

some banks didn't want competition. They didn't want it shown that maybe the cities or the States could run these retirement systems more cheaply and take less money out of the average American's pocket. So we undid this rule. I don't think a single average constituent in any part of America wanted this rule undone, just the big banks—some of them, not all of them. That is the kind of thing my colleagues on the other side of the aisle and President Trump are bragging about. It is nothing to brag about.

Let's be very clear about this. These are not the priorities the American people voted for in November, where a substantial majority of Americans said in exit polls that the economy was rigged against them. These CRAs rig the game even further for the wealthy special interests and are nothing to brag about or write home about.

I yield the floor.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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

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 resume consideration of the Lighthizer nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Robert Lighthizer, of Florida, to be United States Trade Representative, with the rank of Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary.

CLOTURE MOTION

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomi-

nation of Robert Lighthizer, of Florida, to be United States Trade Representative, with the rank of Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary.

Mitch McConnell, John Cornyn, Mike Rounds, Orrin G. Hatch, Thom Tillis, Steve Daines, Mike Crapo, Pat Roberts, Thad Cochran, Luther Strange, John Thune, Richard C. Shelby, John Hoeven, John Boozman, Rob Portman, Jerry Moran, David Perdue.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. 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 Robert Lighthizer, of Florida, to be United States Trade Representative, with the rank of Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from West Virginia (Mrs. CAPITO), the Senator from Alaska (Ms. MURKOWSKI), and the Senator from Alaska (Mr. SUL-LIVAN).

Further, if present and voting, the Senator from West Virginia (Mrs. CAPITO) would have voted "yea" and the Senator from Alaska (Ms. MURKOWSKI) would have voted "yea."

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Missouri (Mrs. MCCASKILL) is necessarily absent.

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

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 81, nays 15, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 126 Ex.]
YEAS—81

Alexander	Enzi	Menendez
Baldwin	Ernst	Moran
Barrasso	Feinstein	Murphy
Bennet	Fischer	Murray
Blunt	Flake	Nelson
Booker	Franken	Paul
Boozman	Gardner	Perdue
Brown	Graham	Peters
Burr	Grassley	Portman
Cantwell	Hassan	Risch
Cardin	Hatch	Roberts
Carper	Heitkamp	Rounds
Casey	Heller	Rubio
Cassidy	Hirono	Scott
Cochran	Hoeven	Shaheen
Collins	Inhofe	Shelby
Coons	Isakson	Stabenow
Corker	Johnson	Strange
Cornyn	Kaine	Tester
Cortez Masto	Kennedy	Thune
Cotton	King	Tillis
Crapo	Klobuchar	Toomey
Cruz	Lankford	Van Hollen
Daines	Leahy	Warner
Donnelly	Lee	Wicker
Duckworth	Manchin	Wyden
Durbin	McConnell	Young

NAYS—15

Blumenthal	McCain	Schatz
Gillibrand	Merkeley	Schumer
Harris	Reed	Udall
Heinrich	Sanders	Warren
Markey	Sasse	Whitehouse

NOT VOTING—4

Capito	Murkowski
McCaskill	Sullivan

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 81, the nays are 15.

The motion is agreed to.

The Senator from Wyoming.

CONGRESSIONAL REVIEW ACT RESOLUTIONS

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, over the past few months, Congress has passed 14 different resolutions that are going to save the American people money and are going to make it a lot easier for our economy to grow. There have been 14 times since February that we have struck down unnecessary, burdensome, and costly regulations.

These were called "midnight regulations" because they came at the end of the Obama administration. Some came out, actually, after the Presidential election had been completed. The outcome was known, and, still, the outgoing administration tried to continue with what President Obama's Chief of Staff at one time called "audacious executive actions." Half of these 14 regulations—half of them—were actually put in place after the November Presidential election.

When one thinks about the election last year in November, President Obama said time and again during the campaign that his agenda was on the ballot. The American people rejected that agenda, and the President dumped these new rules on the American people as a parting shot. We wiped out 14 of these regulations—wiped them off the books.

In one resolution, we rolled back an important part of President Obama's war on coal. That was the so-called stream buffer rule. It was designed to shut down a lot of the surface coal mining in this country. It would have destroyed up to one-third of coal mining jobs in America. So we passed a resolution that will protect coal mining jobs and protect American energy independence.

There was another resolution we passed that restores the role of local land managers in deciding how best to use Federal land. Before the Obama administration, the local experts were the ones who would help decide how Federal land could be used in so many areas around the country. These are the people on the ground. They are the ones who know best what works there. They are the ones with the best sense of how to balance all of the different ways that land can be used. That could be things like recreation, energy production, and grazing.

Well, the Obama administration said it wasn't interested in hearing from the local experts anymore. It decided to put the decisions—all of those decisions—in the hands of unelected, unaccountable bureaucrats in Washington, DC. So Congress passed a resolution that says these are decisions that affect local communities and those communities should have the say—and a significant amount of say—in how decisions get made.

When we look at these 14 resolutions all together, they will save Americans over \$4 billion and more than 4 million hours of paperwork because not only are the regulations expensive, they are burdensome and time-consuming.

I can tell my colleagues this is just the beginning. These resolutions are just one tool that we have to strike down bad regulations. There is much more that Congress can do and will do, and there is much more that the Trump administration can do.

The administration has already made it clear that the bureaucrats in Washington are not in charge anymore. I plan to make sure the Trump administration keeps up the pace and tosses some of the worst regulations and rules into the garbage where they belong.

A good place to start would be for Ryan Zinke, the Secretary of the Interior, to throw out another rule that makes it more difficult to produce American energy. This regulation supposedly tries to reduce how much methane gets lost in oil and gas production. There is always some unprocessed natural gas that gets released at gas and oil wells. Energy producers try to gather up this gas and then ship it to a processing plant where, of course, it can be sold. It can be used by customers, and taxes are paid on it that go to State and local governments, as well as money that is raised by the sales for the companies themselves.

To do that, the producers need small pipelines. They need these small pipelines to collect the unprocessed gas from the wells and to get it to the processing plant. Here is the problem: We don't have enough of these gathering lines. Without the gathering lines, the only option is for that gas to get burned, and that extra natural gas will escape into the air.

So what do the bureaucrats in Washington say? They could have addressed the real reason this gas is being lost; that is, the fact that they haven't allowed enough of these gathering lines on Federal land. Instead, they decided to write a regulation that makes it tougher for us to produce American energy here in America. The Obama administration blocked the permits to build the gathering lines.

So this methane rule is a terrible regulation. It is redundant. It is unnecessary. I believe it is illegal, and it needs to go. Secretary Zinke should wipe the slate clean and get rid of this outrageous rule immediately. He should also order the bureaucrats who work for him to start approving more of these gas-gathering lines. That is what we really need. We need to make energy as clean as we can, as fast as we can, and do it in ways that do not raise costs for American families. We need to balance thoughtful regulation with a growing economy. We can have both.

The Obama administration absolutely failed to strike the right balance. The Trump administration and Congress have a lot more we can do to make sure we get the balance right.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Carolina.

Mr. TILLIS. Mr. President, I will be brief. I think the Senator from Oklahoma is going to go into some addi-

tional details, and the Senator from Wyoming did a great job of summarizing some of the positive results that have come from our actions. I want to refer to his resolutions of disapproval for regulations that we feel were an overreach.

When we went through the 14 votes—we actually had 15, but we were not able to succeed in 1 last regulation of disapproval yesterday—there were arguments put forth against our disapproving these regulations. It was as if we were completely deregulating the subject matter area that we were focused on, but that was not the case. What we were trying to do is eliminate the duplication and the costs associated with layering regulations on top of regulations.

We have a lot of discussion around here about tax reform, and we need to do that, but if we look at the regulatory burden on businesses and homeowners and State and local governments, there is a smart, right-size way to implement regulations, and there is a costly, complex, wrong way to implement regulations.

So I am proud we were able to get 14 resolutions of disapproval completed. I think they were regulations that were not necessary. They are obviously areas that if Congress ever needed to act, we could go back and implement regulations, if necessary.

What we ended up doing through this action over the past couple of months with the administration is reduce regulatory burdens by \$67 billion, and we have eliminated some 56 million paperwork hours. We are eliminating, we are cutting redtape, and that is a good thing.

I appreciate all the Members who worked hard on getting this together. I particularly appreciate my staff—Bill Bode and Torie Ness in particular—who worked hard with the other Senate offices to see what kind of support we could get for moving these regulatory disapprovals forward. I thank my fellow Members and the administration for working with us to fulfill our promise, which is to right-size government and get our economy going again.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, first of all, I appreciate the comments made by my colleague from North Carolina. It is even more meaningful to me because all during the time the regulations were coming on, I happened to be the one who was chairing the Environment and Public Works Committee, and we knew what was going to happen.

I am almost speechless when I think about the success. We went 20 years only taking up 1 CRA, and then we end up passing 14 of them—all but 1. That is a huge, successful record. My colleagues understand, this gives us the opportunity for people who are answerable to the public—people who are elected and have to stand for elections—to have a part in what is some-

times considered to be the action of an unelected bureaucrat.

We have had great opportunities here. I think the “midnight” regulations—a term that is used quite often—so that a party going out of office, such as President Obama, being very liberal—a very proud liberal, I might add—wanted to get as many of his rules in at the last minute. We were able to come in and pass these in the time required. We were able to pass 14 of these, in addition to the other regulations and other methods of doing regulations, which I want to address a little bit. It is just not something that we really anticipated would happen.

Now, I am particularly proud because mine was the first CRA to be passed in 20 years, and that was the very first one that came from what President Obama wanted having to do with the oil and gas industry, but the fact that nothing passed in that long period of time just shows now that people are recognizing that we who stand for election should be involved in this process of doing away with these regulations.

