate—part of the third class ever to admit women, by the way—and a dedicated public servant who served several terms in the U.S. House.

I am sure she will work hard in this new role to strengthen the branch of the military she cares so much about. I look forward to approving her nomination on a bipartisan basis later this afternoon.

After that, we will take a cloture vote on the Gottlieb nomination to head the FDA, which I will come to in a moment. I hope to see robust support for his nomination as well.

HEALTHCARE LEGISLATION

Mr. President, I would like to recognize two important votes that occurred last Thursday. First, let me commend the House for voting to move beyond the pain of ObamaCare. For years, the American people have suffered under this failed law. They watched their premiums soar. They watched their choices dwindle.

Now they are watching as ObamaCare collapses all around them. More than half of our States have counties with only a single insurance option on the exchanges, and a growing number could have no options at all—like, as we saw reported just last week, in nearly every single county in Iowa. That means thousands more Americans could be left trapped, forced by law to purchase ObamaCare insurance but left without the means to do so. Does that sound like a law that is working to anyone?

To those who would try to defend an indefensible status quo, I ask you to consider what Speaker RYAN said last week:

[T]here is a fundamental and urgent choice at the heart of this debate. We can continue with the status quo under ObamaCare, and we know what that looks like. It means even higher premiums, even fewer choices, even more insurance companies pulling out, even more uncertainty, and even more chaos.

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



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To those who suffered enough already, my message is this: We hear you. Congress is acting.

I commend the House and the administration for making this important advance last week. Now the Senate will do its work. The administration will also continue doing its part to deliver relief and stabilize the healthcare markets as best it can. This process will not be quick or simple or easy, but it must be done. It is the least Members of both parties owe to the countless of Americans who continue to suffer under Obamacare, and the countless more who will be hurt if we don't act.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING LEGISLATION

Mr. President, second, let me commend the Senate for voting last Thursday to pass the funding bill. I mentioned last week some of the many important provisions it contained, all of which the President has now signed into law. The largest border-security funding increase in a decade—now law. The critically needed down payment on restoring our military readiness—now law.

The bill also kept in place an important free speech protection. Yet Democrats are now trying to pressure and intimidate the SEC into ignoring something we just passed on a bipartisan basis. For years, Democrats have pressured the SEC rulemaking process to curb and regulate political speech, despite agreement in our funding bills to prevent the Commission from doing just that.

This is not a new page in their playbook. When we first passed this crucial protection in 2015, Democrats appealed to the SEC to actually ignore the law. This time, however, they have gone in an even more extreme direction. Now the Democrats no longer have the administration to stifle speech through the SEC, the IRS, or HHS. They are trying to intimidate private citizens and public companies by telling those citizens and companies what is in their "best interest." This kind of bullying behavior is part of a broader pattern we have seen repeated by the left time and again in similar circumstances—suppression of the viewpoints with which they disagree and forcing Americans into a choice: Tell us your political ideology or be silent.

I have called the left out for intimidation tactics and speech suppression efforts before. I am warning them again today, and I will continue to stay vigilant and defend the First Amendment moving forward.

For now, I would like to highlight a couple of other important provisions in the funding bill that are now law. One is the miners' health provision I was proud to secure, a critical lifeline that will permanently protect healthcare benefits for thousands of retired coal miners in States like Kentucky.

Another is the provision of significant new resources that can be used to combat the prescription opioid and heroin crisis. It is the latest of many significant steps we have taken to tackle this terrible epidemic.

Today, we can take another step forward by advancing the nomination of Scott Gottlieb to head the FDA. I will have more to say on Dr. Gottlieb later, but for now, I will note that he is incredibly qualified for this position, and I am sure he will be an ally for States that continue to struggle with the opioid crisis because the FDA has a critical role to play.

Let's be clear, there is a lot more to be done. States like Kentucky have been hit hard by this crisis, especially our rural communities. In fact, there are a lot of struggles that are particularly pressing in rural America, and several provisions in the government funding bill that can help—provisions to, for instance, advance broadband development, promote safe and clean drinking water, and to help reclaim and develop abandoned mine sites in coal country, among other priorities. Those are just a few of the things that can help rural communities.

There are other actions we can take as well. One is of particular importance to our colleagues from Alaska, Senators MURKOWSKI and SULLIVAN. Majority Whip CORNYN and I have been consulting with them about the Secure Rural Schools Program, which helps rural counties and schools whose economies have been hit hard by steeply declining timber revenues from our public lands. Senators HATCH and WYDEN introduced a bill to reauthorize the program just last week, and it was referred to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, where Senator MURKOWSKI is the chair. This bill is important to Kentucky, as well. I look forward to working with Chairman MURKOWSKI, Senator SULLIVAN, and all the bill's advocates to find a path forward for it this year.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The Democratic leader is recognized.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING LEGISLATION

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, first I want to thank the majority leader for speaking about the agreement that the House and Senate came to on the appropriations bills, the spending bills. We may not agree on emphasis and what the most important things are, but we certainly agree that it was a good effort that moved things forward, and I was proud to be part of it.

KENTUCKY DERBY

Mr. President, I note another thing that might tie the majority leader and the minority leader together—pride in Saturday's Kentucky Derby. The majority leader is very proud of the Ken-

tucky Derby. It is one of the leading events in his State. I know he attends religiously.

I am particularly proud because the horse that won was owned and trained and guided by two Brooklynites. I salute them for their success. Vinnie Viola, one of the two, is a close friend of mine. I have known him for a long time, and I know him well. As many of you know, he was being considered for Secretary of the Army. He would have been a good one. He withdrew because of the financial issues that he was too involved in with companies he owned, but he is a good man. He comes from St. Cecilia's Parish on the Greenpoint-Williamsburg border of Brooklyn. We are all proud and hope that his horse goes all the way. Maybe I can be at Belmont and see him win the Triple Crown. Anyway, that is a nice link between the majority leader and the minority leader.

FRENCH PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

Mr. President, yesterday, the people of France took part in a time-honored tradition of a democratic people: the election of a new President. We here in the Senate congratulate Emmanuel Macron on his win and look forward to the continuing deep and longstanding friendship between our two countries.

Unfortunately, the elections in France were victim to a malicious attempt to distort the results through a coordinated cyber attack on one of the candidates, much as Hillary Clinton's campaign was targeted in our elections. In the waning days of the French election, according to reports, Macron's emails were hacked and leaked to the public, potentially with some altered information included, by agents believed to originate in Russia. The hack was then promoted and spread by far-right activists around the globe, some of whom reside here in the United States. It was *deja vu* all over again. Russia elevated old school propaganda tactics and techniques using new school methods, spreading misinformation with an army of paid "trolls" and computer bots, aided and abetted by far-right activists here in the United States.

It seems that Putin and the international far right have formed an unholy alliance. The goal of this alliance is not necessarily to promote one candidate over another, one party over another, though that is part of it. Their true goal is to destabilize and subvert democratic societies, to cast doubt on the outcome of free and fair elections, to hobble democratically elected leaders before they even take office, and to degrade the alliances and international regimes that have created so much stability, strength, and shared prosperity in the post-World War II era.

Despite Macron's win yesterday, we would be foolish to think that this unholy alliance will not use the same tactics again in upcoming European elections and, even more important to those of us in this country, in upcoming American elections.

Make no mistake about it—Mr. Putin has no loyalty to any one person or President. Whatever is good for Russia at the moment, whatever hurts the United States the most, that is what he will pursue. This is an issue that should provoke grave concern in both parties. He may favor one party one day and another party the next. It should compel us, together—Democrats and Republicans—to take action against this new threat.

This afternoon, the Judiciary Committee will hear from former Deputy Attorney General Sally Yates and former Director of National Intelligence James Clapper. Later this week, the Intelligence Committee will hold its annual worldwide threats hearing. I sincerely hope these two committees will cover these issues in their hearings and beyond.

We should begin an extended bipartisan discussion about how to combat foreign information operations campaigns and safeguard the integrity of democratic elections all over the world and, most importantly, in our own country. It is no less serious than this: The integrity of our democracy, which has thrived, blessedly, for over 240 years could well be at stake.

TRUMP CARE

Now, Mr. President, on healthcare, last week House Republicans passed the latest version of TrumpCare after a failed attempt earlier this year. When they see this version, the majority of Americans will think it is even worse than the first version.

This partisan bill will dramatically increase the cost of health insurance for those who need it most, including older Americans, and lower the quality of coverage.

