MORNING BUSINESS

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

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

TRIBUTE TO CAROLYN LERNER
AND MARK COHEN

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize the service of Special Counsel Carolyn Lerner. Ms. Lerner’s term as the leader of the U.S. Office of Special Counsel, OSC, has expired. By many accounts, she has been the most successful leader of that office in the agency’s 40 year history.

This office has a critical mission, one that is more important now than ever. It protects government whistleblowers and helps to eliminate government waste, fraud, and abuse. It is also responsible for the enforcement of the Hatch Act, which keeps the Federal workplace free from improper partisan politics.

Special Counsel Lerner was confirmed unanimously by the Senate in June 2011. During her tenure, she restored the integrity of the Office of Special Counsel after a difficult period. Moreover, she reestablished the OSC as a safe and effective office to defend government whistleblowers.

Moreover, I would also like to recognize the exemplary service of her principal deputy, Mark Cohen, who is leaving government service as well. The OSC played a critical role in protecting hundreds of whistleblowers at the Department of Veterans Affairs. They worked with these courageous employees to improve care for veterans at hospitals across the country, including medical conditions for veterans in the Baltimore VA.

Under Ms. Lerner and Mr. Cohen’s leadership, the OSC worked with Homeland Security whistleblowers to end an improper overtime program, saving the taxpayers $100 million a year according to the Congressional Budget Office.

These and many, many other victories for whistleblowers and taxpayers set a new standard in terms of effectiveness for this important office. As my colleague and friend from Maryland, Congressman CUMMINGS, stated in a recent Washington Post article, “Ms. Lerner turned the Office of Special Counsel ‘into a model agency and set the bar as the head of that office.’” It was unanimous consent to have this article printed in the RECORD at the conclusion of my remarks.

As Senator GRASSLEY, a longtime champion of government whistleblowers, stated in the same article, “Her leadership should be a road map for future leaders of this office.”

Given the office’s important good government role, the OSC enjoyed broad, bipartisan support under Lerner and Cohen’s leadership. I concur with my colleagues and encourage the next leaders of that office to follow their lead as I pay tribute to their government service.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD.

Congress approved VA improvements following a 2014 scandal over the cover-up of long patient wait times, which was revealed by whistleblowers. Whistleblower disclosures also led to a new oversight for Border Patrol agents. Lerner’s office was instrumental in both.

Devine’s strong praise for OSC is not unjustified. The bad news is they operate at a molasses pace” in some instances, he said.

He added that he would like Lerner to be more aggressive about taking legal action against federal agencies that violate whistleblower rights.

Despite the slow pace, agency statistics show the office has won 376 favorable actions for whistleblowers and other victims of PPPAs [prohibited personnel practices] this past year, more than double the annual average,” the office said in its budget justification to Congress. “In the last two years, OSC has achieved five times the number of favorable actions in whistleblower retaliation cases than in any prior two-year period in agency history.”

The increased caseload leads to bigger backlogs, but it also demonstrates that employees are more willing to trust the office with sensitive cases.

Ironic criticism comes from James J. Wilson, the agency’s chief human capital officer. He filed a whistleblower retaliation complaint against Lerner with the Merit Systems Protection Board after failing to find success before the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency. Regarding his complaints to the Council, Wilson, who previously filed grievances against former employers at two other agencies, signed an affidavit saying he received final decisions closing these four matters with no further action being taken.

The conservative criticism of Lerner, it is outweighed by praise from whistleblowers and Members of Congress.

“She’s fearless,” Robert MacLean, an air marshal whistleblower, told me earlier this year. His was the first federal whistleblower case heard by the Supreme Court and MacLean credits his victory largely to work done by OSC.

Unusual in this era of hyper-polarization, she is lauded by both sides of the aisle.

“Leading the Office of Special Counsel requires a deep appreciation of patriotic work that whistleblowers do to shine a light on fraud or misconduct in government,” Lerner has been a steadfast advocate for government whistleblowers, and I am grateful for her service at OSC,” said Sen. Charles E. Grassley (R-Iowa), chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee. “Her leadership should be a road map for future leaders of this office.”

The Senate Whistleblower Protection Caucus, founded by Grassley and Sen. Ron Wyden (D-Ore.), had urged the Trump administration to retain Lerner.

“I am disappointed the president chose not to retain Grassley’s and my recommendation to renominate Carolyn Lerner, who is an experienced leader with bipartisan support,” said Wyden.

It was bicameral. Before Trump’s decision, Rep. Rod Blum (Iowa), Republican chairman of the House Whistleblower Protection Caucus, led a bipartisan House letter signed by Lerner describing among those who signed was Rep. Elijah Cummings (Md.), the ranking Democrat on the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee.

Lerner turned the Office of Special Counsel “into a model agency and set the bar as the
head of that office," Cummings said by email Monday. “She served with independence and tenacity to hold agency officials accountable when they retaliated against whistle-blowers.”

**TRIBUTE TO BETSY HUMPHREYS**

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, as a Member who supervises the Library of Congress, the National Library of Medicine approved and presented the following resolution to congratulate, commend, and thank Betsy Humphreys for her 44 years of service to the Library of Medicine. She will retire at the end of June after 44 years of extraordinary leadership and distinguished public service.

On behalf of the Library of Congress, the National Library of Medicine approved and presented the following resolution to congratulate, commend, and thank Betsy Humphreys for her 44 years of service to the Library of Medicine. She will retire at the end of June after 44 years of extraordinary leadership and distinguished public service.