Now, the rule that I brought to the floor, which was the first one the President signed—we had a great signing ceremony and I enjoyed it very much—was the one that affected the oil and gas industry. It was an SEC ruling of the Obama administration that said that if you are a domestic producer of oil and gas—of course, that is the private sector—you have to release all of the information you are using in producing a bid against maybe another country. To use an example, in China, it is not in the private sector like it is in the United States. Their oil and gas business is in the public sector so they would have a distinct advantage. Quite frankly, it is consistent with what the previous President—President Obama—was doing in his war on fossil fuels. Fossil fuels are coal, oil, and gas, and he was very proud to be opposed to coal, oil, and gas, and frankly nuclear too.

I have often wondered—I go back to Oklahoma virtually every weekend that I don't have to be in one of the war zones or someplace like that. I go there really for my therapy because they ask questions that make sense. We don't get these questions in Washington. One of them I remember was in Shattuck, OK. When I was there, somebody said: Explain this to me. We have a President who wants to do away with fossil fuels and he wants to do away with nuclear energy. Now, we are dependent upon fossil fuels, coal, oil and gas, and nuclear energy for 89 percent of the power it takes to run this machine called America. If he is successful in doing away with it, how do we run this machine called America?

Well, I am proud to say that the war against fossil fuels is over. The particular CRA I sponsored came out of the Dodd-Frank Act.

By the way, overregulation is overregulation. When I talk to people back in my State of Oklahoma, if they are in

the banking business or the financial services business, they are concerned about the overregulation that comes from Dodd-Frank. If they are farmers, they are concerned about the regulation that would take the jurisdiction of regulating our water resources out of the States and putting it in the Federal Government. So that is what this is all about.

So I will tell you how serious this was. The CRA that I had was so significant that the Federal courts came in, in July of 2013, and said that the SEC made several errors in rushing this regulation through. They actually vacated the rule. That was a major accomplishment. I was very proud that I had the courts on my side, for a change.

Anyway, the SEC finalized the second rule under the authority of Dodd-Frank, section 1504, by making some—without any really substantial changes. Nonetheless, this is the one that he first signed.

So thanks to the Congressional Review Act, oil and gas companies are not at a disadvantage when they are competing with State-owned oil and gas companies such as we have in China.

We passed other critical CRAs because regulations tied the hands of our businesses and took local control away from the States. A lot of people in America—and I think a higher percentage of my people in Oklahoma—are really concerned about Second Amendment rights. Of course, we had one of the regulations that went through—in fact, Second Amendment rights, when we talk about the farmers and the ranchers and not just from my State of Oklahoma—we are a farm State—but throughout America, they will tell you that there are problems. Their No. 1 concern was—and I asked the Farm Bureau representative. He said the greatest problem facing farmers is not anything that is found in the ag bill, it is the overregulation by the EPA and specifically what they call the WOTUS bill. The WOTUS bill, which is the one I just mentioned, would take the jurisdiction away from the State and give it to the Federal Government.

I have to say this. When you talk about “liberals,” that is not a negative term. It is a reality. It is how much power should be in the hands of the Federal bureaucrats as opposed to individuals and the States. So we have a lot of these regulations. One of the things the CRA has done is, it has taken away an excuse that people will use—I am talking about people in this Chamber who are legitimately liberals and believe we should have more control in Washington—it takes the power away from the Federal bureaucrats because what they can do is go ahead and pass the regulations. Then you go back home and when people are yelling and screaming about being overregulated back in their home States, they say: Don't blame me, blame the unelected bureaucrats. A CRA takes away that excuse because it forces them to actually get on record.

So as chairman of the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works, we were involved with more of these regulations than any other committee because that is what we do for a living there. So I was very happy to see all of the successes we had.

Let me just mention because I don't think it has been mentioned before—and I will submit this for the RECORD. There are two ways of doing away with these regulations, and one is through Executive orders. I think everybody knows that. But they don't realize what has already been done. I think we have had a total of 30, 31 regulations that have been done away with either through Executive orders or through the Congressional Review Act. Some of the Executive orders, for example, are the WOTUS, the one we have been talking about; clean energy, something which repeals the Clean Power Plan and something which officially ended the war on fossil fuels, I might add; the Executive order on rebuilding the military; the Executive order on the Keystone and Dakota Access Pipelines—we are all familiar with that and the ongoing debate.

Some of the CRAs really aren't talked about too much, and we are talking about regulations that came from the Obama administration that now have been done away with through use of CRAs—the educational rule mandating Federal standards for evaluating teacher performance; the educational rule establishing a national school board, with an effort to get away from local control of the schools; the Interior rule that blocked Alaska from controlling their own hunting and fishing in that beautiful State; the Social Security rule that put seniors on a gun ban list—Second Amendment rights.

All of these things are very significant, and I am very proud, quite frankly, of this body. With the exception of one, we passed all 14 of the CRAs, and I can't think of any time that has been done in the past. So it is a great thing. It did put the power back in the hands of the people who are elected here, and I am very glad to have been a participant in that.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the complete list of the Congressional Review Act resolutions passed and the Trump Executive actions be printed in the RECORD.

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

CONGRESSIONAL REVIEW ACT RESOLUTIONS
PASSED

SEC Rule requiring oil and gas companies to disclose their “playbooks” on how to win deals. Inhofe-CRA—first signed since 2001; Stream Buffer Zone rule that blocks coal mining; Education rule mandating federal standards for evaluating teacher performance; Education rule establishing national school board; Interior rule that blocked Alaska-control of hunting & fishing; Social Security rule that put seniors with “representative payees” on gun-ban list; OSHA rule that changed paperwork violation statute of limitations from 6-months to 5-years.

Defense rule that blocked contractors from getting deals if suspected (not convicted) of employment-law violations; Labor rule blocking drug-testing of unemployment beneficiaries; BLM rule blocking oil and gas development on federal lands. Federal Communications Commission rule that would have established 2nd regime of privacy rules in addition to Federal Trade Commission; HHS rule that would make it easier for states to fund Planned Parenthood; Department of Labor (DOL) rule forcing private sector employees onto government run retirement plans; DOL rule allowing states to bypass protections on retirement plans.

TRUMP EXECUTIVE ACTIONS

Regulatory reform: requires 2 regulations be repealed for each new regulation; WOTUS: directs EPA to rescind Waters of the United States Act; Energy: repeals clean power plan, other harmful regulations . . . ending War on Fossil Fuels; Mexico City: reinstates ban of fed funds going to NGOs that do abortions; Hiring Freeze: freezes federal hiring (exempted military); Military: rebuilds military; Approves Keystone XL pipeline; Approves Dakota Access pipeline.

Permit Streamlining: expedites infrastructure and manufacturing project permits; Immigration: 90 day suspension on visas for visitors from Syria, Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Yemen. 20 day suspension of U.S. Refugee Admission Program; Sanctuary Cities: blocks federal Department of Justice grants to sanctuary cities; Dodd-Frank: demands review of Dodd-Frank banking regulations and demanding roll-back; Shrink government: directs federal agencies to reorganize to reduce waste and duplication; Trade: evaluates policies to reduce trade deficit; Opioids: fed task force to address opioid drug crisis; Fiduciary rule: delays implementation of bad DOJ rule; Religious Liberty: Eases enforcement of Johnson Amendment and grants other protections for religious freedom; Offshore drilling: revises Obama-era offshore drilling restrictions and orders a review of limits on drilling locations; National Monuments: Directs a review of national monument designations.

Improves accountability and whistleblower protections for VA employees; Affirms local control of school policies and examines Department of Ed regulations; Reviews agricultural regulations; Reviews use of H-1B visas; Top-to-bottom audit of Executive Branch; Moves Historically Black Colleges and Universities offices from Department of Ed to White House; Obamacare: directs federal agencies to ease burdens of ACA; Establishes American Technology Council; Establishes office of Trade and Manufacturing Policy; Identifies and reduces tax regulatory burdens; “Hire America, Buy America”; Establishes a collection and enforcement of anti-dumping and countervailing duties and violations of Trade and Customs laws; Creates an order of succession within DOJ; Revokes federal contracting executive orders.

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.
The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

MENTAL HEALTH

Mr. BLUNT. Madam President, I want to talk today about a topic that

I think is getting more attention now than it has gotten for some time—but still not the attention it deserves—and that is to talk a little bit in May, which is Mental Health Month, about mental health.

I was on the floor of the Senate the last day of October 2013, the 50th anniversary of the last bill that President Kennedy signed into law, which was the Community Mental Health Act. Through the Community Mental Health Act, you saw the facilities that were about to be closed, but the anticipated alternatives, in so many ways, never really developed. According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness, approximately one in five adults experiences mental illness in a given year, and one in five young people between the ages of 13 and 18 will experience severe mental illness sometime during their lifetime.

The National Institutes of Health says that one in four adult Americans has a diagnosable, and almost always treatable, mental health disorder, a mental behavioral health issue, and that one in nine adult Americans has behavioral health illness that impacts how they live every single day. So whether it is the statistic that relates to one in four or one in five or one in nine, this is an issue that affects the lives of lots of people.

Half of the children in that age group, 13 to 18, rarely get the help they need, and even fewer adults do. About 40 percent of adults who have behavioral health issues receive the treatment they need for that issue. I think we are beginning to make great strides on this. Certainly, the discussion has changed. The opportunity to treat mental health like all other health has changed.

In the 113th Congress, just a few years ago, Senator STABENOW from Michigan and I worked to get a bill passed; it was called the Excellence in Mental Health Act, and we now have eight States that have projects going on. In those eight States—in significant areas of all of those States—behavioral health is being treated like all other health.

The idea is really built on the federally qualified health centers idea, the reimbursement model, where anybody can go, and if you are covered by a government program, that is taken into consideration. If you are covered by private insurance, that is taken into consideration. If you are paying cash, there is a significant and rapidly declining amount of cash that you have to pay because your income gets smaller. But everybody in these States would have access to mental health care, just as they currently have access to other kinds of healthcare.