TrumpCare would mean 24 million fewer Americans will be without health insurance.

It would hike premiums by 20 percent in the first few years, and average costs for the middle class could go up by more than \$1,500 a year. Middle-class people can't afford that kind of money. If you are struggling to make it into the middle class, TrumpCare could raise your costs by up to \$4,000, putting you in an even worse pickle.

It makes it possible for insurers to charge older Americans as much as five times the amount they charge younger people, and States could make this ratio even greater if they wanted. Under the first TrumpCare bill, someone making about \$20,000 could have his or her—someone who is 63 years old—premiums go up from something like \$1,500 or \$2,000 all the way to over \$10,000 a year. This will be devastating for senior citizens, those 50 to 65. At 65, they get Medicare. They are in decent shape. But when they are older and not under Medicare, they could get clobbered by this bill after working so hard. And that is the time when you start getting susceptible to so many serious illnesses.

TrumpCare would devastate our rural areas by decimating Medicaid, which

rural areas rely on. Limiting subsidies to lower income Americans, many of whom live in rural areas, TrumpCare would put insurance for rural Americans even further out of reach.

Many rural hospitals are the largest employers in their areas. We have many in New York State, in Upstate New York. They would be shortchanged by this bill. These hospitals—often the largest employers in our rural counties and the only providers of healthcare for scores and sometimes hundreds of miles around—might be forced to lay off thousands of workers. Many of these rural hospital leaders say that if TrumpCare passed, they would have to close. There would be hundreds out of work in an area where it is not easy to find work, and for those who don't work in the hospitals, it would be harder to get to the hospitals. We all know how important it is to get there quickly when, God forbid, a stroke or some other serious illness occurs.

Maybe most troubling of all, TrumpCare would now eliminate crucial consumer protections in our healthcare system, including the ones that protect Americans with pre-existing conditions. Every family in this country knows someone who has a preexisting condition. That sounds like a fancy word. What does it mean? Diabetes, chronic asthma, cancer, things like that. If you live in a State that opts out of this requirement, you will have to jump through so many hoops to maintain access to care, and even then it likely won't be affordable. It is unimaginable. You are a parent. Let's say you are 40 years old, husband and wife, and your child gets cancer. You can't get the coverage that under present law the insurance company has to give you or keep with you, and you watch your child suffer. That is inhumane.

How, for ideological purposes, the folks in the House could have first eliminated it and now made it almost unattainable for so many millions of Americans—unfathomable. We fixed the problem in our healthcare system because we had heard so many horrible stories. The Republican bill brings it back from the dead.

The way the House bill was put together in such a secretive and slapdash way, it is barely legislation. It well could be a menace to millions of American families. It means that the Senate should not even come close to passing a bill like this. It makes healthcare for working families, rural Americans, older Americans, and veterans much poorer and at the same time gives massive tax breaks to the wealthy. Some say that is the motivation of some in the House. To pay for these tax breaks for people making over \$250,000 a year—and they get a big break—cut back healthcare on everybody else or on so many others. That is wrong. That is wrong.

It does, frankly, exactly the opposite of everything President Trump promised he would do on healthcare. He said: Lower costs, better care, insuring

everyone. His words. President Trump said he would not cut Medicare or Medicaid. His bill does both. TrumpCare is a giant broken promise for the working people, the hard-working people of this great country of ours.

House Republicans rushed it through without hearings and without much debate or even a final CBO score. The final version was posted 8 hours before Members had to vote on it. Some of the very same Republicans who during the ObamaCare debate chanted "Read the bill" didn't even look at the final legislation, let alone study it. That is a breathtakingly irresponsible thing to do on a bill that will affect almost one-fifth of our economy and the healthcare of millions of Americans. I am not surprised our Republican colleagues wanted to rush it through. The more the American people see it, the less they will like it, just like with their first bill, which is why the first bill didn't pass and why the second one is in so much trouble here in the Senate.

To borrow Speaker RYAN's catchphrase, there is a better way to reform our healthcare system. Instead of a partisan process, rushing through bills in the dead of night—no hearings, no debate, no score, no input from the other party—both parties could start working together on improving our healthcare system.

Now that the bill is in the Senate's hands, we hope the Republican majority will pursue a bipartisan approach. If they drop their repeal efforts, which are already causing such uncertainty that insurers are pledging to hike rates on Americans next year, we Democrats are willing to work with our Republican colleagues to improve our healthcare system.

In the last few years, we have made a good deal of progress. We have made major improvements in our healthcare system, expanding coverage for over 20 million Americans, bending the cost curve, and protecting folks with pre-existing conditions. Why don't we keep all the good things we have in the system and work on making it even better in a bipartisan way? We want to improve quality, lower costs, reduce the price of prescription drugs, and expand coverage for all Americans. Unfortunately, the House bill does exactly the opposite.

I hope my Republican friends toss this House bill out the window and resist the temptation to follow the same partisan, rushed process. I hope my friends on the other side of aisle drop repeal, which is hurting our healthcare system right now—just the threat of it—and start working with Democrats to make our healthcare better.

PARIS AGREEMENT

Finally, Mr. President, a word on the Paris climate agreement. Reports have indicated that the Trump administration is leaning toward withdrawing the United States from the Paris climate agreement. This would be a historic misstep that would massively disadvantage both American businesses

and diplomats. It would damage our standing on the world stage and allow China to take the high moral ground and the economic upper hand in combatting climate change. Most importantly, a great step forward made by President Obama to get the entire world community to work in a coordinated and concerted effort to reduce carbon pollution so that the United States does not have to bear the burden and so that China would do much more than it has done—all that would be undone in one fell swoop.

Europe and other countries have warned the Trump administration that abandoning the Paris Agreement could lead to carbon tariffs on U.S. goods, stymying access to global markets for our companies and undercutting our trade position. That is why hundreds of American companies, including 28 Fortune 100 CEOs representing 9 million jobs, support the climate agreement.

There is a giant difference between putting America first and making America an international pariah. The latter approach only undermines our power and erodes our standing in the world. Right now, there are only two countries in the world that are not parties to the Paris Agreement—Syria and Nicaragua, the latter of which objects because they feel the agreement is not strong enough.

Climate change is real. It is driven by human activity. It is happening right now. These are facts. They are not in dispute. Our scientists know it, our businesses know it, the world knows it, and the American people who have experienced such changes in weather and climate know it too. The United States needs to have a seat at the table as the world works together to solve this existential challenge.

I strongly encourage the administration to rethink its position and remain in the agreement.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Florida.

REPUBLICAN HEALTHCARE BILL

Mr. NELSON. Mr. President, I want to talk as well about the Republican healthcare plan and point out why it is moving on very treacherous territory when it will affect the funding of Medicaid by lessening the amount of Medicaid money that will be spent in the States, because so much of that Medicaid money is going to address the opioid crisis.

The opioid crisis, we found last year—you know, there was a lot of talk about it being in New Hampshire when the eyes of America were on New Hampshire in the New Hampshire primary. But the fact is, it is in every State now. It is particularly so in my State of Florida. There are something like 2,600 deaths that have occurred in Florida as a result of opioid overdoses. So the seriousness with which we are addressing this issue ought to be of extreme concern, and we ought to be doing something about it. Yet a bill just passed by the House of Representa-

tives is doing exactly the opposite. It is going to cut Medicaid. It is a fancy term, cutting Medicaid with a block grant. What it means is that it is going to be capped. That means a State is not going to get any more Medicaid once that cap has been hit, unless the State responds. So, in essence, it is going to cost the States more money. I don't think you will find many States that are in such a fiscal condition that, in fact, they could do that.

So what are we doing? We are harming poor people and the disabled who get their healthcare from Medicare and Medicaid. In fact, we are not only harming all of them, but addressing the opioid crisis will be particularly hurt.

What I want to talk about today is the Republican healthcare plan that passed out of the House last week. This plan is going to increase costs for older Americans. Remember, it is going to go on a ratio. Instead of 1 to 3, or older Americans being charged three times as much in health insurance as younger Americans, it is going to go up to a ratio of at least 1 to 5, and maybe more. So it is going to increase costs for older Americans. It is going to cut Medicaid, and it is going to take healthcare coverage away from tens of millions of people.