Ms. Betsy L. Humphreys has served NLM, the United States, and the global community with distinction since 1973, culminating in her appointment as the NLM Deputy Director in 2005, a post she continues to occupy today, and serving as NLM Acting Director from April 1, 2015 to August 14, 2016—the first woman and first librarian to lead the Library.

In a career that could be called one long love letter to biomedical information, Ms. Humphreys has directed the groundbreaking Unified Medical Language System project, which produces knowledge resources to support advanced electronic information sources, retrieval, and integration of information from disparate electronic information sources, and which is used around the world. In the process, she developed unique knowledge and experience with the content and format of many biomedical terminologies, health vocabularies, and clinical classifications that would serve her well in all endeavors to follow.

She was a key contributor to interagency efforts to advance standardization of electronic health data, which resulted in the development, promotion, and implementation of mechanisms for designating US standards for health data exchange. She was also a major contributor to the Federal regulation setting the standards for use in electronic interchange of administrative health data. Taking a broader view, she led US government efforts to remove major barriers to the use of standard clinical terminologies in health care, and she was a key player in the development of SNOMED CT, with usage terms favorable to the US. This became a model for other countries and was adopted by the International Health Terminology Standards Development Organisation (IHTSDO) when it was formed to put ownership of SNOMED CT in an international framework. She was IHTSDO’s founding Chair and has served with distinction as its US member.

With the establishment of the ONC, she led NLM’s substantial collaboration with that body to develop, support, and disseminate for free US use the key clinical terminologies required for certification of EHRs involved in use of EHRs by Medicare and Medicaid providers and hospitals. She also directed the development and dissemination of many tools, including mappings, programming interfaces and download sites, and value sets, for government’s health information systems, including the NLM Value Set Authority Center and NIH Common Data Element Repository, to support the use of standards for health care, quality measurement, and in research.

She directed the legislatively mandated expansion of ClinicalTrials.gov to encompass registration of additional trials and submission of summary results information. This multi-year, multi-faceted process involved numerous partners and stakeholders, showcasing her ability to grasp and solve complex problems and her considerable skill at consensus building. ClinicalTrials.gov is the largest and currently used international clinical trials registry.

She worked tirelessly and creatively to expand and enhance access to research publications, data, and health information for scientists, health professionals, system and product developers, information professionals, and the general public. This often involved building and maintaining strong partnerships across the Federal government to adapt and rebrand strategies to changes in Administrations and priorities and to capitalize on opportunities. She oversaw the expansion of PubMed Central to include direct deposits of articles from many publishers, manuscript submissions from investigators of publications resulting from NIH-funded research and research funded by other Federal agencies and private funders, including the Gates Foundation, and digitized articles from back issues of biomedical journals, through a partnership with the Wellcome Trust.

She led a contract with the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to make drug information and device registrations submitted to the FDA by product manufacturers available through the heavily used DailyMed system. In addition, she guided the creation of the AccessGUDID database, which provides public access to registration data for medical devices.

Under her enthusiastic direction, NLM became an early implementer of application programming interfaces and download sites for its many biomedical information resources, flinging open the gates and allowing their use by other computer systems and by innovative product developers, both in the US and abroad. In the face of hiring restrictions, she enhanced the quality and efficiency of NLM’s high-volume operations, ensured reliable 24/7 availability of electronic information services that are essential to research, health care, and public health worldwide, and advanced major initiatives, including the re-competition of NLM’s Informatics Research Training Grants and the re-competition and migration from contracts to cooperative agreements of Library of Medicine Libraries and the National Network of Libraries of Medicine.

Throughout her career, in an exemplary fashion, she exhibited for a lifetime, adaptability, and resilience in partnering with stakeholders inside and outside of NLM. She leads by fostering employee development, diversity, teamwork, and making optimal use of human, financial, and information resources.

Throughout NLM, she is respected and indeed beloved for her kindness, her resourcefulness, and her can-do spirit. Truly a treasure as a human being, as a public servant, she demonstrated a career-long commitment to interagency collaboration and harnessing government resources for the public good.

**MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT**

A message from the President of the United States was transmitted to the Senate by Mr. Ridge, vice chairman of his secretaries.

**PRESIDENTIAL MESSAGES**

**REPORT ON THE CONTINUATION OF THE NATIONAL EMERGENCY THAT WAS ORIGINALLY DECLARED IN EXECUTIVE ORDER 13405 OF JUNE 16, 2006, WITH RESPECT TO BELARUS—PM 9**

The PRESIDING OFFICER laid before the Senate the following message from the President of the United States, together with an accompanying report; which was referred to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs:

**To the Congress of the United States:**

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, within 90 days of the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the Federal Register and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with that provision, I have sent to the Federal Register for publication the enclosed notice stating that the national emergency with respect to actions and policies of certain members of the Government of Belarus and other persons to undermine democratic processes or institutions of Belarus that was declared in Executive Order 13405 of June 16, 2006, is to continue in effect beyond June 16, 2017.

The actions and policies of certain members of the Government of Belarus and other persons to undermine democratic processes or institutions of Belarus, to commit human rights abuses related to political repression, and to engage in public corruption continue to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States. For this reason, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13405 with respect to Belarus.

**DONALD J. TRUMP**

*The White House, June 13, 2017.*

**MESSAGES FROM THE HOUSE**

At 10:27 a.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by