At the community mental health centers that meet 24/7 standards, that are available, that have the staffing needs, and in other places that have the staff the law requires and the access the law requires, people can go to those facilities, and those providers

will know they are going to be reimbursed for treating mental health like all other health.

I am certainly glad that my State of Missouri is one of the eight pilot States in that demonstration program. In our State, we have been—I think by any standard—forward-leaning on this issue for a long time, but not nearly as forward-leaning as we should be or as people who look at the pervasive character of behavioral health issues understand we should be.

When we passed the bill a couple of years ago, we really weren't sure how much interest we would get from States. There was some sense that, well, eight States would be all the States that would even want to do this, if every State that wanted to apply and could go through the application process did so. But, in fact, everybody in the mental health world was encouraged to see 24 States, which represented half of the population in the country, apply to be part of that pilot program—certainly, leading by example here, figuring out what happens.

Frankly, if you treat behavioral health like all other health, I think what many of these States will find—and they may all find—is that the other health costs are much more easily dealt with and, obviously, that not only is treating behavioral health like all other health the right thing to do, but it actually may save money to spend this money. People who have other health problems but who are seeing their doctor because their behavioral health issue is under control may be seeing two doctors. They are taking the medicine they need for behavioral health—if they need medicine for that—but because they are eating better, sleeping better, feeling better about themselves, they are also taking the medicine and getting to the appointments for any other health issue they have.

Early studies indicate that, actually, you save money by doing the right thing and understanding that mental health isn't a topic we don't talk about, but mental health is just another health issue we need to deal with.

We need to be sure that we have providers going forward. We don't have enough doctors in Missouri—or in other States—who are able to treat the increasing number of people who seek treatment. And as doctors retire in these fields, we are going to have an even greater shortage if we don't do something to encourage people to go into this field.

There is a particular shortage in care providers who deal with children. Children and youth who are in need of mental health services and who don't receive them run a greater risk of all kinds of other problems, including dropping out of school, not doing well in school, ending up in the criminal justice system—things that needlessly happen because we haven't stepped forward and viewed their behavioral

health problem as we would if they had some other problems.

I was glad Senator REED from Rhode Island and I were recently able to reintroduce a bill called the Ensuring Children's Access to Specialty Care Act. Pediatric medicine doesn't pay as well as other medicine for lots of reasons. One is that children don't have a lot of their own money to pay with, and often their parents don't have it either.

This bill that Senator REED and I introduced would allow physicians who want to specialize in, among other things, child and adolescent psychiatry to be eligible for the National Health Service Corps student loan repayment program. That program is generally not available now to doctors who go on and specialize on the theory that if you specialize, you are going to have more income than the general practice doctor might have. Those programs have always been focused on the general practice doctor, but if you specialize in children's health—whether it is, frankly, psychiatry or any other area of children's health—you are much less likely to financially benefit from deciding to do that. So this would allow those doctors to pursue that program as part of how they help get their loans paid back.

Whether it is physical or behavioral health, children have a unique set of health needs and often a lack of ability on their own to do what needs to be done. Medical residents who practice pediatric medicine require additional training. One of the barriers they cite for not getting that additional training is that they are going to have to have these additional student loans. Hopefully, we can allow ways for them to get into programs that other doctors get into, to see that they continue to be encouraged to be part of pediatric medicine and pediatric specialties.

Also, we are looking at another bill, the Advancing Care for Exceptional Kids Act, commonly referred to as ACE Kids. What ACE Kids does is treat kids who have serious medical problems as exactly that—to have a way to look at health needs and medically complex kids whom you wouldn't look at otherwise, seeing that these particular patients don't have to go through all kinds of barriers to find a doctor, fee for service. Medically complex kids really need help, and I think we could easily design a new and different way to deal with them.

Finally, talking about kids, I want to say one other thing, and that is just to mention that this particular week is Teacher Appreciation Week. I was a teacher after I got out of college, before I had a chance later to be a university president. I think teachers are always inclined to be teachers and try to tell the stories we need to hear. But when we are talking about mental health and teachers, healthcare, mental health, first aid are things that don't allow teachers to become child psychiatrists or mental health professionals but do allow teachers, as they

are watching the students whom they get to know so well, to identify what students need help and what students don't. Often teachers get the first chance outside the child's home to see that they are clearly challenged or may be challenged in ways that are easily dealt with, if they are dealt with, and are really troublesome if they are not dealt with at all.

So while we celebrate Teacher Appreciation Week at the very end of school and Mental Health Month, I hope we commit ourselves to look at these mental health issues for what they are. They are health issues. They need to be talked about. The right thing to do is to deal with them.

I think we are seeing new and better things happen there, but we are not nearly where we should be yet. As I said earlier, when Senator STABENOW and I could go to the Floor on the 50th anniversary of the last bill President Kennedy signed and 50 years later talk about how few of the goals set in that bill have been met in five decades by society, we really have a lot of catching up to do.

I believe and hope we are catching up, and I hope this is a month where people really think about telemedicine, contacts, opportunities, and excellence in mental health in ways we haven't before.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The assistant Democratic leader.

MEDICAL RESEARCH

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, before the Senator from Missouri leaves the floor, I want to say a word about him and the topic he raised today about health and, in this particular case, children.

Senator BLUNT and I have adjoining States, Illinois and Missouri. We have joined up, as well, on the issue of medical research. I salute him. Even though he is my Republican colleague, I want to make clear that this is a bipartisan issue. He has made it a bipartisan issue. We had the good support of Senator ALEXANDER, Republican of Tennessee, and Senator MURRAY, Democrat of Washington.

The Senator from Missouri has done some amazing things. I want to say specifically for the Record that America owes him a debt of gratitude, as chairman of the Appropriations Subcommittee that is responsible for the National Institutes of Health, the foremost leading medical research agency in the world.

Let me tell you, with his leadership, what we accomplished. For two straight years, Senator BLUNT has been able to raise the appropriations for medical research at the National Institutes of Health by \$2 billion or more. The net result of that is that a \$30 billion budget has grown to almost \$34 billion. What does it mean? It means that researchers don't get discouraged. They stay on their projects. They keep working to find cures.

Secondly, we are making dramatic advances in medicine because of it. His

leadership has been absolutely essential. If there is ever a bipartisan issue, this is it. The Senator has been quite a leader in this regard.

I want to salute you for that while you are on the floor on the topic of healthcare and children.

Mr. BLUNT. Madam President, I appreciate my good friend's comments on this but also his commitment to seeing that we make this happen. As he mentioned, this is a bipartisan effort, but it is an effort that had about a 10-year lag, and we are doing our best to dramatically catch up with what is really an important time in healthcare research.

Mr. DURBIN. I thank my colleague from Missouri. I will tell you that he set a standard. I hope that both parties will agree that this is the starting point. For every year's budget, the starting point is at least a 5-percent real growth increase in medical research.

Thank you, Senator BLUNT, for your leadership.

HEALTHCARE LEGISLATION

Madam President, I also want to address an issue that came up in debate last week in the U.S. House of Representatives; that is, the question of the repeal of the Affordable Care Act. This is an issue where reasonable people can disagree about how exactly to run our healthcare system.

But at the end of the day, I hope that, as with medical research, we can all come together with some basic issues. Congress should not pass a law taking away health insurance coverage from Americans. Let's start there. Congress should work together on a bipartisan basis to find ways to reduce the cost of healthcare and health insurance premiums. I think we should agree on that too.

Third, we have to find a way to make sure that consumers and families across America are protected with health insurance that is there when they need it. Now, it was a little over a week ago when I became a statistic—not just a Senator but a statistic—in healthcare. I went through a heart catheter procedure in Chicago last week on Tuesday. After that procedure—which turned out just fine; thank you—I am a statistic. I am a person in America with a preexisting condition. I have to check that box that says I have had a heart procedure.

It used to be if you checked a box like that—diabetes, asthma, whatever you checked—it ended up having a direct impact on what you paid for health insurance or whether you could even buy it. There were people who survived cancer—children, adults—who could not buy health insurance because they were too big a risk for health insurance companies.

Well, we changed that. The Affordable Care Act changed that and said: Just because you have a preexisting condition—and one out of three Americans has one—you should not be denied coverage. Now, the House of Represent-

atives passed a bill that allows Governors literally to take away that requirement in health insurance plans. What are they thinking?

Do they think they are so darn lucky that they will never have an accident, never have a diagnosis where they end up with a preexisting condition? It can happen to anybody, and it does. So what the House of Representatives did in this regard is a step backward.

They also changed the Medicaid system. People have this image, when you say Medicaid: Oh, that is the same as Medicare. No, Medicare is for seniors and disabled people. Medicaid is a policy of health insurance that is available for people who do not have a lot of money. Well, who qualifies for that? Well, it turns out that the largest number of people who qualify for Medicaid are children and their moms.

In my State of Illinois, half of the kids who are born in the State are covered by Medicaid. So the moms, when they need prenatal care to make sure the babies are healthy, and the babies, when they need care after the hospital, rely on Medicaid. But that is not the most expensive thing when it comes to Medicaid. The most expensive thing in Medicaid are your moms, your grandmoms, and granddads who are in nursing homes. You know what happens? They reach a point where they need to be in a place where folks can watch them and help them.

They have medical issues and age is taking its toll. But many of them get there, and all they have is Social Security and Medicare, and it is not enough. So Medicaid steps in and supplements it so that your mom, your dad, or your grandmother can stay in that place, which is good for them, secure, safe, and with the right kind of healthcare. The other group that relies on Medicaid the most in their daily lives are disabled people, folks who are born with a disability or have acquired one in life and they need ongoing medical care they cannot personally afford.