Right now as a result of the ACA, there are 24 million people who have health insurance coverage who did not have it before this law was passed in 2010. It is going to reverse that. Do we want to take away healthcare from people who can now have healthcare through Medicaid and/or health insurance because they can now afford health insurance? Is that really a goal the United States wants to do—to take away healthcare through private health insurance? I don't think that is what we want to do, but that is what the House of Representatives' Republican healthcare bill has done.

If we just look at my State of Florida, there are almost 8 million people who have a so-called preexisting condition. This includes something as common as asthma. That is a preexisting condition. As a former elected insurance commissioner of Florida, I can tell you that some insurance companies would use as an excuse as a preexisting condition something as simple as a rash and say: Because you have a preexisting condition, we are not going to insure you. Under the existing law, the Affordable Care Act, an insurance company cannot deny you with a preexisting condition. Just in my State alone, there are almost 8 million people who have a preexisting condition. Are we going to turn them out on the streets because their insurance company says they are not going to carry them anymore? I don't think that is what we want to do.

The bill allows insurers to charge older Americans at least five times more than what they charge younger adults. Is that what we want to do?

What is the principle of insurance? The principle of insurance is that you

spread the risk. You get as many people in the pool as you can—young, old, sick, healthy—and you spread that risk.

If you get fire insurance on your home, you are paying a premium every month and the insurance company has calculated in an actuarial calculation what it is going to cost you to insure, and you are part of hundreds of thousands of people in that pool who are also insuring against fire damaging their house. It is the same principle with health insurance. So you get young and old, sick and well, and some people with preexisting conditions, and you spread that risk over a lot of people. One of the fallacies we hear is that we can create this by creating a high-risk pool. In other words, we are going to set up some money for people who have really sick conditions, and we are going to take care of them. That is the most inefficient way to do it because insurance is about spreading risk, not concentrating risk, which is what a high-risk pool exactly is. So the House of Representatives, which has concocted this thing called the Republican healthcare plan, has come up with exactly the opposite idea of funding—instead of spreading the risk, concentrating the risk, and then saying that they are going out and getting \$3 billion and that is going to pay for it. It is not even going to touch it. It is the most inefficient way to approach the subject of spreading risk, because they don't spread the risk. They concentrate the risk.

What this bill does is that over 10 years it cuts over \$800 billion out of Medicaid. You start doing that, and you are going to lose what we know of as Medicaid, a healthcare program primarily for the poor and the disabled.

By the way, isn't it interesting that they cut over \$800 billion and save it out of Medicaid, and what did they do in the same bill? They give upwards of \$600 billion in tax breaks to those who are at the highest income levels. Let me get this right. It is kind of a reversed Robin Hood. I am going to take from the poor by cutting \$800 billion, and I am going to give to the rich by tax breaks for the highest income folks. Is that what we want to do? I don't think so.

Medicaid is a program that guarantees healthcare for millions of Americans, including children, people with disabilities, pregnant women, and seniors on long-term care. Think about that. What am I talking about? It is seniors in long-term care, seniors in nursing homes, who don't have enough resources or enough assets in order to pay for their care in their twilight years. Therefore, they are being paid by Medicaid, and that is the only source of income to take care of them. Is that what we want to cut in order to give a tax break for the highest income group? It ought to be the reverse. That is upside-down thinking.

Last week the Florida Medical Examiners Commission released new data

showing that over 2,600 Floridians have died from opioids in just the first half of 2016 alone. Over the entire year before, 2015, fentanyl, an opioid, killed 705 Floridians. Just in the first half of 2016, almost the exact same number, 704, died. We have a problem in the State of Florida, and there are a lot of other States that have the same.

Last month I went to a research institute down in Palm Beach County. They are using NIH grant money to research new nonaddictive opioid drugs. If they can come up with this, that is certainly all for the better to help people with pain and so that they are not being given an addictive drug. But we are not there yet, and we are using NIH money that is going into that research.

Last month I sent a letter to the Republican leadership pushing for more funding for the opioid fight and for the National Institutes of Health, or NIH.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have that letter printed in the RECORD.

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

UNITED STATES SENATE,
Washington, DC, April 26, 2017.

Hon. MITCH MCCONNELL,
Majority Leader, U.S. Senate,
Washington, DC.

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

DEAR LEADER MCCONNELL AND SPEAKER RYAN: As negotiations over the latest stop-gap government funding measure continue, we urge you to focus on securing substantial funding in the appropriations legislation currently being negotiated for two of our most essential national priorities: fighting the opioid epidemic and investing in our nation's biomedical research programs.

Every day, 91 Americans die from an opioid overdose, and despite the tireless work of many in our communities, this public health epidemic is only getting worse. Currently, only 10 percent of individuals who need specialty treatment for substance use disorder actually get it—not because we don't know how to help, but in large part because there aren't enough funds to provide these services. We need substantial additional resources to fight this epidemic and fund prevention, treatment, and recovery activities.

It is also essential that we increase our investment in the National Institutes of Health (NIH), our nation's premier research institution. NIH funding supports innovative, cutting-edge research that plays a critical role in the development of lifesaving cures for diseases. Our ability to fight Alzheimer's disease, diabetes, cancer, heart disease, and many other diseases depends on our willingness to invest in science. While investments in the NIH have consistently produced tremendous value, funding for the NIH has failed to keep pace with inflation over the last several decades.

It is essential to provide new funding to fight the opioid epidemic and support biomedical research at the NIH. This new funding should not fill in for cuts made elsewhere to opioid and NIH funding. It is also essential that opioid funding be distributed to the communities that need it most and that have been hardest hit by this terrible public health epidemic.

While past Congresses have made promises about providing states with additional funding to address the ongoing opioid crisis, ap-

propriations legislation like the pending budget deal is where the bill comes due. Americans are counting on Congress to live up to its commitments by supporting funding for the priorities that matter most in their lives. Funding to fight the opioid epidemic and support research into lifesaving cures through the NIH rank at the top of this list, and we urge you to include substantial additional funding for these areas in the appropriations legislation now being negotiated.

Sincerely,

Senator Elizabeth Warren, Senator Bill Nelson, Senator Benjamin L. Cardin, Senator Tom Udall, Senator Dianne Feinstein, Senator Debbie Stabenow, Senator Sherrod Brown, Senator Jeanne Shaheen, Senator Al Franken, Senator Richard Blumenthal, Senator Edward J. Markey, Senator Chris Van Hollen, Senator Margaret Wood Hassan, Senator Christopher Murphy, Senator Joe Manchin III, Senator Tammy Baldwin, Senator Cory A. Booker, Senator Tammy Duckworth, Senator Bernard Sanders.

Mr. NELSON. So what we need to do is to take a comprehensive approach to helping our State and local governments respond to this opioid epidemic.

I was very happy to be an early part of putting together and sponsoring a bill called the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act of 2016 and of the funding included in the 21st Century Cures Act to start putting more resources into our States right away for this opioid epidemic. Those laws have resulted in Florida's receiving more than \$27 million to help our State respond to the opioid crisis. Yet a lot more action is needed, as you can see by just the first half of last year alone, with 704 people dying from opioid overdoses.

Last week, in Florida a local paper reported about how the opioid epidemic is affecting our Nation's children. In 2015 alone, 167 babies were born in opioid dependency in just one city—Jacksonville—contributing to Duval County's being tapped as having the second highest number of babies born addicted to opioids in the State. Isn't that sad that children come into this world and they are already addicted?

We are dealing with people's lives here. We are dealing with their health. The last thing in the world we ought to be doing is cutting the resources of funding to help people who are in such dire straits. I would urge our colleagues to think twice about supporting this disastrous Republican healthcare bill.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

PARIS AGREEMENT

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, on December 19, 2015, in Paris, France, diplomats representing more than 190

countries finalized the world's most ambitious, comprehensive, and achievable multilateral agreement to combat climate change at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change's 21st Conference of Parties, or COP21.

I led a delegation of 10 Senators to COP21 to bolster U.S. leadership and to provide confidence in the U.S. commitment to the global effort to fight the existential threat of climate change. The result was an agreement that has nearly universal support, with every party committed to reducing carbon emissions. The momentum coming out of COP21 felt unstoppable.

That momentum continued through 2016. On Earth Day, an impressive 175 nations signed the Paris Agreement. Six months later, and in less than a year's time, the Paris Agreement reached the threshold for entry into force. Up until recently, the United States has led this global effort. The strength of our commitment and diplomacy spurred global enthusiasm for the Paris Agreement.