Children and their moms, elderly folks in nursing homes, and disabled people depend on Medicaid. So what does the Republican bill that passed the House of Representatives do to the Medicaid Program across America? It ends up cutting over \$800 billion in coverage. What it means in Illinois is that 1 million people—out of our 12.5 million population—are likely to lose their health insurance because of the action taken by the House of Representatives.

Even my Republican Governor in Illinois came out publicly and said what they did in the House of Representatives is disastrous for our State. It has a significant negative impact on the cost of healthcare and the coverage of health insurance. So why would we want to do that? Why would we want to take health coverage away from the groups I just mentioned?

Do we want to put less money in prenatal care? Well, if we do, we run the risk that children will be born with problems and challenges that could

cost us a fortune and compromise their lives.

Do we want to put less money into supporting elderly people who are in nursing homes? Well, what are they going to do? What are they supposed to do? If they can't stay in a place that is good for them and with the right kind of care, does that mean the family now has to find a spare room for grandma or your mom? I hope not. These folks want to live in dignity, and they don't want to be in a situation where they have to look for charity or beg for help from their families.

The third group is disabled people. For goodness sakes, we are lucky. We have people with disabilities who are doing amazing things today. But many who are in lower income categories need the help of Medicaid.

I had a group of hospital administrators come in to see me this week from Illinois. They were from every part of the State. If you go down to our beautiful Southern Illinois area, there are some great towns. One of them is Anna, IL, right near Cobden, IL. It is down in the southern end of our State. It is a very rural area with smaller towns.

Then I had administrators in the same group from Quincy, IL, from Springfield, IL, my home town, and from the city of Chicago. They all came here to tell me the same thing: The bill that passed the House of Representatives last week is a disaster when it comes to Illinois hospitals. They estimate they are going to lose up to 60,000 people who are currently working in hospitals in Illinois, because of that bill, and they are also going to see closures and reductions in services at these same hospitals while we see the Medicaid cutbacks take place.

Now, why is that? Let's assume you have a small rural hospital in a town that you live in. If you do, you value it very much because that means there is healthcare there, right next door, when you need it. You don't have to drive 50 miles or more. You have it right there. You also know it is a great employer in your area. You also know, as well, that that is the way you keep a lot of businesses in your town and attract new ones.

So what these hospitals are telling us is that the bill that passed the House of Representatives to repeal the Affordable Care Act is a threat to the future of those hospitals. If the patients don't come in covered by Medicaid and pay for some of their services, the hospitals will still treat them, but they are charity patients, then, and the hospitals have to charge every other patient more because of it.

So that is a terrible way for us to approach healthcare reform in America. That is the reality of what we face today. I am troubled by the fact that this bill, which passed the House of Representatives by two votes—two votes—if two Congressmen had voted the other way, this bill would not have

passed. This bill was never reviewed by the Congressional Budget Office. Well, who cares? I care.

For everything we do that is supposed to be that important to affect the American economy, we are supposed to go to the nonpartisan experts and ask them: Well, what does this really do? We have been held to that standard—Democrats have and Republicans, too—until now. Now, we have this decision by the House of Representatives to pass this bill affecting America's healthcare system—one-fifth of our economy, I might add—and they never went for an analysis to the Congressional Budget Office.

That has never happened before. They did it anyway. You know why they did it? Because the first version of this bill was a disaster. They sent that bill in for an analysis—24 million Americans losing their health insurance over the next 10 years. It was a disaster. They were afraid they would get the same analysis on the second bill. So they never sent it in for the analysis. In 2 weeks, we are going to have the numbers.

But it really gives you fair warning that this bill could be very hurtful to a lot of people across America, and yet it passed the House of Representatives. So today people say to me in Illinois, when I have town meetings: Well, we are listening to you, Senator. But what do you want to do about healthcare today? What would you change in the current system? Well, let me tell you first. I voted for the Affordable Care Act. I believe in it. The number of uninsured people in America—the percentage—has been cut in half because of the Affordable Care Act. Is it perfect? Of course not. Does it need to be changed? Yes.

I can give you two or three specifics, and I will. First, we have to do something about the price of drugs in America—pharmaceuticals. You see what is happening. Hedge funds are buying the rights to drugs and raising the prices two, three, four, and ten times because they have an exclusive drug. There is a family I have come to know who has a young son who is in high school in Chicago. He has diabetes. He is an amazing kid. He is going to be a great success in life. He has fought diabetes for years and years. His mom and dad have stood behind him.

They came in to tell me: Do you know what has happened to the cost of insulin—insulin—which diabetics need dramatically? It has gone up two, three, four, and five times in the last few years for no reason other than that they can charge it. Of course, a person with diabetes may be dependent on that insulin even to survive.

So the first thing we ought to do when we look at the healthcare system is figure out how to make sure that we have reasonable pricing when it comes to pharmaceuticals. Of course, I want them to make a profit. Those pharmaceutical companies, with a profit motive, will keep doing research to find

the next drug. But do I want these hedge funds and others—investment bankers—to buy out the rights to those drugs and drive their prices through the roof? That is not fair. It adds dramatically to the cost of healthcare.

Blue Cross Blue Shield is one of the biggest insurers in America. It is the biggest in my State of Illinois. My wife and I have a plan with them. So the head of Blue Cross Blue Shield came to me, and she said: Senator, did you know that last year Blue Cross Blue Shield paid more for pharmaceuticals than they paid for inpatient hospital care? What? Inpatient hospital care, people who have to come in for surgeries and things—you paid more for pharmaceuticals?

Yes.

Well, there are things we can do about it. I have legislation that I have introduced that reviews the pricing on pharmaceuticals, holds the pharmaceutical companies accountable. I take a position on an issue that all of my colleagues don't share, but I want to share it with you. There are only two nations in the world—only two—that allow pharmaceutical companies to advertise on television. The United States and New Zealand.

Well, what difference does it make? Have you turned on the TV lately and tried to find a show that did not have ads about pharmaceuticals? Have you tried to write down the names of some of those pharmaceuticals so that you might remember them if it is something of interest? Have you tried to listen to the warnings that they give you about all of these pharmaceuticals?

Well, some of the warnings are amazing: If you have had a liver transplant, be sure and tell your doctor. Well, yes, that explains that incision. A liver transplant? Why do they do that? Why do they buy all of those ads on television? Real simple. If you have some condition, and they talk about it in one of those ads, you are going to ask your doctor about that drug, and it is likely, in many cases, that doctor, then, will end up prescribing that drug.

Is it necessary? It may not be. Is it the cheapest form of the drug? It may not be. So, then, why does the doctor write the prescription? Because it is easier to do that than a 10-minute stop in the office for him to sit down with you and patiently explain: You don't need this drug, or you can use a generic, or we ought to wait a while before we go into this.

The result of it is that more and more pharmaceutical companies have their drugs being prescribed and more and more profits coming their way. So I, for one, think that this direct consumer advertising is really hurtful in terms of the cost of healthcare in our country, and it is something we ought to deal with. I would make that part of the reform of the Affordable Care Act.

The second thing we need to do is to make sure, I believe, that in every place in America, if you so choose, you can choose a Medicare-type public plan

to cover your family. Right now, it is private health insurance companies. You may choose to stick with the private health insurance company. That should be your choice. But you also ought to have a Medicare-type plan.

Over 50 million Americans are covered by Medicare, and most of them—the overwhelming majority of them—are happy with Medicare. What if we had a Medicare-type plan, a public option, available to every American to choose if they wish? I think that could reduce the cost of healthcare, and I think it is an option we ought to consider.

The third point I would make is that when we are dealing with reforming the healthcare system, we have one group in particular who is giving us a real challenge: individuals who are buying health insurance. The vast majority of Americans get their health insurance through their employment and many others through Medicaid—a program I described earlier—and then there is that group out there buying insurance on the open market. They are the ones who are seeing the runup in premiums and costs and overruns that they have to face, seeing copayments going up and the like. We need to find a way to deal with this group to give them affordable health insurance. There are a lot of ways to approach that, but that ought to be a target of what we do for the ones who are facing the toughest increases in health insurance.

I will just say this too: The good news about this conversation in the Senate is that it is finally reaching a new level. Now there are 12 Republican Senators who are meeting with Senator MCCONNELL, and they are setting out to draw up a plan and try to pass it with just Republican votes. I hope that does not succeed, and I will tell you why. If we can do this on a bipartisan basis and sit down in good faith and work out these improvements to the Affordable Care Act, that is the best option for this country. Senator COLLINS of Maine and Senator CASSIDY of Louisiana are trying to start that conversation. I have said to them that if this is a good-faith effort not to repeal the Affordable Care Act but to repair it, I want to pull a chair up to the table.

Let's have this conversation. We may not agree, we may not be able to come up with the best solutions, but the bipartisan approach of solving the current problems with the current healthcare system is a much more sensible thing to do than to have an all-Republican bill trying to force its way through here. I hope that doesn't happen. It is far better to do this on a bipartisan basis, and I hope that is what will be done.

I will be going home, as I do regularly, to talk about the impact of the bill passed by the House of Representatives. I have just touched on some of the major points of it.

There is one thing I do want to mention, though. It has an age tax in it

that many people between the ages of 50 and 64 may not be aware of.

Currently the law says that there cannot be a disparity of difference in premiums charged of more than 3 to 1; that is, the most expensive premium charged to someone for health insurance, no matter what their health or condition, cannot be more than three times the lowest premium charged. That is current law. The bill passed in the House of Representatives changed that dramatically. It says: Instead of 3 to 1, let's make it 5 to 1. Who is going to pay the difference? Folks who are older and those facing chronic illness.

If you are between the ages of 50 and 64, watch out for your health insurance premiums under this measure that passed the House of Representatives. That is something which should not have been included. That is why the American Association of Retired Persons has come out against this bill. It is another reason we have to ensure that the bill that passed the House of Representatives does not become the law of the land. To have this discrimination against people because of their age is unfair, and I agree with the American Association of Retired Persons on that particular issue.

Let's hope we can find a bipartisan path to making healthcare even better in America. I don't care who takes the credit for it. If at the end of the day more families have peace of mind with health insurance that they can afford, that provides them quality care when they need it, that is something we need to achieve.

As I said earlier, I again learned this lesson last week. The lesson is simply this: If you go in for a diagnosis and learn that you need quality healthcare, you want to have health insurance. You want to have access to the best doctors and hospitals. Everyone in America wants that. That shouldn't be a privilege which is reserved just for the rich and lucky; that ought to be there for every single American.

I believe healthcare is a right, not a privilege. If we start off with that premise, we can build a healthcare system in this country that is still the envy of the world.

Mr. MCCAIN. Madam President, today I come to the floor in opposition to the nomination of Robert Lighthizer to be United States Trade Representative, USTR. After close examination of the confirmation process for Mr. Lighthizer, I have come to the conclusion that Mr. Lighthizer does not adequately understand the positive economic benefits the North American Free Trade Agreement, NAFTA, has had and will continue to have on Arizona and our Nation. His advocacy for protectionist shifts in America's trade policies, including his support for the withdrawal from the Trans-Pacific Partnership, TPP, and the Trump administration's incoherent and inconsistent trade posture, have only solidified my opposition to his nomination to be USTR.

As I wrote in a February piece in the Arizona Republic, coauthored by my colleague Senator FLAKE and Arizona chamber president Glenn Hammer, NAFTA has delivered enormous economic benefits to the United States since its inception in 1994, especially for the citizens of Arizona. In just two decades, Arizona's exports to Canada and Mexico have increased by \$5.7 billion, or 236 percent. Mexico stands as Arizona's No. 1 trading partner, with bilateral trade accounting for 40 percent of our State's exports to foreign markets in 2015 and totaling \$9.2 billion. Arizona's trade relationship with Mexico also directly supports more than 100,000 Arizona jobs.

While I understand NAFTA could be strengthened and modernized, any efforts by this administration to withdraw from NAFTA or impose new restrictions or barriers on our ability to trade with Mexico and Canada will have serious consequences for Arizona, including massive job losses for workers and dramatically higher costs for consumers. Furthermore, I am troubled by the need for and the process by which Congress recently granted Mr. Lighthizer a waiver to serve as USTR given that he previously represented a Brazilian and Chinese client in trade litigation matters. As part of the Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995, Congress adopted my amendment to prohibit an individual from serving as U.S. Trade Representative or Deputy U.S. Trade Representative if that person has "directly represented, aided, or advised a foreign entity" in "any trade negotiation, or trade dispute, with the United States." Ultimately, the waiver was tucked in the must-pass omnibus spending bill, with no chance to debate or vote on such an important trade related policy.

As Senator SASSE and I recently wrote in a letter opposing Mr. Lighthizer, the administration's incoherent and protectionist message on trade "is especially troubling because confirming a USTR grants the Administration additional legal authority to negotiate trade deals that Congress must consider under 'fast track' procedures. Given these circumstances, granting the Trump Administration additional legal powers through your confirmation without understanding how you or the Administration intend to use those powers would be irresponsible."

I plan to vote against the nomination of Mr. Lighthizer, and I urge colleagues to join me.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Madam President, I support the nomination of Robert Lighthizer to be the United States Trade Representative.

Trade agreements should meet two tests: Does the agreement improve worker wages? And does the agreement add American jobs? For far too long, U.S. Trade Representatives have prioritized profits of large multinational organizations over the interests of the American people and our country as a whole.

The USTR should be someone who negotiates on behalf of the American worker and advances labor and environmental protections, and the USTR should be someone who works to enforce agreements. While I don't agree with everything in Mr. Lighthizer's resume, his record suggests that he will be a USTR who will approach trade policies in the ways I have outlined. I hope the approach he takes going forward will reflect the positions he has taken in the past. I expect him to ask: Does it improve worker wages? And does it add American jobs?

I believe that Mr. Lighthizer will bring fresh eyes to trade policy. I hope that he will focus on increasing transparency at the USTR. I hope that he will stand up for worker rights, both domestically and internationally. I hope that Mr. Lighthizer will work to enforce trade policies that protect the environment.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

TRADE

Mr. MORAN. Madam President, I come from a State that in some ways is very similar to yours, the State of Kansas. You get to see firsthand the impact of trade and exports on the people, on jobs, and on the economic opportunity of my communities. Our State economy relies on our ability to sell the products we grow and manufacture to people around the globe.

Strengthening our trade relationships and expanding market access for exports abroad creates a greater opportunity for Kansans today and those who follow us. One of my goals has always been to make certain that communities across Kansas remain a place in which the young men and women who grow up there find it to be a place to raise their families. Our ability to do that, especially in a small, rural community with agriculture and agricultural exports, is so important. It is a way that we can really put America first.

If our goal is to have an America that has strength and prosperity, we ought to continue to focus on improving our Nation's economy. That is one of the things that I appreciate—we seem to be focused in such a significant way on our ability to grow an economy. I think we are poised for much greater things economically.

"Economics" may sound like just one of those words, but what that means is more jobs, better jobs, more secure jobs, jobs for our children so that maybe they can pay back their student loans. This country desperately needs the jobs in the commu-

nities across Kansas and around the country, and it is really what we call the American dream.

Trade, including our ability to sell the food and fiber we grow in our State, is a key part that drives our economy forward. Almost half of the wheat grown in Kansas is exported to foreign markets. What that means is, if you weren't doing that, nearly half of the acres planted in our State would be idle. That means the communities those farmers and ranchers live in and around would have half of the amount of economic activity that currently is occurring. American ranchers ship over 1 million metric tons of beef to consumers abroad. Thousands of acres of corn, sorghum, and soybeans being planted this spring across Kansas and the Nation will ultimately be exported.

Approximately 95 percent of the world's consumers live outside America's borders. To reach those consumers, our Nation must produce a trade policy that grows the existing export markets while continuously building and developing new ones. Without export markets, both production and prices would fall for farmers and ranchers, and rural communities supported by agriculture would disappear. The revenue generated by exports not only keeps family farmers and ranchers afloat, it drives rural economies and supports small businesses.

The aerospace industry, which is so important in Kansas, also relies on an integrated supply chain and strong trade policy. Wichita, KS—appropriately labeled the "Air Capital of the World"—manufactures more than half of the world's general aviation light aircraft and business jets. Without trade, aerospace and manufacturing facilities in Wichita and surrounding areas and Kansas City and surrounding areas would not exist and workers in those factories would be left without job opportunities.

It is critical that we protect these jobs, many of which depend upon the United States having a strong economic relationship with Canada and Mexico. The North America Free-Trade Agreement, which went into effect in 1994, plays a significant role in supporting trade with those two neighboring nations.

Of course, the world and technology have changed since 1994 when that agreement was entered into. There are areas of the agreement that can be improved and modernized. Many of those changes have been discussed and are issues that the United States, Canada, and Mexico agreed to during TPP negotiations, such as strengthening our intellectual property rights and new provisions for e-commerce.

If we work collaboratively with Mexico and Canada to address the issues with NAFTA, including the issues on which we strongly disagree, I am confident we can improve the agreement for all parties. But efforts to pull out of NAFTA completely or to weaken our trading relationship with Canada and

Mexico during renegotiations would cause significant damage to the American economy. We must have willing negotiators sitting across the table when discussing NAFTA, and that starts with treating our neighbors as trade partners and as friends. We need to treat these folks as friends, and we need to seize the opportunities we have.

Working together to improve NAFTA or building economic relations with other trading partners does not mean America should take a step back from enforcing the current rules. Oftentimes in the past, we have been too focused on striking trade deals and selling them to the public, but we haven't done enough to make sure other countries are playing by the rules that are negotiated. Nontariff barriers and unfair trading practices by foreign countries harm our producers, workers, and consumers.

We must make certain American producers are competing on a level playing field in a global market and that our jobs and wages are not being undermined by other countries' efforts to distort trade policies and trade agreements.

Many Americans have lost confidence in trade agreements, and I believe that is partly because the benefits of trade agreements have been oversold, while the enforcement of unfair trade practices have been insufficient. In promoting agreements, leaders had set expectations for increased jobs, higher wages, growth in exports, and many other metrics that were impossible to meet. When these exaggerated promises did not come to fruition, many people lost confidence in those trade agreements.

America should strengthen our commitment to holding other countries accountable in order to inspire greater confidence from the American public in our Nation's ability to reach a trade agreement that benefits us all.

Weakening our trade relations will cause Kansans to lose jobs. Farmers and ranchers will no longer be able to pursue their careers and lifestyle. But with strong leadership and smart negotiating, I am convinced that America can improve our trade relationships in the world and continue to build on the economic successes we have today.

A robust U.S. economy that provides market opportunities for farmers, ranchers, and manufacturers, and job prospects for workers is an essential pillar of America's strength and well-being. Strong trade relationships, particularly with Canada and Mexico, are primary drivers of our Nation's economy. We must protect those relationships and carefully consider changes in our approach to trade to be certain that Americans continue to benefit from economic opportunities that are created by a strong trade policy.

Madam President, our relationships with Mexico and Canada are important and in many ways determine the economic future of the people of my State at home.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

RUSSIA INVESTIGATION

Ms. HIRONO. Madam President, these are not ordinary times. It is not ordinary for a winning Presidential campaign to be under investigation for collusion with a foreign adversary to influence our 2016 election and undermine our democracy. It isn't ordinary for a President to fire the man responsible for conducting this very investigation. It isn't ordinary for a President whose campaign is under investigation for having ties to Russia to hold an Oval Office meeting with that country's Foreign Minister and only invite the Russian press. This meeting came only a day after firing the person in charge of the Russia-Trump investigation. Yet, here we are. The question is, What should we do next?