Some have said that we are the first generation to feel the effects of climate change and the last generation who can do something about it. Climate change impacts are apparent in my home State of Maryland. Recently, Annapolis began experiencing routine tidal flooding. Today's generations of Smith Islanders may be the last as a rising Chesapeake Bay encroaches further ashore each year.

Around the world, climate change is expanding the range and duration of regional wildfire seasons, prolonging extreme droughts in the Middle East and Southern Africa, which I have witnessed firsthand, and has caused Bolivia's Lake Poopo to evaporate entirely, and entire island nations are being swallowed up by the South Pacific.

The good news is, acting to prevent the worst effects of climate change holds tremendous economic and job growth opportunities for our Nation. The world looks toward the United States for leadership, not just in terms of domestic emissions reductions but also in our private sector and academia for clean energy solutions to power the world. Maryland is positioned to be at the forefront of U.S. leadership in technology innovation.

For example, the University of Maryland, in partnership with the U.S. Department of Energy and a number of Maryland private sector companies like Redox Energy, are leading the way in developing commercial-scale, in-demand technology that the global energy market is demanding.

In 2015, global investment in renewable energy was nearly \$350 billion, which was more than the global investment in fossil fuel energy. The Department of Energy's 2017 U.S. Energy and Employment Report showed that nearly 1 million Americans work in the energy efficiency, solar, wind, and alternative vehicles sectors. This is almost five times the current employment in

the U.S. fossil fuel electric industry, which includes coal, gas, and oil workers. Even though gas and oil have hit record-low prices on the global market, current and projected price per watt for renewables is also low, making clean energy remarkably affordable and competitive in the market.

The United States stands at the crossroads of global clean energy and climate change leadership, and the policy path we take on these issues could not only shape the strength of our economic future but our overall standing in the world. Forward thinking domestic climate change and clean energy policy, including substantial investments in clean energy R&D and clean energy production incentives, have made the United States an incubator for clean energy investment and entrepreneurship.

We see these things in every State of the Nation—new innovators and investors in the clean energy sector.

Creating a robust domestic market helps U.S. companies develop tested records of accomplishment, skilled workforces, and scalable products to export around the world to a global energy market that is hungry for clean energy solutions. This is where domestic policy intersects with U.S. climate diplomacy, which is priming that export market by building good will and faith in U.S. capacity and commitment.

The United States must not squander the considerable time and effort it took to build the world's confidence in the United States when combating climate change.

The rejection of the Kyoto Protocol by the United States severely strained a wide range of diplomacy issues for the Bush administration. That is not just a Senator saying this. Let me quote Secretary of State Colin Powell, when he stated:

Kyoto—this is not talking out of school—was not handled as well as it should have been, and when the blowback came I think it was a sobering experience that everything the American president does has international repercussions.

That was General Powell warning us about the importance of international diplomacy and that our actions have consequences.

Hindsight on the impact U.S. participation in Kyoto would have had on the protocol's success and on the U.S. economy is another debate entirely—and we will leave that for a different day—but a clear lesson from the episode is that the United States must not underestimate how seriously the world takes the issue of international cooperation to combat climate change.

Should the Trump administration withdraw the United States from the Paris Agreement, it will be an incredible insult to our global partners and severely tarnish the trust nations have in the United States. That distrust will bleed over into all areas of U.S. diplomacy and cooperation.

While the Paris Agreement does not have enforceable, binding provisions

that would punish parties for missing self-determined mitigation targets, nothing precludes other countries from acting outside the confines of the agreement to create uncomfortable conditions for nonmembers. It is worth noting here that if we were to pull out, we would be in a club with Syria and Nicaragua.

For example, in November of last year, immediately after the election and during COP22, the New York Times reported that leaders from other countries—so deeply offended by the President-elect's ill-informed rhetoric on climate change and the Paris Agreement—were contemplating implementing border tariffs on goods imported from nations failing to account for carbon emissions.

Staying in the agreement and continuing to advocate for what is in the best interests of the United States could prevent countries from taking such actions.

Many critics of the Paris Agreement sound as though they are stuck in 1997, echoing concerns about the 20-year-old Kyoto Protocol that are simply untrue about the Paris Agreement. The Paris Agreement takes a different approach to international climate change cooperation by creating an action model that allows for ambitious action and accountability through peer review.

The agreement takes a radically different approach to pollution mitigation that incorporates many conservative principles our Republican colleagues routinely espouse: increased transparency and universal reporting requirements for all parties. All parties, both developing and developed nations, commit to reducing greenhouse gas pollution. All parties determine their own greenhouse gas pollution mitigation commitments. Nationally determined commitments are non-binding.

Let me repeat that. The nationally determined commitments are non-binding. It is up to us, our country, to determine how we will meet our targets and when we will meet our targets, and the enforcement is solely within our own means. No international group can enforce any of these commitments on us. That was at the request of many Members of this body, and that was followed in the Paris Agreement.

The Paris Agreement was forged by the lessons the United States learned from the Kyoto Protocol process. Each addressed commonly criticized elements of the Kyoto Protocol.

I cannot stress enough how seriously committed leaders around the world are to the success of the Paris Agreement. For example, it is the top agenda item for both the upcoming G7 and G20 meetings. As such, we absolutely cannot underestimate how thoroughly insulted our friends and allies around the world will be if the United States retreats from the agreement.

Make no mistake, callously disregarding cooperation and partnership

with the global community on a crisis that is literally threatening the very physical existence of countries will have consequences for our foreign policy, diplomacy, national security, and U.S. economic opportunity in an undeniably globalized economy. Retreating from the Paris Agreement puts America alone, not America first, and being alone is tantamount to being last.

The expectation among our partners to the Paris Agreement is that the United States will remain engaged, although a common refrain among foreign delegations is that the world is moving ahead regardless. I take that to mean that if U.S. leadership falters, other countries will jump at the opportunity and fill the void we create and receive the gains which should have been ours.

U.S. energy policy should support the goals of the Paris Agreement. We have already seen hundreds of American corporations make commitments in the agreement's name. There is infinite potential from enhanced U.S. production of scalable and exportable clean energy technology that the world is demanding to power our collective future. If we do the opposite and retreat from the global effort to combat climate change, then we can expect to lose out on this economic growth potential because countries like Germany, China, and India will gladly take our place as the world's leader for clean energy innovation and finance. I will do what I can to protect against this loss.

It is in our national security interests for the United States to remain actively engaged with the world community to fight climate change.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. MARKEY. Madam President, in December of 2015, nearly 200 nations gathered in Paris in order to reach an agreement that each country would make a commitment to the reduction of dangerous greenhouse gases that were warming the planet and causing more and more havoc across this entire world.

That agreement is something that was hard-won. It took the leadership of the United States because so much of the CO₂ that had been sent up into the atmosphere since the dawn of the industrial age was red, white, and blue. It called upon each nation to make a commitment, and they did. The countries making commitments equaled 80 percent of the world's greenhouse gas emitters.

The Trump administration has many advisers telling the President that he should pull out of this Paris Agreement, that he should cede leadership to

the Germans, to the Chinese, and to other nations rather than having the United States continue to be the leader. That would be very dangerous for our country because we would be ceding leadership in this clean energy revolution to other countries around the planet.

There are still many who do not understand the role this clean energy revolution is already playing inside our country. In 2016, we deployed nearly 24,000 new megawatts of wind and solar on our planet. To put it another way, in 2005, the total amount of solar energy that was deployed in the United States was 79 megawatts—79. In 2016, we deployed 14,000 megawatts of new solar power.

Wind—last year, we deployed another 8,000 megawatts in our country. We are heading toward a point where we have an incredible number of people who are working in these industries. Remember, there are no more than 65 to 75,000 people who are still working as coal miners in the United States. In Massachusetts alone, we now have more than 100,000 people who work in the clean energy sector. In wind and solar alone in our country right now, we have 360,000 people who work in those sectors.

By the year 2020, if we just continue at the pace at which we have been moving over the last several years, there will be 600,000 people working in the wind and solar sector. That is the future. That is where we should be going. Those are the goals we should be trying to reach.

Instead, what President Trump is saying is that the United States is a technological weakling, that the United States cannot do it, that the United States can't find the capacity to be able to meet this challenge, that we have to give up.

The President says he is going to revive the coal industry, a 19th century industry, instead of trying to have the United States be the leader in this world on the production of clean energy technologies.

Last night, I was at the Kennedy Library, and we were celebrating the 100th birthday of President John F. Kennedy. On that occasion last evening, the library presented to Barack Obama his Profile in Courage Award. Amongst other things that were cited was his commitment to dealing with this challenge of climate change that is affecting our planet and the role that the United States can and should play in the solving of that problem.