The events of the past 48 hours have been shocking and concerning. Firing FBI Director James Comey in this manner, under this pretext, and at this time is a total disservice to the American people.

President Trump hopes the American people will believe he fired Director Comey because of how he treated Hillary Clinton during the Presidential campaign. President Trump hopes, as his Deputy Press Secretary said on Tuesday night, that the American people think it is "time to move on." President Trump hopes his attempts to distract us from the importance of getting to the bottom of the Russia-Trump matter will succeed. President Trump's hopes are misplaced. If anything, President Trump's firing of Director Comey has resulted in an increased concern about the Trump team's connections to Russian interference with our 2016 Presidential election.

The country is asking, Mr. President, what do you have to hide?

We are learning practically on an hourly basis about how the President made this decision to fire Director Comey and why. This information does not square with the official line coming from the White House, which also changes.

Most recently, the Washington Post reported that Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein threatened to resign after the White House misrepresented his role in the decision to fire Director Comey. CNN reported that President Trump fired Director Comey because he would not provide "assurance of personal loyalty." Both CNN and the Wall Street Journal reported that the decision to fire Director Comey came after the FBI's investigation was accelerating. All of this information has emerged in the last 48 hours or so.

This kind of Presidential interference, through the firing of the FBI Director during an ongoing investigation, is unprecedented, suspicious, and deeply concerning. These revelations and those that are sure to come further argue in favor of appointing a special prosecutor to fully investigate the Russia-Trump matter. A special prosecutor with full autonomy can follow the evidence wherever it leads and prosecute as appropriate.

I call upon Republicans of conscience to stand up and join the call for a special prosecutor.

Over the past few days, a number of my Republican colleagues have spoken out against the way the President had fired James Comey. In particular, I would like to acknowledge Senators MCCAIN, SASSE, FLAKE, BURR, KENNEDY, BOOZMAN, and CORKER for speaking out. I hope, as more information about President Trump's decision to fire Director Comey emerges, our Republican colleagues will join in the call for a special prosecutor.

Leader MCCONNELL argued yesterday that appointing a special prosecutor would disrupt the ongoing work of the Senate committees that are conducting their own investigations. I disagree. The Senate Select Committee on Intelligence and the Senate Judiciary Committee have important oversight responsibilities regarding the Russia-Trump matter, but neither committee has the power to convene a grand jury or prosecute any crimes that may have been committed. Therefore, I reiterate the need for a special prosecutor with the mandate and authority to follow the facts wherever they lead—free of political considerations.

In the coming weeks, President Trump will nominate a new Director for the FBI. This person must be above reproach and be someone whose independent judgment can earn the country's confidence. I have been disturbed by some of the names being floated as potential replacements, names like Chris Christie and Rudy Giuliani. We cannot allow President Trump to appoint one of his buddies to oversee the Russia-Trump investigation or to lead the FBI.

The investigation into the Russia-Trump matter cannot and should not be a partisan issue. We should all care that a foreign government has sought to interfere with our elections and with our democracy. This is not just about the election. This is really about protecting our democracy.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MERKLEY. 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. MERKLEY. Mr. President, there is a Chinese curse that reads: "May you live in interesting times."

To call the times that we find ourselves in right now "interesting" would be certainly an understatement. The fact is, we find ourselves and our country in a moment that is profoundly testing the rule of law here in America, profoundly testing the strength of our democratic institutions. We have a President who has now engaged in a pattern of removing individuals from office who are executing their responsibilities under the law.

First, on January 30, just 11 days into the Trump administration, it was Sally Yates, the Acting Attorney General, who warned the administration that Michael Flynn had been compromised by his connections to Russia—an incredibly responsible act for her to take, but she was fired.

On March 10, it was Preet Bharara, the U.S. attorney in New York, who was reportedly investigating whether Secretary Price had profited from his position in Congress. He had been told he would be retained by this administration when suddenly he was fired.

Then this week, Tuesday, the President fired James Comey, the Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation; James Comey, who was leading the FBI's investigation into the possible collusion between the Trump campaign and Russia in the Presidential election and who was scheduled to testify before the U.S. Senate this week; James Comey; who had just recently asked for more funding and resources in order to appropriately and substantially investigate Russian interference in our elections and possible connections to the Trump campaign; James Comey, whose investigation just handed down its first round of subpoenas.

The firing of James Comey has more than a passing resemblance to Nixon's Saturday Night Massacre, the infamous incident in October of 1973, when President Nixon ordered the Attorney General to fire the special prosecutor who was investigating Watergate. Nixon wanted to derail that investigation. The Attorney General, Elliott Richardson, refused to do so and resigned. His deputy, William French Smith, refused to do so and resigned.

Day by day, we have seen more connections, bits and pieces, come to light—conversations involving Michael Flynn, former campaign manager Paul Manafort, Carter Page, and Attorney General Sessions.

The President insists there is no "there" there, but we have seen a pattern of conversations that we don't fully understand. Was there coordination between the Trump campaign and the Russians to interfere in the U.S. Presidential election? Was there collaboration? We don't know. We know there were a lot of conversations, but what was the substance of those conversations? And who instructed those meetings to take place? What is the full pattern of these events?

It is important that we get to the bottom of it because what every American understands is, if you conspire

with a foreign government to undermine the integrity of the American elections, you are conspiring to undermine the integrity of the American Government itself; that this is a terrible assault, a terrible crime against our country.

The President's team says this firing of Director Comey had nothing to do with the Russia investigation. They did so through a series of documents, including a letter from Attorney General Jeff Sessions to the President, a memo to Jeff Sessions from Rod Rosenstein, and the President writing a letter to James Comey saying you are fired. So the memo from Rosenstein to the AG, the AG's letter to the President, the President's letter saying you are fired, and all of this claiming the basis of the investigation was because they were dissatisfied with the way James Comey had treated Secretary Clinton.

Now, that doesn't really fit with the history we are familiar with. The President told audiences at a campaign rally in October: "I tell you what, what he did, he brought back his reputation."

He is referring to James Comey.

"He brought it back."

And then when the President talked to "60 Minutes," he said: "I respect him a lot," when he was asked about Director Comey in the context of the actions he had taken in regard to Secretary Hillary Clinton.

We remember the chants at his rallies: "Lock her up."

I don't think there is a single American—not a single Member of this body of 100 Senators—who believes for a moment—not for a microsecond—that the reasoning in this memo from the Deputy AG to the AG and the letter from the AG to the President and the President's memo to James Comey, that the arguments made here were the basis of his firing.

If you believe the President woke up and said: I am so concerned about the way James Comey treated Hillary Clinton that he just has to be dismissed, then I have some oceanfront property in Arizona I would be happy to sell you.

We know from the reporting of the last few days that there is quite another story—an accurate story—about why the President fired James Comey. We now know the President had become increasingly frustrated with Director Comey because he wouldn't go along with the story line the President wanted. The President wanted him to support his claim that the Obama administration had wiretapped Trump Tower, but Director Comey, caring about the integrity of his team at the FBI and the office, refused to do so. In fact, he clarified that there is absolutely no information that corroborates the President's claim that Trump Tower had been wiretapped by President Obama.

We know the President was frustrated that the Director was doing his job to explore—that is, to investigate—

Russia's actions in our campaign, in our Presidential campaign, and that he was frustrated that there was looking into potential ties between his campaign and the Russians. He didn't like a lot about the fact that Director Comey was asking for more resources to be able to do a thorough investigation.

Well, we know the result.

According to a report in the Washington Post this morning, President Trump made his final decision to fire the Director last weekend while he was golfing on his property in New Jersey. He then tasked the AG and the Deputy Attorney General to come up with a cover story.

This is an astonishing chain of events. What we have here is the President making a decision based on the appropriate efforts of the FBI to investigate a potential crime against the United States of America. What we have here is a President determining he wanted to derail that investigation, and he went to the AG and the Deputy AG to say: Help me do this. Help me derail this investigation. Give me a cover story I can sell to the American public. And Attorney General Sessions complied and Deputy Attorney General Rosenstein complied.

Now, that is quite different than what happened in the Saturday Night Massacre. In the Saturday Night Massacre, when the President said to the Attorney General: Get rid of that special prosecutor so I can derail the investigation, the Attorney General stood up and said: No way, and resigned—the Deputy Attorney General resigned, but that is not what we have here. We have now our AG agreeing to develop a cover story for the President.

Now, this memo from Attorney General Sessions reads as follows: "As Attorney General, I am committed to a high level of discipline, integrity, and the rule of law to the Department of Justice."

Let me ask this question, Where is the integrity in collaborating in a false story in order to derail an investigation, an important investigation to the very heart of the integrity of our system of government? Where, I ask the Attorney General, is the integrity in developing a cover story—a false story to cover up the action of derailing an investigation. That is the opposite of integrity.

To the Deputy, who also agreed to conspire in this deception of the American public, where is your integrity? Where was your commitment to justice?

So here we have events that are deeply disturbing not only in terms of the President's decision to falsely mislead the American public but also to the Attorney General's decision to collaborate in that and the Deputy Attorney General's decision to support it. How is this not obstruction of justice?

If anyone here thinks for a moment that the President is going to nominate a new head of the FBI and ask

that individual to conduct a robust investigation of Russia's entanglement in the U.S. elections, I have another thought for you: It is not going to happen. The President has deliberately, intentionally derailed this investigation, and the Justice Department has no intention of making it go forward again.

We need to hear from these top officials. We need to have these officials come to the U.S. Senate, to a committee of the whole, to tell us their story and answer these questions about what they have just done to violate the integrity of the Department of Justice.

We need to have a special prosecutor. We know the head of the FBI, when we have one again, is not going to be able to conduct a robust investigation. Therefore, we need a special prosecutor to get to the bottom of this. The American people deserve no less. The restoration of integrity of the U.S. Government deserves no less.