President Obama promulgated last year a Clean Power Plan. That Clean Power Plan was intended to reduce greenhouse gases in the utilities sector by 32 percent by the year 2030. President Trump has already said: We can't accomplish that. We can't figure that out. We don't know how to reduce those greenhouse gases.

In 1961, President Kennedy said that we were going to put a man on the

Moon in 8 years and return those pilots back to Earth safely. We had to invent new metals. We had to invent new propulsion systems. President Kennedy said that we were not going to do it because it was easy but because it was hard.

We were threatened by the Soviet Union for supremacy in outer space. President Kennedy challenged our Nation to respond to the threat of the Soviet Union, and we won.

Here we are, nearly 60 years later, with another challenge, a challenge that threatens this planet. President Trump says that as a nation we are not up to the challenge. As a nation, we can't figure out how to solve this problem, even though the solutions are already out there and being deployed across this Nation.

Another example of solutions like wind and solar: Elon Musk has a new all-electric vehicle that is going to cost \$35,000 and is going to be deployed next year; 400,000 of these vehicles are to be sold. That is a game-changing moment in the history of the automobile, going back to its invention. It is a game changer. To a certain extent, for existing industries, it is a game-over moment unless they get into this all-electric vehicle revolution.

What is Elon Musk doing? Elon Musk is creating a Darwinian, paranoia-inducing environment within which all of the rest of these automotive companies are now going to have to operate—go electric or perish economically as a company.

This is how far it has come: Right now, Tesla has a market value that for all intents and purposes is equal to Ford and to General Motors. That is how much the American people have given in terms of confidence in this company, in this man.

We can do it. It should be the President of the United States who is saying we can do it. The rest of the world expects us to do it.

Why do we continue to import oil into our country from Saudi Arabia? Why do we continue to import oil from other countries around this planet? Why can't the President set as a goal that we are going to have 100 percent renewables in our country by the year 2050, that we are going to accept it as a national challenge in the same way that President Kennedy accepted the challenge in 1961 to put a man on the Moon, to control, to dominate in outer space?

This is a letter to President Trump, which is in today's New York Times. The full-page ad says:

Dear President Trump,

As some of the largest companies based or operating in the United States, we strongly urge you to keep the United States Paris Agreement on climate change.

What are the names of these companies? Adobe, Apple, Danfoss, Facebook, Gap, Google, Hewlett Packard Enterprise, Ingersoll Rand, Intel, Johnson Controls, Mars Incorporated, Microsoft, Morgan Stanley, National Grid,

PG&E Corporation, Salesforce, Schneider Electric, Unilever, VF Corporation.

This isn't the President challenging companies in our country to respond to the challenge. These are the companies in America challenging the President to respond to the challenge. It is the Kennedy era on its head; it is like JFK in reverse. He is saying we can't do it when the private sector is saying we can.

Ultimately, this challenge to our competitiveness globally is something that Donald Trump is going to forfeit for our workers. This opportunity to create jobs and markets and growth is going to be something that we lose.

We need a President who is going to stand up for this stable, practical framework, which is giving an incentive to the private sector to solve this problem. We will be creating jobs while saving all of creation. That is what the winning formula is going to be.

This Paris Agreement is going to lead to increased competitiveness in jobs, in economic growth. By remaining a party to the Paris Agreement, rather than retreating, we will give Americans the opportunity to harness that can-do spirit and technical know-how to create new businesses and jobs. We will give our Nation the opportunity to be a leader in the global effort to address climate change. We will give America the opportunity to lead in this century and into the next.

I urge the United States to remain in the Paris Agreement. We can either be the leader or the laggard internationally in developing the new clean energy technologies that will drive our economy and help combat climate change.

It is a sad day for our Nation when the President of the United States is challenged by the private sector to step up, especially when he calls himself the CEO President of our country. He is turning his back on these innovative companies that want to be able to create jobs here in our country in order to save our planet. I pray for the well-being of our planet and that the President honors this commitment.

I think that the French made a huge statement yesterday in electing their new President, Macron. He was saying to the French people: We must engage the rest of the planet. We must work with the rest of the planet.

The Paris Agreement was signed in France in December of 2015. That election yesterday, I think, should be taken as a signal that we should not be retreating from our global leadership.

I urge this administration to adopt an approach that does unleash further this wind and solar and all-electric vehicle revolution.

With that, I yield back the remainder of my time.

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

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

AMERICAN HEALTH CARE ACT

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, last week our colleagues in the House made a first necessary step to delivering on our promise to repeal and replace ObamaCare and to restore individual choice for a health insurance product that people choose that fits their actual needs, rather than one mandated by Washington, DC. They passed the American Health Care Act, a bill that provides relief to Americans all across the country. With the passage of the AHCA in the House, we have a way forward to do away with government mandating one-size-fits-all healthcare.

Now that the House has passed this legislation, it is up to the Senate to do our job and to keep our promises. To be specific, the promise President Obama made when the Affordable Care Act was passed—actually, he made many promises multiple times—proved not to be true. So in many ways, when President Obama promised that if you like what you have, you can keep it; that if you like your doctor, you can keep your doctor; that if you like your plan, you can keep your plan—none of that was true, we have now learned.

I don't think it is an exaggeration to say that ObamaCare—the Affordable Care Act—was sold under false pretenses. So it is up to us to restore individual choice for healthcare products that people want that fit their needs, not one they buy because the government is holding a gun to their heads or threatens to penalize them unless they observe the government mandate to buy that healthcare.

You know, one of the biggest reasons for passing ObamaCare given at the time, back in 2010, was the number of uninsured in the country. Well, the fact is, there are still 30 million people uninsured under ObamaCare even though it has been the law of the land for the last 7 years.

I believe we can and we must do better to deliver affordable care that people choose, that meets their individual needs, and not healthcare they buy simply because the government is coercing them into doing so. We will work together with all of our colleagues who are willing to work with us. If that means Republicans are going to be working with 52 Republicans to get this bill passed, we will get it done and we will get it passed. Ideally, though, it would be better if our Democratic colleagues work with us. But so far, they have steadfastly refused to work with us even though they know that ObamaCare is in shambles and that people are finding they can't find an insurance company where they live because insurance companies are pulling out of those individual markets because they are simply losing too much money or people who can buy ObamaCare policies in the individual markets are finding that their premiums are going through the roof and that the deductibles are unaffordable,

thus effectively leaving them without effective coverage.

Even though our Democratic colleagues know that ObamaCare is melting down and is not serving the public the way they promised it would or, in fact, is a positive harm to them because of unaffordable premiums and deductibles, still, so far they are standing on the sidelines and unwilling to participate in this process. I hope that changes at some point in the near future in the interests of the people we represent all across the country.

IMMIGRATION LAW

Madam President, I want to spend the rest of my time discussing a specific problem that Texans are all too familiar with; that is, people breaking our immigration laws, and not just breaking our immigration laws but then coming into our local communities and committing additional crimes—assault, murder, rape, you name it—in those communities even after they have entered the country illegally.

This is a difficult issue and one that I don't raise lightly, but it is important that when we talk about sanctuary cities and criminal aliens—these are people who have not just violated the immigration laws, these are people who have doubled down and have no respect for our laws, and, frankly, they have no respect for the communities in which they live. They primarily target the minority community in which they live and work.

We do need to be clear-eyed about this, and we need to treat it seriously. We need to remember that our inaction has some real-life consequences. I have been glad to see the new administration focus on enforcing the law and restoring respect for the rule of law generally and taking quick action to help victims of this type of crime in particular.

I want to take a couple of minutes to tell a story about one particular victim who was really an American hero, one of my constituents who lost his life at the hands of a violent illegal immigrant. That would be Houston police officer Rodney Johnson.

By all accounts, Rodney Johnson was larger than life, standing about 6 feet 5 inches tall, with a smile just as big. He was a dedicated family man, a husband to fellow Houston Police Department officer Joslyn Johnson. They had three daughters and two sons. His wife even called Rodney “the glue that held the family together.”

Rodney was a hero not only to his family but to the local community as well. He was a hero for our country, too, because he was a veteran of the U.S. military police, the U.S. Army. Of course he was a hero for the State of Texas as a former corrections officer with the Texas Department of Public Safety.

A few years ago, Rodney ran into the flames of a burning building and saved the lives of several children. For that act of courage, he was awarded one of

the highest honors a law enforcement officer in Texas can receive, the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement's Medal of Valor.

Sadly, all of that changed in the fall of 2006. At about 5:30 p.m. on September 21, Officer Johnson pulled over a driver for speeding near Houston Hobby Airport. By all accounts, it appeared to be a routine traffic stop, but when the driver, Juan Quintero, could not provide Officer Johnson with a driver's license, he decided to take him into custody. What Officer Johnson did not know is that Mr. Quintero was a hardened criminal illegal immigrant with an extensive record of offenses, as well as deportations and repeated illegal entries into the United States. Even more tragically, Officer Johnson did not know that this career thug was concealing a 9mm handgun in the waistband of his clothing.

Officer Johnson followed protocol. He handcuffed the criminal suspect, placed him in the back of his squad car, and began writing a police report. But just then, Quintero managed to move his cuffed hands in front of him, reached for his concealed weapon, and opened fire in a cowardly surprise attack, literally killing Rodney Johnson by shooting him in the back.

Quintero was a dangerous career criminal who had no respect for our laws. He had no place in our country and had been deported numerous times by the Federal Government. But somehow he was free and on the streets alongside of our families and heroes like Officer Rodney Johnson. That should be an embarrassment to everyone who believes in the rule of law and believes that it is government's responsibility at the local, State, and Federal level to keep our communities safe.

This issue is not going to go away, as much as some of our colleagues would like to ignore it. There are countless other stories across the country of victims and their families who have suffered from some of the worst tragedies imaginable because of criminal illegal immigrants.

I am not talking just about people who have entered the country in violation of our immigration laws; I am talking about hardened criminals who target people in their communities for profit or for other reasons. I have spoken about a number of them from the floor before.

In addition to Officer Rodney Johnson, I could tell you the story of Javier Vega, a Border Patrol officer killed by two criminal illegal immigrants while fishing with his family. These criminals had been deported numerous times and committed multiple crimes.

I could tell you about Kevin Will, a Houston police officer killed by a drunk driver who had entered and was living in the United States illegally and who had been deported twice before.

I could tell you more about Josh Wilkerson, a teenager brutally killed by a criminal illegal immigrant in 2010,

somebody who had been arrested numerous times before.

I could tell you about Kara Willingham, who was beaten to death by a criminal illegal immigrant; Gustavo Burr or Andres Reyes, kidnapped and held at gunpoint in South Texas; and Neri Garcia, killed by an illegal alien who caused a drunk-driving accident in the Dallas area.

I could tell you story after story after story of the tragedies wrought by a Federal policy that did not enforce our borders or make sure that people, once deported, stayed deported because of the danger they posed to our communities. I believe this really is a matter of political will, and we finally, for the first time in the last 8 years, have an administration and a President who believe in securing our borders and keeping the public safe.

There are larger and other additional discussions we need to have about our flawed immigration system, but the first thing we need to do is regain the public's confidence by securing our borders and enforcing our laws. I am glad President Trump is well on his way to beginning that process under the leadership of GEN John Kelly at the Department of Homeland Security.

The entire point of this is to keep the first commitment that the government makes to American citizens: that we will protect you and keep you safe. That is the government's main job, and that includes protecting all Americans and everyone in the country, literally, from those career criminals who commit offenses and who thumb their noses at our immigration laws. As I said, the Trump administration is finally taking our security seriously, and I am grateful for that. By focusing on violent repeat offenders, we are protecting our citizens and making our communities safer places to live. I don't know how anyone could be against that.

I look forward to doing my part here in the Senate to continue working with this administration to make sure that our laws are enforced and not ignored, such as the one signed into law by Governor Abbott in Texas, making sure that sanctuary cities exist no more and that every local, State, and Federal law enforcement agency cooperates in enforcing the law and making our communities safe and regaining the public's confidence in their own government.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia.

Mrs. CAPITO. Madam President, today is a glorious day. It is a great day for this country because we and my colleagues, I believe, will confirm Heather Wilson to be Secretary of the Air Force.

There are many reasons why it is appropriate for Heather Wilson to be Secretary of the Air Force. She has Air Force in her DNA. Her father Doug was an Air Force veteran and commercial pilot. Her grandfather flew for Brit-

ain's Royal Flying Corps in World War I before coming to the United States and serving as a courier pilot during World War II.

Heather was to be no different. She was a junior in high school when the Air Force Academy started accepting women. She applied and was appointed there to be part of the Academy's third class with women. She also became the first woman to command basic training and the first woman vice wing commander.

After college she thought she was going to flight school, but those plans changed because she answered the call and was awarded the very prestigious Rhodes Scholarship. It was only the sixth year that women were permitted to apply for a Rhodes Scholarship, and she was a collegiate rower there and earned a master's degree and a doctorate in international relations.

Heather's assignments and accomplishments are many. During her service she was a negotiator and political adviser to the U.S. Air Force in England and a planning officer for NATO in Belgium, where she worked on arms control negotiations.

Heather left the Air Force because she heeded another call to serve as the Director of European Defense Policy and Arms Control on the staff of the National Security Council. I know she worked very closely with former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice during the Presidency of George H.W. Bush, the fall of the Berlin Wall, and the collapse of the Warsaw Pact.

Heather has always been on an upward trajectory. She left government and started her own company advising defense and scientific corporations, but public service has always called Heather back. In 1995 she was asked to be the cabinet secretary of the New Mexico Children, Youth and Families Department, where she oversaw foster care, adoption, early childhood education, children's mental health, and the juvenile justice system. From there, again, public service kept calling her, and she was elected to the House of Representatives in 1998, becoming the first woman to represent New Mexico since the 1940s and the first female veteran elected to a full term in the U.S. Congress.

I met Heather Wilson in the House of Representatives. Her time on the Hill included service on the U.S. House Committee on Armed Services and the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence. I was lucky enough to serve with Heather, to learn from her and from her incredible depth of knowledge, her certainty—Heather is so certain—and her ability to cut through the politics to do what is right for the country. I heard Heather give many speeches on the House floor, and they were always through the frame of what is in the best interests of the United States.

So after she left Congress she founded another company before she was selected as president of the South Da-

kota School of Mines and Technology, and she is there now serving as the school's first female President. My condolences go to the South Dakota School of Mines and Technology because duty is calling Heather Wilson back to Washington to be our Secretary of the Air Force.

There are a lot of firsts in Heather's life. Senator Pete Domenici, to whom Heather felt very close, once called Heather "the most brilliantly qualified House candidate anywhere in the country."

I say Heather is a brilliantly qualified designee to be Secretary of the Air Force. She has always been not only an incredible intellectual and a strong leader, but she is also a very warm, welcoming, and kind person. We became good friends and remain so to this day. She is a leader. She is a spouse. She is a mother of two wonderful children, a pilot, and a veteran. So I am excited about the prospect of Heather's returning to Washington to become our Secretary of the Air Force.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Madam President, Heather Wilson was one of the first women to graduate from the U.S. Air Force Academy and the third generation of her family to serve in the Air Force. She was one of the pioneers of gender integration of the modern Air Force. Even so, her track record in public service and the private sector after her Air Force career raises concerns.

While serving as the Representative from New Mexico's First District, Ms. Wilson admitted to telephoning the U.S. Attorney in Albuquerque to pressure him on an ongoing corruption investigation of State Democrats, in violation of House ethics rules.

Ms. Wilson was paid \$450,000 between 2009 and 2013 through a Lockheed Martin subsidiary for consulting work for Sandia National Laboratory. The Government Accountability Office criticized the lab for not having adequate documentation of the work that she performed, and Lockheed Martin ultimately paid \$4.7 million to settle charges that it had paid a lobbyist with taxpayer funds. Ethics laws prohibited Ms. Wilson from lobbying within a year of serving in Congress. Ms. Wilson failed to list her business relationship with Sandia Labs in her financial disclosure filings. In spite of this, she claims that she did nothing wrong.

During her unsuccessful run for the Senate, Ms. Wilson claimed that legislation intended to reduce bullying of LGBTQ children was a violation of religious freedom. She argued that the correct response was not to punish bullies, but to "strengthen our children to be more comfortable with themselves." She has steadfastly refused to support Federal nondiscrimination protections for the LGBTQ community.