Lady Justice carries scales in her hands, and where is the blindfold? The whole point is that no one in America is above the law, no one—not Presidents or Vice Presidents, not AGs or Deputy AGs. Lady Justice is all about getting the facts, following the facts where they go, holding individuals accountable, when we get those facts, when we get that information.

That is what we need to do now. We need to get to the bottom of this. We need to have that special prosecutor. We need to make sure that if anyone did conspire with the Russians, they are held to the full account of the law because conspiring with a foreign country to undermine the integrity of U.S. elections is treasonous conduct. This is not a traffic ticket. This is a question of treasonous—conspiring with a foreign government, undermining the U.S. Presidential election.

I am deeply disturbed about this turn of events. I am deeply disturbed about the information we have. We need to get the full, full story, the complete story, and make sure justice is served.

Thank you, Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Idaho.

Mr. RISCH. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that following the remarks of Senator MURPHY, there be 20 minutes of postcloture time remaining on the Lighthizer nomination, equally divided between the chairman and ranking member of the Finance Committee; that following the use or yielding back of that time, the Senate vote on the Lighthizer nomination; and that, if confirmed, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table, and the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. RISCH. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. MURPHY. Mr. President, I thank Senator MERKLEY for his remarks this week, as this body has been rightly focused on the firing of James Comey

and the imagined rationale that the President gave.

HEALTHCARE LEGISLATION

Mr. President, secret meetings have been happening amongst our Republican colleagues to draft a healthcare bill that could have devastating consequences on the people we all represent. I know we are about to have a vote on the floor, but I wanted to come to the floor to simply remind all of my friends on both sides of the aisle of the promises that have been made about this process and this piece of legislation which emerged from the House last week with devastating consequences. Those consequences include 24 million people losing coverage and people with preexisting conditions being subjected to \$200,000 premium increases, potentially.

I just reference the words of the President of the United States, who told us repeatedly over and over again, during the campaign and after the campaign, that the result of this healthcare reform debate was going to be a healthcare system that was better. President Trump outlined that in a number of different ways.

Here is what he said on April 30, just a few weeks ago. He said:

The healthcare plan is on its way. Will have much lower premiums & deductibles, while at the same time taking care of preexisting conditions!

That is not true. That is a lie. The healthcare bill that emerged from the House of Representatives did none of those things.

CBO has not come out with its final estimate. It is unbelievable that the House voted on a reordering of one-sixth of the American economy without a CBO estimate, but we can pretty much be sure that the first CBO estimate will hold, in that it will say that premiums are going to go up by 15 to 20 percent immediately for everybody, and then for the nonyoung healthy and wealthy, premiums are going to go up even higher.

It didn't take care of preexisting conditions. It did the opposite—allowed every State to be able to walk away from the protection of the Affordable Care Act, which makes sure people with preexisting conditions, which could be one-third of all Americans, can't be subject to higher rates, and it substituted that requirement with a high-risk pool which is dramatically underfunded to the point that it is laughable, in the opinion of many healthcare economists.

Here is what Donald Trump said earlier this year:

We're going to have insurance for everybody. People covered under the law can expect to have great healthcare. . . . Much less expensive and much better insurance for everybody.

CBO says 24 million people will lose their insurance, and that number might be higher when the new estimate comes out. This wasn't true. This was a lie.

Finally, the President said, during the campaign:

I was the first & only potential GOP candidate to state there will be no cuts to Social Security, Medicare & Medicaid.

No cuts to Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid—this is a giant cut to Medicaid. This is an \$880 billion cut to Medicaid being used to finance a giant tax cut for people making over \$200,000 a year. This wasn't true. This was a lie as well.

A lot of Democrats will be willing to talk about making our healthcare system better, but we want our Republican colleagues, as they are having these behind-closed-door meetings, to remember the promises that were made. They said nobody would lose insurance, premiums would go down—not up—and your benefit package wouldn't become worse. If Republicans can deliver on those promises, then there is a discussion to be had. But if anything looking like the House product emerges, it is a violation of the promises this President and many Republicans made over and over again.

Finally, I also want all my colleagues to remember what is happening as we speak. Leader MCCONNELL was on the floor talking about premium increases announced by Blue Cross Blue Shield in Maryland. What he failed to mention was the head of Blue Cross Blue Shield of Maryland came out and specifically said that a big part of the reason they were asking for major premium increases was because of the actions President Trump is taking right now to sabotage the Affordable Care Act. They were not sure the individual mandate was going to be enforced. Why? Because in an Executive order this President signed, he directed his agencies to undermine the Affordable Care Act and to withdraw many of the fees levied on Americans, such as that which comes if you don't get insurance. He stopped advertising for the exchanges for the last week. We were on target to have more people sign up this year than ever before; but then, in the last week, the President withdrew all the money for the exchanges. Right now, as we speak, this administration is bleeding out the money for insurers to help pay for cost sharing within the exchanges 1 month at a time, not telegraphing if there is going to be any certainty for that funding in the future.

The President is undermining and sabotaging the ACA every single day. The reason insurers are passing along premium increases or considering withdrawing from these exchanges is because of this sabotage the administration is undertaking of our entire healthcare system. I hope these behind-closed-door meetings take into account all of the promises this President and our Republican friends made that they would repeal the Affordable Care Act and replace it with something better. Everything we hear is that the product that emerged out of the House of Representatives—the product that may emerge out of the Senate—violates every single one of these promises.

We await the ability to work together, Republicans and Democrats, to

preserve what works in the healthcare system, to fix what doesn't work, and to hold our Republican friends and the President of the United States to their promises.

I yield back.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there are 20 minutes of postcloture time remaining, equally divided between the chairman and the ranking member of the Committee on Finance, prior to a vote on the Lighthizer nomination.

The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I thank my colleague and good friend, Chairman HATCH, for his courtesies. We have worked very closely together on this nomination. This was a challenging task, and I thank Chairman HATCH for his cooperation.

Mr. Lighthizer needed a waiver because he had represented foreign interests. It was extremely important that we work with Senator MANCHIN and other colleagues to address the enormous needs of the miners, and we had a whole host of Members with a variety of extremely important trade issues—matters like steel, aluminum, and digital goods in our part of the world; we also care about softwood lumber tremendously.

Chairman HATCH and I worked with all the members of the Finance Committee. It was a unanimous vote, and I thank him for his cooperation.

We have talked a little bit about trade and what a modern trade policy is going to look like. The Lighthizer discussion is the beginning of the debate on trade in this Congress, and I have tried to be clear about my agenda. My agenda is to create more red, white, and blue jobs in America—high-skilled, high-waged jobs. Very often, the trade jobs pay better than do the nontrade jobs because there is more value added in them; there is a higher level of productivity. So my view is, as we set out on this journey to get more high-skilled, high-waged jobs, look to Asia where there are going to be 1 billion middle-class people there in a few years. What we ought to do is focus on growing them in the United States, making them in the United States, adding value to them in the United States, and then shipping them somewhere. That is my idea of a modern trade agenda.

So far, the administration's trade agenda amounts to a muddle of 140-character tweets, mixed messages, and overhyped announcements that seem to be backed by not much substance. I think we are going to have to put together a coherent strategy quickly to promote our exports and fight back against trade cheats. That is not exactly what we have seen from the administration to date.

We can almost suffer whiplash from the reports about what happens with various trade deals. Late at night, it was reported that the President is about to pull the United States out of NAFTA; then suddenly there is another

report saying he has changed his mind after a conversation with the Canadians. Next, at a moment of extreme tension on the Korean Peninsula, it is reported that the President is threatening to pull out of the U.S.-Korea trade agreement. Then suddenly that threat is walked back. So the President has made some major statements with respect to trade deals on the books, but he has yet to give us much in the way of specifics on how he would like to bring that about.

If one is trying to run a business in Oregon or around the United States that exports to foreign markets, it is pretty hard not to feel rattled and confused by some of the President's statements and tweets about trade. One might even make the decision not to invest and not to hire additional workers. I hope the President will soon see that some of the uncertainty and confusion that has been stoked as a negotiating tactic is not a recipe for creating red, white, and blue jobs.

I do think Robert Lighthizer knows what the challenge is really all about, and I want to tell him I have appreciated our conversations. He is a real pro at this. I have appreciated his views, particularly on digital goods, which I think are so important to our burgeoning technology sector, and his views on Canadian lumber.

I would also like to state at this time that I think very highly of Secretary Ross. He has been very constructive in our conversations, particularly on Canadian softwood lumber.

Obviously, the U.S. Trade Representative will lead our country in trade negotiations, and that will be Mr. Lighthizer's role. The bulk of the expertise of trade does reside within his office. When Mr. Lighthizer is confirmed, as I hope he will be and expect he will be, this expertise will no longer be silent.

I will wrap up simply by way of saying that the United States may be the world's largest economy, but it represents only 4 percent of the world's consumers. Red, white, and blue jobs in the United States depend on our ability to sell to the other 96 percent. The number of middle-class households around the world is going to double over the next decade. This represents a lot of potential buying power for the American brand, the Oregon brand. The fact is, people all over the world love buying the goods and the services we make. It is going to take a lot of hard work to smash through the barriers that block American-made goods and fight back against trade cheats.

Lastly, the trade rules in many particulars are out of date, so we have a lot of work to do to promote labor rights, combat human trafficking, crack down on trade in illegally taking wildlife and endangered species, and get the trade system updated so it includes things like digital goods and small businesses that now have an international reach, which is especially important. The trading system has to

respond more quickly to countries that break the rules or are unfairly producing basic commodities, such as steel and aluminum. This is especially true with respect to China.

As policymakers, we must continue to take an honest look at the trade rules and fix what doesn't work so that American workers aren't left behind. It is long past time to invest more resources in monitoring, litigating, and enforcing our trading partners' obligations, including China's. The United States must respond more aggressively and more rapidly to threats to U.S. workers and businesses.