The core values of the Air Force are, integrity first, service before self, and excellence in all we do. In spite of her career as an Air Force officer, Ms. Wilson has not demonstrated the unflinching commitment to integrity that we

demand of our men and women in uniform. She has compromised ethics rules in Congress, accepted pay for questionable work that was ill-defined and can't be fully documented, and failed to show that she is willing to stand up for all serving in uniform, regardless of their sexual orientation.

For these reasons, I cannot support Ms. Wilson's nomination to be 24th Secretary of the Air Force.

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

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

Mr. REED. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to use 10 minutes of the Republicans' allotted time because my side has used all of our time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. REED. Madam President, I rise today to discuss the nomination of Dr. Heather Wilson to be Secretary of the Air Force.

The Secretary of the Air Force is an important and influential position within our national security structure. As the head of the military Department, the Secretary of the Air Force oversees recruiting, organizing, training, and equipping of the force. The next Air Force Secretary will oversee the Defense Department's most complex and costly acquisition programs in history. The Secretary will also lead 495,000 Active-Duty, Guard, and Reserve members through the challenges of rebuilding long-term sustainable readiness, while contending with ongoing operational demands around the globe.

Dr. Wilson has the knowledge and expertise to serve in that role. She is a graduate of the U.S. Air Force Academy and a Rhodes scholar. She served in the House of Representatives and on the House Armed Services Committee and the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence. Currently, Dr. Wilson is president of the South Dakota School of Mines and Technology.

Without question, Dr. Wilson has notable credentials, but I have significant concerns about certain of her past actions. First, Heather Wilson & Company, LLC, founded by Dr. Wilson following her tenure in Congress, had contracts with four National Nuclear Security Administration, or NNSA, laboratories—Sandia National Laboratories, Los Alamos National Laboratory, Oak Ridge National Laboratory, and Nevada National Security Site. From January 2009 through part of 2011, Dr. Wilson's company received \$464,000 in payments from these laboratories for consulting services.

However, due to claims of contracting irregularities involving the

company, the Department of Energy inspector general conducted two investigations into this matter. As a result, the contractors that operated the laboratories on behalf of the government paid back at least \$442,877 to the Department of Energy with respect to payments made to Dr. Wilson's company. The rationale for the repayments was the absence of any appreciable evidence of work product. Furthermore, Lockheed Martin, which operated Sandia National Laboratories, agreed to an overall settlement of \$4.7 million for their management failures.

Let me be clear. Dr. Wilson was not found culpable of wrongdoing. Nevertheless, the allegations that were levied are serious and directly involved her company. As such, during her confirmation hearing, I asked Dr. Wilson about these contracts and the allegations of impropriety. Unfortunately, I did not receive a satisfactory response. Dr. Wilson deflected any suggestions that she bore any responsibility for these contracting irregularities.

As concerning as these allegations are, there was another incident that I found even more problematic as we reviewed Dr. Wilson's qualifications to serve as Secretary of the Air Force. In October of 2006, while serving as a Member of the House of Representatives, Dr. Wilson contacted a sitting U.S. attorney, David C. Iglesias, who was appointed by President George W. Bush, regarding the status of Federal corruption cases in New Mexico. This action was highly unusual and contrary to guidance in effect at the time from the House Ethics Committee. In fact, the House Ethics Manual provided that a request for background information or a status report from a U.S. attorney "may in effect be an indirect or subtle effort to influence the substantive outcome of the proceedings." The guidance provided by the manual stated that the best way to communicate any inquiry or question was in writing, in order to make it part of the proceedings.

As a former Member of the House myself, I have deep concerns about this action in terms of House ethics rules and the possibility that a Federal prosecutor may have felt pressured by Congress in an ongoing investigation.

In September of 2008, a joint report by the Department of Justice inspector general and the Department of Justice Office of Professional Responsibility, which investigated the removal of nine U.S. attorneys, including Mr. Iglesias, concluded that "the evidence we have developed so far shows that Wilson . . . in fact called Iglesias before the election, and that the substance of the call led Iglesias to believe he was being pressured to indict the courthouse case before the upcoming election."

During her nomination hearing, Dr. Wilson testified that she called Mr. Iglesias because, in her words, "an individual or constituent with knowledge of ongoing investigations told me that the U.S. Attorney was intentionally

delaying corruption prosecutions, and I felt as though I had to address that allegation in some appropriate way." However, as I previously mentioned, contacting a U.S. attorney in this manner was clearly contrary to the ethics rules that govern the conduct of Members of the House of Representatives.

Perhaps Dr. Wilson, though, does deserve the benefit of the doubt. Maybe her intention, when she called Mr. Iglesias, was not to pressure him. However, when I asked Dr. Wilson the name of the individual who made the allegation about Mr. Iglesias's intentionally delaying corruption prosecutions, she refused to provide the person's name. Dr. Wilson argued that she had an obligation not to reveal who it was who made a highly politicized and unusual charge against Mr. Iglesias.

I think providing the name of the person is important because it helps us to understand the purpose of Dr. Wilson's call to Mr. Iglesias. It is one thing if a concerned constituent with no ties or interests in corruption cases under investigation innocuously contacted Dr. Wilson. Perhaps her subsequent call to Mr. Iglesias could be excused. But because we do not have the name, we have no way to verify the motive. It remains very possible that the person who contacted Dr. Wilson wanted to pressure Mr. Iglesias to move forward with these pending corruption cases. If that is the case, it casts Dr. Wilson's call to Mr. Iglesias in a much different light. Unfortunately, without further information from Dr. Wilson, I will not be able to resolve my concerns about this incident.

The two issues I have just discussed have reluctantly led me to conclude that while Dr. Wilson has excellent academic and professional qualifications, I must vote against her nomination before the full Senate.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, a month ago, I spoke in strong support of Dr. Heather Wilson to be the 24th Secretary of the Air Force. I am pleased that it appears that her nomination will be confirmed today.

In the many years I have known Dr. Wilson, I have always been impressed by her intellect and especially by her leadership skills. Her qualifications and character are beyond dispute. Throughout her life, she has used her many talents not for personal gain or self-aggrandizement but for the public good.

Dr. Wilson was one of the first female graduates of the Air Force Academy,

which is a pretty impressive accomplishment unto itself, but she set an even higher standard when she earned a Rhodes scholarship to study at Oxford University.

Upon being awarded her Ph.D., she went to work for the National Security Council and then ran for Congress. I got to know Dr. Wilson through her insightful work on the House Intelligence and Armed Services Committees. Make no mistake—Dr. Wilson made a difference during her service in the House. As a well-respected member of the Intelligence Committee, she built a reputation as a no-nonsense legislator who was deeply committed to upholding our national security. In all things, she proved herself to be exceptionally competent, and I have to say that she proved herself to be worthy of the highest trust.

After her service in the House, Dr. Wilson became the president of the South Dakota School of Mines and Technology. There, she again set a high bar by leading a school whose alumni, I have been informed, make a higher average starting salary than do Harvard graduates.

For over 20 years, our Nation's Air Force has been involved in conflicts all over the world. Now more than ever, the Air Force needs a proven leader who can modernize the service and lead us to victory. I believe Dr. Wilson will provide that leadership. I have every confidence that she will serve with honor and integrity and make a lasting difference as the next Secretary of the Air Force. I have known her for a long time. I have gone to her State and worked with her and campaigned with her. All I can say is that she is a very top-notch woman leader, one of the best I have seen in all of my time in the U.S. Senate, and I know she is going to do a terrific job. I am going to help her every step of the way, and I am sure everybody else here will.

I hope everybody on this floor will vote for Dr. Heather Wilson for this position. We cannot lose. We are all going to be ahead because she is willing to serve and serve more, and she is willing to leave what really is a very comfortable position in order to take one that is not so comfortable and is very demanding, and I respect her for that and think the world of her.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. McCAIN. Mr. President, what is the parliamentary situation?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate is considering the nomination of Heather Wilson to be Secretary of the Air Force.

The time runs out in 37 minutes.

Mr. McCAIN. What is the time of the vote?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The time concludes at 6:03 p.m.

Mr. McCAIN. Mr. President, I rise to speak in support of the nomination of Heather Wilson to be the next Secretary of the U.S. Air Force.

Dr. Wilson is a proven leader and a dedicated public servant. She is a distinguished graduate of the U.S. Air Force Academy and Oxford University, where she earned master's and doctorate degrees as a Rhodes Scholar. If confirmed, Dr. Wilson will be the first Air Force Academy graduate in history to serve as Secretary of the Air Force.

Dr. Wilson served 7 years as an Air Force officer. During the Cold War, she served in the United Kingdom and at the U.S. Mission to NATO in Brussels. As the Cold War came to an end, she served on the National Security Council staff under President George H.W. Bush, working on issues concerning NATO and arms control.

Dr. Wilson later moved west to marry her husband, Jay, who is also an Air Force veteran. After a few years in the private sector, Dr. Wilson once again answered the call to service, first as the head of the New Mexico Child Welfare Department and later as a Member of the U.S. House of Representatives.

In Congress, Dr. Wilson was the leading voice on national security. She took on the tough issues, from surveillance programs to sexual assault at the Air Force Academy, and she earned the deepest respect of her colleagues on Capitol Hill, including mine.

For the last 4 years, Dr. Wilson has been the president of the South Dakota School of Mines, enhancing its reputation as a premier engineering, science, and research institution.

Now America's Air Force needs her leadership.

The next Secretary will lead America's Air Force in confronting the most diverse and complex array of global crises since the end of World War II. The world is on fire, and now more than ever our Nation is counting on the global vigilance, global reach, and global power that are the hallmarks of the U.S. Air Force capabilities.

The next Secretary will also inherit the oldest, smallest, and least ready Air Force in its history. Twenty-five years of continuous deployments, troubled acquisition programs, and frequent aircraft divestments have aged and shrunk the Air Force's inventory. The combination of relentless operational tempo and the self-inflicted wounds of the Budget Control Act and sequestration have depleted readiness. Meanwhile, potential adversaries are rapidly shrinking America's technological advantage and holding our aircraft at greater risk over greater distances.

In short, we have asked a lot of our Air Force over the last 25 years, and the demands placed on the service continue to grow. Congress has only added

to the problems with the Budget Control Act and sequestration. We are placing an unnecessary and dangerous burden on the backs of our airmen, and we cannot change course soon enough.

We owe our airmen the resources, equipment, and training they need to succeed. We also owe them proven leadership. That is why the Senate should confirm Dr. Wilson to be the next Secretary of the Air Force. From the Air Force Academy to the Air Force, to the National Security Council, to the House of Representatives, Dr. Wilson has proven herself as a leader. She understands the missions of the Air Force and the capabilities it brings to the defense of our Nation. I am confident she will uphold the Air Force's core values: integrity first, service before self, and excellence in all the Air Force does.

Heather Wilson is the right person to lead the Air Force to a stronger future, and I urge my colleagues to support her nomination.

Mr. President, I yield back all time.

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

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

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

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

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS) is necessarily absent.

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

The result was announced—yeas 76, nays 22, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 122 Ex.]

YEAS—76

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

NAYS—22

Blumenthal	Cortez Masto	Gillibrand
Booker	Duckworth	Harris
Cantwell	Feinstein	Hassan
Cardin	Franken	Hirono

Leahy	Reed	Whitehouse
Markey	Schumer	Wyden
Merkley	Van Hollen	
Murray	Warren	

NOT VOTING—2

Isakson	Sanders
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The nomination was confirmed.

CLOTURE MOTION

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

The legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Scott Gottlieb, of Connecticut, to be Commissioner of Food and Drugs, Department of Health and Human Services.

Mitch McConnell, John Cornyn, Tom Cotton, Dan Sullivan, Shelley Moore Capito, John Barrasso, Roger F. Wicker, Mike Rounds, Orrin G. Hatch, Bill Cassidy, Pat Roberts, Mike Crapo, Lamar Alexander, Richard Burr, John Thune, Jerry Moran, James E. Risch.

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

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of Scott Gottlieb, of Connecticut, to be Commissioner of Food and Drugs, Department of Health and Human Services, 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).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS) is necessarily absent.

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

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 57, nays 41, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 123 Ex.]

YEAS—57

Alexander	Ernst	Murkowski
Barrasso	Fischer	Nelson
Bennet	Flake	Paul
Blunt	Gardner	Perdue
Boozman	Graham	Portman
Burr	Grassley	Risch
Capito	Hatch	Roberts
Carper	Heitkamp	Rounds
Cassidy	Heller	Rubio
Cochran	Hoeven	Sasse
Collins	Inhofe	Scott
Coons	Johnson	Shelby
Corker	Kennedy	Strange
Cornyn	King	Sullivan
Cotton	Lankford	Thune
Crapo	Lee	Tillis
Cruz	McCain	Toomey
Daines	McConnell	Wicker
Enzi	Moran	Young

NAYS—41

Baldwin	Cardin	Durbin
Blumenthal	Casey	Feinstein
Booker	Cortez Masto	Franken
Brown	Donnelly	Gillibrand
Cantwell	Duckworth	Harris

Hassan	Menendez	Stabenow
Heinrich	Merkley	Tester
Hirono	Murphy	Udall
Kaine	Murray	Van Hollen
Klobuchar	Peters	Warner
Leahy	Reed	Warren
Manchin	Schatz	Whitehouse
Markey	Schumer	Wyden
McCaskill	Shaheen	

NOT VOTING—2

Isakson	Sanders
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The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 57, the nays are 41.

The motion is agreed to.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Scott Gottlieb, of Connecticut, to be Commissioner of Food and Drugs, Department of Health and Human Services.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Dakota.

CONFIRMATION OF HEATHER WILSON

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I am honored to speak tonight after casting my vote to confirm Dr. Heather Wilson as Secretary of the Air Force. I have known Heather for nearly 20 years and submit that President Trump could not have selected a more qualified candidate to lead the Air Force in these demanding times. I am pleased that the Senate was finally able to confirm her nomination, and I wish her great success.

As an Air Force veteran, former Member of Congress, and most recently the leader of one of the top science and engineering schools, the South Dakota School of Mines and Technology, Dr. Wilson has repeatedly demonstrated leadership abilities that will serve her and the Air Force well in this next chapter.

Her commitment to duty links back to her time as a cadet at the Air Force Academy, where she was a distinguished graduate. In fact, she will be the Academy's first graduate in history to serve as a Secretary of the Air Force. Dr. Wilson went on to serve as an Air Force officer in Europe during the Cold War, where she was based in the United Kingdom and at the U.S. Mission to NATO in Brussels. Upon leaving the Air Force, she served on the National Security Council staff of President George H.W. Bush, working on NATO and conventional arms control.

At a time when America's partnerships are being challenged by threats around the world, I am confident that her experience will lend a steady hand to our military decisionmaking.

Dr. Wilson will also bring with her great experience honed in the Halls of Congress. At the start of her decades-long representation of New Mexico's First Congressional District, she quickly became one of the go-to Members on national security issues. Heather took on tough issues not unlike the ones she will surely face as Secretary of the Air Force. Whether on issues of strategic

objectives and readiness or personnel matters, such as military sexual assault, she is prepared to have frank discussions on the issues and will contribute insightful proposals on how to best tackle the many challenges facing the Air Force. She understands not only the Air Force's key capabilities but the perilous outcomes we may face as a nation if we do not properly train and fund our military. She knows that rising to meet the challenges of the day must be done with an eye to the future so we may also deter and defeat the threats of tomorrow.

At a time when national security is of foremost concern, Dr. Wilson understands the Air Force's tremendous responsibility in keeping Americans safe and will be guided by the core values of the Force: integrity first, service before self, and excellence in all that the Air Force does.

I could not be happier for my friend, Dr. Heather Wilson, and wish her and her husband Jay the best of luck. South Dakota and the South Dakota School of Mines and Technology are losing an asset, but I am confident that the new era of excellence Heather helped usher in leaves the school well-positioned to remain a foremost engineering, science, and research institution. We are proud of Heather's continued success and trust she will represent us well as the 24th Secretary of the Air Force.

I would like to thank my colleague, Chairman McCAIN, for his work to advance Dr. Wilson's nomination through the Senate Armed Services Committee and for granting me the opportunity to introduce Dr. Wilson at her confirmation hearing. It was my honor to endorse her before the committee and to cast my vote in support of her nomination this evening. I am glad the Senate has advanced another of President Trump's nominees and wish Dr. Wilson, our next Secretary of the Air Force, continued wisdom and success as she continues her outstanding leadership in service to our country.

Thank you, Mr. President.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

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.

TRIBUTE TO MICHAEL "MICKEY" GORAL

Mr. DURBIN. Today, Mr. President, I want to honor my friend Michael "Mickey" Goral. For nearly four decades, Mickey has held elected office in