There was a recent example of how this is done right when the Commerce Department said "enough" to Canada's unfairly traded softwood lumber. The steps the Commerce Department took were undeniably warranted after mill towns in Oregon and many other States have been clobbered over the last few decades. My first preference is a long-term agreement with Canada, but if they are not going to come to the table, I will keep fighting for our mills and mill jobs, and I will insist the administration do the same.

The U.S. needs to carry that same steadfast approach across the board—getting trade enforcement right is not just a lumber issue. That means more resources for boots on the ground: investigators and enforcers. Not just at the office of the USTR but also at Customs and Border Protection and the Departments of Commerce, Agriculture, Labor, State, and Interior, where investigators are tasked with stopping trade in illegally taken wildlife. Bottom line, trade enforcement requires all hands on deck. If you boost trade enforcers at one agency only to wipe out the trade enforcers at another, you will fail to protect American workers from unfair or illegal imports.

So I will be looking closely at the budget that the President submits to determine whether he is serious about delivering real results on trade enforcement or whether the campaign rhetoric and dramatic tweets are just a bunch of hot air.

In recognition of the need for a new approach on trade enforcement, Congress recently passed new laws that give the President better tools to respond when trading partners don't follow the rules. It also passed legislation to strengthen domestic laws that enable the U.S. to unilaterally respond when American jobs are under threat, and it provided new direction should the President wish to negotiate new trade agreements or renegotiate past ones. In the coming months, I expect that those tools will not just sit and gather dust while the administration talks tough with respect to trade.

It takes consistency, strategy and a lot of hard work to get trade done right. I have confidence that Robert Lighthizer will work to pursue a trade agenda that is coherent, constructive, and will deliver for American workers, and I will support his nomination.

However, I want to express reservation on one issue pertaining to this nominee. During his confirmation hearing, Senator STABENOW asked Mr. Lighthizer how he would deal with situations in which he was conducting trade negotiations with a country in which the President has business interests. Senator STABENOW wanted to make sure that the President's personal financial interests wouldn't take precedence over the public interest. Mr. Lighthizer seemed surprised by the question, saying, quote, "the idea that this President would do anything untoward is . . . far out of the realm of possibility."

I would like to put Mr. Lighthizer on notice. This is a legitimate issue, and I share Senator STABENOW's concern. Never before has this country faced a circumstance in which our trade representative will be negotiating trade agreements with countries in which the President or his family have active business interests, whether it is trademarks, golf courses, or construction deals. I have introduced a bill requiring the President, when initiating trade negotiations, to disclose whether he has business interests in the country that we will be negotiating with. I intend to press this issue as trade negotiations move forward. Trade should be about fighting on behalf of American workers and businesses. It is not about the President's bottom line.

Finally, on an issue that has been closely related to this nomination, I want to commend several of my colleagues for working together to provide relief to retired mineworkers regarding their healthcare costs. Senator MANCHIN has been a crusader on behalf of the mineworkers. Hardly a week went by over the last several months when I didn't hear from JOE MANCHIN about how important it was to get the mineworkers the healthcare benefits they have earned. And he has worked hand-in-hand with Senators BROWN, CASEY, and WARNER, all of whom serve on the Finance Committee. Chairman HATCH deserves thanks for working with us to get this across the finish line as well.

I see that my good friend, Chairman HATCH, is here to make his remarks. I thank him for the cooperation he has shown. I think the interests of both sides in processing this nomination have been advanced.

A lot could have gone awry here. We had challenges with getting the waiver Mr. Lighthizer needed. We needed the space to make sure the miners were protected. Members had strong views.

I thank Chairman HATCH for the diplomacy and cooperation he showed me and our side. I think that is why there was a very large vote for Mr. Lighthizer in the committee.

I will be voting aye this afternoon and look forward to the Chairman's wrap-up remarks.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah.

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, I thank my colleague, who is an excellent person to work with. We enjoy each other and enjoy working together. We are getting a lot done, and I appreciate his kind remarks here today.

I rise today in support of the nomination of Robert Lighthizer to be the next United States Trade Representative. Mr. Lighthizer was reported out of the Finance Committee unanimously—Democrats and Republicans—and I hope he receives a similarly strong bipartisan vote here on the floor.

By statute, Congress has designated the USTR as the primary official for developing and coordinating U.S. trade policy, advising the President on trade, and leading international trade negotiations. The USTR must also report directly to and consult closely with Congress on a wide range of issues affecting international commerce. The USTR is Congress's first and most important point of contact when it comes to trade policy. Therefore, in order for Congress to have an effective voice in shaping our Nation's trade agenda, we need to have a fully staffed and functional USTR office.

For that reason, I have been very critical of the pointless and unprecedented delays we have faced in filling this vacancy, in filling this position, due to some unreasonable demands from some of my friends on the other side of the aisle. This delay has served only to weaken Congress's position in trade policy and has hampered our ability to provide the new administration with substantive input. Despite this ill-advised delay, I am pleased that Mr. Lighthizer's nomination has finally been brought to the floor, and I thank my colleagues for that.

Mr. Lighthizer's years of experience in public service, including as staff director for the Senate Finance Committee, as Deputy USTR during the Reagan administration, and in private practice, make him extremely well qualified to serve as our Nation's representative. Mr. Lighthizer's knowledge and experience will be vital to his service in this position and vital to our country.

Put simply, growing our economy and creating better paying jobs for American workers require increased U.S. trade. Toward that end, I have spoken to Mr. Lighthizer about the importance of removing trade barriers for American businesses, workers, consumers, and, where those barriers have already been removed, maintaining the status quo.

I know there is quite a bit of discussion going around about potential changes to the North American Free Trade Agreement. As I told Mr. Lighthizer, there are definitely opportunities to update and improve NAFTA, but it is important that the administration follow the spirit of the Hippocratic Oath: First do no harm.

Mr. Lighthizer and I have also discussed the importance of protecting

U.S. intellectual property rights around the globe through strong enforcement and better rules in trade agreements. I believe he recognizes the importance of this priority, and I will work to ensure that this issue plays a prominent role in our future trade negotiations.

I have also made clear to Mr. Lighthizer that I believe consultation on trade policy between Congress and the administration is essential, particularly if our agreements are going to adhere to the standards Congress put forward in the Bipartisan Congressional Trade Priorities and Accountability Act of 2015, the statute that included the most recent reauthorization of trade promotion authority.

On this key point, I believe Mr. Lighthizer and I are in agreement. As U.S. Trade Representative, Mr. Lighthizer will have the task of holding our trading partners accountable, ensuring that Americans don't pay more for the products their families need and helping American businesses and workers sell more of their goods and services around the globe.

This is not an easy job, but I am confident that Mr. Lighthizer is up to the task. As chairman of the Senate committee with jurisdiction over our Nation's trade policy, I am committed to working with him to ensure that we advance a trade agenda that will grow our economy, create more jobs, and expand market access around the globe for America's farmers, ranchers, and manufacturers.

Mr. President, I suggest we vote on Mr. Lighthizer.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. All postcloture time has expired.

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

Mr. WICKER. 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 bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from West Virginia (Mrs. CAPITO), the Senator from Georgia (Mr. ISAKSON), the Senator from Alaska (Ms. MURKOWSKI), and the Senator from Alaska (Mr. SULLIVAN).

Further, if present and voting, the Senator from West Virginia (Mrs. CAPITO) would have voted "yea."

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

The result was announced—yeas 82, nays 14, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 127 Ex.]

YEAS—82

Alexander	Booker	Cardin
Baldwin	Boozman	Carper
Barrasso	Brown	Casey
Bennet	Burr	Cassidy
Blunt	Cantwell	Cochran

Collins	Heitkamp	Peters
Coons	Heller	Portman
Corker	Hirono	Risch
Cornyn	Hoeben	Roberts
Cortez Masto	Inhofe	Rounds
Cotton	Johnson	Rubio
Crapo	Kaine	Scott
Cruz	Kennedy	Shaheen
Daines	King	Shelby
Donnelly	Klobuchar	Stabenow
Duckworth	Lankford	Strange
Durbin	Leahy	Tester
Enzi	Lee	Thune
Ernst	Manchin	Tillis
Feinstein	McCaskill	Toomey
Fischer	McConnell	Udall
Flake	Menendez	Van Hollen
Franken	Moran	Warner
Graham	Murphy	Wicker
Grassley	Murray	Wyden
Hassan	Nelson	Young
Hatch	Paul	
Heinrich	Perdue	

NAYS—14

Blumenthal	McCain	Schatz
Gardner	Merkley	Schumer
Gillibrand	Reed	Warren
Harris	Sanders	Whitehouse
Markey	Sasse	

NOT VOTING—4

Capito	Murkowski
Isakson	Sullivan

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the motion to reconsider is considered made and laid upon the table, and the President will be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR—Resumed

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

RUSSIA INVESTIGATION

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, there is a saying, an old adage, that history doesn't repeat, but it rhymes.

Over the past week, the dramatic firing of James Comey has recalled past events—history that involved one of the major scandals in our Nation's past—the Watergate scandal.

In Watergate, the saying originated—another very common saying—that the coverup is worse than the crime. The danger now in the United States—the greatest country in the history of the world, with the most effective and fair justice on our planet—is that, in fact, there may be a coverup, and that the truth will be stifled, and people who should be held accountable will not be. That is the danger.

In this instance, in comparison to Watergate, actually, the crime is extraordinarily serious. In Watergate, there was a two-bit break-in or burglary, and the coverup, in fact, involved obstruction of justice. What we have here is a deliberate, purposeful assault on our American democracy by the Russians through a cyber attack that involved, really, in effect, an act of war—a combination of cyber, propaganda, and misinformation spread deliberately; it involved hacking into both major parties and the spread of the results of that hacking for one of those parties—possibly influencing the outcome of the election.

The issue of whether and how the outcome of that election may have